

The Maiden, the Mother and the Other One: The Witches in Terry Pratchett's Discworld Novels

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Pro gradu työssäni tarkastelen Terry Prachettin (1955-) Discworld-fantasiakirjasarjassa esiintyviä naishahmoja, keskittyen niin sanottuihin Lancre-kirjoihin ja niiden pääosassa oleviin noitahahmoihin. Analyysini painopiste ovat naisstereotyyppit ja kuinka Prachettin hahmot samanaikaisesti purkavat ja ylläpitävät näitä stereotyypejä.

Prachettin noitahahmot - etenkin Lancre-kirjojen kolme päähenkilöä, noidat Magrat Garlick, Nanny Ogg ja Granny Weatherwax - edustavat neljää naisstereotyyppiä neitsyt, äiti, vanha akka sekä noita. Näistä kolme ensimmäistä muodostavat naisen elämänkaaren, noidan ollessa näiden roolien rikkomisen symboli. Discworld-sarjassa noita roolina heijastaa Mary Russon käsittää "unruly woman", vallaton nainen, joka kieltyy mukautumasta annettuihin rooleihin ja tekee itsestään spektaakkelin olemalla liian vanha, äänekäs, ruma tai groteski.

Analyysini toinen painopiste stereotyyppejä ohella on kysymys identiteetistä ja toiseudesta. Noidat ovat perinteisesti saduissa edustaneet pahaa toiseutta, ja nostossaan nämä hahmot kirjojensa keskiöön ja sankareiksi, Pratchett käääntää perinteisen asetelman päälaelleen. Siinä missä perinteisissä saduissa naisten tehtävä on ollut vain odottaa passiivisena prinssiä jonka kanssa mennä naimisiin, Lancre-kirjat käsitlevät monilta osiltaan tytöjen aikuistumisriittejä identiteetin etsimisen pikemminkin kuin heteroseksuaalisen täyttymyksen etsimisen kautta. Kaikenkäiset naishahmot esitetään omien identiteettiensä kautta, eivät unohdettuna tai vain miesten kautta määriteltävinä 'Toisina', ja koska Lancren maailma esitetään suurilta osin naisten näkökulmasta - niin kirjojen sankarit kuin usein myös vihollishahmot ovat naisia - mieshahmot ottavat ikirjoissa 'Toisen' roolin.

Kysymys (nais)identiteetistä esiintyy kirjoissa myös toisesta näkökulmasta: Kirjassa Equal Rites Pratchett esittelee ajatuksen kahdenlaisesta taikuudesta, miesten akateemisesta taikuudesta ja naisten luonnollisesta taikuudesta, mikä heijastaa kahtiajakoa maskuliiniseen sivistykseen ja feminiiniseen luontoon. Naisten taikuus esitetään kirjoissa kuitenkin miesten taikuutta vahvempana, mikä omalta osaltaa viittaa siihen että Discworld-sarjassa taikuus sinällään feminiinistä. Vaikka noidat/naiset esiintyvätkin Discworld-kirjojen sankareina, ei näillä ole tarinoissa useinkaan valtaa kuin yliluonnollisina olentoina ja siinä suhteessa naiset merkitään oletusarvoisesti ei-ihmisiksi.

Käsittelen myös Discworld-sarjaa ja fantasiakirjallisuutta yleensä Mikhail Bakhtinin karnevaaliteorioiden kautta nähden kirjojen fantasiamailman karnevaalina jonka sisällä hierarkiat ja perinteiset roolit voidaan purkaa ja käääntää päälaelleen, mutta jonka ulkopuolella patriarkaalinen status quo säilyy muuttumattomana.

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1. Introduction

The aim of my thesis is to examine the female characters in the *Discworld* series by the British author Terry Pratchett (1948-), concentrating on the witch characters. I will be discussing how these characters both break the traditional stereotypes of women and femininity, and conform to them in Pratchett's style of rewriting and recycling elements from not only traditional fairytales and the fantasy genre, but also popular culture in general.

Discworld is a series of humorous fantasy books that consists at the moment of some thirty novels.¹ The first book of the series, *The Colour of Magic* was released in 1985, and chronicled the adventures of an unfortunate wizard in a parody of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, and other authors of the genre such as Fritz Lieber and Robert E. Howard.² However, already the third book of the series, *Equal Rites*, shifted from simply lampooning fantasy clichés to an approach closer to social satire, in the case of *Equal Rites* aimed at the inherent sexism of patriarchal institutions. The later books have then been increasingly dark in nature, with the emphasis slowly shifting from humour to social commentary. Nevertheless, Pratchett's style of writing continues to rely heavily on the use of intertextual references to both high and popular culture.

The novels are set on Discworld, a fantasy world that is flat and travels across space carried by four giant elephants that in return are standing on the shell of a turtle.³ It is an amalgam of various time periods and historical locations with some

¹ In addition to the novels, there is a large number of ‘tie-in books’ and other merchandise for the series, mostly written by Pratchett, including, for example, computer games, illustrated maps and almanacs, a cookbook, and *The Science of Discworld* series which combines Discworld novelettes with popular science non-fiction.

² The book had, for example, characters such as Cohen the Barbarian that were barely disguised parodies of famous fantasy characters, in the case of Cohen the Barbarian Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian.

³ The idea of the world being carried on the back of an elephant that stands on the shell of a turtle comes from Indo-European mythology, for example the Hindu legends of Chukwa, the first and oldest turtle that supports the world on its back.

parts of the world having been modelled after, for example, Central Europe of the Middle Ages, while others resemble more London of the Victorian era or ancient Egypt. The books do not have one single hero or main character; instead the series is divided into several subseries and a few stand-alone novels which are all set in the same fantasy world but each follow a different set of characters. There is some overlapping between the different subseries, but mainly they are self-sufficient with their own story- and character-arcs. The four main subseries are what might be called the Rincewind series⁴, the Death series⁵, the City Watch series⁶, the Lancre witches series and the Tiffany Aching series. I will be mainly discussing the Lancre witches novels, which follow the lives of a coven of witches living in the small rural kingdom of Lancre. The subseries currently consists of six books - *Equal Rites* (1987), *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), *Witches Abroad* (1991), *Lords and Ladies* (1992), *Maskerade* (1995) and *Carpe Jugulum* (1998) - and although my main focus will be mainly on *Lords and Ladies* and *Carpe Jugulum*, all of the books will be discussed to an extent because the development of the characters spans the entire subseries. Some of the characters have also appeared in the first two published books in the Tiffany Aching series, which is also set in Discworld but aimed for children and young adults and deals with the coming-of-age of the young witch Tiffany Aching. Even though I will mostly leave the Tiffany Aching books outside my analysis, they will be briefly discussed as they share many similar themes with the ‘adult’ Lancre witch books.

The reason why I have chosen this particular subseries for my analysis is not only that it has more major female characters than the other series, but also that the books themselves in their narrative contain discussion about the roles and images of

⁴ Stories about an inept wizard called Rincewind and his equally inept colleagues, often parodying old universities and other fortresses of patriarchy.

⁵ Stories about a personified Death, his servants and his adopted family.

⁶ Originally a parody of police shows and the impersonal and ineffective city guards of ‘sword and sorcery’ fantasy, but which has later matured into the most political of the Discworld subseries.

women. The protagonists of the books, the three witches Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick, can be seen to embody four stereotypes of women – the maiden, the mother, the crone and the witch – three roles for good women and the fourth one that breaks them down. The main part of the analysis is then divided into sections after these stereotypes and will deal with the way the characters relate to them. I will argue that although in many ways the women in Pratchett's books obey to the traditional stereotypes, the witch as a character and a role becomes an agent of subversion, an “unruly woman”, that challenges the stereotypes by both rebelling against and drawing strength from them. The term “unruly woman” comes from Mary Russo,⁷ and I will be mainly using it as used by Kathleen Rowe in *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*.⁸ In relation to this I will also be discussing the subversive nature of the fantasy genre and its relationship to Mikhail Bakhtin's⁹ ideas of the carnivalesque, and how this allows the witches' unruliness.

An important theme will also be the question of the self and the other in relation to the dichotomy of male/female. In *Equal Rites* Pratchett establishes the division of magic into men's magic and women's magic within the world of Discworld. Witches are women, wizards are men and the difference is not only in having a different word for a male and a female practitioner of magic, but in how magic in this context takes on the role of a symbol for concepts that have traditionally been coded masculine or feminine. Men's magic is scientific, civilized, “out of the sky”, whereas women's magic is “out of the ground”, feral and part of the nature. This reflects the traditional male/female duality of culture/nature, but Pratchett inverts the situation when he

⁷ Mary Russo, “Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory” *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies* Teresa de Lauretis (ed.) (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986)

⁸ Kathleen Rowe *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

⁹ Bakhtin, Mihail *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)

ridicules the rigid rules of men's magic and makes women's magic the stronger power. This, and the fact that the witches are central characters and even heroes in every book they appear in, also makes the witches/women of Discworld a 'Self' rather than an 'Other', defined by their own actions rather than through other (male) characters.

Although the witch characters are at the centre of my study, I will also very briefly discuss Pratchett's other female characters. The *Discworld* series has many strong female characters, but they are almost all powerful due to their link to the supernatural. Men's magic may be less powerful than women's magic, but when the magic is taken away, men still hold the political and economical power within the narrative.

2. A Carnival of Intertextuality

2.1 Fantasy, Fairytale and the Carnival

In my thesis I will use the term 'fantasy literature' to refer mainly to that subgenre of 'fantastic' literature that Pratchett's Discworld novels inhabit, the genre of 'magical fantasy' or 'high fantasy' that is set primarily in a secondary world and – in its contemporary form - borrows heavily from the literary works of J.R.R Tolkien. The genre dates back to early 20th century and writers such as Eric Rucker Eddison (1882–1945) but was popularised by Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (published 1954–1955) and C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* series (published 1950–1956). Popularity of the genre has grown exponentially in the five decades since Tolkien and Lewis, not only in literature but also in role-playing games, movies etc. The genre is currently very

popular and has become a part of the so-called ‘mainstream’ in literature and other entertainment, thanks to the motion pictures that have been made of the classics of the genre in the last few years, *Lord of the Rings* and *Narnia* among them, and also the popularity of J.K. Rowlings’ *Harry Potter* series.

Fantasy literature in general shares its roots with the fairytale, but according to Maria Nikolajeva,¹⁰ a scholar of children’s literature, it is difficult to determine when the first actual fantasy novel was published, and that the difference between the fairytale and the fantasy genre is primarily a question of definition. High fantasy in particular has, as Nikolajeva puts it, “inherited the fairy-tale system of characters” and the difference comes in that fantasy characters are not as clearly pure stereotypes as fairytale characters – the hero, for example, can lack heroic qualities or even fail.¹¹ She sees fantasy as a form of literature that is anchored to the post-modern ideas of uncertainty, and mainly a creation of the twentieth century when scientific advancements in areas such as quantum physics have allowed the reader to accept non-natural phenomenon without attributing them merely to fairytale magic.¹² Johanna Sinisalo, a fantasy writer herself, has a similar definition of fantasy literature as she describes it as a more exact form of fairytale. Where in fairytale the characters are nameless heroes and princesses, and the story is set “long time ago in a faraway kingdom”, in fantasy literature places and characters are given names and personalities, creating a fully functional fantasy world for the reader to submerge themselves into. She gives dragons as an example: in fairy tale the dragon is a dangerous beast that does not hold any motivations beyond providing an antagonist to the hero, but the dragon of

¹⁰ Nikolajeva, Maria “Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Post-Modern” <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (13.4. 2005), 139

¹¹ Nikolajeva, 140

¹² Nikolajeva, 140

fantasy literature can have a name and a personality, and can also function as an advisor or a friend to the hero.¹³

Fantasy literature as the post-modern progeny of the fairytale holds a subversive level that the fairy tale lacked, and this subversiveness is an attribute of the genre that is most relevant to my thesis. According to J.R.R. Tolkien, fantasy can be things that are “not only ‘not actually present,’ but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there”¹⁴. This is an attribute of the genre that he sees as an advantage rather than a fault. Rosemary Jackson takes the view even further, describing fantasy not only as description of the unreal, but as an attack against the ‘real’,¹⁵ a genre that “re-combines and inverts the real, but [...] does not escape it [and which] exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real”.¹⁶ In Jackson’s definition of fantasy the most important characteristic is this “refusal of prevailing definitions of the ‘real’ or ‘possible’”, and that fantasy is “based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility”¹⁷.

Fantasy as literature of escapism and subversion has then the potential for commentary on the “primary world” as Tolkien called it. The possibilities of this from the view of feminism and the portrayal of women in fantasy fiction are described by Lucie Armitt as following:

Women are not located at the centre of contemporary culture and society, but are almost entirely defined from the [...] negative perspective of ‘otherness’ or ‘difference’. As such, the need to *escape from* a society with regard to which they already hold an ex-centric position is clearly an irrelevant one.

¹³ Sinisalo, Johanna “Fantasia lajityyppinä ja kirjailijan työvälineenä” ed. Irma Hirsjärvi and Urpo Kovala *Fantasiaan monet maailmat* (Saarijärvi: BJT Kirjastopalvelu, 2004), 14-16

¹⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien ”On Fairy Stories”, *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973)

¹⁵ Rosemary Jackson *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981) 26

¹⁶ Jackson 20

¹⁷ Rosemary Jackson *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), 14

More appropriate perhaps is the need to *escape into* [...] an alternative reality within which the centrality is possible.¹⁸

Jack Zipes, an important scholar in the field of studying fairytales and their effect on society, uses similar words to describe the feminist fairy tale. He sees them as stories that gives a view of the world that has traditionally been left outside fairy tales, giving a voice to those who have been customarily silenced.¹⁹ Feminist fairy tales in the form that Zipes talks about them, are then closer to fantasy literature than traditional fairy tale, post-modern fairy tales, especially when literally rewriting the old fairy tales to call attention to the dated role models of the traditional fairy tales.²⁰

Although fantasy literature with its post-modern heroes and inherent subversive nature as described by Nikolajeva and Jackson, would be expected to have female characters that rise beyond pure stereotypes, this rarely happens outside deliberately feminist fantasy such as the aforementioned feminist fairy tales. This is not, unfortunately, always the case. In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* Jackson leaves some notable authors of high fantasy - including J.R.R. Tolkien - outside her analysis because their works are, in her opinion, closer to romance fiction in their lack of subversion.²¹ Tolkien himself made a distinction between fantasy that is “fantastic” and fantasy that is merely “fanciful”²² and this distinction can be extended to apply to Jackson’s reasoning for leaving out some high fantasy authors. This lack of imagination, as one might call it, in popular fantasy is most clearly seen in the female characters as even in the most fantastic ‘secondary world’ women are usually confined by the norms and expectations of the ‘primary world’ despite the fact that fantasy

¹⁸ Lucie Armitt "Where No Man Has Gone Before" *Where No Man Has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction*, Lucie Armitt, ed. (London: Routledge, 1991)

¹⁹ Zipes, Jack. *Don't Bet on the Prince*. (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), xi

²⁰ Zipes, *Don't Bet on the Prince*, xi-xii

²¹ Jackson. 9

²² J.R.R. Tolkien. "On Fairy Stories."

literature holds the possibility for discarding sexual stereotypes and conventions.

According to Kanerva Eskola,²³ female characters in fantasy literature can appear in different roles, but those roles are mostly narrow stereotypes that function mainly in relation to the (male) protagonist. Women can be innocent “damsels in distress”, powerful witches – both good and evil – or strong warriors, but the characters themselves nevertheless often remain shallow and their power only seemingly theirs.

Fantasy worlds and their potential for subversion can also be seen to be related to Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas about the world of the carnival. The folk carnival is a fantasy world of its own, a world where the rules of the normal world have been abandoned, an “attack against the real” to borrow the words Jackson used to describe fantasy. While it lasts, “there is no life outside it”²⁴ just like as long as the reader or the protagonist of the fantasy novel is ‘in’ the secondary fantasy world, the rules of the ‘real world’ do not apply.

According to Mary Russo the carnival as a historical institution cannot necessarily be called feminist or empowering to women because its abandonment of hierarchies did not generally extend to gender hierarchies²⁵ and because the liberating anarchy of the carnival does not remain when the carnival ends. The world will always revert to the status quo of the patriarchal rule as the “temporary loss of boundaries tends to redefine social frames, and such topsy-turvy or time-out is inevitably set back on course”.²⁶ But within the symbolic carnival, when the outside world does not exist, the female characters can be allowed to reverse the hierarchical structures of the world so that they come out on top. The world of the carnival is also the world of grotesque, and the irregular female body – pregnant, aging, something other than the required norm –

²³ Eskola, Kanerva. “Haltianaiset paljastavissa puvuissaan.” Peili 2/2001.

²⁴ Bakhtin, 37

²⁵ Russo, Mary *The Female Grotesque : Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 60

²⁶ Russo, 58

coded as grotesque, becomes unruly and liberated when in the carnival it is set loose in the public sphere.²⁷

In the Discworld novels, and especially the Lancre books, the element of carnival is strong. Parody in itself is a carnivalesque practise,²⁸ and many of Pratchett's characters fall into the realm of the grotesque and carnivalesque²⁹ but in *Wyrd Sisters* Pratchett also makes a direct reference to carnival traditions. The novel begins with the murder of the King of Lancre that leaves the kingdom in the hands of the murderous Lord and Lady Felmet. The three witches then attempt to restore the rightful heir to the throne, but when the prince refuses the crown, the witches give the kingdom to Lord Felmet's fool Verence.³⁰ The element of reversing the hierarchy is an important element of the carnival, and as the witches put the fool on the throne³¹ in a recreation of the "feast of fools"³² Lancre becomes the land of the carnival where the jester reigns as the king and the women/witches can achieve centrality and are not confined to the role of the Other.

2.2 Stereotypes, Characters and Intertextuality

Richard Dyer, one of the most important scholars in the field of stereotypes and representation in the media, makes a distinction between stereotypes as social types and stereotypes as aesthetic fictional representations. According to him the later are characters defined by immediately recognizable traits that do not allow character

²⁷ Russo, 56

²⁸ Bakhtin, 13-15

²⁹ For example the various non-human characters – dwarves, trolls, werewolves, etc. – in major roles, suggesting a world inhabited by sideshow freaks, an important part of the carnival imagery.

³⁰ Pratchett, Terry *Wyrd Sisters* (Reading: Corgi, 1997/1988), 318

³¹ The witches claim that the fool is the illegitimate son of the king and while the fool and the prince are half-brothers, Granny and Nanny are well aware that it was actually the prince who was the illegitimate son of the fool's father. *Wyrd Sisters*, pp. 329-330

³² A medieval celebration where a jester was elected as the mock king, archbishop etc. Bakhtin, 81

development within the narrative, and refer to features of the “human world”, be they “conceptualised as universal and eternal” (archetypes) or “historically and culturally specific” (social types/stereotypes).³³

Myra MacDonald,³⁴ on the other hand, sees the relationship between reality and stereotypes as a two-way traffic – the stereotypes are reflections of reality, but they also cast their own reflection. According to her, fictional stereotypes create social types, limiting the available role models and representations to one-dimensional and distorted caricatures. Macdonald also points that the stereotypes become particularly harmful when the represented group are already in a disadvantage. When comparing stereotypes of women and men, she points out the imbalance in both the quantity and the quality of representation in media. Not only is there more stereotyping with women than with men, but male stereotypes, even when holding negative connotations (Macdonald uses the example of ‘the macho man’), do not threaten male authority.

The use of stereotypes in Pratchett’s books is a deliberate device. The characters, as well as the settings, storylines, and the Discworld itself are all created from intertextual references. Pratchett uses intertextuality as the centre of the construction of his world and the reader is often expected to be able to recognise the original source of the intertextual references in order to enjoy or understand the text. This can be seen most clearly when comparing Pratchett’s children’s books to those written for adults – the former are more straight-forward, holding far less literary allusions and popular culture references as the latter. Pratchett’s use of intertextuality ranges from using characters and storylines borrowed directly from other works to small jokes that can only be picked up by a knowledgeable reader. He then uses this

³³ Richard Dyer *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*, 12-13

³⁴ Macdonald, Myra *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (Bristol: Arnold, 1995), 13

knowledge the reader has of the original text(s) for humour and social commentary by playing against the reader's expectations.

Returning to stereotypes, the opposite of a stereotype, according to Dyer, is the novelistic character, which he describes as being

defined by a multiplicity of traits that are only gradually revealed to us through the course of the narrative, a narrative which is hinged on the growth or development of the character and is thus centred upon the latter in her or his unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world.³⁵

According to Dyer, stereotypes "always carry within their very representation an implicit narrative"³⁶, an idea taken further by Jo Spence³⁷ who argues that the diverse images of women all carry the same narrative pattern that has "a 'beginning' and a 'middle' (birth, childhood, marriage, family, life) but [. . .] only minimal representation of its 'end', of growing old and dying." Narrative as a process of selecting some events and omitting others, the "showing or telling of [the] events and the mode selected for that to take place",³⁸ as Paul Cobley describes it, is then instrumental in the creation of stereotypes in fiction. Stereotypes feed the narrative, which in return feeds the stereotypes.

When analysing the Discworld books, the question of the relationship between narrative and stereotypes is particularly important because of Pratchett's use of intertextual references for both humour and social commentary. Pratchett himself has often called Discworld a "world and a mirror of worlds"³⁹ and the stereotypes and narrative conventions are not only used as a literary device, but are actually a part of the narrative reality as shown by the following excerpt from *Witches Abroad*:

³⁵ Dyer, 13

³⁶ Dyer, 15

³⁷ Spence, Jo "What Do People Do All Day? Class and Gender in Images of Women" Screen Education 29

³⁸ Cobley, Paul *Narrative*, 6-7

³⁹ For example, in the foreword for *The Last Continent* (Pratchett, 1998)

People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around. [...] Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper.⁴⁰

The quotation above is a description of a recurring theme in the Discworld books, and the explanation Pratchett gives to the recurring stereotypes. “Narrative causality”⁴¹, as Pratchett calls it, refers to the narrative made visible so that even the characters of the books acknowledge their place and role in the story. The entire book *Witches Abroad* is based on this theme, dealing with characters fighting against their assigned roles within the story when, in a rewrite of *Cinderella* (and also several other well-known fairytales), the three witches battle a fairy godmother to make sure that the orphaned kitchen maid does not have to marry the (frog) prince.

The basic idea of ‘narrative causality’ is the opposite of what Dyer wrote about novelistic characters – characters shaping the narrative versus narrative shaping the characters. Pratchett’s characters could then be seen to exist somewhere between the stereo/archetype and the novelistic character. They begin as stereotypes defined by their most obvious characteristics and functions – maiden/sexuality, mother/motherhood, crone/madness – but gain the “unique individuality”⁴² which Dyer mentioned as a property of a novelistic character, and ascend the role as a mere signifier to the real world when Pratchett uses the freedom of the fantasy genre to allow the characters be aware of their roles and functions in the story and rebel against them.

‘Narrative causality’ can also be seen as what Cobley calls a “rupturing effect”, a postmodernist literary device that calls attention to the narration rather than

⁴⁰ Terry Pratchett *Witches Abroad* (Reading: Corgi, 1992/1991), 8

⁴¹ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 8

⁴² Dyer, 15

fading it away.⁴³ Pratchett's use of footnotes to comment on the narrative is a similar rupturing device. This postmodernist visible narration is then a very important part of his writing style and can also be seen in his use of intertextuality, and stereotypes which the reader is expected to recognise as stereotypes.

3. Witches

3.1. The Midwife in the Gingerbread Cottage

According to the folklorist Tristram Potter Coffin, although the word *witch* can refer to both men and women, and to people with both benign and malicious supernatural powers, the popular usage refers to evil women.⁴⁴ In the case of witches these two words – evil and woman – have sometimes been seen as more or less synonymous. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, a 15th century “witch-hunt manual”⁴⁵ declared women evil by default, and was supported by some medieval religious thinkers with their belief that all humans would be resurrected as men.⁴⁶ According to Mary Ellman, the stereotypical female characteristics are formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality and compliancy,⁴⁷ characteristics that do not so much describe the ideal woman as the *idea* of a woman with both her faults and virtues.

⁴³ Cobley, 172

⁴⁴ Tristram Potter Coffin *The Female Hero in Folklore and Legend* (New York: Quokka Book, 1978) 143.

⁴⁵ *Malleus Maleficarum* was written by the 15th Century German Dominican inquisitor, the demonologist and witch hunter Heinrich Kramer and is by far the best known of the witch hunt manuals. It is distinguished from the other demonologies by its obsessive hatred of women and sex, which is why it is often mentioned when discussing witch hunts in relation to misogyny and the oppression of women. There is some controversy on how influential *Malleus Maleficarum* truly was in the actual witch trials, but it has without a doubt had a definite influence on the image of witchcraft as a ‘women’s sin’.

Burns, William E.: *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: An Encyclopedia* (Westport (Conn.): Greenwood Press, 2003) 158-160

⁴⁶ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English *Witches, Midwives & Nurses: The History of Women Healers* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976) 26.

⁴⁷ Mary Ellman *Thinking About Women* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968) 74-137.

The crimes women were accused of in the witch-hunts – sexuality, magical powers (often meaning medical and obstetrical skills⁴⁸), conspiring not only with the Devil but also with other women⁴⁹ - are crimes against these assumed characteristics. Activeness instead of passivity, rebellion instead of compliancy; acts of “feminine trouble-stirring”, which, according to Coffin,⁵⁰ is a connotation the word ‘witch’ carries.

The witch as the evil counterpart of the ideal woman is something that Sarah M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss when looking at images of women in literature written by men. The witch, or the monstrous woman, is the opposite of the image of woman as the ethereal angel, pure saintly and eternal, the wicked stepmother hunting the innocent Snow White. Woman as the angel is compliant, ethereal, eternal and most of all pure, while the witch encompasses what the anthropologist Sherry Ortner, as quoted by Gilbert and Grubar, calls “subversive feminine symbols”⁵¹ such as castrating mother and menstrual pollution.⁵²

The witch in literature is then just as much an agent of evil as she was in *Malleus Maleficarum* – active and rebellious, in league with Satan and escaping her confinement with her flying broom. This trouble-stirring woman can, however, be seen in a positive light as a type of “unruly woman”, a character described by Kathleen Rowe as someone who

is willing to offend and be offensive. [...] her sexuality is neither evil and uncontrollable [...] nor sanctified and denied like that of the virgin/madonna. [...] the unruly woman often enjoys a reprieve from [...] fates that often seem inevitable to women under patriarchy, because her home is comedy and the

⁴⁸ The question of connection between midwifery and witchcraft in the witch-hunts is one of controversy. *Malleus Maleficarum* equates midwifery with witchcraft, and some feminist scholars such as Ehrenreich and English see the midwives as victims of patriarchal institutions, persecuted as witches because of their profession. According to Burns (pp. 199-200), however, the blatant misogyny of *Malleus Maleficarum* was an exception among demonologies and midwifery was not only a respected profession for a woman, but that midwives were more often among the witch hunters than accused witches.

⁴⁹ Ehrenreich and English, 26-28.

⁵⁰ Coffin, 143.

⁵¹ Gilbert and Gubar, 19

⁵² Gilbert, Sarah M. and Susan Gubar *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 19-20, 28-29

carnivalesque, the realm of fantasy and inversion where, for a time at least, the ordinary world can be stood on its head.⁵³

The unruly woman creates disorder by dominating men and refusing to become invisible, by being a spectacle and refusing to adhere to the rules and taboos of the patriarchal society.⁵⁴ Although the Discworld series is nominally set in a world that resembles medieval Europe, the fantasy genre allows Discworld to become the “home of comedy” and “realm of fantasy and inversion”⁵⁵, where the witches are shown neither as victims nor as inherently evil, but as heroes who draw their power from their unruliness.

An edge witch is one who makes her living on the edges, in that moment when boundary conditions apply – when life and death, light and dark, good and evil and, most dangerously of all, today and tomorrow.⁵⁶

This passage, describing Nanny Ogg but applying also to the other witch characters, mirrors the idea of the unruly woman, a figure of ambivalence, associated with thresholds, borders and margins,⁵⁷ just as the witch is a character on the edge of ‘good’ womanhood, trapped between the images of the healer and the midwife, and the crone who bakes children in her oven. The witch is ambivalent because although the strongest connotation of witch is the evil woman, it does not mean that the other connotations do not exist. Pratchett's witches mainly draw inspiration from four different images or traditions of witches. The first one is the traditional wicked witch of fairytales and stories - the old crone who lives in the gingerbread cottage and flies on a broomstick casting curses on people. The second is the image of the witch as an evil woman – a

⁵³ Rowe, Kathleen, 10-11.

⁵⁴ Rowe, Kathleen, 31.

⁵⁵ Rowe, Kathleen, 11

⁵⁶ Pratchett *Thief of Time*, 19

⁵⁷ Rowe, Kathleen, 31.

bride of Satan - as described in *Malleus Maleficarum*. The third one is the 'real' witch, the midwife and the healer whose magic comes not from any supernatural source but from the knowledge of herbs and old healing traditions, and the fourth is the 'modern' witch of the Wicca and neopagan religions, or the practitioner of trendy and commercialised occultism.

In creating the witch characters, Pratchett then draws from both the historical and modern image of witches and witchcraft, and the literary tradition, parodying all sides of the contradicting image of the witch from the brides of Satan to the old crone living in the gingerbread cottage. In addition, although much of the way the witches are represented in the Discworld novels could be seen as feminist – turning the negative, othered female stereotypes into positively portrayed protagonists – Pratchett does not hesitate to ridicule the neo-pagan/wiccan ideal of witchcraft as female empowerment and a celebration of sisterhood as well.

The main trinity of witches – Magrat Garlick as the maiden, Nanny Ogg as the mother and Granny Weatherwax as the crone - are first introduced in *Wyrd Sisters*, a novel that borrows it's name from the description of the three witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*⁵⁸. Pratchett's three witches are the Discworld equivalent of Macbeth's witches, and by extension the Fates⁵⁹, in their way controlling the fates of the people of Lancre.

Witches generally act as layers-out of the dead as well as mid-wives; there were plenty of people in Lancre for whom Nanny Ogg's face had been the first and last thing they'd ever seen [...]⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The entire book is a parody of *Macbeth*, only with the three witches as the heroes working to remove Lord and Lady Felmet – the Discworld version of Macbeth and his wife – from the throne.

⁵⁹ Personification of the destiny in Greek mythology, the Fates, or the Moirae are three women who control the "thread of life" deciding on the birth and death of the mortals.

⁶⁰ Pratchett, Terry *Lords and Ladies* (Reading: Corgi, 1997/1992), 48

They are midwives, healers and layers-out of the dead, but with the power to decide who lives and who dies not only through their medical skills, but also by having enough power to bargain with supernatural powers greater than themselves. Their unruliness can be seen in the way they defy even the narrative. “When shall we three meet again” asks one of them on the first page of the *Wyrd Sisters* echoing the meeting of the three witches in *Macbeth*, only to be answered with “Well, I can do next Thursday rather than the ominous “in thunder lightning or in rain” which the knowledgeable reader would expect. Later in the book the witches attend the performance of play that has been written about the events in the novel, and protest being represented as evil witches in scene which, although shown only through the witches’ comments, appears to be a direct loan from *Macbeth*.⁶¹

3.2 Granny Weatherwax – The Crone

*In a cottage deep in the forest lived the Wicked Old Witch... It was a cottage out of the nastier kind of fairy tale.*⁶²

This is how Granny⁶³ Weatherwax’s cottage is described through the eyes of Tiffany the witch’s apprentice, and it summarizes the stereotypical level of Granny’s character as well. She is the wicked witch living alone in the forest, “an old woman with a lined face and rough hands in a dress as black as night”⁶⁴ who inhabits a cottage that is not made out of ginger bread but could be. Granny Weatherwax is the one character where

⁶¹ For example, at one point Nanny Ogg protests the play with “I never shipwrecked anybody! [...] They just said they shipwreck people! I never did!””, referring to Act 1, Scene 3 of *Macbeth*. The play within the book can also be seen as a reference to Shakespeare distorting history in his play Richard III for the sake of entertainment and to appease the current rule.

⁶² Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky*, 264

⁶³ Granny and Nanny are both honorifics rather than names and refer to their status as witches, not as women (Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky*, 225)

⁶⁴ Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky*, 213

Pratchett takes most advantage of the stereotype of the fairy tale witch and then inverts it, turning the traditional antagonist into a mentor and a hero.

Granny is one of the most powerful characters not only in the Lancre witch books, but in all of the Discworld. Her magical (mental) powers are shown to grow exponentially as the series progresses – in the beginning she is presented as a simple midwife with some magical skill such as the ability to see through the eyes of animals. Nevertheless, already by the end of the first book she is battling with the leader of the wizards and eventually cannot be hurt by neither blades nor fire, while even the land and the animals come to her when they need help. She defeats vampires and the Queen of Elves and faces death more than once, always finding her way back among the living, sometimes even bargaining with Death himself for the life of someone else. By *Carpe Jugulum* she has become an almost superhuman character:

'You grab a sharp sword by the blade, you get hurt. World'd be a terrible place if people forgot that.'
 'You weren't hurt.
 'Not my fault, I didn't have time.'⁶⁵

The above passage demonstrates the extent of Granny's unruliness, the refusal to adhere even to the laws of nature. Her role in the coven may be that of the crone, but her abilities as a witch allow her to ascend beyond the weakness associated with the role.

Nevertheless, Granny is very obviously still a crone character. After *Equal Rites* Granny - who began as a midwife and an herb woman associated with birth and life - becomes more and more associated with death as the role of the mother and the midwife shifts to Nanny and Granny becomes more strongly the crone. In *Carpe Jugulum* the young witch Agnes Nitt comments how "people generally called Nanny out for the births and Granny for the deaths", and in the few cases after *Equal Rites*

⁶⁵ Pratchett, Terry *Maskerade*, (Reading: Corgi, 1996/1995), 374

when Granny acts as a midwife, she is there because of her familiarity with death rather than with birthing. In *Maskerade*⁶⁶ she bargains with Death for the life of a little child, making him take a cow's life instead of the child's, and again in *Carpe Jugulum* Death lets her decide whether it should be the child who dies in a difficult birth or the mother.⁶⁷

Granny's greatest skill from the beginning has been her ability to 'borrow', to leave her body and to ride in the mind of an animal, using it as her eyes and ears, again making the connection between the witch and the land and nature. In *Lord and Ladies* she becomes a swarm of bees and in *Carpe Jugulum* she puts herself into a group of vampires, and where the other witches, as discussed later chapters, find themselves in becoming one with the land, for Granny it means the danger of losing herself. As Granny's apprentice Tiffany considers her:

[I]t must be hard, being the best. You're not allowed to stop. You can only be beaten, and you're too proud to ever lose. Pride! You've turned it into a terrible strength, but it eats away at you. Are you afraid to laugh in case you hear an early cackle.?⁶⁸

The question of identity and losing it comes forward often in relation with Granny. It is both related to both the price of her power and the root of it.

In *Witches Abroad*, Granny is forced to take a stand against her own sister, Lily Weatherwax or Lady Lilith⁶⁹ who, in a reversal of roles, is an evil fairy godmother acting as the antagonist to Granny's good witch. The theme of getting what one needs instead of what one wants is a recurrent one in Pratchett's books and is revisited here when the fairy godmother attempts to marry the servant girl to a prince against her will

⁶⁶ Pratchett, *Maskerade*, 97-102

⁶⁷ The passage is discussed in briefly later in the "Mothers" section of the thesis.

⁶⁸ Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky* 273

⁶⁹ The name Lilith connects Lily Weatherwax to the Lilith of apocryphal Jewish lore, Adam's first wife who refused to submit to her husband and joined the demons instead, and who in legends is often shown as a child-eating demon or the queen of the succubi.

in a twisted version of Cinderella. More importantly, the book is filled with references to mirrors. Lady Lilith has a hall of mirrors from where she can see through any mirror anywhere she wants. It is among these mirrors that Lilith tells Granny that they are alike, and that “There isn’t a deed I’ve done that you haven’t contemplated”.⁷⁰ Granny is not Lilith’s twin, though, but rather her mirror image - as her appearing in mirrors also seems to suggest – exactly the same but also completely the opposite.

Granny recognizing herself in the mirrors reflects the Lacanian idea of a mirror stage,⁷¹ where identity is first discovered as mirage-like reflections and therefore based on a false, idealised, idea of self. This self is in conflict with the true self that can then never be achieved because it cannot be found in these reflections.⁷² Granny has been seeing her reflected identity in the mirrors, yet the woman in the mirror is not she but Lilith, the idealised version of Granny, the beautiful fairy godmother who is nevertheless far crueler than Granny is. Granny breaks free from the endless circle of looking for identity in the reflections when she shatters one of Lilith mirrors, trapping both herself and her sister inside the reflection where they are told they can find the way out only by finding the one reflection that is real. While Lilith can only run “through the endless reflections”,⁷³ Granny knows the correct answer without having to even think:

Granny looked at herself.
'This one,' she said.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Pratchett *Witches Abroad*, 271

⁷¹ The stage where child begins to recognize their own image in the mirror and, thanks to the reflections in the mirror and in the eyes of other people, begin to form their own identity as an entity that is separate from the mother.

⁷² Lacan, Jacques *Ecrits: A Selection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 1-7

⁷³ Pratchett *Witches Abroad*, 278.

⁷⁴ Pratchett *Witches Abroad*, 281.

Despite her ambiguity, Granny remains the unchallenged hero of the witch books. She can act as the wise woman, or the mentor character for the other witches such as Tiffany, but she always remains at the centre of the story, the semi-messianic character who sacrifices herself and then becomes more and more powerful every time she is beaten down and resurrected again.

Granny's unruliness is in her position on the edge, balancing between life and death, sanity and madness, good and evil. It is also a question of choice, choosing between good and evil, of having power but choosing not to use it, which makes her associated with edges. Unlike the other witches, she was not chosen to become a witch, but chose the role herself.⁷⁵ The witch can be seen as the symbol of unruliness, of the woman who refuses to avoid making a spectacle of herself by containing her unruliness and grotesqueness, but in Granny's case it is not a question of being unable to control herself, her body, her appetites, but by choosing to make a spectacle of herself and using that in her advantage.⁷⁶

3.3. Nanny Ogg – The Mother

Nanny is different from Pratchett's other main witches in the respect that she is more of a supportive character than the protagonist, without major storylines of her own. Nanny's is mainly a 'comic relief character' whose contribution to the story is her unruliness, and her function to make a spectacle of herself, an act that Russo calls a feminine danger.⁷⁷ As will be discussed later in the thesis, all the witches in Discworld

⁷⁵ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 33

⁷⁶ It is often mentioned in the books that large part of Granny's power comes not from her magical skills, though they are also formidable, but from her performance as a witch. She does not need to resort to magic if the "show" she gives is impressive enough for people to believe that she has used magic even when she has not.

⁷⁷ Russo, 53

books hold a strong connection to earth and nature, but unlike Granny, whose main power – the ability to travel in the minds of animals – connects her with nature on a spiritual level, Nanny's connection to the earth is on a material level.

In *Lords and Ladies*,⁷⁸ Nanny takes her lover Casanunda to a burial mound that is shaped like a phallus, a holy place which, according to Nanny, was “never intended as a women’s place”⁷⁹ and that the men of the family used it to perform rituals that were forbidden to women. Nevertheless, Nanny admits of having visited the place in secret often like her female ancestors before her, and suggests that unbeknownst to men, the place is actually used by women for their own rituals.⁸⁰ The mound is also decorated with runes Nanny calls Ogham, and later it is revealed that the line of Oggs is a maternal one,⁸¹ emasculating the phallic image when Nanny embraces the active (masculine) sexuality it represents rather than is intimidated by it.⁸² Later she corrupts this place of masculine power by smuggling in a horseshoe – iron being poisonous to the elves who inhabit the mound - the shape of which suggests a vessel and, by extension, the uterus, making it a feminine symbol.

Of all of Pratchett’s witches, Nanny is the one most closely tied to the grotesque. Bakhtin uses a figurine of pregnant hags, senile and laughing, as a symbol of the grotesque body, and although Nanny is neither pregnant nor senile, her age and her role as the mother of the coven, makes her easy to associate with Bakhtin’s figurines. Bakhtin speaks of “pregnant death, a death that gives birth”⁸³ and Nanny as the

⁷⁸ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 298, 303-305

⁷⁹ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 305

⁸⁰ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 298, 305

⁸¹ In *Thief of Time* a character comments on the fact that Nanny maintains her maiden name Ogg throughout her several marriages, prompting another character to explain this with “Witches are matrilineal [...] They find it much easier to change men than to change names.” (p.22)

⁸² The burial mound is a door to the realm of the King of Elves, a character whose description suggests that he has been modelled after Pan figure of Greek mythology, a symbol of masculine sexuality and virility, and also Oberon from William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (several scenes in *Lords and Ladies* are a parody of the play).

⁸³ Bakhtin, 25

midwife, the mother and the sexual crone, reflects this idea of new life (motherhood/birth) combined with death (old age) being a typical image of the grotesque. Looking at Nanny's appearance, she is not only fat but also wrinkle-faced and toothless, and the excessiveness of her body and behaviour is often described explicitly:

[...]time had left her with a body that could only be called comfortable and a face like Mr Grape the Happy Raisin.⁸⁴

It was a large and experienced bosom, and not one that was subject to restraint.⁸⁵

[Her] face became a mass of cheerful horizontal lines when she laughed, and Nanny Ogg laughed a lot.⁸⁶

[...]Nanny Ogg's voyages on the sea of intersexual dalliance had gone rather further than twice around the lighthouse [...]⁸⁷

She laughs, eats and talks in excess, refuses to fade into the background, and adjust to the rules of the society, embodying the spirit of the carnivalesque. Nanny's explicit sexuality, most obviously brought forward in her courtship with the dwarf Casanunda,⁸⁸ also connects her with the grotesque and the pregnant hags.

Bakhtin's vision of the pregnant hags may have centred around the grotesque image of their bodies, but Rowe sees the characters differently. In her opinion the laughter of the hags is a scene of unruly women deliberately making a spectacle of themselves.⁸⁹ The “unruly woman” celebrates the grotesque, unwilling to suppress her appetites and when she laughs, she is an active subject, not a passive object and simply

⁸⁴ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 219

⁸⁵ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 230

⁸⁶ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 245

⁸⁷ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 235

⁸⁸ Discussed further in chapter 4.2

⁸⁹ Rowe, Kathleen, 2

the ‘butt of the joke’.⁹⁰ The same applies to Nanny – the reader may be laughing at Nanny’s vulgarity, but within the story she is laughing back at the fact that the combination of an old woman and sex can be found in any way humorous or unnatural.

Rowe sees this refusal to control oneself as a positive characteristic of the unruly woman, but Ellman has an opposing view, listing materiality - manifesting as a strong appetite for any kinds of pleasures - as a stereotypical female characteristic, one that reduces women to “brain-damaged children, entirely absorbed in indiscriminate sensory impressions”⁹¹. But if appetite for sensory impressions, sexual or otherwise, is a negative characteristic, one seen to be a part of woman’s nature, but a part that should be contained (as seen again in the witch-hunts with women being accused of having sexual pleasure⁹²), then in her unwillingness to contain it the unruly woman – Nanny – acts out her unruliness.

Nanny’s unruliness is not just a result of Pratchett making use of the stereotype of the fat unruly woman⁹³ as can be seen when comparing her with the other ‘fat ladies’ who have major roles in the Discworld series. Agnes Nitt, who will be discussed more in chapter 3.3. is a shy teenage girl with an identity problem, lacking Nanny’s confidence and her aversion to hierarchies and the Establishment, although there is a suggestion in the text that Agnes might in later books grow to become more like Nanny. Lady Sybil is a character in the City Watch subseries, and even though Sybil’s physical size is described just as explicitly as Nanny’s, Sybil’s, like Agnes’ excessiveness is limited to their appearances. They are ‘fat ladies’ like Nanny, but without Nanny’s ‘appetite’ – Sybil is more about control than unruliness. She is what might be called a proper lady, dutifully obeying and enforcing the rules of the society:

⁹⁰ Rowe, Kathleen, 31.

⁹¹ Ellman, 98

⁹² Ehrenreich and English, 27.

⁹³ Examples of this would be the Rowe’s two main subjects in *The Unruly Woman*, Miss Piggy, a puppet in the American children’s variety show *The Muppet Show* and the American comedian Roseanne Barr.

an aging virgin who is rescued at the cusp of spinsterhood in *Men at Arms* when she marries the book's protagonist and becomes a wife and a mother. She has some similarities with Nanny – both can yield power over other people by using the force of their personality – but Sybil's power is diminished by the fact that she is only a ‘daddy's girl’ who lives in a mansion she inherited from her father, living on his money, and later signs out her property and her political power to the care of her husband. In some respect it could be seen as a class difference – Sybil's upper class status forbidding her to surrender to the (folk culture) spectacle of the carnival and to cut free from the norms of the patriarchal society.

3.4. Magrat Garlick and Agnes Nitt – The Maidens

Magrat Garlick, the youngest original member of Granny Weatherwax's coven is introduced in *Wyrd Sisters* as the maiden and the lowest ranking one of the three witches. She is described as a young woman with “a slightly watery-eyed expression of hopeless goodwill wedged between a body like a maypole and hair like a haystack after a gale.”⁹⁴ She is clumsy, kind-hearted and more of a healer and an herb woman than a fairytale witch with supernatural powers.

The books *Wyrd Sisters*, *Lord and Ladies* and *Carpe Jugulum* form an arc that depicts Magrat's transformation from an insecure young maiden to a powerful witch/healer (and mother). Pratchett's ‘maiden witches’, Magrat included, are often shown as practitioners of a parody of modern (commercialised) occultism, described as being nothing but “ooh-jar [sic] boards and cards and wearing black gloves with no

⁹⁴ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 22.

fingers to ‘em and paddlin’ with the occult”⁹⁵. Surface and glamour instead of ‘real’ witchcraft, which in Pratchett’s world appears to be in large part simply life experience. Magrat discards her occult jewellery when she marries a king and, in an act of defiance against the older witches, chooses marriage over witchcraft.⁹⁶ Ellman speaks of passivity as a property of women that is simultaneously assumed to be a natural part of them, and at the same time not condoned, with childbearing being a preferred activity.⁹⁷ Likewise Magrat, when she stops being a witch, loses her ability to do anything, and is confined to a life where she is only required to exist and to ensure the royal succession.

Magrat is roused from her passivity when the Queen of Elves threatens to steal her husband-to-be in order to take over the kingdom and to become the queen herself. Magrat puts on the armour of an ancient warrior queen Ynci⁹⁸ the Short-Tempered (unaware that the queen never existed and that the armour is simply decorative) and challenges the Elf Queen believing to be under the possession of the warrior’s spirit.⁹⁹ With the armour and the helmet of Queen Ynci nothing but fakes, the spirit of the warrior queen that takes over Magrat is her own self, rebelling against the court life that allows her only pastimes such as embroidery and interior decorating – the kind of occupations which, according to Ellman¹⁰⁰, are passive in their lack of meaning. By taking on the role of the warrior queen, Magrat is freed from her inability to act and is restored of her status as a witch when she battles the Elf Queen in an attempt to rescue her husband and her land from slavery.

In marrying the King Magrat takes on the role of mother, first symbolically as the mother of the kingdom and some time later a mother of a small daughter, and

⁹⁵ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 86.

⁹⁶ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 34-37.

⁹⁷ Ellman, 78-82.

⁹⁸ Ynci, read backwards, appears to be a reference to the Iceni tribe, suggesting – together with the actual description of Queen Ynci - that Magrat is channelling the spirit of the Discworld equivalent of Boadicea.

⁹⁹ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 339-349.

¹⁰⁰ Ellman, 81

leaves behind the role of the maiden. Still, even as a (witch/warrior) queen and a mother, in the eyes of the other witches she has nevertheless “settled for the second prize”¹⁰¹ by choosing a husband over a career in witchcraft.

When Magrat becomes a wife and a mother, another young witch called Agnes Nitt takes her place in the coven. I will not be discussing Agnes’ character as extensively as that of the other three major witches, but she merits a mention as she very much takes Magrat’s place in the later Lancre witch books and because she has an important role in the deconstruction of the maiden-mother-crone trinity in *Carpe Jugulum*. Agnes is a teenage girl who is introduced already in *Lord and Ladies* as a member of a coven of young witches who, with the help of the Queen of the Elves, try to prove themselves as greater witches than Granny Weatherwax. Agnes, like all of Pratchett’s witches, is described as not being within the modern beauty norms, but because of her young age still aspiring to them:

[she] wore a black hat with a veil too, because Diamanda [the leader of the coven] did. Both of them were seventeen. And she wished she was naturally skinny, like Diamanda, but if you can’t be skinny you can at least look unhealthy. So she wore so much thick white make-up in order to conceal her naturally rosy complexion that if she turned around suddenly her face would probably end up on the back of her head.¹⁰²

It is made clear in the narration that Agnes, like Nanny, is fat, yet unlike with Nanny, her excessiveness is limited to her size, and she is described to be “thoughtful and shy, as if trying to reduce the amount of world she took up”¹⁰³. Just like Lady Sybil who was briefly discussed in the previous chapter, Agnes’s character also seems to lack the unruliness of Nanny, even though it is suggested by appearance. She is a fat lady, but the excessiveness of her body is more connected with maintaining control than losing it,

¹⁰¹ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 20.

¹⁰² Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 78

¹⁰³ Pratchett, *Maskerade*, 36

and as a young girl, the fertility her body shape suggests is not grotesque like Nanny's but natural¹⁰⁴ - the other witches, are shown to approve Agnes' figure and Nanny sees her as "quite good-looking in an expansive kind of way [...] a fine figure of typical young Lancre womanhood"¹⁰⁵.

Agnes does, however, have the anarchist spirit of the carnival in her, it is only manifest quite differently than in Nanny. She has an alter ego called Perdita, a secondary personality she creates to act as a "repository for all those thoughts that Agnes couldn't think on account of her wonderful personality"¹⁰⁶. Perdita who is described to be the thin girl within the fat girl waiting to be let out¹⁰⁷ is the girl Agnes wishes to be, the non-irregular, non-grotesque body trapped inside the grotesque. Agnes behaves like a fat girl is expected to behave; quiet and unnoticeable, trying to reduce her size so as not to take space from others. Perdita is the unruliness she tries to suppress but which – when set loose – allows her to rebel against the part of her personality that insists that she must comply to society's rules and expectations.

4. Mothers

4.1. The Ubiquitous Invisible Mother

The mother is perhaps the most important of the female stereotypes - she is everywhere, as E. Ann Kaplan in her study about the representation of the mother in western popular culture and melodrama states, but at the same time ignored. Motherhood is the role

¹⁰⁴ Lady Sybil's fatness is similarly coded as positively maternal and fertile - in *The Fifth Element* (p. 419) she describes herself as having been "bred for breeding" – unlike Nanny's who, being much older than both Sybil and Agnes, is coded as grotesque with her aging yet sexually charged and fat body.

¹⁰⁵ Pratchett, *Maskerade*, 36

¹⁰⁶ Pratchett, *Maskerade*, 40-41

¹⁰⁷ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 101

women are traditionally expected to assume, with the need to nurture being the one quality that is perhaps most often associated with women. Yet in cultural imagery the mother herself becomes the Other while the attention is focused on the child.¹⁰⁸ Kaplan uses as examples scenes from films where at birth scenes the mother is forgotten when the attention of the father, the midwife and the viewer are focused on the child.¹⁰⁹ In fairy-tale tradition, mothers are often either absent or evil,¹¹⁰ but nevertheless a woman's jurisdiction is still her home even if she is the active hero of the story, and her reward is a husband who can, in compliance of the heterosexual imperative, provide her with motherhood.¹¹¹

Despite the invisible ubiquitousness of the mother, the representation of mothers is not a simple issue. According to Kaplan, there is no single description or definition of mother, and the different representations contradict each other in their many-sidedness and multiplicity. The idea of 'the mother' is born from four distinctly different yet ultimately related discursive levels: the historical mother as the institutional role that girls are socialised to become, the psychoanalytic mother of the unconscious, the fictional representations of mother that draw from the historical and psychoanalytical mothers, and the real mother of the real world who exists outside the discourse and who is, according to Kaplan, "ultimately non-representable".¹¹² The image of a mother – be it the 'real' mother or the good mother – changes not only from age to age, but every age has several overlapping ideas of motherhood.¹¹³ In the representation of mothers in popular culture since the 1970 onwards, for example,

¹⁰⁸ Kaplan, E. Ann *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3-5

¹⁰⁹ Kaplan, 3-5.

¹¹⁰ The good mother dying and being replaced by the evil stepmother is a common plot that can be found in stories such as Cinderella.

Rowe, Karen E., 212

¹¹¹ Zipes, Jack *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (New York : Routledge, 1991), 57

¹¹² Kaplan, 6-7

¹¹³ Kaplan, 19

Kaplan sees the different representations being both a case of the old images being revisited but also new images being created, with the image of the sexual mother who also has her own career being one that is still mostly absent.¹¹⁴

My interest lies in the third level of Kaplan's mother discourse, in the fictional representations, because Pratchett's characters – including mothers – are mostly created from intertextual references to the fictional mother-stereotypes of popular texts. When looking solely at fictional representations of mothers,¹¹⁵ Kaplan sees the same complementary yet contradictory paradigms of womanhood, the “angel” and the “witch”, also appear in the popular imagery of motherhood. This character is a derivation of the Victorian idea of an ideal woman, “the Angel in the House” – a term dating back to a poem by the same name published by Coventry Patmore in 1863. This type of character is later described by Virginia Woolf as following:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it--in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all--I need not say it---she was pure.¹¹⁶

This ideal, angelic mother, the “maternal sacrifice paradigm”¹¹⁷, is a character-type Ellman also mentions, calling it the maternal ideal, and describing it as a mother who lives for her children, but does not bind them and remains passive even while nurturing them, living not only for them, but also through them.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Kaplan, 181, 183

¹¹⁵ It should be noted that, according to Myra McDonald (as discussed in chapter 2.2.), fictional representations, in this case the fictional mother, do not exist in a vacuum, and so the fictional mother is affected by the other mother discourses and in return has its own effect on the institute of motherhood and ultimately the “real mother” as well, through the creation of role models.

¹¹⁶ Woolf, Virginia “Professions for Women” (1931)

¹¹⁷ Kaplan, 77

¹¹⁸ Ellman, 131.

The witchlike “phallic mother”¹¹⁹ represents the negative side of the sacrificial mother and the power mother holds over her children as the overpowering, almost monstrous figure who also lives through her children, but in a way that binds them to her power. In both images motherhood is shown as “suffering and self-sacrifice in the service of a duty”, but according to Kaplan by the end of the 20th century motherhood has been reified as a fulfilment of womanhood rather than a duty.¹²⁰ So while motherhood is no longer the only role available for women (whore and virgin/spinster having previously been the negative alternatives),¹²¹ it is still an important one and its presence or lack in a female character is often one of the most obvious characteristics.

In the Discworld novels, motherhood is not a central theme as such. Two of the three witches are/become mothers in some point of the series, but it is made clear that when being forced to choose between identifying as a mother and identifying as a witch, the characters choose witchcraft. The mother-stereotypes are present, however, and when the characters are shown in relation to these stereotypes, they are the focus of the text rather than the children (be they real or metaphorical). Parenthood is also shown as a purely feminine area of life with the fathers mostly absent, powerless or ignored. All of Nanny’s husbands are dead, and her youngest son is strongly hinted to be illegitimate,¹²² further emphasising the point that the mother is more important than the father. The same theme continues in a passage in *Carpe Jugulum* where, while helping in a difficult childbirth, Granny is forced to choose between the life of the

¹¹⁹ Kaplan, 78

¹²⁰ Kaplan, 194

¹²¹ Kaplan, 183

¹²² When being asked about his father, Nanny’s youngest son Shawn says that his father has been dead for thirty years when Shawn himself is much younger than that.
Pratchett, *Lord and Ladies*, 200

mother and the life of the child, and refuses to hear the father's opinion on the matter before making her decision:

'I'd getter go and put it to John Ivy, then,' she [the midwife] said.
 [. . .]
 'He's no part of this,' she [Granny] said.
 'But after all, he is the-'
 'He's no part in this.'¹²³

Granny chooses to save the mother because the mother is young and still capable of childbearing, and because the father would not be able to raise the child and manage the farm alone.¹²⁴ The father's opinion is insignificant and his role in the child's birth is completely ignored when Granny does not even allow the midwife to mention the word 'father'.

4.2. The Monstrous Mother

The monstrous phallic mother is the perverted version of the angelic maternal ideal of a passive yet nurturing mother who dotes over her children, with no other ambition but to take care of them. Kaplan,¹²⁵ summarizing Karen Horney's study about maternal narcissism, describes mother-daughter and mother-son relationships where the mother suffocates the child with obsessive over-protectiveness toward the son, or by domineering the daughter (especially by disapproving the daughter's sexual interests). If the 'good mother' in her mothering is unobtrusive, the evil, monstrous mother

¹²³ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 36

¹²⁴ Lancre is modeled after the feudal society of England of the middle ages – or more precisely the popular image of England of that era rather than the historically accurate image - but the question of children and childhood is mostly shown from a modern perspective. Children are generally treated by the adult characters with affection, and are in many cases even doted on, and the childbirth scene in *Carpe Jugulum* is one of the very few instances in the series where children are treated as less important than adults.

¹²⁵ Kaplan, 108-109

becomes the centre of her children's life, shifting the focus to herself, making the mother visible at the expense of the child, going against what, according to Kaplan,¹²⁶ is the norm. The best-known use of the image of the monstrous mother in popular culture is quite likely Norman Bates' mother in the film *Psycho* (1960)¹²⁷ where the mother, nothing more than a grotesque dead body, continues to control her son long after her death. Another example, used by both Kaplan and Rowe, is Anne Ramsay's character in the film *Throw Momma from the Train* (1987)¹²⁸, who – although alive – is just as grotesque in her appearance as the mother in *Psycho*. She is old and fat, and domineers over her son, and the viewer is invited to identify with the son, and to cheer on his decision to commit matricide.

Out of all Pratchett's witches, Nanny Ogg is the one most clearly coded as a mother. In *Carpe Jugulum* Agnes describes her with the following passage:

Nanny was someone's mum. It was written all over her. If you cut her in half, the word 'Ma' would be all the way through. Some girls were just naturally... mothers.¹²⁹

She is a woman who "had been married three times and ruled a tribe of children and grandchildren all over the kingdom."¹³⁰ She does not, however, seem to represent the ideal sacrificial mother, but the grotesque excessiveness of her body and character - fat, loud, vulgar, openly sexual – makes her closer to the monstrous mother of *Throw Your Momma from the Train* and Kaplan's overbearing "phallic mother". In *Lord and Ladies* Nanny's relationship with her family is described as following:

¹²⁶ Kaplan, 3-5

¹²⁷ Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, the movie is one of the landmarks of the horror genre, telling the story of a motel keeper who, after the death of his domineering mother, preserves her body and begins to kill young women who her mother would not have approved, pretending that he is, in fact, his mother.

¹²⁸ The film, directed by Danny De Vito, is a parody of Alfred Hitchcock's 1951 film *Strangers in Train*. Anne Ramsay plays an over-protective mother whose son (played by De Vito) makes a deal with another man to murder the man's wife in return for killing his mother.

¹²⁹ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 131-132

¹³⁰ Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, 20

[Nanny] had never prepared a meal or wielded a duster since her eldest daughter had been old enough to do it for her, and who had at least four meals cooked for her every day by various terrified daughters-in-law.¹³¹

An embodiment of Horney's narcissistic mother, Nanny treats her daughters as her servants but she dotes her sons and grandchildren, and her motherhood seems to consist of her fertility goddess-like sexuality and the power she holds over her children and grandchildren. Because of the genre of the text, maternal oppression is played for laughs, and Nanny's character becomes a parody of the monstrous mother like the mother in *Throw Your Momma from the Train*. However, unlike the mother of the film, Nanny and her motherhood is not represented as evil. She is one of the protagonists of the books, inviting the reader to identify with her rather than her oppressed children.

Granny criticises Nanny in several occasions – although it is not always made clear if she criticises Nanny's power over her children or the fact that Nanny is a mother at all – but the narration never makes Nanny into an evil “Other”.¹³² It's her children who (with the exception of two sons) remain nameless, featureless and in the periphery, mentioned only in relation to Nanny. The mother is more important than the children, but not necessarily in negative light. Nanny is often shown to care about her children and grandchildren and her mothering is mainly presented as a positive characteristic. Nevertheless, in the end Nanny does not conform to the maternal ideal of the compliant mother who sacrifices herself in favour of the children, living not only for them, but also through them¹³³ - her role as a mother and a matriarch is usually shown only in relation to her role as a witch, when she uses her power over her ‘clan’ as a means to summon a mob¹³⁴ or get information, or as an interlude set in her home between action. There is a passage in *Lord and Ladies* where Nanny's roles as a witch

¹³¹ Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 245

¹³² Kaplan, 77

¹³³ Ellman, 131.

¹³⁴ For example, *Carpe Jugulum*, pp. 215-216

and as a (grand)mother become both entwined and conflicted. During a magical battle between Granny and another witch, Nanny uses one of her grandchildren to break the magic circle, luring the child into the circle with sweets so that Granny can then rescue the crying boy and win the sympathies of the crowd. When questioned about her decision to put the child in danger, she only points out that the magic would at most “give him a sunburn”.¹³⁵ Unruliness overrides compliancy, and Nanny is still first and foremost a witch with motherhood being a secondary role, settling for the “second prize”.¹³⁶

4.3. The Working Mother

The same way as Nanny’s motherhood is in large part a parody of the stereotype of the monstrous, suffocating mother, can Magrat’s motherhood be seen as a play on the stereotype of the working mother. Kaplan¹³⁷ sees the image of the working mother, a woman trying to balance between the traditional role of the mother and the role of the new liberated working woman, as a trend in the media from 1970’s onwards. Kaplan¹³⁸ calls this stereotype the “supermom” – a woman who not only tries to balance a career with motherhood, but also sees the child as a project, worrying about her child’s education before it is even born, taking every step possible to ensure that the child grows up intelligent, healthy and in every way perfect.¹³⁹ In *Carpe Jugulum* there is an extended sequence where Magrat, after finding out that Granny needs her help, proceeds to pack everything she thinks her child needs, from diapers to toys.

¹³⁵ Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 102

¹³⁶ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 20.

¹³⁷ Kaplan, 180-219

¹³⁸ Kaplan, 188-189

¹³⁹ A passage where Magrat attempts to untangle a brightly coloured mobile which, according to her, speeds a child’s development proves that Pratchett is well aware of the super-mom stereotype of the 1980’s

'You find a bag or something and empty into it all the stuff in the top drawer over there, and take the potty, and the little truck, oh, and the stuffed animals, and the bag of nappies, and the bag for used nappies, and the bath, and the bag with the towels, and the box of toys, and the wind-up things, and the musical box, and the bag with the little suits, oh, and the woolly hat, and you, Agnes, find something we can make into a sling. You came up the back stairs? We'll go down the same way.'

'What do we need a sling for?'

Magrat leaned over the crib and picked up the baby, wrapped in a blanket.

'I'm not going to leave her here, am I?' she said.¹⁴⁰

Pratchett is making a reference to the image of the working mother who has to battle with balancing her work with the – in Magrat's case literal – burden of motherhood and childcare. Even the form of the passage, one long run-on sentence where Magrat instructs the others on what she will need if she is going to take her child with her 'to work', followed by the short sentences when she takes on the role of the witch, reflects her attempt to balance the two roles. It shows how Magrat is simultaneously the over-protective mother (over-thinking what the child might need while they are away) whose life is getting out of hand, and a professional woman (witch) who can easily take control of the situation, planning on how to escape from the castle.

In Kaplan's examples, such as the 1987 film *Baby Boom*,¹⁴¹ the woman finds her natural role in motherhood and, after failed attempts to combine the roles of a working woman and a mother, usually chooses to abandon the hectic life of a career woman and embrace the softer family values. Magrat, however, although starting as a working woman who abandons her profession when entering marriage, when finding herself in a situation where her old 'career' and her motherhood collide, chooses to combine the two roles even though it means carrying a double burden.

¹⁴⁰ Pratchett *Carpe Jugulum*, 172-173

¹⁴¹ Directed by Charles Shyer, the film tells the story of an over-worked business woman who suddenly becomes the caretaker of an orphaned child and is forced to become a mother and choose between her career and the child.

As mentioned earlier, Kaplan laments how in popular culture the image of the sexual mother who also has her own career is mostly absent.¹⁴² Appropriately it is Magrat who, in her motherhood, becomes the “working mother”. The working mother Kaplan finds in the popular culture of the eighties is a single mother, looking for a partner, but rarely finding him. Magrat as the maiden character is, unlike Nanny, an asexual mother. She is somewhat unaware of her sexuality¹⁴³ and when in *Carpe Jugulum* she takes the role of the mother, she is also to an extent a single mother. King Verence is not only not expected to care for the child, but in *Carpe Jugulum* becomes also incapacitated by the vampires, leaving Magrat alone with the child for the duration of the book.

4.4. The Symbolic Mother

One of the traditional connotations of the stereotype of the witch is a woman who thinks only about herself. This can be seen in the monstrous mother figure that Kaplan calls the “witch”, but even though Nanny can be seen to possess some qualities of the monstrous mother, in general the Discworld witches are presented as nurturing. This nurturing is not necessarily connected to actual motherhood, however. Even though both Magrat and Nanny have children, neither is shown to be stereotypically¹⁴⁴ motherly towards their children except occasionally. Maternity in the reproductive sense is not a major theme in the Lancre books – there are mothers but motherhood is usually a secondary aspect of their character. There is, however, a recurring theme of the witches as the symbolic mothers of the land.

¹⁴² Kaplan, 181, 183

¹⁴³ When Magrat marries Verence, the other witches in several occasions express their concern of the sexual inexperience and lack of knowledge of both Magrat and Verence.

¹⁴⁴ If seeing ‘mothering’ as a positive quality, as shown in the stereotype of the ideal ‘angelic’ mother.

As discussed in chapter 2.1, the death of the king of Lancre results in the kingdom being thrown into the state of carnival when the witches put a fool on the throne. At first the witches refuse to “meddle with politics”,¹⁴⁵ but in the end the fall of the Macbethian Lord and Lady Felmet is not marked by Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane, but by the forest – in the form of the animals - coming to Granny Weatherwax for help while the humans turn to Nanny Ogg.¹⁴⁶ The king is described to be “one with the land”¹⁴⁷ a father of the kingdom, but with a fool on the throne, the country is left without a strong father figure. Moreover, in both *Lords and Ladies* and *Carpe Jugulum*, the king is rendered powerless¹⁴⁸ while Magrat as the queen with the help of the other witches fights to save the kingdom.

The theme of the queen as the mother of the land is at its clearest in *Lords and Ladies* when by marrying the king Magrat becomes more of a mother-figure than when she actually gives birth later in the series. In *Lords and Ladies* she is not a mother, and her knowledge of motherhood is questioned by other women;¹⁴⁹ yet Pratchett makes it clear that she is moving from the role of a maiden to the role of a mother even before she has lost her virginity. While feeling trapped in the passive and constrictive life of an upper class woman, Magrat has a conversation with the royal beekeeper who tells her about the social structure of a beehive.¹⁵⁰ The queen bee is the only fertile female in a bee colony and the mother of all the other bees, and if the hive has more queens than one, they will battle for the dominance of the colony. Later

¹⁴⁵ Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, 166

¹⁴⁶ Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, 102, 104, 118

¹⁴⁷ Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, 167; *Lords and Ladies*, 333

¹⁴⁸ In *Carpe Jugulum* he is under the thrall of the vampires, in *Lords and Ladies* the Queen of the Elves. However, King Verence even in the normal state of affairs holds very little power over his subjects as the people of Lancre generally ignore him and his attempts to improve the society. It is worth noting that King Verence’s ineffectual rule is not necessarily tied to the question of gender as the idea of a powerless government is strongly present in Terry Pratchett’s other Discworld novels as well, especially the City Watch books.

¹⁴⁹ Magrat’s attempts to give “lessons in natural childbirth” to the local women is ignored by the local women and laughed at by the witches. *Lords and Ladies*, 32

¹⁵⁰ Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 124-128

Pratchett juxtaposes Magrat and the Queen of Elves with the queen bees battling for their claim for the role of the mother and matriarch of the hive/kingdom. The Queen of Elves has chosen King Verence as her mortal lover in order to take over the land and describes the connection between the land and the queen as following:

[. . .]when we are *married* [. . .] the land must accept me. By your own rules. I know how it works. There's more to being a king than wearing a crown. The king and the land are one.¹⁵¹ The king and the queen are one. And I shall be queen.¹⁵²

The Queen takes over the land through marriage, through becoming one with the king – the wording suggesting a sexual intercourse – and becomes the mother of the land, the new queen of the hive.

The Queen of Elves as the antagonist of *Lords and Ladies* is then the evil stepmother figure of the story, a monstrous mother juxtaposed with Magrat and Granny who act as the sacrificial ‘true’ mothers. Though Magrat as the soon-to-be queen of Lancre is the most obvious symbolic mother of the kingdom, Granny’s connection to the land is also strong and she is shown to care for it like a mother. In Granny’s case this connection manifests in her ability to become one with the animals, to understand them, and the condition of her power is that she must treat the land kindly.

There was a price. No-one asked you to pay it, but the very *absence* of demand was a moral obligation. [. . .] You *cared*; not because it was kind or good, but because it was right¹⁵³

When the Queen of the Elves lets her mind roam through the minds of the animals of the kingdom, the imagery is quite different, suggesting an invasion and almost a rape of

¹⁵¹ Almost exactly the same words are used by the ghost of the king of Lancre in *Wyrd Sisters* (p. 167)

¹⁵² Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 333

¹⁵³ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 76

the land making a strong contrast to the description of Granny “steering [the borrowed minds] gently”¹⁵⁴

[. . .] it’d go in and out of another mind like a chainsaw, taking, taking,
taking.¹⁵⁵

Granny too is then taking the role of the sacrificial mother who lives for the child – in this case land – standing against the monstrous phallic (step)mother who exists in a parasitic relation with the child.

The final battle in *Lords and Ladies* is a battle between the mothers, with the men once again absent, their presence represented only by symbols such as the burial mound shaped like a phallus that Nanny enters. It is motherhood without fathers, and heterosexual relationships do not come into play until the King of the Elves, a Pan figure and very much a symbol of male sexuality, rises to take the Queen of Elves back to their own world. In doing this he frees Verence from the Queen’s thrall and the heterosexual status quo is restored with Magrat now able to marry Verence and take her assigned role as a wife and a (non-symbolic) mother.

Through the recurring theme of the witches being connected to the land, all of the three major witches can be seen as Earth mother figures, expressing the nurturing tendencies often associated with femininity through their care of the land and its inhabitants, enabling them all to become mothers without discarding their assigned roles in the maiden-mother-crone trinity. Magrat is the working mother as she gains her motherhood through her new ‘career’ as a queen, while Nanny as the matriarch of the Ogg clan who form a large percentage of the kingdom’s populace is the natural mother. Even Granny is described as “everyone’s grandmother”,¹⁵⁶ in *A Hat Full of Sky*, though

¹⁵⁴ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 76

¹⁵⁵ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 76

¹⁵⁶ Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*, 226

Granny's character hardly elicits the connotations the word 'grandmother' holds. The idea of motherhood/marriage as a "settling for the second prize" for witches comes across strong through the conversations between the witches. Yet it seems like in choosing witchcraft over motherhood, the traditional preferred role for women, the witches are not so much abandoning the role of a mother as choosing the role of a symbolic mother.

5. Maidens and Crones

5.1. The Maiden

In her humorous look at the clichés of the fantasy genre Dianne Wynne Jones describes the stereotypical witch as following:

[Good witches] are often good-looking and well dressed. All of them have commanding personalities and a great skill in Magic, but from time to time they show an endearing lack of confidence in themselves. [...] A condition of her powers may be that she remains a Virgin.¹⁵⁷

The good witch of fantasy literature is not then the old and warty crone, but young, pure and beautiful. It compares to the idealistic image of the woman as an angel, an embodiment of the "feminine symbols of transcendence", woman as the muse or the dispenser of salvation. The most important symbol of maidenhood is of course Virgin Mary, the ultimate symbol of female purity, the mother of god who maintains her purity even in childbirth. The maiden is the eternal ethereal angel, embodiment of what Russo saw as the idealistic female body; tall, slim and aerodynamic; monumental and static,¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Jones, Diana Wynne *The Tough Guide to Fantasy Land* (Guernsey: Vista, 1996), 215

¹⁵⁸ Russo, 25

something that should remain untouched and unchanged, a body to be looked at rather than a body for living. In the stereotype of the maiden, youth and virginity can be seen as interchangeable with beauty. Both Jack Zipes and Marcia K. Lieberman¹⁵⁹ see beauty as the most important attribute for a woman in fairytale and Lieberman further argues that in fairytale tradition inner and outer beauty are inseparable, with beautiful girls being always gentle, docile and good-tempered while ugly girls are ill-tempered and evil.¹⁶⁰

The witch in fairytale is almost without exception evil, but even though the post-modernity of fantasy literature allows the character to be ambiguous, to have more dimensions than the evil stereotype, the juxtaposition of good/beauty and evil/ugliness remains. The character described by Jones is then the fantasy equivalent of a Vestal virgin, whose purity and virtue - which are also reflected in her physical beauty - are the source of her powers, suggesting that a woman's worth is linked to her virginity. According to Rowe virginity can be seen as "the key to a woman's value as a token of exchange among men",¹⁶¹ a cultural construct created by and for men. The evil counterpart of the good fantasy witch, the bad witch or the enchantress is described by Jones as a *femme fatale* like character who is "very beautiful" and "will proceed to seduce you if you are male",¹⁶² suggesting again the Madonna/whore division of marking women good or evil on the basis of their sexual experience.

This can also be seen in the relationship between female characters and marriage. In the fairytales marriage is often the fulcrum of the girl's story, a reward for a good girl (virgin), but also a punishment for the fallen (unruly) woman. If the girl

¹⁵⁹ Zipes, Jack *Fairytales and the Act of Subversion*, 25

Lieberman, Marcia K. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale" *Don't Bet on the Prince* Jack Zipes ed. (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), 189-190

¹⁶⁰ Lieberman, 188

¹⁶¹ Rowe, Kathleen, 133

¹⁶² Jones, Diana Wynne, 215

remains passive, and simply waits to be chosen, she will be rewarded with a marriage with a prince.¹⁶³ An unruly girl in return will be forced to wed the ugly monstrous man such as Blue Beard. The marriage provides a guaranteed social and financial security, and the girl only needs to accept “passive assimilation into her husband’s sphere”.¹⁶⁴ The purity/beauty/passivity combination also remains in the fairytale setting, most clearly seen in Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, heroines who both sleep enchanted sleep, which Marcia K. Lieberman calls ultimate state of passivity”.¹⁶⁵ The most valuable possession of these women is their beauty that acts as a symbol of their virginity, protected by the enchanted sleep that keeps the girls passive and static, unchanging and eternally pure.

The enchanted sleep cannot last forever, though, and at some point the prince must wake them up. According to Ellman the most resented of stage of womanhood is the spinster.¹⁶⁶ Purity that is cherished in the young is resented in the old; the maiden has the potential of becoming a mother and the spinster is the symbol of that lost potential. In fairytale one equivalent of the spinster is the princess who refuses to marry, presented as reprehensible and “stuck-up”,¹⁶⁷ and the heterosexual imperative - the cultural imperative for women to marry - demands that in the fairytale tradition these women be punished by forcing them to marry against their wishes.¹⁶⁸ While virginity can be seen as a woman’s token of worth, it can, however, also be understood as a source of power, refusal to embrace maternity and the role of the mother rather than a sign of prohibition against sex.¹⁶⁹ In the traditional fairytale this construction, seeing the refusal to marry as wish to preserve their identity, is denied and shown in negative

¹⁶³ Lieberman, 189

¹⁶⁴ Rowe, Karen E., 217

¹⁶⁵ Lieberman, 191

¹⁶⁶ Ellman, 136

¹⁶⁷ Lieberman, 199

¹⁶⁸ Rowe, Karen E., 217

¹⁶⁹ Rowe, Kathleen, 133

light,¹⁷⁰ but it can be read as empowering. In this case virginity is then not a celebration of purity, but a choice to rebel against the norm, against the idea of motherhood as the pinnacle of female existence - and the power of this choice comes from a different source than the power offered to the Vestal virgin who is allowed by the patriarchy to hold her power only if she remains pure.

In the case of Pratchett's witches the title of maiden does not so much refer to sexuality and actual virginity as to a hierarchy of women where a maiden is young and less experienced in general and not only sexually. It is also not a category that the woman necessarily leaves behind at the loss of virginity. As Nanny describes the role of a maiden in *Carpe Jugulum*:

[. . .] it ain't down to *technicalities*, see? Now, me, I don't reckon I was ever a maiden *ment'ly*. [. . .] What about your Aunt May [. . .] Four kids and she's still bashful around men. [. . .] some people's body and head don't always work together.¹⁷¹

The maiden is the lowest rank in the hierarchy of witches, her place in the coven being very much that of an apprentice. There is, however, a sexual level attached to the maiden characters as well. In the books it is established that the society where the Lancre books are set requires women to remain virgins until their marriage. To an extent virginity is then tied to the heterosexual imperative, and motherhood (in marriage) as the culmination of womanhood and the role to which the women must aspire. Neither Magrat nor Agnes, however, are confined by the narrative to a single note story of a woman in search of a man, and both remain maiden characters even after their sexual awakening. Magrat's motherhood is very much asexual¹⁷² and Agnes, although remaining a virgin, discovers her sexuality in *Carpe Jugulum* when she is

¹⁷⁰ Lieberman,

¹⁷¹ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 131

¹⁷² Discussed in chapter 4.3

courted by a vampire and then turns him down in favour of a platonic relationship with a priest.

A complementary image of virginity as a choice not tied to heterosexuality comes in the form of Granny Weatherwax. The question of Granny's virginity is dealt extensively in *Lords and Ladies* where she is re-united with her old paramour and becomes aware of all the alternative realities where she chose marriage over witchcraft. Granny's "prolonged virginity"¹⁷³ is not something forced upon her due to a failure to comply with the heterosexual imperative, but rather a choice, "a sign of prohibition against maternity".¹⁷⁴ Taking care of children and a husband would have distracted Granny from her pursuit of witchcraft and, consequently, her powers as a witch can be seen to stem from her virginity. This view is supported by a passage at the end of the book where Granny catches a rampaging unicorn, which traditionally can only be tamed by a maiden. In using the unicorn myth, Pratchett is borrowing from the traditional maiden imagery, but also gives it a new level when he makes Granny – the crone and the spinster – to be the one to tame the animal rather than Magrat who, being still unwed, would presumably qualify. Granny's maidenhood is not tainted by her age, nor is she forced to remain static and unchanged, inexperienced, in order to maintain the power she draws from it.

5.2. The Other One

Like Jo Spence, as quoted in chapter 2.2, states, the narrative inherent to the representations of women lack ending, the old age and death of a woman being almost taboos. The aging body is a grotesque body, and the aging woman is supposed to fade

¹⁷³ Ellman, 136

¹⁷⁴ Rowe, Kathleen, 133

into the background, hidden from sight so as not to disturb the younger generations and when brought forth, the crone has the same function as the skull in a vanitas painting,¹⁷⁵ to act as a reminder of mortality. It is the opposite of the untouched and unchanged virginal body, a body that is ravaged by entropy, the signs of living, of moving towards death, making it grotesque. Aging, especially for women, is a taboo and even Granny, when talking about the roles of the witches, speaks of the maiden, the mother and “the other one”,¹⁷⁶ and the choice of words suggests whole different female role, that of a whore, equating old age to obscenity, juxtaposing it even more clearly with the virtuous maiden.

In the fairy tale tradition witch and hag are almost synonymous, and the witch becomes a figure of a crone who is unwilling to be ‘put to her place’ and become invisible as old women are supposed to. Granny Weatherwax is the crone of the trinity of witches, and her aging is an important theme in the books. In *Equal Rites* she is still a midwife, associated with life, but from *Witches Abroad* onwards, she becomes more and more associated with death. When she travels in the minds of the animals, her body is left cold and dead, and she needs to leave a card with her body that says “I aten’t dead [sic]”¹⁷⁷ to separate her from the dead. While Granny’s magical powers appear to increase during the series, her body is that of an old woman. This becomes more obvious in *Carpe Jugulum* where Granny is juxtaposed with the immortal and eternally young vampires while Granny’s own body is betraying her, and she has to rely on the help of a young priest to be able to even walk.¹⁷⁸

When looking at the character development of Granny and comparing it to the image of the fairy tale witch, the crone becomes not so much a symbol of age and

¹⁷⁵ A still life painting that juxtaposes beautiful objects with the grotesque (such as insects or skulls) to act as a reminder of the brevity of human life.

¹⁷⁶ Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 198

¹⁷⁷ For example *Lords and Ladies*, p. 72

¹⁷⁸ Pratchett *Carpe Jugulum* 299-301

physical entropy, as madness, entropy of the mind. Granny is the only one of the central witches whose power comes from magic as a supernatural phenomenon. Magrat is a queen who knows herbs, Nanny as a midwife knows about people; neither one has been shown to use magic more than occasionally. In the Discworld books the wicked witches of *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* and other famous stories are all merged into the character of Black Aliss, a witch often mentioned in relation with Granny.

She was said to have been the greatest witch who ever lived - not exactly bad, but so powerful it was sometimes hard to tell the difference. When it came to sending palaces to sleep for a hundred years or getting princesses to spin straw into Glod, [sic] no-one did it better than Black Aliss.¹⁷⁹

In Discworld the witches themselves are not evil, but they can be corrupted by their power and become the child-eating fairy-tale hags. In the course of the series Granny too becomes “not exactly bad, but powerful”, and the wisdom of the age becomes equated with evil and madness, in the same way that old women is often equated with witches in fairy tales.

Madness is an inherent part of the grotesque and the carnival, allowing people to see the world “through different eyes”, unhindered by the normal.¹⁸⁰ Granny’s madness, however, is not the exuberant “festive” madness of the carnival but more what Bakhtin calls the madness of the Romantic grotesque, marked by “somber, tragic aspect of individual isolation”.¹⁸¹ There is, however, carnival imagery attached to her as well. When returning to her body after ‘borrowing’, Granny is momentarily shown to possess the qualities of the animal whose mind she has borrowed, buzzing like a bee¹⁸² or trying

¹⁷⁹ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 114

¹⁸⁰ Bakhtin, 40

¹⁸¹ Bakhtin, 40

¹⁸² Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 360

to twist her head around like an owl.¹⁸³ In this in-between state Granny takes the form of a half-human half-animal, a hybrid or a freak, that is an important part of the carnival imagery.¹⁸⁴ Her body may not be exuberantly grotesque like Nanny's, but it is rendered grotesque by her mental transformation.

Granny's power comes from knowing who she is. She defeated Lilith by being able to tell herself apart from her reflection, the Queen of Elves by having enough control of her mind to allow it to be divided into the minds of a swarm of bees, and the vampires by putting her 'self' in her blood so that when the vampire drank her blood, they did not pass the vampirism to her, but rather she passed her weaknesses to them. Her madness, the increasing difficulty she has in controlling her power and avoiding going dark becomes a symbol of losing one's identity through the maladies of age, simultaneously gaining power and losing it, wisdom of the age being balanced by the loss of control brought on by senility.

It could be then questioned just how unruly Granny is? The root of her power is in having control over herself, and although in refusing to fade away she "makes a spectacle of herself", her body is not the grotesque "let loose on the public" like Russo described the unruly woman, but her grotesque is the madness which she must keep under control so as not to lose her power. Agnes has Perdita as her inner unruly woman, and similarly Granny has Black Aliss within her, waiting to be let out. But where Perdita is the festive madness of the carnival, Black Aliss reflects the darker Romantic madness that does not allow the freedom from society's rules but rather binds her to them as she battles to maintain control over herself.

¹⁸³ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 73

¹⁸⁴ Bakhtin, 25

While Granny might not be the agent of unruliness she could be, Nanny, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the unleashed hag. As discussed earlier,¹⁸⁵ Nanny's whole character is coded with unruliness from her large size to her excessive appetite. If the female sexuality in itself has been considered a sin,¹⁸⁶ it is a small taboo compared to the sexuality of an old woman, usually assumed and expected to be genderless and asexual¹⁸⁷. While Granny – the virgin crone – insists that she is not naked underneath her clothes as she has three vests on,¹⁸⁸ Nanny is an openly sexual character, flirting with the dwarf Casanunda, and freely talking about her sexual exploits.

An important part of Nanny's open sexuality – and character in general – that is coded with unruliness is the way she dominates men. In the Lancre witches books male characters, even important ones, are often portrayed as powerless or 'silly' in comparison to the witches or even other female characters. Similarly Nanny and Granny refuse to acknowledge the rulers of the kingdom as authorities higher than they are.¹⁸⁹ Nanny's dominance over men is shown most obviously in her relationship with Casanunda¹⁹⁰ who courts her in *Witches Abroad* and *Lords and Ladies*. Casanunda is a dwarf and therefore hardly half of Nanny's size, meaning that she literally overshadows him. Moreover, although Casanunda is described to be "word's second greatest lover"¹⁹¹ even he becomes overwhelmed by Nanny's overt sexuality and lack of modesty¹⁹².

¹⁸⁵ Chapter 3.3

¹⁸⁶ Ehrenreich and English, 26.

¹⁸⁷ Simone De Beauvoir *Toinen sukupuoli* trans. Annikki Suni (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1981) 328.

¹⁸⁸ Pratchett, *Witches Abroad*, 44

¹⁸⁹ "She's a queen. That's pretty high." Nanny says of Magrat, then adding "Almost as high as witches." Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 367

¹⁹⁰ The name Casanunda is a reference to Giancarlo Casanova, the 18th century Venetian adventurer and writer known for his romantic pursuits (-ova = 'over', -unda = 'under', referring to Casanunda's small size)

¹⁹¹ Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 113

¹⁹² Pratchett *Lord and Ladies*, 304

Nanny's sexuality is like that of a fertility idol, earthy and primitive, even though Nanny herself is well beyond her age of fertility. Even more, Nanny Ogg is explicitly described as a hag, not only fat but also wrinkle-faced and toothless. She is not De Beauvoir's vision of an old woman seeking for eternal youth through young lovers,¹⁹³ but a laughing grotesque hag, whose sexuality - as excessive as everything else in her - is not shown in a negative light.

6. Self/Other

6.1. The Witch as the Other

According to Simone de Beauvoir, the expression of the duality of the Self and the Other is “as primordial as consciousness itself”,¹⁹⁴ and can be found in every society and mythology, no matter how primitive or ancient. The Self is born out of rejection of the Other, and for a group to become one, it will set up the Other against itself. The Other, in return, does not then exist without the Self and is defined only by what it is not – i.e. the other group, the Self. This othering of one group to create an identity to another is not limited to gender, but is clearly seen in the man/woman duality. Humanity is seen as male, and women are the Other for the male Self to reject, while the female is only defined in relation to the male, as non-male,¹⁹⁵ making her a deviation from the norm – an outcast, irregular and unruly.¹⁹⁶ The word ‘woman’ is then always gendered, while ‘man’ can be used as a neutral term, referring to both men and women. Julie Kristeva sees that in this duality woman has been “divided from man, made of that very thing

¹⁹³ Beauvoir, 328

¹⁹⁴ Beauvoir, 16

¹⁹⁵ Beauvoir, 16-17

¹⁹⁶ Morris, 24

which is lacking in him".¹⁹⁷ Woman is the abject space for everything mysterious and magical, that must be controlled and contained.¹⁹⁸

The question of whether or not Pratchett's witches could be considered as othered is complex. The witch is a character of the grotesque, and in itself a deviation from the norm, an Other, and this comes across strongly in Terry Pratchett's writing as well:

There was nothing like that not fitting in feeling to simulate the old magical nerves; that was why Esme [Granny] was so good at it.¹⁹⁹

The woman who makes a spectacle out of herself is a 'she' rather than an 'I', the woman to be pointed at and used as a warning example.²⁰⁰ The unruly woman is then a double Other, deviation not only from the human norm (man) but also from the norm of the (idealised) woman. The unruliness of the witches, their gender and unwillingness to remain simply objects, makes them simultaneously both active subjects and the traditionally evil Other that is shunned, abject. Gilbert and Gubar, however, argue that women are not othered only as the negative "Other", the 'monster' or the 'witch' but also as the 'angel'. Tied to the (feminine) nature and excluded from the (masculine) culture woman is the Other that is simultaneously worshipped, feared, loved and and loathed.²⁰¹

Lancre of the witch books is very much a world inhabited by women with the female as the norm, and in this respect it is the men who become the deviation and the Other. There are male characters, but they are mainly secondary and their actions and even existence is often shown only in relation to the female characters – as

¹⁹⁷ Kristeva, 140

¹⁹⁸ Morris, 31

¹⁹⁹ Pratchett, *Maskerade*, 36

²⁰⁰ Russo, 53

²⁰¹ Gilbert and Gubar, 19

husbands, lovers, sons, enemies, allies. They are the deviation and the ones defined as not-women. From this point of view, the witches cannot be said to be truly Other even if their deviance from the norm as unruly and grotesque women would suggest so. Not only are they the most powerful characters, but also as the protagonists of the books they are the characters the reader is assumed to identify with.

There are, however, female characters in the books who in their powerlessness can be seen to take the place of the silent Other - women who are shown as the Discworld equivalents of the real world victims of witch-hunts.

'They never burned witches,' said Granny. 'Probably they burned some old ladies who spoke up or couldn't run away. [...]'²⁰²

In *A Hat Full of Sky* there is a passage where Tiffany recounts why she wants to become a witch, saying that she wants to "speak up for those who don't have voices"²⁰³, reflecting what Jack Zipes mentions as a property of a feminist fairytale, giving voice to those who have customarily been silenced.²⁰⁴ In Tiffany's case, the silenced one is Mrs. Snapperly, an elderly woman who was accused of killing and eating the son of the Baron, driven out of her home and then left to die of exposure. Mrs. Snapperly is the witch without the unruliness, momentarily reverting the story back away from the carnivalesque fantasy world to show what the characters are actually rebelling against in their unruliness. It is in juxtaposing these two groups of women, the powerless accused witches and the powerful real witches that Pratchett is literally giving a voice to those "customarily silenced".

²⁰² Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum*, 289

²⁰³ Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky*, 43

²⁰⁴ Zipes *Dont Bet on the Prince*, xi

6.2. Identity and Coming of Age

The coming-of-age story is one of the corner stones of fairy tale tradition, the tale of the protagonist going through trials to achieve the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This narrative convention is often associated with boys and the rituals of “becoming a man”, and forms the core of many important novels in the fantasy genre.²⁰⁵ As Rosemary Jackson writes, “in its broadest sense, fantastic literature has always been concerned with revealing and exploring the interrelations of the ‘I’ and the ‘not-I’, of self and the other,”²⁰⁶ themes which are at the centre of the coming-of-age narrative.

Female coming-of-age stories are far more rare than stories about becoming a man, and do not usually so much deal with the discovery of self in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, as the transition from maidenhood to motherhood. Where the boy in the fairytale is expected to become ambitious and self-sufficient, the girl does not need these qualities, as her primary goal is marriage.²⁰⁷ The coming-of-age story of a woman is a story of finding herself a husband and taking her assumed place in the heteronormative society. In the case of some fairytale writers such as Charles Perrault, the woman lacks even this little activeness as she is assumed to remain passive, waiting for the right man to recognize her virtue and marry her. Jack Zipes, when looking at the fairy tales of Charles Perrault, points out that the fairytales centring on women such as *Blue Beard* and *Little Red Riding Hood* are often also told as warning tales, teaching girls by negative example what a good girl should be like.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ For example the coming-of-age narratives of the young wizards Harry and Ged of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series and Ursula Le Guinn’s *Earthsea* series, or Frodo the hobbit’s journeys in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*.

²⁰⁶ Jackson, 53

²⁰⁷ Zipes *Fairytales and the Act of Subversion*, 26

²⁰⁸ Zipes *Fairytales and the Act of Subversion*, 24

Many of the Discworld books, especially earlier ones, are stories about young men becoming adults through a baptism of fire,²⁰⁹ but Pratchett has also written few books dealing with girls' coming-of-age and explores themes of women and identity in several other books: a minor ongoing plot in the City Watch books has been the liberation of the dwarfish women, asserting their right to act and look like women,²¹⁰ and in *Monstrous Regiment* a young girl disguises herself as a boy and joins the army to escape a society that oppresses women and to rescue her brother who has been taken a prisoner of war, only to find out that her entire regiment – and, in fact, most of the country's ruling body - is made of girls and women who have done the same thing.

Out of Pratchett's witch characters the ones with most obvious coming of age stories are Magrat, Tiffany and Esk, the young protagonists of *Equal Rites*. Magrat's transition from the young and inexperienced maiden to a self-assured witch queen was already discussed in chapter 3.4. Although her coming-of-age narrative is not the central theme of all the books where it takes place and is very much in compliance with the heterosexual imperative, it parallels the stories of Esk and Tiffany whose stories – despite the presence of potential romantic interests – do not end in a celebration of heterosexuality and deal mainly with their search for their true identities.

In the case of Esk the rite of passage is being accepted in the Unseen University, a wizard's university where only men are permitted to study. Esk was born with the magical powers of a wizard and finds that she cannot use them for witchcraft, which is "women's magic" and "mostly about doing ordinary things"²¹¹ as opposed to the high, academic magic of the wizards. She eventually earns her right to become a

²⁰⁹ E.g. *Mort*, *Pyramids*, *Moving Pictures*, and *Small Gods*.

²¹⁰ Originally a joke on the absence of female dwarves in Tolkien-inspired fantasy, Pratchett's dwarves have two sexes, but only one gender because they all identify as male due to cultural pressure.

²¹¹ Pratchett *A Hat Full of Sky*, 86

wizard when she defeats monstrous creatures that a young wizard has accidentally summoned. Tiffany on the other hand does not start off with supernatural powers but earns them when she sets out to rescue her brother from the Queen of Elves and by fighting ‘a hiver’, a spirit that attempts to possess her. Unlike the traditional fairytale heroines, Tiffany, Magrat and Esk do not remain passive but become active participants in the story, heroines like the ones Zipes finds in feminist fairytales, characters who “actively seek to define [themselves],” and whose “self-definition then determines the plot”.²¹²

When Esk eventually defeats her opponents, she does not do this by using her powers but by realising that the creatures reflect her power, that “if magic gives people what they want, then not using magic can give them what they need”²¹³ and that the only way to destroy the creatures is by not using her powers. Tiffany’s test is similar. She defeats the Queen of the Elves by becoming one with the land and the women who lived on it before her, taking on the legacy of her grandmother,²¹⁴ mirroring Magrat being taken over by the spirit of the Queen Ynci without knowing that the power came from Magrat herself, as Queen Ynci had never really existed. Her powers are then born from knowing “exactly where she was, and who she was, and what she was.”²¹⁵ In defeating the Queen, Tiffany becomes a woman as she discovers her identity and takes her place in the line of women before her. The scene reflects the scene in *Witches Abroad* where Granny is able to pick her own reflection (true self) in the hall of mirrors.²¹⁶ Her fight against the hiver, in return, mirrors Esk’s fight when she realises that the hiver is not so much possessing people as it is also giving them

²¹² Zipes *Don’t Bet on the Prince*, 14

²¹³ Pratchett *Equal Rites*, 280

²¹⁴ Tiffany’s grandmother Granny Aching is described to be the mirror image of Granny Weatherwax, “everyone’s grandmother” only without Granny Weatherwax’s dark powers and the madness that comes with them.

²¹⁵ Pratchett *The Wee Free Men*, 290

²¹⁶ Discussed in chapter 3.2.

what they want instead of what they need. She stops fighting the hiver and gives it what it needs, an end.

Magrat's, Esk's and Tiffany's coming-of-age stories all share a variation of the same theme – becoming more powerful by possessing powers and not using them. Esk and Tiffany both pass their tests of character by actively not acting. As Esk describes it, “not using magic because you can't, that's no use at all. But not using magic because you can, that really upsets them.”²¹⁷ It is a question of choices: Magrat, even though choosing to settle for the “second prize”, becomes more powerful as a mother and a queen than she was as the maiden and the “third witch”, a role chosen for her by others. By choosing their inaction, rather than having it forced upon them like it was forced upon Magrat whose only function was to exist, they become active subjects. Magrat may marry the King in the end of *Lords and Ladies*, giving the book a ‘fairytales ending’, but she does not become the submissive wife of Perrault's tales nor the dutiful wife of Brothers Grimm,²¹⁸ but she maintains her identity, not becoming nameless – as women traditionally give up their own names and take those of their husbands - and defined only through her husband. Esk, Tiffany and Agnes also maintain the selves they have discovered as they all at the end of their narrative refuse the chance of marriage as they decline the offers of the male characters set up as their romantic interests in the novels.

6.3 Magic of the Earth, Magic of the Sky

²¹⁷ Pratchett *Equal Rites*, 280

²¹⁸ Zipes *Fairytales and the Act of Subversion*, 25, 53

As discussed earlier, there are not many important male characters in the Lancre books, and those few that do exist are nowhere near as powerful as the witches who are shown to be more or less above the law, or in some cases even being the law.²¹⁹

There are, however, also male characters who are tied to the supernatural, and the most important of these are the wizards, the male equivalent of the witches. While the witches are only seen in the Lancre and Tiffany Aching novels, the wizards do not as such have a subseries of their own even though the protagonist of the Rincewind books is a wizard. Instead the wizards are often shown as supporting characters in various novels in different subseries, including *Equal Rites* and *Lords and Ladies*. The division to witches and wizards is clear-cut: there have been no male witches in the series and only two female wizards – a nameless woman who is only briefly mentioned in *The Color of Magic* and Esk who at the end of *Equal Rites* is accepted into the Unseen University. Both Esk and the nameless female wizard are never to be seen or even mentioned after the end of the books where they appear.

While many other fantasy authors also use the words ‘wizard’ and ‘witch’ to distinguish between male and female practitioners of magic,²²⁰ in Pratchett’s case the distinction between witches and wizards goes deeper than simple terminology. In the Discworld series magic is divided into distinctly male and female magic:

'Female wizards aren't right either! It's the wrong kind of magic for women, is wizard magic, it's all books and stars and jommetry. [sic] She'd never grasp it. Whoever heard of a female wizard?'

[. . .]

'Witches is a different thing altogether,' snapped Granny Weatherwax. 'It's magic out of the ground, not out of the sky, and men never could get the hang of it'²²¹

²¹⁹ Granny, for example, judges a child killer to be hanged without a trial. *Carpe Jugulum*, 72-73

²²⁰ For example J.K. Rowling in her Harry Potter series.

²²¹ Pratchett: *Equal Rites*, 19-20

The description of the two different kinds of magic reflects the traditional binary system of world being divided into masculine and feminine, to create such pairs as mind/nature, superior/inferior, culture/nature and head/heart.²²²

The women's magic ties the witches to the earth and the people, making them into mother figures as discussed in earlier chapters. They are midwives, herbalists and healers, living in rural areas as opposed to the wizards who live in a large city and are shown to be academics and scientists. It again comes back to the duality of culture/nature with men representing the culture, which the women, being tied to the nature, cannot inhabit. It is not, however, the sophisticated and scientific 'sky magic' that is shown to be the stronger and more powerful of the two, but the 'earth magic' of the witches. Pratchett does not so much change the 'natural order' as he turns it around, allowing that half of the couplet which is coded female to be the more powerful one.

There are two books where the wizards and witches meet, *Equal Rites* and *Lords and Ladies*. In *Equal Rites* Granny and Esk go to meet the wizards, whereas in *Lords and Ladies* the wizards come to Lancre, and in both books the witches are the ones shown to have more power. There is a magical battle between Granny and the Archchancellor at the end of *Equal Rites* that is a direct homage to the magical duel between Merlin and the evil witch Madam Mim in T.H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1938).²²³ The battle ends in a truce, but with a strong suggestion that unlike in *The Sword in the Stone*, here it would have been the witch who would have won.²²⁴ Similarly in *Lords and Ladies* the wizards are rendered powerless by the Queen of the

²²² Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986/1975) 63-64

²²³ The first part of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* that details the life of King Arthur through the eyes of Merlin.

²²⁴ Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, 224-22

Elves, leaving the final battle a battle between women, as discussed in an earlier chapter.

When looking at the way Pratchett describes the witches and the wizards, the difference between the men's magic and women's magic appears to be that the latter is shown to be learned and academic, whereas the latter is an inner power, something within the woman, further suggesting that magic has been coded feminine.

'Do you want to find out how much power I have, madam? Here, on the grass of Lancre?'²²⁵

'I know where I come from and I know where I'm going. You cannot fool me anymore. Or touch me. Or anything that is mine.'²²⁶

Variations of these threats, which Granny and Tiffany, respectively, give to the Queen of the Elves in *Lords and Ladies* and *A Hat Full of Sky*, occur in most of the witch books. Magic is born of earth, women are connected to earth, therefore women are connected to magic and all three - women, magic and earth - become almost synonymous.

This is reflected in the witches' and wizards' different approaches to magic. While the witches are clearly heroes of the Lancre books, the wizards on the other hand are just as often the cause of the troubles in the books where they appear.²²⁷ The wizards use magic without any control, whereas the witches find the power in not using magic. A good comparison is the Archchancellor of the Unseen University conjuring a bag of gold to pay for his debts²²⁸ as opposed to Granny forbidding Esk to use magic to light the fireplace.²²⁹

²²⁵ Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*, 345

²²⁶ Pratchett, *Wee Free Men*, 291

²²⁷ In *Equal Rites* a young wizard accidentally breaks the walls between different realities, in *The Last Continent* the faculty of Unseen University almost undo creation, etc.

²²⁸ Pratchett *Lords and Ladies*, 114

²²⁹ Pratchett *Equal Rites*, 83

As discussed earlier, both Esk and Tiffany in their coming-of-age stories discover the power in having the power but not using it, and the same theme can be detected in Granny's refusal to embrace her full powers and follow the footsteps of Black Aliss. Passivity is shown as activeness, and the women maintain a stereotypical female characteristic of passivity, but in a way that empowers them. The women remain passive and their activity lies in the act of controlling themselves. They may be unruly in some areas, but the magic, coded feminine and the core of their identity as witches/women, is something that must be controlled and not "set loose in the public".

Even with all their power the witches are not a part of the (male) culture. In Lancre it may be the men who are lacking voices, but in the other Discworld subseries the men still hold the power, suggesting that the non-Other status of the Lancre witches is simply a fortuity. Esk was allowed to study at the Unseen University and *Equal Rites* ends with the archchancellor suggesting that the school be opened for girls as well, but this is forgotten in the later books where the university is still a men-only institution and Esk herself is never seen or heard again in the novels. Moreover, many of the major female characters in the Discworld series in general are in some way connected to the supernatural, further suggesting that in Pratchett's writing magic/supernatural is coded as feminine. This is supported by the fact that even though many of the male characters, too, are supernatural, when looking at the female characters, nearly all characters who rise beyond the role of a simple love-interest or sidekick are either supernatural or non-human²³⁰. Women are then by definition non-human (non-male), only gaining power through the control of the feminine magic.

²³⁰ e.g. werewolves or elves, or Susan, the granddaughter of Death who is also one of the few non-witch female protagonists in the series.

7. Conclusion

Terry Pratchett has dealt with openly feminist themes in his books, most clearly in *Equal Rites* and *Monstrous Regiment*, but the question remains, how feminist the Discworld books really are? The question is as difficult to answer, as it is to define the idea of ‘feminist’. According to Jack Zipes, it is not so much a matter of authorial intent as it is a certain vision of the world, challenging the conventional views of gender and creating an alternative world where those who are traditionally silenced are given voices.²³¹

In my thesis I was mainly interested how this possible feminism in Terry Pratchett’s work is related to his use of the traditional female stereotypes. Stereotypes are cultural shorthand that can simplify the complex world outside fiction into characters that are easily recognizable to the reader. They very much rely on participation from the reader of the text who needs to be familiar with the types in order to fully understand the message the writer is trying to convey with them. They can be detrimental in limiting the number of role models available, but can also be used ironically to draw attention to this very same lack of role models, and the quality of those few that are available. Pratchett’s writing style relies heavily on the use of intertextuality and parody, and many of his characters are either stereotypes, archetypes or direct references to specific characters. Magrat, Nanny and Granny witches are introduced as a parody of the three witches in William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and their later narratives borrow from other literary and popular culture texts.

Pratchett uses the intertextual references and the knowledge the reader has of the original texts to make Discworld the “world and a mirror of worlds” he has

²³¹ Zipes *Don’t Bet on the Prince*, xi

described it. The humour in the books often stems from the characters acting against the expectations the reader has of the stereotype. The witches are not an evil other but protagonists and heroes, the mothers are not defined only through their children, and negative stereotypes such as the spinster and the non-sacrificial mother are shown in a positive light. In doing this he reveals and breaks the sexist role models offered by fantasy literature and fairy tales, but at the same time the characters are very much defined by these same stereotypes.

Discworld combines the subversive qualities of its two genres, fantasy and humour, to offer an “alternative reality” such as described by Armitt, a world in which women can take the central role free of the reality of the society. Lancre, as seen by the reader, is very much a women’s world. The stories are told from the point of view of women, and not only the heroes, but also often their nemeses are women – Queen of the Elves in *Lords and Ladies* and *Wee Free Men*, Lilith Weatherwax in *Witches Abroad*, Lady Felmet in *Wyrd Sisters*. It is a carnival where the fool can be the king and the women can gain centrality and hold power over men. It is, however, only within this carnival that women can be powerful. The symbolic carnaval begins in *Wyrd Sisters* where the witches put a fool on the throne, turning the hierarchy upside down. Women are still tied to nature and excluded from the masculine culture, even if in the carnivalesque Lancre women come out on the top of the hierarchy. The non-magical crones, the women who were described as the real victims of the witch hunts, are left outside the carnival and therefore remain powerless.

Furthermore, the carnival does not extend to the entire Discworld, but is limited to Lancre, and the witch books. The wizards, when entering Lancre, become powerless under the thrall of the Queen of Elves and ineffectual in comparison to the witches. In return the witches, when entering the city-state of Ankh-Morpork, which is

the wizard's realm, may be able to maintain their superiority for a while, but are unable permanently to affect the natural order of things. When Granny leaves Ankh-Morpork and Unseen University, the women who were allowed into the Unseen University are forgotten. Outside Lancre is the world of culture where men are still in power. The books set in Ankh-Morpork, most importantly the City Watch series, are inhabited by male characters, and while there are female characters in the novels, they are often only in secondary roles and positions of lesser power than the men. The centrality of women in the narrative of the Lancre books serves then to emphasise and strengthen the patriarchal status quo of the rest of the Discworld books.

Pratchett does, however, use the witch as a stereotype to break stereotypes, the unruly woman who refuses to adhere to the roles assigned to her. In *Carpe Jugulum*, where the three witches have become four as Agnes joins them, the women's assigned roles are put into question. Magrat becomes a mother and Nanny is forced to accept the role of the crone when Agnes joins them, but this leaves Granny without a role and when she refuses to simply step away and die, the clear-cut division of roles is broken and all four women abandon the embrace the role of the witch that becomes the symbol of a woman who is not defined by just one role.

The witch as the symbol of the power discovered through discovering the (female) self, nevertheless holds also negative connotations because although the witches are not othered within the narrative, the witch as a character and a stereotype is an Other. Moreover, the women in Discworld books only hold power through the supernatural, through magic that then becomes coded as feminine, and this in itself codes women as non-human. The unruliness of the witches, their reluctance to adhere to their given roles, is countered by the control they must maintain of themselves, the feminine magic inside them, turning evil if they allow it to break free. Pratchett's

witches then remain an Other, non-(hu)man, even when they are the protagonists of the books, and although Pratchett gives the women a voice, the voice is not necessarily equally loud as that of the men.

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