Which witch is which?

A feminist analysis of
Terry Pratchett's Discworld witches

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Foreword

The researching and writing of this work took place while I was working full time, and so took time away from my family. I would therefore like to give my great appreciation to my husband, Hans, and my daughter, Emelie, who were understanding when mummy had to "go work on the computer". Many a Pratchett novel was re-read to a background of cartoons, which is perhaps why a couple of cartoon characters made cameo appearances in this essay. Thanks also to my in-laws, Margareta and Arne Andersson, who gave me childfree afternoons when I could concentrate.

I would also like to thank the head of the English Department at the time, Monica Karlsson, who allowed me to read the course when it was not officially offered. Thanks also go to Timothy Cox for taking time to read this essay and give helpful feedback. Last but in no way least, a huge thank-you to my tutor, Kristina Hildebrand, who would willingly spend hours talking Pratchett.

Abstract

Terry Pratchett, writer of humorous, satirical fantasy, is very popular in Britain. His Discworld series, which encompasses over 30 novels, has witches as protagonists in one of the major sub-series, currently covering eight novels. His first "witch" novel, *Equal Rites*, in which he pits organised, misogynist wizards against disorganised witches, led him to being accused of feminist writing. This work investigates this claim by first outlining the development of the historical witch stereotype or discourse and how that relates to the modern, feminist views of witches. Then Pratchett's treatment of his major witch characters is examined and analysed in terms of feminist and poststructuralist literary theory. It appears that, while giving the impression of supporting feminism and the feminist views of witches, Pratchett's witches actually reinforce the patriarchal view of women.

Keywords: Terry Pratchett, Discworld, witches, speculative fiction, feminism, poststructuralism, discourses.

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‘Which witch is which,’ said one of the girls cheerfully.
‘Anyone can do that pun, Lucy Warbeck,’ said Annagramma without looking round. ‘It’s not funny and it’s not clever.’
Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky (London: Transworld, 2004).

Introduction

Throughout history, the image and understanding of “the witch” has changed dramatically, and is continuing to change even now. In Europe, the Judeo-Christian patriarchal society ensured the transformation of the witch into our current stereotype of children-eating, black-dressed, evil-looking and just plain evil witch of modern fairy tales, cartoons and myth. Every Halloween she makes her scripted appearance in order to frighten small children and amuse adults.

However, a slow but growing movement, begun sometime in the middle of the last century, is working to redeem and reclaim the witch image – redefining her role and appearance. Wicca, feminist witches and other modern witches seek to define the witch archetype as something positive and multifaceted rather than all negative. That it is women, on the whole, who are performing this uncoordinated ritual of redemption, is not surprising. What is the focus of this essay is a man with a wide scope of influence who may be claimed to actively take part in this process, namely a writer of popular fiction, Terry Pratchett.

On the whole, most male writers of popular fiction who write female characters tend to stick to the usual, safe stereotypes. Even when casting a woman as the protagonist or creating strong female characters, male authors do not necessarily avoid misogyny. The misogyny, or the lack thereof, in the texts often remains a subject of debate, as in Stephen King’s case[1].

However, Terry Pratchett has largely escaped this debate, mainly through his having escaped feminist criticism entirely. What makes this oversight interesting is the fact that Pratchett has actually used witches as protagonists in a number of his books.

It has been alleged that Pratchett has a feminist slant to his writing: “Pratchett’s feminism never becomes strident, and seems impossible to dispute; this novel [*Equal Rites*] was even serialised on BBC Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour*.”[2] That Pratchett has a pro-feminist slant appears to be the case considering his frequent musing over women’s rights in *Equal*

[1] See Kathleen Margaret Lant & Theresa Thompson, eds., Imaging the Worst: Stephen King and the representation of women (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).
[2] Andrew M. Butler, The Pocket Essential Terry Pratchett (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2001), 28.

Rites and other novels, for example in *A Hat Full of Sky*: "Tiffany smiled. It should be 'sorority', not 'fraternity'. We're sisters, mistress, not brothers."[3]

Yet, Pratchett's feminism does not appear to be congruent with itself. Whilst touting women's rights, he seems to be, at the same time, reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes and mores. Pratchett's Lucy Warbeck may be right in wondering just which witch is which.

This essay will examine Pratchett's feminism through his treatment of witches in the eight 'witch' novels of the Discworld series: Equal Rites (1987), Wyrd Sisters (1988), Witches Abroad (1991), Lords and Ladies (1992), Maskerade (1995), Carpe Jugulum (1998), The Wee Free Men (2003) and A Hat Full of Sky (2004).

Starting with a brief synopsis of the historical development of the witch stereotype or discourse and its link to the literary stereotype/discourse, this essay will then detail Pratchett's characterisation of witches and attempt to show that while appearing to be pro-feminist, Pratchett's treatment of witches seems to be incongruous, revealing an underlying patriarchal paradigm. It seems that while superficially adhering to the feminist witch views, at a deeper level his characterisations actually reinforce the patriarchal view.

[3] Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky (London: Transworld, 2004) 326. Further references will be in the text as HFS.

An Overview of the witch stereotype in history

The concept of the witch has been with humanity for untold millennia. Exactly when the idea or concept formed and what it looked like will be forever lost in the mists of time. One thing we do know is that the concept of the witch has changed over time. There are numerous scholarly works charting the history of witches and witchcraft, mainly during the last two millennia, and so only a brief sketch of that history is given here.

One of the early mentions of witches lies within the Judeo-Christian influence, being found in Exodus 22:18. God tells Moses on Mount Sinai: "You must not allow a witch to live."[4] Later, in 1 Samuel 28, we find the king Saul who, having himself banned and persecuted witches, puts on a disguise and goes to consult, "a woman who has a familiar spirit".[5] The woman is commonly known as the witch of Endor and, having conjured up the dead prophet Samuel for Saul, she shows compassion and hospitality to the shaken Saul. No mention is made in the Bible of the source of a witch's power, and whether she worships some kind of god or magical entity.

Moving into the Christian era, St. Augustine (354-430), one of the most influential Christian writers and saints, categorically condemned witches and witchcraft. He spent his life battling heresy and is a well-known misogynist in religious feminist circles. According to Brian Levack[6], in his comprehensive historical collection of witchcraft documents, Augustine addressed the witchcraft heresy in a number of his works and decreed that all who practised witchcraft were heretics as well as pagans. Augustine influenced both medieval Catholic and Protestant witch hunters.

The first great Catholic canon that deals with witches is the *Episcopi*, which was most likely written some time in the ninth century. It was compiled with other canons in the twelfth century by the monk Gratian, and became, "one of the most famous and controversial texts in the history of witchcraft."[7] Although not widely used until the fifteenth century, it was seen as being sceptical of witches and witchcraft. It states:

> It is also not to be admitted that some wicked women, perverted by the Devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves, in the hours of night, to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans,

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[4] The Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha (Avon: Oxford UP and Cambridge UP, 1989) The Old Testament, 65.
[5] Bible, The Old Testament, 255.
[6] Brian P. Levack, The Witchcraft Sourcebook (London: Routledge, 2004), 27.
[7] Levack, 33.

> and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of her mistress, and to be summoned to her service on certain nights.[8]

It goes on to point out that other people who believe in witches are led from the true faith into error, that is, heresy. However, most telling is his description of the error of faith, namely, "that there is anything of divinity or *power* except the one God"[9] (my italics).

Moving on, the 14th century saw the Irish trial of Dame Alice Kyteler in 1324. That trial,

> marks one of the milestones in the development of the early modern stereotype of the witch. […] Dame Alice and her associates were accused of sacrificing animals to a demon and using powders, ointments, and lotions to commit murder and persuade young men whom she had infatuated by magical means to give their possessions to her. The accusation that she had had relations with an incubus demon also was a standard charge.[10]

Already aspects of the stereotypical witch of modern fairy tales can be seen.

The next great and influential publication concerning witches, issued in 1486, was the famous, or infamous, *Malleus Maleficarum*, written primarily by the Dominican monk Heinrich Kramer who, according to Levack[11], was obsessed with the sexual aspects of witchcraft. This document challenges and dismisses the more sceptical texts, stating firmly that witches and witchcraft exist and are a threat to the church.

> In this discussion Kramer contends that the canon *Episcopi […]* which asserted that witches claiming to go out at night with Diana were deceived by the Devil, was not a denial of the reality of witchcraft. The second theme is that the Devil needed witches as well as the permission of God to perform their destructive work. The third theme is the highly misogynistic argument that witchcraft was practised mainly by women whose intellectual feebleness, moral weakness, and sexual passion led them to become witches.[12]

Malleus Maleficarum also dismisses the 'erroneous' belief in the power of goddesses and wrests power away from Diana, putting it squarely in the hands of a male demon, the Devil and God – all seen as male in the patriarchal Christian church. Patriarchy has thus removed

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[8] H.C. Lea, Episcopi, translated in "Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft" (Philadelphia, 1954) as quoted in Levack, 34.
[9] Lea, as quoted in Levack, 34.
[10] Levack, 39.
[11] Levack, 58.
[12] Levack, 57-58.

any residual power from women by setting Diana firmly in the power hierarchy, with the Devil, and ultimately God, above her. Interestingly, the publication also depicts women as victims; led astray by the Devil because of their feebleness – a replication of the Devil's deception of Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* chapter 4, "*Here follows the way whereby witches copulate with those devils known as incubi*" and "*Chapter 6. How witches impeded and prevent the power of procreation*"[13] seem to present a neat explanation of men's victimisation in the face of demonic women who cuckold them and cause them to be impotent:

> Husbands have actually seen Incubus devils swiving [copulating with] their wives, although they have thought that they were not devils but men. (…) Intrinsically they [witches] cause it [impotence] in two ways. First, when they directly prevent erection of the member which is accommodated to fructification. (…) Extrinsically they cause it at times by means of images, or by the eating of herbs (…). But it must not be thought that it is by virtue of these things that a man is made impotent, but by the occult power of devils' illusions witches by this means procure such impotence, namely that they cause a man to be unable to copulate, or a woman to conceive.[14]

It seems that witches became a convenient scapegoat for men's sexual problems, yet it was not their own power or actions that caused the problems. The power lay with the Incubus devils (male) that governed the witches.

The 16th and 17th centuries saw an explosion of witch persecution. According to Levack[15], William Perkins' treatise of 1608, *The Damned Art of Witchcraft*, was highly influential in England and reflected St Augustine's position. Perkins stated that it was the pact with the devil that was the witch's error, and not merely any evil acts, *maleficium*. He also noted that, although men could be witches, women outnumbered men. King James I of England was also very influential and took a very hard line in his treatise on witchcraft written in 1597. Even most of his contemporaries found his trials and punishments harsh, according to Levack.[16]

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[13] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, The Malleus Maleficarum, ed. Montague Summers, as quoted in Levack, 66-67.
[14] Kramer and Sprenger, as quoted in Levack, 67.
[15] Levack, 94.
[16] Levack, 140.

Another influential treatise of the 17th century was by Pierre de Lancre, a French magistrate who presided over witch trials in Spain. He described the witches' Sabbath in detail, especially the sexual aspects:

> De Lancre plays the role of eye-witness and observer, and in describing the ceremonies of the Sabbath, especially the dances […] he also assumes the role of ethnographer, showing how dancing reflected Spanish traditions of the people of Labourd. Like many other demonologists, de Lancre emphasizes the fact that the great majority of the witches whom he tried were women."[17]

At the same time, the famous Lancashire trials took place in England. Marion Gibson's deconstruction of witchcraft trial documents,[18] which examines the trial of Alizon Device in Lancashire, shows how historical records concerning witch trials and anti-witchcraft pamphlets contain inconsistencies that raise doubt as to their accuracy. She quotes a description of the stereotypical witch as written by Reginald Scott in 1584[19]:

> One sort of such as are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, plae, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious and papists[…]These go from house to house, and from doore to doore for a pot full of milke, yest, drinke, pottage, or some such releefe; without the which they could hardlie live[…]It falleth out many times, that neither their necessities, nor their expectation is answered or served.[20]

Scott wrote the treatise, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which was published in 1584. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Scott was, according to Levack[21], sceptical of witches and witchcraft. His treatise examined the social aspect of women, as reflected in his description of the witch stereotype, and contended that witches were no more than old, poor women who inconveniently placed a burden on their community. Gibson points out that the entire concept of the witch is suspect:

> There is no stable thing called 'witchcraft' which lies hidden beneath its various constructions. […]This is borne out by the depressing realisation that we can never know what witchcraft meant to a witch because there are no unmediated

[17] Levack, 104-105.
[18] Marion Gibson, Witchcraft Trials – Stories of Early English Witches (London: Routledge, 1999).
[19] Gibson, 80.
[20] Reginald Scott (as quoted in Gibson, 80).
[21] Levack, 285.

> accounts of it, so that 'witchcraft itself' in that sense no longer exists, and never did exist in writing.[22]

Gibson seems to be saying that witches and witchcraft were social constructs, without external validity or 'truth'. Scott's treatise essentially challenged those constructs, thus destabilising them.

The persecution of witches, at least by governmental or ecclesiastical bodies, trickled to an end in the 18th century, and the last witch trial in England was carried out in 1717. According to Levack, "the English witchcraft statute of 1604 and the Scottish statute of 1563 were both repealed by the British parliament in 1736."[23] This was not a public denial of witchcraft, however, as the public's belief in witchcraft continued.

Historical literary images and the witch discourse

This judiciary reprieve did not prevent the public and the media from continuing to persecute witches. Plays, and later novels, helped people to form their image or stereotype of witches. In poststructuralist literary theory, the witch stereotype could be more accurately termed the witch 'discourse'. Hans Bertens defines a discourse, a term coined by Foucault, as:

> a loose structure of interconnected assumptions that makes knowledge possible. (…) Such a discourse, then, produces claims to knowledge and it is these claims – which we accept – that give it its power. There is then an intimate relationship between knowledge and power. Knowledge is a way to define and categorize others.[24]

This discourse, which has been around, although evolving, for millennia, was accepted as 'fact' and used by authors. Levack summarizes the appeal of dramatic representation of witches and witchcraft:

> Ever since classical antiquity, dramatists have used the theme of witchcraft in their literary works. The human exercise of mysterious or supernatural evil has always appealed to audiences and offers the dramatist numerous possibilities for character and plot development.[25]

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[22] Gibson, 117.
[23] Levack, 171.
[24] Hans Bertens, Literary Theory: The Basics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004) 154.
[25] Levack, 319.

Levack goes on to say how the historical accuracy of the literary portrayals of witches is problematic since playwrights had no need to be historically authentic. That said, those representations present to us the stereotype or discourse which became part of the culture and helped to shape the public's image and opinions of witches. Therefore, although perhaps not an accurate historical description of the discourse prior to the work, the literary representations could be seen as an accurate description of the subsequent, evolved discourse, formed by the work itself. As Bertens points out, "literature does not simply reflect relations of power, but actively participates in the consolidation and/or construction of discourses and ideologies […] Literature is not simply a product of history, it also actively *makes* history."[26] This creation of history can be traced briefly through some influential literature that has influenced society's view of witches.

The Latin poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace) of the first century BCE describes a witch called Canidia in his work *Fifth Episode*, whom he describes as worshipping and being aided by Diana, goddess of the night. Levack summarises Horace's treatment of Canidia:

> In depicting Canidia, Horace contributes to the creation of the classical witch-figure, which Ovid and Seneca had already helped to form. That image was enduring, and it influences early modern depictions of the witch, especially during the period of the Renaissance, when works of classical authors had great authority and influence. Horace's depiction of Canidia was not intended to instill fear of magic and witchcraft in his audience. His grotesque image of the witch […] is intended to mock and debunk witchcraft, not to give it credibility.[27]

The 'classical witch-figure' can be seen as the emerging literary discourse of witches.

In the heyday of the witch trials, when the theme of witches was popular, Thomas Middleton wrote *The Witch* (1616). Levack states: "The play is set in Ravenna, and the chief witch in the play is named Hecate, after the witch of classical mythology. […] [Middleton] was successful in familiarizing his literate audience with contemporary witch beliefs."[28]

Any discussion of literary witches has to include the most famous, namely those of Shakespeare. His three most famous witches open the play *Macbeth*, and although Shakespeare does not include any description of the witches, their early portrayals would most likely have reflected the prevailing discourse. There is even some speculation that Middleton had added Hecate and her scenes to the play.[29] The most famous witch scene is, of

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[26] Bertens, 177.
[27] Levack, 22.
[28] Levack, 329.
[29] "Hecate." Wikipedia. 2005. Wikipedia The free encyclopedia. 12 Sept. 2005 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hecate>.

course, Act IV, Scene 1, the "Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble"[30] scene, where the three witches get the approval of Hecate and meet Macbeth.

Portrayals of witches in popular culture include far too many works to cite here, but the discourse or stereotype, as honed during the witch trials and early literature, lives on today, albeit under threat from emerging alternative images. One well-known image still in use is Witch Hazel from the Bugs Bunny cartoons by Warner Brothers. She is described thus:

> Her rotund, green-skinned body is wrapped in plain, blue cloth and supported by twiglike legs. She has wild, black hair (from which hairpins fly whenever she moves), and she wears a crumpled black hat. Her nose and chin jut bulbously from her face, and her mouth sports a single tooth.[31]

The witch stereotype of the 20th century, as fed to children through cartoons and Halloween costumes, is the direct result of literature and theology over the centuries that have built up a pervasive discourse both in literature and in society. This discourse, or claim to knowledge, has quite a lot of power, and, as Bertens says:

> It does not take much effort to show that in many cases so-called knowledge reflects a relation of power between the subject (the knower) and the object (that which the knower knows or studies) rather than what we would call truth.[32]

With such a powerful and negative discourse about witches, it seems unlikely that any modern woman would actively choose to call herself a witch; yet many do.

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[30] William Shakespeare, Macbeth Act IV Scene 1, Line 35, ed. A. R. Braunmuller (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) 192.
[31] "Witch Hazel (Looney Tunes)." Wikipedia. 2005. Wikipedia The free encyclopedia. 12 Sept. 2005 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch_Hazel_%28Looney_Tunes%29>.
[32] Bertens, 155.

From the historical discourse to modern witches

Given the prevailing witch discourse, evolved over millennia, it is appropriate now to pose the question feminist writer Kathryn Rountree asks at the beginning of one of her articles:

> Why, we might well ask ourselves, should any woman today see any point in calling herself a witch when she knows full well that the witch of mythology was a misogynistic invention and that the brutal process of witch-labelling led, in Europe, to three centuries of gynocide?[33]

She tells of a large "movement growing in contemporary Western societies, who are re-examining the witch and the goddess as images of womanhood."[34] It seems that women, especially feminists, are attempting to redeem or reinvent the witch discourse, or create a ""reverse" discourse"[35].

As was shown in the previous historical overview, the creation and vilification of the negative witch image is a mainly male activity, with the primary purpose of gaining and maintaining power. Rountree comments on this:

> By invoking the symbol of "goddess", they are recalling the pre-patriarchal, goddess-worshipping societies of Europe from the Paleolithic through until approximately four thousand years ago in which, they claim, women were valued as highly as men and social relations were based on the full participation in society of both sexes. They trace a direct connection between the demise of the Goddess and the demise of women's position in society. The shift to patriarchy and patriarchal religions, with the eventual dominance of Judeo-Christian monotheism, they claim, meant that women were alienated not only from social and political power but from the powerful aspects of themselves.[36]

She goes on to make the point that, "The purpose of invoking such societies is to make the points that patriarchy and god-worship are not normative."[37]

Another feminist writer, Diane Purkiss, includes witches in the umbrella term of Paganism, which she states is "the fastest-growing religion in America, and perhaps in the UK as well."[38] There are a number of independent modern witch movements, and Purkiss claims

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[33] Kathryn Rountree, "The New Witch of the West: Feminists Reclaim the Crone", Journal of Popular Culture, 30(1997):4: 211-229, 211.
[34] Rountree, 211.
[35] Bertens, 154.
[36] Rountree, 213.
[37] Rountree, 213.
[38] Diane Purkiss, The Witch in History – Early modern and twentieth-century representations (London: Routledge, 1996), 31.

that this diversity is not seen as a problem by witches since it facilitates the evasion of the pitfalls of organised religions.[39] One of the better-known witch organisations is Wicca, and the modern version of Wicca can be said to have been founded by Gerald Gardner through the publishing of his book *Witchcraft Today* in 1954. Being founded by a man, and being based, as many think, on the occult rituals of Aleister Crowley,[40] the modern Wicca organisation reflects many elements of patriarchy. Rountree comments on the 'traditional' modern Wicca's reaction to feminist witches:

> Traditional Wicca covens were horrified, writing off feminist witchcraft as populated by "a load of lesbians." Such a dismissal of women who conduct their spiritual practices independently of men points up not only the homophobia of Gardnerian witchcraft but also the fact that a fear of women's independent power was as entrenched in this witchcraft tradition as it is in other religions.[41]

It appears that the issue of women having power is contentious, as is its inversion, that is, women being powerless, or victims of power. Rountree responds to the "witch as harmless victim" approach used by some historians:

> From a feminist perspective […] To interpret witches purely as victims, as many historians […] have done, is to ignore or deny the challenge these women represented to the dominant institutions within their societies. Feminist scholars have redefined "witch" to mean a woman – whether a sixteenth century village wise woman or a 1990s feminist – who challenges patriarchal control and claims independent knowledge and power.[42]

She also states that not only were the women who were accused of witchcraft also accused of healing, but also, "of sexual crimes against men and of being *organized*"[43] (my italics). Women were in no way supposed to be powerful or organised, as that would threaten the patriarchal powers of the church and state.

Rountree ends with mentioning the triple aspect of the goddess image,[44] which is a common image and one reflected in Hecate herself. The female trinity of Maiden – Mother – Crone is not palatable to a patriarchal system. The first two can be of some use to men: the Maiden serving as a source of sexual attraction and ultimate object of possession, and the

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[39] See Purkiss, 31.
[40] See: Rountree, 216-217 and "Wicca." Wikipedia. 2005. Wikipedia The free encyclopedia. 12 Sept. 2005 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicca>.
[41] Rountree, 217.
[42] Rountree, 221-222.
[43] Rountree, 223.
[44] Rountree, 226.

Mother serving as the bearer of heirs. The Crone, a woman past childbearing, is of no use to men, and can easily become a threat. Never one to leave pagan images alone and present a threat, the Catholic Church combined and reworked the first two aspects into the image of Mary, the virgin mother of God – pure and good, and the third into the witch – tainted and evil. This can be related to Levi-Strauss's binary oppositions. As Bertens explains:

> Classification in terms of such oppositions, in which the opposites are related to each other because they express either the presence or the absence of one and the same thing (…) seems a natural thing to do (…) In some cases, the meanings that were attached to the original opposites and that found expression in their cultural materialization were clearly rooted in the real world: it makes sense to attach a positive value to things that are edible and it also makes sense to attach a negative value to things that make you sick or will kill you. In other cases, however, those meanings are as arbitrary as the relationship between a linguistic sign and its real-world referent and are based not on factuality (as in the case of edibility), but on what we would call superstition.[45]

Binary oppositions are not neutral but contain, as intimated above, an inherent power imbalance, as developed in poststructuralism by Derrida:

> One of these terms [in a binary oppositional pair] always functions as the centre – it is *privileged*, in poststructuralist terms. Some terms have always been privileged – good, truth, masculinity, purity, whiteness – others may be found either in the centre or in the margin. (…) [and] the privileging of certain terms can easily escape our notice.[46]

Some women, and particularly feminists, are challenging various binary oppositions such as sexless virgin (privileged) versus witch (marginalised), or patriarchy (privileged) versus matriarchy (marginalised). They are rediscovering and reworking the witch and goddess images into ones that empower women. However, Purkiss maintains that:

> The myth of the Goddess, with its insistence on an identity grounded in the maternal body, betrays its origins in male fantasy. Although modern witches claim to be recovering a pure matriarchal vision from the remote past, such a claim cannot really be sustained once their borrowings from more recent texts and discourses have been traced. […] The Goddess was originally discovered – or invented – by male scholars serving an agenda which was far from feminist. The myth of an originary matriarchy serves to explain and justify women's subordination through a narrative in which men wrest control from women because women are oppressive and incompetent.[47]

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[45] Bertens, 62-63.
[46] Bertens, 129.
[47] Purkiss, 33-34.

Therefore, what at first appears like a relatively straightforward act of redemption, or a reversal of a discourse, is not as simple as it seems. Feminists who justify their reworked images of the witch and goddess still seem to be reinforcing a patriarchal construct.

There is also a danger of the feminists' reworking the triple goddess and witch archetypes to suit their own needs yet presenting it as fact. Purkiss states that the story popular with feminists of the witch during the "Burning Times" is just that, a myth.[48] She goes on to say:

> The myth has become important, not because of its historical truth, but because of its mythic significance. What is that significance? It is a story with clear oppositions. Everyone can tell who is innocent and who is guilty, who is good and who is bad, who is oppressed and who the oppressor. […] This is, above all, a narrative of the Fall, of paradise lost. It is a story about how perfect our lives would be – how perfect we women would be, patient, kind, self-sufficient – if it were not for patriarchy and its violence. It is often linked with another lapsarian myth, the myth of an original matriarchy, through the themes of mother-daughter learning and of matriarchal religions as sources of witchcraft. This witch-story explains the origins and nature of good and evil. It is a religious myth, and the religion it defines is radical feminism.[49]

It is interesting to note that Rountree points out that the tendency to dichotomise things into polar opposites is a characteristic of patriarchal societies. She gives such examples as good/evil, active/passive, self/other and light/dark, among others, and states that modern witches reject this patriarchal concept of dualism. They favour a more holistic view where such positive/negative dichotomies are seen as too simplistic and limiting.[50] However, Purkiss' 'radical feminist myth', or religion as she calls it, is, on the one hand, opposed to dichotomies and supportive of a holistic attitude, yet on the other hand, appears to be built, perhaps unconsciously, on a dichotomy, that of matriarchy good / patriarchy bad. It is still a myth of good and evil, a discourse where the privileged term is reversed, or with the problem externalised to a male / female binary opposition. It seems as if they are in fact perpetuating dichotomic thinking and are merely reversing the power balance of the binary opposition. It could perhaps also be said that this tendency to binary oppositions in the male-dominated poststructuralist literary theory is, in itself, a discourse or construct based on patriarchy, and a

[48] See Purkiss, 8.
[49] Purkiss, 8.
[50] Rountree, 214.

truly feminist or perhaps gender-free poststructuralist literary theory would not contain such binary oppositions.

Despite modern witches, of whatever inclination, trying to redeem and/or rework the image of the witch, fictional portrayals of witches in literature tend to stick to the popular stereotypes or pervasive discourse. As Purkiss notes, "When we say 'witch', we can hardly help thinking of *Macbeth's* witches, however we judge them politically or aesthetically. It is hard for a literary critic to hear any new story without at once trying to fold it back into the old."[51] However, she also points out that the rise in popularity of witches on the stage coincided with their decline as victims of persecution, and that, "The more witches were represented on stage, the more sceptical the London populace grew".[52] Purkiss traces the development of the witch on stage, through Elizabethan times, noting from that era that, "the surviving stage witch is almost purely Shakespearean. In virtually every one of his thirty-seven plays, witchcraft is a topic, a metaphor, a joke, a story, a half-formulated reference point, a piece of the plot.[53] She also concludes that, "Witches and fairies go with thatched cottages, knot gardens, maypoles on the village green and the other appurtenances of the organic society, village-style."[54]

Purkiss is, however, quite scathing in her opinion of Shakespeare and his witches:

> The witches of *Macbeth* are a low-budget, frankly exploitative collage of randomly chosen bits of witch-lore, selected not for thematic significance but for its sensation value. […] Shakespeare buries popular culture under a thick topdressing of exploitative sensationalism, unblushingly strip-mining both popular culture and every learned text he can lay his hands on for the sake of creating an arresting stage event.[55]

In her conclusion, Purkiss states that, "despite the subtleties of radical feminists, historians and modern witches, the dominant image of the witch is still of a shrieking hag on a broomstick, the Wicked Witch of the West."[56]

Bertens relates that in feminist literary criticism, some of the first questions asked regard the roles of women in the text and the themes to which they are connected. He lists various common female stereotypes and states that, "these characters clearly were

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[51] Purkiss, 180.
[52] Purkiss, 181.
[53] Purkiss, 189.
[54] Purkiss, 190.
[55] Purkiss, 207.
[56] Purkiss, 276.

constructions, put together […] to serve a not-so-hidden purpose: the continued social and cultural domination of males."[57]

Whether Pratchett falls into the trap of creating such characters or not will be examined. Perhaps he, like Shakespeare, is "unblushingly strip-mining both popular culture and every learned text he can lay his hands on for the sake of creating an arresting"[58] novel at the expense of creating authentic female characters. Andrew M. Butler states that, "the Discworld [can be seen] as a secondary world which gives Pratchett a comic distance from reality in order to criticise the world of the everyday."[59] Whether Pratchett takes that opportunity to criticise patriarchal stereotypes or perpetuate them will be investigated. As a preparation for this, a brief account of Pratchett's literary style is provided.

An introduction to Terry Pratchett's writing style

Since he is, "Suffering under the triple damnation of writing popular, humorous fantasy, Pratchett has largely been ignored by academia and the serious press,"[60] according to Andrew M. Butler. Pratchett's distinctive style of writing relies heavily on satire and parody, and any stereotype is fair game. As John Clute says:

> It is almost as though he were some eighteenth-century composer – like Handel or Bach – for whom parody served not as a weapon but as a straightforward, value-neutral compositional technique. […] Pratchett's 'borrowings', like Handel's, are in no sense simple steals of material; nor are they one-to-one mappings that operate under an exaggeration transform, so that a muted cry in the original becomes a bathetic bleat in the parody[…] His parodies never make a 'point'; their incipits are never mentioned. Hence the deliciousness of his first novel.[61]

This 'technique' of Pratchett's means that defining his literary style can be perhaps best served by giving examples. A characteristic example of Pratchett's satirical wit can be seen in *Equal Rites* when Granny follows some dwarves back to where they live:

> The dwarf halls rang to the sound of hammers, although mainly for effect. Dwarves found it hard to think without the sound of hammers, which they found

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[57] Bertens, 97.
[58] Purkiss, 207.
[59] Andrew M. Butler, "Theories of Humour", Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature, eds. Andrew M. Butler et al. (Maryland: Old Earth Books, 2004) 69.
[60] Andrew M. Butler et al., "Preface", Butler et al., viii.
[61] John Clute, "Coming of Age", Butler et al, 19-20.

> soothing, so well-off dwarves in the clerical professions paid goblins to hit small ceremonial anvils, just to maintain the correct dwarvish image.[62]

Pratchett's approach to description is also distinctive, and seems to run along the lines of, 'why say something in one boring word when lots of words can be funny.' Some examples of his humorous descriptions are:

> curiosity not only killed the cat but threw it in the river with weights tied to its feet. The lodgings were on the top floor next to the well-guarded premises of a respectable dealer in stolen property because, as Granny had heard, good fences make good neighbours. (ER,164-165)

> She [a fairy godmother] was not someone to use extreme language, but it was possible to be sure that when she deployed a mild term like 'bee in her bonnet' she was using it to define someone whom she believed to be several miles over the madness horizon and accelerating.[63]

Pratchett often makes allusions or references to other texts, and some of his books are openly based on other literary works. He addresses this in his Author's Note at the beginning of *Lords and Ladies*: "what took place [in *Wyrd Sisters*] was a plot not unadjacent to that of a famous play about a Scottish king."[64] The play performed in *Wyrd Sisters* is not unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and *Lords and Ladies* itself has a number of similarities to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *Maskerade,* we see parallels with Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Phantom of the Opera*, and other parallels have been drawn with other works.[65] With Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Pratchett openly borrows the opening dialogue for *Wyrd Sisters*:

> As the cauldron bubbled an eldritch voice shrieked: 'When shall we three meet again?'
>
> There was a pause.
>
> Finally one voice said, in far more ordinary tones: 'Well, I can do next Tuesday.'[66]

Pratchett also alludes to characters from other works, for example in *Witches Abroad,* Gollum from Tolkien's *The Hobbit* makes an appearance (WA, 59-60), and popular fables and fairy

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[62] Terry Pratchett, Equal Rites (London: Transworld, 1987) 142. Further references will be in the text as ER.
[63] Terry Pratchett, Witches Abroad (London: Transworld, 1994) 16. Further references will be in the text as WA.
[64] Terry Pratchett, Lords and Ladies (London: Transworld, 1993) 5. Further references will be in the text as LL.
[65] See: Butler, The Pocket Essential Terry Pratchett.
[66] Terry Pratchett, Wyrd Sisters (London: Transworld, 1989) 5. Further references will be in the text as WS.

tales are also used, such as Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, the Three Little Pigs and Goldilocks.

Other allusions Pratchett makes are to non-fictional phenomena, for example, the stone circle called 'The King's Men' in between Great Rollright and Little Rollright in England which is said to be magical, partly because no one can accurately count the number of stones in the circle:

> The stone was about the same height as a tall man, and made of bluish tinted rock. It was considered intensely magical because, although there was only one of it, *no-one had ever been able to count it*; if it saw anyone looking at it speculatively, it shuffled behind them. It was the most self-effacing monolith ever discovered. (WS, 88)

He also alludes to some well-known airlines (TWA, BA and Pan Am):

> 'And we could call ourselves …' she paused. As always on the Discworld, which was right on the very edge of unreality, little bits of realness crept in whenever someone's mind was resonating properly. This happened now.
> '…Three Witches Airborne,' she said. 'How about that?'
> '*Broomsticks* Airborne,' said Magrat. 'Or Pan … air …'
> 'There's no need to bring religion into it,' sniffed Granny. (WA, 86-87)

Even documents pertaining to witches and other demons are fair game (or easy targets): "'This is from Ossory's *Malleus Maleficarum*,' he [the vampire Count] said. 'Why do you look so surprised? I helped *write* it, you silly man!'"[67]

Pratchett's satirical style happily borrows from, or alludes to, other works and thus makes his works entertaining with frequent hidden and not-so-hidden references. Yet, at the same time, he is also making philosophical and political statements and judgments. For example, in his treatment of wizards he highlights and ridicules, and thus satirizes, their academic hierarchy and usefulness. Pratchett states, in not so many words, that if one wants to learn something, a university is the last place one should go. Organised religions are treated similarly, with priests being ridiculed and beliefs being mocked. Pratchett is following in the footsteps of many in the British satirical tradition who have ridiculed the great and the powerful. He uses satire for social commentary, and witches are not exempt:

> In the Ramtops witches were accorded a status similar to that which other cultures gave to nuns, or tax collectors, or cesspit cleaners. That is to say, they were respected, sometimes admired, generally applauded for doing a job which

[67] Terry Pratchett, Carpe Jugulum (London: Transworld, 1999) 238. Further references will be in the text as CJ.

> logically had to be done, but people never felt quite comfortable in the same room with them. (ER, 52)

It is Pratchett's treatment of witches, and ultimately the nature of his alleged feminism, which will be explored here.

Terry Pratchett's witches

It is Purkiss' enduring image of the witch that we first meet in Terry Pratchett's Discworld. The first witch we encounter, Esmerelda Weatherwax, otherwise known as Granny or Esme, sets the tone for all other witches that follow. Purkiss' village-style witch of the thatched cottage and herb garden is what we find in the Discworld, at least in the form of Granny, but of course with a Pratchett flavour:

> The witch's cottage consisted of so many extensions and lean-tos that it was difficult to see what the original building had looked like, or even if there had ever been one. In the summer it was surrounded by dense beds of what Granny loosely called 'the Herbs' – strange plants, hairy or squat or twining, with curious flowers or vivid fruits or unpleasantly bulging pods. Only Granny knew what they were all for, and any wood-pigeon hungry enough to attack them generally emerged giggling to itself and bumping into things (or, sometimes, never emerged at all). (ER, 30)

Granny Weatherwax also conforms to the somewhat inaccurate stereotype of witches being female:

> Witches were cunning, she [Esk] recalled, and usually very old, or at least they tried to look old, and they usually did slightly suspicious, homely and organic magics and some of them had beards. They were also, without exception, women. (ER, 88)

Pratchett is not content with just using the predominant discourse for witches, however, but explores and satirizes them. The title *Equal Rites,* by its name, indicates that it is an exploration of gender identities and stereotypes. It does not take long to see which side Pratchett apparently takes, with his satirical descriptions of wizards, though at the same time he clearly delineates the power imbalance that favours men. One example of this is when Esk, the young female protagonist of *Equal Rites* who wants to be a wizard, meets up with an older wizard and his apprentice on their way to the Unseen University, the school for wizards:

> ‘I happen to believe that witchcraft is a fine career, for a woman. A very noble calling.’
>
> ‘You do? I mean, it is?’
>
> ‘Oh yes. Very useful in rural districts for, for people who are – having babies, and so forth. However, witches are not wizards. Witchcraft is Nature’s way of allowing women access to the magical fluxes, but you must remember it is not *high* magic.’
>
> ‘I see. Not high magic,’ said Esk grimly. […]
>
> ‘High magic requires great clarity of thought, you see, and women’s talents do not lie in that direction.’ (ER, 150)

The patronisation is taken to the extreme and thus parodied.

As well as ridiculing misogyny, Pratchett comments specifically on the stereotype of witches’ activities as outlined by Levack and other male historians as well as most by feminist historians. Early on in *Equal Rites*, Granny Weatherwax is conversing with a dead wizard, who is occupying, or being, a tree (the wizard’s dialogue is in italics):

> *Women have never been wizards. It’s against nature. You might as well say that witches can be men.*
>
> *If you define a witch as one who worships the pancreative urge, that is, venerates the basic* – the tree began, and continued for several minutes. Granny Weatherwax listened in impatient annoyance to phrases like *Mother Goddesses* and *primitive moon worship* and told herself that she was well aware of what being a witch was all about, it was about herbs and curses and flying around of nights and generally keeping on the right side of tradition, and it certainly didn’t involve mixing with goddesses, mothers or otherwise, who apparently got up to some very questionable tricks. And when the tree started talking about *dancing naked* she tried not to listen, because although she was aware that somewhere under her complicated strata of vests and petticoats there was some skin, that didn’t mean to say she approved of it. (ER, 48)

Not content with merely ridiculing the dominant historical discourse, it seems that Pratchett attempts to reverse it. As is claimed by a number of feminists, many women accused of being witches were old and alone and thus a burden on the community, begging for food. Pratchett’s version of this is exemplified by Granny:

> ‘I never pay for anything,’ said Granny. ‘People never *let* me pay. I can’t help it if people gives me things the whole time, can I? When I walks down the street people are always running out with cakes they’ve just baked, and fresh beer, and old clothes that’ve hardly been worn at all. “Oh, Mistress Weatherwax, pray take this basket of eggs”, they say. People are always very kind. Treat people right an’ they’ll treat *you* right. That’s respect. Not having to pay,’ she finished, sternly, ‘is what bein’ a witch is all about.’ (WA, 58-59)

Pratchett also addresses the discourse directly: "Artists and writers have always had a rather exaggerated idea about what goes on at a witch's sabbat. This comes from spending too much time in small rooms with the curtains down, instead of getting out in the healthy fresh air." (WA, 18) He then continues his examination of the stereotypical Sabbath by commenting at length on different aspects, such as dancing naked, having meetings, and having odd 'food' and mystic ointments. (WA, 18-19)

Pratchett also addresses the impact of Shakespeare's witches on the modern witch stereotype. In *Wyrd Sisters*, a play, not unlike *Macbeth*, is performed, with Granny in the audience, and she remarks to herself about the power of plays:

> Granny turned slowly in her seat to look at the audience. They were staring at the performance, their faces rapt. The words washed over them in a breathless air. This was real. This was more real even than reality. This was history. It might not be true, but that had nothing to do with it. […]
>
> That's us down there, she thought. Everyone knows who we really are, but the things down there are what they'll remember – three gibbering old baggages in pointy hats. All we've ever done, all we've ever been, won't exist any more. […]
>
> Whoever wrote this Theatre knew about the uses of magic. Even I believe what's happening, and I know there's no truth in it. (WS, 282-283)

This seems to comment on the power of a discourse when used in literature, here a play.

Although there are many witches in the Discworld series, Pratchett has created a few main characters that he has developed and used numerous times. It is these five witches that will be examined here: Esmerelda Weatherwax, the strongest and most prominent of the witches; Gytha Ogg, Esmeralda's sidekick and friend who is renowned for her sexual innuendos; Magrat Garlick, New Age wet hen; Agnes Nitt, sexually unappealing split-personality; and Tiffany Aching, child extraordinaire.

Esmerelda Weatherwax

As mentioned, Esmerelda Weatherwax, also known as Granny or Esme, first appears in *Equal Rites* in the role of midwife, but we soon realise that this midwife is more than just a deliverer of babies. The implications of this are made fairly clear early on: "She was a witch. That was quite acceptable in the Ramtops, and no-one had a bad word to say about witches. At least, not if he wanted to wake up in the morning the same shape as he went to bed." (ER, 19)

It can be said that Granny is the most developed and complex of the witch characters in the Discworld novels. She appears in all eight of the novels in which witches appear at all, and is the unspoken leader of the leaderless, non-hierarchical association of witches:

> Unlike wizards, who like nothing better than a complicated hierarchy, witches don't go in much for the structured approach to career progression. It's up to each individual witch to take on a girl to hand the area over to when she dies. Witches are not by nature gregarious, at least with other witches, and they certainly don't have leaders.
>
> Granny Weatherwax was the most highly-regarded of the leaders they didn't have. (WS, 8)

Granny's appearance seems to fit the historical stereotype. She is a silver-haired old woman in a black pointy hat, (ER, 60, 32) and is very much aware of the importance of appearances:

> 'So people see you coming in the hat and the cloak and they know you're a witch and that's why your magic works?' said Esk.
>
> 'That's right,' said Granny. 'It's called headology.' She tapped her silver hair, which was drawn into a tight bun that could crack rocks.
>
> 'But it's not real!' Esk protested. 'That's not magic, it's – it's –'
>
> 'Listen,' said Granny. 'If you give someone a bottle of red jollop for their wind it may work, right, but if you want it to work for sure then you let their mind *make* it work for them. Tell 'em it's moonbeams bottled in fairy wine or something. Mumble over it a bit.' (ER, 60)

Granny's image in the minds of the readers has been influenced however by Pratchett's dust jacket artists, Paul Kidby and Josh Kirby, who have kept Granny's appearance roughly consistent throughout the Discworld series. The depiction of Granny, with her wart-covered, hooked nose and protruding chin, bears a striking resemblance to Michelangelo's drawing, 'Head of the Common sibyl', as can be seen in the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of

Macbeth.[68] It is the power of the drawn image that prevails, since Granny is, in fact, described as lacking warts, although she mourns this, as it does not help with her "crone-credibility" (ER, 196). The caption to Michelangelo's drawing states that the model for the female figure was actually male, and that could also sum up Granny's character.

Although clearly gendered female, Granny has many characteristics that are commonly seen as male, or at least ones that are highly valued by men. The definition of masculinity is both easy and hard to pin down. One useful summarisation is given here:

> Social scientists Deborah David and Robert Brannon (1976) give the following four rules for establishing masculinity:
>
> 1. *No Sissy Stuff*: anything that even remotely hints of femininity is prohibited. A real man must avoid any behavior or characteristic associated with women;
> 2. *Be a Big Wheel*: masculinity is measured by success, power, and the admiration of others. One must possess wealth, fame, and status to be considered manly;
> 3. *Be a Sturdy Oak*: manliness requires rationality, toughness, and self-reliance. A man must remain calm in any situation, show no emotion, and admit no weakness;
> 4. *Give 'em Hell*: men must exude an aura of daring and aggression, and must be willing to take risks, to "go for it" even when reason and fear suggest otherwise. [69]

Each point will be compared with Granny Weatherwax's character.

Firstly, there is the question of whether Granny avoids any female characteristics or "Sissy stuff". In terms of sexuality, Granny has never been married: "Front doors in Bad Ass were used only by brides and corpses, and Granny had always avoided becoming either." (ER, 31) She is not typically maternal, and it is gradually revealed that she is still a virgin (LL, 96, 374, 377). In fact, any hint that she is maternal is taken as an insult:

> 'Um,' it began, 'look, mother –'
> 'I'm not a mother,' snapped Granny. 'I'm certainly not your mother, if you ever had mothers, which I doubt. If I was your mother I'd have run away before you were born.'
> 'It's only a figure of speech,' said the head reproachfully.
> 'It's a damned insult is what it is!' (ER, 141)

[68] Shakespeare, 41.
[69] Robert Brannon, "Introduction", The Forty-Nine Percent Majority, eds. Robert Brannon and Deborah David, as quoted in Martin P. Levine, Gay Macho (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 145.

When confronted with the prospect of explaining 'the birds and the bees' to Magrat, Granny dodges: "Granny Weatherwax had done many unusual things in her time, and it took a lot to make her refuse a challenge. But this time she gave in." (WS, 49) She then advises Magrat to speak to Nanny, since she knows all about such things, being thrice married and a mother many times over.

Being a witch, for Granny, means not being feminine: "'I'm not a lady, I'm a witch,' said Granny." (ER, 223) She is not openly emotional and regards personal things as unimportant:

> 'Got important things to do,' said Granny, without turning around. 'Been letting everyone down.'
>
> 'Some people might say *this* is important.'
>
> 'No. It's just personal. Personal's not the same as important. People just think it is.' (LL, 228)

She is ruled by her head and not her heart, which is typically male: "'Heartless it may be, but headless it ain't. I've never claimed to be nice, just to be sensible.'" (LL, 149) Therefore, it can be claimed that Granny avoids characteristics that are coded feminine.

The second point of the definition deals with the possession of success and power, and thus status. Granny is respected by non-witches: "his wife, like every other woman in the village, held Granny Weatherwax in solemn regard, even in awe" (ER, 41) And even at the Witch Trials, surrounded by witches: "There had been a crowd around the gate leading into the field, but there was something about that 'Hah!' The crowd parted, as if by magic, and the women pulled their children a little closer to them as Granny walked right up to the gate." Even the Nac Mac Feegle acknowledge that she is the "hag o' hags" (HFS, 287, 237). It can be thus asserted that she is successful. As for power, there are many examples of her power, these being a few:

> The trees around her began to sway and the dust from the road sprang up into writing shapes that tried to swirl out of her way. Granny Weatherwax extended one long arm and at the end of it unfolded one long finger and from the tip of its curving nail there was a brief flare of octarine fire. (WS, 170)

> 'They say she can turn herself into a fox. Or anything. A bird, even. Anything. That's how she always knows what's going on.' (ER, 28)

> 'You wanted to know where I'd put myself,' said Granny. 'I didn't go anywhere. I just put it into something alive, and you took it. You invited me in. I'm in every muscle in your body and I'm in your head, oh yes. I was in the blood, Count. In the blood. I ain't been vampired. You've been Weatherwaxed.' (CJ, 398)

There are even explicit references to her fame: "Esk knew that she [Granny] was famous throughout the mountains for special potions for illnesses that her mother – and some young women too, once in a while – just hinted at with raised eyebrows and lowered voices" (ER, 43) Therefore, it can be asserted that Granny has success and power, and thus status.

Thirdly, self-reliance, toughness and a desire to not show weakness is a characteristic of masculinity. Granny is nothing if not self-reliant: "'What I say is, if a witch can't look after herself, she's got no business calling herself a witch.'" (WS, 156) She is also tough, both externally, enduring numerous physical trials, but also internally: "Very few people in the world had more self-control than Granny Weatherwax. It was as rigid as a bar of cast iron. And about as flexible." (WA, 30) Although sometimes feeling weak, either physically (CJ, 299) or mentally, she never shows it: "Granny had built a solid reputation on always knowing the answer to everything. Getting her to admit ignorance, even to herself, was an astonishing achievement." (ER, 162) Therefore, it can be attested that Granny is self-reliant, tough and shows no weakness.

Finally, the question arises as to whether Granny is aggressive and willing to take risks. Granny's aggressiveness is mostly implied: the trolls call her "She Who Must Be Avoided" and the dwarves call her "Go Around the Other Side of the Mountain"[70] (M, 200, 201). Sometimes, though, her aggressiveness is portrayed:

> 'Do you want to find out how much power I have, madam? Here, on the grass of Lancre?'
>
> She stepped forward. Power crackled in the air. The Queen had to step back.
>
> 'My own turf?' said Granny.
>
> She slapped the Queen again, almost gently.
>
> 'What's this?' said Granny Weatherwax. 'Can't you resist me? Where *your* power now, madam? Gather your power, madam!'
>
> 'You foolish old *crone*!'
>
> It was felt by every living creature for a mile around. Small things died. Birds spiralled out of the sky. Elves and humans alike dropped to the ground, clutching their heads. […]
>
> Granny Weatherwax dropped to her knees, clutching her head. (LL, 345)

Granny's character appears willing to take risks, though she always appears certain of herself: "Granny Weatherwax was not a good loser. From her point of view, losing was something that happened to other people." (WA, 102) She even risks death, challenging the character

[70] Terry Pratchett, Maskerade (London: Transworld, 1996) 200 & 201. Further references will be in the text as M.

Death to a duel, double or quits, and 'wins' (actually she cheats Death), all for the life of a little child whom she has met for the first time. When she wins, she then gives Death a quick osteopathic treatment for his repetitive strain injury. When asked by Death what would have happened if she had lost, she states she would have broken his arm (M, 97-102). Thus, it can be contended that Granny is aggressive, when it suits her, and takes risks.

Looking at the definition of masculinity as a whole, it seems that Pratchett has, like Michelangelo, created his witch, Granny, in the image of a male, but not only a typical male – a male hero. She replays various heroic struggles in most of the novels. In *Equal Rites* Granny battles the head wizard and wins. In *Wyrd Sisters,* she battles a king and the concept of theatre, the power of stereotypes, and wins. In *Witches Abroad,* she battles her evil sister, the Voodoo witch, and Death, and wins. In *Lords and Ladies* she battles the Queen of the Fairies, and almost loses, but wins. In *Maskerade,* she has a minor role, but locks horns with an embezzler and a child with a split personality and wins. In *Carpe Jugulum* she battles vampires, infecting them when bitten, and wins.

Granny is not portrayed as invincible, however, which would tend to make her character one-dimensional. She reveals weakness, in carefully controlled situations. In *Lords and Ladies,* after Magrat stops being a witch, Granny reveals to Nanny: "'I'm losing my touch, that's what it is. Getting old, Gytha.'" She is aware of her mortality: "The point was that Granny Weatherwax had a feeling she was going to die. This was beginning to get on her nerves." She apparently dies while battling the Queen of the Fairies. However, she manages the seemingly impossible by 'borrowing' a swarm of bees, and later returns to her body (LL, 74-75, 89, 351, 360). In *Carpe Jugulum,* she doubts her ability to triumph over evil: "'I'm beaten, Gytha. Even before I start. Maybe someone else has a way, but I haven't. I'm up against a mind that's better'n mine [a vampire]. I just about keep it away from me but I can't get in. I can't fight *back.*'" However, being Granny, she finds a way to win, turning her weakness into a strength. She confronts the vampire Count but cannot overpower him, and so is bitten. While she is battling the 'call of the blood', she has an internal battle with her shadow and wins that most important battle. She triumphs over the vampires by 'borrowing' her own blood, and so the vampires are instead 'Weatherwaxed' (CJ, 203, 276-277, 398).

By the eighth book in which Granny appears, *A Hat Full of Sky*, although growing older, Granny is still a force of Nature to be reckoned with: "For an old woman Mistress Weatherwax could move quite fast. She strode over the moors as if distance was a personal insult." However, the inexorability of age is starting to show and Granny cannot keep the

pace her mind sets when walking. An allusion is made to the inevitability of Granny's death through Tiffany musing over her grandmother's death (HFS, 283, 284-285, 271).

The witch custom of training up a girl to take her place when she dies seems to be implied near the end of the book when Granny talks to Tiffany about 'real magic': "You were fed up with babies and silly women? Then this is … the other stuff." (HFS, 295) This is foreshadowed at the end of *A Hat Full of Sky*, when Tiffany muses:

> You pretend to be the big bad wicked witch, and you're not. You test people all the time, test, test, test, but you really want them to be clever enough to beat you. Because it 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 terrible strength, but it eats away at you. Are you afraid to laugh in case you hear an early cackle?
>
> We'll meet again, one day. We both know it. We'll met again, at the Witch Trials. (HFS, 344)

After her defeat of the hiver, Tiffany finds that Granny has given her her hat (HFS, 314-316). "No-one knew better than Granny Weatherwax that hats were important. They weren't just clothing. Hats defined the head. They defined who you *were*." (WA, 185) This handing over of the hat could perhaps be seen as the witch method of handing over the baton.

It seems that the stereotype that best fits Granny is not one of the common female stereotypes. Bertens lists a few: "the woman […] as immoral and dangerous seductress, the woman as eternally dissatisfied shrew, the woman as cute but essentially helpless, the woman as unworldly, self-sacrificing angel."[71] However, none of these come close to encompassing her character. She is more a man than a woman. In the binary opposition male/female, for a person to possess power, that person must be a man. If the character is stereotypically female, then that female must be masculinized[72].

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[71] Bertens, 97.

[72] How interesting that in the English language there is 'masculinize', meaning to make masculine, which has a positive connotation, 'emasculate', meaning to take away masculinity, which has a negative connotation, 'feminize' meaning to make feminine, which has a negative connotation, and 'defeminize', meaning to take away femininity, which also has a negative connotation. See the Oxford English Dictionary On-line for more detail.

Nanny Ogg

It is in *Wyrd Sisters*, the second book containing witches, that Pratchett moves from a single witch to a coven of three. Here we meet Gytha Ogg, usually called Nanny, and it appears that she is a long-time friend and sidekick of Granny's. We are told early on, though, that Nanny is not at all like Granny, although powerful in her own way:

> Most witches preferred to live in isolated cottages with the traditional curly chimneys and weed-grown thatch. Granny Weatherwax approved of this; it was no good being a witch unless you let people *know*.
>
> Nanny Ogg didn't care much about what people knew and even less for what they thought, and lived in a new, knick-knack crammed cottage in the middle of Lancre town itself and at the heart of her own private empire. Various daughters and daughters-in-law came in to cook and clean on a sort of rota. Every flat surface was stuffed with ornaments brought back by far-travelling member of the family. Sons and grandsons kept the logpile stacked, the roof shingled […] No other tyrant in the whole history of the world had ever achieved a domination so complete. (WS, 64)

Her appearance is not as austere as Granny's: "Nanny, on the other hand, was as gummy as a baby and had a face like a small dried raisin." (WS, 43)

Nanny embodies the role of Mother, (CJ, 131-132) and is most definitely feminine. Using the four rules of masculinity, it can be seen that Nanny is most definitely not masculine. There is varied evidence of her feminine characteristics, the first criterion of the masculinity definition:

> 'I've got 15 children.' (M, 67)

> Nanny Ogg was used to the idea of domestic service. As a girl, she'd been a maid at Lancre Castle, where the king was inclined to press his intentions and anything else he could get hold of. Young Gytha Ogg had already lost her innocence* but she had some clear ideas about unwelcome intentions, and when he jumped out at her in the scullery she had technically committed treason with a large leg of lamb swung in both hands.
> *[Pratchett footnote:] Without regret, since she hadn't found any use for it. (M, 169)

> 'I've been a bride three times, and that's only the official score.' (LL, 231)

> Food as an aphrodisiac was not a concept that had ever caught on in Lancre, apart from Nanny Ogg's famous Carrot and Oyster Pie* *[Pratchett footnote:] Carrots so you can see in the dark, she'd explain, and oysters so's you've got something to look at. (LL, 235)

The second criterion is about being successful, and Nanny has her successes but is always overshadowed by Granny, one example being that she does not have the self-discipline to 'borrow'. (CJ, 144) She admits to herself that Granny is a superior witch, though feels that she is superior to Granny when it comes to feminine areas:

> 'You…you do *know* what *kind* of place this is, do you, Esme?' said Nanny Ogg. She felt curiously annoyed. She'd happily give way to Granny's expertise in the worlds of mind and magic, but she felt very strongly that there were some more specialized areas that were definitely Ogg territory, and Granny Weatherwax had no business even to know what they were.
>
> 'Oh, yes,' said Granny, calmly.
>
> Nanny's patience gave out. 'It's a house of ill repute, is what it is!'
>
> 'On the contrary,' said Granny. 'I believe people speak very highly of it.' (M, 132)

She does not have the status of Granny: "a little old washerwoman-type who got drunk and sang songs" (WA, 62); "Common as muck" (M, 219).

The third criterion refers to being rational, tough and self-reliant: "Nanny's philosophy of life was to do what seemed like a good idea at the time, and do it as hard as possible. It had never let her down." (M, 170) She readily shows emotion: "Nanny Ogg laughed a lot." (LL, 245)

In terms of the fourth criterion, daringness and aggression, she usually prefers to blend in:

> People didn't take any notice of little old ladies who looked as though they fitted in, and Nanny Ogg could fit in faster than a dead chicken in a maggot factory.
>
> Besides, Nanny had one additional little talent which was a mind like a buzzsaw behind a face like an elderly apple. (M, 176)

Therefore, according to the definition of masculinity, it appears that Nanny is most definitely feminine, and there are numerous references to her having been sexually active in the past, summarised here: "Her courtships had been more noted for their quantity than their quality." However, she reveals that she is no longer sexually active: "Long-banked fires gave off a little smoke." (LL, 219, 218)

Like Granny, Nanny appears in all eight 'witch' novels, although only briefly in the final two. Unlike Granny, Nanny seems to fit comfortably into the female stereotype of immoral over-the-hill trollop, especially given the 'quantity' quotation above.

Magrat Garlick

Magrat, along with Nanny, is introduced in *Wyrd Sisters*, though Magrat clearly plays a lesser role than Nanny, and does not appear in as many novels. The main emphasis of Pratchett's description of Magrat is on her quirky looks and manners:

> Every morning her hair was long, thick and blond, but by the evening it had always returned to its normal worried frizz. To ameliorate the effect she had tried to plait violets and cowslips in it. The result was not all she had hoped. It gave the impression that a window box had fallen on her head.
>
> In a certain light and from a carefully chosen angle, Magrat was not unattractive.
>
> Magrat shunned the traditional pointed hat, as worn by the other witches, but she still held to one of the fundamental rules of witchcraft. Its not much use being a witch unless you look like one. In her case this meant lots of silver jewellery with octograms, bats, spiders, dragons and other symbols of everyday mysticism; Magrat would have painted her fingernails black, except that she didn't think she would be able to face Granny's withering scorn.
>
> Magrat believed in Nature's wisdom and elves and the healing power of colours and the cycle of the seasons and a lot of other things Granny Weatherwax didn't have any truck with.
>
> She messes about with Grimoires and Runes, which is disapproved of by Granny and Nanny." (WS, 65, 136, 116, 31, 66-67)

Magrat, though quirky, is definitely female, yet not sexually active in the beginning: Like many young virgins, she feels awkward: "Magrat looked up guiltily. She had been deep in conversation with the Fool, although it was the kind of conversation where both parties spend a lot of time looking at their feet and picking at their fingernails. Ninety per cent of true love is acute, ear-burning embarrassment." (WS, 160) In fact, relationships in general are a source of worry for her. (WS, 53)

Magrat is portrayed as well meaning but mostly ineffectual: "That was Magrat for you. Head full of pumpkins. Everyone's fairy godmother, for two pins. But a good soul, underneath it all. Kind to small furry animals. The sort of person who worried about baby birds falling out of nests." (WS, 51) Although not as complex and developed a character as Granny, during the course of a few of novels, Magrat develops and changes more than Granny does. This, of course, is owing to Granny's tutelage. (WA, 197)

As she is a maiden, it is perhaps expected by the reader that a love interest for Magrat would appear. This takes the form of the Fool in *Wyrd Sisters*, a man later to become King of

Lancre. The prospect of becoming sexually active raises the issues of continuing to be a witch:

> 'Is it the witching?' he said. 'You don't have to give that up entirely, of course. I've got a great respect for witches. And you could be a witch queen, although I think that means you have to wear rather revealing clothes and keep cats and give people poisoned apples. I read that somewhere.' (LL, 30)

This is initially resolved by Magrat deciding to give up being a witch: "'You can jol--- you can *damn* well find another witch for Lancre! All right? Another soppy girl to do all the dreary work and never work and never be told anything and be talked over the head of all the time. I've got better things to do.'" She then throws her witch's hat into Lancre gorge. This seems to have done the trick as the next day: "Magrat woke up. And knew she wasn't a witch any more." (LL, 36, 42, 56)

When Magrat's role as queen is threatened, she displays new sides to her character. It is as if she takes on the persona of a warrior queen, and she kills a number of elves in cold blood and seeks out the queen of the fairies. This challenges her:

> And the ablation of Magrat Garlick roared on, tearing at the strata of her soul …
> … exposing the core.
> She bunched up a fist and hit the Queen between the eyes.
> There was a moment of terminal perplexity before the Queen screamed, and Magrat hit her again.
> Only one queen in a hive! Slash! Stab! (LL, 349)

Having established herself as Queen of Lancre, Magrat then produces an heir: "Well, Magrat had certainly retired now, and had gone off to be Queen and if there was ever any doubt about that then there could be no doubt today. [the naming day of Magrat's daughter]" (CJ, 20) This validates that she is no longer eligible for the maiden role and has begun to assume the mother role: "Agnes heard Perdita think *I don't like Magrat. She's not like she used to be*. Well, of course she's not. *But she's taking charge, she's not cringing slightly like she used to, she's not WET*. That's because she's a mother, Agnes thought. Mothers are only slightly damp." (CJ, 177) After this, Magrat disappears as a character.

Agnes Nitt

When Magrat stops being a witch, it is Agnes who takes over the maiden role. She first makes an appearance in *Lords and Ladies*, but it is in *Maskerade* that she is the protagonist. Pratchett seems to spend an inordinate amount of time reminding us that Agnes is overweight. He also implies, though never states outright, that she is homely. These two things conspire to produce the 'perfect' maiden witch. When Nanny is thinking about all the young girls in Lancre as possible 'maiden' witches, she remembers Agnes and her suitability:

> And then a name rose out of the throng. Oh, yes. Her. Why hadn't she thought of *her*? But you didn't, of course. Whenever you thought about the young girls of Lancre, you didn't remember her. And then you said, 'Oh, yes, her too, of course. O' course, she's got a wonderful personality. And good hair, of course.'
>
> She was bright, and talented. In many ways. Her voice, for one thing. That was her power, finding its way out. And of course she also has a wonderful personality, so there'd be not much chance of her being…disqualified… (M, 21-22)

'Disqualified' means stopping being a maiden by having sex. This is Pratchett's way of implying that Agnes is so ugly and fat that no one would want to have sex with her. Pratchett makes good use of innuendo when describing Agnes, for example:

> She stopped. At least, *most* of Agnes stopped. There was a lot of Agnes. It took some time for outlying regions to come to rest.
>
> People always tended to assume that she could cope, as if capability went with mass, like gravity. (M, 17, 105)

At other times, Pratchett comes right out and has various characters say cruel remarks about her:

> Granny shrugged. 'Fat girl. Big hair. Walks with her feet turned out. Sings to herself in the woods. Good voice. Reads books. Says "poot!" instead of swearing. Blushes when anyone looks at her. Wears black lace gloves with the fingers cut out.'
>
> 'Amazing,' he said. 'Do you think she knows how fat she is?' (M, 43, 131)

Agnes herself sometimes muses on her lot in life, as defined by the male understanding of attractiveness that includes the 'truth' that being fat is equated with not having sex:

> Agnes's life unrolled in front of her. It didn't look as though it were going to have many high points. But it did hold years and years of being capable and having a lovely personality. It almost certainly held chocolate rather than sex and, while Agnes was not in a position to make a direct comparison, and regardless of the fact that a bar of chocolate could be made to last all day, it did not seem a very fair exchange. (M, 106)

However, Agnes is not the simple character we first meet. In *Maskerade*, Pratchett hints at Agnes having an alter ego, Perdita X Dream (or Perdita X Nitt):

> Agnes had been brought up in the knowledge that a lot of things were wrong. It was wrong to listen at doors, […] *to put yourself forward* …
>
> But behind the walls she could be the Perdita she's always wanted to be. Perdita didn't care about anything. Perdita got things done. […] Perdita X Nitt, mistress of the darkness, magdalen of cool, could listen to other people's lives. And never, ever have to have a wonderful personality.
>
> If you were someone like Agnes Nitt, wouldn't you long to be someone as dark and mysterious as Perdita X Dream? (M, 233-234, 262)

In *Carpe Jugulum*, Pratchett expands and develops this, giving Agnes a full-blown split personality:

> Those who are inclined to casual cruelty say that inside a fat girl is a thin girl and a lot of chocolate. Agnes' thin girl was Perdita. […]
>
> Agnes disliked Perdita, who was vain, selfish and vicious, and Perdita hated going around inside Agnes, whom she regarded as a fat, pathetic, weak-willed blob that people would walk all over were she not so steep.
>
> Agnes told herself she'd simply invented the name Perdita as some convenient label for all those thoughts and desires she knew she shouldn't have, as a name for that troublesome little commentator that lives on everyone's shoulder and sneers. But sometimes she thought Perdita had created Agnes for something to pummel. (CJ, 18)

This apparent handicap is the means by which Agnes 'saves the day' when the vampires take over Lancre. Both Agnes and Perdita are attracted to a younger vampire, Vlad de Magpyr. He, like all the other vampires, can control people's minds, but he cannot control Perdita inside Agnes. Perdita then takes over Agnes' body in order to save them both, and later the whole country, with Granny's help, of course. (CJ, 80, 94-95, 98)

Agnes, being an ugly and overweight girl, is not attractive to 'normal' men, but Vlad, a blood-sucking vampire, is attracted to her. However, it is, in reality, the skinny and tough Perdita inside Agnes that he is fascinated by (CJ, 113). Agnes ends up being bitten by Vlad, but it is after Granny has infected the vampires, has 'Weatherwaxed' them, and so Agnes is infected with Granny, not vampirism. Perdita notices this and comments:

> *It's changed you*, said Perdita
> 'How?'[…]
> *You're sharper … edgier … nastier*.
> 'Maybe it's about time I was, then.'(CJ, 361)

After her two large roles in the fifth and sixth witch novels, Agnes is not mentioned again. Since the seventh and eighth novels develop a separate storyline with a young girl named Tiffany, it can only be assumed that Agnes is still the maiden of the Lancre coven.

Tiffany Aching

We first meet Tiffany as the protagonist of *The Wee Free Men*, a story partly about the Nac Mac Feegle, "the most feared of all the fairy races".[73] Outwardly, she seems a simple girl, wearing hammy downs, and with a simple appearance: "Then there's Tiffany's face. Light pink, with brown eyes, and brown hair. Nothing special." (WFM, 14-15) However, at only nine years old, she has decided to be a witch (WFM, 11). This career choice seems appropriate, from what we have learned about witches in the preceding novels, since when faced with a monster, Tiffany is not at all afraid, but is angry and indignant instead (WFM, 14 & 20-21). It is during this incident that she is recognised by the Nac Mac Feegle as the hag (witch) when she scares away a monster in the river, using her little brother as bait and a frying pan as a weapon (WFM, 20-21). We are also told that she is precocious for her age:

> She'd read the dictionary all the way through. No one told her you weren't supposed to.
>
> 'Zoology, eh? That's a big word, isn't it?'
> 'No, actually it isn't,' said Tiffany. 'Patronizing is a big word. Zoology is quite short.'
> The teacher's eyes narrowed further. Children like Tiffany were bad news. (WFM, 12, 29)

[73] Terry Pratchett, The Wee Free Men (London: Transworld, 2004) 15. Further references will be in the text as WFM.

Her witch-like qualities are also revealed throughout the novel, such as:

> Tiffany could outstare a cat.
>
> She has 'First Sight *and* Second Thoughts. That's a powerful combination.'
>
> First Thoughts are the everyday thoughts. Everyone has those. Second Thoughts are the thoughts you think about the *way* you think. People who enjoy thinking have those. Third Thoughts are thoughts that watch the world and think all by themselves. They're rare, and often troublesome. Listening to them is part of witchcraft.
>
> 'She hears about an old lady dying because these idiots thought she was a witch, and *she* decides to become a witch so that they don't try that again. A monster roars up out of her river and she bashes it with a frying pan! […] A Nac Mac Feegle *spoke* to her! *Warned* her! […] If she's got *them* on her side, who knows what she can do?'
>
> She heard voices. She pushed the door open with her foot to hear them better, because a witch always listens to other people's conversations. (WFM, 50, 53, 71, 54-55, 64)

Her appropriateness for being a witch is confirmed by the kelda (clan queen) of the Nac Mac Feegle:

> 'Aye, you're a born hag, right enough,' said the kelda, holding her gaze. 'Ye've got that little bitty bit inside o' you that holds on, right? The bitty bit watches the rest o' ye. 'Tis the First Sight and Second Thoughts ye have, and 'tis a we gift an' a big curse to ye. You see and hear what other canna', the world opens up its secrets to ye, but ye're always like the person at the party with the wee drink in the corner who cannae join in. There's a little bitty bit inside ye that willnae melt and flow.' (WFM, 139)

She is clearly witch material since she is described as being eerily like Granny.

There are many parallels drawn, both covertly and overtly, between Tiffany and Granny Weatherwax, sometimes highlighting Tiffany's superiority. Like Granny, she finds ingenious solutions to seemingly impossible problems, for example, when she very cleverly avoids marrying a Nac Mac Feegle without giving offence or going against custom (WFM, 166-167). She is very self aware, for example when looking for the entrance to the fairy world (WFM, 177). Like Granny, she can turn even a witch into "a bag of nerves" (HFS, 63) by staring at her. She cannot make a shamble (HFS, 273), and she battles the Queen of the Fairies and wins, using her anger to help her focus and avoid being afraid (WFM, 230).

Tiffany is shown to be more adept than Granny when her Second Thoughts are overwhelmed by the power of the Queen of the Fairies, and she discovers that she has Third Thoughts that the Queen does not know about. (WFM, 239-240) She even outdoes Granny by fighting the Queen in the Fairy world, the Queen's turf, whereas Granny nearly lost while battling the Queen on her own turf of Lancre. She is portrayed as being immensely powerful:

> The anger overflowed. She stood up clenched her fists and screamed at the storm, putting into the scream all the rage that was inside her.
>
> Lightening struck the ground on either side of her. It did so twice.
>
> And it stayed there, crackling, and two dogs formed.
>
> Steam rose from their coats, and blue light sparkled from their ears as they shook themselves. They looked attentively at Tiffany.
>
> The Queen gasped, and vanished. (WFM, 282)

Early in *A Hat Full of Sky,* we are shown Tiffany's latest trick, being able to leave her body and walk around to see herself. Later we learn that "not one […] witch in a hundred […] can do that" (HFS, 16-18, 175) and that it is a form of Borrowing, Granny's trick. Tiffany is even shown to be more powerful than Granny when she terrifies the Queen and overpowers her, stripping her of all her illusion. (WFM, 290-292) She is also shown to be cleverer than Granny, since aside from being powerful, intelligent and practical, she is also learned. She describes herself as: "'I am careful and logical and I look up things I don't understand! When I hear people use the wrong words I get edgy! I am good with cheese. I read books fast! I think! And I always have a piece of string! That's the kind of person I am!'" (WFM, 264) Finally, Granny is called the "hag o' hags" (HFS, 237) by Rob Anybody, a Nac Mac Feegle and husband of the kelda. He also says of Tiffany: "'She's *oor* big wee hag. An' I'll tell ye, Jeannie, she has it in her tae be the hag o' hags. There's power in her she doesnae dream of.'" (HFS, 97)

When Tiffany and Granny finally meet, at the end of *The Wee Free Men*, Granny 'shows off' by performing flashy magic to learn Tiffany's story instead of asking Tiffany herself. Granny then talks with her:

> 'You beat the Queen, at the end. But you had help, I think.'
>
> 'Yes, I did,' said Tiffany.
>
> 'And that was---?'
>
> 'I don't ask you *your* business,' said Tiffany, before she even realized she was going to say it. Miss Tick gasped. Mrs Ogg's eyes twinkled, and she looked from Tiffany to Mistress Weatherwax like someone watching a tennis match.

> ‘Tiffany, Mistress Weatherwax is the most famous witch in all---’ Miss Tick began severely, but the witch waved a hand at her again. I really must learn how to do that, Tiffany thought.
>
> Then Mistress Weatherwax took off her pointed hat and bowed to Tiffany. (WFM, 310-302)

This is a great honour, as we are told in the next book (HFS, 84-85). Granny then gives Tiffany a virtual hat that only she can see, as a sort of recognition of her abilities (WFM, 306-307).

When Tiffany next appears, in *A Hat Full of Sky*, she is now eleven years old (HFS, 30) and is in for an even greater challenge than the Queen of the Fairies. During one of her out-of-body experiences, she is taken over by a hiver, (HFS, 151) which is an immortal entity that Rob Anybody comments on thusly: “nae one in his’try has survived a hiver! Ye cannae kill it, ye cannae stop it” (HFS, 47) However, the hiver has trouble taking over Tiffany completely: “ – it was having trouble. It had flowed through her like a dark tide but there was a place, tight and sealed, that was still closed. If it had the brains of a tree, it would have been puzzled. If it had the brains of a human, it would have been frightened…” (HFS, 177). Tiffany manages to trick the hiver out of her, but has to face it eventually, at the Witch Trials. She manages to defeat it, with a little help from Granny. They acknowledge this through both not participating in the Trials and at the end, recognising each other as equals: “Tiffany and Granny stood up at the same time, to the second, and bowed to one another.” (HFS, 328)

Tiffany dares to challenge Granny to her face and to argue with her (the power of which makes leaves fall off trees and animals run for safety), (HFS, 252-254) and Granny ultimately concedes to Tiffany: “‘Child, you’ve come here to learn what’s true and what’s not but there’s little I can teach you that you don’t already know. You just didn’t know you know it, and you’ll spend the rest of your life learning what’s already in your bones. And that’s the truth’” (HFS, 340). Despite the acknowledgement and recognition by Granny, Tiffany, deep inside, is ambitious, (HFS, 159-160) and is not content to settle for being a copy of Granny, through accepting her hat. She wants to find her own hat and identity as a witch. (HFS, 336-337) Her stereotype, which has found her, is more complicated. She appears, at first, to be ‘the waif’, yet is too powerful for that. She is more the precursor to the ice-queen stereotype, powerful and unattainable.

The Coven of Three – Maiden, Mother, Crone

Having examined each of the five witches separately, the coven of three, which Pratchett states as important, also needs to be explored. In the second book in which witches appear, *Witches Abroad*, Pratchett first mentions covens and initially states something that he later reverses: "The natural size of a coven is one. Witches only get together when they can't avoid it" (WA, 19). In *Witches Abroad* and *Maskerade*, Pratchett explores the idea of a coven and the stereotypical coven of three: "Three is an important number for stories. Three wishes, three princes, three billy goats, three guesses … three witches. The maiden, the mother and the … other one. *That* was one of the oldest stories of all" (WA, 62-63).

When Magrat becomes Queen of Lancre, the coven of three is threatened and the exploration begins:

> Three was the natural number for witches.
>
> And they'd lost one. Well, not lost, exactly. Magrat was queen now, and queens were hard to mislay. But…that meant that there were only two of them instead of three. […]
>
> And there was not having Magrat back…at least, to be precise about it, there was no having Magrat back *yet*. (M, 12)

It is assumed that three witches are necessary for stability, and the problem that is confronted is that, through being married, Magrat is no longer the virgin maiden:

> As a witch, she [Nanny] didn't believe in any occult nonsense of any sort. But there were one or two truths down below the bedrock of the soul which had to be faced, and right in among them was this business of, well, of the maiden, the mother and the … other one. […] it was an *old* superstition – older than books, older than writing – and beliefs like that were heavy weights on the rubber sheet of human experience, tending to pull people into their orbit.
>
> And Magrat had been married for three months. That ought to mean she was out of the first category. (M, 12-13)

Magrat cannot be the Maiden anymore, and Nanny's strong maternal presence prevents her from becoming the Mother. There is no place for her in Pratchett's coven of three.

One of the plots of *Maskerade* is the search for the maiden witch for the coven. When Nanny is thinking about all the young girls in Lancre as possible "maiden" witches, she remembers Agnes and her suitability – she is so overweight and unattractive that there is, "not much chance of her being…disqualified" by having sex (M, 21-22). This subplot is resolved at the end when Agnes somewhat reluctantly agrees to become a witch and replace Magrat in

the maiden role. There is a final repetition with resolution of the 'When shall we three meet again', (M, 380-381) which counterpoints the initial, uncertain: "'When shall we…two…meet again?'" (M, 9)

This theme is revisited in *Carpe Jugulum* when Granny feels she has been slighted by not being invited to the naming ceremony of Magrat's daughter (her invitation was taken by magpies) and leaves – leaves as in she quits being a witch in Lancre (CJ, 118). After Granny's disappearance, Nanny starts to act like Granny, the crone role taking her over: "What's got into her? Agnes thought, watching the pastor's ears turn red. That's the way *Granny* would act. Perdita added: *Perhaps she thinks she's got to carry on like that because that old bat's not here yet.*" However, Nanny feels threatened by this: "'I can't start being a hag at my time of life,' she muttered. 'None of my bras'll fit.'"; "'Can't say I fancy being a crone.'" (CJ, 69, 128, 131) It seems that the power of the roles is greater than the power of their personalities, at least in Nanny's case.

It seems that all the witches, Granny, Nanny, Magrat and Agnes, are aware of and mull over the three roles on offer and who is capable of filling those roles, for example:

> [Agnes thinks:] 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. *And some*, Perdita added, *were cut out to be professional maidens*. As for the third, Agnes went on, ignoring her own interruption, perhaps it wasn't so odd that people generally called Nanny out for the births and Granny for the deaths.
>
> Granny shook herself. 'Anyway, if there's a problem, well, you've got your three witches. It doesn't say anywhere that one of them *ought*,' she nodded at Agnes, 'to be Granny Weatherwax. You sort it out. I've been witching in these parts for altogether too long and it's time to … move on … do something else…'
>
> *And what have we got now*? Perdita chimed in. *The knowing but technically inexperienced young woman, the harassed young mother and the silver-haired golden ager … doesn't exactly sound mythic, does it*? (CJ, 131-132, 199, 201)

It seems that in forcing his witches to adhere to a specific witch role, a construct within the witch discourse, Pratchett is also forcing them into a specific construct within contemporary society, one that prevents authentic females from possessing authentic power.

Pratchett's Feminism

It seems that being sexually inactive is a crucial aspect of the witch roles. Pratchett has declared that the maiden is disqualified from her role as soon as she becomes sexually active. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ends with everyone being paired up. *Lords and Ladies*, which is loosely based on Shakespeare's play, ends with the three witches being paired up to a certain extent, but it is only Magrat who consummates the relationship, and because of this is sidelined. Even at the beginning of the novel, her betrothal to Verence precludes her being a witch. Butler comments on this:

> With the best will in the world, witching seems to be a single woman's game (Nanny is presumably a widow or divorcée, several times over) and Magrat's dalliance with Verence requires her to give up such activities. […] Nevertheless, by the end of the book [*Lords and Ladies*] she is married off and presumably no longer available for maiden duties.[74]

Her replacement in the coven is Agnes, guaranteed to remain sexless, and hence never become a mother.

The Mother role is naturally a sexual being, yet although Nanny exudes sexuality in one sense, it is a safe sexuality in that it is essentially spent. She hints at and talks about her numerous liaisons, yet she is never sexually active in the novels. The closest we get is the attraction to her of the unusual dwarf, Giamo Casanunda, "World's Second Greatest Lover" (LL, 113). Nanny, therefore, is also sexless, although with a 'saucy' flavour.

Granny, in her crone role, is the most powerful of the three witches, and of all witches, we learn in the later novels. Despite her heroic pattern of battling evil, Granny comes very close to death in *Carpe Jugulum*. However, with Nanny so firmly in the mother role, there is no one to take over the crone role if Granny dies. As disclosed by degrees over several novels, Granny is a virgin crone, having moved straight from maiden to crone. Although there are three available roles for witches, there does not appear to be any rules for moving between the roles, despite Karen Sayer's belief that the transitions adhere, "to the (reproductive) mythic model"[75]. Therefore, despite her age, Granny cannot presumably be killed off until a suitable crone replacement is found.

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[74] Butler, The Pocket Essential Terry Pratchett, 44.
[75] Karen Sayer, "The Witches", Butler et al, 151.

This problem appears to be addressed through the introduction of Tiffany in *The Wee Free Men*. The eleven-year-old virgin's first substantial magical act is the defeat of the Queen of the Fairies, the same queen who almost killed Granny and took over Lancre in *Lords and Ladies*. Tiffany does admittedly have the help of the Nac Mac Feegle, but she is the lone human and the lone witch. In *A Hat Full of Sky*, Granny acknowledges Tiffany as her equal, and the stage is set for Tiffany to become Granny's apprentice. Since Tiffany is on the verge of puberty (WFM, 142) at the end of *A Hat Full of Sky*, it will be interesting to see what Pratchett does with her in future novels, if she shows up again. Perhaps she will repeat Granny's maiden-to-crone transition.

It appears that Pratchett has created a male fantasy coven, a modern construct. Instead of the feminist maiden-mother-crone coven, as mentioned by Purkiss, he seems to have created a coven of a spinster, an over-the-hill harlot and a virgin. Pratchett appears to reinforce, rather than rail against, the 'no sex please, we're British' cultural milieu in which he lives and writes. As Bertens states when reviewing Marxist theory: "Writers can never completely escape ideology and their social background so that the social reality of the writer will always be part of the text."[76] This is reflected in Pratchett's treatment of witches in his texts.

Pratchett seems incapable or unwilling to create a female witch who is sexually mature and sexually active. He has created very strong and independent female characters, certainly in the form of Esmerelda Weatherwax and Tiffany Aching, plus other non-witch characters in other novels, such as the werewolf Angua and Death's granddaughter Susan. However, not one of these characters is sexually active and powerful at the same time. Of the witches, all we find are postmenopausal women, either virgin or experienced, sexually mature but unattractive and inexperienced women, or premenarchal girls. The two menarchal women, Magrat and Agnes, can attract only a fool or a vampire. Magrat, who does manage to become sexually active, has to give up her witch status and power. Female sexuality, it seems, is just too threatening to be coupled with female power.

Therefore, Pratchett's alleged feminism does not appear to be congruent with itself. At the same time as he is touting women's rights, he is reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes and mores. One clear example of this is his use of names. The most powerful female character, the witch Esmerelda Weatherwax is usually referred to as 'Granny', a nickname that could be seen as a diminutive, lessening her status. Gytha Ogg is also treated thus, being called 'Nanny'. On the other hand, the wizards are all referred to by their surnames. This is

[76] Bertens, 90.

highlighted when, in front of all the wizards in the dining hall, Granny openly challenges and battles the Chancellor of the Unseen University, who is referred to only by his surname 'Cutangle', (ER, 224-266, 241). The duel ends in a draw, but Cutangle admits to himself that he would not have been the winner, though he still likens her to a small, annoying pest rather than a majestic, powerful, and hence worthy, opponent, again belittling her:

> He felt drained. It had been decades since he'd duelled in magic, although it was common enough among students. He had a nasty feeling that Granny would have won eventually. Fighting her was like swatting a fly on your own nose. He couldn't think what had come over him to try it. (ER, 241)

It is not only the use of diminutives and first names for females that Pratchett uses to disempower females. He is well known (and loved) for his creation of unusual and humorous names. When creating characters, he gives them a name that reflects their personality or role. Slapstick or buffoon characters have such names as Carrot, Nobby, Colon, Rincewind, Thighbiter, No'-as-big-as-Medium-Sized-Jock-but-bigger-than-Wee-Jock-Jock, Dorfl, and Moist von Lipwig (the list is almost endless). Serious or authority characters have relatively unfunny names such as Commander Vimes, Lord Vetinari, John Dearheart, Leonard of Quirm, King Verence, and Death. When creating his witch characters, the only witch to receive a relatively unfunny name from Pratchett was Esmerelda Weatherwax, though that could be debated. The name Gytha Ogg cannot really be taken seriously, and Magrat (pronounced as spelled: Mag - rat) can only be seen as ridiculous. Agnes Nitt combines a first name that alludes to a Catholic saint, who allegedly grew hair down to her feet in order cover her nakedness (Agnes is known for her voluminous and beautiful hair), with a last name that is a lousy pest that infects hair, or an allusion to 'nitwit'. As for Tiffany Aching, she could equally have been named Bambi Pain – airhead first name combined with physical discomfort.

The power imbalance and the disdain inherent in the male view of women are not limited to the treatment of names. Gender roles are explicitly addressed when Granny is in the Unseen University with the Chancellor, and her mere presence in the all-male enclave is disturbing to the wizards:

> 'This is getting embarrassing,' said Cutangle, out of the corner of his mouth. 'I shall have to declare you an honorary wizard.'
>
> Granny stared straight ahead and her lips hardly moved.
>
> 'You do,' she hissed, 'and I will declare you an honorary witch.'
>
> Cutangle's mouth snapped shut. (ER, 268)

Cutangle presents the idea of a woman becoming an honorary wizard as prestigious, like receiving an honorary degree from a renowned university. The opposite, however, a man becoming a witch, is seen as unthinkable. This stereotyping is congruent with modern society's gender stereotyping, yet while Pratchett appears to be making a parody of it, he is, at the same time, reinforcing it.

Pratchett created the most powerful witch, Granny, as a 'man in women's clothing', and perhaps that is why she is able to defeat the head wizard. Perhaps also, because magic is associated with witches, the wizards themselves are not 'real men', but are partly emasculated by magic.

This damning by association may also account for the belittling of certain witches and apprentice witches. Pratchett makes it clear when describing Magrat that any and all New Age paraphernalia only condemns the hapless witch to ridicule by 'real' witches. Granny often pokes fun at Magrat for her New Age jewellery, candles and such. Tiffany, and thus Pratchett, is equally sceptical and dismissive of the young witch apprentices who indulge in the New Age:

> 'Mrs Earwig says that if we are to make any progress at all we *must* distinguish the higher magiK from the everyday sort.'
>
> 'The *everyday* sort of magic?' said Tiffany.
>
> 'Exactly. None of that mumbling in hedgerows for *us*. Proper sacred circles, spells written down. A proper hierarchy, not everyone running around doing whatever they feel like. Real wands, not bits of grubby stick. Professionalism, with respect. Absolutely no warts. That's the way forward.
>
> […]
>
> They'll all applaud Mistress Weatherwax. She always wins, whatever she does. She just messes up people's minds. She just fools them into thinking she's good. She wouldn't last five minutes against a wizard. They do *real* magic. And she dresses like a scarecrow, too! It's ignorant old women like her who keep witchcraft rooted in the past.' (HFS, 142-143)

Annagramma's explanation of 'proper' witchcraft above sounds a lot like the wizards' version, or at least a masculine rendering of the witches' version. Perhaps a modern Wicca version. Either way, Pratchett's satire seems to be supporting an authentic feminist witch interpretation of witchcraft as opposed to the Wicca version. How odd then that only masculine and sexless females, like Granny and Tiffany, can be truly powerful in such a witchcraft.

Conclusion

In so many ways, Pratchett's witches, while on the surface appearing to present positive female roles, instead reinforce patriarchal constructs and discourses – powerful women regendered as male and/or denied sexuality. Like the feminist 'reverse' discourse that attempts to empower women whilst it simultaneously reinforces a patriarchal construct, as mentioned by Purkiss, Pratchett seems to present a discourse that appears to be like this 'reverse' discourse – it appears to empower women whilst it reinforces patriarchal constructs and mores.

Perhaps Pratchett will take up the challenge of becoming a feminist writer and satirise the patriarchal witch discourse as well as the 'reverse' discourse, neither of which truly are feminist. Perhaps he could allow Tiffany to become sexually active while still retaining and using her power as a witch. Perhaps he could allow Tiffany to define her own role, without reference to, or domination by, men. Only then could the allegation of feminism, as put forth by Butler and others, begin to be accurately applied to Pratchett.

It is rumoured in L-space, the Pratchett fan website, www.lspace.org, that Pratchett is planning more books with Tiffany as the protagonist. At the Discworld convention in 2004, Pratchett read excerpts from a new Tiffany novel, supposedly titled *Wintersmith*. Having been nine in *Wee Free Men* and eleven in *A Hat Full of Sky*, Tiffany will probably have left her prepubescent status behind. However, another Tiffany book is also rumoured to have the working title, *When I am old I shall wear midnight*, which implies and reinforces the idea that Tiffany will assume Granny's virgin crone role, and thus perpetuate the discourse.

Based on Pratchett's opinion of literary criticism, there is little hope of an outside literary influence on his writing:

> The Librarian swung on. It was slow progress, because there were things he wasn't keen on meeting. […] Several times he has to flatten himself against the shelves as a thesaurus thundered by. He waited patiently as a herd of Critters crawled past, grazing on the contents of the choicer books and leaving behind them piles of small slim volumes of literary criticism.[77]

I hope that Pratchett, if this essay ever comes to his attention, will take up the challenge of creating authentically empowered witches and other female characters, and take this 'Critter excrement' in the spirit in which it is meant.

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[77] Terry Pratchett, Guards! Guards! (London: Transworld, 1992) 190-191.

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