



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The Maiden, the Mother and the Other One

The Satirical Use of Stereotypes within Terry Pratchett's Witches Series

B.A. Essay
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Abstract

Terry Pratchett is an author that has created the vast fantasy world of Discworld, which is contained in over forty published books. In a subseries that takes place in a remote area of Discworld, a kingdom named Lancre, he focuses his storytelling on witches, which are the female magic users in his world. The witches represent nature and wisdom while their male counterparts, the wizards, represent science and order. The witches do not always require magic in their profession as they are very adept at reading people and know when simple psychology is the better remedy, this practice they call using headology. The witches are, at first, based on the three witches of Shakespeare's Macbeth and then later on, the Triple Goddess stereotype. The Triple Goddess stereotype originates from early mythology, all the way back to the Great Goddess who gave birth to all the Great Gods and the Moon Goddesses represented by the phases of the moon. In this essay I explore Pratchett's subversion of these stereotypes when creating the witches of Lancre, women that over the course of the series come to embrace all aspects of their lives in spite of modern society's view that what they are embracing is not socially acceptable. In addition to the subversion of stereotypes, Pratchett subverts the fairy tale as we know it, shedding light on common misconceptions about how happy an ending needs to be.

Index

Introduction	1
1. Background	2
1.1 Fantasy Literature	2
1.2 Fairy Tales.....	3
1.3 Discworld.....	4
1.3.1 Lancre	5
2. Magical World	6
2.1 Witches versus Wizards	6
2.2 Headology	8
2.3 Magic.....	9
3. The Witches as a Stereotype.....	10
3.1 The Witches of Lancre.....	10
3.2 The Origin of the Triple Goddess	12
3.3 The Maiden	13
3.3.1 Magrat Garlick as the Maiden	14
3.3.2 Agnes Nitt	15
3.4 The Mother.....	16
3.4.1 Nanny Ogg, the ultimate Mother.....	17
3.4.2 Changing positions	18
3.5 The Crone	19
3.5.1 Granny Weatherwax	19
Conclusion.....	21
References	22

Introduction

Stereotypes are something everybody recognizes in one form or another. Modern cultures are teeming with many different stereotypes ranging from the beautiful yet less than intelligent blonde to the little old lady who is kind to everybody she encounters. In literature, authors often use stereotypes as tools in creating their stories by either implementing self-explanatory background characters that conform to a certain stereotype or make their protagonist break out of a stereotypical situation to rise to whatever heights he is destined to reach. All in all, stereotypes are everywhere, whether they have any truth to them or not.

In Discworld, a fantasy series created by Sir Terry Pratchett, the world is built on stereotypes. It is a world where the heroes never lose and the witches walk around with big pointy hats, proudly showing off their warts and striving to have as few teeth as possible. Despite this, Discworld is by no means filled with every possible stereotype, for instance it does not have bad female drivers or visually appealing construction workers. Pratchett uses satire to subvert the stereotypes he uses in his stories to fit whatever part he wishes them to play. In the Discworld books he creates a purely fictional world that is none the less based on previously encountered places, people and fairy tales from around the real world.

In this thesis I explore Terry Pratchett's satirical use of stereotypes, focusing on the witches of Lancre and the world they inhabit, with a glance at their surroundings, the magic of Discworld and its seemingly stereotypical patriarchal society. The characters I focus on are the four witches, Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick and Agnes Nitt. Tiffany Aching is another witch that is undoubtedly a witch of Lancre, but I consider the books on her to be another subseries of the Discworld and therefore not relevant for the purpose of this essay. The main theme I explore is the neo-pagan goddess myth of the Triple Goddess or; the maiden, the mother, and the crone, which Pratchett uses openly as a stereotype in this series by making the characters aware of the role they play and how they are to fulfill it.

1. Background

1.1 Fantasy Literature

The genre of fantasy literature has been growing exponentially in both popularity and variety since the publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy in the 1950's. The increase has risen most dramatically ever since the movie industry started adapting these, as well as other fantasy novels to the big screen. The element of fantasy is an appealing factor for the reader who wishes to escape his reality and all the rules which the real world imposes on him. According to William R. Irwin as quoted in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*: "A fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into 'fact' itself" (Jackson 14). That view is lacking in the social context between the fantasy world and the real world. In fantasy, there are elements that subvert reality but not without implementing the fantasy into a social context that the reader can identify with. The reader needs to be able to identify with the protagonist of the story; no matter how foreign or fantastic the environment may seem. Fantasy is usually based on something that the reader can envision, but it is then adapted to the imaginary by giving it a supernatural twist.

In the case of the Discworld fantasy series, Pratchett introduces a world that seems to work differently than ours, yet upon a closer inspection, it has a lot in common with the world we inhabit. While our modern world is ruled by reason, the Discworld has an element to it that justifies that some aspects of it do not have a concrete answer. That aspect is only explained as being *magic*. "The fantastic opens on to a region which has no name and no rational explanation for its existence. It suggests events beyond interpretation" (Jackson 25). By giving the reader an element to believe in without question, Pratchett creates a world where his words are the law and therefore when he comments on his world's culture, the reader cannot argue with it. Nevertheless he automatically compares it to the culture that he knows.

In Discworld, Pratchett brings to light elements of his culture that the reader is compelled to disagree with, yet when looking at his own culture the reader can see the same faults as are present within Discworld. "The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (Jackson 4). Therefore fantasy is the true literature of subversion; it subverts reality in such a way that an admonition on

a fictional society cannot be interpreted as a direct assault on modern society, but giving it the same faults or strengths; people are bound to compare and contrast the two societies and perhaps open their eyes to elements they had not otherwise questioned.

1.2 Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are in many ways akin to fantasy literature, as they have a similar sense of adventure and magic as fantasy literature, although they are often set up to be a lesson in morality as well as entertainment for the reader. The main difference between the two is that while fantasy literature is specific and has a focus on characters with developed personalities the fairy tale has less defined characters and a more generalized point of view. According to Jack Zipes in his book *Why Fairy Tales Stick*: “Writers cultivated the fairy tale as a socially symbolic act within an institutionalized discourse of the Western civilizing process to comment on norms, mores and values” (Zipes xi). According to his interpretation, the fairy tale was created as a tool for writers to ambiguously direct attention to the flaws in society as well as attempting to appeal to the reader to embrace the moral lesson of the story. In that regard the fairy tale, compared to the fantasy novel, is a less evolved and less personalized way for the writer to show his feelings towards his society. That does not mean, however, that all fantasy novels and fairy tales serve a higher purpose than to entertain the reader, but they all have a capacity to bring the reader to a deeper understanding than he previously had.

The reason why fairy tales are relevant when focusing on Pratchett’s subversion of stereotypes, is that in his books, he uses common fairy tales as stereotypical adventures that actually take place within his world except they never appear to happen in a way that the reader expects. In his novels, he subverts the genre of fairy tales, taking it from being the fantasy novel’s predecessor to being a supplement to the stories in his fictional world. In the *Witches* series, the witches of Lancre must knowingly take on fairy tale roles, fix fairy tales that have gone awry as well as try to prevent a fairy tale from coming true. The book in the series that is most notable for its fairy tale element is *Witches Abroad*, where Magrat gets appointed as a fairy godmother when the previous one passes away. In *Discworld*, nobody actually wants to be a fairy godmother, because it is a demanding job with little reward. (Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* 7). In the book, many fairy tales are clashed together, such as Cinderella, The Princess and the Frog and Snow White. The town the majority of the book takes place in is Genua, a fairy tale town

which is beautiful, sparkly and clean and all the inhabitants look happy; at least on the outside. In reality Genua is ruled by a fairy godmother named Lilith, and she rules it with a heavy hand. Everything needs to be perfect, in lieu of fairy tale standards and when an imperfection is found, it is promptly and quite forcibly removed. In Genua, if a thief was caught stealing, instead of cutting off their hand, “they cut their heads off so they wouldn’t think of stealing again” (Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* 119). Lilith strives to live up to fairy tale standards, but in doing so she ignores the real purpose of the fairy tale and imposes her view of perfection on Genua, her own version of a happy ending. She is the one that Magrat, Granny and Nanny are here to face, because she has misinterpreted the purpose of the fairy tale. By subverting the fairy tale in such a fashion, Pratchett sheds light on the misconceptions of the happy ending. It is not always a girl’s wish to be whisked off by a handsome prince, nor is it always appropriate to be happy and jovial. Magrat, Nanny and Granny understand this and therefore they oppose Lilith’s happy ending and try to help Genua’s version of a Cinderella to get out of her predestined marriage to the prince. Therefore the story does not end in the “happy ending” readers have come to expect from fairy tales, but rather in the contentment of the people participating in the fairy tale. Which is ultimately what Pratchett is directing his readers towards understanding; the difference between the ideal and the real, however abstract that may seem in a world such as Discworld.

1.3 Discworld

The Discworld is, on the surface, a far cry from the world we know. It plays by different rules than the physics of our world allows and is, by all appearances, nothing like Earth. Instead of being round such as the law of gravity dictates it should be, Discworld is a 10,000 square mile surface carried on a disc which is carried by four elephants which, in turn, are standing on a really big turtle. This turtle is Great A’Tuin. The following quote describes the Discworld as it would be seen from space. It is found in the beginning of *Equal Rites*, the first book to introduce the kingdom of Lancre and the witches that reside there.

Then it comes into view overhead, bigger than the biggest, most unpleasantly armed starcruiser in the imagination of a three-ring film-maker: a turtle, ten thousand miles long. It is Great A’Tuin, one of the rare astrochelonians from a universe where things are less as they are and more like people imagine them to be, and it carries on its meteor-pocked shell four giant elephants who bear on their enormous shoulders the great round wheel of the Discworld. (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 1)

Discworld is not meant to be the real world, but rather a parody of what we, as a society, once believed the real world to be. In some ancient cultures it was believed that the world was carried by a great big turtle and that is where Pratchett got his inspiration for A'Tuin from. "This is one of the great ancient world myths, found wherever men and turtles are gathered together; the four elephants were an Indo-European sophistication" (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 216). Despite their outward appearances, however, the real world and the Discworld seem to have a lot in common. The only real difference is the way in which the world works. If we, for instance, look back to a time in our civilization where religion was more dominant and science was hardly even a speck on people's radar, we can see clear similarities. A well quoted sentence from Arthur C. Clarke stated that: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" (Clarke 36). Science is the birthing ground of all new technology and science seems to be the basis of most magic in the Discworld. The key to wizard magic is, as stated in *Equal Rites*, reading and studying which is a feature that is the most prominent in acquiring scientific knowledge in our society.

1.3.1 Lancre

Although Discworld is small in comparison to the real world, it does have many kingdoms and therefore many kings. One of those kingdoms is Lancre, a small kingdom situated on the Ramtops, which is a large mountain range. Lancre has a certain unmistakable small town feel to it. The main town in Lancre is named Bad Ass and as Agnes Nitt explains the name in *Carpe Jugulum*, it could just as well have been named Disobedient Donkey: "Look, there was a donkey, and it stopped in the middle of the river, and it wouldn't go backwards or forwards" (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 54). Everybody knows everyone in Lancre and the inhabitants are small town people, generally with small town problems. One revealing aspect of the nature of Bad Ass is this quote from *Equal Rites*: "Front doors in Bad Ass were used only by brides and corpses" (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 273), which is indicative of the closeness of the community. But despite the sleepiness that seems to be a prominent feature of Lancre, a lot of big adventures take place within this small kingdom and that is where the Lancre witches come in.

Lancre is based on the area in Southern England where Pratchett grew up. In an article in *Folklore* titled 'Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories,' he writes that the kingdom of Lancre "is a somewhat idealized version of the little fold in the Chiltern Hills where I grew up, stirred in with

the western area of the Mendpis where I spent a great deal of my adult life” (Pratchett, *Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories* 162). This kingdom, as all kingdoms generally are, is ruled by a king but as in many modern western cultures, this king seems to have less power than the word monarch implies.

In the Shakespeare inspired book, *Wyrd Sisters*, the rightful king has been assassinated by his cousin who then ascended to the throne. This new king does not, however, rule Lancre as Lancre has come to expect and eventually the land itself rises against him and enlists Granny Weatherwax to deal with the problem. Eventually, with the aid of Nanny and Magrat, Granny manages to rid Lancre of this king and facilitate the ascension of a more agreeable king for their little kingdom, even after claiming that “it always goes wrong if you meddle in politics. Like, once you start, you can’t stop. Fundamental rule of magic, is that. You can’t go around messing with fundamental rules” (Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters* 42). By breaking this fundamental rule, she shows the true nature of the people of Lancre. They are people that hold to tradition in every way possible; if that does not work, they get rid the thing or person that does not fit in and then carry on as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

2. Magical World

2.1 Witches versus Wizards

There are many types of magic users in the Discworld, but the two most prominent ones in this series are the wizards and the witches. Their magic, however, does not work in the same way, for it appears to be gender specific. The book *Equal Rites*, is a parody aimed at gender specific roles within the Discworld, namely wizardry. In it, young Eskarina is mistakenly given wizard powers immediately after her birth. Granny Weatherwax, who may not abide by all of the rules imposed upon her by society, does seem to agree with rules regarding gender roles. According to her, female wizards are wrong as it is not the correct magic for women. Their magic comes from learning books and the stars. (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 136). That does not mean that she thinks women are inferior to men, for her view on a man’s ability to become a witch has the same ultimate result: “It’s magic out of the ground, not out of the sky, and men never could get the hang of it” (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 136). As she explains it, a wizard’s magic comes from the sky, which entails reading books and learning science, while a witch’s magic comes from the

ground, which means that they are the embodiment of the natural world, rather than the scientific one.

“I mean there's no male witches, only silly men,” said Granny hotly. “If men were witches, they'd be wizards. It's all down to -”she tapped her head “- headology. How your mind works. Men's minds work different from ours, see. Their magic's all numbers and angles and edges and what the stars are doing, as if that really mattered. It's all power. It's all -” Granny paused, and dredged up her favorite word to describe all she despised in wizardry, “- jommetry.” (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 29)

Discworld is predominantly, at least on the surface, a patriarchal society. The wizards are at the top of the magical hierarchy, kings rule the kingdoms and men are considered the head of their households. “Within this patriarchal structure, though, female characters gain and exercise power by both fulfilling and subverting gender norms” (Reid 243). In Lancre, it is the king that holds the power, but that does not mean much if it is the queen that is pulling the strings. In *Wyrdsisters*, the former king is assassinated by his cousin, under the orders of the cousin's wife. When the witches intervene on behalf of the kingdom and try to get rid of this new king, they realize that it is in fact the queen that is the driving force behind it all, while the king has gone mad. Therefore the book has turned from being a battle of kings to a battle between women, or witches versus an evil queen.

Wyrdsisters is not the only book in the series that subverts gender norms within Discworld. The book *Equal Rites* is another that shows clearly the battle women face when they are required to step into a world dominated by men. Eskarina, the first female wizard known to exist, needs to enter the Unseen University to be able to train her wizard magic. The obstacle she faces is that the Unseen University does not admit women as students, mostly because before her, there was never a need to because there were no female wizards. A wizard Eskarina met on her journey to the university explained women and wizard magic, or “high magic” in such a way that women were lacking clarity as they are a bit too emotional which can lead to an overheating of their brains (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 56). Eskarina does end up proving the wizards wrong and being the first female wizard admitted to the Unseen University. By addressing this feature of society, Pratchett sheds light on our society's discriminatory practices in regards to women and their supposed roles. In giving Eskarina her small victory over the patriarchal society in Discworld, he shows the reader that perhaps there are aspects of our own culture that need to be re-evaluated in regards to gender roles and that knowledge is not limited to any specific gender.

2.2 Headology

The witches of Discworld do use real magic to achieve some of their goals, but they also realize that all problems do not require magic to be solved, but rather the illusion of magic. The witches refer to this particular talent of theirs as headology. Headology is, by real world standards, nothing more than psychology, or more accurately the placebo effect. If people believe that what they are witnessing is magic, they are more inclined to believe that it will solve their problem. In the case of the witches of Lancre, headology is their most often used tool to deal with issues not requiring direct magical intervention. On the other hand, to say that headology is exactly the same as real world psychology would not do it justice, due to the nature of Discworld and its inhabitants. In *Maskerade*, Pratchett touches upon the similarities between the real world psychiatrist and a Discworld headologist:

Though there may be some superficial similarities between a psychiatrist and a headologist, there is a huge practical difference. A psychiatrist, dealing with a man who fears he is being followed by a large and terrible monster, will endeavor to convince him that monsters don't exist. Granny Weatherwax would simply give him a chair to stand on and a very heavy stick. (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 135)

The witches of Lancre, however, did not all agree on the importance of headology. Granny and Nanny, although neither of them much inclined to read books, realized the importance of reading people. “Granny Weatherwax had never heard of psychiatry and would have had no truck with it even if she had. There are some arts too black even for a witch. She practiced headology - practiced, in fact, until she was very good at it” (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 135). The younger witches were not as experienced as Granny and Nanny and they were a lot more eager to practice, what they referred to as, real magic. Magrat, shortly after assembling the coven in Lancre in *Witches Abroad* comments on the older witches’ use of headology: “It's just glaring at people and tricking them, taking advantage of their gullibility. It wasn't what I expected when I set out to become a witch” (Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* 98). At that point in the stories, Magrat had yet to understand the importance of the human psyche, the importance of having faith in something that people believe to be more than what they can comprehend. Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg embrace people’s expectations of them and therefore people take them more seriously than they do the younger witches. The fact that Magrat may be more skilled in herbalism, for example, because she has read books on the subject and actually learned something; the older witches prefer to wave their hands in a mystical way and hand their

patients a vial of potion that has no effect other than calm their patient's worries. Granny's view on headology was that it was just as important as real magic, if not more important. "Most magic goes on in the head. It's headology" (Pratchett, *Wyrds Sisters* 127). Headology, nevertheless, cannot replace actual skill, and that is where they have to rely on their magic.

2.3 Magic

Headology may be what mostly is required to solve the small problems of the people in Lancre, but in some cases, it is simply not enough. Lancre, although a sleepy little kingdom, is notorious for attracting large scale adventures and that is where the witches' real magical ability, rather than the use of simple headology, comes into play. Real magic in Discworld is not that dissimilar to what we refer to as particle physics, although Pratchett gives magic creative license to do what needs to be done. In that regard, he has given magic a life of its own. It has a personality, one that is rather similar to that of a toddler. Magic has its own will and desires, but it can be willed or persuaded, to do a magic-user's bidding. The wizards and witches of Discworld approach magic in a completely different way, which is what differentiates the two professions. As stated in an earlier chapter, it all comes down to gender and the difference between how men and women regard the world of magic. In *Equal Rites*, Granny Weatherwax needs to re-evaluate her view of the magical world when Eskarina is mistakenly given the magical powers of a wizard and Granny decides to take it upon herself to be her teacher in the ways of magic. Eskarina tries to conform to Granny's ideas of magic but the wizard magic overrules Granny's teachings and Eskarina gains understanding previously unheard of in a female magic-user. She realizes that magic has a cause and effect; "You can't just make things happen, there's a sort of – like a seesaw thing, if you push one end down, the other end goes up" (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 9). Her understanding of magic was a simplified version of what all wizards are taught about magic:

All wizards knew how to move things about, starting with protons and working upwards, but the important thing about moving something from A to Z, according to basic physics, was that at some point it should pass through the rest of the alphabet. (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 48)

Granny's relationship with magic is different from that of a wizard's. Rather than pushing at magic, she persuades it, or in some cases, shames it to do as she asks. In *Lords and Ladies*, a witch's view on magic is explained thus: "The universe really doesn't know what the hell is

going on and consists of a zillion trillion billion possibilities, and could become any one of them if a trained mind rigid with quantum certainty was inserted in the crack and twisted” (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 117). Magic seems to be only limited by the magic-user’s imagination since, according to Pratchett, every single possibility exists out there in the universe somewhere. Granny’s favorite form of magic is borrowing an animal’s mind. In fact, she is more of a passenger or a co-pilot to the animal she borrows from since she can have some form of control, although she is also affected by the animal’s mind and begins to take on characteristics of the animal. While she is borrowing, her body lies cold and lifeless where she left it. On occasion she has been mistaken for dead and therefore she started a tradition where she clutches a handwritten note which simply states: “I ATE’NT DEAD” (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 151). Borrowing is not the only magic she does, however, and in the course of the books she goes from a simple, yet hardy witch, to becoming the most powerful witch in Discworld.

3. The Witches as a Stereotype

3.1 The Witches of Lancre

The witches of Lancre vary in number depending on each book, but the four main witches are Esmeralda (Granny) Weatherwax, Gytha (Nanny) Ogg, Magrat Garlick and Agnes Nitt. The four of them are a part of a coven of three, although not all of them are always present at the same time.

The series starts with the novel *Equal Rites*, which features Granny Weatherwax as a Lancre witch. She is seemingly the only witch around and therefore she takes on all of the responsibilities that come with being a witch. The responsibilities of a witch in the Discworld are manifold. It entails being a wise woman to the people, healer, midwife, herbalist and their link to the supernatural. The supernatural in that sense, that it can have little or no relations with magic, other than people believing it to be magical or otherworldly in some way. That does not mean, however, that witches do not employ magic in their profession, it only means that it is rarely necessary for them to do so, if the problem can be solved with simple headology.

The second novel in the series, *Wyrd Sisters*, introduces Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick and is that the first appearance of the trinity of witches located in Lancre. In this novel, Pratchett draws his inspiration for the witches from Shakespeare’s works. The idea of the three witches

comes from Macbeth, although their manifestations in *Equal Rites* are a deliberate subversion of the witches they are based on. The witches of Lancre have an opportunity to openly criticize Shakespeare's witches when they see a play that has three evil witches plotting against a king.

Of the three, it is only Granny Weatherwax that realizes the true difference between them and the witches in the play. The whole novel is centered round the Lancre witches "meddlin' in the affairs of kings" (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 120) which is exactly what the witches in the play are doing. The difference lies in the nature of the witches themselves and by having the witches in the play to be simply evil, they are one dimensional and serve only one purpose; while the witches of Lancre have many sides to them, which makes them far easier to identify with as well as being more realistic as characters.

The witches of Lancre are characters that embrace their status as stereotypes, although to a varying degree, depending on the witch in question. The older witches are more at ease with being labeled by appearance and behavior, while the younger witches wish to break free from tradition in an effort to hold on to their individuality. To the people of Lancre, witches are meant to have certain qualities, at least if they wish to be taken seriously as representatives of their profession. A witch's appearance and behavior is as important, if not more so, than her magical ability and knowledge. Therefore it is customary for a witch to wear a pointed hat, regardless of its lack of purpose." "The pointy hat carried a lot of weight in the Ramtops. People talked to the hat, not to the person wearing it" (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 5). In some cases it was necessary to dress extra witchy to make it clear that the witch was on official business, and on such an occasion Granny would don her long black cloak in addition to the pointed hat (*Pratchett, Wyrdsisters* 41). Warts were also an essential addition to any witch, and having as few teeth as possible completed the look, although not all of the witches could achieve that, no matter how hard they tried.

Granny suffered from robustly healthy teeth, which she considered a big drawback in a witch. She really envied Nanny Annaple, the witch over the mountain, who managed to lose all her teeth by the time she was twenty and had real crone-credibility. It meant you ate a lot of soup, but you also got a lot of respect. And then there was warts. Without any effort Nanny managed to get a face like a sockful of marbles while Granny had tried every reputable wart-causer and failed to raise even the obligatory nose wart. Some witches had all the luck. (Pratchett, *Equal Rites* 236)

By embracing these less than desirable traits that are associated with the witch, Pratchett allows them freedom that the reader does not necessarily have. The freedom to cast aside social norms and cherish features on themselves that would, in our society, be considered a deformity.

As the series progresses Pratchett further enhances the stereotype which the witches are modeled after into that of the Triple Goddess stereotype, which plays on the trinity and their relationship to each other. Over the course of the series the witches continue to evolve while struggling to stay within the frame that has been provided for them in the Triple Goddess, although not always successfully.

3.2 The Origin of the Triple Goddess

In ancient mythology, gods and goddesses underwent radical changes that took place over thousands of years of human history, in fact, “to know the name of a deity at any given place or period, is far less important than to know the nature of the sacrifices that he or she was then offered. The powers of the gods were continuously being redefined” (Graves 14). Scholars have believed they can trace one myth to another and in that way trace myths, not only to their time of origin but also locate where in the world the myth originated. The myths representing the Great Goddess started early in human civilization, “some of them dating from the Old Stone Age” (Graves 10). The Great Goddess does not refer to a specific goddess, but rather a specific type of goddess which represents the same, or similar, image to her followers. The other goddesses mentioned by title and not by name in this chapter are also a representation of a type of myth pertaining to what power she holds or the influence she has over the material or mythical world. The Great Goddess of ancient mythology did not hold much power in her own right, but rather it was she that was the origin point, or the mother, of many of the most powerful ancient gods.

The powers associated with the White Goddess were, as described by Graves, predominantly to be the protector of the innocent, a goddess of the woods or the moon and associated with pigs and beans. The bean was such an integral part of the White Goddess myth that “in primitive times only her priestesses might either plant or cook it” (Graves 69). The White Goddess, however, had other sides to her as well. In a Latin myth quoted by Graves to be an “inside out” myth, it was “the White Goddess who destroyed children after disguising herself in bird or beast form, and the hawthorn which was sacred to her might not be introduced into a

house lest she destroyed the children inside” (Graves 68). This, as well as other multifaceted aspects of the White Goddess, gave rise to the Triple Goddess myth. A myth where either one goddess served three separate roles or three goddesses formed a triad of goddesses, each with their own role to play in accordance with either a phase in a person’s life or the time of the month, according to the position of the moon.

The moon has ever been entangled with the myth of the goddess, from the time of the Great Goddess myth, where she was actually sometimes represented as being the Moon herself. In the Triple Goddess myth, the phases are described by Graves as being the three phases of the moon; the new moon, the full moon and the old moon. “The New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the Old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination” (Graves 70). These goddesses then evolved into the Mother, the Maiden and the Crone, a different representation of the same Triple Goddess myth, divided into the possible phases of a woman’s life, rather than the different phases of the moon in the nighttime sky.

3.3 The Maiden

The first stage of a woman’s life, in accordance with the Triple Goddess stereotype, is the maiden stage. This stage begins when she has grown from a child and into a woman but while she still retains her innocence and vibrancy of youth. Her color is white, as the White Goddess’, for she is the closest to the White Goddess in terms of her relations to innocence and purity, as well as white being a representation of the new moon, a reference to her previous manifestation as the first of the Moon Goddesses. A generalized view of the Maiden as she is represented in Pratchett’s books is that she is a quiet figure who is respectful of her elders, while wishing to break away from the standard and create her own identity. She has a thirst for knowledge and adventure and seeks to learn from others as well as on her own. She is the one that people have the least amount of trust in, because she is less established than the other ones, as well as being less set in her ways. In Pratchett’s novels, the witches that most identify with that of the Maiden stereotype are Magrat Garlick, and then later Agnes Nitt, when Magrat transcends from being a maiden and into motherhood.

3.3.1 Magrat Garlick as the Maiden

The first witch of the Lancre to be in the position of the Maiden is Magrat Garlick and at the beginning of the series, she is the youngest witch in Lancre. It was in fact her idea for the three of them, Granny, Nanny and herself to create a coven of witches. From the start, it is obvious that Magrat Garlick is a subversion of the traditional fair-maiden stereotype that readers have come to expect from fairy tales. She is by no means an alluring young woman that entices any man that gazes upon her, but rather an embodiment of an eccentric and naïve aunt that everyone assumes will end up a spinster. Magrat refuses to wear the traditional pointy hat of a witch, but instead adorns herself with “clusters of amulets, magical jewelry and occult bangles” (Pratchett, *Wyrdsisters* 55). Her appearance is mostly reminiscent to the modern day occult Wiccan, a new-age stereotype generally associated with eccentric and self-proclaimed ‘free spirited’ people. Her personality does nothing to undermine this impression, as she strives to hold on to the theatrical view of witchery that she had imagined since before coming a witch: “She’d dreamed of wise discussions of natural energies while a huge moon hung in the sky, and then possibly they’d try a few of the old dances described in some of Goodie Whemper’s books” (Pratchett, *Wyrdsisters* 52).

Magrat does not hold headology in as high regard as the other two witches, as she believes it to be unethical of them as witches to play mind games rather than use actual magic. Her romanticized view of being a witch plays a large part in her view, as well as her desire to participate in an occult gathering as she has read about in her books. On the contrary to the other witches, she likes reading and gathering her own knowledge. A trait passed down to her from her mentor, Goodie Whemper, a witch who believed in the power of true knowledge. Due to this, she is the most skilled healer of the three witches, as she believes in herbalism and knowing which plants and herbs have what effect on people rather than relying on fake remedies accompanied by headology. This view of hers is not shared by the other witches, which is evident when they are about to cast a spell and Magrat interjects with:

‘Oh, but you can’t. Not here. You need a cauldron, and a magic sword. And an octogram. And spices, and all sorts of stuff.’ Granny and Nanny exchanged glances. ‘It’s not her fault,’ said Granny. ‘It’s all them grimmers she was bought.’ (Pratchett, *Wyrdsisters* 38)

Her responsibilities in the coven are that of the lowest ranked witch. She is the one that prepares their meetings and it is her job to make the tea. It is not a rule that seems to be written

down anywhere, but rather be a general understanding between the three of them. The hierarchy of the coven does not change until Magrat meets, and subsequently marries The Fool. The Fool later becomes King Verence at the end of *Wyrd Sisters* due to the witches' meddling. The King and Magrat had a very long engagement, which gave Magrat ample opportunity to take part in adventures with her coven before she gives up her witching ways to become Queen of Lancre in *Lords and Ladies*.

The theme of feminism is something that comes up regularly in regards to the witches of Lancre. While they appear to adhere to the patriarchal hierarchy of the Discworld, they do not always abide by their own rules. As with their apparent rule that they do not "meddle in the affairs of kings," they choose when to follow those rules and when to take matters in their own hands. Of the three witches, it is Magrat that has the most developed feminist perspective and it is she that needs to re-evaluate her status as an independent woman when she agrees to become the Queen of Lancre.

The most common feminist theme is the question of balancing career expectations and traditional gender roles, a problem shared by several young female characters and exemplified by Magrat Garlick, who gives up her place in the coven to marry the king. (Reid 243)

Pratchett effectively removes Magrat from her position of a witch and places her in the prominent, but boring role of being the Queen of Lancre, which, as mentioned above is a kingdom where not much happens apart from the adventures of the witches. In *Maskerade* Magrat has left the coven which prompts the other witches to find a replacement for her. A replacement they found in Agnes Nitt, another young Lancre witch. Magrat, however, is not completely done with being a witch and in *Carpe Jugulum* she decides to fight against the patriarchal society which decrees that she cannot be both a witch and a queen and steps in when Granny disappears from the coven. Magrat has evolved from the Maiden by that point and finds herself in the role of the Mother.

3.3.2 Agnes Nitt

When Magrat leaves the coven, Nanny and Granny are stuck in a trinity of two which they resolve by inviting another young witch, Agnes Nitt, to join them. While the coven had not actually been assembled until Magrat came along, now that she was gone, Nanny and Granny realized that having a third witch was essential to their coven and not just any type of witch

either. “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” (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 2). This marks the first appearance of the self-awareness that Pratchett gives to his characters. He makes them aware of the stereotype they are molded after, which in essence, gives them a frame of reference for themselves.

Agnes is as much a victim of modern culture’s stereotypical view of the witch as Magrat and her apparent reference to Neo-Paganism, although Agnes is of a younger generation. A very blunt description of her was given by Granny in *Maskerade*:

‘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. (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 14)

Appearance wise, Agnes is an embodiment of the modern-day Goth, down to the black lace, black dresses and the pale make-up. Agnes completely disregards the stereotypical white attire of the maiden and tries to alter people’s view of her gentle nature by dressing as darkly as possible. Although unable to overcome her own pleasant personality, she does succeed in creating an alternate personality within herself, Perdita, who has all the traits that Agnes wishes she has, down to being attractive, skinny and able to speak her mind to anyone. (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 13).

Agnes is not too keen on joining Nanny and Granny in the start. Instead she decides to go to Ankh-Morpork which is the largest city in Discworld and try her luck as a singer, as singing is one of her greatest talents. It is not until after Nanny and Granny help her uncover a grand scheme in the opera house she worked at, that she decides to move back to Lancre and join the coven. Then she assumes the role of the maiden in Magrat’s absence with all of the responsibilities and inconveniences that come with that position.

3.4 The Mother

The mother is the second manifestation of the Triple Goddess, a stage which represents a woman’s life after the transition from being a maiden to becoming a mother. The transition takes her from being a token of innocence and purity to being a lover, a caregiver, and possibly the head of her own matriarchal society. With motherhood comes a responsibility for others, as well as a warrior instinct raised by the need to protect those she cares for. The color that represents

this stage is the color red, the same as the Full Moon goddess wears. A generalized view of the mother stereotype in Pratchett's novels is that she is a law unto herself. She is the mediator between the maiden and the crone because she is at the stage that links the two. Without the mother, the maiden and the crone would not be able to function together for they stand on opposite ends of the stereotype. The mother is a loving, but crude, woman when compared to the maiden and shows little restraint in comparison with the crone. Of the three witches, Nanny Ogg is the ultimate incarnation of the Mother, but when Magrat Garlick has a child of her own, she manifests some of the characteristics associated with this stereotype.

3.4.1 Nanny Ogg, the ultimate Mother

Gytha Ogg, or Nanny, is a different type of character from all of the other witches. She is the only witch that does not have a storyline of her own, but instead is always in a supporting role for the other witches in the coven. Nanny is the only one of the witches to have a large family, the others are mostly all single and living alone. She has many children, and most of them remain unnamed in the books, apart from two of her sons, who serve special roles in the community of Lancre. She has many daughters-in-law that take care of her every whim, although she never actually bothers to learn their names. While most of Discworld's society is patriarchal, Nanny is exempt from that as she is the ultimate authority in her family. She has been married three times, although it has had no effect on her position as matriarch. She adorns the walls of her home with pictures of her children, the ones most in favor being the most visible. "Above the hearth was a huge pokerwork sign saying 'Mother'. No tyrant in the whole history of the world had ever achieved a domination so complete" (Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters* 26).

Her personality is as extreme as her appearance. The image of the ultimate mother in the reader's mind is probably that of a kind, average looking woman with an apron and a throng of children around her. Nanny Ogg, although not unattractive in her youth, got older and "time had left her with a body that could only be called comfortable and a face like Mr. Grape the Happy Raisin" (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 172). She had more success with ridding herself of teeth than Granny as well as manufacturing an impressive collection of warts. Despite her lack of physical appeal, she is an extremely social character and has no trouble making friends with just about anyone. Pratchett draws on her character from the unruly woman. "The unruly woman creates disorder by dominating, or trying to dominate, men. She is unable or unwilling to confine

herself to her proper place” (Rowe 31). Rowe goes on to say that the unruly woman possesses an excessive or fat body, which implies lack of self-control, she is crude and she “makes jokes, or laughs herself” (Rowe 31). These characteristics all apply to Nanny Ogg, who does not make any excuses for who she is, but rather revels in her role as Mother and unruly woman.

In concordance with the rest of her personality, Nanny has a sexual appetite to match. Not only was she married three times before the events in the series take place, but she also had a child five years after her husband, and the supposed father of the child, had died. By her own admission, she was never mentally a maiden. (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 46). In the course of the series, Nanny meets a dwarf named Casanunda. He is very different from other dwarves and as the name would suggest, the inspiration for him is Casanova who was a famous womanizer. Casanunda is yet another example of Pratchett’s subversion of the original, as his charm and sexual prowess is undermined by his height restriction. Casanunda’s attraction to Nanny is explained as being more of attraction to the mind rather than that of the body:

Nanny Ogg was an attractive lady, which is not the same as being beautiful. She fascinated Casanunda. She was an incredibly comfortable person to be around, partly because she had a mind so broad it could accommodate three football fields and a bowling alley. (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 187)

That is the secret to Nanny’s exceptional skill at making herself comfortable in any situation and with any type of people. Her mind, although apparently crude and uncivilized, is in fact broader than anyone could guess at. Nanny Ogg may not be a leading character, but she is essential to the trinity of the Lancre coven, because of her ability to set herself in other people’s shoes, she is able to identify with the other witches, and thereby hold them all together.

3.4.2 Changing positions

Magrat Garlick, although predominantly in the Maiden role in the series, transcends to the role of the Mother after the birth of her daughter, Esmeralda. Her change takes place during the events of *Carpe Jugulum*, a story centered round the appearance of vampires in Lancre. Due to a misunderstanding, Granny Weatherwax takes a vacation from Lancre which leaves the coven without a Crone. When Magrat realizes this, and the danger her kingdom is in, she decides that she has had a long enough break from being a witch and with a determination previously unknown for Magrat, she quickly settles into her new role in the coven, all the while taking care of her infant daughter.

Her appearance in the coven puts the hierarchy in an uproar. The otherwise filled position of the Mother, by Nanny, had to be vacated so that Magrat could take her place. According to Nanny, the trinity of the coven was not as simple as it sounded, because there had to be a certain quality to each of three witches for the coven not to fall apart. (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 47). Nanny was therefore shuffled to the end, to the position of the Crone, although the role was not at all to her liking. Nanny's temporary transition to that of the Crone had a much smaller impact on her as a character than that of Magrat's character. She is the one that obviously grew into something irreversible, while Nanny's position was only temporary. The only one that could not quite accept the change was Granny Weatherwax, who, at the end of the story, asks Magrat to make tea, a duty that Agnes should rightfully have as the Maiden of the coven. Magrat, rather than argue the point, realizes that Granny is both accepting her, and putting her in her place, waves Agnes down and attends to the tea (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 156).

3.5 The Crone

The third and final stage of the Triple Goddess stereotype is the one that stands for old age and death. She is the crone stereotype, or the hag, which represents a woman that has lived through the maiden and the mother stage and ended up an old, and often, bitter woman. She is depicted as a lonesome figure that wears black, the color of death, and she is generally not very pleasant to be around. The crone can be a malicious character, and in mythology a manifestation of her can be found snatching kids while in bird form and destroying them (Graves 68). In Pratchett's novels, the Crone is the oldest of the three. She is the wisest, but also the one that takes herself most seriously. Her experience in life far exceeds those of her fellow witches and due to that she has a certain air of superiority around her. She relies less on formalities with people, since she believes she knows better than to sugarcoat what she is saying. She has no time for patience. She demands respect from the people around her and invokes fear in ordinary people.

3.5.1 Granny Weatherwax

Esmeralda Weatherwax, or Granny as she is always called, is the most complicated character of the witches of Lancre. At the beginning of the series, in *Equal Rites*, she is a regular small town witch that serves her people as best she can, although her personality is quite developed as she is already an old woman. Despite her age, she is the character that evolves the

most over the course of the series. In *Equal Rites* she is the midwife that is called to attend births which does not conform to stereotype of the Crone, a stereotype she later identifies with the most. Every chance she gets, she outdoes the expectations others have of her, not because she is so eager gain power, but rather that it is what was required of her to succeed. Granny is the hardest of the three to properly define, because she always ends up overstepping the boundaries that are set in front of her. When Agnes asks Nanny which profession Granny is mentally, the maiden, the mother or the other one, Nanny can only answer with: “Damned if I ever worked that out” (Pratchett, *Carpe Jugulum* 47).

Mentally, Granny was never properly definable by the Triple Goddess stereotype, but it was rather seemed to fall into the role that best suited her. Her personality is a stern one, and she left the laughing mostly up to other people. “In fact, it seemed to Nanny, she was only Granny Weatherwax when she was angry” (Pratchett, *Maskerade* 3). She has confidence that far exceeds that of any other character in the Witches series, as she believes in herself completely, which is why she is very seldom afraid of anything. She had “the certain knowledge that the darkness held nothing more terrible than she was” (Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* 12). In Pratchett’s series, it could be said that it is not the Crone that defines Granny, but Granny that defines the Crone.

Another side of Granny is seen when she is discovered to have had been in love when she was young. A man named Ridcully who later became a wizard. In *Lords and Ladies*, Granny starts to experiences memories that are not her own, memories of other Esmeraldas, ones that had not chosen the same path in life as she had. At the end of the book, Granny concedes to tell Ridcully of her memories that involve him.””Somewhere Mustrum Ridcully married Esmeralda Weatherwax and they lived-‘Granny gritted her teeth‘-lived happily ever after. More or less. As much as anyone does”” (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 308). Even this admission that happiness would be something she would seek, although in a different universe, causes Granny to grit her teeth against this idea of happiness for herself, in any reality.

Conclusion

Terry Pratchett has used the subversion of stereotypes to enrich his vast world with multifaceted characters and by subverting a whole genre he draws into the light some common misconceptions about the nature of people and the purpose of the fairy tale. Pratchett's works shed light on a different side to age old ideals that have become accepted as the social norm in our culture, ideals such as that maidens should be fair, a mother is sexless and self-sacrificing or that crones are generally evil. In addition to these character-based stereotypes, he also tackles fairy tales, a genre full of helpless princesses and handsome princes, and shows us that not every princess needs rescued and not every prince is worth marrying.

In Discworld, the four witches of Lancre are practically given free rein to rediscover themselves in a way that allows them to pick and choose which aspects of their respective stereotypes they wish to take on as aspects of themselves. When they encounter an element of themselves, or of what is expected of them that they do not believe conforms to who they believe themselves to be, they simply ignore that element and carry on with their lives; Agnes accepts that she is not Perdita X, although having her around can be helpful at times. Magrat Garlick realizes that she can simultaneously be a mother, a queen and a witch, and choosing one or two would only result in her unhappiness. Nanny Ogg never really comes to a realization, because she has always embraced her sexuality and her own authority, although she does realize that it is quite entertaining to be a part of a coven. Lastly, Granny Weatherwax realizes that despite her status as the Crone in the coven, or "the other one," she does not necessarily have to become evil to properly tackle the role.

Pratchett specifically gives his witches a framework of the Triple Goddess for them to break free of. The witches are aware of the roles that they should play, but those roles do not always fit the occasion and therefore they learn to set those roles aside for however long it is required. The Triple Goddess stereotype started as an embodiment of one persona, one complete woman, but ended up being four very different women all working together for a common goal; the protection of their kingdom and their tightly-knit community.

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