From First Witches to Funny Witches:

Early Modern Reinterpretations of Circe and Medea Myths and the Witches of Terry Pratchett's Discworld.

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Contents

Abstract

The story of the Witch has always been about dangers presented by her nonconformity and resistance to gender expectations. This thesis initially traces the development of the two major strands of Witch stereotypes, the dangerous seductress and the ugly old hag, from the first examples we have of them, in the myths of Circe and Medea, to reinterpretations of these myths in select early modern texts. The main focus of this part of the thesis is on ways in which early modern reinterpretations of Circe and Medea intersect with traditionally English witches of the Hag variety, and how in turn this relates to marked reductions in the power witches were said to possess, often in conjunction with more humorous representations of these figures in early modern texts. The thesis thereupon argues that by the end of the seventeenth century, the witch stereotypes that would be such an influence on the Fantasy fiction genre of modern times had clearly developed. As the thesis subsequently argues, Terry Pratchett's witches interact with, manipulate, and frequently resist the story of the Witch as an evil woman so prevalent in early modern texts and consequently in Fantasy fiction up until the late nineteen eighties. The performative nature of witchcraft and gender is evident in the Story of the Witch at many points in history and literature, and Pratchett's good witches, like contemporary feminists, resist and re-write the conventional story of what it is to be a witch or a woman.

Statement of Candidature

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled "From First Witches to Funny Witches: Early Modern Reinterpretations of Circe and Medea Myths and the Witches of Terry Pratchett's Discworld" has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Introduction

In what follows, witchcraft, its history, the literature it enabled, and how the latter relates to early modern representations of Medea and Circe—and also to representations of early modern women—will be examined across a wide range of texts.[1]In the process, this study will seek to demonstrate that Witch stereotypes altered during the early modern period, thanks in large part to changes to depictions of Circe and Medea, depictions that persist to a great extent in contemporary culture. For example, in the Witch novels of the Discworld series, upon which a large part of this study focuses, Terry Pratchett both reacts to the stereotypes that grew out of changes to Circe and Medea figures in early modern texts and directly parodies several early modern texts, most notably Shakespeare's plays. These stereotypes, built as they are on mythic witches, thus provide a lens through which we can view the culture and societies which produced them. Study of them, therefore, allows us to see how ideas of the feminine, not merely ideas of witches as such, relate to Circe and Medea figures. Stevie Davies's textual approach to representations of the feminine in literature in *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature* is not dissimilar to my own method. In part, it examines the interplay between the influences of real women on literature, and how literature shaped ideas of the feminine and therefore what was expected of women, often by women themselves. But, in addition, more contemporary feminist theories relating to early modern texts will necessarily shape my readings as will theories of gender, including those to be found in texts such as Mark Breitenberg's *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, and Merry E. Wiesner's *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*.[2]

This study will thus, in no small part, focus on intertextuality and the literary sources of Circe and Medea figures. Sources such as pamphlets and non-literary historical documents will also be perused for possible interactions with the myths of Circe and Medea. Many literary critics and historians have written about witchcraft generally and

representations of witches during the early modern period. I will, of course, examine where these pamphlets and other texts interact with classical representations of witches, and the extent to which such interactions may have influenced dramatic and poetic early modern representations of Circe and Medea.[3]

As those theoretical resources mentioned above partly indicate, in this study I shall be making use of both historicism and new formalism. My methodology has been influenced by the writings of Heather Dubrow and of Frank Lentricchia and their uses of formalism, as well as by those of Mark Bevir, Roger Chartier, and Quentin Skinner with respect to historicism.[4] Recent work on adaptation theories has also been considered, particularly in my examination of Terry Pratchett's texts.[5] The theories of myth expounded by Robert A. Segal as well as Laurence Coupe I have found to be especially useful to the understanding of representations of Circe and Medea in literature.[6] Recent studies have examined early modern literature through the lenses of history and popular culture, including those by Jason Scott-Warren and Mary Ellen Lamb. Making various but coherent use of those interrelated theoretical practices, I shall be looking closely at the texts while also setting them in their historical contexts.

In the hands of early modern authors, the presentations of Circe and Medea changed significantly from their presentations in medieval texts. These changes reflect the society and culture in which they were produced. In turn, these changes then influenced later reinterpretations of these mythic figures as well as representations of witches and women in general. Early modern representations of female power and witchcraft reflect the fears and beliefs of both the people writing and receiving those texts, while at the same time influencing those beliefs and fears. As we have no trouble in perceiving, the mythic figures of Circe and Medea in their many guises throughout literature were of significant influence in the creation of negative female stereotypes, such as the duplicitous seductress or the murderess rebel. Reinterpretations of Circe and Medea increasingly became limited

to some extent by a tendency to represent women according to type, rather than as individuals, and what was once just part of the greater narratives of their myths (for example, seduction), became primary attributes for which they became known.

As will be shown, during the early modern period, many of the symbols of female power—whether beneficial, benign or dangerous—previously associated with Circe and Medea were reassigned to male characters by male authors. When the powers previously associated with them were not appropriated, they were frequently demonised. Circe and Medea were often defined as 'Other'. Even in classical myth, they existed outside of society, Circe on her island and Medea as the foreigner wherever she went. Therefore, representations of them were also defined by what were considered desirable characteristics in a 'good' woman at any given point in history. By the time the myths arrive in early modern England, they are both largely represented as 'bad' women, particularly Medea who is also a 'bad' mother.

What is a Circe Figure?

The myths of Circe are to be found in many classical sources, the two best known being Homer's *The Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[7] The Homeric Circe is a different character from the Ovidian Circe, the former being a more balanced character: a wise, powerful, beautiful goddess who teaches Odysseus how to get home after he has been her guest and willing lover for a year. Certainly, Homeric Circe was still a dangerous figure, but no more so than some of the other gods or goddesses. Her powers centre on transformation and she is firmly connected to the elements and nature, including animals, whom she appears to control (*The Odyssey* only shows her transforming men into pigs). Her knowledge extends to magical herbs and drugs, which she uses in conjunction with her rod and cup to transform Odysseus' men. "During the period from the sixth to the fifteenth centuries, the texts of the Homeric poems were lost to the West, and [Homer's] writing

existed there only as fragments embedded in the literature of rhetoric and philosophy. During this period the Homeric tales themselves, burdened by now with centuries of moralizing, became thoroughly dissociated from the poetry that had been their medium and largely reverted to the oral tradition."[8] In the absence of the Homeric version, the Ovidian version became the primary source for allegorical reinterpretations of Circe myths, steeped as they are in misogyny. For example, there are allusions in religious works such as Augustine's *The City of God*, where he describes Circe as a "most famous sorceress".[9] For a time these became the only versions available, changing reinterpretations of Circe even after the Homeric version re-entered literature. The Ovidian Circe is a more negative figure than the Homeric Circe. She still has power over the elements, but instead of using them to speed Odysseus' ship she uses them to attack people who anger her. She is repeatedly portrayed as a woman scorned and taking vengeful action, transforming both men and women out of spite. In Ovid, she is still a goddess, but is dishonest, sexually insatiable, and takes on elements of Homer's Odysseus, including guile and cunning.

During the intervening period between the initial circulation of *The Odyssey* and its rediscovery during the early modern period, Circe appears in many texts. These texts include Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautika*, where her portrayal is very similar to that in Homer.[10] She had, however, begun the transition from being represented as a goddess to being portrayed as a powerful mortal. Hesiod's *Theogony* has her listed amongst the Titans, being the daughter of a sea nymph and the Sun; she is also mentioned in the list of goddesses who bore children to mortal men.[11] In Virgil's *Aeneid*, she is a wealthy daughter of the Sun who spends her days singing songs, spinning and weaving, as she does in Homer. She still turns men into animals, in this case, they are: lions, boars, bears and wolves. She uses magical "words and *wicked* herbs."[12] Diodorus Siculus deviates greatly from the regular versions of Circe's pedigree. In his version, her father is Aeetes, whose brother Perses had a daughter Hecatê. Hecatê poisoned Perses to take over his kingdom,

then married Aeetes and had two daughters, Circê and Medea—and also a son, Aegialeus. Circê married the king of the Scythians, but she poisoned him and was cruel and violent to her subjects. She was deposed and fled to a desert island, sometimes called Circaeum, in Italy. Two trends commonly seen in later interpretations of Circe myths—to make her mortal and to make her dangerous—can be found in this unique early reinterpretation.[13] In the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus, Circe is again Medea's aunt and not her sister, and her powers are said to include bringing sleep to people by using her wand. Another unique feature of this version is that Circe is married to the Ausonian Prince Picus.[14] Apollodorus's *The Library* is very similar to Homer, except that Ulysses' men are transformed into many different creatures and not just pigs. There is also some ambiguity as to Circe's status as a goddess, whereas in Homer there is none.[15]

It was Ovid's version of Circe that had the most profound effect on later representations of her in literature. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she is charged, only for the second time, with the transformation of Scylla. She also transforms Picus (who is not her husband in this version) into a woodpecker, and in both cases, she does this because she has been thwarted in love. In Golding's translation of Ovid, which had a significant influence on early modern English literature, she is still called a goddess, but throughout she is described as a witch or a sorceress. There, in her encounter with Picus and his men, she even prays to Hecate, the goddess of witches, the way a mortal witch would.

By the time we reach the early modern period, her use in allegory (which ignores the second half of the story in Homer, in which she guides Odysseus home) shows a very one-sided Circe. During the medieval period, she became a figure of vice, being often represented in emblem books as a prostitute. She symbolises sexual pleasure, which allegedly seeks to overcome men's reason and turn them into beasts. As an independent, powerful, sexually free female, Homer's Circe was therefore the opposite of how Christian patriarchs wanted women to behave. "Circe, who survived as a remnant of the ancient

Goddess within the Mycenaen setting of Homer's epic, could not survive with plenitude and divinity intact in the Christian West."[16] In humanist circles in Italy and other parts of Continental Europe, the translation of Homer from Greek caused a revival of the Homeric version of Circe. Many authors nonetheless still clung strongly to allegorical interpretations. However, some rewrote them changing the moral. For example, there is *The Circe of Giovanni Battista Gelli of the Academy of Florence Consisting of Ten Dialogues Between Ulysses and Several Men Transformed into Beasts, Satirically Representing the Various Passions of Mankind and the Many Infelicities of Human Life*, in which Circe returns to much of her former glory and Ulysses cannot win an argument.[17]

Although in Europe the Homeric Circe experienced somewhat of a comeback, in early modern England authors frequently reinterpreted Circe in a very different way. Mostly they continue to draw on emblematic Circe figures, for example, the dangerous seductress seeking to overwhelm man's reason with pleasure **(**such as Spenser's Acrasia or Shakespeare's Cleopatra**)**, but others take some of the powers and emblematic items associated with Circe and give them to male characters. At the start of the early modern period, the attributes most often associated with Circe included: her wand or rod; her cup (sometimes a bowl); her drugs, potions and herbs (all of which she uses to transform men into beasts). Some of her lesser known attributes are: her spellbinding voice; great beauty (often with an emphasis on her hair); spinning and weaving. She is also usually portrayed as a foreigner and a Queen with a palace. By this time her status as a witch is securely in place and her divine heritage as a daughter of the Sun is rarely used in reinterpretations. As part of his argument in "Vulgar Eloquence: On the Renaissance Invention of English Literature," Sean Keilen examines Circe, partly through her son Comus, in relation to English poetic agency as a symbol of transformation and change.[18] Many critics have noted individual Circe figures in the works of early modern authors, but the only extensive study of her as a literary and mythical figure is that by Judith Yarnall.

What is a Medea Figure?

Medea, like her aunt Circe, is also a dual-natured figure, not only in different sources but sometimes within the same text. Fritz Graf examines what he calls the horizontal and vertical traditions of the myth of Medea, describing two main representations of her. There are the Colchian Medea, or the virtuous young woman who gives up everything for the love of Jason, and the Corinthian Medea, or powerful witch who has murdered Pelias and takes her terrible revenge.[19] As argued by Carole E. Newlands, "By juxtaposing in the *Metamorphoses* the two Medeas of literary tradition, the sympathetic girl and the wicked sorceress, Ovid invites reflection on the difficulties and dangers involved in the rewriting of myth."[20]

The creator of the figure of Medea as she is mostly known today, the vengeful infanticide, was Euripides in the play bearing her name. Was Euripides the first to make her kill her children by choice? Due to the lack of early recorded versions of her myth, this would be difficult to prove or disprove. One thing is certain, however: even if he was not the first, he was the one who cemented the idea in the public mind.[21] In his drama, the audience meets a more mature Medea, famous as a dangerous witch, who is betrayed by a husband portrayed as an incompetent liar who treats her as though she is less than human.[22] She is initially a sympathetic character; even the chorus is on her side until she decides what form her revenge will take. The audience is, however, also reminded of the crimes she has committed to help Jason, including betraying her father, killing her brother and tricking Pelias' daughters into killing their father. With her eloquence and cunning, she postpones her exile for long enough to enact her revenge, giving Jason's betrothed a magical gift which makes her burst into flames along with Creon, the bride's father, and their palace. Most would perhaps consider this revenge enough, but Euripides takes it one step further and has her kill their children so as to leave Jason desolate. Ordinarily, a mortal would not go unpunished for such atrocities, but Medea escapes in the dragon-

drawn chariot of her grandfather, the sun god Helios, looking every inch the foreigner and a lot like a goddess.

As with the mythical figure Circe, Ovid's interpretation of Medea became one of the largest influences on later representations of her, thanks to his *Metamorphoses*, the *Heroides* and a now lost drama about Medea. Through his representation of her in separate texts, he appears to embrace the complexity of Medea's character. Unfortunately, his characterization of her as an abandoned woman in the *Heroides*, or love-struck girl who transforms into an inhuman witch in the *Metamorphoses*, was so effective that now Medea tends to be represented in either of these roles, rather than as an individualized figure. Ovid's emphasis is different in these two texts. The *Metamorphoses* initially focuses on the younger or Colchian Medea, and her struggle between her passion for Jason and loyalty for her family. While she is still a priestess of Hecate, using magic, magic itself is a means to an end. When Jason and she reach Iolcus, her transformation into a murderess and full-blown witch begins, with Jason asking her to rejuvenate his father. A detailed description of her performance of magic includes an emphasis on the gathering of ingredients and the rituals involved, along with the repetition of actions three times.[23] However, readers are reminded throughout, as they were in the earlier section, that Medea's magical power is not her own. She is only granted power by Hecate, locating her firmly with human witches rather than the divinities from whom she is descended. From adding to life to taking it, is perhaps only a small step. Her murder of Pelias is also a major focus of her story and, in this version, she even slits his throat herself. After the cataloguing of the places Medea flies over during her escape in her winged chariot, only half a dozen lines are devoted to her destruction of Jason's bride in Corinth and her murder of her children. More space is used to describe the origin of the poison she tries to give to Theseus when she is living in Athens with Aegeus after her escape from Corinth. It is by glossing over these points,

focusing on her crimes and not her reasons for committing them, that Ovid dehumanises her, turning her into an archetypal witch.

Medea appears in two of the books of Ovid's *Heroides*, "Book VI: Hypsipyle to Jason" and "Book XII: Medea to Jason". In the first of these, one can find much of the language later used in the early modern period for Medea figures:

> Indeed, she could draw the moon out of its course,
> she could hide the horses of the sun
> in darkness, she could stop the flowing of streams;
> bringing life to the trees and the rocks
> she causes them to move about the country.
> So often she prowls among the tombs
> with her garments undone and her hair flowing;
> she gathers bones from warm funeral pyres,
> she curses the absent to their doom; she makes
> figures of wax and drives needles through
> their unlucky hearts; more is better not known.[24]

Hypsipyle is another of Jason's abandoned lovers, by whom he also had two sons. In an attempt to free Jason from blame in his desertion of her, she makes Medea the villain, an evil witch who used love potions on him, and who is cruel to children, tearing her brother limb from limb. She ends by cursing Medea: "[M]ay the woman who usurped / my marriage-bed suffer the fate I endure / at her hands. As I am alone, wife / and mother of two, may she also one day / lose both her husband and her children."[25] Was the witch bewitched, perhaps? In "Book XII: Medea to Jason", Medea is portrayed in the moments between her abandonment by Jason and her revenge. Apart from hinting that she would use

fire and magic against her rival, she does not share what this revenge will be. Most of the letter is spent retelling her tale, emphasising Jason's betrayal and all she did to help him. In doing so, she shows her barbarity, or distance from Greek civilisation, through her lack of self-control and the extremes of her emotions. This version of the myth attempts to humanise the figure of Medea by displaying the depths of her feelings, but since it does this by showing her to be profoundly disturbed in mind, her crimes of murder and treason moreover being unhidden even if not explicitly mentioned, it cannot be said to portray her in a favourable light.

Compared to Seneca's *Medea*, as John Studley translated it in 1566, Ovid gives her a positively glowing review. Adapted from Euripides' *Medea*, there are nonetheless large sections, such as most of the fourth act, describing Medea's magic that have more in common with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In this version, Medea's unwillingness to submit to male authority figures is a constant undertone. She betrays her father; she kills her brother; she commits regicide, and would not quietly disappear when her husband puts her aside. She is also a serious threat to Creon, Creusa, and Jason's safety. Initially, Creon wants to kill her, but Jason talks him into exiling her. As in Euripides, Medea spends the first part of the play bemoaning her fate and imagining what form her revenge will take. But in Seneca's play she seems to have decided quickly to kill her children, first wishing they would drown in her tears and then saying that she would gut them on an altar, as a sacrifice to her brother's ghost. Another of Seneca's departures from Euripides is that his Medea seems to be completely mad, imagining that her brother's ghost is demanding the sacrifice of her children.

During the medieval period, in both England and continental Europe, Medea was a surprisingly popular character. In Europe, the founding of 'The Order of the Golden Fleece' by the Dukes of Burgundy led to a revival of the Argonautic myths. With a view to presenting their leader Jason as an honourable and heroic knight, Medea's role in the myth

was minimised, or she was demonised.[26] In England, it was Ovid's reinterpretations of the myth that had the greatest influence, mainly due to Chaucer's use of the *Heriodes* in his *Legend of Good Women*, in which he paired Medea with Hysipyle, as lamenting, abandoned women. However, as Morse suggests, "the Medeas we have seen are tragic figures caught by love in a series of dilemmas. It would be unwise to see any of these characters as heroines to be elevated in a straightforward sense; they may be sinned against, but they are never suffering innocents. If they are betrayed, there are reasons for those betrayals."[27]

By the start of the early modern period, there were remnants of the two main types of Medeas, the Colchian and the Corinthian, but it was primarily as a witch and an infanticide that she was known to early modern authors. Throughout the many representations of Medea, the symbols most associated with her include snakes and greater serpents, such as could be seen in her grandfather's dragon-drawn chariot, and her cauldron with all the gruesome ingredients it contains. She occasionally has a wand, like her aunt, Circe, but she usually works magic using drugs, potions, charms, or spells. There are often references to her gathering herbs with a special knife, and she is also represented with a sword. Medea is a foreigner and visibly different from those around her; she is usually described as dark in colouring, although usually still beautiful. In almost every source Medea is linked to Hecate, the goddess of witches, often as her priestess but sometimes as a relative. So a lot of the imagery and attributes usually associated with Hecate often appear in representations of Medea, including power over life and death, rejuvenation, murder, and birth. Medea is a female hero, a figure who is between the mortal and the divine; she is therefore linked to boundaries and liminal spaces such as marriage, birth, death and other rites of passage. She also sometimes has prophetic powers. In more negative representations she is shown as an 'unnatural' or masculine woman, betraying her father and brother, and taking a very active role in her story. She is both

unwomanly and a representative of the worst that women can be: excessively passionate, powerful and uncontrollable, and one who kills her children as an act of revenge. Thanks to medieval allegories, almost any woman who kills children can be considered a Medea figure, including other mythical figures such as Ino and Procne. Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and its numerous imitators also linked abandoned women such as Dido and Ariadne to the figure of Medea.

Towards the end of the middle ages, representations began to be based on a reversal of the stereotypical attributes of Medea, in what is known as an Anti-Medea figure. "Later, in numerous Renaissance texts, certain female characters do indeed compare themselves to Medea, either in horror or in emulation."[28] During the early modern period, Medea became the archetypal witch. The Medea of classical literature was filtered through medieval romances, combined with Anglo-Celtic myths, fairy lore and folk beliefs to become the type of witch we still consider stereotypical. She remains the abandoned woman she was portrayed as being in medieval literature, only now the emphasis has moved to the method of her revenge. Medea represents the unnatural or failed mother, an infanticide, an enemy of patriarchy and a breaker of families. This, therefore, makes her a more negative figure than she was in most medieval representations. As will be demonstrated, a major change that occurs to Medea as a literary figure in the early modern period is that she almost ceases to be a 'character' in her own right. While some literary figures are instantly recognisable as Circe figures, such as Acrasia in *The Faerie Queene*, the most recognisable Medea figures are the Weird Sisters, Lady Macbeth or Margaret of Anjou, none of whom is unambiguously Medean. However, echoes of Medea abound in representations of witches, bad mothers and rebellious women throughout the early modern period.

Making the Story of the Witch

The figures of Circe and Medea were often linked in classical texts because of their familial ties (both are descendants of the Sun) and their magical powers, or witchcraft as it would come to be known. They also have many similarities, including the fact that they have two main representations, one being positive and the other much darker. As examples of their darker sides, one could cite the following: both Ovidian Circe and Corinthian Medea are women scorned, wreaking havoc with their desire for revenge; they are also deceptive, and instances of the mysterious and unknowable 'other'. They are women who act independently, displaying great cunning and wisdom, with ample knowledge of herbs, drugs, magic potions, and the power to control animals. Neither has much luck with the opposite sex, despite being beautiful and of divine parentage. Both are semi-divine, with their degree of divinity remaining undetermined in many sources, although they have gradually been represented as less divine as the centuries have progressed. This loss of divinity did not come with a reduction in power; their links with the goddess of witches, Hecate, were however strengthened as an explanation for their magical abilities. From Ovid onwards, they are both represented as having power over the elements and nature, primarily through Hecate.

Authors have, however, often represented these similar figures in entirely different ways. Although they are both witches, Circe is arguably more of an enchantress, representing an intellectual or spiritual danger, tempting 'men' towards physical pleasure at the expense of spiritual fulfilment. Circe's form of danger lends itself well to poetry and allegory as she can be seen as a figure of the 'other' within the self or the innate desires which must be overcome by use of Reason. Medea, on the other hand, is a much more earthly witch and is presented more as a physical threat. She is a murderess, a regicide, a fratricide and an infanticide, representing, as do all witches, rebellion—particularly from patriarchal rule. Her magic is therefore often more visual. With her cauldron simmering

away and flying about in a chariot pulled by dragons, she is more often to be found in dramatic genres such as stage plays. She is an embodied form of the 'other', in that she is always an outsider, and is therefore used as a scapegoat, as were many early modern witches.

Through medieval allegories, Circe and Medea figures became part of the discourses that helped shape early modern ideas about desire and masculinity. They also form part of the debate about women and power, legitimate or otherwise**,** that is especially significant during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Spenser uses Circe figures in particular, but also Medean Hag witches in his examinations of these concerns—and the first chapter, on *The Faerie Queene*, will explore how he does so.

Many early modern texts use Circe and Medea figures, or generalized witch figures, which by this point certainly contain traces of their earliest predecessors. A selection of those that primarily draw on classical texts for their inspiration will comprise my second chapter. Included in this will be John Lyly's *Endymion* and *Mother Bombie*, John Marston's play *The Wonder of Women or the Tragedy of Sophonisba*, Heywood's *The Wise-woman of Hogsdon*, as well as two masques. The masques examined will be Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, and Milton's *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, alternately known as *Comus.* Situated at the end of the early modern period, Milton used his reinterpretations, particularly of the figure of Circe, to examine the ongoing tensions between sensuality or desire and Christian virtue and reason. These tensions are similar to those expressed during the Elizabethan period in Lyly's texts. Socially approved feminine behaviour, and its opposite as represented by Circean- and Medean-witch figures is a theme present in all of the texts examined in this study, particularly those included in this chapter.

Shakespeare's thinking about women was demonstrably influenced by inherited representations of Circe and Medea, and many of his female characters have elements of

Circe or Medea or are defined against them—such as Hermione in *The Winters Tale*, who could be described as an anti-Medea figure. Shakespeare's use of Circe or Medea is so extensive that almost all of his works make some reference to them. More noticeably than the other authors examined, Shakespeare combines English myths, folklore, fairy tales and the confessions of early modern witches with these classical figures, changing the way witches were represented in literature. As will be explored in the third chapter of this study, it is Shakespeare's reinterpretations of Circe and Medea that had, arguably, the greatest influence on witch stereotypes, and to which the witches of Terry Pratchett's Discworld are a response.

The reinterpretations of the myths of Circe and Medea that occurred during the early modern period demonstrate an interaction between literature, culture and belief, and can offer some insight into early modern life. One of the beliefs expressed by these reinterpretations is that in witchcraft itself. Towards the end of the early modern period, despite evidence that many still believed in the possibility of diabolical witchcraft, the fear of witches appears to have diminished, with growth in scepticism of their possible abilities. The texts examined in the fourth chapter of this study interrogate these dynamics, as well as the idea of witchcraft as a performance or spectacle. Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* and Rowley, Dekker and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* demonstrate quite different approaches to the subject of witchcraft, the latter being loosely based on accounts from a real trial. Later, Heywood and Bromes' *The Witches of Lancashire*, and Shadwell's Restoration adaptation of it, *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O'Divelly the Irish Priest*, while also ostensibly based on real life witch trials, clearly demonstrate the move towards witchcraft as a humorous staged spectacle. It will be demonstrated that many elements of witch stereotypes that are recognisable today, were consolidated in these plays, as well as in Restoration revisions of Shakespeare.

Nevertheless, it was the subtle changes made to Circean- and Medean-witch figures by all early modern authors that made possible Terry Pratchett's Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick, Agnes Nitt, Miss Tick, Tiffany Aching and many others. Given that Pratchett's witches are at once so widely known and are so evidently revisions of the witch stereotypes, his witches will be examined at the end of this study in relation to the innovations made to Circe and Medea figures and witches in numerous early modern texts. I should add that the ways in which changes to representations of women and witchcraft can be either a reaction to changes in women's behaviour, or an attempt to control their behaviour, will be examined throughout this study, along with how these early modern changes to the myths have influenced our literature and culture. I will argue that the idea—present in many texts—of the witch as a 'bad' or socially non-conforming woman can be seen as early as classical Circe and Medea myths. It is through early modern reinterpretations of these figures in conjunction with distinctively 'English' witch beliefs, that the two main strands of witch stereotypes, the beautiful seductress, and the Hag who is a danger to children, that are still current in contemporary texts, developed. But, for the immediate purposes of this study, it is with Spenser that discussion must begin.

1. For an overview of the history of witchcraft see Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); D. Oldridge, ed. *The Witchcraft Reader*, Second ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); For a brief overview of witchcraft in art, literature and popular culture see Jane P Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural: The Dark Side of European Culture, 1400–1700* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2012).

2. Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Merry E Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1995)., in particular, chapter seven on Witchcraft; Stevie. Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature - the Feminine Reclaimed* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986); Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices - Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992); Mary Ellen Lamb, 1946- *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson* Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture (Abingdon, Oxon;New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2006); Jason. Scott-Warren, *Early Modern English Literature*, Cultural History of Literature (Cambridge;Malden, MA: Polity, 2005).

3. Barry, Hester, and Roberts; Margaret Ann Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate," *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (2003); Richard Kieckhefer, "Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1, no. 1 (2006); Kasey Evans, "How Temperance Becomes "Blood Guiltie" in *the Faerie Queene*," *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 49, no. 1 (2009); Daniel. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002); Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History - Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996).

4. Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* trans.

Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988); Quentin. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. Volume 1: Regarding Method (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5. Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Ray Cutchins, eds., *Adaptation Studies: New Approaches* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 2010); David Buchbinder, "From 'Wizard'to 'Wicked': Adaptation Theory and Young Adult Fiction," in *Contemporary Children's Literature and Film: Engaging with Theory*, ed. K Mallan and C Bradford (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

6. Laurence Coupe, *Myth* (London: Routledge, 1997); Eric Csapo and Margaret C. Miller, eds., *Poetry, Theory, Praxis: The Social Life of Myth, Word and Image in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxbox Books, 2003); Robert A. Segal, *Theorizing About Myth* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Robert A. Segal, *Myth - a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

7. In the interest of simplicity I will be referring to the composer of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* as Homer, as that is what he was known as to early modern English authors. Also throughout this text I will use the variant names of ancient characters as they appear in the source I am referring to, for example while discussing Ovid I will use Ulysses and for Homer I will use Odysseus. In all other references I will standardise them as follows: Circe, Medea, Hecate, Odysseus, Aeetes and Jason.

8. For a full history of Circe in literature and myth see, Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Mine is only a general outline not intended to be complete.

9. Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe*, 94.

10. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* ed. William H. Race and Library Loeb Classical (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2008).

11. Hesiod, *Hesiod's Theogony*, trans. Richard S Caldwell (Cambridge, Mas.: Focus Information Group, 1987).

12.Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil Translated by John Dryden* ed. Robert Fitzgerald, trans. John. Dryden (New York: Macmillan, 1965), Book VII, l. 26.

13. Siculus Diodorus, *Diodorus of Sicily* trans. C.H. Oldfather, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann, 1933-1967).

14. Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica, with an English Translation by Jh Mozley* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd./Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963).

15. Apollodorus, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology* trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2007).

16. Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe*, 98.

17. Giovanni Battista Gelli, *Circe: Consisting of Ten Dialogues between Ulysses and Several Men Transformed into Beasts, Satirically Representing the Various Passions of Mankind and the Many Infelicities of Human Life.*, ed. Robert Martin Adams, trans. Thomas Brown (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1963).

18. Sean Keilen, *Vulgar Eloquence: On the Renaissance Invention of English Literature* (New Haven Yale University Press 2006).

19. For an expansion on this idea see Fritz Graf "Medea, the Enchantress from Afar: Remarks on a Well-Known Myth" in James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles. Johnston, eds., *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth Literature, Philosophy, and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

20. Carole E. Newlands, "The Metamorphosis of Ovid's Medea" in ibid.

21. Graf, *Medea* in Clauss and Johnston, *Medea*, gives a succinct overview of the earlier sources of Medea myths. For a more detailed overview see Ruth Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge [England]; Rochester, NY, USA D.S. Brewer 1996). And Katherine

Heavey, *The Early Modern Medea : Medea in English Literature, 1558-1688* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

22. In ancient Greece the legal status of women, particularly foreign women, was similar to what it was in Early Modern England, in that they were treated more like property or children than as full adults.

23. The language used in this section appears in many early modern texts which will be examined in this study.

24. Ovid, *Heroides*, trans. Harold Isbell (London: Penguin, 1990), 51.

25. Ovid, *Heroides*, 53.

26. For more detail on the use of Medea myths up to the early modern period see Morse. *The Medieval Medea*.

27. Morse, *The Medieval Medea*, 146.

28. Morse. *The Medieval Medea*, 206.

Chapter One:

Spenser's The Faerie Queene: Myths, Fairy Tales and 'English' Witches

Introduction

In the creation of *The Faerie Queene*, arguably one of the most influential poems in the English canon, Edmund Spenser drew exhaustively on the cultural and literary sources at his disposal. This study does not contain the space to rehearse all of these resources, even were that possible.[1] It is especially interested in his use of the two mythic witches Circe and Medea. Even though Circe and Medea figures appear in many of Spenser's works, this study will be focusing on those to be found in *The Faerie Queene*, because of this poem's enduring influence on English literature and culture, and also because of our current perceptions of early modern culture. While these two witches sometimes appear as obvious recreations, such as the Circean Acrasia in her Bower of Bliss, their general character types (as well as the symbols and tropes associated with them) had, by the early modern period, been subsumed into representations of women in literature more generally, especially those of 'bad' women and witches. Thanks to widely disseminated moral allegories and emblem books, Circe became virtually synonymous with the dangers of sexual temptation, and Medea with the woman scorned, although even in the allegorical traditions that Spenser inherited, they are much more complex than this redaction would indicate. In addition to allegorical representations of Circe and Medea, Spenser also had access to early versions of their representations in myth, particularly in Homer's *Odyssey*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As several critics have noted, Spenser uses a combination of these texts, and their later moralistic accretions, throughout *The Faerie Queene* when fashioning his versions of Circe and Medea figures.[2]

By the early modern period, many Circean or Medean tropes and symbols had entered the arsenal of misogyny available to most early modern writers. This study focuses

on those symbols and tropes, and in particular, their presences in *The Faerie Queene*. The changes to the use of Circean and Medean symbols, in particular, can be utilised as a means to examine how male authors during the early modern period dealt with gender, power and sexuality, especially when these combine in the figure of the witch. It is interesting to note the sheer number of characters (both male and female) within *The Faerie Queene* that have elements of Circe or Medea or both. There are over fifty characters that have Circean and or Medean elements, out of a total cast of about 275, making it approximately one fifth that are influenced in some way by these myths. Of these, 42 are female characters, and 14 are male, and of the female characters, only one quarter can be seen as 'good' characters in a tale that is largely a battle between good and evil. In comparison, half of the male characters that have taken on elements of Circe and Medea are 'good'. Changes to these figures are also visible elsewhere in changes to witch stereotypes, and they have entered into early modern culture more broadly, such as into the misogynist and proto-feminist pamphlets that formed the "querelles des femmes" or debate about women.[3]

All of the characters with Circean and Medean traits cannot of course be examined in detail in this study. Therefore, it will be those that most directly reflect or influenced changes to English witch stereotypes that will be of interest here. In particular, it will consider representations of the witch as a Hag, which were arguably becoming more common in early modern texts. It will also look at characters (often identified as witches), with major Circean and Medean traits, especially when combined with specifically English witch beliefs. Thirdly, it will examine figures that are described using Circean and Medean attributes, or the language of witchcraft, but who largely do not have access to magical powers, will be examined, especially when their portrayals intersect with humour. Next, the possibility of redemption for Circean and Medean figures will be briefly addressed regarding minor female characters, before moving on to Spenser's separation of less

desirable Circean and Medean traits (such as sexuality, independence and violence), from some of their magical abilities in his presentation of 'good' female characters. Finally, this chapter will examine Spenser's attribution of magical abilities and objects which were originally possessed by Circe and Medea in early versions of their myths, to male characters. Many of the trends examined regarding representations of Circe and Medea figures in *The Faerie Queene* can also be seen in other texts from the early modern period that will be examined later in this study.

Ugly Old Hags – The Characters of Witchcraft

Elsewhere this chapter examines many beautiful young women who can be seen as having Circean and Medean attributes that are not necessarily connected to witchcraft but are often described in the language of witchcraft. The characters that follow are older, unattractive, and combine tropes associated with witches from literature, such as Circe, Medea, and Hecate, with tropes associated with witches from English folklore, and from 'real life' accounts of witchcraft in pamphlets about witch trials.

Medean and Hecatean

The first old witch we encounter is Night; unlike the other old witches in the poem, she is not directly called a Hag. But she is called a grandmother, implying age, and she can be seen as a stand-in for Hecate, the Goddess of Night and Witches amongst other things. Duessa evokes Night in much the same way as Medea evokes Hecate in the seventh book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when she is creating the potion to rejuvenate Aeson. Night's powers are much reduced when contrasted with those in other representations of Hecate despite the statement that like Hecate 'She in hell and heauen had power equally'.[4] Night does, however, retain the ability to drive a flying chariot, like Hecate, and Medea—only hers is drawn by horses, not dragons (*FQ*, I.v.28). Duessa (a Medean figure) and Night are

forced to take Sansjoy to Aesculapius, the famed 'leech' or doctor of Greco-Roman myth. "Beseeching him with prayer, and with praise, / If either salues, or oyles, or herbes, or charmes / A fordonne wight from dore of death mote raise," (*FQ*, I.v.41.6-8). In Ovid, Medea would have been able to fix him on her own, using these same means. Hecate in her crone form, as she implicitly appears here, influenced many representations of witches during the early modern period.

Circean

The two "wicked Hags", Impotence and Impatience make a limited appearance with Maleger. Maleger is a male character with elements of Circe and Medea, amongst which are his companions' weapons, Impotence's staff, a Circean symbol, and Impatience's "raging flame", a Medean one (*FQ*, II.xi.23). Impotence is one of the few 'bad' female Circe figures who has a staff or wand; another is Detraction, who spins on a distaff and also weaves, another Circean activity found in the Odyssey. Although she is not associated with Circean sexual temptation, her description contains terms associated with witchcraft and evil more generally, including a "cursed tongue", an "Aspis sting" and "Foming with poyson," (*FQ*, V.xii.36).

English Witches

Detraction comes paired with another Hag, Envy, who is the personification of one of Medea's primary traits, as envy is a twin to jealousy. Envy, like Fury, has "foule heare / Hung loose," that is reminiscent of Ovid's Medea (*FQ*, V.xii.29.3-4). She also plays with snakes and poisons, and her nails are described as being like toad's claws, all originally Medean symbols that have become part of English witch-stereotypes by the early modern period. Another element of 'real' English witches as they from pamphlet accounts of trials is also seen in Detraction and Envy. Some theories as to why neighbours accused each

other of witchcraft or testified that their neighbour was also a witch include envy of the neighbour and defaming stories exaggerated by gossip, so it is possible that these witch-like Hags function in effect as illustrations of the causes of historical witchcraft accusations.[5]

> So when that forrest they had passed well,
> A little cottage farre away they spide,
> To which they drew, ere night vpon them fell;
> And entring in, found none therein abide,
> But one old woman sitting there beside,
> Vpon the ground in ragged rude attyre,
> With filthy lockes about her scattered wide,
> Gnawing her nayles for felnesse and for yre,
> And there out sucking venime to her parts entire.
>
> (*FQ*, IV.viii.23)

The stanza above is included in its entirety as it has many elements associated with early modern witch stereotypes. In it, the reader encounters Sclaunder, who is a Hag, living in a cottage, dressed like a slattern, with wild hair (not unlike Ovid's Medea). In the next stanza, she pours out "poyson", a Medean and Circean tool, and "lewdly [does] miscall". Lewdness and deception are of course also Circean and Medean attributes that, by this stage in literature, form part of witchcraft stereotypes, mainly thanks to Seneca's play about Medea. She is also linked to a serpent, an animal strongly associated with Medea, and is a "queane so base and vilde," so she is possibly also like a prostitute, and therefore Circean, or at the minimum, sexually incontinent.[6] Sclaunder has minor elements of Circe,

Medea, and thanks to her threadbare cottage, and poor hospitality, also some English witch stereotypes.

The first "wicked Hag" we encounter who is named as such is Occasion, the mother of Furor (*FQ*, II.iv.4.1). As one who creates strife and cannot control her tongue or her emotions, she has elements not only of Medea but also of early modern pamphlet witches and heretics, whose muttered curses had the power to kill or injure, or whose blasphemies were a danger to the church. The punishments that Guyon inflicts on her, the scold's bridle and being tied to a stake, are not punishments usually given to early modern English witches, but rather the punishments of disruptive women more generally, as an example to others not to ferment dissent.

Humour

These are not the only Hags to appear in the poem, but it should be noted that there is hardly any successful magic use by those mentioned thus far (and Night even needs to rely on the assistance of a male doctor for healing) making them laughable in their ineptness. Their descriptions are focused on their grotesque hag-like appearance, which can be seen as both a connection to Hecate in her crone aspect and an attempt to demystify the ageing female body, thereby rendering it less threatening and more humorous.

Throughout *The Faerie Queene*, there are three main types of witches. Firstly, the predominately classical, literary witches based mainly on Circe and Medea. Secondly, there is the predominately English witch as she appears in Fairy tales, folk tales, trial pamphlets and ballads (which however by this period also contain some elements of literary witches including Hecate); and there is the third type of Witch, a recombination of these two. All three will be examined in the next section.

Very Bad Girls and Wicked Witches

It is in this section of my study that Spenser's most overt reinterpretations of the myths of Circe and Medea will be examined. These include the overtly Circean Acrasia and the rebellious, Medean Radigund. In the character of Duessa there are elements from not only Circe and Medea myths but also more native English witch beliefs to explore. As has been already mentioned, not every Circe and Medea figure in *The Faerie Queene* can be scrutinised in this study. Therefore, only one other potentially dangerous and ambitious female to be considered here will be Mutabilitie, in the Cantos bearing her name.

Circean

Book II Canto xii, "consists of an Odyssean journey undertaken by Guyon and his guide, the Palmer, to the Bower of Bliss, the abode of the Circean enchantress Acrasia, modelled on the enchantresses of Cinquecento Italian epic."[7] Exposure to these Circean enchantresses in literature would mean that many early modern readers would have immediately recognised Acrasia as a Circe figure, as have most commentators on this section of the poem. Thanks to Amavia's tale, by the time readers get to Phædria and the Mermaids, they already know a fair bit about Acrasia, a sorceress so dangerous that she makes Phædria and the Mermaids seem easy to resist (*FQ*, II.i.51-55). According to Amavia, Acrasia has a poisonous cup, a wandering island, and she knows many spells and herbs that will make men become her lovers; and then, as the reader finds out later, she turns these men into animals. A more complete Circe figure than Spenser's Acrasia is unlikely to be found in English literature, although, as noted by Tania Demetriou, Circe is never directly named anywhere in the poem, even though other characters associated with her myths are.[8] As Hamilton notes, Acrasia's name means badly mixed, or incontinent, and one of the meanings of Circe's name is 'mixed', and she is associated with in-between

states of being, as are many later witches in literature, including (as we shall see later) those in Pratchett's texts.[9]

On Guyon's journey to Acrasia's island, we encounter her relative, Medea, whose story Spenser added to the garden's gate in a departure from one of his sources, Tasso.[10] According to Demetriou, Circe's and Medea's stories had become even more linked (thanks to Renaissance allegories) than their originals suggested they already were, and the two are often found paired as a dual archetype of witches and enchantresses.[11] What this study is interested in here, however, is Spenser's use of Medea's myth, especially as it is located in the narrative as part of the build-up to a major Circe figure. Medea here is jealous and murderous, using charms and violence to get what she wants, much like Acrasia. This rendering of Medea's story downplays the assistance she gave Jason in gaining the Golden Fleece, or the part of her story where she is relatively benign. There are also at least two ways that the 'boyes blood' could be interpreted. Hamilton's notes to these stanzas suggest that this phrase refers to her murdering her brother, but it could also refer to her later crime of killing her sons. For educated readers of the early modern period, a mention of boys' blood in this context would have brought to mind both instances.

In stanzas 39 to 41 we can see another of Spenser's innovations, this time to Circe myths by contrast primarily with Homer's account of Circe in *The Odyssey*. In *The Odyssey*, and some other early texts formulating the Circe myth, the wild animals all over Circe's island are tame, the implication being that they are either under Circe's power or have been transformed from men into beasts by Circe. In those stories also, it is Circe who has a rod, wand, or staff. In the Renaissance allegorical tradition, Mercury and his moly represent rationality or the grace of God, and the Palmer (rationality) is obviously meant to be a reinterpretation of Mercury. In *The Odyssey* Mercury possibly has his Caduceus, but this is not a feature as he does not use it, nor does Odysseus, who uses the moly that Mercury has provided. However, the Palmer has a staff (often compared to the Caduceus),

which he uses to tame Acrasia's animals. Spenser's innovation is that the power over the animals has been taken away from a stick-wielding woman and given to a stick-wielding man. It is interesting to note that Acrasia, one of the most overtly Circean figures in Spenser, does not have a rod or staff, and this is not the only instance of Circe's magical powers being diminished in Spenser's reinterpretation of her as Acrasia.

In the argument to Book II canto I, Acrasia is directly named as Pleasure, and she is an obvious example of Circe as the Pleasure Principle or sexual temptation. It is this element of Circe that Spenser focuses on in The Bower of Bliss section of *The Faerie Queene.*[12] Spenser also links pleasure and magic in this section, highlighting the similarities between seduction and witchcraft: "Where Pleasure dwells in sensuall delights, / Mongst thousand dangers, and ten thousand Magick mights," (*FQ*, II.xii.1.8-9). Also, Acrasia and other Circe figures are conflations of her representation as Pleasure and her familiar representation as using of potions or poisons. For example, in the following lines, "from pleasures poyson to abstaine:" (*FQ*, II.ii.45.4) and "[m]ade dronke with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt," (*FQ*, II.v.34.9). Therefore, as Spenser makes clear, Pleasure itself becomes a drug, one that makes men weak and woman-like as demonstrated by Cymochles (*FQ*, II.v.36.2). That said, it is of interest that Acrasia is also described as "a wicked Fay" at II.ii.43.3, a direct linking of the Greco-Roman myth of Circe with the lore of English fairies.

Circe has lost much power between her appearance in Homer and her reinterpretation as Spenser's Acrasia. She has gone from being a relatively benign Goddess to becoming a dangerous sorceress and courtesan, in the allegorical tradition; and, in Spenser's poem, she does not even have her wand. An important phenomenon here is that, consistently, the Palmer takes over actions that were Circe's in Homer, and Acrasia, when we finally see her, is utterly ineffectual, not even being able to escape her enemies. Her powerlessness at the end is interesting given that, not so long before, we are told that she

has the power to fetch or summon young men from a great distance, as she does Verdant. Finally, Guyon destroys her bordello-like Bower, and it does not seem quite so intemperate to do so if the Bower of Bliss is taken to represent a garden of earthly delights that in effect equates with a whore house.[13] Moreover, from a Calvinist perspective, that which is of this world cannot ultimately co-exist with that which is not. Of pertinence here in that regard are stanzas 86 and 87, which contain the story of Gryll. "This is a tiny story and creates an understated closure for the sharp and troubling episode of the Bower of Bliss. However, the simple logic by which Grill remains a hog casts a shadow over the fond hope that *The Faerie Queene* might 'fashion a gentleman'—the hope that virtue and faith will transform a human being for this world and the next."[14] Most commentators read this section as meaning, let Gryll become a pig again; however, it can also be read as, let Gryll stay a man but keep his already hoggish mind. The point here is that whether Circe has the power to change the minds of men, or only their form, is something that varies quite a bit depending on the recreation of her by any given author. Here, Spenser suggests that Acrasia is only able to transform men's bodies if their minds were already bestial—solely preoccupied with the pleasures of this world: a covert and ingenious method of implying her reduction in power.

Medean

A disruptive, power-usurping female who meets a grisly end in the text is Radigund, the self-proclaimed Queen of the Amazons. She has many Medean qualities that add to her characterization as a dangerous or unwomanly woman. She is cruel, wrathful, merciless, greedy, as well as vengeful, all of these being very Medean traits, especially when in excess, as they are in Radigund (*FQ*, V.v.14). She also has the Circean quality of making men effeminate, achieved by taking their weapons, making them wear women's clothes and limiting their food so as to reduce their strength. Radigund likewise possesses Circe's

dangerous beauty (*FQ*, V.v.21). However, one Circean and Medean trait not possessed by Radigund is their magical powers. She has this lack of magic in common with several 'bad girls' who have Circean and Medean attributes, but not their powers, such as Argante. The death of Radigund, an unlawful Queen, in being beheaded by a virtuous female leader who largely conforms to social norms, is of course a rehearsal of the death of Duessa, and of Mary Queen of Scots. The implied meaning for an early modern male audience is that sometimes, when dealing with the threat of female power, the most efficient way is to cut it off at the source.

Circe, Medea and English Witches

Duessa has many of the elements examined so far, and the appellations 'witch', 'wicked witch', or 'vile sorceress' are used to describe her. The first time we encounter evidence of her powers as a witch is Fraudubio's story of his transformation into a tree (*FQ*, I.ii.33-43). In it, Duessa is jealous of the beauty of a rival, whom she transforms, declaring her beauty to be false in a reversal of the truth, which is that Duessa's beauty is an illusion. This story has similarities to Ovid's tale of Circe and Scylla, where Circe, the powerful sorceress, transforms the nether regions of her rival Scylla; only, here, Duessa transforms first Fraelissa's appearance and then changes her entire person into a tree. In an interesting twist, in stanza 41 we see that it is Duessa's "neather parts" that are misshapen. When she knows she has been discovered, she "With wicked herbes and ointments did besmeare / My body all, through charmes and magicke might, / That all my senses bereaued quight:" turning Fraudubio into a tree as well (*FQ*, I.ii.42.3-5). As John Staines points out, "Duessa's appearance gives her power —'this that seem'd so faire / And royally arayd' (40.1-2)—just as Mercilla's does."[15] It is this power that adds to the danger of trusting appearances, especially those of beautiful, charming women, as they are just as likely to be a Circe- or Medea-style witch.

Duessa is a real mix of both Circean and Medean tropes, as well as English witchcraft traditions, and as such she is a style of witch not seen before in English literature. It is as though, in creating her, Spenser gathered every bad attribute a woman could have in his culture and exaggerated them. Duessa is similar to a young Medea in her disloyal attempts to help Sanjoy. Fortunately for the Red Crosse Knight (who thought he had her support), he has the "charmed shield, / And eke enchaunted armes, that none can perce," (*FQ*, I.iv.50.5-6). Invincibility was more commonly associated with those Medea helps, than her enemies in early versions of her myths, and here it is not the Medea figure granting invincibility. Adding to Duessa's Medean attributes is her going to Night (a reinterpretation of Hecate) for aid in restoring Sansjoy, as it is reminiscent of Ovid's Medea evoking Hecate when she is making her potion to restore Aeson (*FQ*, I.v.20-27). She even has a Medean serpent-drawn chariot (*FQ*, I.vii.17-18).

Duessa is the daughter of Deceit and Shame, the first of these being both a failing much attributed to women in the early modern period and a major part of Duessa's character (*FQ*, I.v.26.9). Duessa is also especially associated with sexual desire, and is repeatedly likened to a loose woman or prostitute, and is even called "That scarlot whore" (*FQ*, I.viii.29.2). She is therefore linked not only to Circe-types but to the whore of Babylon, which iterates the connection between sexually available women and witchcraft stereotypes in early modern texts. Nevertheless, Duessa's Circean elements are more than just her sensual appeal and false beauty; she also has a magical cup, which she uses to bring down Timias (*FQ*, I.viii.14). Timias does not even need to drink from this cup to be unmanned, as Duessa just needs to sprinkle her potion on his "weaker parts" or nether regions for him to be transformed, much as Ovid's Circe sprinkles the water with her potion to physically transform Scylla's nether regions.

Later, in a Medean excess of emotion, Duessa throws away her powerful golden cup, enabling her downfall to begin (*FQ*, I.viii.25.2). Once she is caught, Duessa's ugliness

is unveiled, a process that deploys all the tropes about Hags and expressive of misogyny to be found in early modern pamphlets, including those specifically about witches. This unveiling also shows her links to the witches of English fairy tales and folktales. For example, her mismatched feet are a sure sign that she is evil. There is a strong tradition of seemingly beautiful women with animal feet or one animal foot in stories about witches, fairies and devils.[16] Duessa, like Medea, also avoids punishment for most of the poem. However, unlike classical versions of Medea, she is eventually caught and punished, as was the rule for early modern Medeas who were demonstrably powerful.[17] In the case of Duessa, when she is caught for the final time in Book Five, she is brought to Mercilla's court and charged: not with her numerous other crimes, but with treason against the 'rightful' monarch Mercilla (*FQ*, V.ix.40). So in the end, it is primarily for her attempts to usurp political power that this disruptive female, this witch, is executed and thus taken out of the tale.[18]

Humour

As Hankins and others suggest, the Acrasia section revolves around the question of dominance, in this instance, the 'inappropriate' and therefore dangerous dominance of a sexually aggressive, magical female. Mutabilitie, the main character of the Mutability Cantos is arguably the grandest example of an overreaching female to be found in *The Faerie Queene*. In contrast to the case of Acrasia, however, it is her desire for political power, not her sexual desires that make her a dangerous female. Her characterisation has many Circean tropes, including her wand and the ability to influence animals and the weather (*FQ*, VII.vii.17-onwards). Mutabilitie also has attributes that Circe and Medea share, such as their descent from the Titans, and their beauty. Despite the fact that she puts forward an excellent argument, including the right of rule by descent, she is consistently described in terms of usurpation; even her race, the Titans, are associated throughout the

poem with rebellion, such as the characters Argante and Duessa. Mutabilitie is the only bad female Circe figure in the poem that has an overtly identified wand, and a gold one at that, which symbolically links it to ambition (*FQ*, VII.vi.13.4). Being an ambitious Titaness, she proceeds to threaten to hit the Moon with it, hardly and comically not the traditional use of a wand at all. Nature upholds Jove's right to rule, despite the fact that Mutabilitie has won the debate; and, like all the other threatening females of the poem, Mutabilite is put in her place. Within the main body of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser repeatedly examines inappropriate female rulers and re-establishes the 'correct' order of things with a lot more conviction than he does in these cantos. An obvious example occurs when Britomart chops off Radigund's head and gives her obviously usurped power back to men.

Conclusion

As I have argued at various points, deception and illusion are both strongly connected to the use of magic as portrayed within *The Faerie Queene*. This is a reflection of contemporary ideas about witchcraft and magic, at least amongst the educated classes, and indicates a move towards scepticism such as is found within Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which was published not long before Spenser's poem. Even amongst the educated, belief in witchcraft was still quite strong at the time that Spenser was writing, although what witches were believed to be capable of had been significantly reduced when compared to what literary sources (such as the myths of Circe and Medea as they appear in Ovid) would suggest. Almost all of their magic, including their ability to transform themselves into animals, was considered to be illusory—except for maleficium, or their ability to injure or kill people and livestock, which is largely missing from Spenser's witches. Another thing that magic, in literature at least, appears to have no power over is love, although the ability to create lust is still a tactic open to early modern witches. Cognately, one of the main uses for illusory magic in the poem is to change the

appearances of characters, particularly to hide deformities (obvious examples would be Duessa's and Ate's hiding under an illusion of beauty). Illusions are also used by Archimago initially to deceive Redcrosse and, later, to look like him. All of this, as nearly goes without saying, reminds the reader not to trust in appearances.

Throughout the poem, Spenser demonstrates a troubled relationship between beauty and goodness, with many dangerous female characters appearing to be beautiful, while some such as Acrasia really are beautiful. He attempts to circumvent this problem by qualifying the types of beauty the reader encounters, with 'good' female characters having 'heavenly' or 'angelic' beauty. Spenser also extends the significance of beautiful hair, once a Circean trait, as in Homer. In *The Faerie Queene*, we see a preference for blond hair carefully restrained, which, it can be argued, has remained a marker for virtuous female characters until the present day. In the poem, restrained hair of any colour belongs to chaste or restrained women, and loose hair, particularly dark hair, belongs to 'loose' women similar to Circe as she was represented in medieval texts. Spenser reinforced Circe's sexual nature in many of his Circean figures: especially, the link between Circe and loose women, prostitutes or deviant sexuality (such as is seen in Argante). Also, the Circean or sexual nature of bowers is repeatedly emphasised throughout the poem, and this continues to be a feature in relation to Circe figures throughout early modern texts, including Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A bower is even found in connection with a Circe figure in Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men*.

Circe, Medea and Hecate, were all represented as immortals in early versions of their myths, and frequently still were in medieval reinterpretations. However, by the time Spenser writes *The Faerie Queene*, witches in general, including those based on Circe and Medea, have mostly become mortal, or at least significantly reduced in power. Notable exceptions are Night, who is based strongly on Nyx or Hecate, and Acrasia who is based strongly on Circe. They still appear to be immortal, despite the numerous changes that

Spenser makes to Circe and Medea figures within the poem. In fact, as I have argued, his representations of Circe and Medea figures still have many similarities to their originals and each other, and many of his 'bad' women possess elements of both. However, throughout the poem, Medean traits are increasingly associated with English witches' characteristics as given in pamphlets, trials and folktales. This phenomenon emphasises Medea's role as an example of an 'unnatural' or 'unwomanly' woman, whereas Circe figures still tend to embody the role of a myth-based seductress or enchantress. It was during the Early Modern period that the stories of Circe and Medea became disconnected, with their differences emphasised, and their similarities, such as their use of herbs or drugs, being subsumed into general 'witch' characteristics in literature.

Bad Girls – The Language of Witchcraft

Not all the 'bad' female characters to be found in Spenser are, strictly speaking, Circe and Medea figures or witches. Some, such as Acrasia's handmaidens, are little more than window dressing that augments the Circean nature of the Bower of Bliss. However, many of the 'bad' characters, particularly the female ones, have at least one Circean or Medean attribute. For example, in the chronicle of British history we see one of Medea's more recognisable attributes: the killing of boy children (thereby disrupting patriarchal successions) when Wyden kills her son (*FQ*, II.x.35). As the allegorical tradition would have it, by the early modern period, Circe was strongly associated with courtesans and prostitution. Also, during this time, the line between a so-called 'loose' or unchaste woman and a whore was not as clean cut as it may be today. Therefore any female in a text who pursues a man, or makes herself sexually available can be seen to some extent (and in particular contexts) as Circean.[19] For example, there is the minor character Perissa, who is a "loose woman" prone to sexual excess (*FQ*, II.ii.36-37). The Bower of Bliss episode, as

previously examined, addresses Spenser's use of Circe as a symbol of Pleasure and sexual temptation.

Circean

A Circean symbol that makes many appearances in *The Faerie Queene* is her cup. At the start of the early modern period, there was already a strong connection between Circe and wine, especially the excessive consumption of wine.[20] As both Matthew Fike and Karren Britland note in their quite different approaches to the uses of Circe in early modern literature, there is a connection in the culture of the period between excessive eating and drinking, and prostitution—all of which appear in many versions of the myth of Circe.[21] This can be seen in the description of Excesse, whose loose clothing and golden cup of sensually pressed wine mark her as an overt (though minor) Circe figure (*FQ*, II.xii.55.7-9, II.xii.56-57). What is notably absent from this reinterpretation of Circe is her wand, which had been so central to her iconography before the early modern period.[22] However, the male character that appears before Excesse, Genuis (*FQ*, II.xii.49.9), does possess a wand. As A.C. Hamilton remarks in his notes to this stanza, "The bowle and staffe (or wand) are Circe's attributes and carry the same sexual significance."[23] In this instance, the male Circe figure with a wand is no more powerful than the female one without it; but, elsewhere in this study, it is demonstrated that male characters with wands often possess the powers previously associated with the wand-wielding Circe of *The Odyssey*.

Despite not having her wand, many of the Circean females of *The Faerie Queene* still possess her sexually aggressive nature, which they combine with traits such as claims to temporal power or rebellion. Amongst the many examples in the text is Lucifera, who, Robin Headlam Wells notes, due to her usurpation of power, "is clearly not only a symbol of Antichrist, as Protestant reformers interpreted this figure, but also a demonic parody of Elizabeth."[24] These Satanic elements also link her to early modern representations of

witchcraft, as well as to representations of Circe, Medea, Hecate and Diana, who, along with other figures from Greco-Roman myth, were conflated with devil worship in some early modern texts, including demonologies. Circe's cup (particularly when filled with wine) is also frequently found in conjunction with sexually tempting women in the text, including Malecasta (*FQ*, III.i.51).

Medean

Munera, a beautiful foreigner, is skilled in magic, only, unlike Medea who uses her magic against her tyrannical father, Munera uses hers to help her father, making him "more emboldned by the wicked charms," (*FQ*, V.ii.5.5). In Spenser's version, the Medea figure of the story, Munera, attempts all the 'charms' or magic she knows but is ultimately unable to defeat Talus. In some versions of the myth, such as Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautika*, Medea can defeat Talos from afar, using only her magic.[25]

Meanwhile, the only magic associated with another Medean female, Adicia, is her self-transformation into a tiger when furious (*FQ*, V.viii.49). Her urging of her husband to commit treason aligns her with another early modern Medea figure with no access to magic, Lady Macbeth. Adicia, as a knife-wielding vengeful female, is directly compared to Medea, Ino, and Agave, all murderous mothers, although, Hamilton's note to the stanza suggests that they are meant to "treat a woman's role as wife, sister and mother."[26] Hamilton is correct that this particular stanza emphasises Medea's murder of her brother. However, in Ovid, as well as Medieval English sources, these three women were more commonly grouped together in lists of murderous mothers, so early modern readers would have more than likely identified them as such, rather than in their roles as wives or sisters. What is truly interesting in this section is Spenser's innovation, as it is not a boy child that Adicia desires (but fails) to murder: it is the female messenger (a subject or metaphorical child) of a female ruler. Adicia is rejecting authority; however, due to the politics of the

poem it is not male authority she is rejecting, but that of Mercilla, a clear representation of Queen Elizabeth.

Humour

Spenser introduces humour in many instances, some of them involving magic, but others just involving potentially dangerous Circean or Medean figures. An obvious example is Malecasta, in the Castle Joyous section of the poem, which is imbued with the language of witchcraft connected to the temptation of Lust, for instance in reference to Malecasta's "*crafty* glaunce" (*FQ*, III.i.50.7 emphasis mine). The humour in this section stems from Britomart's gender-bending disguise, which leads Malecasta to believe she is a man. The height of the humour occurs in the famous bed scene, where Malecasta "felt, if any member moou'd," (*FQ*, III.i.60.7), only to find out soon that the male member she was after is not even there. In this poem we see Circean figures range from being scary seductresses (such as Acrasia) to a foolish woman lusting after another woman, with an ease that belies the anxiety possibly felt by early modern males when it came to sexually aggressive women.[27] Most of Malecasta's Circean traits relate to lust. However, she is not immune to its dangers: "But yet her wound still inward freshly bledd, / And through her bones the false instilled fire / Did spred itself and *venime close inspire*" suggesting that she has poisoned herself with lust, thereby making her a Circe who is also her own victim.[28] This is an instance of subtle humour, akin to a bad guy shooting himself in the foot, or a witch cursing her nose because she has a squint.[29]

The humour continues in Spenser's reworking of Trojan myths with his story of Paridell and Hellenore. Hellenore is Circe-like primarily because of her lust and desire for pleasure. Another Circean element, her association with beasts and taming them, is added to Hellenore's story when she partners with the Satyrs, who treat her very well indeed, as in *FQ*, III.x.48 which demonstrates their sexual prowess in the manner of a bawdy comedy.

Another Circean trope that Karren Britland points out is that the satyrs, "handle her 'as commune good' with all the connotations of prostitution that this implies."[30] Hellenore's wandering and final home not only remind the reader of Medea's multiple journeys, but it combine Circean tropes with those more commonly associated with fairies and folklore, such as "The greene-wood" (*FQ*, III.x.36.2). This combining of fairy-tale and folkloric sources with classical myths will be revisited throughout this study, as it had a major influence on the changes to witch stereotypes as they were inherited by Pratchett and other contemporary authors.

Conclusion

Even these few examples (which are sometimes possibly unconscious uses) of Circean and Medean tropes demonstrate the two main types of dangerous women that repeatedly occur throughout not only *The Faerie Queene* but also other early modern texts. The 'unwomanly' woman who is a danger to children, and the 'seductress'. Thus, I am arguing, as the reader will gather, chiefly two things. First, that specific recreations of Circe and Medea can be seen throughout Spenser's poem. Second, that tropes associated with those mythic characters colour other figures in the poem, drawing them into the orbits as it were of the Circe and Medea archetypes. From that latter perspective, Circe and Medea can be seen as representational resources even where they do not function as substantive originals. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Circean and Medean tropes not only define the two main strands of witch stereotypes that developed during the early modern period but are also present in representations of non-magical, non-conforming or dangerous women.

Not So Bad Girls

As one can see above, Circean and Medean traits are not only utilised in *The Faerie Queene* to portray those with supernatural powers. Pœana, Corflambo's daughter, has

several Circean traits, including her enchanting singing voice, which she employs while seated in "her delitious boure" (*FQ*, IV.ix.6.1). She also possesses Circe's beauty and her aggressive sexuality. Pœana, however, has no access to magic, and once her potentially dangerous nature is restrained by religiously sanctioned marriage to a good man, she is portrayed as redeemed. This marriage, engineered by Arthur in his role as God's grace, strips her of all her autonomy, wealth, and power, and gives her a legitimate outlet for her sexual desires (*FQ*, IV ix.16). Arthur also cures her of her more Medean traits, including her fiery temper and her desire for revenge.

Another female character who demonstrates a decided disrespect for early modern social and gender norms is Briana, in Book Six. Much like Medea, she is proud and rejects acceptable female behaviour because of her love for an undeserving knight. Not only is Briana unwomanly in that she builds herself a castle and makes herself the ruler of it (much like Lucifera), but by cutting off Ladies' hair and Knights' beards, she also defaces or disfigures the gender of whoever enters her domain).[31] Unlike Medea, who continues to defy the rules for socially appropriate female behaviour at each stage of her mythic life, Briana, once she has her man, reverts to conventionally appropriate female behaviour, as had Pœana before her.

Rejecting paternal decrees and fleeing the safety of the family home was a perilous thing for a young woman to do in the early modern world. Æmylia is one instance of so unruly a daughter. Much like the young Medea as seen in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she chooses to elope with a man who has not met with her father's approval. Here, where their stories diverge, we witness the vast difference between the autonomous Medea of Ovid, who saves her lover, steals the Golden Fleece and flees to safety before performing numerous other amazing deeds, and Æmylia whom Lust captures almost immediately. If we projected the moral allegory back onto Medea, it could be said that Lust inspired the majority of her actions, and she is just as much its captive as Æmylia. Her capacity for

independent action is where the difference lies; Medea gives into and controls the outcomes of her lust. However, Æmylia requires the assistance of an old woman to be temporarily saved from the worst dangers of lust—rape, loss of virginity and the potential risk of pregnancy. Even Amoret, the symbol of chaste womanhood and an unbedded bride, is a potential victim of Lust due to her unprotected wandering through the woods. There is often a fine line between notionally good and bad women throughout *The Faerie Queene*—a problem that is complicated still further as the poem progresses and aberrant female figures are seen to be capable of redemption.

Good Girls

The general setting of *The Faerie Queene* in Faerie Land, where magic is expected, adds to the ambiguity of the use of magic or magical objects by characters, whether good or bad. Even though Acrasia and other Circean figures' seductions are coined in the language of witchcraft, the use of magic itself does not make a character a witch, or even a 'bad' character. Several female figures that this section examines have one or more Circean or Medean attributes, including healing, knowledge of herbs and, occasionally, a magic wand. These particular attributes tend to be positive and are given to 'good' (that is, of course, chaste and dutiful) female characters who do not have less savoury Circean and Medean traits (for example, sexual availability).

As might especially be expected of a poem written during the reign of Elizabeth I 'the Virgin Queen', female characters are largely considered to be good, bad, or redeemable based primarily on their willingness to engage in sexual behaviours. Within the poem, the female characters who reach the height of perfection and goodness are represented as angelically beautiful virgins; and, at the opposite end of this schema, we have Acrasia, Duessa and Radigund. Given this standard, it is interesting to note the number of times that Spenser chooses to show beautiful virgins under assault, for example,

Una, Florimell, and Amoret. It would appear that being a virgin, while itself desirable, does not demonstrate a woman's virtue: it is the defence of that state, the demonstration of a desire to maintain one's chastity against usually overwhelming odds, which proves a woman's 'worth'. In a poem filled with dichotomies such as this Madonna or Whore standard applied to the female characters, it is not surprising to find a few examples of Anti-Medea and Anti-Circe figures. An example of both is Amoret.

Amoret, having been raised by Venus' daughter-in-law Psyche, and, "trained vp in trew feminitee: ... lessoned / In the lore of loue, and goodly womanhead." (*FQ*, III.vi.51.5-9), is both an Anti-Medea and an Anti-Circe figure. Amoret is a daughter of the Sun and a Nymph, and as such has a shared ancestry with both Circe and Medea. However, Spenser specifies that the birth of Amoret and her twin Belphoebe is the result of an immaculate conception, instantly distancing both of these paragons of virtue from the pagan origins of their literary relatives. Amoret does not represent a complete antithesis of Medea, such as is seen in Chaucer's Griselda, but she does represent what 'appropriate' female behaviour should be, thereby demonstrating how some Circean and Medean attributes were as undesirable in an early modern woman as they were in a woman of Ancient Greece.[32]

Circean

The other and more central Anti-Circe and Anti-Medea figure in the Temple of Venus section is Venus herself. Elements of the myths of Circe and Venus, especially in her role as goddess of sexual pleasure and prostitutes, were conflated by medieval and early modern mythographers such as Natale Conti. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's Venus has several Circean attributes, including "her blisfull bowre of ioy aboue," (*FQ*, III.vi.11.5). However, despite her similarities to Circe, except for the depiction of her relationship with Adonis (*FQ*, III.vi.46), Venus is principally portrayed throughout the poem as a relatively benign Goddess of Love. In her search for Cupid, and the upbringing of Amoret, Venus

can also be seen as an Anti-Medea figure, since thereby she performs her more traditional mythic role as good mother (Venus Genetrix), in contrast to Medea as the archetypal murderous mother, or Spenser's Circe figures who represent sterile sexuality.

Unlike Amoret, her twin Belphœbe was raised by Diana, a virgin goddess, which makes her the ultimate good girl of the poem, and one of the few representations of Queen Elizabeth that is named as such. Her foster mother's connection to the changeful moon, Hecate and witchcraft could have presented a problem within the text, but Spenser largely ignores these elements of Diana's myth and focuses on her role as a virgin huntress. Belphœbe is an unusual combination of both Anti-Circean and Anti-Medean attributes, while at the same time positively using some of their symbols. Belphœbe is so comprehensively idealised that she is of course as unbelievable as some of the monstrous women of the poem. Her conception and birth were completely spotless and sin free, a Virgin born of a Virgin, which is important in this poem, where virginity is good, chaste marriage is a necessary evil, and otherwise sexual women in the poem are to be viewed with suspicion at the very least. "If Belphœbe represents Elizabeth in the character of 'a most vertuous and beautifull Lady', then Acrasia is just as clearly her antithesis." As Robin Headlam Wells notes, much of Belphœbe's characterization is based on her antithesis to the bad female characters in *The Faerie Queene*.[33] Throughout Book Three, Canto Five, Spenser uses the Circean imagery of the Bower of Bliss to highlight the opposition between Belphœbe and Acrasia, although their similarities may be more noticeable than their differences. Like Homer's and Ovid's Circe, Belphœbe lives in a pleasant valley, in a palace or pavilion fit for royalty, an earthly paradise, similar to, yet different from Acrasia's Bower of Bliss and Malecasta's Castle Joyous as noted by Hamilton in his commentary to stanza 39. Another link between Belphœbe and Acrasia (and by extension Circe) is the way in which she (unknowingly and unwillingly) captures Timias's heart, as even the purest of maidens tempt men to burn with lust, solely because of their beauty (*FQ*,

II.iii.42). Their tempting beauty gives them power over the male characters in the poem. It is how they use this power that decides whether they are treated as evil, Circean temptresses, or as untouchable angels who lead men towards spiritual bliss. The difference between Belphœbe and other Circe figures is that while she is very tempting, she is not a temptress.

Some of Diana's role as the goddess of witches may be revealing itself in Belphœbe's use of herbs to heal people, showing her to have another positive Circean and Medean trait, such as when she attempts to heal Timias (*FQ*, III.v.32). In the note to this stanza, Hamilton suggests that the herb she chose "could have been moly, which was given to Odysseus in Homer, Odyssey 10.302-4, to cure concupiscence (*Golding tr. Ovid, Met., Epistle 278-79*)."[34] In Homer's *Odyssey*, moly was a general protection against Circe's magic. Here thanks to Golding's moralising of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, moly is turned from a protective herb into a healing one, meaning Belphœbe can be seen as not a positive Circe figure, but as like Mercury, protecting and healing the male character from the dangers of beautiful women. Meanwhile, Timias mistakes her for a goddess and so these words show: "To send thine Angell from her bowre of blis, / To comfort me in my distressed plight? / Angell, or Goddesse doe I call thee right," (*FQ*, III.v.35.3-5). Many of Spenser's 'good' girls, especially those who heal people or use magic in a positive way are described as angelic or angel-like in their beauty. The 'bowre of blis' mentioned above is obviously implying a spiritual bliss, rather than sensual bliss of the kind found in Acrasia's Bower. However, the use of the same terms does help to demonstrate the fine line between the appropriate and the inappropriate in this poem, particularly regarding love, lust, beauty and pleasure.

Medean

Much like a Colchian or young Medea, Britomart leaves home to chase after a man of whom her father would not approve. The difference here is that she disguises herself and her gender to protect her chastity and reputation. She is also not meeting with her lover in a pre-arranged tryst; rather, she is searching for the man she will marry. Britomart has beautiful hair, fiery eyes and the ability to break enchantments (such as those holding Amoret captive), all of which are Circean (and to a lesser extent, Medean) traits. However, they are divorced from the sexual natures of most Circe figures. In fact, Britomart is linked within the text to Circe's allegorical and iconographical opposite from Greco-Roman myth, the chaste and constant Penelope (*FQ*, V.vii.39). If it were not for her chastity, Britomart would be considered (much like her dark mirror Radigund), to be a dangerous female and therefore would have been demonised within the poem. Britomart is, in fact, an exception in so many things, not unlike Queen Elizabeth, whom she covertly represents. As is the case with Elizabeth, the many facets of her character and the roles she chooses to play highlight some of the difficulties inherent in representations of gender during the early modern period.

Physically, Britomart is tall and strong, with large limbs, making her of a more masculine build. She needs only training to make her a fighter, and armour to make her look like a man (*FQ*, III.iii.53). Being a non-feminine or manly woman is quite common with Medea figures, who routinely step outside what is considered acceptable female appearance and behaviour in their given societies. (Their otherness is something that will repeatedly be examined throughout this study, as it is a common theme in many of the texts under consideration). It is pertinent that Britomart's spear and shield which, "Bladud made by Magick art of yore," (*FQ*, III.iii.60.2), give their user invincibility. This is not unlike Medea's giving Jason invincibility in his fight against the Brazen Bulls. When she is facing personal combat with men, she relies on the strength of her spear, which is directly

associated with her chastity, and her shield, which is allegorically related to faith, indicating that as a female knight her best protections against males are her faith and chastity. When facing 'bad' women (such as Radigund) and their servants (Malecasta's champions), on the other hand, she has recourse to a more Medean weapon, a sword. However, far from being portrayed as an object of selfish and unnatural revenge as it frequently is in Medea myths, the sword here is a symbol of just vengeance, as when Britomart uses it to kill Radigund.

Another resemblance between Britomart and early versions of Medea is her tendency to go one step further than being a helper maiden and become a female hero. Just as most of Jason's victories (for example, stealing the golden fleece) are Medea's victories, so too is it with Britomart and Artegall at the end of Book Five Canto Seven. It is Britomart who restores 'justice' to the land of the Amazons, not Artegall, the Knight of Justice. There are many other Circean and Medean traits to be found in conjunction with the character of Britomart, often problematically. However, direct comparison to Britomart's evil opposite, Radigund mitigates their influence on her depiction. Much like Pratchett's witches, as will be examined in the last chapter of this study, Britomart is recognisably 'good' because of what she is not (namely Radigund) as much as for what she is.

Good Fairies

As one can see from my discussion, Spenser's fashioning of Circe- or Medea-related characterizations is pervasive. Canacee, Agape, and Cambina are three minor characters who all contain several positive Circean and Medean elements, in particular, the knowledge of herbs and the ability to control animals. Agape is also Fay or a Fairy, combining these mythic witch traits with Spenser's relatively new idea of benign or good fairies (*FQ*, IV.ii.44). Cambina, her daughter, also possesses a Circean cup and a rod (*FQ*,

IV.iii.42.1-2, 8-9). All of the magic used here is of course ‘good’ as it serves to assist, not to destroy, male relatives and demonstrates the start of a trend of positive Circean and Medean attributes appearing in conjunction with good fairies, as will be examined in more detail later in this study.

Spenser’s fashioning of these figures does indeed pervade his epic. Nonetheless, my point here is to emphasise not merely the frequency but the importance of such characterizations. A further instance is seen in Cymoent and her accompanying sea nymphs, all of whom have some Circean and Medean attributes. Nymphs in Spenser are supposedly skilled at healing and perform some of the offices of good witches, such as those found in Pratchett, or good women generally within early modern literature. However, in this instance, they are relegated to the role of nursemaids, and a male doctor is called (*FQ*, III.iv.40, 43). Their inability to heal is another example of a male character performing a task (magical or otherwise) completed by females in earlier texts.

Humour

Glauce (a positive Medea figure) attempts to use magic to help her ‘daughter’ as any good mother would. She is, however, just an ordinary woman, so her herbs and charms have no effect. However, with all the spitting and turning withershins (or against the sun), this potentially dangerous endeavour becomes quite comic and highlights how useless Glauce is as a magical practitioner. In the end, Britomart and Glauce have to turn to Merlin to find out who the mystery knight is, and what they can do about it. Thus, once again, magical powers are denied to a female practitioner humorously and are only effective when used by a man. Glauce’s attempts at magic are also a good example of village-witch style sympathetic magic of the kind found in witchcraft pamphlets, combined with references to literary magic users, and as such is an example of the type of magical practices that later influences Pratchett’s witches.

Conclusion

The Circean and Medean traits which are seen in conjunction with 'good' girls demonstrate that the use of myths was often quite variable during this period, with elements disconnecting themselves from their original contexts, and forming parts of new stereotypes. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser divides up Circean and Medean characteristics. He shows that some, such as magical healing, are perfectly acceptable if used by an angelically beautiful royal virgin, or a suitably chaste woman. Whereas others, which played only a minor part of Circe and Medea's earlier myths, such as being sexually available or even aggressive, become defining features of antithetical figures. Meanwhile, 'bad' women' have become in *The Faerie Queene* less successful users of magic, or at least less believable users of magic, as contrasted with their more socially acceptable counterparts and the male magic users of the poem. This shows that for Spenser, at least, it is not the use of magic or the supernatural that is evil in and of itself, but the person using it that makes it so.

Male Circe and Medea Figures: Wizards and Magic Men

This study raises consideration of how magic is gendered, and in particular how male Circe and Medea figures in Spenser's epic use magic. Prior to the early modern period, there was much cross-over between the genders in using different styles of magic. Versions of Circe and Medea in myth, particularly in Ovid, use many forms with ease, and they have cosmic powers commensurate with their semi-divine statuses. As their powers are portrayed in diminished terms over the early modern period, the style of magic available to witches (widely seen as female in literature, despite historical evidence of male witches) becomes progressively more passive, with witches' powers being dependent on the abilities and wills of their mostly male familiars.[35] Meanwhile, in literature at least, male magical

practitioners gain many magical powers previously associated with witch goddesses, such as Hecate, Circe and Medea. These powers include control of the weather, the ability to predict and affect the future, and metamorphosing matter of all kinds—and, indeed, people. It is in early modern literature that this differentiation occurs, so in texts written close to the start of this period, particularly those by Spenser and Shakespeare, both men and women are portrayed as using several styles of magic with varying degrees of effectiveness. The following section of this study examines, firstly, Archimago and Busirane as examples of bad or dangerous male magicians and, secondly, Merlin as a benign or problematic magic user. Then it examines good characters such as the Palmer, who possess Circean and Medean traits; and, finally, it touches on the humour that can be found in relation to male Circe and Medea figures.

Bad

'Bad' male characters in *The Faerie Queene* are more likely to have effective recourse to magic if they favour what I will refer to throughout this study as wizard-style magic. By wizard magic, I mean magic using written spells, summoning demons or spirits by using complex rites, and other practices more often associated with early modern sorcery or alchemy than with the maleficium, or pact-style witchcraft more often to be found mentioned in English witchcraft trials. Two of the more obvious 'bad' users of wizard-style magic in *The Faerie Queene*, are Busirane and Archimago. I shall now examine them as major Spenserian representations of male power asserted through the use of magic.

In line with the gendering of magic as discussed above, we are reminded that Busirane's magic comes from and is written in books: "His wicked bookes in hast he ouerthrew," (*FQ*, III.xii.32.2). Mere lines before, we see Busirane using Amoret's blood to write his spells, another instance of a male worker of magic using the written word. In early version of their myths, neither Circe nor Medea needs to write spells to perform

magic, and it was not a common feature of trials involving female witches during the early modern period.[36] It should be noted here, for it will arise later in this discussion, that Terry Pratchett's witches and wizards commonly maintain this dichotomy of men using books to work magic, and women drawing on oral traditions for knowledge. Busirane's book magic does win him a reprieve, as Britomart and Amoret need him to undo the spells he has worked so far. "Those cursed leaues, his charmes back to reuerse:" (*FQ*, III.xii.36.2).[37] Busirane's magic also utilises a few Medean tropes, including magical fire (*FQ*, III.xi.23.8-9) and an enchanted knife (*FQ*, III.xii.19-21).[38] He also attempts to kill Britomart with a knife when she intrudes on his spell writing (*FQ*, III.xii.32.5). However, most of his magic is based on his use of books, which can also be seen in the other dangerous male magician of the poem, Archimago.

One of Archimago's first magic-related actions within the poem is his going to his study, where, in "His magick books and artes of sundrie kindes, / He seekes out mighty charmes, to trouble sleepy minds" (*FQ*, I.i.36.8-9). In these books, he finds a spell invoking Proserpina (who is linked to Hecate in myth) to summon sprites or demons, which appear "like litle flyes"—which Hamilton glosses as a reference to Beelzebub. It could, of course, possibly be a reference to a form sometimes taken by witches' familiars as described in actual witchcraft trials in England (*FQ*, I.i.37-38). It should be noted that Archimago also has the Circean ability of metamorphosis, as seen in his method of disguising himself (*FQ*, I.ii.10). However, Archimago's comparison to Proteus does distance his metamorphoses from the practice of witchcraft; in addition, it implies the educated perspective on such phenomena that, as with much of witchcraft, they are merely illusory. Nevertheless, even insofar as he can create illusions, Archimago is undoubtedly a dangerous magic user. As is the case with most of the 'bad' magic users within the poem, the threat he poses is ultimately contained. However, his magic is initially effectual, which

is not surprising given that, like Duessa and Lucifera, as well as witches as portrayed in early modern trial records, he notionally derives his powers from the Devil.

Although he is a 'high magic' user or sorcerer, Archimago also exhibits the skills more commonly associated with early modern witches, and cunning men and women, some of which are also continuations of Circean and Medean skills as found in literary sources. One of these skills is the use of balms, herbs and spells, which he uses to heal Pyrrhochles' wounds (*FQ*, II.vi.51). Another cunning-man trait that Archimago possesses is the ability to tell when an object is enchanted, such as when he informs Pyrrhochles that Arthur's sword Morddure would not work for him as Merlin has enchanted it (*FQ*, II.viii.19-21).

Benign

Merlin, as an Arthurian paradigm of the male magician (and thus of relevance to Pratchett's novels), must additionally be considered here. In some respects he can be aligned with the Palmer; certainly, he stands against the figures of Archimago and Busirane. Merlin, as recreated by Spenser, forged and charmed Arthur's armour using Medæwart, "That no enchauntment from his dint might saue;" (*FQ*, II.viii.20.6). Arthur's sword, Morddure is also enchanted so that it cannot be used against its owner. Merlin is, however, a problematic figure. As I have just now mentioned, Merlin is a counterpart to Archimago and Busirane. A deeply suspect figure for Protestant readers, Merlin is inescapably ambiguous. At Spenser's hands, he is nevertheless a mostly positive magician. Matthew Fike observes: "Merlin commands a demonic force, rather than being subject to it, and his power, at least potentially serves the good of human characters."[39] Merlin uses wizard-style magic, or the writing of spells, to summon his demons, much as Archimago does in Book I (*FQ*, III.iii.14.8-9). Not surprisingly, as a major user of magic Merlin has many similarities to both Circe and Medea. For example, Merlin has "brasen Caudrons"

(*FQ*, III.iii.9.3), and is one of the only magical characters in *The Faerie Queene* who is shown to have or to use a cauldron, reinforcing the fact that for Spenser, cauldrons were not yet synonymous with evil witches.

Circe, and more commonly Medea, were usually described as being better at magic and knowing more about herbs than anyone else, so it is not surprising that "Merlin has in Magick more insight, / Then euer before or after liuing wight," (*FQ*, III.iii.11.8-9). Merlin's powers are described in terms similar to those used for Circe and Medea in Ovid, including creating soldiers and control of the elements (*FQ*, III.iii.12). Hamilton, however, relates Merlin's powers to those of other positive characters within the poem, while at the same time indicating that some critics have examined the diabolical nature of such skills.[40] Thus, Merlin is a problematic figure when it comes to deciding which side of the good/evil divide he fits into in this poem, which is pervaded by dichotomies. This is made more difficult because Spenser uses terms such as "th'Enchaunter" (*FQ*, III.iii.17.1), which he usually reserves for bad or dangerous witches and wizards.

Good

Throughout Spenser's poem, male figures who are not sorcerers—for example, the Palmer and several others—actively use magic, and even exhibit various characteristics or attributes associated with dangerous witches, such as Circe and Medea. However, evidently, they are presented as being predominantly positive characterizations. One of the Palmer's most important symbols, his "mighty staffe, that could all charmes defeat", is based on both the caduceus of Mercury and the rod or wand of Circe (*FQ*, II.xii.40.3). Although Book two, canto twelve, stanza forty-one (and therefore most commentary), equates the Palmer's staff with Mercury's caduceus, most of the magical ways in which he uses it are not traditionally associated with Mercury, but rather with Circe. Thus, for example, Spenser has the animals on Acrasia's island behave aggressively at the outset,

and therefore need taming by the Palmer, the equivalent to which was achieved by Circe in early versions of her mythos. Such is the case in *The Odyssey*, where the beasts are already tame by the time that Odysseus and his men arrive.[41]

Earlier in the poem, the Palmer also uses his staff to calm the seas and scare away monsters. Controlling the weather and water, particularly the ocean, is a skill more often seen linked to Circe or Medea than it is to Mercury.[42] Likewise, in Homer, Circe assists Odysseus to avoid the dangers of the great sea monsters, Scylla and Charybdis. In his role as Reason or rational thought, the Palmer also reminds the reader, by referring to the sea monsters "as bugs to fearen babes withall," (*FQ*, II.xii.25.8), of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. There, witches, fairies and other mythical creatures are described as bugbears used to frighten children.[43] This reference to a well-known sceptic may seem to make Spenser's representations of witches and magic in *The Faerie Queene* problematic. However, as an allegory set in an imaginary location, Spenser's poem is largely free from the requirement of representing current beliefs or disbeliefs in the actuality of magic.

Humour

There are of course many instances where gender is used to create humour in *The Faerie Queene*, such as anywhere the Snowy Florimell appears, since 'she' is a male demon who can pretend to be a woman better than any woman can, an idea repeated by Pratchett in *Monstrous Regiment*. The main point here, however, is that often caught up in the humour created by the Snowy Florimell are 'bad' male Circe and Medea figures, such as Braggadochio, who are often humorous in their own right, as they attempt to perform, and therefore parody, knightly behaviour.

Meanwhile, there are often instances of (possibly) unintended humour in *The Faerie Queene*, such as the Salvage (or Savage) man's naked fight with Turpine, which leads to him shrieking and running away (*FQ*, VI.iiii.4-8). The Salvage man, while not

particularly humorous in the poem, prefigures other, more major, male Circe and Medea figures to be examined later in this study, including Milton's Comus, and Shakespeare's Caliban, the latter being in the main a figure of fun. The Salvage man is, however, an ineffectual magic user, as, despite his Medea-like knowledge of herbs (*FQ*, VI.iv.12 and 16), it is the Hermit who heals the wounds, using "Leaches craft" or medicine (*FQ*, VI.vi.3.1). He also takes up a weapon that resembles a wand. "That was an oaken plant, which lately hee / Rent by the root; which he so sternely shooke, / That like an hazel wand, it quiuered and quooke," (*FQ*, VI.vii.24.8-9). However, it appears to have no magical powers here, despite being oak, a plant long associated with magic, and described as like a wand made of another magical plant, hazel.[44] To anticipate a little, in Pratchett we find that sometimes a wand is just a stick, or that an ordinary stick can be turned into a wand, and the witches in his novels have an uneasy relationship with using a wand to work magic. This is largely an inheritance from Spenser and other early modern authors' changes to witchcraft stereotypes, which resulted in wands no longer being a tool of benign Circe-figures.

Conclusion

Along with the general reduction in powers of female magic workers within the poem, we also see a greater differentiation between male and female styles of magic. At this point in early modern texts, females or 'witches' tend to rely on orally transmitted knowledge, particularly of herbs, drugs and chants, whereas male 'wizards' become more reliant on book-based magic. Also, at this cultural moment, styles of magic are still very much mixed, with both genders having access to most techniques and forms, albeit with varying degrees of success. Spenser's epic also expresses concern about the dangers of book or writing-based magic, and this is a theme that continues through to Pratchett's witches, who do not trust magic that comes from books. Book magic is also not particularly effective in

Spenser's poem, with its major users of wizard-style magic, Archimago and Busirane, being defeated. When male characters undertake to use Circean and Medean types of magic for positive purposes, they are on the whole more successful, such as when the Palmer turns the beasts back into men, and when numerous male characters use magic to heal. Success or lack thereof in using magic is often a source of humour in *The Faerie Queene*, and it is sometimes used to diminish the status of a character who is threatening.

Conclusion

The figures analysed in the discussion above indicate that, in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser inclusively and diversely re-fashions the mythic archetypes of Circe and Medea. Throughout this epic, there is a conflation of characters from classical myth with biblical figures such as the whore of Babylon, but also with demons and spirits, which, during the early modern period were making their ways into folktales and ballads involving Fairies. As we know, the poem is also strongly influenced by medieval and early modern Romances, and their uses of these same supernatural figures. Therefore, the reader can encounter a witch-like, satanic Lucifera, who has many Circean and Medean traits, overseeing a joust. There are some elements of fairy tales in the poem as well, but Spenser primarily bases his witches on local folk witch beliefs, and literary witches such as those based on Circe and Medea. Spenser also makes the most of Hecate as the goddess of witches in her crone aspect, combining her with representations of 'real' witches in contemporary culture to create a new style of literary witch, the Hag.

Spenser's Fairies or Elves are a departure from many other early modern representations of such personages in that they are 'good' characters. This is because they represent Gloriana's (that is, Elizabeth's) court—despite the portrayal of other supernatural or non-mortal creatures in the poem as 'bad'. Spenser's use of Fairies marks the start of their descent into the benign flower-fairies found in Shakespeare and later authors, and

which Terry Pratchett eventually reacts against, returning them to their more dangerous roots in folklore.

Within *The Faerie Queene,* we do not find any examples of Circe's cup being used for its original purpose, which is, as one part of the spell to transform people into animals. The meaning and nature of animal transformations also change, as Circe, and witches generally, no longer just transform others into animals. They more often transform themselves into animals. This becomes a fixed part of witchcraft traditions during this period, although it had started much earlier in representations of female magic users, such as in *The Golden Ass*.[45] These self-transformations from people into animals and usually back again were conflated with the idea of the witches' familiars in early modern texts, and many of the transformations were into small animals such as those associated (in pamphlets and trial records) with familiars. The result of this confusion is that the threat of a witch turning people into frogs and toads survives into the present as part of witch stereotypes, and is a common theme in Pratchett's novels—frogs and toads being fairly common witches' familiars. Toads, bats, snakes, ravens, owls and similar animals have become part of witch stereotypes by the time we reach Spenser. Originally, those animals were linked to Hecate, and also associated with Medea in myths, as ingredients of her spell-casting (so they are in Ovid for example). They are mentioned numerous times throughout the poem, reinforcing their association with evil and witches, especially in relation to older Hag-type witches. Later in the poem, Circe's cup largely indicates a temptation that is easily overcome.

Sometimes, good female characters have access to wand or rods, such as Queen Elizabeth's 'white rod' or sceptre which she has in Merlin's prophecy, and which Hamilton glosses as being analogous to Mercury's caduceus—called a 'white rod' by T. Cooper's dictionary of 1565.[46] This identification of 'white rods' with Mercury's caduceus complicates Spenser's use of the wand as a symbol of power, both magical and otherwise.

One can thus see the change to uses of Circe's wand in literature, as it is less dangerous Circean characters that use rods or wands to work magic.

Just as the political power of female characters is often reduced or removed within the poem, so too are their magical powers. Where they are not reduced, demonic forces facilitate the witches' magic, thereby taking the agency away from the female characters. Minor negative or 'bad' female Circe and Medean figures are, as a rule, not magical, or at least not successfully so. Positive Circean and Medean traits are occasionally divorced from Circe and Medea's less savoury characteristics, such as their disruptive sexuality and nonconformity, and given to 'good' female characters, or male characters. This means that Circe and Medea figures who are 'good' can sometimes use magic to heal, protect, and even transform people. As I have observed above, throughout much of *The Faerie Queene* it is not the attribute, so much as who has it and what they do with it, that makes a Circean or Medean attribute good or bad. In later early modern texts this theme continues, despite the growing belief during the early modern period that all magic is either evil or an illusion. In texts, at least, magic can be good, bad or indifferent depending on the intentions of the practitioner; and in Spenser, rebellion or ambitious desire for power is more of a concern than magical skill. This is also seen in Pratchett's novels, which are written in a time when almost none of his audience believes that magic and witchcraft exist in the way people thought it did, or might, when *The Faerie Queene* was written.

The number three, the Triad of Witches types—the maiden or single woman who can be associated with both the young Medea and with Circe, the 'bad' mother (or an older Medea), and the 'ineffectual' crone (Hecate-related)—all become standard features of witchcraft stereotypes, either before or during Spenser's time, and are all featured here. In *The Faerie Queene*, we see the rise of old women or Hag-style witches, often found living in derelict cottages (as they still often are in stories), who possess Circean and particularly Medean elements of witchcraft, such as the use of herbs and spells. Often these figures are

humorous and not very competent users of magic. Males in the poem, such as doctors, the Palmer, or the magician, Merlin, then frequently complete their tasks.

On a darker note, there is humour to be found in the masking and unmasking, and in descriptions of the grotesqueness of the Hag witches, such as Duessa, Ate, and the Witch of Book Three. Glauce mainly serves to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of 'white' magic as practised by amateurs, as well as reinforcing the idea that magic has no power over love. Magic can, however, inspire lust, and behaviours caused by lust are often portrayed as humorous within the poem. Even the Palmer's holding Guyon back from Acrasia's beckoning maids, as they tease him from the fountain, is a little funny, but humorous denigration is usually reserved for those who deserve it, such as Malebecco who, because of his jealousy and blindness, is cuckolded under his own roof. His wife Hellenore's bawdy antics with the satyrs and his reaction to it generates another very humorous episode. It is therefore interesting that even the goddess Diana becomes an object of humour in the Mutability Cantos, when Faunus laughs at seeing her naked, and she is compared to an angry dairy maid. Subsequently, she deals out a punishment so weak that it is itself humorous. This demonstrates that even a virgin Goddess associated with Queen Elizabeth is not free from an early modern male author's tendency to cut down any female figure of power, using whatever devices are available—not least, humour.

Ultimately, it is the use of humour in representations of Circe and Medea, and by extension all witches, that forms the strongest link between witches in early modern texts, and those found in Pratchett's Discworld novels. These changes will subsequently provide a means for examining the witches from Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, and for discerning the extent to which the latter are a reaction to early modern texts involving witchcraft. Spenser's specific influence on Pratchett's novels, while not as obvious as Shakespeare's, is very much present through changes to witch and gender stereotypes, as

well as through a more direct influence of *The Faerie Queene* on his novels, such as *Witches Abroad*, and *Lords and Ladies*.

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1. For Spenser's sources see Colin Burrow's "Spenser and classical traditions" in Andrew Hadfield, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).; Tania Demetriou, "'Essentially Circe': Spenser, Homer, and the Homeric Tradition," *Translation and Literature* 15, no. 2 (2006).; and John Erskine Hankins, 1905, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of the Faerie Queene.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

2. Such as Syrithe. Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2005).

3. For examples see Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women or, the Vanity of Them, Chuse You Whether. With, a Commendation of the Wise, Vertuous, and Honest Women. Pleasant for Married-Men, Profitable for Young-Men, and Hurtfvll to None*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 2046:07 (London : printed by E.C. for F. Grove, on Snow-hill, near the Sarazens-head, 1660., 1660). As well as the responses to it, such as Ester Sowernam's pamphlet.

4. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton, Yamashita, Hiroshi. and Suzuki, Toshiyuki., Rev. ed., Longman Annotated English Poets (New York: Pearson

Education Ltd., 2007), I.v.34.9. Henceforth references will be mostly in text using the abbreviation *FQ*.

5. For a general overview of the possible origins of witchcraft accusations see Malcolm Gaskill, "Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent: Stereotypes and the Background to Accusations," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 258-9.

6. *FQ*, IV.viii.28.8 As suggested by the OED definition of 'quean'.William R. Trumble and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 5th ed., 2 vols., vol. 2 N-Z (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2432.

7. Demetriou, *Essentially Circe*, 163.

8. Demetriou, *Essentially Circe*, 170.

9. *FQ*, II.xii.69, *n*.8, 282.

10. *FQ*, II.xii.44-45. This departure from sources has been noted, as one would expect by many critics.

11. Demetriou, *Essentially Circe*, 168. They are also in many versions of their myths closely related, being Aunt and Niece or occasionally sisters.

12. Freud's Pleasure Principle will not be examined in this study. However, it has been noted by numerous commentators on this section, which is about Temperance, that Acrasia and other characters are representations of the dangers of instant gratification without thought of the consequences.

13. Matthew Fike, *Spenser's Underworld in the 1590 Faerie Queene*, vol. 24, Studies in Renaissance Literature (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 73. For another interpretation of the ending see Hankins, *Source and Meaning*, 135.

14. Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567-1632* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 139.

15. John D Staines, "Elizabeth, Mercilla, and the Rhetoric of Propaganda in Spenser's Faerie Queene," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 2 (2001): 296.

16. *FQ*, I.viii.45-50. Katharine Mary Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976), 92-3.

17. See Katherine Heavey, *The Early Modern Medea : Medea in English Literature, 1558-1688* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

18. The political allegory of this book is problematic for many critics, for a more detailed analysis of this section see Tobias Gregory, "Shadowing Intervention: On the Politics of the Faerie Queene Book 5 Cantos 10-12," *ELH* 67, no. 2 (2000): 369.

19. For a more detailed examination of Circe as a prostitute see Katherine O'Donovan, *Sexual Divisions in Law* Law in Context (London Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 74-80.

20. For a general overview of the link between Circe and Wine including examples from literature see, Karren Britland, "Circe's Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama," in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2004).

21. Britland, *Circe's Cup*, 112; and Fike, *Spenser's Underworld*, 76-9.

22. For a brief history of visual representations of Circe up to this period see Charles Zika, "Images of Circe and Discourses of Witchcraft," *zeitenblicke* 1, no. 1 (2002).

23. Hamilton, *FQ*, 278.

24. Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth:* (London;Totowa, NJ: Croom Helm;Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), 33.

25. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* ed. William H. Race and Library Loeb Classical (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2008), 463.

26. Hamilton, *FQ*, 567.

27. Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150-74. His fifth chapter addresses anxieties related to cross-dressing and androgyny.

28. *FQ*, III.i.56.3-6, emphasis my own. Hamilton in his note to this section suggests an obvious link to Cupids arrow, I offer an alternate reading based on Circean tropes.

29. The former is often to be found in Hollywood movies, and the latter in Terry Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* (London: Random House, 1992), 33. Further references will be in text using the abbreviation *WA*.

30. Britland, *Circe's Cup*, 112-13.

31. *FQ*, VI.i.15, see Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

32. Ruth Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge [England]; Rochester, NY, USA D.S. Brewer 1996), 205-6. Morse looks at the Anti-Medea figure of Griselda in Chaucer and Boccaccio.

33. Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 68.

34. Hamilton, *FQ*, 337.

35. Charlotte Rose Millar, "The Witch's Familiar in Sixteenth-Century England," *Melbourne Historical Journal* (2010).

36. Marion Gibson, ed. *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 152-3. Gibson relates the use of image magic using parchment, but does not mention a written spell.

37. "In Ovid, Met. 14.300-01, Circe strikes her beasts with her reversed rod and retracts her charms to restore them to manhood. On Busirane as a male Circe and Britomart who defeats him as a female Ulysses, see Roberts 1997:73" Hamilton, *FQ*, 404. See also, Robert's chapter "7. The descendants of Circe: witches and Renaissance fictions", in

Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

38. It has been suggested the fire allegorically represents Scudamore's desire, which makes sense within the text, and is an additional link to Medea's magical fire that was created by her jealous desire. Maurice Evans, *Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: A Commentary on 'the Faerie Queene'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 160.

39. Fike, *Spenser's Underworld*, 87. See *FQ*, III.iii.10 for an example of Merlin's use of demons.

40. "A secular analogue to the power God gave Fidelia at I x 20. Similarly, Arthur's shield defeats armies of men, terrifies the heavens, and changes men into stones, dust and nothing at all (I vii 34-5). In Virgil, *Ecl*. 8.69, songs are said to have the power to draw the moon from the sky. On the diabolism of Merlin's art, see Fike 1999:91-93." Hamilton, *FQ*, 313.

41. This change in Circe myths originated with Virgil's *Aeneid*, where the animals can be heard raging from the ship. Virgil. *The Aeneid of Virgil Translated by John Dryden* Translated by John. Dryden. Edited by Robert Fitzgerald New York: Macmillan, 1965. Book VII, ll.18-27.

42. *FQ*, II.xii.26, Hamilton's note to this stanza compares the Palmer's actions with those of Moses and Christ, reinforcing the fact that there are multiple ways in which the Palmer's magical powers can be read.

43. Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft, Wherein the Lewde Dealing of Witches and Witchmongers Is Notablie Detected* (London: William Brome, 1584), 153.

44. F. S. Burnell, "Staves and Sceptres," *Folklore* 59, no. 4 (1948): 161.

45. Apuleius, "The Golden Ass," ed. P.G. (Patrick Gerard) Walsh (Oxford;New York: Clarendon Press;Oxford University Press, 1994).

46. Hamilton *FQ*, III.iii.49.n, 319.

Chapter Two:

Classical Witches in Early Modern Plays and Masques

Introduction

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter on Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene*, early modern reinterpretations of the Classical witch figures, Circe and Medea, have a complex relationship with representations of magic, witches, and women more generally. Given the number of texts that feature Circean and Medean tropes, this study cannot offer an exhaustive examination. Those examined were chosen because they were: popular at the time; are canonical, or are strong examples of the types of representations available. In this chapter, the texts examined are primarily influenced by more literary representations of witches—in particular, Ovid's Medea, rather than local English witch beliefs. Circe and Medea figures and their symbols will be used to examine changes in forms of misogyny, female power, and levels of scepticism and comedy in relation to the figure of the witch, and how such changes affected witch stereotypes.

One play where magic bears similarities to that in Spenser's reinterpretations of Circe and Medea myths is Lyly's *Endymion*.[1] The witchcraft to be found in this play has more in common with that in Roman plays and poetry than with the more homely magic associated with witches at this time in England. Meanwhile, Marston's *Sophonisba* takes the more sensational elements of Roman literary witchcraft to create a tragedy that demonstrates the pervasive nature of Circean and Medean tropes. In his treatment of the good cunning woman of that name in *Mother Bombie*, Lyly does reflect many local English beliefs about magic, but classical influences are still strong. Magic is not portrayed as a threat to the audience, with the boys joking about being turned into animals, and Mother Bombie herself is a very positive figure within the play. Plays involving magic in one form or another were not uncommon on the early modern English stage. As Merchant

observes, Heywood's play, "*The wise-woman* would also have been the latest of at least eight magician/witch plays in Henslowe's repertory…."[2] All but two of these plays, one being Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, have been lost.

This popularity of plays concerned with witchcraft or, at least, magic is reflected by the two Masques included in this study, Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, and Milton's *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, henceforth referred to by its more common name *Comus*.[3] *The Masque of Queens* is reflective of more educated beliefs about witchcraft. It was strongly influenced by witches from classical texts, including Circe and Medea. Jonson in his notes to charm three did claim to choose elements that also reflected local English beliefs, but this proves secondary.[4] *The Masque of Queens* bore many similarities to contemporaneous plays containing witches and was almost certainly a major influence on later witch plays. Also exhibiting a strongly classical influence is the much later *Comus*. Milton's text is unusual in many ways, including its imperfect conformance to its claimed genre of the masque.[5] Its treatment of witchcraft is vastly different from that in other plays of its own time featuring magic and witchcraft. *Comus* has more in common with much earlier plays and masques.

Lyly's *Endymion*

While cases of witchcraft were not uncommon at this point in English history, they were predominantly localised in nature, and not particularly sensational. The St Osyth trial in 1582, involving the overzealous Justice Brian Darcy, was the closest thing to a witch-hunt England had experienced at the time *Endymion* was written. It is therefore not surprising that this play, like many other early witch texts, has more in common with Spenser's reinterpretations of classical witches, than with witches found in English pamphlet reports.[6] There were also a few treatises published in English on the subject of witchcraft by this time, including Reginald Scot's sceptical tract, and George Gifford's response to

it.[7] Therefore, witchcraft was topical; but there is scant evidence that is was a major concern for the elite audience this play was likely written for, as it was performed at Court on February 2nd, 1588 by Paul's Boys Company.[8] Although it was one of the earliest 'witch' plays in early modern England, there is no evidence of *Endymion* being performed for a very long time, in fact, until 1944.[9] Like *The Faerie Queene*, and courtly masques (including Jonson's *Masque of Queens*), *Endymion* is highly allegorical. For example, Dipsas and Tellus bear striking similarities to Spenser's Duessa, including her allegorical connection to the Catholic Church.[10]

Bad Medean/Circean Females

Much like Duessa, who contains many elements of the classical witches, Circe and Medea, Dipsas and Tellus are very Medean, with a few Circean traits; other female figures, including problematically, Cynthia, also have Circean and Medean elements. Bevington has already noted this problem:

> Tellus's association with the earth and with chthonic powers is in evidence throughout the play. Even in her resemblance to the jealous Juno, her intent is to 'turn Jupiter's lovers to beast on the earth' (I.ii.73-4). The image casts Tellus as a Circean enchantress. In her desire to win Endymion's unwilling affection, she relies upon the substances of the earth, especially those with alchemical properties: 'herbs, stones [minerals], spells, incantation, enchantment, exorcisms, fire, metals, planets' (I.iv.16-17). She commands the obedience of Dipsas who, like Medea, is able to 'darken the sun' by her skill and 'remove the moon out of her course', 'restore youth to the aged', and 'make hills without bottoms', though

> significantly she does differ from the gods in that she is 'not able to rule hearts' (ll.22-7).[11]

Just as Tellus at times resembles a jealous Medea, Endymion resembles a deceptive and opportunistic Jason. As we read: "Treacherous and most perjured Endymion, is Cynthia the sweetness of thy life and the bitterness of my death?" (*Endymion*, 1.2.1-2). The key change that Lyly makes in his reinterpretation of the myth is that, despite Endymion's promises, the pair are never married, and it is never overtly stated that they have a child together.[12] Tellus does embrace Medean imagery, however: "As long as sword, fire, or poison may be hired, no traitor to my love shall live unrevenged," (*Endymion*, 1.2.6-7). Yet, like Medea, she also ultimately does not want her beloved to die: "I am resolved: he shall neither live nor die," (*Endymion*, 1.2.41-2). There she refers to the sleep she has Dipsas impose on him.

Initially, Tellus's plan for Endymion is much more Circean: "I will entangle him in such a sweet net that he shall neither find the means to come out, nor desire it. All allurements of pleasure will I cast before his eyes, insomuch that he shall slake that love which he now voweth to Cynthia, and burn in mine, of which he seemeth careless…" (*Endymion*, 1.2.44-55). However, Tellus cannot achieve this sort of enchantment on her own and seeks the help of Dipsas, who nonetheless also cannot achieve it. Tellus has greater success with the soldier Corsites, who claims she has enchanted him (*Endymion*, 3.2.28-9).

While Corsites finds her enchanting, the terms 'Malice' and 'Envy' are more commonly used in relation to Tellus, and both were of course strongly associated with witches, and witch-like women during the early modern period, (*Endymion*, 3.2.9-10, 4.1.9-10). Thus, we learn of "Wicked Dipsas, and most devilish Tellus, the one for cunning too exquisite, the other for hate too intolerable!" (*Endymion*, 4.1.18-20). Lyly has Tellus

identify herself as 'devilish', and she is very aware of her spiritual transgressions. Dipsas, meanwhile, avoids identifying herself as a witch but is clearly seen as one by the other characters.

As she asks Dipsas to make Endymion fall in love with her, Tellus reminds the audience that Dipsas is old and cunning, the former trait becoming increasingly tied to the stereotype of the witch, having first been seen in Ovid's Medea when she disguises herself as an old woman (*Endymion*, 1.3.11-19). In her reply, Dipsas lays claim to many classical witch traits from Ovid's Medea that also appear in numerous later early modern texts (*Endymion*, 1.3.22-31). While she has no power to create love, Dipsas can "breed slackness in love" (*Endymion*, 1.3.35) implying physical impotence, as well as the term's emotional aspects. This power over male sexuality will be seen again in Middleton's *The Witch*, and other early modern texts. In another similarity to Medea, Dipsas reverses her rejuvenation of Aeson, by putting Endymion into an ageing sleep (*Endymion*, 2.3.28-51). Cynthia, whom largely achieves her magical reversals without recourse to spells, eventually rejuvenates Endymion.[13]

Good Circean/Medean Females

"Without doubt Endymion is bewitched; otherwise in a man of such rare virtues there could not harbour a mind of such extreme madness," (*Endymion*, 1.1.88-90). Eumenides considers that for an otherwise sane man to be in love (with the Moon), he must be bewitched, one of the many problematic links between witch figures such as Circe, and the idealised ruler, Cynthia. As David Bevington has noted, "because she is associated with the moon and thus with Selene, Cynthia conjures up not only positive images but also disturbing suggestions of the crone or the witch that some contemporaries may have dared privately to compare with the ageing Elizabeth."[14] However, like many of the 'good' Circean figures of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, it is made clear throughout the play that

Cynthia is both virginal, and the rightful ruler, separating her transformational magic from the more dangerous kind practised by Dipsas. Her magic is also about restoring the status quo, such as when she changes Bagoa back into a woman, (*Endymion*, 5.4.295-7).

Sir Tophas and Dipsas as a humorous Circe

Cynthia might be representative of a positive Circe figure; however, in Sir Tophas's presentation of her, Dipsas is undoubtedly a humorous one. Among other things, Sir Tophas compares himself to Ulysses, (*Endymion*, 3.3.50). This comparison is particularly fitting, as he imagines himself undergoing a Circean transformation from a warrior to a poet and lover. He compares the Witch, Dipsas, to Circe, even using a parodic anti-blazon, adding to the ridiculousness of the idea that the hag-like witch Dipsas could be a dangerously alluring Circe figure, (*Endymion*, 3.3.55-64). As Bevington points out: "This sort of misogynistic burlesque of the Petrarchan blazon, or heraldic cataloguing of one's mistress's charms, became a trope in its own right during the Renaissance."[15] As Bevington also remarks in his annotation, there is quite a tradition of the parodic blazon, which is also utilised by Shakespeare in some of his early plays, and in the Dark Lady Sonnets. The parodic blazon is another example of an inversion of the idealised woman, so it is not surprising that Sir Tophas's blazon of Dipsas includes many elements from the physical witch stereotype: big nose, toothless, sagging breasts, thin hair (generally all the signs of undignified ageing). Sir Tophas's friends then launch into a song, describing him as an "amorous ass" (*Endymion*, 3.3.120) as well as reminding the audience that Dipsas looks like a witch whose, "nose and chin meet" (*Endymion*, 3.3.123). She is directly called a witch, too (*Endymion*, 3.3.127). The clowns of the play also connect her to a parodic hymn to Satan, as Bevington notes, which adds to the sense that Dipsas is an inversion of all that is good and right (*Endymion*, 4.2.35-6). In many ways, Lyly's witch matches up

more closely with European and educated Demonological beliefs, than with grass-roots English beliefs about witches—only here it is combined with humorous singing.

As Dares points out, Dipsas is: "a notable witch, and hath turned her maid Bagoa to an aspen tree for bewraying her secrets. / *Tophas*. I honour her for her cunning, for now, when I am weary of walking on two legs, what a pleasure may she do me to turn me to some goodly ass and help me to four!" So Sir Tophas even turns her transformational powers into a joke (*Endymion*, 5.2.84-89). The tree-transformation is common in early modern texts (utilised by Spenser's Duessa, and Shakespeare's Sycorax), as is the Circean transformation of men into asses. Cynthia takes Dipsas's powers seriously, though, and proposes a poetic justice for her: "I will send you into the desert amongst wild beasts, and try whether you can cast lions, tigers, boars, and bears into as dead a sleep as you did Endymion, or turn them into trees as you have done Bagoa," (*Endymion*, 5.4.51-54).

Conclusions

By the end of the play, all the dangerous female magic users are reintegrated into the community, under the protection and control of their husbands. In many ways, this play potentially reflects magical beliefs at the time of writing, where magic is a part of life, and the source of the power and the intentions of the user decide whether it is wicked or benign. So we see when Pythagoras, and Gyptes, two male philosopher magicians summoned by Cynthia, perform the role of cunning men, and diagnose Endymion's sleep as an enchantment, and suggest that either the death of the witch or a miracle are required to cure him (*Endymion*, 4.3.150-57, 168-72). Of course, the miracle comes in the form of Cynthia, whose divine healing is largely divorced from the sexual or vengeful natures of Circean and Medean witches.

Within this play are allegories of gender and power reflecting a patriarchal society with a woman at the top, and the anxieties this has caused. In texts produced during

Elizabeth's reign, witches were less likely to be able to create potent love potions, the worst they could do in this regard was to trap the weak using lust, which made them less threatening than Ovid's Circe. The most powerful 'witch' within the play, Dipsas, becomes a figure of fun, with many jokes made about her ageing body, which could be seen as a form of displacement, since one cannot laugh at the ageing Queen, but one can laugh at the wicked old witch[16]. Misogyny is a constant undertone, with Vices personified as female, not unlike in *The Faerie Queene*, and numerous later texts. They include Envy and Treachery, two vices strongly related to Circe and Medea myths, as well as witchcraft generally (*Endymion*, 5.1.135-143). Like Circe and Medea in the classical sources on which the play relies heavily, the witches within the play are mostly unpunished, which was sadly not the case for those deemed to be witches in Elizabethan society.

Marston's *Sophonisba*

As has been noted by Harris and other critics, "Erictho is similar to the Weird Sisters in that Marston, like Shakespeare, has modelled his creation on a mixture of classical and contemporary witch beliefs and also his portrayal exhibits a blend of human and supernatural qualities."[17] In this, the character is also similar to Lyly's Dipsas, and the later hag witches of Jonson's *Masque of Queens*. *Sophonisba* was probably written and performed circa 1606. However, the various revisions and dating uncertainty surrounding *Macbeth*, make it difficult to decide which of these early modern texts influenced each other. "Although dating is not precise it seems likely that *Sophonisba* set the trend at the Blackfriars, followed soon after by *Macbeth*, in its initial state as performed at the Globe. Both plays are notable for their emphasis on the less comic, more disturbing aspects of the subject."[18] This study notes that the influence of classical witches, including Ovid's Circe and Medea, seems to have a more direct connection to most of the texts examined in this

chapter, than the texts do to each other, or even to contemporary accounts of witchcraft in pamphlets.

Bad Medean/Circean Females

Like many classical witches, Erictho is predominantly influenced by Ovid's Medea; however, she also has several Circean elements, including her title as enchantress in the list of Interlocutors, an epithet more commonly applied to Circe than her niece Medea, and seldom applied to English witches.[19] Many of Erictho's attributes are drawn from literary rather than historical sources, including the ability to read minds (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.126) and to work magic (like Circe) to cause lust, but not having any power over love (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.170). Also, like many literary witches, her very humanity is brought into question: "Deep knowing *spirit*, mother of all high / Mysterious science," (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.139-40 emphasis mine). This description aligns her more closely with the classical witches, namely, Hecate, Circe, and Medea. The first two were usually described as goddesses, and Medea's divinity was uncertain in classical texts.

Despite her purported powers and similarities to classical witches, much of what Erictho accomplishes within the play is achieved using trickery. Even in the bed trick, where she substitutes herself for Sophonisba, it is unclear whether we are presented with a physical transformation, or merely a disguise good enough to fool the enthusiastic Syphax (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.208-216). Much of her magical skill is only reported by others or claimed by her, including a Medean ability to control the waves. Erictho's rant at Syphax when he discovers the bed trick, brings the matters of her age, and inhumanity, back into question. She claims to have "a thirsty womb", a term commonly associated with lovesickness in young women, but in the next line she also claims that she has "coveted full threescore suns for blood of kings". Adding to the confusion about whether she is an old hag or a temptress is her claim that Syphax's "proud heat well wasted" has rejuvenated her. Erictho

ends with a reminder that love cannot be magically forced before escaping, like Medea, only she does this through a trap door, rather than into the air like a goddess (*Sophonisba*, 5.1.4-21).

A Good Female Circe

It has been argued that one of Erictho's main purposes in the play is to act as a foil to the idealised womanhood of Sophonisba.[20] This is not surprising as the witch, both in literature and historically, is primarily represented as the antithesis of what a 'good' woman should be. Sophonisba has many elements associated with Circe figures, and she shares many of these with the 'good' female Circe figures from Spenser. "We things called women, only made for show / And pleasure, created to bear children / And play at shuttlecock, we imperfect mixtures," (*Sophonisba*, 1.2.20-22). The last phrase of her statement echoes the meaning of both Circe's and Acrasia's names, implying all women are a bit Circean, and a bit like Spenser's dangerous Circe figure, Acrasia. It is how Sophonisba differs from Circe that allows her to be presented as the 'wonder of women' the title page announces her to be. While in Act One, Scene Two, Sophonisba has the Circean attributes of a bower-like bed, with music playing, and is compared to a goddess, it is her marriage bed, and she is a modest virgin, which aligns her with other 'good' female characters who have Circean traits in Spenser.

As with many of Spenser's 'good' Circean figures, Sophonisba is blamed for the 'bad' behaviour of the men who pursue her. For example, when Syphax blames Sophonisba for his duplicity, using Circe-related terms such as "wanton" and "charms" (*Sophonisba*, 5.2.80, 81) and stating that she would turn Massinissa against the Romans to save Carthage. Scipio, of course, believes him, seeing her as both an object to be possessed or displayed, and a danger to be prevented. Far from being the dangerous Circe type that Scipio perceives her to be, Sophonisba has anti-Circean tendencies. For example, she

sends her husband away to fight a battle on their wedding night, thereby leaving their marriage unconsummated and her virginity intact (*Sophonisba*, 1.2.210-18). Sophonisba does, however, use some Circean tools in not very positive ways, such as when she uses drugged wine to knock out Vangue so she can escape Syphax (*Sophonisba*, 3.1.157-62). She also drinks from a poisoned bowl of wine rather than become a Roman prisoner (*Sophonisba*, 5.3.85-106). Sophonisba is a model of self-sacrificing 'good' womanhood. In her death, she perfects her tradeable object status when Massinissa delivers her to Scipio.

Male figures with Circean and Medean traits

Many of the male characters in this text exhibit Medean characteristics without attracting the accusation of witchcraft. Syphax, in particular, can be seen as a male Medea figure, for he is scorned in love and seeking revenge. However, his desire for revenge is presented as political rather than emotional and as mostly caused by the damage to his reputation caused by his rejection (*Sophonisba*, 1.1.1-7). This is reinforced, and complicated by Syphax's later statement, "A wasting flame feeds on my amorous blood / Which we must cool or die," (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.90-1), where he describes his lust in terms reminiscent of Medea's magical fire, which she used in revenge against Creusa. Another instance of descriptive double standards at this time is that if Massinissa's would-be poisoner, Gisco, had been a woman, he would have been called a witch, because of his elderly (and disgusting) appearance, and use of poison; however, he is not (*Sophonisba*, 2.2.38-52).

Conclusions

Marston's Erictho is reflective of the dominant image of the witch in drama at the time, which was the Hag Witch of classical Rome, a female figure who has many Circean and Medean traits in combination. One could especially note her purported ingredients for potions and her sexual voraciousness. However, Erictho is not a central character in any

sense, and her actions have very little, if any, influence on the outcome of the play. The outcome is produced by male politics, war, and betrayals; therefore, Erictho is not presented as a real threat. However, the 'good' Sophonisba, cast by the men in the role of a Circean temptress who meddles in politics, is eliminated because of she is perceived as being a threat.

Lyly's *Mother Bombie*

Mother Bombie is another witch figure, who operates on the periphery of the action. She also seems, as far as I am aware, to be the most complete picture of a good cunning woman in early modern drama. Unlike Erictho, she does affect the outcome of the play, with her cunning, or precognition, allowing for a happy conclusion to the multiple plot lines. First performed circa 1590, the play was published in 1594 and "despite its probable success in its own day […] *Mother Bombie* has rarely been performed in modern times."[21] While set in England, the play, including its plot devices and even characters' names are mostly Greco-Roman, especially influenced by Roman New Comedy and Terentian Comedy.[22] Meanwhile, "there is considerable evidence to suggest that in creating his cunning woman Lyly was drawing on a specific historical figure, or one reputed, at least, to have lived." It should be noted however that it is only in Lyly's play that she is a predominately positive figure, with her ambiguity more present in other sources.[23] With a probable first performance of the play in 1590, Mother Bombie is also one of the earliest witch figures examined in this study, so it is therefore not surprising that Circean and Medean elements are scattered throughout the play. As Scragg suggests, "[a] knowledge of the emblem tradition and the works of Ovid is required, for example, for a full appreciation," of the text, however, its wise-woman, at least, is primarily an English figure.[24]

Medea as a Hag

Like Dipsas, Erictho, and many others to follow, her appearance is that of a Hag type witch, as noted by Scragg.[25] However, the role she plays is more like that of an oracle, with both of these attributes connecting her to Medea, who in Ovid disguises herself as a hag and, in Apollodorus, utters prophecies. While telling the future is associated with both Circe and Medea in myth, Medea is better known for her cunning and Circe for her enchanting nature. Despite her kinship with classical witches who were themselves sometimes presented as benign, Mother Bombie, makes clear to any who ask that she is not a witch, but a cunning woman, (*Mother Bombie*, 2.3.98-9). She does this for an excellent reason, as she holds a precarious position in early modern society. One minute, so to speak, she is held to be a good woman; the next minute, Maetius and Serena think of her as an "old hag" witch tempting people to sin (*Mother Bombie*, 3.1.62).[26] This lack of a clear social position is another thing she has in common with Medea who, once she leaves Colchis, is an outsider with no real social position.

Circean

As we will see in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, servants are often quicker to believe in the dangers of witchcraft than their masters. As we hear: "Mark her not; she'll turn us all to apes!" (*Mother Bombie*, 3.4.89).[27] It is important to note that Dromio does not say this to Mother Bombie directly, and it is not clear if he is joking or if he truly fears this as a real possibility. However, the only transformations that Mother Bombie undertakes within the play are the metamorphoses in status and social relations of numerous characters.[28] Meanwhile, the beautiful idiot, Silena, is presented as having numerous Circean elements, including an enchanting beauty, and potentially an alluring singing voice. We are assured that "Silena was very wise, and could sing exceedingly:" (*Mother Bombie*, 3.2.20). Depending on how Act Three, Scene Three, is performed, the second statement could

either be presented as false, like the first or true. Either way, Silena can be seen as a funny, benign parody of a Circe figure, and of absolutely no danger to a sane man.

Male Figures with Circean and Medean traits

Within the play, a man is at more risk from the dangers of Circe's cup most directly in the form of excessive drinking. "Eleven of the play's characters succumb, moreover, at some point to the influence of wine, losing the ability to pursue their own interests (cf. the Hackneyman's unwitting release of Dromio from debt: 5.1.6-11), and conducting themselves in a manner that serves to equate them with beasts (cf. the boys' song on the dehumanizing effects of excessive drinking at 2.1.164ff.)."[29] The wine itself is credited with transformational powers: "[T]he wine hath turned my wit to vinegar!" (*Mother Bombie*, 2.4.6-7). The song at lines 2.1.164-83 makes clear the connection between Circean style transformations, and drinking—especially wine; and it has been noted previously that the animals that feature in the song are associated with the stages or types of drunkenness.[30]

Conclusions

Magical transformations are not presented as being a threat within this comedy, and the only 'magic' witnessed within the play is Mother Bombie's foretelling and her finding things, which could just be proof that, like many cunning folk, she just knows things that others do not. "The ambivalent status of Lyly's wise-woman also corresponds with the position occupied by cunning folk in the late Tudor period, as revealed by the historical record."[31] This is directly seen in characters' reactions to her. According to Serena: "They say there is, hard by, an old cunning woman, who can tell fortunes, expound dreams, tell of things that be lost, and divine of accidents to come. She is called the good woman, who yet never did hurt." (*Mother Bombie*, 3.1.26-29). Meanwhile, Serena's would-be husband

Maestius is sceptical and calls her a hag. Throughout the play she is frequently referred to as "good", or, "practising good," (*Mother Bombie*, 5.3.367). It may be that she is the only 'good' female cunning woman so identified in early modern drama. For example, Shakespeare's Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* has elements of the cunning woman but is not in fact identified as one, as will be examined in the next chapter. Part of what marks Mother Bombie as a good woman, is that she stands outside the mercenary economic motivations of the other characters, saying, "I take no money, but good words. Rail not if I tell true; if I do not, revenge," (*Mother Bombie*, 3.4.194). None of the characters had planned on paying Mother Bombie in any case, but nor would they seek revenge against her. The unnamed title character of *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, on the other hand, does expect money, and many would potentially desire revenge against her.

Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*

Critics such as Merchant have questioned whether "a play treating a white witch with such indulgence would have been popular with the new king, who had in the same year strengthened the penalties against such activities."[32] I suggest that Heywood's Wise-woman is presented as a con-artist without any actual recourse to magic, and is mostly a comic figure. Therefore King James would have possibly appreciated the play, as the message it sent to the audience is not to trust people who claim to be witches or to have magical powers for, if you are lucky, they are just con-artists. At least fourteen years and a change in the monarch separates this play from Lyly's *Mother Bombie*, and that is evident in the differences between the representations of essentially the same figure, the cunning woman, in the two texts. Both plays are influenced by Roman comedy, "with the Wise-woman as [a] variant of the Plautine witty slave, faintly coloured by the procuress-witch of Renaissance belief."[33] The procuress, or bawd witch, is also an obvious literary descendant of the highly sexual Circean witch.

Circean

Since she is a bawd, it is not surprising that the Wise-woman has many Circean elements presented so as to be humorous. The half-drunk Chartley describes her as both old 'beldam', and a would-be temptress, who has to employ younger 'witches' to tempt 'spirits' to rise. He fills his lines with references to classical goddesses associated with witches, such as Hecate and Proserpine, (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.95-105). He also dehumanises her, calling her first an "old dromedary," (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.110) and a "she-mastiff," (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.113) or a bitch, although calling her a dog also adds a sexual connotation to the insult. Chartley's relationship with the Wise-woman demonstrates a possibly common attitude to cunning folk at this point in history: people are happy to insult them, distrust them, and even call them 'witch', but are content to seek their assistance. Chartley cannot even bring himself not to insult her while she is helping him, referring to her as, "my honey-sweet hag" (*Wise-woman*, 3.1.78). Boister's interactions with the disguised Second Luce demonstrate another Circean element, transformation:

> *Boister.* No, Ise warrant thee. What art thou, girl or boy?
>
> *Second Luce.* Both, and neither. I was a lad last night,
>
> But in the morning I was conjured into
>
> A lass. And being a girl now, I shall be
>
> Translated to a boy anon. Here's all
>
> I can say at this time for myself: farewell. [*Exit*.]
>
> *Boister* [*Alone*]. Yes, and be hanged withal. O, for some gunpowder
>
> to blow up this witch, this she-cat, this damned sorceress!
>
> (*Wise-woman*, 3.2.28-35)

As we can see, the play presents cross-dressing as a form of metamorphosis. Boister seems to hold the Wise-woman entirely responsible and calls her a witch, and a sorceress.

Medean

She is however neither a witch nor a sorceress, and is not shown to perform, or even attempt to perform any actual magic within the play. She is, therefore, the most complete picture of a cunning woman as trickster or con-woman in surviving early modern dramatic texts (as far as I am aware). Despite not performing any magic, she does orchestrate a happy ending for most of the characters.

> Let me see, how
> many trades have I to live by? First, I am a wise-woman and a
> fortune-teller, and under that I deal in physic and forespeaking, in
> palmistry and recovering of things lost. Next, I undertake to cure
> mad folks. Then I keep gentlewomen lodgers, to furnish such
> chambers as I let out by the night. Then I am provided for
> bringing young wenches to bed. And, for a need, you see I can
> play the match-maker.
> She that is but one, and professeth so many,
> May well be termed a wise woman, if there be any.
> (*Wise-woman*, 3.1.140-49)

Her trickery links her to the first trickster witch in literature, Medea, and her aunt, Circe, whose tainted offer of hospitality could of course also be viewed as trickery. The section above also links her to these two mythical witches, firstly through her Circean enabling of illicit sexuality, and, secondly, by the Medean crime of (potential) infanticide, associated

with her "bringing young wenches to bed" (*Wise-woman*, 3.1.146). As she states regarding the resulting infants: "Why, in the night we send them abroad, and lay one at / this man's door, and another at that, such as are able to keep / them. And what after becomes of them, we inquire not." (*Wise-woman*, 3.1.30-33). Her method of re-homing infants does potentially make her guilty of infanticide, as all or none of the babies might be taken in. It could be argued that she is performing a necessary service, and helping out young women, who have no other options, but she is presented as indecorously proud of her scheme, and it is made clear she disposes of infants for material gain.

Just as her motives are not of great import, it seems Heywood did not consider it necessary to give her a proper name, although she is known by many names throughout the play. Near the very end, Chartley calls her, "Mother Midnight," (*Wise-woman*, 5.6.214). He earlier called her "the witch, the beldam, the hag of Hogsdon," (*Wise-woman*, 1.2.170). Luce calls her "the Wise-woman of Hogsdon" (*Wise-woman*, 1.2.169), and denies that the old woman is a witch. Second Luce's aside offers a different take on these activities:

> 'Tis strange the ignorant should be thus fooled.
> What can this witch, this wizard, or old trot
> Do by enchantment or by magic spell?
> Such as profess that art should be deep scholars.
> What reading can this simple woman have?
> 'Tis palpable gross foolery.
>
> (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.33-38)

Second Luce is a sceptic, which is not something one would expect from a country girl, but then she knows that the Wise-woman is in fact, not very knowing as she has tricked her into thinking she is a boy. Of course, the play validates her opinion as the Wise-woman is a

total fraud, although nonetheless astute. She, like most cunning people, is certainly clever enough to deny any connection to devilish magic, as when Boister asks: "Canst conjure?" (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.143). To which the Wise-woman replies, "O, that's a foul word! But I can tell you your fortune, / as they say. I have some little skill in palmistry, but never had to do with the devil," (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.144-46).

Like Second Luce, earlier, Boister calls the Wise-woman, amongst other things, a wizard: "Where's this witch, this hag, this beldam, this wizard?" (*Wise-woman*, 4.4.30). He could be using it the sense of 'wise one'; but, given the context, the term is probably an insult. These lines demonstrate that, at this point in history, the term 'wizard' is not strictly used to designate a male magic user, and could be applied to any user of magic, or 'wise person', although it does appear to have been more commonly used when referring to a man. Similarly, during the early modern period, the term 'witch' could be used for a man but was mostly applied to a woman. Cunning folk were more commonly thought to be of both sexes, as indicated in the Wise-woman's list of local cunning folk, which includes at least one man (*Wise-woman*, 2.1.19-31). The Wise-woman of Hogsdon is undeniably presented as an independent, almost masculine woman—not least insofar as she dominates the play's plot.

Good Circean/Medean Females

As can be seen in *Sophonisba*, relatively 'good' female characters are sometimes described by their would-be lovers in Circean terms. Therefore, it is not surprising that, according to Chartley, Luce: "hath a brow bewitching, eyes ravishing, and a tongue enchanting. And indeed she hath no fault in the world but one, and that is, she is honest," (*Wise-woman*, 1.1.122-25). Act One, Scene Two confirms this when presenting Luce as modest and chaste, her only real fault being a Medean one, her secret marriage, which she believes is to Chartley. She is rewarded for this bad behaviour by Chartley's taking the role of Jason:

"My husband to marry another wife tomorrow? O, / changeable destiny. No sooner married to him, but instantly to / lose him. Nor doth it grieve me so much that I am a wife, but that / I am a maid, too." (*Wise-woman*, 4.4.23-25). This statement presents a vital difference between her and Medea, in that she is still virginal, and certainly not a mother capable of killing her children.

Male Figures with Circean and Medean traits

Chartley is most certainly a Jason figure, totally dishonest in love, and always looking for the best 'bargain' or socially and materially advantageous bride. First, he abandoned the Second Lucy in the country the night before their planned wedding (*Wise-woman*, 3.3.14-19). Then, within six hours of thinking he is married to Luce, he is planning to court a wealthier and apparently more beautiful woman, Gratiana, and deny ever having married Luce (*Wise-woman*, 3.3.47-70). Luce asks why Chartley intends to marry another if he loves her, and he claims he plans to kill Gratiana for her money, not that Chartley necessarily would, for this is just what he tells Luce (*Wise-woman*, 5.6.49-54). So to perpetrate his Jason-like perfidy, he presents himself as willing to play the role of a Medea figure, planning to do away with the 'new' wife.

Conclusions

By the end of this play, it is quite clear that Heywood is not presenting the notion of the Wise-woman's having any real magical powers, as anything other than a joke. Like her more obviously good predecessor, Mother Bombie, the Wise-woman brings together the multiple plot lines and enables a happy ending. Within the play, the only forms of transformation are those of social statuses, such as that from maiden to wife or, in the case of Second Luce, the cross-dressing transformations from male to female. This is all

undertaken with generous helpings of humour, and the Wise-woman, despite her numerous social transgressions, is never presented as a serious threat to the status quo.

Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*

As we have seen in plays from this period, as well as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, portrayals of witches at this stage of history are likely to be much just as much influenced by classical myths and the iconography found in emblem books. For example, *Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa, which Jonson references in his description of Good Fame, (*Queens*, ll.436-44). Jonson's witches, as his notes inform a reader, are not only directly influenced by the classical witches (Circe, Medea and Hecate) but less directly by the figures associated with unruly womanhood in texts such as Ripa's (for example, Ate, or Envy). As is noted in McDermott's edition of *The Masque of Queens*, Jonson states, in his annotations to the published text of the masque, that he wishes to connect the classical forms of witchcraft to be found in literary and demonological sources, to popular English witch beliefs.[34] "I prescribed them their properties of vipers, snakes, bones, herbs, roots, and other ensigns of their magic, out of the authority of ancient and late writers," (*Queens*, ll.41-44). Therefore, it should not be surprising that Jonson's Hags more closely resemble Medean witches than English village witches; and, as Harris has noted, these classical witches are drawn from many of the same sources as Shakespeare's Weird Sisters, in particular, Seneca's and Ovid's Medeas.[35]

Medean

Ovid's Medea is clearly evident when the Dame first appears: "At this the Dame entered to them, naked-armed, barefooted, her frock tucked, her hair knotted and folded with vipers; in her hand a torch made of a dead man's arm, lighted; girded with a snake," (*Queens*, ll.97-99). Jonson lists several sources for this image, including emblematic representations

of the goddess Ate, as well as Erictho from Lucan's *Pharsalia* (on whom Marston's Erictho in *Sophonisba* is based), Horace's Canidia, and also Medusa, making her an amalgam of ugly hag witches from the classical tradition.[36] While earlier literary witches evidently influence Jonson's hag witches, they also have many links to contemporary and later representations of witches, as Harris notes: "The rhetoric of the Dame occasionally achieves a measured intensity, particularly in her impressive invocation to Hecate. Clearly based, as Jonson acknowledges, on the familiar Medea speech from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VII, it compares not unfavourably with Shakespeare's rendering of the lines in *The Tempest*."[37] This intertextuality is particularly evident in Charm Three (*Queens*, ll. 77-96), which has many references to animals associated with classical witches, and that are also found in many other witch dramas. However, line 184, "A purset to keep Sir Cranion in," mocks the very English tradition of keeping pet-like familiars.[38]

All the Charms the Hags sing are mostly classical in their sources, but referencing English beliefs where possible. For example, sticking pins in wax and wool pictures is a very English practice, if also one to be found in Horace.[39] Many of the gruesome ingredients gathered by the Hags for use in the cauldron scene (*Queens*, ll. 152-202), can be traced back to the ingredients of Ovid's Medea. Jonson heavily annotates the sources of the ingredients, which, as just noted, mostly originate from classical Roman texts, including Ovid, Seneca, and Horace. Jonson's cauldron scene has also strongly influenced other cauldron scenes as will be examined later in this study, although any direct connection between this scene and the cauldron scene of *Macbeth* is a subject of previous studies, and will not be covered here.[40] For the purposes of this study, the links that all these witch texts have to the classical witches, Medea and Circe is my primary focus.

One of the obvious links this text has to Medean myths is the danger that these hag witches represent regarding children and babies. Jonson's Hags repeatedly refer to using human body parts and claim to have killed many infants, including an illegitimate child,

using the very Medean implement of a dagger, (*Queens*, ll. 169-175). Not surprisingly, the images found in these lines are among those frequently repeated in later witch plays, like *The Witch*, and the various Lancashire witch plays. Also to be found throughout English witch plays are the hallucinogenic or poisonous plants Jonson lists in lines 185-88. Again an obvious source is Ovid's Medea; and also, like the flying Medea of Ovid, the Dame gets her ingredients from far flung places (*Queens*, ll.198-202).[41] Predictably, given her likeness to Ovid's Medea, the Dame claims to have powers beyond all other witches, including Hecate. "You that have seen me ride when Hecate / Durst not take chariot," (*Queens*, ll.222-23). She also, like Ovid's barefoot Medea, invokes Hecate to work her spells:

> And thou, three-formèd star, that on these nights
> Art only powerful, to whose triple name
> Thus we incline, once, twice, and thrice the same:
> If now with rites profane and foul enough
> We do invoke thee, darken all this roof?
> With present fogs!
>
> (*Queens*, ll.235-40)

Flying, using the longstanding tradition of stage machinery, has been associated with the figure of Medea since Euripides had Medea escape using a flying chariot in the same Greek tragedy which established her as an infanticide. Therefore the tendency of early modern dramatists to utilise the spectacle of witches flying is not particularly innovative, such as when Jonson has the Dame mount a broomstick: "'Up, Dame, o'yor Horse of Wood'" (*Queens*, ll.61-3). While not being very new in literature, the idea of witches flying was relatively unheard of in English trials prior to this period, and yet it would go on

to become one of the central images of the stereotype of the witch. Jonson also includes an idea common in European witch beliefs, that is, using magical ointments to facilitate flying, which is also repeated in numerous witch plays, often with the command to "come away," (*Queens*, l.53). The line appears in the song in *Macbeth* and again in Middleton's *The Witch*, as well as the later Lancashire Witch plays. However, Jonson does not limit his witches to flying on brooms, and Charm Two lists many methods witches were said to use to fly (*Queens*, ll.66-75).

As we know, the idea of the world turned upside down, or reversal of the 'natural' order, is central to representations of witches in literature, paintings, demonological tracts and historical pamphlets. They are shown to be the opposite of all that is good and right in early modern society, and their opposition to the status quo is the source of their threatening nature. Jonson utilises this in lines 226-31, which are all about the witches creating reversals, or turning things upside down. However, it is important to note that every type of disruptive magic these witches attempt to use is entirely unsuccessful. They cannot summon the demon they try to call using gruesome ingredients in Charm Four. The storm they endeavour to raise in Charm Five is equally unsuccessful. As the Dame announces: "Stay! All our charms do nothing win," (*Queens*, l.281). Nothing they try works, which, given the context of the Masques' performance, is not unexpected as they are in the presence of the highest authority in the state, King James. It was a common belief that once in the presence of legitimate authority, the devil would abandon witches, leaving them powerless.[42]

Circean

The Dame's final attempt to work magic utilises the Medean tool of "[a] rusty knife to wound mine arm, / And as it drops I'll speak a charm" (*Queens*, ll.305-6). This attempt to birth a demon using blood-magic (*Queens*, l.311) is also a failure; however, it leads into

Charm Seven, which is full of sexual innuendo about how the demon can have all the witches sexually. As McDermott suggests, the audience is lead to expect a sexual orgy but does not even get the devil showing up.[43] The ineffectual nature of these witches makes them humorous, rather than threatening, and one of the few Circean traits they exhibit, the aggressive sexuality of old bawds, does not make them appealing in any sense but is just another weapon of ridicule. Their ridiculousness extends to the topsy-turvy music and dancing, which could have been plucked out of European demonologists' reports of dancing at Sabbaths, (*Queens*, ll.340-57). This performance of the antithesis of good womanhood, which was Jonson's stated goal in creating his anti-masque, is broken up by the entrance of the 'good Queens', played by the real Queen and her court ladies.

The Good Queens

Among the eleven Queens from the past featured in the Masque proper, several are problematic representations of good womanhood, potentially demonstrating the difficulty Jonson faced in trying to find historical examples of women who enjoyed Good Fame. Some, such as Penthesilea, were warrior women, although like her many were ultimately defeated by men—which, all things considered, was probably to be preferred to the back stories of some of the other women featured, many of whom had Circean or Medean traits (*Queens*, l.389). One of the more interesting among them is Amalasunta, who resembles Shakespeare's Cleopatra and also Circe. "Jonson notes: 'She was the most eloquent of her age, and cunning in all languages of any nation that had commerce with the Roman empire' (311)."[44] Also of interest as McDermott points out, is:

> *Valasca*] 'the Bold', Queen of Bohemia who liberated her country-women from tyranny, slaughtering 'their barbarous husbands and lords; and possessing themselves of their horses,

> arms, treasure, and places of strength, not only ruled the rest, but lived many years after with the liberty and fortitude of Amazons' (Jonson 312). She seems to be a dubious symbol of female fame, and Jonson omits the legend that she used magic to win her battles, depriving the men she defeated of their right eyes and their thumbs, another fact that would seem to ally her more closely with the witches, than with the virtuous queens of the House of Fame.[45]

Another problematic association between the Queens of Good Fame, and dangerous witches such as Medea, is their entrance on chariots, which were traditionally used by men for Triumphs, and by Medea figures (including a few relatively recent ones in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*) to escape. While this is possibly mitigated by the fact that their evil opposites, the Hags, are used as slaves to pull the chariots, the association between dangerously proud Queens and chariots remains (*Queens*, ll.461-2). Not surprisingly, given the audience for the Masque, the feminine powers, or Queens, are framed by a male representation of Heroic Virtue, in the shape of Perseus, who here is the father of Good Fame. He is the first to appear after the witches are disposed of, implying that he was truly the figure responsible for getting rid of them.

Conclusions

Coming first, and taking up the vast majority of the speaking lines of the Masque, the Hags are central to the performance in a way that is not evident in previous dramas involving female witches. As has been mentioned previously, the figure of the Witch is a representation of the opposite to all feminine ideals, which results in many stereotypical elements, including Medean tropes like child murder, or more relatively benign and Circean ones, like sexual promiscuity. The grotesque and comedic nature of Jonson's Hag

witches is highlighted by their total inability to perform magic within the Masque. By publishing *The Masque of Queens*, Jonson intended "to transform a one-time-only performed event into an enduring document of classical scholarship."[46] This has left an enduring influence on later representations of witches in early modern drama as well as on the witch stereotype, particularly the use of classical attributes in conjunction with local beliefs, favouring the more fantastical elements of witchcraft found in literature, such as the power of flight.

Milton's *Comus*

Despite the leap forward in time between Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* and Milton's *Comus*, it is included at this point in my study because, stylistically and thematically, it has more in common with earlier texts featuring magic and witchcraft than it does with its contemporaries, such as Heywood and Brome's *The Witches of Lancashire*, which was also produced in 1634. As John Carey points out, many critics have traced Milton's sources to representations of the classical witch figures Circe and Medea, and noted the text's "pervasive stylistic debt to Shakespeare and to Spenserian allegory".[47] Therefore, it is not surprising that the magic to be found in this masque is classically inspired, with the only notable English traditions included being occasional references to fairies. For example, Comus himself mentions Morris dancing and fairies, (*Comus*, ll. 116-8) and he also describes the brothers as Fairy like: "Their port was more than human, as they stood; / I took it for a faëry vision" (*Comus*, ll. 296-7).

Unlike Jonson's masques, which were created for a royal audience at court, Milton's *Comus* was produced for the Earl of Bridgewater, and performed by three of his children and members of his household—although a professional actor would have played Comus. Production conditions should be borne in mind, as it then makes sense that Milton would use a male Circe figure, rather than a female one. The two boys were too young to

be considered men and at risk of falling for Circe's temptations, but Alice, a young woman, was a perfect age to be tempted. As Carey observes: "Breasted has […] discovered, N&Q 17 (1970) 411-12, that in 1632 the Countess of Bridgewater believed a male servant had bewitched Lady Alice, which must have given added point to Comus for a family audience."[48]

Males with Negatively Circean and Medean Traits

Many critics have examined Comus in terms of his Circean and Bacchic heritage, including Harris, who covers several of the points I make here in his *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama*.[49] Comus' first appearance in the masque makes clear his connection to Circe, as he is holding "*a charming-rod in one hand, and his glass in the other*" (*Comus*, l.92 stage direction). Evidence of his successful use of these Circean objects can be seen in his animal headed crew, as well as the Lady's inability to move from her seat. According to the stage directions, Comus' victims are a mix of men and women, as opposed to Circe's, who were exclusively male. The use of both genders could mean that, like his father Bacchus, Comus is bi-sexual, although it is also probable that he tempts the men with drunkenness and the women with sex.

Comus, is a figure from late antiquity, although not a particularly well-known one. Bacchus is given as his father, and he is primarily associated with revelry and excessive drinking.[50] Circe as his mother is Milton's invention, and he probably did this to utilise Circe's sexual nature and magical entrapments. Circe is called a nymph, not a goddess in the Masque, and it is stated that her cup turned men into swine. However, her wand is not mentioned, as frequently transpired in early modern reinterpretations of her myth, such as occurs with Spenser's Acrasia (*Comus*, ll. 50-54). Just as Circe exceeded all others in her knowledge of 'drugs' or magical arts, and Medea excelled her, so too does Comus (*Comus*, l. 63). The transformations he causes are different as well and highlight emblematic or

allegorical uses of Circe, where men were transformed into different beasts according to their natures, rather than all being merely changed into pigs.[51] They are only partially transformed, which is of course much easier to stage, and seem to keep at least some of their mental faculties, although Comus' victims are also forgetful, which was common amongst victims of Spenser's Circe figures, and is reminiscent of the Lotus eaters. The victims, "roll with pleasure in a sensual sty," (*Comus*, l.77), implying that, even though they have different forms, they are all porcine.

Milton initially distances Comus from the idea of the witch, which was beginning to become unpopular among many educated men (associated as it was with poor old ugly women and stage spectacles), by making Comus a priest of an obscure goddess called Cotytto. Cotytto has many attributes in common with Medea and Hecate, with whom she rides, including Hecate's torches, Medean fire, and the dragons which are associated with both (*Comus*, ll.128-36). However, we soon find Comus, and his rabble, "[d]oing abhorred rites to Hecate" (*Comus*, l.534), in their "bowers" (*Comus*, l.535) and performing "spells" (*Comus*, l.536). It appears that Milton's earlier distancing of Comus from witchcraft is now forgotten, and he and his followers worship Hecate directly. Perhaps with some allusion to Shakespeare's Prospero, Comus is now referred to as, "that damned wizard hid in sly disguise" (*Comus*, l. 570), and a "damned magician" (*Comus*, l.600). Milton has no problem naming Comus as an evil magic user, although the terms he uses are still less insulting than the term, which is never applied to Comus as it would have been to his mother Circe, "witch".

The language that Comus himself uses is, however, that of magic and witchcraft, and he identifies his magic with his mother's.[52] Much of his magic is based on sight and illusions: "Thus I hurl / My dazzling spells into the spongy air, / Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, illusion, / And give it false presentments" (*Comus*, ll.153-56). His "magic dust" (l.165) creates a glamour-like illusion, here a simple disguise as a villager.

Comus' magical skills are designated as inseparable from his implements. For example, "his bare wand can unthread thy joints," (*Comus*, ll.613).[53] The magic he works against the Lady, which compares her entrapment to being transformed into a tree, thus linking him to other magic users in literature, including Lyly's Dipsas, Spenser's Duessa, and Shakespeare's Prospero and Sycorax. Another echo of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is the requirement to reverse his wand and words to reverse the enchantment (*Comus*, ll.813-17), which was also needed to reverse Busirane's enchantments in Book III. The reversed words were a common part of witchcraft beliefs, and Carey also notes the connection to Spenser in his examination of possible sources.[54]

The Lady's description of Comus aligns him with the devil, and the devil's servants, witches. She calls him "false traitor" (*Comus*, l.689); accuses him of "lies" (*Comus*, l.691); refers to "thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver" (*Comus*, l.695); and rejects his "treasonous offer" (*Comus*, l. 701). In case the audience missed the classical roots of the Masque, in lines 701-2 Milton directly references Euripides' *Medea*, when the Lady equates Comus' offer with Jason's to Medea while he was betraying her.[55] The Lady's entirely negative view of him matches the intent of the Masque, as Comus, like his Mother Circe, is meant to represent "sensual folly, and intemperance" (*Comus*, l.974). However, Comus views himself in a much more positive light, presenting his potion as medicinal, a cure for melancholy (*Comus*, ll.810-11).

Good Circean/Medean Females

Links to Spenser are evident throughout the text. For example, Comus enacts the obligatory topos of mistaking The Lady for a goddess, a manoeuvre so common in Spenser, and also to be found in Shakespeare's *Tempest*.[56] He asks: "Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould / Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?" (*Comus*, ll.243-44). Comus asks this after the Lady sings, singing that he contrasts to that of Circe and the

Sirens, which highlights negative aspects of the latter's song, including the fact that they sing while collecting dangerous herbs. He emphasises the "sacred, home-felt delight" of the Lady's song (*Comus*, ll.251-63). Meanwhile, The Lady is very modest, and claims no skill in singing, further distancing this virginal heroine from dangerous Circe figures, despite her alluring nature. The lady is both virginal (*Comus*, l.349) and a lost, wandering woman (*Comus*, ll. 349-50), which as we know from Spenser, means many will attempt to take her virginity. In rescuing the lady, Sabrina appears in the role of a perpetual virgin who is also a cunning woman or anti-witch (*Comus*, ll.846-53). Her "vialed liquors heal" (*Comus*, l.846) and she "can unlock / The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell," (*Comus*, ll.851-2).

Conclusions

Milton's text does not break any new ground in regards to witchcraft stereotypes, although he does demonstrate that there were still multiple forms for representing magic users, both male and female in early modern English performances. This masque, like many others, is full of mythological allusions, and as stated earlier, has more in common with Lyly's courtly dramas, than with the Witch plays that were being produced for the public stage by Milton's contemporaries. It is therefore not surprising that the concerns it echoes are that of self-control, chastity and temperance; and, while Comus escapes at the end, he is never presented as a threat in the same way that many female Circean figures, or witches generally, were both before and after this performance.

Conclusion

As the title of this chapter indicates, the texts examined above are all predominantly influenced by the witches of classical literature, and therefore the myths of Circe and Medea. Lyly's texts were created during the reign of Elizabeth and, not surprisingly,

demonstrate different concerns and anxieties regarding strong female characters, whether or not they have a supernatural element, from those texts which came later. Even this early in the representation of witches on the English stage, we can still see the beginnings of trends that would continue well beyond the early modern period, including humorous representations of female magic users (Lyly's Dipsas, for instance). In Marston's *Sophonisba*, we see another trend: the inhumane grotesqueness that witches could also be presented as embodying, which in itself can be seen as so unbelievable as to be humorous. During James I's reign, one of the most obvious trends to be added to the potentially humorous nature of stage witches was their decreasing effectiveness as magic users, with Heywood's Wise-woman not even attempting to use magic, and Jonson's Hags in *The Masque of Queens* being utterly ineffectual magic users.

There are many potential reasons for these trends. It can be argued that even though belief in witchcraft was relatively strong amongst the general population of England when these texts were created, the earlier plays by Lyly were primarily produced for a more elite audience, who were not overly concerned about what village witches were supposedly doing to their neighbours. They would have been more familiar with the witches they had encountered in books. There had not yet been any large scale witch scares, as had occurred in Continental Europe. Even the North Berwick witch trials, which so affected King James in Scotland, had not happened when Lyly was writing the texts examined in this chapter. For later audiences, dangerous and powerful witches could not be shown to have recourse to transformational magic without in some way being made to seem ridiculous, ineffectual, or very marginal within the text. We can see this with Marston's Erictho who, like Shakespeare's Weird Sisters, appears around the time of this change, which predictably came with the ascent of James I to the English throne.

In terms of the physical stereotypes of the Witch that can still be found in contemporary literature and popular culture, this period's fascination with the classical

witches, Circe and Medea, has led to the two main types of witches that we encounter in texts today. The beautiful young witch, who is dangerous sexually, and the elderly hag witch, who is a danger to children. The latter became increasingly popular during the early modern period, but the former could still be drawn on for representations, as we can see with Milton's *Comus*. The Hag witch has solid connections to Ovid's Medea, so it is therefore not unexpected that scenes involving her cauldron, and potion making, as well as her ability to fly, became increasingly popular as time progressed, and this will be examined in the subsequent chapters of this study.

1. John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). All further references will be to this edition, and in text.

2. Thomas Heywood, *Three Marriage Plays*, ed. Paul Merchant (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 6. All references to *The Wise-woman of Hogdson* will be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *Wise-woman*.

3. John Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, Rev. 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007). References to *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* will be to this edition and in text using the title *Comus*.

4. Ben Jonson, *Masques of Difference: Four Court Masques by Ben Jonson*, ed. Kristen McDermott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). References to *The Masque of Queens* will be to this edition, and in text using the abbreviation *Queens*. McDermott, discusses Jonson's notes to the text but does not include them, *Masques* , 41.

5. Barbara K. Lewalski, "Genre," in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 8.

6. Anna Bayman, "'Large Hands, Wide Eares, and Piercing Sights': The 'Discoveries' of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Witch Pamphlets," *Literature & History* 16, no. 1 (2007). For copies of Witch Pamphlets see Marion Gibson, ed. *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

7. Philip C Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot and 'the Discoverie of Witchcraft'* (IB Tauris, 2014). George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes, 1593* ed. Beatrice White (London: London : Oxford University Press for the Shakespeare Association, 1931).

8. Bevington, *Endymion*, 8.

9. Bevington, *Endymion*, 60.

10. Bevington, *Endymion*, 33.

11. Bevington, *Endymion*, 18.

12. As Bevington points out: “The play hints strongly that Endymion has had a carnal relationship with Tellus; in allegorical terms, she represents the trammels of the flesh in a familiar contest of body and soul.” the picture she made of Endymion during her banishment could possibly be a child, “the product of sexual desire”. *Endymion*, 19-20.

13. Bevington notes the similarities between Endymion’s enchanted sleep and Ovid’s Medea’s rejuvenation of Aeson, meaning that an audience familiar with Ovid would-be expecting someone to rejuvenate Endymion. *Endymion*, 165.

14. Bevington, *Endymion*, 37.

15. Bevington, *Endymion*, 124-5.

16. Natalia Khomenko, “‘Between You and Her No Comparison’: Witches, Healers, and Elizabeth I in John Lyly’s Endymion,” *Early Theatre* 13 (2010). Addresses the relationship between Dipsas and Elizabeth. Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Montrose’s fifth section looks in detail about the difficulties in representations of the ageing Elizabeth.

17. Anthony Harris, *Night’s Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester University Press, 1980), 65.

18. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, eds., *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press 1986), 3.

19. Corbin and Sedge, *Witchcraft Plays*, 35.

20. Viviana Comensoli, *‘Household Business’: Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 119.

21. John Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 39. Further references to this play will be in text using the title *Mother Bombie*.

22. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 11.

23. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 13.

24. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 14.

25. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 37.

26. Scragg's notes on page 117 also mentions this.

27. Scragg notes the significance of this on page 12, "the young servants are terrified by her witchlike appearance, and fear that she will transform them into sub-human forms (3.4.88-9)." See also, notes on page 132.

28. "Mother Bombie evokes the shifting character of a seemingly stable world, concluding with a metamorphosis as far-reaching as any of the transformations accomplished by the classical deities of the dramatist's more overtly Ovidian works." Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 20.

29. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 27.

30. See Scragg's notes on pages 94-5 regarding contemporary references to drinking and transformations. The general connection between Circean transformations and drinking in early modern texts is also examined by Karren Britland, "Circe's Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama," in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2004).

31. Scragg, *Mother Bombie*, 12. Scragg also references works on cunning-folk which are a good starting point for further reading on the topic.

32. Merchant, *Marriage Plays*, 6.

33. Merchant, *Marriage Plays*, 9. Also noted by Corbin and Sedge, *Witchcraft Plays*, 7.

34. McDermott, *Masques*, 41.

35. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 86.

36. See McDermott's note to ll.97-8 *Masques*, 110.

37. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 75.

38. McDermott mentions Jonson's note about this, *Masques*, 114.

39. McDermott, see note to l.86, *Masques*, 109.

40. Harris, *Night's Black Agents* , 84-5, is one example.

41. See McDermott's notes to these lines, *Masques*, 115.

42. For King James VI's thoughts on the matter, see his *Demonology* in Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 398-89.

43. McDermott, *Masques*, 43.

44. McDermott, *Masques*, 124.

45. McDermott, *Masques*, 125.

46. McDermott, *Masques*, 7.

47. "More recently-proposed sources include: Ovid, Met. XIV 245-440 (K. Swaim, MQ 9 (1975) 14-17), Welsh oral tradition (V. O'Valle, MS 18 (1983) 25-4), Boethius, Consolation (E.H. Dye, MQ 19 (1985) 1-7), Thomist theology (J. Obertino, MS 22 (1986) 21-44), the Shepherd of Hermas (E.B. Cunnar, MS 23 (1987) 33-52), the Callisto myth (K. Wall in Walker 52-65), Shakespeare's Tempest (M. Loeffelholz in Walker 25-42—a feminist reading which sees M. as repressing the 'maternal' Shakespeare and reaffirming patriarchy), and Paul's Epistle to the Corithinians (S.M. Felch, MQ 27 (1993) 59-70)." Carey, *Shorter Poems*, 175.

48. "Barbara Breasted first argued for the importance of the Castlehaven scandal to the conception of Milton's masque in "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," Milton Studies 3 (1971): 201–24. John Creaser argues the opposite case in "Milton's Comus: The Irrelevance of the Castlehaven Scandal," N&Q 31 (1984): 307–17." Carey, *Shorter Poems*, 176.

49. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 181-82.

50. For an example, he does not appear in Conti's *Mythologiae.* Carey looks at Comus' parentage in some detail on page 183, and notes that the only early modern texts he appeared in before Milton's, were Jonson's.

51. Carey's note to ll.68-75 examines possible sources for this.

52. Especially in the Trinity MS. See Carey's note to l.151.

53. The 'bare' nature of the wand is not glossed, but it could be a reference to a penis and venereal disease.

54. Carey, *Shorter Poems*, 222, notes to l.815. This section of Spenser's poem is also about Chastity.

55. Carey's notes "*701-2*. Cp. Euripides, Medea 618: 'A bad man's gifts convey no benefit.'", *Shorter Poems*, 215.

56. Comus, l.266. See Carey's note, *Shorter Poems*, 194.

Chapter Three:

Shakespeare and Witch Stereotypes

Introduction

During the end of the sixteenth, and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, when the first performances of Shakespeare's plays occurred, there were various representations of witchcraft available for use. The renewed interest in Ovidian myths during the early modern period, as clearly seen in Spenser and Shakespeare, resulted in the increased complexity of figures such as Circe and Medea. These two witches from classical myth were primarily presented in medieval allegories and emblem books as a warning against the dangers of prostitution or pleasure (Circe); and jealousy or murderous rage (Medea).[1] In Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, we can see how Circean and Medean traits had become means for representing bad or dangerous women more generally. In this long poem, representations of witchcraft and magic use from myths and literature also began to take on elements more commonly found in pamphlets and other early modern historical sources, creating a new type of witch unique to English Literature. At the same time, the magical and secular power available to female magic users in Spenser had largely diminished when contrasted with that in early versions of Circe and Medea in myths, while at the same time being increasingly tied to their conformance (or non-conformance) to idealised feminine behaviour. This chapter will examine how these trends in the reinterpretations of Circean and Medean figures and the traits associated with them continue in Shakespeare's plays and poetry, and how these canonical works have thereafter influenced the representations of witches in English literature.

The focus of this chapter will, therefore, be on the use of magic in Shakespeare's plays, particularly as it relates to Circe and Medea myths. It will also examine characters that have strong Circean and Medean traits, and are non-magical, as well as general trends

amongst minor characters with some of these traits, especially the use of magical language to describe these characters. It will not, however, be a comprehensive survey of every character in Shakespeare that has some Circean or Medean traits, as they are too numerous—many of these traits having by this period in literature become associated with undesirable female behaviour more generally. While there are many gender-based trends to be examined that occur throughout the plays, this study does not have the space to explore the implications of the gendering of magic in early modern literature completely.[2] It is probably not a coincidence that the plays to be examined in detail in this chapter are amongst the most widely known of Shakespeare's plays, and those most commonly studied in schools in English speaking countries. These include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, and several of the history plays including *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*. The use of magical language and ideas in several of the comedies, as well as a trend towards more humorous uses of witches and other magical creatures in Shakespeare, will also feature in this chapter.[3]

Section 1: Magical Circe and Medea Figures.

Oh, how small these fairies be! The Diminishing of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

With Bottom running around with an Ass's head for a significant portion of the play, much of the humour in this comedy is still accessible to audiences today. What most audiences today would not necessarily perceive is how innovative Shakespeare was in his representations of fairies and their magical world. As Greenblatt states:

> [I]ntensive scholarly research over several generations has suggested that Shakespeare's fairies are quite unlike those his audience might have

> credited, half-credited, or –as Scot hoped— discredited. / The fairies of Elizabethan popular belief were often threatening and dangerous, while those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are generally benevolent. The former steal human infants, perhaps to sacrifice them to the devil, while the latter, even when they quarrel over a young boy, do so to bestow love and favour upon him; the former leave deformed, emaciated children in place of those they have stolen, while the latter trip nimbly through the palace blessing the bride beds and warding off deformities. Shakespeare's fairies have some of the menacing associations of "real" fairies—Puck speaks of shrouds and gaping graves, while the quarrel between Oberon and Titania has disrupted the seasons and damaged the crops, as wicked spirits are said to do. But the fairies we see are, as Oberon says, "spirits of another sort." Oberon and Titania (whose names Shakespeare took from the French romance *Huon of Bordeaux* and from Ovid, respectively) repeatedly demonstrate their good will toward mortals, though they have very little good will toward each other.[4]

Shakespeare's fairies are, however, fairies that a modern audience can recognise. Act 2, Scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* clearly demonstrates the types of fairies used by Shakespeare. They are small, with references to flowers, dewdrops, and other such diminutive objects, and while little fairies existed in folklore during the early modern period, they were not as common as they became after this play.[5] Shakespeare diminished these elves in both size and power, often in a humorous manner, such as needing to hide in "acorn cups".[6] Robin Goodfellow (Puck) demonstrates some crossovers between fairies and witches, by playing tricks that reflect crimes of which witches were sometimes accused, like making butter not churn, and ale go bad (*MSND*, 2.1.34-38). Titania's

changeling child also shows a cross-over between witches and fairies as witches are associated with stealing babies in modern witch stereotypes. These changes to fairies in this play are of relevance to this study, due to the way fairies combine with reinterpretations of Circe myths in a text that reduces them both, in size and power. The figure most affected by Shakespeare's changes is Titania the Queen of the Fairies, whose name as David Wiles notes links her to Circe, a daughter of a Titan.[7]

Thanks to Golding's Ovid, fairies, nymphs, goddesses, and witches were often confused or combined in early modern literature. Several instances of this occur in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, such as the stealing or harming of children, animal transformations, as well as the use of spells, charms and potions, which clearly have their origins in early Circe and Medea Myths. While Titania has links to an Ovidian Circe, Oberon and Puck exhibit more Circean traits than she does. These include the ability to bring about transformations, which they accomplish by using a potentially wand-like flower that contains a magical liquid, which they apply while saying a charm or spell. Titania on the other hand does not perform any transformational magic in the play. She has no wand, and the only cups (Circe's other symbol of power) associated with her are the acorn cups in which her fairies hide. Oberon, like Medea and Circe, is knowledgeable about herbs, or at least "love-in-idleness" or the Pansy, and its antidote, "Dian's bud," which he uses in conjunction with a charm that he changes according to the situation (*MSND*, 2.1.168, 4.1.68-72). Like Medea, he uses these magical herbs to get revenge against a spouse. There is also a Circean-style transformation of emotions for his victims, which occurs when he casts his spells. Oberon also intends that Titania will fall in love with a beast: "Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, / On meddling monkey, or on busy ape," (*MSND*, 2.1.180-81), and all the animals he mentions are found in Circe myths. While Oberon successfully has access to transformational magic, Titania and her fairies cannot even protect themselves from his 'charms':

TITANIA Come, now a roundel and a fairy song,

Then for the third part of a minute hence:

Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,

Some war with reremice for their leathern wings

To make my small elves coats, and some keep back

The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders

At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;

(*MSND*, 2.2.1-8)

Their song is a lullaby that aims to protect Titania from lots of things that would hurt small creatures: snakes; hedgehogs; poisonous newts and blindworms; spells and charms; and spiders and beetles. Many of these animals are also associated with witches and bad omens. While singing is a Circean trait that the fairies retain, their singing has lost the magical quality of Circe's singing, in their case, even lacking the ability to protect against charms. This scene demonstrates two ways in which Shakespeare reduced the perceived threat of a previously Circean Titania and her fairies. They are physically smaller, and they have lost much of their magic.

Shakespeare also makes Titania and her fairies the objects of Oberon and Puck's magical joke, that of Titania falling in love with a partially transformed Bottom. It is clear from Oberon's words, while he is putting the juice on Titania's eyes, that he always intended for her to fall in love with a beast, and the element of bestiality arguably heightens the humour of the plotline (*MSND*, 2.2.33-40). Puck, however, suggests he has the power to transform himself into animals, and fire:

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier.

> Sometime a horse I'll be, Sometime a hound,
>
> A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire,
>
> And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
>
> Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn.
>
> (*MSND*, 3.1.94-99)

This speech occurs immediately following Puck's transformation of Bottom using the Ass's head, demonstrating Bottom's true nature, while reinforcing Puck's Circean skills. Another Circean symbol Puck mentions, is when he threatens Demetrius that he will, "whip thee with a rod," (*MSND*, 3.2.411). This is a reminder of the use of rods as correctives, particularly in early modern schools, that transformed boys into young men. Circe's use of her rod in *The Odyssey* can also been seen as a corrective, as one can argue that having been transformed back from their bestial nature, Odysseus' men would be more self-aware.

Meanwhile, Oberon's love potion makes Titania perceive the transformed Bottom as though he were a Circe figure, believing his singing to be beautiful, and his body a trap: "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. / Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note; / So is mine eye entrallèd to thy shape;" (*MSND*, 3.1.122-23). The whole Bottom and Titania plot turns the idea of the Circe figure on its head in a humorous manner. The Queen of the Fairies was previously in stories the type to seduce men, and transform them using her magic, such as in the ballad of "Tam Lin", and much like early versions of Circe.[8] Here a monstrous man, transformed by the magic of her male enemies, is seducing her without even trying to, in her own bower. The humour occurs because Oberon's magic succeeds, causing Titania to say things such as, "Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful," (*MSND*, 3.1.131) the joke being that Bottom is neither, and Titania appears to have lost her wits. In one of the many parallels between the human plot and the fairy plot of the play, Helena

believes herself to be the butt of a joke when first Lysander, and then Demetrius, woo her under the influence of the love potion (*MSND*, 3.2.146-51). Shakespeare also departed from literary tradition in the use of an effective love potion. In Spenser, magic could not cause or cure love, however, it could trap those susceptible to lust, such as on Acrasia's island.

Shakespeare transfers the magical and political power that belonged to the Fairy Queen in stories prior to this play to her now husband, Oberon and his assistant, Puck.[9] Throughout the play, the denizens of Oberon's "fairy kingdom," as even Titania now acknowledges it to be, go by numerous names (*MSND* 2.1.144). Titania says, "I am a spirit of no common rate," (*MSND*, 3.1.136) and elsewhere they are referred to as sprites and elves. The conflation of these beings occurred frequently during the early modern period.[10] The terms spirit, fairy and elves are virtually synonymous throughout the play.
This interchangeability of names is not unique to Shakespeare, although his use of these various terms potentially influenced Pratchett's use of the term 'elves' in *Lords and Ladies*, as will be examined in more detail later in this study. Another term that had ambiguous uses during the early modern period was "charm" (*MSND*, 2.1.183). As the language of magic became confused with the language of seduction (possibly due to figures such as Circe) the words charm, bewitch and enchant could increasingly be found in many non-magical contexts. This metaphorical use of magical language occurs in this play and others, mostly in relation to the human characters. The human characters also refer to Circean-style animal transformations, albeit of a metaphorical or rhetorical nature. An example is Hermia's accusation against Demetrius:

> And has thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
> Could not a worm, an adder do so much?—
> An adder did it, for with doubler tongue

Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

(*MSND*, 3.2.70-73)

Hermia metaphorically transforms Demetrius into a murderous, deceptive snake, having earlier made him a dog (*MSND*, 3.2.65). Although lacking Circe's power literally to transform the men, she does have several Circean traits, including a lovely singing voice (which she shares with Helena); and she is obviously attractive as she initially has two men chasing after her. She also has a few Medean traits (which she again shares with Helena) such as disregard for paternal authority and quickness to anger. Unlike Hermia, who calls other people animals, including Helena (*MSND*, 3.2.324); Helena metaphorically transforms herself into animals. She calls herself Demetrius' spaniel (*MSND*, 2.1.203) and considers herself "as ugly as a bear," (*MSND*, 2.2.100). She acknowledges her unorthodox behaviour, as she chases a Jason-like Demetrius who has rejected her in favour of a politically more advantageous marriage. It is clear she has more similarities with Medea than her more Circean friend Hermia does, although like Hermia she is without direct recourse to magic (*MSND*, 2.1.229-44). This mortal Medea figure has magic performed on her behalf by Oberon and Puck—and not surprisingly, given that this is a comedy, with a much happier outcome than is associated with earlier Medea figures.

As a comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides a suitable space in which to transform that which has the potential to be terrifying—magical beings like Circe with recourse to weather magic, power to effect animal transformations, and effective love potions (here called fairies or elves)—into something humorous and less threatening. The threat was reduced, firstly by taking said magical powers away from a dangerous female figure, such as Titania and giving them to her *husband*; secondly by making her the butt of a joke using that Circean magic; and thirdly, by literally reducing the size of her followers. In the tragedy *Macbeth* on the other hand, there are no obvious attempts at humour in

relation to the "Witches" and the other witch-like characters, Macbeth and his Lady. Yet, the influences of this play on subsequent representations of witchcraft, especially in Jacobean witch plays, led the way to quite humorous representations of witches.

Medea's Cauldron and *Macbeth*'s English Witches

When examining representations of witchcraft in the early modern period, one of the most obvious texts to include is Macbeth. "The Jacobean theatregoer, whether he was a firm believer or a sceptic in his attitude to real-life witches and their alleged powers, would have recognised in the Weird Sisters a portrayal of some of the most traditional beliefs concerning witches—in their actions, their motives and their probable appearance."[11] However, as Greenblatt notes: "[s]cholarly responses have been complicated by the high probability that not all the witchcraft scenes are by Shakespeare himself: it appears that 3.5 and part of 4.1, the scenes featuring the goddess Hecate, were added to the play some time after its first performance and incorporate songs derived from Thomas Middleton's play *The Witch*."[12] In *Witches and Jesuits*, Garry Wills argues that the:

> Hecate scenes do have many signs of being added to the 1606 original—they introduce a large number of boy actors (chorus and attendants) available at some later private performance, and they use elaborate stage machinery (Hecate's car) of the sort that Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones used progressively at court. But removing the two Hecate scenes does not "restore" the 1606 *Macbeth*. These were probably not just added on the former play, but replaced some demonic business having to do with necromancy. The parallel with Barnes's 1606 play shows that Shakespeare included a conjuring scene in the original (1606) *Macbeth*.[13]

For the purposes of this study, the tendency of modern editors and directors to remove these scenes further complicates these textual issues, to the extent that many of the editions taught in schools only have three witches, and sometimes Hecate.[14] I personally did not encounter a text with Hecate, the Spirit like a cat, or the additional three witches until University. "Yet the text with Hecate is the only one we have, the one Shakespeare's troupe treated as authoritative when they included it in the Folio. If they felt it inferior, why did they print it?" As Wills points out, *Macbeth* as it existed in the early modern period, when it formed a part of larger trends of representations of witches in drama, included the Hecate scenes. Therefore, this study will include these scenes in its examination of developments in witchcraft stereotypes, especially as they relate to the mythic witches, Circe and Medea, who have strong connections to Hecate in myth. Later in this study the effects of the removal of these scenes from modern editions will be seen in Pratchett's parody of *Macbeth* and the importance of the 'three' witches motif in the Discworld witch novels.

In *Macbeth*, we can witness an amalgamation of witch 'types' (mythic, and historical), similar to that found in characters like Spenser's Duessa. As Macbeth says in the same speech in which he encounters the infamous dagger, "Witchcraft celebrates / Pale Hecate's offerings," (*Macbeth*, 2.1.51-52) reminding the audience of Hecate's status as Goddess of Witches, and implying that murder is something that would please her. He again associates Hecate with murder at 3.2.41-44, where he cryptically tells Lady Macbeth of his plans for Banquo and Fleance. Hecate is however not just the Goddess of Witches; she is also a goddess of the moon, the night, ghosts, necromancy, and magic more generally. As an old goddess, she has many and varied myths, and while she is associated with the dead, murder was something more often directly linked to her Priestess (or relative) Medea. Many elements that have gone on to become part of witchcraft stereotypes have their source in the myths of Hecate, and her relatives and fellow witches, Circe and

Medea. These include animals such as bats, owls, dogs, the moon, and night, the Underworld, crossroads, ghosts, the liminal and control of the weather. Potions, poisons, usurpation and transformations, particularly into animals, are all associated with these three classical witches, which brings us to one of the most important parts of representations of Hecate, her Tripartite form. Hecate, on her own, embodies the three stages of womanhood now so strongly connected to witchcraft, the maiden, the mother, and the crone. She also arguably forms a triad with the two other witches from classical myths, with Circe being the sexually appealing, single maiden, Medea, the (murderous) mother, and Hecate as an older goddess (and sometimes ancestress to the other two) is the crone. The number three has a long association with Hecate, and therefore witches. Ovid's Medea is represented as both a witch and a priestess of Hecate, and she uses the number three repeatedly in her spells.[15] Shakespeare's witches, as well as appearing in groups of three, also use it in their spells: "Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / And thrice again to make up nine. / Peace! The charm's wound up," (*Macbeth*, 1.3.33-35). Another Hecatean trope associated with Medea in myths, is her ability to appear as an old woman or Hag, something that is also a feature of witches in English folklore and trials, as well as Shakespeare's "weird" sisters.[16]

It has been often noted that the 'witches' in Macbeth refer to themselves as "weird," "weyard," or "wayward" sisters depending on which spelling an editor chooses to adopt. These words are potentially derived from the Old English term "wyrd" which means "fate" and, less directly, is related to the Norns, the three Norse goddesses of destiny.[17] As such, the three figures were more likely to be presented as attractive maidens (as pictured in Holinshed), than as Banquo describes them:

> …… What are these,
>
> So withered, and so wild in their attire,

> That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth
>
> And yet are on't?—Live you, or are you aught
>
> That man may question? You seem to understand me
>
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
>
> Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
>
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
>
> That you are so.
>
> (*Macbeth*, 1.3.37)

Above, is one of the most frequently quoted sections in relation to the witches in *Macbeth*, and for good reason, as it demonstrates the ineffable nature of these 'women'. It also has several elements pertinent to witch stereotypes. They are Hag-like in appearance while also being indeterminate in gender, their beards implying that they are masculine women or very old. They are monstrous in appearance, which brings their humanity and mortality into question. Their otherworldliness demonstrates the possibility that they do not get their Hag-like appearance only from the witches of English folklore, but also from their patron, the goddess Hecate in her crone aspect. The idea of witches being Hags, or old women, was not a new one in the early modern period. We can even find it in some versions of the Medea myths, as there she disguises herself as an old woman in order to lull people into a false sense of security or to trick them.[18] The idea of the sorceress being an ugly old woman who disguises herself as a beautiful young woman to trap men (such as Spenser's Duessa), or of beautiful goddesses who disguise themselves as old women to test men, are both well attested in myth and folklore.[19]

Hecate herself calls the three witches, "beldams," glossed as "hags" in the Norton edition (*Macbeth*, 3.5.2). It is notable that this scene with Hecate is one of the "problem" scenes often left out of modern performances (*Macbeth*, 3.5). It does however demonstrate

the influence of both classical witches such as Circe and Medea, including predicting the future, and the use of spells and charms, and influences from early modern witch pamphlets and cases, such as, anointing oneself to be able to fly (which was more common amongst Scottish and European witches) and feeding animal-like familiar spirits blood. A Circean influence appears in the part of A Spirit like a Cat. As a speaking part, a man dressed as a cat, possibly exhibiting a disturbing animal hybridity for an audience unused to such things, would have presumably performed the role. Animals are repeatedly mentioned in conjunction with the witches in *Macbeth*, particularly those associated with Hecate and Medea in myths, like owls, bats, toads, dogs, and the more exotic animals associated with Circe, like tigers. These include the witches' familiars that appear in the very first scene of the play (a cat and a toad), reinforcing the connection between these Circean and Medean animals and witch stereotypes. Another animal associated with Circe is pigs, so it is not surprising that one witch proclaims that she has been "killing swine" (*Macbeth*, 1.3.2) as the *Odyssey* implies Circe usually does with her transformed men.[20] Act 1, Scene 3, also rehearses other skills possessed by Circe and Medea, including controlling the weather and destroying men, as well as those connected to Scottish witches, such as sailing in a sieve; and all witches like revenge.

While Macbeth has many elements of early modern English witchcraft belief, we also see some features that were more commonly believed in Scotland and Europe entering drama at this time, largely thanks to a renewed interest in King James' *Daemonologie* with his ascension to the English Throne. These include the above-mentioned sieve sailing, and a greater emphasis on demonic pacts, such as are found in the 1591 pamphlet *Newes From Scotland*, a woodcut from which, featuring a cauldron, is often reproduced in discussions of early modern witchcraft.[21] The image of the cauldron was not strongly associated with historical witches at the start of the early modern period in England, but the appearance of

a cauldron in conjunction with a witch, would not have been new to anyone familiar with Ovid's or Seneca's Medea. As Harris observes:

> Lady Macbeth has elements in common with both Medea and Clytemnestra and the contents of the Weird Sister's cauldron also seem to have been derived in part from Studley's version of *Medea*. The cauldron sequence also borrows from Lucan and from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VII, and it is therefore not surprising if the Sisters exhibit a combination of characteristics—human and supernatural, Classical and contemporary. In this they conform to the pattern of many such creations and it is dangerous to attempt to limit their natures to any single form.[22]

It is arguably the cauldron scene in *Macbeth* that cemented the image of the cauldron with the image of the witch in English literature. Previously in literature, its primary association with witchcraft was with Medea; and depending on the version of her myth, it was used predominantly to make potions (that could either heal or harm), and it was not strictly associated with 'bad' magic. In Act 4, Scene 1, the potion made in the cauldron is not used for rejuvenation, as Medea's was, but rather incorporates another skill of classical witches, prophecy, in this instance by summoning spirits. The potion the witches are making has impossible ingredients like dragon, and many human body parts, including the finger of a "birth-strangled babe" (*Macbeth*, 4.1.30).[23] The infanticide involved in the creation of the latter is a strong Medean symbol, and witches' desire for infants to use in their spells became a common feature of witches in literature, despite its relative absence from historical accounts within England.[24] Their conjuration also features the number three,

which featured in Ovidian Medea's spell castings, with which this scene has strong similarities.

The evidence of revisions, including the additional witches and Hecate at 4.1.39-60, complicates the cauldron scene in *Macbeth*. As I have noted above, modern productions frequently remove these lines, and while they may seem redundant, including as they do the repetition of ingredients already placed in the cauldron, they contain references to early modern witch beliefs that are otherwise not evident in the play. Hecate asks the witches to "now about the cauldron sing / Like elves and fairies in a ring, / Enchanting all that you put in," (*Macbeth*, 4.1.41-43). As Briggs and Purkiss (among others) have noted, the blending of fairy and witch beliefs was fairly wide spread during the early modern period.[25] The revisions also feature more 'homegrown' witch traits, with lots of English sounding familiar spirits, like Tiffin and Robin. The larger number of witches and the carnivalesque nature of the song and dance, reflect the belief in witches' Sabbaths in Scottish accounts of witches that were relatively unheard of in English trials. Part of the reason the Hecate scenes are regularly excised is the problem of ambience. Modern directors have difficulties deciding what to do with witches who dance and sing for no obvious reason (to modern eyes at least), and are therefore not as ominous and threatening as the three Hag-witches we encounter at the start of the play. Their redundancy in many ways makes them humorous, and this concept will be explored further later in this study in relation to other cauldron scenes in Jacobean drama. Modern audiences are encouraged by productions that exclude these scenes, to take more interest in a human witch figure, Lady Macbeth.

As has been argued by several critics, and quite convincingly by Inga-Stina Ewbank, Lady Macbeth has many similarities to Seneca's Medea.[26] These similarities are to be found in the two most frequently referenced sections of the play involving Lady Macbeth, the "unsex me here" scene (*Macbeth*, 1.5.36-52) and the infanticide reference she

makes when saying she has the courage of her convictions (*Macbeth*, 1.7.45-59). In Seneca, Medea invokes Hecate to help harden her resolve to commit murder; in Shakespeare; Lady Macbeth invokes "spirits" to do the same, even offering them her breasts, a traditional symbol of feminine nurture, to suckle like a familiar. The spirits, however, do not come, as she has no recourse to magic like others in the play (including her husband), and she *is* therefore racked by remorse, leading to her sleepwalking and death. On the journey to her tragic end, Lady Macbeth exhibits characteristics found in Medea figures, such as her unwomanly behaviour, and fiery temper. She also utilises potions as she, "drugged [the guards'] possets" (*Macbeth*, 2.2.6), making sure that they will not disturb Macbeth in his task, thus bearing similarities to Medea assisting Jason with the Dragon. This potion also has a Circean undertone, "When in swinish sleep / Their drenchèd natures lies as in a death," (*Macbeth*, 1.7.67-8). Circe's Cup was commonly referenced in relation to drunkenness during the early modern period, especially when drunkenness resulted in a dereliction of manly duties or beastly behaviour.[27] "That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold." (*Macbeth*, 2.2.1). Like Lucifera in Spenser, Lady Macbeth is also a Circean figure affected by her own dangerous devices. Also, like Lucifera and other dangerous women in Spenser, Lady Macbeth combines several Circean and Medean attributes but ultimately has no power, except the seductive power she holds over her husband.

Despite the stereotyping of witches as ugly old women, during the early modern period, up to approximately one quarter of accused witches in England were men. Garry Wills argues, "[t]hat Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a witch is apparent from the Medea-speech he gives to him. The language is used, elsewhere, *only* by witches (including the "white witch," Prospero)."[28] Although we must note, he is addressing the lines to the Medean weird sisters, suggesting that even though they can do all the things he lists, he can still command them. Not only is Macbeth's conjuring speech based on one by Medea, he,

like Medea, is also guilty of infanticide. Unlike Medea, who performs the deed herself, Macbeth is one-step removed from the act, ordering the murders of Macduff's children (*Macbeth*, 4.1.166-69). E.J. Kent explores the connection between tyrants and male witches and I agree that Macbeth's ambition and tyrannical acts such as his murder of children, reinforce his identification as a male witch.[29] As Wills has noted, Macbeth has several marks indicating he is, in effect, a male witch, or magician. Macbeth "conjures" the witches to tell him his future (*Macbeth*, 4.1.66), and because of what he sees, he believes, "I bear a charmèd life, which must not yield / To one of woman born," (*Macbeth*, 5.10.12-13). This charm or believed charm is reminiscent of Medea's protective charms she gives Jason when he is facing the challenges set by her father. Here such a charm does not help Macbeth, as it was a trick of the witches to give him false confidence. Macbeth is aware that in choosing to kill Duncan while he is a guest in his home he has added to his guilt. In doing so, Macbeth is similar to Medea's father Aeetes, who executed all strangers who came to Colchis, and Circe who worked her magic on all visitors who came to her island (*Macbeth*, 1.7.13-16). After the deed is done, Macbeth puts on the trappings of royal power, and at the end of the play, he calls for his "staff" which is glossed in the Norton edition as a "lance" (*Macbeth*, 5.3.48). Despite a resurgence in the popularity of jousting during the early modern period, lance is a less likely meaning of the word than "a staff of office", or even as Wills suggests, "a magic staff".[30] Unlike many other early modern male magic workers who have a staff, Macbeth is evil, and therefore his magical connections, including his perceived charm, are destined to fail him.

Throughout *Macbeth*, attributes of the three classical witches, but particularly Medea, feature in numerous characters, including the weird sisters, helping to cement the stereotype of the Hag witch, in conjunction with the motif of a cauldron full of disgusting ingredients. Not surprisingly, the murderous usurpers, Macbeth and his wife, bear many similarities to the ambitious murderess, Medea. "Macbeth sees no contradiction in using

classical concepts to address the hags. In fact, "folk" and classical motifs mix in all the dramatic treatments of witches in 1606—for a very good reason: Those who believed in witchcraft thought it was a permanent feature of history, ever since its master tempted Eve in Eden."[31] However, as has been noted by many critics, it is Macbeth and his Lady who bear the punishment for their transgressions, and not the witches he consults. The lack of punishment for the weird sisters (with their questionable humanity), makes more sense if they were considered to be closer to their classical sources, the goddess like witches, Circe, Medea and Hecate, than they were to the old women burnt in Scotland for supposedly similar treasonous activities. Despite what texts such as the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and King James's *Daemonologie* would have people believe, the beliefs (and methods of prosecution and punishment of witches, both female and male) were far from uniform in early modern England, which allowed some space for 'white' magic workers.

Types of Magic in *The Tempest*

According to Harris, "[King] James's main objection to theurgy was its reliance on spirits to effect its unnatural powers and there is no doubt that, however benevolent might be the ends to which Prospero employs his 'Art', he performs his magical deeds with the aid of spirits."[32] Although Prospero repeatedly refers to his magic as his "art" (*Tempest*, 1.2.1, 28, 293), probably in an attempt to distance himself from 'witchcraft', if one pays attention to what he does in the play, as opposed to just what he says, it is evident his actions are frequently malevolent. He performs the role of a benevolent mage, but it is just that, a performance. As several critics have noted, Prospero's oft referenced, "I'll drown my book" speech towards the end of the play, bears striking similarities to one by Ovid's Medea in Golding's 1567 translation.[33] Harris also points out that, "the speakers of the parallel passages in *The Witch* and *The Masque of Queenes* are undoubtedly witches, practitioners of 'black' magic. Such literary associations are a clear indication of the

culpable nature of the magical practices that Prospero reviews."[34] However, thanks to the many texts produced since the early modern period featuring older male magic workers as benevolent wizards (including Fantasy novels), modern audiences probably go to performances of *The Tempest* expecting to see a 'good wizard'.

Prospero presents himself, from his very first appearance on stage, dressed as we now expect of wizards, "[*in his magic cloak, with a staff*]" (*Tempest*, 1.2 stage directions). "Both Dekker and Barnes show the conjunction of papal and witch-like powers in the wizard's cloak. … Another attribute of the wizard is his wand, or staff, or rod—the wand we see Faustus wield in the illustration to the 1616 Quarto, the staff Mephistopheles wields at B3.2.16; the staff Prospero must break when he abjures his magic (*Tempest*, 5.1.54), the rod that Merlin uses to quell his enemies in *The Birth of Merlin*."[35] Wills clearly considers wands and staffs to be objects for male magic users within the traditions of the early modern stage. One of the only instances of Prospero using magic directly within the play is when Ferdinand "*is charmed from moving*" (*Tempest*, 1.2.469 stage directions), and Prospero insists, "I can here disarm thee with this stick" (*Tempest*, 1.2.476). Meaning, as the gloss suggests, Prospero is utilising a "magician's wand" to perform magic. Presumably, he brought this object of power with him to the island (although it may have belonged to Sycorax), and he uses it to threaten Ariel that he will imprison the spirit again using transformational magic. We never discover within the play the origins of the magic cloak (which he uses to go invisible) or the staff; however, we do know that Prospero brought his magic books with him to the island, and Caliban stresses the importance of the books to Prospero's magic (*Tempest*, 3.2.82-92). It could be argued that Prospero used the knowledge he had gained from his "secret studies" (*Tempest*, 1.2.77) to summon Ariel out of Sycorax's tree prison and that all subsequent magic he performs, is with the aid of the Circean spirit, Ariel.

Prospero, not unlike Oberon with his Puck, utilises a spirit to change the world magically so that it is more to his liking. Puck and Ariel have many similarities: "They can both travel with superhuman speed, assume various forms or become invisible. They can imitate human voices and they use all these arts to tantalise their mortal victims."[36] It is unclear what type of spirit Ariel is, but similarities with an acknowledged fairy such as Puck make a simple identification as a demon difficult. Prospero, Ariel and the other spirits even perform a version of a wild hunt, something associated with fairies, not wizards (*Tempest*, 4.1.252-57). Add to this the nature of the magic Ariel uses against Caliban and his cohorts, which is full of pinching and trickery, as well as their identification of Ariel as a 'Fairy', and what type of spirit Ariel is, becomes as clear as mud.[37] Ariel's indeterminate nature reflects the differences between demonologies and popular beliefs during the early modern period; but most importantly, this opens up a space for Ariel to be a more complex character.

This complexity involves many Circean characteristics (another similarity with Puck) including singing, here setting the scene for Ferdinand and Miranda to meet and fall in love (*Tempest*, 1.2.377-411). While elsewhere in the play Ariel produces music, he does not use it to entrap people in the manner Circe does in *The Odyssey*: he uses it to transform them metaphorically. "So I charmed their ears / That *calf-like* they my lowing followed, through / Toothed briars, sharp furzes, pricking gorse, and thorns," (*Tempest*, 4.1.178-80 emphasis mine). Ariel's task is made easier, as they had earlier partaken of Circe's Cup and "were red-hot with drinking," (*Tempest*, 4.1.171). Caliban also fears that Ariel will, on Prospero's behalf, use transformational magic and that they would, "all be turned into barnacles, or to apes" (*Tempest*, 4.1.245), all of which Ariel can achieve without a wand, or staff, such as Prospero possesses. Prospero does present himself as having some of Circe's more positive attributes, such as control over the weather: "I'll deliver all, / And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales, / And sail so expeditious that shall catch / Your

royal fleet far off. [*Aside to* ARIEL] My Ariel, chick, / That is thy charge. Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well," (*Tempest*, 5.1.317-22). As this final order to Ariel shows, just like the opening tempest which gives the play its name, it is not Prospero who directly controls the weather; it is Ariel who does for the Italians, what Circe did for Odysseus and his crew, providing good weather with which to leave the island.

Caliban, for one, does not care how the magic works; he simply considers Prospero as powerful as a god (*Tempest*, 1.2.375-77). It is clear that many times throughout the years that Prospero has been on the island, he has used Ariel as a means to torment Caliban in a manner with Circean echoes. Prospero transforms Caliban using pain so that he roars like a beast (*Tempest*, 1.2.372-74). Prospero presents himself as an all-powerful director of the action on the island, claiming power over the smallest of Ariel's actions (*Tempest*, 3.3.83-93). The vanishing banquet scene that precedes these lines demonstrates the grab-bag nature of the magic and myths utilised by Shakespeare in the production of this play (unicorns and the Phoenix even get a mention). The monstrous spirits can be seen as devils, which casts Prospero in the role of the Devil presiding over a witches Sabbath. Alternatively, they can be considered Fairies, which appears to be Alonso's belief, as he initially refuses to eat, which would be quite wise if it is indeed a Fairy feast.[38] However, they do not get the chance to eat, as Ariel descends like a harpy, channelling classical myths, and the banquet vanishes (*Tempest*, 3.3.18-83). The stage directions in this scene are as important as the spoken lines. They are filled with 'stage magic', making things appear and disappear, spirits flying, music coming from behind the scenes. This scene demonstrates some of the changing trends in theatrical practice. Magic was much easier to stage by the time *The Tempest* was produced than it was just fifteen years earlier when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was first performed, and this could in some ways explain the increase in magical effects used in Shakespeare's later plays. Magical and mythical elements had long been associated with early modern masques, with their higher budgets

and different staging possibilities. It is therefore not surprising that Prospero, the director of magical affairs on the island would put on a pageant full of mythological figures to celebrate his daughter's pending marriage, a common reason for court masques (*Tempest*, 4.1.60-143). He cuts it short, however, to get on with punishing the 'rebels'.

"As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island," (*Tempest*, 3.2.40-41). Caliban sees himself as a deposed ruler; however, as Prospero is in control, he also controls the story told about the island's history. It is therefore not unexpected that Prospero presents Caliban as an inhuman and ungrateful rebel and his mother Sycorax as a whorish Hag witch. The fact that Prospero never met Sycorax, and has most of his knowledge of her from Ariel and the remainder from Caliban, is glossed over in the text, as Prospero presents himself as the expert on Sycorax, who needs to remind Ariel what she was like:

> This damned witch Sycorax,
> For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible
> To enter human hearing, from Algiers
> Thou know'st was banished. For one thing she did
> They would not take her life.
>
> (*Tempest*, 1.2.265-69)

Of course, the 'thing she did', implied loose sexuality, demonic even, if Prospero's later insults of Caliban are to be believed.[39] "This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child," (*Tempest*, 1.2.270), he says. One could consider that being of child-bearing age would make it difficult for her to be a Hag, in the sense of an old woman. We might consider that Prospero was using the term in its other early modern sense meaning 'a witch' generally, except that Prospero had already described her as, "[t]he foul witch Sycorax, who with age

and envy / Was grown into a hoop?" (*Tempest*, 1.2.259-60). Although she may have been Hag like by the time she died, as we are not told how old Caliban is, this confusion is most likely an indicator that Prospero is an unreliable narrator, who chooses to vilify a woman he has never met, in order to distance his own behaviour from hers.

Prospero has reason to distance himself from Sycorax, as much of the magic they practice is the same. Prospero de-humanises Caliban and Sycorax: "Save for the son that she did litter here, / A freckled whelp, hag-born—not honoured with / A human shape" (*Tempest*, 1.2.284-86). However, one can piece together from the many references to Sycorax throughout the play that she was indeed quite a powerful witch, in the style of the classical witches, Circe and Medea, with whom she had obvious affinities.[40] She also bears similarities to Spenser's Duessa, another amalgam of Classical and early modern witch tropes (sometimes a Hag, but always dangerous), who like Sycorax imprisoned someone in the form of a tree (*Tempest*, 1.2.271-294). Her Medean attributes are numerous, many of which she shares with the witches of *Macbeth*, "[a]ll the charms / Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you," (*Tempest*, 1.2.342-43). All of these animals have become common ingredients in witches' potions and spells in early modern drama, and have similarities to Ovid's Medea.[41] She also shares with those witches, Medea's ability to control the moon and tides:

> … This misshapen knave,
> His mother was a witch, and one so strong
> That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
> And deal in her command without her power.
> These three have robbed me, and this demi-devil,
> For he's a bastard one, had plotted with them
> To take my life. Two of these fellows you

Must know and own. This thing of darkness I

Acknowledge mine.

(*Tempest*, 5.1.270-79)

Shakespeare here combines Sycorax's magical powers with a reminder of her Circean (or even demonic) sexuality: her illegitimate son. Prospero demonstrates his perception of Caliban's inhumanity and his treachery, after thoroughly humiliating him via Ariel's treatment of him and his co-conspirators, as they stand there smelling like horse piss.[42] Caliban despite being a failed rapist and failed murderer is ultimately not presented as a dangerous figure; he is an object of ridicule. Caliban shares some of the classical witch attributes of his mother, but without any of her magical powers. His link to Medea is to her desire for revenge, but even this he does not have the strength to act on himself, suggesting instead that his co-conspirators should slit Prospero's throat (*Tempest*, 3.2.82-92). Meanwhile, the Circean nature of the Island in general forms a significant part of Caliban's comic subplot.

Caliban, Trinculo and Stefano are constantly in Circe's Cup, or drunk. The comic subplot abounds in Circean imagery such as when the drunken Stefano mistakes Caliban and Trinculo for, "some monster of the isle with four legs" (*Tempest*, 2.2.62), which he plans on taming (much as Circe would), using his wine (*Tempest*, 2.2.71-74). Meanwhile, poor Caliban is so used to being tormented; he thinks that Trinculo and Stefano are just another of Prospero's tricks. They are not the only ones aware of the island's Circean nature; "Even now we heard a hollow burst of bellowing, / Like bulls, or rather lions. Did't not wake you?" (*Tempest*, 2.1.307-8). Sebastian uses what people expect from mysterious islands, gathered from descriptions of Circe's island in such sources as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey*, to explain why he is armed.

The setting of *The Tempest*, on a strange and unknown island, opens up the types of magic possible, as had Golding's 'Englishings' of the classical witches, Circe and Medea. One of the most notable is the conflation of fairies, with spirits and witches, as we see most clearly in Ariel. Arguably, a fairy, Ariel indulges in many magical acts associated with those creatures during the early modern period such as pinching and leading travellers astray, while also using Circean-style transformational magic, such as appearing as mythic figures, including a sea nymph and a harpy. As a male magician, Prospero attempts to define himself against the dangerous 'classical' witch Sycorax, denying that he seeks revenge, while at the same time orchestrating an intricate plot in which his enemies think they have lost everything they hold dear. Even as Prospero undoes the spell to bring his enemies back to their senses, or right minds, he is mocking them. At the implied end of his magic, he takes off his wizard robe and dresses himself as the Duke of Milan again (*Tempest*, 5.1.57-87). As Harris has pointed out, Prospero's magic, "must be placed in the context of the established tradition of the dramatic portrayal of magicians and conjurors, for Shakespeare was working with absolute consistency within this form."[43] Prospero, for all of the attributes he shares with 'classical' witches, he also shares many of the Circean and Medean traits with previous mages, and is at the pinnacle of the wizard stereotype in the early modern period.

Section 2: Is that supposed to be Magic? Magic and Perceptions.

Falstaff plays a Witch in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Another male character in Shakespeare, who presents with witch-like attributes, albeit in a very different way from Prospero, is Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, in Falstaff's disguise as "the witch of Brentford," we see a very English style of witch, embedded in a play about jealousy.

> FORD A witch, a quean, an old, cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? We are simple men; we do not know what's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by the figure, and such daubery as this is, beyond our element. We know nothing—Come down, you witch, you hag, you! Come down I say!
>
> (*MWofW*, 4.2.149-55)

Falstaff's disguise presents him as a Hag witch of indeterminate gender, similar to the 'weird sisters' who appear in the later play, *Macbeth*. "By Jeshu, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed. I like not when a 'oman has a great peard. I spy a great peard under his muffler," (*MWofW*, 4.2.167-69). According to Evans, a bearded woman must be a witch; however, he is thoroughly confused as to the gender of the person he sees before him. As has been made clear earlier in this study, partly thanks to reinterpretations of Circe—including Spenser's Acrasia and Duessa—prostitution and loose sexuality were firmly linked with witch figures during the early modern period. It is also evident from the "cozening quean" reference above that Shakespeare had no problem combining the image of the ugly old Hag style of witch with the sexually dangerous (and traditionally beautiful) Circean witch, as he also does this with Sycorax in *The Tempest.* Simple, as his name suggests, has a different understanding of magic from Ford's. He calls the old woman of Brentford a 'wise woman', not a witch, implying she is a cunning woman, seeking her help finding a stolen item, and asking about his master's success in courting—both traditional jobs for a cunning woman (*MWofW*, 4.5.21-6, 37-8). Much as in the case of Sycorax, the exaggerated style of the insults is telling, with Ford insulting this 'woman' he hates to such a degree despite not knowing her well enough to recognise that 'she' is, in fact, Falstaff in

disguise. "Out of my door, you witch, you rag, you baggage, you polecat, you runnion! Out, out! I'll conjure you, I'll fortune-tell you!" (*MWofW*, 4.2.162-63). Ford's misogyny in this section is quite clear, as he hurls many gender-based insults (particularly revolving around her sexual incontinence), at this "old woman," before beating "her". He presents her as the worst type of woman, unruly, unattractive, old, yet still sexually voracious, and he primarily identifies her as a witch.

Falstaff's other performance of the supernatural comes at the end of the play when he presents himself as Herne the Hunter. Mistress Quickly (a lower class woman of questionable sexual morals), plays the Fairy Queen, a Welshman (the Welsh were sometimes considered effeminate) is a satyr, and children dress as fairies running around with candles with which to punish Falstaff. It is clear that the fairy pageant the wives direct represent a far different kind of fairy from the kind that Falstaff understands. "They are fairies. He that speaks to them shall die. / I'll wink and couch; no man their works must eye," (*MWofW*, 5.5.44-5). That is the kind of fairy to be found in ballads and folklore at the start of the early modern period.[44] Such fairies are even very different from the land-blighting and marriage-bed-blessing Titania and Oberon of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This 'performance' within the play demonstrates the larger trends, in the early modern period, of presenting supernatural creatures (that are no longer perceived as threatening) humorously. This will be examined in more detail in relation to Pratchett's representation of Elves and Fairies later in my study. These fairies are all about maintaining social order and rewarding the good and punishing the bad in a thoroughly domestic manner, thereby acting as a means for the wives' revenge against Falstaff.

Much as Ford misinterprets the 'woman' he encounters as the witch of Brentford, so too does Falstaff in the cases of Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, who represent within the play the opposite of what Ford considers the witch of Brentford to be. Falstaff suggests that Mistress Page has fiery eyes, like Circean and Medean figures: "[T]he appetite of her

eye did seem to scorch / me up like a burning-glass", he says. He suggests that like them, she will be an easy sexual conquest, but he judges incorrectly (*MWofW*, 1.3.57-58). Mistress Page desires revenge for Falstaff's presumption of her sexual availability and therefore insult to her honour (*MWofW*, 2.1.26-27). She desires revenge, but for a 'good' feminine reason. After their second trick on Falstaff and his beating in the guise of the witch of Brentford, Mistress Ford asks, "What think you—may we, with the warrant of womanhood / and the witness of good conscience, pursue him / with any further revenge?" (*MWofW*, 4.2.179-81). The two wives, Ford and Page, undertake something usually associated with witches like Medea, seeking revenge by using trickery. But, because they perform these acts to discourage Falstaff's unchaste behaviour, thereby preserving social order, and are careful not to exceed acceptable womanly behaviour (at least in regards to Falstaff), they are not Medean witches but, rather, good wives. This reversal is to be expected in a play that could be described as a revenge comedy.[45] The minor characters such as Evans and Caius, humorously put aside their differences to seek revenge against the Host of the Garter for thwarting their duel (*MWofW*, 3.1.99-102), adding another layer to this theme. However, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, revenge is only served to those who deserve to be punished, such as Falstaff.

The Wise-woman of *The Winter's Tale*

In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes seeks revenge; however, his revenge is not justified, as the crimes he accuses his wife and friend of are figments of his imagination. After Mamillius his son and heir dies, Paulina outlines Leontes' crimes, or at least the ones he wanted to commit. These include the murder of his infant daughter, poisoning of his friend, and causing the death of his faithful wife and their son by slandering and imprisoning her (*WT*, 3.2.173-200). He was motivated by the Medean emotion of jealousy, and this would have led to other Medean behaviours, including infanticide and poisoning, except that, unlike

Medea, he chose not to carry out his revenge personally and is thereby saved from his own tyrannical desires by servants who choose to serve his best interests, rather than follow his commands. Despite all his Medean behaviour, he is never described as a witch, or accused of using magic: that is reserved for the women of the play, including the wise-woman Paulina, who helps him to see through his jealousy-induced madness.

Leontes' Medean madness, acts as a foil to the woman he accuses of being a witch, Paulina: "Out! / A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o'door— / A most intelligencing bawd," (*WT*, 2.3.67-69). Leontes calls Paulina a manly witch, and in the next breath, a bawd, or an enabler of illicit sex, combining a Medean attribute and a Circean one in his accusations. After Paulina compares Leontes' slanders of the Queen to "a curse" (*WT*, 2.3.88), he turns his slanders against her: "A callat / of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband," (*WT*, 2.3.91-92). Callat is glossed as a scold or a harlot, but since a woman's sexual reputation is usually involved when insulting one, it is not surprising that this word has no clear interpretation. Leontes also calls her a Hag: "A gross hag!— / And lozel, thou art worthy to be hanged, / That wilt not stay her tongue," (*WT*, 2.3.108-09). Antigonus responds that if the King hanged all the husbands who could not control their wives' tongues, he would not have any subjects left. The gist of his insults is that she is an unwomanly woman, who is not ruled by her husband, but who instead rules him—but the language of witchcraft is utilised throughout.[46]

Of course, like his slanders of Hermione, Leontes' accusations of witchcraft against Paulina are also false. She is arguably, one of the few representations of a wise- or cunning-woman (or a good witch) in early modern drama. Paulina is, however, a Lady, not a class usually associated with cunning-women, but she still performs several functions of a cunning-woman. Like a mid-wife, she attests to the paternity of Hermione's child and vouches for her honesty. She also seeks to 'cure' Leontes' madness with the truth, (*WT*, 2.3.37-39). She describes herself as: "Myself your loyal servant, your physician, / Your

most obedient counsellor," (*WT*, 2.3.54-55). She presents herself as one who heals; however, she does so without medicines or potions but with words. She is initially unsuccessful in her attempts to counsel Leontes, who even refuses to listen to Apollo's oracle until he learns his son has died; his belief in the evil, witchlike nature of the women around him is so strong.

Parts of Leontes' accusations against his wife, Hermione, reflect anxieties surrounding witchcraft and maternity.[47] However, within the play, there are several examples of witchcraft accusations levelled at women simply because a man in power does not like what they say or do. An obvious example is Leontes' railing against Paulina, strongly connecting her with a Hag type of witch. Another is Perdita, accused of being a more Circean-style of witch by her prospective father-in-law, Polixenes: "And thou, fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know / The royal fool thou cop'st with—" (*WT*, 4.4.410-12). When Polixenes takes off his disguise, he also displays his true feelings. Prior to that, he was singing Perdita's praises, and now his son wants to marry her, she is a scheming witch. "And you, enchantment, / Worthy enough a herdsman" (*WT*, 4.4.422-23) he says. However, much like his friend Leontes concerning Hermione, Polixenes is mistaken in his assumptions regarding Perdita, for she is not of low birth, and she does not try to trap Florizel, as would a Circean witch.

Since the men in this play are so willing to believe that magic affects their lives, it is not surprising that Paulina stages a "magical" resurrection of Hermione. The text is unclear as to whether Paulina does use magic, or if it is all just a trick. Hence her not wanting people to touch the statue of Hermione because the paint is wet (*WT*, 5.3.47-8) and her suggestion: "No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy / May think anon it moves," (*WT*, 5.3.60-61). Whether Hermione's "restoration," is magic or just a trick (which of course seems more obviously to be so), it is certainly a performance. Hermione begins to stir after a musical queue (*WT*, 5.3.98), and Paulina instructs her initial actions: "I'll make

the statue move indeed, descend, / And take you by the hand. But then you'll think— / Which I protest against—I am assisted / By wicked powers," (*WT*, 5.3.88-91). Paulina implies that if she re-animates Hermione, they will think she is in league with the devil: "You hear my spell is lawful," (*WT*, 5.3.105). Paulina's magic comes from words, which is very different from the very physical nature of Medea's rejuvenation magic that she uses to bring Aeson back to life. Paulina has no cauldron, no knife, or wand. It makes it easier to believe, as we are repeatedly told, "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (*WT*, 5.3.109-11). Prior to King James' modifications to the witchcraft statutes in 1604, Paulina's actions may have been lawful, even if they were magical. She does not intend to defraud, or commit maleficium and, as Hermione says, she has "preserved / Myself to see the issue" (*WT*, 5.3.28-29). No necromancy was involved as she was never dead. Yet how exactly she was preserved is still unclear.

Magic and Medicine

The line between magic and medicine was often blurred during the early modern period, as it had been at many stages throughout history. So it is in the myths of Circe and Medea, who were very knowledgeable about drugs. This witch attribute can be quite a positive force, as we can see in the character of Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Helen has many similarities with Medea in particular, including that she falls in love with an unworthy young man who does not love her. She inherits the ability to heal from her father, both with medicines he has left and his notes, and presumably her own knowledge of his practice (*AWEW*, 1.3.206-16); in this, she differs from Medea who gains her knowledge from female relatives. Helen is presented as a female doctor, not as a witch, even if she can cure that which the 'doctors' say is beyond a natural ability to cure (*AWEW*, 2.1.101-22). Helen is a 'good' young woman, as recognised by the King (*AWEW*, 2.1.174-85). He also suggests that some "blessèd spirit" (*AWEW*, 2.1.174) works within

her. She is self-confessedly bold, but she is willing to back up her boldness with her life (*AWEW*, 2.1.169-73). She is ambitious but demonstrates her knowledge of limits, such as when she asks for her choice of husband as her reward yet makes it clear she does not aspire to one of royal blood (*AWEW*, 2.1.194-7). While Helen resembles a young Medea, better known for her cleverness than for murder, her chosen husband Bertram resembles Jason, who scorns her to pursue another woman. Although it is unclear why an otherwise intelligent woman such as Helen wants Bertram, in the end, her wits ultimately restore order, with a baby on the way and Bertram acknowledging their marriage. The kind of positive magic, or magic-like medicines Helen uses, is more commonly associated with male doctors or cunning-men in the early modern period.[48] One such example is Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* who, at the start of Act two scene two, discourses on the time to pick herbs and their powers. Unfortunately, for the doomed lovers, he demonstrates a greater knowledge in producing potions, than he does in making sure that people get messages.

Witchcraft and Madness in *The Comedy of Errors*

The belief in cunning-men or good male magical workers being able to help people is evident in one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, *The Comedy of Errors*, a play in which magical language is repeatedly used to explain the mundane. When they think Antipholus of Ephesus is mad or possessed, his wife and her sister consult a schoolmaster whom they call a conjurer, the "Good Doctor Pinch" (*CofE*, 4.4.42). Meanwhile, Antipholus calls him a "doting wizard" implying he is the mad one (*CofE*, 4.4.53). Doctor Pinch attempts an exorcism, which is, of course, unnecessary, but it does demonstrate the willingness of the characters in this play to attribute unusual occurrences to magic (*CofE*, 4.4.49-52). The Syracusans, Dromio and Antipholus, as strangers in a strange land, are the most prone to attributing their experiences to the supernatural of all varieties: "This is the fairy land. O

spite of spites, / We talk with goblins, oafs, and sprites. / If we obey them not, this will ensue: / They'll suck our breath or pinch us black and blue," (*CofE*, 2.2.184-92). These malevolent beings are not the benign fairies that appear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The character most likely to attribute events to magical causes is Dromio of Syracuse. He is prone to excess in his descriptions, including that of the hellish jail he believed he left his master in, with "a devil", "a fiend, a fairy" and a "wolf" for jailors (*CofE*, 4.2.33, 35, 36). Dromio's descriptions also demonstrate the lack of distinction for this servant between different forms of magic; to his mind, anyone at the prison could just as easily be a demon, a witch, or a fairy. His master Antipholus of Syracuse is more likely to blame these same occurrences on classically inspired witches, such as Circe.

After much identity confusion, Antipholus of Syracuse blames Dromio's strange behaviour on witchcraft, suggesting that it is to be expected in a place like Ephesus. There, he says, one finds, "[d]ark-working sorcerers that change the mind, / Soul-killing witches that deform the body," (*CofE*, 1.2.99-100). These lines refer to witches that change men's shapes, as Homer's Circe transformed Odysseus's men into pigs.[49] Circean themes repeatedly occur throughout the play, especially in regards to the Syracusan's interactions with women. For example: "Are you a god? Would you create me new? / Transform me, then, and to your power I'll yield," (*CofE*, 3.2.39-47). In this section, Antipholus of Syracuse refers to Luciana in terms often used in reference to Circe figures: he questions her divinity, and suggests she can transform him. He also calls her a Siren, a being long associated with Circe (*CofE*, 3.2.45-7). However, she thinks he is her brother-in-law, and far from encouraging him, believes that he must be mad. Later in the play, Antipholus of Syracuse again likens Luciana to a Siren:

> Possessed with such a gentle sovereign grace,
>
> Of such enchanting presence and discourse,

> Hath almost made me traitor to myself.
>
> But lest myself be guilty of self-wrong,
>
> I'll stop mine ears against the mermaid's song.
>
> (*CofE*, 3.2.158-62)

He had previously implied that her sister, the woman who claims to be his wife, is a common witch. Antipholus of Syracuse evidently thinks of women as witches, so his reaction to the Courtesan is not surprising. She is a witch, a devil, "the devil's dam", and a sorceress, a very different style of Circe from that with whom Antipholus associates Luciana (*CofE*, 4.3.38-74).

This play demonstrates the manifold representations of Circe possible in early modern drama, from the bewitching beauty to the dangerous sorceress, or something a bit more humorous. Dromio is the source of most of the humour associated with Circean women in this play, such as when he thinks Luciana has transformed him by calling him a snail and a slug. Antipholus suggests that in their minds, they are both transformed, and Luciana counters humorously by stating that if Dromio is changed into anything, it is an ass (*CofE*, 2.2.192-98). This is taken to another level in Dromio's interactions with Nell the kitchen-maid, whom he presents as a grotesque and unattractive Circe figure who not only seeks to make Dromio into a beast but is beastly herself (*CofE*, 3.2.85-88).

> To conclude, this drudge or diviner laid claim to me, called me Dromio, swore I was assured to her, told me what privy marks I had about me—as the mark of my shoulder, the mole in my neck, the great wart on my left arm—that I, amazed, ran from her as a witch. And I think if my breast had not been made of faith, and my heart of steel, she had transformed me to a curtal dog, and made me turn I'th' wheel.

(*CofE*, 3.2.137-144)

Dromio fears a Circean transformation into a dog and being caught in this witch's sexual clutches, but Nell is not a beautiful enchantress: she is homely, and therefore a more English style of a witch. There is no "real" magic performed by anyone in this play; however, magic is blamed for many of the misunderstandings in it. The Duke, in finding the underlying cause of the confusions says, "I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup" (*CofE*, 5.1.271), meaning that he thinks drinking too much has transformed their wits. Since there are no witches with real powers in this play, they must all be mad.

Section 3: Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know.

Dangerous Women

As has been noted elsewhere in this study, Circean and Medean attributes were frequently utilised during the early modern period in representations of 'bad' or dangerous women. These were frequently non-magical women or ineffectual magic users; nevertheless, the language of magic surrounds them. The female characters in this section share many attributes, the most notable being that they all seek political and sexual power. Despite what 'right' they may have to power, the female characters examined here, Cleopatra, Tamora, and others including Regan and Goneril are all presented as monstrous or unwomanly in the exercise of that power.

As the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra arguably had every right to rule. She, like many monarchs, including English ones, presented herself as being of divine descent. In describing her first encounter with Antony, Shakespeare presents her as a Venus-like goddess with many of the trappings of royalty that we might associate with dangerous women, such as Spenser's Lucifera and Duessa (*A&C*, 2.2.196-248). According to

Octavius, she and Antony both present themselves as royalty in a public display, only this time, it is another goddess, Isis, to whom Cleopatra is compared (*A&C*, 3.6.1-18). An addition to this type of scene is the inclusion of Cleopatra's offspring, especially the mention of their different fathers. This demonstrates her fertility; however, since it is Octavius doing the describing, this is used as an insult suggesting her promiscuity. As Cohen and others have noted, "[m]uch of the play's fascination arises from this intertwining of empire and sexuality."[50] Cleopatra's foreignness is part of her danger and her appeal, as is the case with Circe and Medea. Like other Circe figures, she is described as a personification of Pleasure, again associated with her exotic location: "I'th' East my pleasure lies", according to Antony (*A&C*, 2.3.38). Cleopatra's presentation is more diverse than there are characters to describe her; even her self-presentations can be contradictory, depending on her rhetorical mode.

When Cleopatra describes herself as, "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black, / And wrinkled deep in time" (*A&C*, 1.5.28-29), she is obviously using overblown rhetoric to suggest her fears of ageing, and no longer being of interest to Antony. Meanwhile, Antony considers her an "enchanting queen and "cunning past man's thought" (*A&C*, 1.2.117, 132). Later, he also calls her a "great fairy" (*A&C*, 4.9.12), which the Norton edition glosses as 'enchantress'. As *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrates, the language of lust and magic strongly intertwine. What is more pertinent here is how interchangeable magical figures (such as fairies, witches and goddesses) seem to be, especially since the only 'magic' Cleopatra uses, are her feminine wiles, albeit with a particularly Circean flavour:

> … But all the charms of love,
> Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip.
> Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both

> Tie up the libertine, in a field of feasts
> Keep his brain fuming; Epicurean cooks
> Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
> That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honour
> Even till a Lethe'd dullness—
>
> (*A&C*, 2.1.19-27)

Many significant elements of Circean myths appear here. Pompey suggests Cleopatra uses witchcraft, as well as feasts of rich food and wine, to keep Antony in an altered state, which is also reminiscent of the Lotus Eaters.

The idea of Cleopatra's transforming Antony from a powerful Roman soldier into something 'other' repeatedly occurs throughout the play. As Philo states in the first Act, she has "[t]he triple pillar of the world transformed / Into a strumpet's fool" (*A&C*, 1.1.12-13). Like the knightly victims of Spenser's Acrasia, a Circean Cleopatra 'transforms' Antony from a military leader into a lover. We can add to this Cleopatra's emasculating powers: "and think / What Venus did to Mars" (*A&C*, 1.5.17-18). Just in case the audience is unaware of what Venus did to Mars, Cleopatra spells it out, "I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him whilst / I wore his sword," (*A&C*, 2.5.21-3). These aspects of Cleopatra's characterization are extant in characters from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, like Radigund and Acrasia, who took their victims' armour and made them woman-like. Here there is a combination of drinking (Circe's Cup) with gender transformations through cross-dressing, as well as failing to meet heroic ideals of masculinity. Antony's transformation is taken to the next level when he is described as "like a doting mallard," for fleeing a fight because of the "magic" sway that Cleopatra holds over him (*A&C*, 3.10.19, 18).

Antony is not the only character affected by this confusion over gender identities, even if he, "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he," (*A&C*, 1.4.5-7). The idea of the masculine woman is more often associated with Medea in myth than it is with Circe, who was more commonly associated with loose women, or whores. In this regard, Cleopatra is evidently a Circe figure, as she is repeatedly referred to as a whore throughout the play, as are her attendants (*A&C*, 1.2.68). What is emphasised in this play, however, is the political power she is said to have gained by exerting her sexual powers over Antony. "He hath given his empire / Up to a whore," and he "gives his potent regiment to a trull" (*A&C*, 3.6.66-7, 95). Even Antony joins in:

> Triple-turned whore! 'Tis thou
> Hast sold me to this novice, and my heart
> Makes only wars on thee. Bid them all fly;
> For when I am revenged upon my charm,
> I have done all.
>
> (*A&C*, 4.13.13-17)

Antony suggests Cleopatra has been disloyal to three, Caesar, Pompey and himself, and he conflates her sexual fidelity with her political allegiances.[51] In this scene, Antony uses the language of magic combined with that of misogyny to describe Cleopatra's betrayal (*A&C*, 4.13.9-49). She is the "charm" (glossed as sorceress) he seeks revenge on, and she becomes the "spell" that he was under (*A&C*, 4.13.16, 30). He even goes so far as to say, "[t]he witch shall die", making Cleopatra both the witch and the spell she produces (*A&C*, 4.13.47). Earlier in the play, Antony questions her flirtatious behaviour, claiming that when he found her, she would have been anybody's, a loose intemperate woman (*A&C*, 3.13.117-23). However, his friends wish that they could, "from the lap of Egypt's widow

pluck / The ne'er lust-wearied Antony," (*A&C*, 2.1.37). These lines provide a subtle reminder that Cleopatra murdered her brother-husband, making her a Medea figure, and it combines this with her Circean skill in keeping Antony trapped in her 'lap'.

Cleopatra shares several attributes with Circe and Medea, not least of which is an unfaithful man. Antony, like Jason, had three main women in his life; he had Fulvia, then Cleopatra, then the socially appropriate Octavia. Jason had Hippolyta, Medea, and the socially appropriate Creusa. Unlike Medea, Cleopatra is not just the woman scorned, she is also the 'other woman', which aligns with her Circean nature. Like Medea, she is the dark foreigner rejected in favour of a politically advantageous marriage.[52] Cleopatra, on hearing that Antony has married someone else certainly reacts like a vengeful Medea figure, complete with a knife, only she seeks to kill the messenger. She also calls herself mad and thinks harmless creatures will transform into serpents—thus linking two Medean attributes, jealousy and snakes, with the more Circean skill of transformation, which she, however, does not possess (*A&C*, 2.5.72-80). While Medea uses her best attire, and her crown to get her revenge on her rival, Creusa, Cleopatra merely seeks to present herself as a queen when she suicides wearing hers (*A&C*, 5.2.223-24). Another demonstration of the diminishing of power associated with Circe and Medea figures like Cleopatra is that the only escape she can achieve is by choosing her own death. Whereas Medea uses a serpent drawn chariot to flee, Cleopatra can only use a serpent to die.

Cleopatra's death reminds us of a vital difference between her and early Circean and Medean figures: she is merely mortal. It is therefore not surprising that she shares many Circean and Medean characteristics (in a reduced form) with other dangerous human women, including one we briefly looked at earlier, Lady Macbeth. These two dangerous women both desire to distance themselves from the softness and emotions associated with their gender:

> … I have nothing
> Of woman in me. Now from head to foot
> I am marble-constant. Now the fleeting moon
> No planet is of mine.
>
> (*A&C*, 5.2.234-37)

She becomes unemotional, and therefore unwomanly. Another similarity Lady Macbeth shares with Cleopatra, and with witches more generally, is the image of the monstrous mother. Commentators make much of the fact that Cleopatra puts the snake to her breast: "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?"[53] While she performs motherhood in her suicide, by doing so she left her real children undefended, essentially condemning them to death. It is interesting that Shakespeare uses the image of breastfeeding in conjunction with 'unnatural' acts in *Macbeth* as well, with Lady Macbeth's infanticide imagery used in conjunction with regicide. In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia says that Tamora's sons sucked their wickedness from her breasts before they act as Tamora's surrogate in raping and mutilating her (*Titus*, 2.3.144-45). Shakespeare uses a symbol of benevolent nurturing (unique to women), breastfeeding, and repeatedly perverts it, to present the desires of these women for revenge or power as perverted and unwomanly.

This 'unwomanly' desire for power demonstrates the problematic nature of Queenship in the early modern period.[54] Tamora was royalty in her homeland ("Queen of Goths" –see *Titus*, 1.1.139), as was Medea and as were many of the other dangerous women in drama and myths. Here it is merely a reminder of her dangerous foreignness since she is repeatedly described as barbarous. Within the play, she is also compared to Semiramis, Sirens, and other mythic women who are known for their Circean-style of dangerous sexuality (*Titus*, 2.1.22-3, 3.118). *Titus Andronicus* is full of mythical and

classical allusions, mostly from Ovid. These allusions include a myth of a murderous mother that is a central theme in the play: "For worse than Philomel you used my daughter, / And worse than Progne I will be revenged," (*Titus*, 5.2.193-194). The use of this myth is complicated and complicating, in regards to the characterization of Tamora, who has many Medean attributes. Here, she is aligned with the rapist Tereus and Titus is aligned with Progne who killed his son (and hers) and tricks him into eating him as revenge. However, Tamora is also, like Medea, a murderous mother who sends her newborn off with Aaron to be killed, because his colour was proof of her infidelity (*Titus*, 4.2.66-69). Even her "black devil" Aaron, is presented as having more compassion than Tamora, as he refuses to kill the baby, seeking to swap it for a white one instead.

Tamora epitomises the idea of the 'bad woman' in early modern literature, the only thing that prevents her from being an example of pure evil, like Spenser's Duessa, is that she does not attempt to use magic. She is unfaithful to her husband, she orders the abuse of another woman, and she seeks to kill her child. She uses her sexuality to influence political matters, and she is a, "most insatiate and luxurious woman!" (*Titus* 5.1.88). According to Lavinia, she has, "No grace, no womanhood—ah, beastly creature, / The blot and enemy to our general name," (*Titus*, 2.3.182-3). This suggests at the same time that she is not a 'woman' but rather a beast and that all women are tarnished because of ones like Tamora. Towards the end of the play, Tamora is called a "ravenous tiger," and "beastly" (*Titus*, 5.3.194, 199). This is a common thread amongst Circe and Medea figures, or dangerous women, during the early modern period. They are no longer the ones who transform men into animals; they have been transformed metaphorically into animals due to their 'unnatural' or 'unwomanly' behaviour. In Act 5 Scene 2, Tamora presents herself, in a strange scene, as Revenge personified, a fitting disguise for a Medean figure; however, by feigning madness Titus can take his own revenge against this murderous Queen. Tamora,

like most of Shakespeare's unruly women, queens included, meets her end before the play does.

Another wicked woman who dies in a Shakespearean play is the unnamed Queen in *Cymbeline*. As Susan Dunn-Hensley notes, "the imagery of the witch pervades the scenes involving the Queen."[55] She also points out that the Queen fulfils the wicked stepmother role from folk tales. Fortunately, for Innogen, the Queen has no skills or powers of her own, and the doctor knows 'her malice', reminiscent of the term maleficium, central to witchcraft cases. Therefore, he gives her a sleeping potion (common in fairy tales, to which this play has several similarities) that is ultimately a restorative, rather than the poisonous drugs she asked for (*Cymbeline*, 1.5.33-44). It is important to note, that unlike other Circean and Medean witches, this Queen does not learn her skills from other females, or get them from the devil. She has been studying distillation with the good doctor Cornelius, who evidently does not teach her as much as she would like to know (*Cymbeline*, 1.5.10-23).

This lack of knowledge on her part does not stop her from claiming Medean powers of rejuvenation for the drugs the doctor has provided for her: "It is a thing I made which hath the King / Five times redeemed from death," (*Cymbeline*, 1.5.62-3). She does so in an attempt to trick Pisano (as Medea does Pelias' daughters) into killing someone while thinking they are curing them. The Queen, like many other Medean figures in early modern literature, has Medea's murderous desires, but none of her powers. One power she does have however is the Circean ability to use her sexuality to influence a man with power. Her powers of seduction are not something her son Cloten has inherited. "That such a crafty devil as is his mother / Should yield the world this ass!" (*Cymbeline*, 2.1.49-50), we are told. The Queen and Cloten form part of a tradition of witches (or would be witches) and their loutish sons who seek to possess a virtuous young Lady. His company includes Caliban from *The Tempest*, and the Witch's son in Book Three of Spenser's *The Faerie*

Queene. Cloten attempts to use music to seduce Innogen, complete with a passage of unintended double entendres (*Cymbeline*, 2.3.10-16). He is an unsuccessful male Circe figure, unlike Innogen's husband, Posthumus who according to Giacomo is, "such a holy witch / That he enchants societies into him; / Half all men's hearts are his," (*Cymbeline*, 1.6.167-69). Despite her son's inadequacies, the Queen is a good mother, and most of her evil behaviour (like other stepmothers in folktales) attempts to improve his social station. In her dying madness, she confessed many things, including her plan to kill the King by using a slow acting poison so that she could get him to name Cloten as his heir (*Cymbeline*, 5.6.47-61). Cymbeline blames her beauty for his inability to see her wickedness, although others could, such as Innogen and the doctor.

The ability of dangerous women to mislead Kings is a common theme in Shakespeare. Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* blinds Saturninus; Cleopatra manipulated several Roman leaders, and Regan and Goneril easily deceive their father, King Lear. *King Lear* is a play about strained familial relationships, and betrayal both real and imagined. Lear sees Cordelia's refusal to play his rhetorical game of false flattery as a betrayal, making her in his mind a treacherous Medea type. Of course, her sisters are truly the Medean types of the play, with a few Circean traits as well, making them well-rounded portraits of 'bad women'. The fool calls Goneril a loose woman (*Lear*, 1.4.200), which is, of course, proved true later in the play when she plots to have her would-be lover kill her husband so she can marry him instead (*Lear*, 4.7.257-65).[56] By abdicating in favour of Regan and Goneril, King Lear gave these women power that their later actions prove they did not deserve.

The ensuing family feud, caused by a non-patrilineal succession, utilises gendered insults and themes, such as when Goneril accuses Lear's Knights of behaving disgracefully and drunkenly, describing them as little better than pigs (*Lear*, 1.4.216-21). She utilises the idea of men losing their masculinity through drinking, so often associated with Circe's cup

during the early modern period, as an excuse to reduce his train of followers. Lear himself uses the image of the witch in his railings against his two eldest daughters, calling them "wicked creatures," and "unnatural hags" (*Lear*, 2.4.251, 273). Their wickedness and unnatural behaviour are both themes associated with Medea figures. As Medea was an unruly daughter, who was also a witch, the description of these unruly daughters as witch-like is unsurprising, even though they make no recourse to magic within the play. Like Medea, they are presented as masculine women, going beyond their sex, such as when Regan uses the manly weapon of a sword to kill a servant (*Lear*, 3.7.83-85). Meanwhile, Goneril's masculine behaviour means that her more moderate husband, Albany, is presented as being the more feminine of the two with his, "milky gentleness" (*Lear* 1.4.320). Goneril, like Spenser's Radigund, also seeks to place the feminine tool of the distaff in her husband's hands, while she takes up arms and engages in what she perceives as heroic action (*Lear*, 4.2.17-18).

Albany meanwhile, recognises the dangers of Goneril's ambitions: "How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell; / Striving to better, oft we mar what's well," (*Lear*, 1.4.324-25). Her husband describes her eyes as piercing, her father describes them as fierce, and burning, as he implies her sister Regan's are not (*Lear*, 2.4.164-67). Lear also accuses Goneril of having a "wolvish visage", and of transforming his manhood by removing his right to keep all his followers, implying that Regan will defeat Goneril and restore his former "shape" (*Lear*, 1.4.285, 86). Of course, Regan is also an 'unnatural' daughter, who sides with her sister against her father, although, as they are also bad women and wives as well as wicked daughters, they later turn on each other, over lust for Edmund. Like the unfaithful Tamora, Albany describes Regan and Goneril as, "Tigers, not daughters," and he calls Goneril a "devil," as he can no longer see her as a woman because of her behaviour (*Lear*, 4.2.41, 60). As we saw with Tamora, this Circean woman is morally deformed, and no longer considered fully human. Albany repeats this theme when he calls Goneril a

"gilded serpent" (*Lear*, 5.3.84). This description appears in a passage full of treason, infidelity and betrayal, as Regan is in the process of dying due to her sister's poisoning her out of jealousy, combining three elements from Medea's myths (*Lear*, 5.3.97). Edmund says that Goneril kills herself, using the Medean tool of a knife—and, although the play provides no real motive for her to do so, it does continue the trend of bad women being dead by the end of Shakespeare's plays (*Lear*, 5.3.240).

The image of the witch and various witch-like attributes are repeatedly used in these representations of dangerous women. Witches in literature, like Circe and Medea, were presented as: ambitious and power seeking; murderous and uncaring; sexually dangerous, unfaithful wives, and bad mothers. Their witch-like nature is inseparable from the idea of them being bad or dangerous women. This is seen in relation to all the female characters examined in this chapter, but in reverse, as the language of witchcraft is repeatedly deployed, to emphasise the fact that by being bad women, they are also witch-like, even when they have no recourse to magic.

Magic in Histories

Some of the female characters in Shakespeare's History plays do have some recourse to magic or are accused of doing so. As has been noted in most analyses of Shakespeare's Histories, the plays are not so much concerned with historical accuracy as they are with dramatic effect. It was probably for this reason that Shakespeare largely invented the conjuration in Act 1, Scene 4, of *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster (The Second Part of Henry VI)*.[57] Casting a horoscope to seek knowledge of the King's demise, and using image magic to try to hasten his death are not particularly dramatic.[58] Conjuring a spirit by using a magic circle while muttering in Latin to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, however, is much more entertaining. Arguably thanks to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and scenes such as this, an early modern

audience, and in turn a modern one, have come to expect such trappings when Wizards work magic. Margery Jordan "the cunning witch of Eye" (*2 Henry VI*, 1.2.75), in the action of the play, does not really function in the capacity of a witch, but as an additional conjurer, speaking only once, commanding the spirit Asnath to answer questions. As Jessica Freeman notes, the Margery Jourdemayne found in *The Mirror for Magistrates* was a much more powerful and attractive figure, described as an enchantress who could raise the dead as well as charm fiends and fairies, making her a recognisable Medean figure, something not utilised in Shakespeare's representation of her.[59] He practically erases her character from the narrative, which instead focuses on the punishment of her highborn accomplice, Dame Eleanor Cobham, the Duchess of Gloucester, who got off lightly by contrast to Margery, who was burnt at the stake as a heretical witch. Like many Medean witch figures before her, the Duchess was punished as much for her pride and ambition as for her dabbling in magic. Her overreaching for the crown also aligns her with other dangerous females such as Lady Macbeth and Joan of Arc.

In her introduction for *1 Henry VI* in the Norton Shakespeare, Jean E. Howard succinctly summarises the enigma which is Joan as she appears in Shakespeare: "Depending on the vantage point from which she is viewed, Joan is a holy maid sent by God to aid her country, a servant of the devil, or a deceitful whore".[60] This combination of vantage points demonstrates Joan to be a witch with many literary and historical influences. What is of most interest here, is where descriptions of Joan coincide with Circean and Medean attributes, showing the diminishment of powers available to witches in early modern literature. At the beginning of the play, she appears to have many positive Circean and Medean skills, including the ability to predict the future. Joan is first described as a "holy maid," and a true prophetess (*1 Henry VI*, 1.3.30). In some early versions of her myths, Medea makes prophecies, and Circe accurately predicts the dangers Odysseus will encounter after leaving her island. Joan also appears to have otherworldly access to

knowledge, a common skill amongst witches, such as when she knows that Rene is pretending to be the Dauphin, despite her never having met either of them (*1 Henry VI*, 1.3.44). She also claims to have been made beautiful by a visitation from the Virgin Mary, which is a bit of a twist on the theme of dark, ugly witches making themselves seem beautiful (*1 Henry VI*, 1.3.62). However, by the end of the play, even the French are calling her a whore, one of Circe's less socially acceptable attributes.

The English used sexual slurs against Joan from the beginning, with Talbot, the hero of the English using puns to call her a slut, and more directly calls her a "high-minded strumpet," or an arrogant whore, (*1 Henry VI*, 1.6.85, 7.12). Burgundy also joins in, suggesting Joan's promiscuity using puns, and calling her a "vile fiend and shameless courtesan" (*1 Henry VI*, 2.1.23-25, 3.5.5). Talbot calls her a, "[f]oul fiend of France, and hag of all despite, / Encompassed with thy lustful paramours," implying she is both a hag-type witch and a Circean strumpet (*1 Henry VI*, 3.5.12-13). He also calls her "that railing Hecate" (*1 Henry VI*, 3.5.24) linking her 'unwomanly' outspokenness with the goddess of witches. It appears the English cannot speak about, or to, Joan without mentioning witches or whores or both. As was common amongst historical witches in England during the early modern period, Joan was said to have a familiar spirit. It fails to assist her, however, as the English are winning at this point, making this one of many examples of Joan's magic being ineffectual within the play (*1 Henry VI*, 3.6.8). One clear example where it is effective is in the following scene: "CHARLES: Speak, Pucelle, and enchant him with thy words" (*1 Henry VI*, 3.7.40). Joan then convinces Burgundy to stay on the French side: "BURGUNDY [*aside*]: Either she hath bewitched me with her words, / or nature makes me suddenly relent," (*1 Henry VI*, 3.7.58-59). This is historically inaccurate, as Burgundy did not return to the French side until four years after Joan's death, meaning that the playwright invented one of the few instances within the play of Joan's successfully using her bewitching skills, which may not have even be magical.[61]

The English are willing to credit the French with using "art and baleful sorcery," and state that the Dauphin has joined, "with witches and the help of hell," (*1 Henry VI*, 2.1.15, 18). However, ultimately, Joan's powers are shown to be worthless. After her capture, Richard Duke of York taunts her, suggests she try using her spirits and "spelling charms" to gain her freedom, implying he does not think she can (*1 Henry VI*, 5.4.2). Richard also says, "[f]ell banning hag, enchantress, hold thy tongue," (*1 Henry VI*, 5.4.13). This line includes three witch tropes, she is a Hag (an ugly woman), but at the same time an enchantress, and is outspoken, the first being more common among Medea figures, the second a term often used for Circe. Not being able to hold their tongues is practically a requirement of bad women generally. "See how the ugly witch doth bend her brows, / As if with Circe she would change my shape," (*1 Henry VI*, 5.4.5-6). This scene is one of the few where Shakespeare makes a direct reference to Circe. Therefore, Joan is one of the few women named as a witch in early modern literature compared directly with Circe. It is more common to deploy Circean references to describe women who present a sexual danger, such as Shakespeare's Cleopatra or Spenser's Acrasia. In this direct comparison, it is clear that Joan lacks Circe's powers, at least in regards to the English, as she is unable to seduce them or change them. She does not have a wand or a cup and does not demonstrate Circe's other skills such as knowledge of potions, or control of the weather. As is made clear in the summoning scene with makes up Act 5 Scene 3, when it comes to the magical powers Joan possesses, she has more in common with witches from English trial pamphlets than she does with the classical witches Circe and Medea. She summons spirits and offers them blood, as historical English witches confessed to doing. The spirits, however, refuse to help her, even with a prophecy; she has become an entirely ineffectual magic user. She no longer has any power, either good or bad.

It has been noted many times that Margaret of Anjou enters *1 Henry VI* just after Joan is captured, in fact, just after Richard Duke of York compares the captured Joan to

Circe. For some, this marks her as Joan's replacement as the dangerous foreign woman who, as will be argued here, also happens to have Circean and Medean attributes. Queen Margaret is the strongest female presence in the history plays, appearing in four of them, as is noted by Michael Stapleton in his article comparing Margaret to Seneca's Medea.[62] In York's description of her, we see many elements that repeatedly appear in Shakespeare's representations of dangerous women:

> O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!
> How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child
> To bid the father wipe his eyes withal.
> And yet be seen to bear a woman's face?
> Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible—
> Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
>
> *(3 Henry VI*, 1.4.138-43)

He covers many traditional complaints levelled at the unwomanly or Medean woman, including pride, her beastly behaviour, and her murder of a child. Essentially, like many other dangerous women, she is so unwomanly that she is inhuman (*3 Henry VI*, 1.4.155). Margaret proves him correct by stabbing him (*3 Henry VI*, 1.4.177). Like many masculine women, her lack of suitably feminine behaviour is a threat to the masculinity of the men around her. She questions Suffolk's masculinity: "Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch! / Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemies?" (*2 Henry VI*, 3.2.309-310). The language of witchcraft such as usually appears in conjunction with Hecate or Medea permeates his response, including screech owls, murderous serpents, and dangerous or poisonous herbs including mandrake (*2 Henry VI*, 3.2.311-30). The play this occurs in, *2 Henry VI*, has a direct reference to Medea. Young Clifford (who appears to think in mythic

terms), compares himself to Medea, saying that if he meets "an infant of the house of York, / Into as many gobbets will I cut it / As wild Medea young Absyrtus did," (*2 Henry VI*, 5.3.57-9). He wishes to do so in revenge for his father's death. As such, his cruelty would be justified, unlike Medea's, as it would be reinforcing patrilineal ties and honour, whereas her murders undid them. The myth of Medea seems to be an obvious choice to use repeatedly in a series of plays about treachery, revenge, murder and royal successions.

In the first Henriad Tetralogy, witchcraft and witch-like behaviour form part of the scenery. In *1 Henry VI*, we primarily have Joan of Arc, with a Circean Margaret appearing at the end. In *2 Henry VI*, there is the Duchess of Gloucester's conjuring scene, as well as Medean references. In *3 Henry VI*, as shown above, Queen Margaret is a warrior Queen and at her Medean best (or worst). By the time we reach *Richard III*, the audience should be expecting a description of Margaret as a "[f]oul wrinkled witch," and that the play would be peppered with her curses (*Richard III*, 1.3.164, 193-211). Margaret calls Richard a dog, and numerous other animals, as though she is attempting a Circean transformation of him, which is, of course, unsuccessful (*Richard III*, 1.3.287-302). Rivers and Gray do believe, however, that Margaret must have some powers, as they think her curses are coming to pass (*Richard III*, 3.3.14-21). Elizabeth even asks Margaret, "O thou, well skilled in curses, stay a while, / And teach me how to curse mine enemies," (*Richard III*, 4.4.116-117). Despite her witch-like attributes, Margaret is not one of the women accused of witchcraft in the play. That dubious honour falls to Edward's Queen Elizabeth, and his former mistress (now Hasting's) Shore (*Richard III*, 3.4.59-77). It is a politically based accusation, and Richard uses it as an excuse to execute Hastings for trying to protect them. Richard also repeatedly calls Shore a harlot, and strumpet, which equates her with common prostitutes. Witchcraft was virtually inseparable from the idea of loose sexual morals by this point in history and literature. Meanwhile, Richard himself has many Medean

attributes, including murdering children both for revenge and to destroy dynastic successions. His marriage to Lady Anne also provides us with a Medean image:

> LADY ANNE: And I in all unwillingness will go.
> O would to God that the inclusive verge
> Of golden metal that must round my brow
> Were red-hot steel, to sear me to the brains.
> Anointed let me be with deadly venom,
> And die ere men can say 'God save the Queen'
> (*Richard III*, 4.1.57-62)

What Lady Anne is describing is her desire to take the place of Jason's new bride in the scene where Medea takes her revenge in Ovid's version of her myth; she does not desire the tainted crown. Richard, while he is described in various ways as evil, and has Medean attributes, is not of course described as a witch. It would appear that in Shakespeare's plays, at least, it is much harder to present a powerful man as a witch or witch-like than it is to present a power-seeking woman in such ways. That is even so when these men are shown to use witch-like magic, such as Prospero, or "that great magician, damned Glyndŵr—" (*1 Henry IV*, 1.3.82).

Glyndŵr like other magic workers before him claims to know more than any living man in Britain about "the tedious ways of art," something often claimed by Circe and Medea figures (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.46). He also states that he: "can call spirits from the vasty deep," (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.51). Summoning spirits was, as we know, a common element of early modern magic, especially that performed by men. Female magicians or witches often had spirits or familiars, but they did not necessarily have any control over when they would turn up. Glyndŵr meanwhile can "command the devil," (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.54). One thing

that Glyndŵr shares with the witch-like women of the History plays is his foreignness. His non-Englishness is emphasised even by his allies (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.117). The magic he demonstrates within the play, music playing from afar, is notably benign, especially given the fact that he is at war (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.220-2). Magical music is, however, a Circean attribute, and Circean attributes are also seen in the women of Wales.

Glyndŵr's daughter (Mortimer's wife), who remains unnamed, and has no English lines in the play, is figured as quite Circean. Mortimer compares the language she speaks to songs, "sung by a fair queen in a summer's bower," (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.205). She wants Mortimer to lay in her lap while she charms him with her songs, as Spenser's Acrasia and other Circe figures do with their victims, who like Mortimer should also be pursuing more manly activities (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.209-15). Her beauty is also entrancing, even the happily married Hotspur jokes about being helped into "the Welsh lady's bed," (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.238). In contrast, the English woman, Lady Percy, refuses to sing. While Glyndŵr's daughter is a benign version of Circe, who is only trying to charm her husband, the other Welsh women in the play are said to transform the corpses of their male enemies, by mutilating them, possibly in a sexually denigrating way, and are presented as the worst type of foreign woman. "Upon whose dead corpse' there was such misuse, / Such beastly shameless transformation, / By those Welshwomen done as may not be / Without much shame retold or spoken of," (*1 Henry IV*, 1.1.43-46), we learn at one point.

The Welsh 'Wizard', Glyndŵr, demonstrates part of a larger trend when it comes to the gendering of magic in Shakespeare's plays, that of male magic users largely being seen as benign. The flip side that we see is that vengeful or sexually dangerous women do not even need to attempt magic use for others to describe them as witches. Many of the witch-like attributes of these 'bad' women have their origins, as I have argued above, in the myths of Circe and Medea. They are regularly described as beasts because they are so unwomanly, tigers being a favourite animal utilised for analogies by poets and playwrights.

Their gender transgressions, or dangerous sexuality, emasculates the men around them. However, their lack of magic use, or ineffectual use of magic, does not prevent the use of the language of witchcraft in their presentations as Hags and whores.

Conclusion

As the preceding section demonstrates, throughout Shakespeare's plays dangerous women are frequently tied to witch-like attributes, whether they attempt to use magic or not. The female characters that have recourse to magic are usually presented as ineffectual magic users, like Joan of Arc; and they show reductions in power from previous sources, like Titania; or are demonised, like the Weird Sisters of *Macbeth*. In cases like Titania's, we see male characters taking on many Circean traits, previously possessed by female figures, without being presented as overly dangerous or evil. This trend continues with Prospero, who has many of the same Medean and Circean witch-skills as Sycorax, whom he demonises throughout *The Tempest*, while also frequently denying the strength of her magic, which would appear to be on par with his. He, however, is presented as a benevolent magician, complete with a staff and cloak, while she was a wicked witch, who within the text never possesses that Circean object of power, a staff, or wand. None of the magical female characters in Shakespeare's plays has access to this symbol of magical power, which adds to evidence already accumulated in relation to Spenser that the wand, under its various names, has become by this point in literature a symbol of male magical power.

Another symbol of Circe's powers, her cup, has also been largely divorced from female magic users and has become a metaphor for what men do to themselves by drinking too much. Women such as Cleopatra are described as having Circe's seductive nature but without her magical powers. They are often accused of encouraging drunkenness and dereliction of manly behaviours; however, they do not have the power literally to transform

their lovers, unlike earlier Circe figures. The magical language previously associated with Circe figures, including terms such as charm, bewitch, and enchant, frequently appear in non-magical contexts, especially in relation to love or lust. Circe's most lasting influence on the figure of the witch in literature from this point onwards is the fact that non-conforming or dangerous sexuality became virtually inseparable from the idea of the witch. There are no examples of female magic workers or even those accused of doing magic in Shakespeare, whose sexual integrity is not also questioned. In addition, female characters who, like Circe, use their sexuality as a way of gaining power are frequently described as witches or witch-like.

During the early modern period, the terms witch and whore were commonly deployed as derogatory terms for non-conforming women, regardless of their actual social transgressions, and this trend still occurs today. Another trend to solidify in early modern literature was the image of the Hag witch. In Spenser, we saw some evidence of this trend, but largely thanks to *Macbeth*, the idea of the witch as an ugly old woman has now become stereotypical. The image of the Hag or crone has its origins in ancient myths, including the myths of Medea (who disguises herself as one) and Hecate as one aspect of her tripartite form. The idea of three witches be they all old, or like Hecate, the maiden the mother and the crone also became more common after *Macbeth*. In Shakespeare, we see a larger trend in referring to all witches as Hags, regardless of their age or attractiveness: Joan of Arc, for example, and Lear's witch-like daughters, Regan and Goneril, are all called Hags. This is in part thanks to the addition of 'local' and historical witch traits, especially Scottish ones in the later plays like *Macbeth*. However, some tropes that have become part of modern witch stereotypes owe a lot more to the literature of the early modern period than to historical witches as we find them described in pamphlets and court records. One of these is the idea that witches steal babies and kill children for uses in their potions. This, it can be argued, owes more to the myth of Medea, and her murder of children, which over time

became conflated with her use of a cauldron to brew her potions, possibly largely thanks to Seneca's *Medea*, which was a strong influence on Shakespeare. The other ingredients to be frequently found in witches' cauldrons after *Macbeth* include animals related to classical witches in myths, such as bats, toads, owls, and dogs, which primarily relate to Medea and Hecate, and tigers, lions, and pigs, that appear in conjunction with Circe. Today, those animals associated with Hecate and Medea proliferate in witchcraft stereotypes, primarily due to their repeated use in early modern drama. Another element of Medea's myths, which solidified as part of the image of the witch in Shakespeare's plays, was her vengeful nature. Many of the vengeful female characters in Shakespeare, such as Tamora, are described as witch-like through the use of Medean imagery. They often have Medea's vengeful desires, but without her cunning, or magical skills.

One of Medea's magical skills which is arguably absent from depictions of female magic workers in Shakespeare is her ability to heal. Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well* is one of the few females shown to have healing powers in Shakespeare, and she is distanced from Medean magic on two fronts, as it is implied that her healing the King is more medicine than magic, and she gains her knowledge from her father. Most of the healing, some of it seemingly miraculous, in Shakespeare is done by men. It will be demonstrated later how Pratchett reclaims this skill for his witches. Paulina, in her 'resurrection' of Hermione, puts on a magical performance, to the extent that it is not clear how much was performance, and how much was magic, again, distancing her from magic associated with Medea.

Meanwhile, male characters like Prospero, can perform very Medean magic, and not be called a witch. Macbeth, to a certain extent, shares this male immunity, as, despite his dabbling in conjuring and consorting with witches, his witch-like nature is not central to his representation, whereas his treachery is. Lady Macbeth is the character more likely to be described as the "Fourth Witch."[63] The only male character called a witch in a

derogatory manner in Shakespeare is Falstaff, in his disguise as the Witch of Brentford, which demonstrates another trend in Shakespeare—that of presenting witches as objects of ridicule. This is done by making them ineffectual, like Joan of Arc, or by dehumanising them, like Sycorax and the Weird Sisters. Fairies also became figures of fun in Shakespeare, which is unsurprising given how intertwined, fairies and witches became in early modern literature, especially when exhibiting Circean and Medean characteristics, such as shape-changing and child stealing.

Especially, in the very early and the later plays, Shakespeare demonstrates an eclectic approach to the supernatural. Witches, fairies, and devils are frequently combined in the one sentence. We also see an increase in 'magical' special effects in the stage directions of the later plays. This was possibly due to changes in what could be performed, thanks to the move to the indoor theatre at Blackfriars, but it might also have been influenced by the more collaborative nature of these later works. Not unlike the early play, *The Comedy of Errors*, one of Shakespeare's last plays, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is full of supernatural, mythic and witchcraft references. This would seem to indicate an ongoing interest on the part of early modern audiences in such themes, and an interest in the supernatural continued with the vogue for witch plays in the Jacobean period.

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1. Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 98; Ruth Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge [England];Rochester, NY, USA D.S. Brewer 1996), 117.

2. Amongst the many studies on the topic of gender and magic see: Heidi Breuer, *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Routledge, 2009). Brian P Levack, ed. *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, vol. 4. Gender and Witchcraft (NewYork/London: Routledge, 2001). Justyna Sempruch, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).

3. "In fact, there is not a single play by Shakespeare that does not have some reference to witchcraft, some metaphor based on it, some terms associated with it in a technical sense." Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 35. Wills suggests this reflects the popularity of witchcraft in early modern texts.

4. William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt, et al., 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 808. Greenblatt's introduction to the play is referring to Katharine Mary Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge, 1959), and many others who have examined Shakespeare's use of fairies in detail. All references to Shakepeare's plays will be to this edition and in text using abbreviated titles.

5. *A Dictionary of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976), 98-102.

6. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.31. All further references will be in text using the abbreviation *MSND*.

7. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Almanac: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Marriage, and the Elizabethan Calendar* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 3-4.

8. Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), 68-70.

9. Regina Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 71-72.

10. Darren Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil in Early Modern England," *The Seventeenth Century* 31, no. 1 (2016).

11. Anthony Harris, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester University Press, 1980), 38.

12. Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2560.

13. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 44-45.

14. For example, the 1998 Signet Classic Edition of *Macbeth* (complete with a Teacher's guide) has only three witches. The 2004 Heineman *New Classroom Shakespeare: Macbeth* has three witches and Hecate. The more recent (2014) *Cambridge School Shakespeare: Macbeth*, has six witches, Hecate and three apparitions.

15. Such as when she is preparing to rejuvenate Aeson. Ovid, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, ed. Madeleine Forey, trans. Arthur Golding (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), ll.242-61.

16. *Macbeth*, 1.3.30, the word used in most modern editions is 'weird', as is noted, it appears as 'weyward' or 'weyard' in the First Folio.

17. It has even been suggested that they are fairies, see Katherine M. Briggs, *Pale Hecate's Team : An Examination of the Beliefs on Witchcraft and Magic among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and His Immediate Successors* (London: Routledge, 1962), 78.

18. Natale Conti, *Natale Conti's 'Mythologiae'* trans. John Mulryan and Steven Brown, vol. 2 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 483.

19. For examples see Breuer, *Crafting the witch*, Chapter 4.

20. Daniel Ogden, *Night's Black Agents: Witches, Wizards and the Dead in the Ancient World* (Hambledon Continuum, 2008), 17.

21. For example, it can be found on page 2561 of the Norton Shakespeare. The pamphlet itself while saying they made potions, does not directly mention the witches using a cauldron.

22. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 36.

23 Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 87, looks at the sources of the cauldron's ingredients in more detail.

24. Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 173. Historically witches were known for killing older children (not babies) however, like Medea their motivation was primarily revenge, and not in order to get ingredients. The use of infant fat and similar was a feature of European trials and therefore Demonological texts. Jane P Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural: The Dark Side of European Culture, 1400–1700* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2012), 76.

25. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*; Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, and Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women.*

26. Inga-Stina Ewbank, "The Fiend-Like Queen: A Note on Macbeth and Seneca's Medea.," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Kenneth Muir (1966).

27.Karren Britland, "Circe's Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama," in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2004), 114.

28. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 74. In section three (pages 53-74) Wills examines Shakespeare's use of classical representations of witchcraft, including Medea and Hecate as they relate to Macbeth.

29. E. J. Kent, "Tyrannical Beasts: Male Witchcraft in Early Modern English Culture," in *Emotions in the History of Witchcraft*, ed. Laura Kounine and Michael Ostling (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 83.

30. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 139. Wills also suggests that Macbeth could be wearing a wizards cloak put on him by the witches at this point, which would identify the staff as a wizards staff. This is however not overtly stated in the text, although it is a popular costume aspect in productions. The association of wizards with robes and staffs, is of course complicated by the fact that Kings also wore cloaks or robes, and often carried staffs of office. *Witches and Jesuits*, 138-41.

31. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 65.

32. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 134.

33. Greenblatt's note 7: "Prospero's speech closely follows Ovid's Metamorphoses 7.265-77, in Arthur Golding's translation (1567); the speaker in Ovid is the sorceress Medea, who uses her witchcraft to vengeful ends." *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3098.

34. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 134.

35. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 138

36. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 141. Harris compares *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* suggesting they use magic and location to create change within the characters. *Night's Black Agents*, 140.

37. *Tempest* 4.1.196-211, and Act 3 Scene 2 shows Ariel as a trickster spirit. Another interpretation could be that Ariel is Prospero's familiar, for the connections between fairies and familiars see Emma Wilby, "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," *Folklore* 111, no. 2 (2000).

38. Katherine Briggs relates the folk belief that Fairy feasts were merely inedible weeds disguised, *Dictionary of Fairies*, 143. Also see her Index of Types and Motifs, "C211.1: Taboo: eating in fairyland. FAIRY DWELLING ON SELENA MOOR; TRUE THOMAS." *Dictionary of Fairies*, 466. In these examples Fairy food either provides no sustenance or is a trap.

39. “Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!” (*Tempest*, 1.2.322-23).

40. Harris, *Night’s Black Agents*, 143-44. John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, vol. 4, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 142., looks at glosses of Sycorax’s name linking her to Circe and Medea.

41. Kirsty Corrigan, *Virgo to Virago: Medea in the Silver Age* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 32.

42. *Tempest*, 4.1.196, it is unclear whether they are covered in horse piss, or just smell like it.

43. Harris, *Night’s Black Agents*, 137.

44. Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women*, chapter 2.

45. Marguerite A Tassi, *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 23. See also her seventh chapter.

46. Kirilka Stavreva, “Fighting Words: Witch-Speak in Late Elizabethan Docu-Fiction,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30, no. 2 (2000): 315.

47. Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield, “Nursing Nothing: Witchcraft and Female Sexuality in the Winter’s Tale,” *Mosaic (Winnipeg)* 35 (2002).

48. In Arthurian romances, “[t]hough female healers are not always magical, they are usually good.” Breuer, *Crafting the witch*, 21. Breuer also traces the demonization of magic, and the rise in popularity of the witch figure, see especially pages 98-99.

49. *The Norton Shakespeare*, 696, footnote 9.

50. Cohen, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2619.

51. As suggested in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2688, footnote 1.

52. Cohen notes, “[Antony] chooses between fidelity to a chaste, white wife and adultery with a promiscuous, ‘tawny,’‘black’ seductress (1.1.6, 1.5.28).” *The Norton Shakespeare*,

2620. However, he does not note the similarity of this situation to Medea myths, and Jason's multiple marriages.

53. *A&C*, 5.2.300-01. Cohen for one, suggests, "in taking the poisonous asp to her breast, she may become a Roman matron," *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2625.

54. This is looked at in detail, including Tamora and her role as contaminating mother, in Susan Dunn-Hensley, "Whore Queens: The Sexualized Female Body and the State," in *"High and Mighty Queens" of Early Modern England: Realities and Representations*, ed. Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney, and Debra Barrett-Graves (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2003), 105-10.

55. Dunn-Hensley, "Whore Queens", 113.

56. All references to *King Lear* are to the conflated text in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2479-553, using the abbreviated title *Lear*.

57. All further references to this play will utilise its more common name of *2 Henry VI*.

58. For an historical overview see Jessica Freeman, "Sorcery at Court and Manor: Margery Jourdemayne, the Witch of Eye Next Westminster," *Journal of medieval history* 30, no. 4 (2004).

59. Freeman, "Sorcery at Court", 344.

60. Jean E. Howard, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 439.

61. Howard, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 479).

62. Michael L Stapleton, "'I of Old Contemptes Complayne': Margaret of Anjou and English Seneca," *Comparative Literature Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006).

63. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 74.

Chapter Four:

Performing Witchcraft in Stuart Drama

Introduction

The texts to be examined in this chapter have been gathered from across a considerable period of time; yet despite this, their similarities far outweigh their differences. As with all the other texts selected for this study, they were chosen because they were popular, are canonical or, as in the case of Middleton's *The Witch*, offer clear examples of how witches could be represented at that time, and have links to earlier and later texts. The classical witches, Circe and Medea, are of course still useful figures for tracing representations of witchcraft and womanhood; however, as time progresses, the significances of their symbols take on subtle changes as witchcraft stereotypes move more clearly towards those that are still recognisable today. Nonetheless, the figure of the witch is, as always (and particularly in literature and drama), tied to forms of misogyny, idealised feminine behaviour (and its opposite), and representations of female power. In this period, we can also discern a clear growth of scepticism about witchcraft and an increase in the comedic use of witch figures in texts.

The nature of this chapter is that of a brief overview of possible uses of Circe and Medea figures, focusing of course on plays that feature witches during a period in which Witchcraft was still a prosecutable offence. A whole study could be done on Middleton's uses of Circe and Medea figures in his plays, as was partially attempted in relation to Shakespeare's texts in the previous chapter. However, given Middleton's lack of direct influence on contemporary popular culture and literature, it is more profitable to look at several plays—spaced over nearly 80 years, with various approaches to the performance of witchcraft on stage—in order to see what has changed and what has stayed the same. To this end, the chapter will also be examining *The Witch of Edmonton*, by Rowley, Dekker

and Ford, as a quasi-factual representation of an historical English witchcraft case. Continuing in this vein, with even less emphasis on the facts of the relevant case, is Heywood and Brome's play, *The Witches of Lancashire*. Despite the similarity in subject matter, Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O'Divelly the Irish Priest* makes no claims to historical veracity. All of these texts were produced for public performances in London, and excepting Middleton's *The Witch*, they all enjoyed a reasonable amount of success and profitability. What this can tell us about changes in beliefs regarding witchcraft, as well as the influence performances may have had on stereotypes after beliefs had waned, is the main subject of this chapter.

Middleton's *The Witch*

While there has been much debate surrounding Middleton's admission that *The Witch* was "ignorantly ill-fated", it is beyond debate that the play has strong textual links to contemporary texts involving witches, such as the Folio *Macbeth*, and Jonson's *The Masque of Queens.*[1] Written and first performed sometime between 1613 and 1616, the play gives several signs that it was quickly produced or amended to capitalise on an increase in the popularity of witches on stage.[2] An example of this is the rather superfluous nature of the witch episodes themselves, and their generally comedic nature, including the overly gruesome ingredients used in reference to the cauldrons. As has already been noted in this study, *Macbeth* and *The Masque of Queens* are among the many dramas to utilise the image of the cauldron (by this stage in drama a common magical tool with Medean literary origins), and *The Witch* follows this trend. As Anthony Harris has noted: "All three works depict elaborate incantation ceremonies which are conducted around cauldrons, and a comparison of these scenes throws interesting light on the approaches of the three writers." Harris suggests that, in *Macbeth*, the cauldron scene's purpose is to facilitate Duncan's murder, thence anarchy in Scotland, and ultimately Macbeth's personal

fall, whereas in *The Masque of Queenes* it is to evoke universal disorder. However, in *The Witch*, one cauldron scene exists for witchcraft to produce a flying ointment by using a baby's fat, and the second to effect a poison (again, using human remains), neither scene having a larger social purpose or outcome.[3] Middleton's witches are the most evidently Medean and grotesque of the witches in these three texts—at least, insofar as they are linked to the symbol of the cauldron. They also differ from Jonson's witches in that most of their magic is successful, but ultimately they do not have any effect on the outcome of the play.

Medean Hags

By the time that Middleton produces *The Witch*, it is unclear whether Ovid's Medea is directly influencing references to Medean magic, or if they are filtered through other sources (for example, see *Witch*, 5.2.18-29).[4] This reflects how popular the Medea episode of Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* was in early modern references to magic and witchcraft, especially within plays. Like Medea, Hecate in Middleton's play (and her witches) raises storms, a common skill amongst stage witches including those in *Macbeth* (*Witch*, 1.2.133-48). In this scene, in a manner similar to a cunning-woman, Hecate lists the forms of maleficium she and her witches can perform until she gets a reaction from her visitor, then claims to 'know' what he desires. Although this visitor, Sebastian, questions Hecate's humanity, he clearly does not view her as the dread goddess with whom her name connects her; he goes so far as to state: "Whate'er thou art, I have no spare time to fear thee," (*Witch*, 1.2.121).

Middleton's Hecate undoubtedly resembles the Hag witches of English belief, while at the same time demonstrating many traits more commonly associated with European demonological texts and literary witches. Among these is evidence that she has entered a demonic pact, and has sworn to the devil to do mischief for its own sake (*Witch*,

1.2. 69-70, 182-3). Also, her reasons for seeking revenge against those around her could have been taken directly out of trial testimonies:

> They denied me often flour, barm and milk,
> Goose-grease and tar, when I ne'er hurt their charmings,
> Their brew-locks, not their batches, nor forspoke
> Any of their breedings. Now I'll be meet with 'em.
> Seven of their young pigs I have bewitched already
> (*Witch*, 1.2.53-57)

Hecate's forms of revenge are also conventionally English, such as stopping cows from providing milk and harming livestock such as pigs. Middleton's witches, even more so than Shakespeare's, represent a combination of English supernatural beliefs with representations of witches from classical literature, and the addition of continental beliefs to do with Sabbaths, and flying.

Flying witches did not feature in English witch trials at this point in history, but after scenes such as Act Three, Scene Three, they are abundant in Witch plays. The song the witches sing about flying, "Come Away", also appears in the Folio *Macbeth*, with much debate over where it was used first. This scene, similar to some of the Hecate scenes in *Macbeth*, has no real connection to the play's plot overall. It is merely a showcase of spirits, and of the European belief of anointing with baby grease ointment in order to fly: "I will but 'noint, and then I mount," (*Witch*, 3.3.48).

The requirement of baby fat for the flying spell is something that is a central part of Middleton's presentation of the witches as bad and dangerous women, and its origins can be found in the infanticidal Medea. The stage direction even specifies that Hecate gives the other witches the dead body of a baby (*Witch* 1.2.18-31). Moreover, not only does

Middleton have two cauldron scenes—whereas many other plays utilise this Medean image less—but the scenes go beyond earlier scenes in the gruesomeness of their ingredients, using more human body parts, and listing more details. In the second cauldron scene, furthermore, the charm they sing contains many folk beliefs and fairy references, including the very English names of the spirits. However, all the ingredients are those that have been associated with witches since antiquity, including bats, lizards, toads, and snakes (*Witch*, 5.2.49-84). (Unlike the witches' flying ointment, and love charm, it appears that this final potion was unsuccessful, as Almachildes, the intended victim is still alive at the end of the play.) Medean animals such as snakes and bats are repeatedly utilised for various spells by Middleton's witches. One of his more interesting innovations is the use of a bat as a familiar: "There was a bat hung at my lips three times / As we came through the woods and drank her fill," (*Witch*, 3.3.7-8). This combines the very English belief in blood sucking familiar spirits with an animal long associated with witches in classical texts but was not commonly found in lists of familiars in English trial records.[5]

Circean Hags

Another innovation in *The Witch* regarding familiars is Malkin, the spirit like a cat, who can fly, sing and play the fiddle. When Firestone asks to borrow the Nightmare the way a modern son would ask to borrow the car, Hecate reveals her incestuous perversions by asking who will "lie with me then?" (*Witch*, 1.2.96). Firestone's response adds bestiality to her list of perversions as he suggests that she should use the great cat to slack her lust, implying that she has done so before. Non-reproductive or perverted sexuality is a theme that recurs throughout this play, linking it back to previous uses of Circean tropes in poetry and drama. Here, though, the sexual witches are ugly old hags, and the drunk Almachildes aptly describes them as "bawdy witches" (*Witch*, 1.1.95). They provide charms to make women more willing to have sex, and the whole play is scattered with bawdy innuendos

and word plays, reinforcing the humorous nature of these ugly old witches. Middleton's hags vary from many other early modern literary witches, in that they produce an effective love (or lust) charm (*Witch*, 2.2.69-104). Apart from the sexual trap it can potentially create, the "charm her hagship gave," (*Witch*, 2.2.9) to Almachildes, does not utilise much Circean imagery. There is no cup or potion, and it is not designed to trap men but is instead a three coloured ribbon, with a written charm or spell, much like tokens utilised by early modern cunning men and women (*Witch*, 2.2.10-1). Hecate does initially offer a love charm using a cup or potion, but that is not what is ultimately delivered (*Witch*, 1.2.205). Meanwhile, elsewhere in the play, the literary tradition of a witch's inability to undo a marriage is continued when Hecate admits that she and her associates can only really affect a person's ability or desire to have sex (*Witch*, 1.2.170-77).

Males with Circean and Medean traits

Firestone is presented primarily as a clown, and while there is initially a dark moment, when he considers using his mother's potion against her, she can tell he is planning something, thus reinforcing his clownish and ineffectual nature (*Witch*, 1.2.83-84). Firestone shares many of his more humorous scenes with Almachildes, whose drunken entry he describes: "He / stumbled at a pipkin of child's grease, reeled against Stadlin, / overthrew her, and in the tumbling-cast struck up old Puckle's / heels with her clothes over her ears," (*Witch*, 1.2.186-89). Some elements of British humour have not changed much in a few hundred years, and this sort of grotesque slapstick, where a drunk slips in baby fat, is reminiscent of the Monty Python skit, "Every Sperm is Sacred", in which someone slips in amniotic fluid. In this comic scene, Almachildes also indulges in a bit of toilet humour, before offering the witches (marzipan) toads to eat (*Witch*, 1.2.210, 216). Almachildes also suggests that witches might eat disgusting things such as "fried rats / And pickled spiders?" (*Witch*, 1.2.224-5). Witches eating the animals more common as their familiars, or as

ingredients in their potions, becomes a part of humorous representations of witchcraft, and it also occurs in Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters*, as will be examined in the next chapter. This comic scene ends with a Sabbath-like banquet carried by spirits playing music, an example of a type of stage magic that will become common in later witch plays. Unsurprisingly, this feast, similar to Sabbath feasts in Europe, and fairy feasts in England, leaves the revellers hungrier than they were when it started (*Witch*, 1.2.233-4).

Conclusions

From the first scene of *The Witch*, in which the Duke uses the skull of his wife's father as a cup (prompting her vow of revenge), and we discover Francisca's unwanted pregnancy, we see themes commonly associated with witches: unruly women, illicit sex, and revenge. In many instances, this play builds on the performative aspects of witchcraft, as well as witchcraft as a staged spectacle. In her dealings with the people who seek her magical assistance, Hecate puts on a performance, which mostly leads to her providing the means for her customers to obtain their desires. Meanwhile, all of the witch scenes make heavy use of stage machinery, and presumably costumes, to present figures that are otherworldly, such as Malkin, and have unbelievable powers, such as flying and summoning spirits to perform for them. So the image of the witch that an audience could take away from this play is that of an old Hag, flying through the air (probably on a broomstick), speaking in rhyme, or singing and dancing around a cauldron filled with disturbing ingredients. Many elements of this image take aspects of witchcraft which may have been threatening or disturbing off the stage and show that they are illusory, mere trickery. Most of the later witch plays, including those based on the Lancashire witch trials, which will be examined shortly, follow this trend. *The Witch of Edmonton*, however, attempts, at least partially, to represent witchcraft as it was understood in English villages at the time, namely, as the very real threat of the devil working his evil amongst ordinary people.

Rowley, Dekker & Ford, etc.'s *The Witch of Edmonton*

More representative of historical English witchcraft beliefs as they appear in pamphlets and trial records than are the other texts being examined, *The Witch of Edmonton* has fewer Circean and Medean elements than those texts, and fewer references to classical literary witches.[6] The two primary source texts for this play are Henry Goodcole's pamphlet account of the relevant trial and Reginald Scot's sceptical tract on witchcraft.[7] Loosely based on a real life trial, the play was published in the same year, 1621, to take advantage of the notoriety of the case. It has a somewhat documentary style: however only one of its three plot lines focuses on the story of Mother Sawyer, a powerless old woman, who is mostly presented as society's and the devil's victim. People insist on calling her a witch, so she becomes one (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.1-13); yet, there is little evidence of her using magic successfully, and she cannot even remember the spell that the devil taught her.[8]

Some characters treat the old woman with kindness, including the simple Young Cuddy Banks, who is one of the few genuinely kind and good characters. He calls her "Gammer Sawyer" (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.191) and treats her more like a wise-woman as this honorific would indicate. Cuddy Banks even gives her money to help him. However, the fact that she accepts it, and then proceeds to trick him, using his desire for a 'bewitching' young female against him, marks her as a witch rather than as a wise-woman and would have negated some of the sympathy the audience may have been feeling for her. One other element that the Cuddy Banks plot brings to the play is the combination of traditional English pastimes, including Hobby horses, Morris dances, and May games with witches, suggesting the village folk have someone playing a witch as part of the entertainment.[9] When the 'real' witch of the play appears, their banishing of her is a communal activity: "*All*. Away with the Witch of Edmonton!" (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.98).

Medean

Revenge, a desire associated with witches since classical incarnations of Medea, is a major theme in all of the play's subplots. The primary target of Mother Sawyer's desire for revenge is the person who has mistreated her the most, a representative of patriarchal power, Old Banks. " 'Tis all one / To be a witch as to be counted one. / Vengeance, shame, ruin light upon that canker!" (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.118-20). This demonstration of her Medean tendencies immediately precedes the Devil Dog's appearance, thereby reinforcing the connection between demonological ideas about witchcraft and much older ideas about the witch as a vengeful woman. Mother Sawyer's first scene with the Dog makes it clear that this is pact witchcraft, and Sawyer is making a deal with the Devil, however unwillingly. It is only after this play, that female witches are shown to be making pacts with the devil on stage. Middleton's *The Witch* obliquely refers to a pact, but it is not central to the performance, as it is for Marlowe's earlier (and male) *Faustus*, and plays after *The Witch of Edmonton*. According to the stage directions, when the devil sucks her arm, completing the pact in the manner of a familiar spirit there are thunder and lightning, that is to say, special effects to denote that a supernatural event is occurring (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.147).

Mother Sawyer, despite her very Medean desire for revenge, and devilish assistance, like most 'historical' witches, does not have much recourse to effective magic. The audience is more likely to find Medean tropes used against her than used by her, such as when the villagers deploy the common English belief that burning thatch from her house will make her appear if she is a witch (*Witch of Ed*, 14.1.19). Fire was also used in many parts of the world, as a means of punishing witches, which is (erroneously for England) called for here, "set fire on her!" (*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.27). Mother Sawyer's cry of : "Shall I be murdered by a bed of serpents?" (*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.28) demonstrates another reversal of Medean imagery. Where Medea masters serpents by putting them to sleep, as ingredients,

and as a means of escape, Mother Sawyer fears them. Despite her very patent differences from the witches of classical myths and literature, after her arrest Mother Sawyer uses imagery associated with those witches (revenge, ravens, fire, dragons and serpents) in her calling of her familiar spirit, the colour-changing and speaking Devil Dog (*Witch of Ed*, 5.1.7-16). She follows that with a more contemporary reference to a powder-mine blowing up the world, which is a subtle reminder that her primary fault is rebelling against the status quo (*Witch of Ed*, 5.1.21-2).

Circean

Even though Mother Sawyer thinks she has control over a talking animal, one of the only connections between her and the classical witch, Circe, is sex, which by this time is quite strongly connected to witches in literature, even when they are not sexually desirable themselves. "Now an old woman / Ill-favoured grown with years, if she be poor / Must be called bawd or witch," (*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.122-24). As will also be seen in later witch plays, bewitchment is also used as an excuse by supposedly 'good' women to excuse unwomanly (particularly sexually illicit) behaviour when they are caught (*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.10-1). Sexual disorder and witches are linked primarily in literature, but occasionally in early modern trial documents as well. Mother Sawyer rails against immoralities of many types that are not punished as harshly as witchcraft was, essentially pointing out the sexual double standards of the time:

> Dare any swear I ever tempted maiden,
> With golden hooks flung at her chastity,
> To come and lose her honour, and being lost,
> To pay not a denier for't? Some slaves have done it.
> Men-witches can, without the fangs of law.

(*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.140-4)

These Men-witches, such as Sir Arthur in his treatment of Winnifride, are more Circean than she is, but as she has stated, they are in no danger from the law.

Males with Circean and Medean traits

Some of the male characters of the play have more direct affinities with Circean traits, such as the devil, who is a shapeshifter. The devil's trick against Young Banks also utilises a spirit that could remind the audience of Spenser's false Florimell: "Thus I throw off my own essential horror, / And take the shape of a sweet lovely maid / Whom this fool dotes on," (*Witch of Ed*, 3.1.75-7). The trick culminates in Young Banks ending up wet in a ditch, and since the material associated with Young Banks is absent from the primary sources, it can be assumed that the dramatists made it up, possibly for some comic relief (*Witch of Ed*, 3.1.95). Even when male characters display very Medean tendencies, such as we see in the Frank Thorney plot, where he uses the Medean tool of a knife to murder his second wife (usually Medea's role in the myth) they are not presented as Medean. Rather, the blame for his very violent and socially aberrant behaviour is given to the devil or even his victim (*Witch of Ed*, 3.3.36-39).

Conclusions

As has already been mentioned, this text is interested in presenting witchcraft as it appeared in contemporary accounts; yet despite this, elements of witches from myths and literature still appear. The most common types of witchcraft described in the play are those common to English beliefs (even if their roots go back to classical ideas of the witch as a bad or unwomanly woman), and include laming horses, nipping a child (to cause death or sickness), and butter failing to churn (*Witch of Ed*, 4.1.161-165). The idea that witches are

becoming more common on stage is also expressed within the play: "Have we e'er a witch in the morris?" (*Witch of Ed*, 3.1.7-8). The response that, "witches themselves are so common now-a-days that the counterfeit will not be regarded. They say we have three or four in Edmonton besides Mother Sawyer," (*Witch of Ed*, 3.1.12-14) demonstrates a certain ambivalence about witches, including stage witches. This play also utilises elements of staged witchcraft which would remain common in future witch plays, including musical instruments that will not play (*Witch of Ed*, 3.3.43-4), and the thunder and lightning special effects mentioned earlier. *The Witch of Edmonton* almost certainly demonstrates and possibly contributes to, a decline in belief in witchcraft, with its humorous devil of limited powers (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.157-8). At this time, when belief was evidently waning, one of the arguments used by theologians and demonologists was that witches only had as much power as the devil provided, and the devil only as much power as God allowed, meaning that any evil a witch did was by God's will. This decline in or ambivalence regarding belief in witches only grows in subsequent plays featuring witches, almost in directly inverse proportion to the wonders that they appear to do on stage.

Heywood and Brome's The Witches of Lancashire

Supposedly based on 'true' events, *The Witches of Lancashire* (also known as *The Late Lancashire Witches*), like the court cases it is loosely based on, reflects stories told about witches.[10] Therefore, in addition to local beliefs about witchcraft, the play incorporates Continental beliefs about and literary representations of witches. This includes the magic they were said to be able to perform, including flying, animal transformations, and love potions—all of which are associated with the classical witches, Circe and Medea. There is, however, a clear increase in the humorous elements incorporated into the text, by contrast with those present in previous plays, as Harris has noted:

> The declining fear of witchcraft (rather than a loss of the belief in its existence) is reflected in the drama of the post-1625 period. In contrast to the seriousness with which the subject was treated in nearly all the Jacobean works, it became increasingly a source of humour, particularly in the Restoration theatre. This trend is first evident in Heywood and Broome's *The Late Lancashire Witches*. Printed in 1634, it has many affinities with its Jacobean predecessors, but the treatment is essentially comic.[11]

It can be argued that there is evidence of an increasing use of humorous witches on stage during the Jacobean period, and humorous reference to them appears even as early as Elizabethan plays, as I have demonstrated previously in this study. It can be argued that this progressively more humorous treatment of witches and magic on stage may have even contributed to a reduction in fear and belief in witches for London audiences. I do however agree with Harris that, from this point forward, witches on stage were on the whole taken a lot less seriously than their predecessors possibly were. This change in belief (or fear) regarding witches, can be seen in the increase of sceptical characters within the play itself, despite magic being increasingly portrayed as 'successfully' used on stage (via, for example, flying and descending banquets). It is also important to note that, in this instance, the playwrights did not let the facts get in the way of the play, regularly conflating persons from the 1612 trial with those from the 1634 trial, and including elements that had been dismissed as fanciful during the trial.[12]

This move towards using witchcraft as an excuse to stage the impossible or at least unnatural has also been noted by James Wallace regarding his experience of a recent staged reading of the play. "[T]his play was an excuse for spectacle and amusement and little else. The witches are not particularly diabolical, as they are in *Macbeth*, nor is witchcraft placed in a social context of small-town poverty with its attendant prejudice and

ignorance, as in *The Witch of Edmonton*. It neither frightened nor enlightened."[13] Wallace has also suggested that, "[n]ot witchcraft but witch-hunting is the play's serious matter."[14] This is repeatedly demonstrated throughout the play by Doughty's actions, particularly through his championing of the Boy's stories, believing them wholesale, despite encountering much less evidence in the community generally (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.1.47-51). The play also demonstrates how a witch hunter steps outside the normal mode of witchcraft accusations, where people would have had a pretty good idea who the witches in their community were. In the play, as it was in the 1634 trial, the word of one boy (who we now know lied about all of it) carries much weight.

Circean

The lines between reality, lies and stories are further complicated in this play, as it is in all subsequent witch plays, by the performance on stage of many 'magical' feats, including shape-shifting, flying, powerfully effective potions, and objects moving on their own, while sceptical characters deny the possibility of these feats. Whole studies could be dedicated to the possible ways in which magic was 'performed' on stage at different points in theatrical history, but of primary interest here is how often the staging of magic intersects with representations of the classical witches Circe and Medea.[15] The most obvious of these is the shape-shifting of witches into animals, or the threat that they might transform others (usually men) into animals. In this play, witches and devils transform themselves into hares (an animal rich in English folkloric associations) and greyhounds, all to play a trick on the hunters (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1.54-7). They also transform themselves into cats so as to torment the Miller (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.2.197-8), which leads to the use of the oft-repeated (and folkloric) image of a severed limb returning to its human state (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.3.93-4). The soldier uses this as an opportunity to

make an off colour joke when Generous asks for the hand: "There's that of the three I can best spare," (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.3.96).

At various points, the witches transform others into animals, although the means through which they are said to achieve these transformations (that is a spell, potion, ointment or will), is seldom mentioned. A notable exception is the use of a magical bridle and a brief spell by Mrs Generous to turn her groom, Robert, into a horse. It is predictable that he later uses it against her, and turns her transformation into an extended joke about her being her husband's beast (*Witches of Lancashire*, 3.2.103-4, 4.2.67). This transformation, like several in this play, occurs offstage, implying myriad ways in which it could have been performed (*Witches of Lancashire*, 4.2.111-30). The witches also transform cakes into bran, and magically steal a whole feast of food, combining the repeated theme of transformation with the topos (common to English beliefs) of witches tampering with food (*Witches of Lancashire*, 3.1.50). Transformations were a focal point of much scepticism at the time, with many demonologists limiting their possibility to that of being mere illusions created by the devil. However, they were rarely mentioned in English trials before the 1634 Lancashire trials and were previously more strongly associated with literary witches such as Circe and Medea.

Another Circean element associated with these witches is their association with illicit sex, as well as the arguably sexual nature of their relationship with their familiars. Mawd says to hers, "come, my Puckling, take thy teat," implying a staging of the sometimes sexualized feeding of a familiar (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1.14). We are not told where the teat is (unlike in the Witch of Edmonton), and in trial pamphlets, teats were often said to be found in the "privy parts".[16] When Meg confesses, she calls for "[m]y friend, my sweetheart, my Mamilion," (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.5.204). This also has a sexual tone, 'friend' often being a euphemism for 'lover', as was 'sweetheart'. Doughty picks up on this by calling the familiar her "incubus" (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.5.206).

These witches, with their bawdy jokes and suckling familiars, are a far cry from the sexually dangerous Circes of myths, or the active pursuit of sexual gratification by many Medea figures.

Medean

Arguably, the first witch to fly as part of a performance was Medea in plays such as Euripides', where she appears and exits using a machine previously reserved for deities, and described as her Grandfather Helios' chariot. At the beginning of the early modern period, such stage machinery was not commonly used in public theatres. Later, when playhouses changed, and it became easier to present witches as flying on the public stage, it also became more common to do so, and this play is no exception. The witches of this play all fly to their Sabbath on different animals, with Mrs Generous riding her groom with the obvious bawdy connotations of her doing so (*Witches of Lancashire*, 4.1.78-83). They are also clearly said to have flown on brooms, unlike in Middleton's *The Witch*, where it can be inferred but is not unequivocally stated (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.2.19). The witches of this play, particularly in this Sabbath scene, are quite original in an English story or play, and more closely resemble witches from European Sabbath paintings, where it was common for witches to sing and dance in a circle in pairs with their animalistic familiars or devils (*Witches of Lancashire*, 4.1.97-124).[17]

The more common aspects of Medean witches, such as sexual jealousy, and the desire for revenge, can be seen in the character Moll. She varies from previous Medean witches in that she directly attacks the groom, using a charm for impotence, which affects the bride, but not in a violent manner (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.5.44-56). Even her humorous, rather than dangerous charm is ultimately ineffectual as the victims discover it and burn the charmed cloth, in a striking reversal of Jason's new bride being burnt to death by a charmed cloth provided by Medea. Moll is more of a threat to Arthur who is worried

that Moll's Circean ability to charm sexually will have an adverse impact on an inheritance coming his way (*Witches of Lancashire*, 3.3.28-30).

Males with Circean and Medean traits

As was mentioned previously, when Robert the groom transforms Mrs Generous into a horse, animal transformations are not only effected by the female witches of this play. This is also seen when the Boy beats the witches-as-greyhounds with a switch, or a long thin stick similar to Circe's wand, and they transform back to their former shapes (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.5.16-30). Another instance of a male character using a Circean tool for a 'magical' purpose, is the constable with his "staff" which, as a symbol of his authority, becomes an object with magical powers, in that it removes magical powers provided by the devil (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.5.164, 153-68). With the exception of this last example, male characters' connections to witchcraft tend to be imbued with strong comical tones, often in association with those of previous stage witches, or popular beliefs about witches, as can be seen in the following exchange:

Shakestone Sweet Master Whetstone!

Bantam Dainty Master Whetstone!

Arthur Delicate Master Whetstone!

Whetstone You say right! Master Whetstone I have been,
Master Whetstone I am, and Master Whetstone I
shall be, and those that know me know withal
that I have not my name for nothing. …

(*Witches of Lancashire*, 1.1.59-64)

This echoes the triple naming of Macbeth at the start of that play, making the gallants into a comic version of the Weird Sisters. Later, in the same scene, Bantam suggests that Whetstone is a witch for guessing that they are going to his Uncle's for dinner. He replies: "How! A witch, gentlemen? I hope you do not / mean to abuse me, though at this time (if report) / be true) there are too many of them here in our / country. But I am sure I look like no such ugly creature," (*Witches of Lancashire*, 1.1.88-92). This scene reflects the dehumanising of witches in texts, reminds us that men could be witches, and that to call someone a witch, who was not one, was considered slanderous.

Witchcraft as Performance

As demonstrated in that echoing of *Macbeth*, a primary theme of this play is witchcraft as a theatrically performed act. Part of this is the physical image of the witch, which by this point in history is rapidly approaching the stereotype as Pratchett would inherit it. As such, the play repeatedly references performances of witchcraft from earlier plays, in particular, *Macbeth*, such as: "You / look like one o' the Scottish weird sisters," (*Witches of Lancashire*, 1.2.162-63), and Mawd singing the song "Come Away" (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1.12).[18] These witches are also aware of other recent witches on stage, such as those from Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, as they perform a dance to perform magic (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1.16-19), and refer to their performance as a masque (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1.20-1). In a manner that links back to very early ideas about witches and revenge, in Act Four, Scene Five, the witches use a performance as a means of assisting Whetstone to get revenge against the gallants for their previous insults.

There is thus undeniably a strong element of 'stage magic' in this, and later witch plays. The 'stage magic' of their Sabbath feast is quite apparent, with the witches pulling on ropes to make the stolen food appear (*Witches of Lancashire*, 4.1.55-71). As well as flying on brooms, they also report that the brooms magically sweep under their own power,

in a manner familiar to anyone who has seen Disney's animated film *Sleeping Beauty* (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.6.24-6). The witches also cause milk pails to fly across the stage, and of course, they bewitch the musicians so that they play badly, something previously seen in *The Witch of Edmonton* (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.6.46, 3.3.106). Meanwhile, the witches achieve many of their magical feats while speaking in rhyming verse; which has become another staple of witches on stage (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.1 *passim*). Their powers, like those of many other stage witches, are limited; therefore, they only have enough power to work one substantial spell at a time. Their lack of power gives the Seelys a reprieve from the social chaos they are inflicting on their household while they transform the wedding feast (*Witches of Lancashire*, 3.1.164-6). This magically caused social disruption demonstrates a way that witchcraft can be used to both demonise social disorder as well as explain it. There are many instances in this play, and in those that follow it, when being bewitched is used as an excuse for socially inappropriate behaviour (*Witches of Lancashire*, 1.2.169 and 194-99).

Conclusions

These 'sisters' and "wicked witch[es]" (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.5.40) combine Circean transformations, European Sabbaths, and touches of local humour with references such as those to the purloined sirloin of the wedding feast (*Witches of Lancashire*, 5.1.60-63). This play contains many elements of stereotypical witches, in that they are mostly old, bawdy, fly and create potions in cauldrons. It also has more than a little bit of humour, as is noted by Egan, which a modern audience might find odd, given that the accused witches were in jail at the time the play was written and performed.[19] The play also reflects the potential ambivalence of the playwrights and the audience to all things magical in its occasional references to folk and fairy beliefs (*Witches of Lancashire*, 4.1.70-1, 5.3.72-76). I think that Paul Merchant sums up the state of (dis)belief nicely:

> It would appear that throughout his career Heywood viewed magic as simultaneously the province of charlatans and an area of psychic exploration, at the same time a fearsome and ill-understood phenomenon best treated with deflationary humour and a readily available source of comfort and assistance, consulted by people of all classes. The ambivalence of his plays probably reflects an almost identical uncertainty in the minds of the audience.[20]

Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O Divelly the Irish Priest*

If we jump forward nearly 50 years, and across a period of massive social upheaval in England, to the Restoration period and the addition of female actors to the stage, we encounter a play that draws very heavily on *The Witches of Lancashire*. Thomas Shadwell's text, *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O Divelly the Irish Priest*, contains many of the same elements of stage witchcraft that occurs in its precursor, but it focuses more on the marriage plots.[21] This play demonstrates many levels of belief and scepticism about witches, from the self-styled witch-hunter, Sir Jeffery Shacklehead, to the more moderate and sceptical Sir Edward Hartfort. Although there are several likeable characters such as Sir Edward that are sceptical about witchcraft and magic, the issue is made problematic by the depiction on stage of 'magical' occurrences. These include references to flying, animal transformations, and a masque-like show using spirits. In his introduction to the play, Shadwell implies that prosecutions of witches were largely a thing of the past and that there had been a great reduction in general belief, at least in London. However, it was politically unwise to deny the potential power of witches, so he had to present them as 'real' rather than frauds. This did not, however, dampen his desire to capitalise on the

popularity of 'staged magic' at the time, which included several revisions of Shakespeare's plays by himself and others.[22]

Not surprisingly, given the popularity of revisions to Elizabethan plays, this text is very strongly influenced by the witches of Greco-Roman myths, including elements such as Medea's infanticide, cauldron ingredients and rejuvenation speech, as Shadwell demonstrates in his extensive notes on the witchcraft scenes. These notes, especially when they reference classical witchcraft, owe more than a little to Ben Jonson's 1609 *The Masque of Queens*, as is noted by Summers in his edition of the play.[23] It is clear that Shadwell's witches are taken as much if not more from poetry, fiction (especially Ovid and Lucan), demonology and earlier drama, than from what people 'knew' on a local level about witches. Therefore, many Circean and Medean elements can be found scattered throughout the text.

Circean

As has been previously mentioned, this play is a reworking of the earlier play, *The Witches of Lancashire*, so it should come as no surprise that it shares several of that play's themes, including the Circean trait of transformative magic. In this play, the witches transform into hares, cats (complete with limb amputation), and a horse (again utilising the magical bridle) (*Lancashire Witches*, 114, 117, 178, 148). These witches, who are routinely referred to as hags throughout the text, fly overhead like a flock of birds (it is unclear what shape they are taking), and Tom Shacklehead shoots Mal Spencer, causing her to fall to the ground in human form. This more often happened to witches in their shapeshifted form in English witch stories and is a part of folklore mentioned in Pratchett's novels. Clod then uses Mal's own transformational magic against her, by putting the magical bridle on her, thus transforming her into a horse on which he flies away (*Lancashire Witches*, 166-7). Shadwell's notes upon the Third Act outline the classical witch sources referenced within

the play, many of which coincide with Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, (*Lancashire Witches*, 152-4). The notes dwell on witches' abilities to transform themselves and others, including the belief that "the Devil does not change the Body, but only abuse and delude the fancy" (*Lancashire Witches*, 154). As previously mentioned in this study, metamorphosis was a favoured target of sceptics.

Another aspect of Circean witchcraft utilised by these witches is Mal Spencer's use of "Love Cups" or love potions, using sympathetic magic ingredients, including a wolf's tail hairs and bits of his penis or "yard" (*Lancashire Witches*, 132). This sexual aspect of the witches is a theme continued throughout, including the humorous interlude caused by darkness and mistaken identities, where a Catholic priest and an ugly old witch end up fornicating (*Lancashire Witches*, 168). Humour is used in conjunction with Circean elements, including a scene where Mother Dickenson beats Tegue with her staff, which is clearly just a walking stick and not an object of magical power as it might have been in previous reinterpretations of Circe (*Lancashire Witches*, 166). Amongst the many references to classical witches and their more recent dramatic incarnations, is their attempt to use weather magic to sink a ship (as in *Macbeth*). In the earliest versions of Circe and Medea myths, their use of weather magic is either benign or a show of power with no negative outcome. By this stage in literature and drama, however, weather magic is almost always used in an attempt to cause harm.

The witches also repeatedly use songs, something originally associated with Circe's temptations, but here solely for entertainment value, and in order to narrate magical exploits on an otherwise increasingly rational stage.[24] An example of this is the song on page 151, which has many classical witch resonances, and tells the new witch, Madge, what her powers are. Verse one includes their ability to control men and beasts (like Circe). In verse two they claim to be able to control the weather, (like Circe and Medea), and also like Medea, in verse three, they can fly. The fantastical elements are multiplied

when in verse four they are reported as fairylike. This includes creeping into houses, stealing food and drink, sleeping in flowers like bees, implying they can make themselves small, like the diminutive fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Verse five realigns them with Medea, with their desire for revenge. The Devil sums up the supposed powers at the end, including their ability to "[r]aise Ghosts, transform yourself, and whom you will," (*Lancashire Witches*, 152).

Medean

Another song, which emphasises the witches' links to classical literary witches, is found on page 133 and includes many things that were attempted by the Hags in *The Masque of Queens*. These included weather magic, flying and illicit sexuality. It is implied by the humorous presentation of these things that by the late seventeenth century most of the powers that these witches claim to possess are not commonly believed in, or at least not in London, where this play was performed. Medean threats such as "[o]f full revenge we have the power;" seem a lot less threatening when followed by the confused nonsense that the witches say before vanishing. The very fact that these witches are singing and dancing speaks volumes about changes in representations, and potentially about beliefs.[25] Nevertheless, the undoubted influence of Medea on witches in Drama is noted by Harris:

> Medea's speech from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VII, which Jonson, Middleton and Shakespeare had all incorporated into their dramas, is also used by Shadwell. […] These lines are spoken in Act III by the Devil, during an initiation ceremony which includes a five-part song and a dance 'with fantastic unusual postures'. This is one of several instances of Shadwell's adding to the spectacle of the play by portraying grotesque rituals, the details of which he found in his source material.[26]

These details include references to animals associated with witchcraft thanks to Medea and Hecate, and their reinterpretation in *Macbeth*, such as toads, owls, bats, wolves, and snakes (*Lancashire Witches*, 115, 116). The witches work their magic using a cauldron-like pot, which they stir with their broomsticks before tossing them in the air to create a storm. The ingredients of their potion are arguably the most grotesque in the literature thus far. They go beyond previous stage witches in the crimes they commit in gathering them, such as, "A Brat ith' Mothers Womb I slew: / The Fathers neck I twisted too," thereby destroying a whole family (*Lancashire Witches*, 132). Mother Dickenson also resembles Ovid's Medea: "With Coats tuck'd up, and with my Hair, / All flowing loosely in the Air, / With naked Feet I went among / The poysonous Plants, there Adders Tongue," (*Lancashire Witches*, 149-50). The Devil also informs us that the Medean trait of the murder of children is a yearly tribute required to obtain their powers (*Lancashire Witches*, 150). Despite all this, these witches are on the whole presented as more humorous and therefore less threatening than any of their antecedents.

Counter Magic

One innovation of this play is the number of times that counter-magical actions or prophylactics against witchcraft are mentioned. These include protective items that a modern audience (and even some early moderns) might more strongly associate with protections against other supernatural entities. Such as horse shoes (also good against fairies); garlic (now considered useful for vampires); as well as certain herbs such as moly, that have long been said to protect against spirits and witches (*Lancashire Witches*, 147). Lady Shacklehead, whose sexual aggressiveness marks her as more than a little Circean, exhibits quite a bit of knowledge regarding counter-magics, recognising bewitchment, herbs, and other traits more commonly associated with cunning-women (*Lancashire*

Witches, 161). What prevents her from being considered a witch could benefit from further study; however, her magical knowledge is being shared to help restore the status quo (in the manner of a cunning-woman), and her husband the witch-hunter is unaware of her sexual desires.

Apart from when a character uses the witches' magic against them, as in the case of the magical bridle previously mentioned, no other characters successfully use magic despite their attempts to. This includes Tegue O Divelly's attempts to "conjure down this Tempest," which is immediately followed by thunder (*Lancashire Witches*, 177). The Priest also claims extensive magical knowledge, which is unsurprising given the associations between the Catholic Church and magic in post-Reformation England, but it is repeatedly shown to be at odds with what others know about magic (*Lancashire Witches*, 178).

Witchcraft as Performance

The idea of witchcraft as a performed act—and as a spectacle to be staged—becomes even more pronounced as the century progresses, and witchcraft prosecutions and convictions become less common. The witches of this play, like those in many preceding plays, speak in rhyme when they are meeting (*Lancashire Witches*, 149). This can be seen as a distancing tool, as even their speech is different from that of other characters, as well as reflecting the power believed to be inherent in charms, which often consisted of rhyming words. *The Lancashire Witches* contains many of the same instances of stage magic to be found in *The Witches of Lancashire*, and other plays, including: bewitched musicians, music playing in the air, unusual dancing, as well as brooms and other props such as bottles moving on their own volition, and flying—as mentioned earlier (*Lancashire Witches*, 165, 150, 131).[27] In addition, this play uses the stage convention of magical invisibility so as to show Mother Demdike playing fairly violent tricks on Tegue, kicking

him and punching him (*Lancashire Witches*, 163). The idea of witchcraft as performance is further complicated by the fact that Isabella and Theodosia, the mostly 'good' girls of the play, disguise themselves as witches to frighten people, an act that demonstrates a lack of fear on their part of being thought to be witches.

Conclusions

An idea that could do with further exploration is the concept that frivolous representations of witches (such as we see in this play) could be staged at a time when witchcraft was still being prosecuted as a serious crime, and witches were being hanged. As Summers has noted, "it was about a year after the production of Shadwell's play, on 25 August, 1682, that the last execution for witchcraft took place in England, when three witches were put to death at Exeter."[28] While in some parts of England witchcraft was still considered a serious crime, in London, in particular, there was an observable growth in scepticism (or at least a reluctance among the elite to prosecute witches), as is reflected in the character of Sir Edward Hartfort. As he makes clear (on page 144), Sir Edward views Sir Jeffery's ideas about witches as potentially entertaining, since he does not believe that witches are a threat to him. This is problematic in terms of this play, as the witches' powers are presented as being real (including their ability to drink everything in Sir Edward's cellar). However, the idea of the witch as a scapegoat, which made brief appearances in the earlier plays examined in this study, is clearly entrenched within this play. Many characters in this play blame their socially unacceptable behaviour on witches, or they claim to be bewitched, as does Lady Shacklehead when she feigns sleepwalking to cover her attempted assignation (*Lancashire Witches*, 171).

As was seen in the earlier play, *The Witches of Lancashire*, Shadwell's reworking, *The Lancashire Witches*, utilises a stereotypical image of the witch that would be recognisable to a modern audience. These witches fly, they sing, they dance, they are

mostly ugly old hags with the odd pretty young one thrown in for good measure. They speak in rhyme, cast spells around cauldrons full of disgusting ingredients, and might just turn themselves or you into an animal. Unlike a century earlier, where they were more likely to be seen as sinister and ambiguous forces in histories or tragedies, by the Restoration period witches are just as, if not more, likely to appear in a comedy such as this, with its attempted critique of social mores and religion, and with no real expectation of belief by the audience in the magic as performed on stage. This trend is seen in other Restoration plays, in particular, revisions of Shakespeare.

Restoration Revisions of Shakespeare

Revisions of Shakespeare during the Restoration period were popular, although many would be barely recognisable to audiences more familiar with the plays as they are found in modern editions of early Quarto or First Folio versions. Among these is *The Tempest or the Enchanted Island*, which was first revised by Dryden and Davenant, and later again by Shadwell. It contains many more characters, a lot of new songs, and a notable deletion is Prospero's renunciation of his magic speech, with its connection to Ovid's Medea. Barbara Murray has done a useful study of Restoration revisions of Shakespeare, examining the plays as texts in their own rights, and, although she does not look in detail at the magical or fantastical elements of these plays, I do not consider it necessary to cover the plays she looks at in any great detail as part of this study.[29]

All in all, these revisions, which include *Macbeth* in addition to *The Tempest*, are more concerned with 'performing' supernatural elements. They use magic as an excuse for including spectacles such as flying, singing, and dancing, which would otherwise have no place on stage because of the then-contemporary emphasis on internal consistency and rationality within plays. They are certainly not overly concerned with whether the audience believes in the possibility of what they are portraying. Many of the elements associated

with witches in these plays influenced English Pantomimes and the witch stereotype that was affirmed by their performance, including old women flying on broomsticks, potions in cauldrons, and the steeple hat.[30]

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated by the four chapters of this study thus far, there have been many types of witchcraft available for use by poets and playwrights in early modern England, up to and including the Restoration period. Despite the obvious differences between early reinterpretations of the mythic witches Circe and Medea, as seen in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and the most popular incarnation of the figure of the witch during the Restoration, the Bawdy Hag witch with her cauldron and her flying broom, I would hope this study has illustrated the progression of representations that has made possible the latter. At various points throughout this period, one can see a correlation between how much of a threat witches were perceived to be off the stage, as indicated by frequencies of prosecutions, flare-ups of witch-hunting and popularity of other texts such as trial pamphlets, and how they were presented onstage. Generally speaking, the less threatening witches were to the target audience of a text, the more comic their representation was, with a gradual although by no means consistent move towards witches who could simply no longer be taken seriously by any but the most credulous individuals.

These ebbs and flows in the threat witches were perceived to be did have some correlation to larger political and social concerns. Hence, during the relative stability of Elizabeth's reign, when witchcraft was a prosecutable offence, and widely believed in, but not an overt or serious threat to a courtly audience in their daily lives, the subject was treated carefully, with magic used successfully, but also successfully contained by authority figures and with occasional humorous elements included. During the Jacobean period, with King James' particular interest, and earlier fear of the power of witches, many

of the witches represented on stage were often utterly ineffectual magic users, on the margins of the text, or ambiguously dangerous, as in *Macbeth*. However, throughout all the periods examined in this study, representations of witches would regularly draw on ideas and images found in literary depictions of the classical witches, Circe and Medea. Given that the basis of the stereotype of the witch is that of a bad or dangerous woman, who has access to power (be it magical or political) that is undesirable for a woman to wield, it is unsurprising that the first witches in literature would have a clear influence on their much later incarnations. This continuity was made stronger by the popularity of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the strong association of these witches with particular parts of undesirable female behaviour, such as Circe's dangerous sexuality, which eventually translated to the image of the Bawdy old witch, and Medea's desire for murder and revenge, which is strongly associated with the image of her cauldron. The next chapter of this study will examine Terry Pratchett's take on the idea of the witch in his Discworld Series, and how he reacts to the stereotype of the witch as a bad woman as it was developed during the early modern period.

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1. All references to *The Witch*, will be in text with the abbreviation *Witch*, and will be to Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, eds., *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press 1986). Corbin and Sedge look at the issues of the play's success, and contemporary textual influences briefly in their introduction on page 13. Taylor and Lavagnino's edition was also consulted, but the Corbin and Sedge edition was chosen as it is more accessible. Marion O'Conner outlines the Devereux-Howard divorce and its possible influence on the text and reception of the play her introduction to *The Witch* in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds., *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 1124-26. O'Connor also notes that the witches are: "[c]onspicuously ineffectual in their plot relations to the courtiers, the witch and her colleagues appear almost innocent alongside them. For all her

[Hecate's] talk of incest and infanticide, the coven is not shown to be performing anything more noxious than their aerial song and dance routine." O'Connor, *Thomas Middleton*, 1126.

2. O'Connor suggests 1616, *Thomas Middleton*, 1128. Corbin and Sedge suggest the wider date range of 1613-16, and hasty composition style, *Witchcraft Plays*, 14, 13.

3. Anthony Harris, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester University Press, 1980), 84-85.

4. For more detail on possible sources, see Corbin and Sedge's notes to these lines, *Witchcraft Plays*, 230.

5. English familiars were most commonly domestic animals, like dogs, cats and small rodents, see Charlotte Rose Millar, "The Witch's Familiar in Sixteenth-Century England," *Melbourne Historical Journal* (2010): 118.

6. All references to *The Witch of Edmonton* are to the edition by Corbin and Sedge, *Witchcraft Plays*, and will be in text using the abbreviation *Witch of Ed*.

7. Corbin and Sedge touch on the sympathetic portrayal of Mother Sawyer, see notes to II.i.34-4, and 8-13, *Witchcraft Plays*, 234.

8. By her first repetition, Mother Sawyer has already corrupted the words (*Witch of Ed*, 2.1.181). In this section, according to Corbin and Sedge, "Dekker draws heavily on the source." *Witchcraft Plays*, 236, referring to Goodcole's pamphlet. At lines, 2.1.243-4, she corrupts the charm again.

9. *Witch of Ed*, 3.1.7-8.,Meg F. Pearson, "A Dog, a Witch, a Play: The Witch of Edmonton," *Early Theatre* 11, no. 2 (2008); Frances Elizabeth Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 211.

10. References to the play will be in text and to Richard Brome and Thomas Heywood, *The Witches of Lancashire*, ed. Gabriel Egan (London: Nick Hern Books, 2002). Egan's notes

to the text regularly reference the glossary of Laird H Barber, *An Edition of the Late Lancashire Witches by Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979). Egan's text has modernized spelling and punctuation, and Barber's text is a facsimile with a detailed introduction and extensive notes to the text. Both of these editions cover the Historical circumstances of the plays composition, as well as the fact that the catalyst of the 1634 court case was stories told by a young boy to avoid getting in trouble.

11. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 176.

12. Charlotte A. Coffin, "Theatre and/as Witchcraft: A Reading of the Late Lancashire Witches (1634)," *Early Theatre* 15.2 (2013).

13. James Wallace, "A Note on the Staged reading", in Egan, *Witches of Lancashire*, vi.

14. Wallace, "A Note on the Staged reading", vii.

15. Lisa Hopkins and Helen Ostovich, *Magical Transformations on the Early Modern English Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016). Elissa Beatrice Hare, *Enchanted Shows: Vision and Structure in Elizabethan and Shakespearean Comedy About Magic* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 1988).

16. Charlotte-Rose Millar, "Sleeping with devils: the sexual witch in seventeenth-century England." in Marcus Harmes and Victoria Bladen, *Supernatural and Secular Power in Early Modern England* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015). Connections between English witches and devils are explored further in her recent book, Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2017).

17. For the visual aspects of witchcraft, see Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

18. This is possibly a reference to Middleton's *The Witch*, which also featured this song in conjunction with flying, but is most likely a reference to the revised version of *Macbeth* that contains this song and the Hecate scenes.

19. Egan, *Witches of Lancashire*, xi.

20. Thomas Heywood, *Three Marriage Plays*, ed. Paul Merchant (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 9-10.

21. Thomas Shadwell, *The Complete Works: Of Thomas Shadwell*, ed. Montague Summers, vol. 4 (London: Fortune Press, 1927), 90. All references to the play will be to this edition, and referenced in text using the abbreviated title *Lancashire Witches*.

22. Summers, *Thomas Shadwell*, 89.

23. Summers also provides a fairly complete summary of Shadwell's probable sources, *Thomas Shadwell*, 89-90.

24. Steven E. Plank, "'And Now About the Cauldron Sing': Music and the Supernatural on the Restoration Stage," *Early Music* 18, no. 3 (1990).

25. Plank, "Music and the Supernatural", 394.

26. Harris, *Night's Black Agents*, 191.

27. Loeb, Andrew, "'My poor fiddle is bewitched': Music, Magic, and the Theatre in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*" in Hopkins, Lisa, and Helen Ostovich. *Magical Transformations on the Early Modern English Stage*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016, 215.

28. Summers, *Thomas Shadwell*, 90-1.

29. Barbara A Murray, *Restoration Shakespeare: Viewing the Voice* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 2001).

30. Summers, *Thomas Shadwell*, 98.

Chapter Five:

Pratchett's Witches

Introduction

Throughout the recent influx of scholarship on Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, including an entire edition of *Mythlore*, there has been much work done on Pratchett's use of Shakespeare in his witch novels.[1] Frequently neglected in this work, however, is the broader story of the witch figure in history and literature, and the place of the texts in this tradition. Since the first witches in literature, what we might reasonably call the Story of the Witch has been about the dangers presented by her nonconformity and resistance to gender expectations. This chapter briefly traces the development of the two main strands of witch stereotypes, the dangerous seductress and the ugly old hag (including their gendered nature) in Pratchett's witch novels. It does this using the myths of Circe and Medea (from which these stereotypes derived), especially when the reinterpretations of these myths in early modern texts have influenced the novels. However, the main focus of this chapter is on the ways in which Pratchett's witches interact with, manipulate, and frequently resist the Story of the Witch.

In Pratchett's Discworld novels, narrative, like magic, is a force that can be manipulated if a character has the skills and knowledge to do so, and Pratchett's witches frequently do so. The performative nature of witchcraft and gender is evident in the Story of the Witch at many points in history and literature, and Pratchett's good witches, particularly his younger witches, like contemporary feminists, resist and re-write the story of what it is to be a witch or a woman. This chapter will examine four of Pratchett's main witch characters, Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick, and Tiffany Aching, focusing on their connections to other witches in myth, literature, and drama. In doing so, it will also consider what happens when the witches are not the 'evil others' of the text

(which was common in traditional representations), and what this can tell us about the culture and society in which they appear.

Revisiting the Story of the Witch

Early modern representations of female power and witchcraft reflect the fears and beliefs of both the people writing and receiving those texts, while at the same time influencing those beliefs and fears. The mythic figures of Circe and Medea in their many forms throughout literature were of significant influence in the creation of female stereotypes, such as the duplicitous seductress or the infanticidal hag. Even witch trials in history were influenced by the stories of Circe and Medea, as early modern demonologists had no qualms using classical poetry as evidence and the mythic witches Circe and Medea as proof that witches did things like transform people into animals, or fly. The equation of bad women with wicked witches, or the evil Other to be feared—a tradition inherited by early modern English authors—is a repeating trend in literature since classical myths. Kimberly Stratton examines early examples of this tradition in *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World*.[2]

Frequently throughout Shakespeare's plays, dangerously ambitious women are described as having witch-like attributes, whether they attempt to use magic or not. Meanwhile, representations of female characters that do have recourse to magic often portray them as ineffectual magic users, like Joan of Arc; they show reductions in power from their antecedents (Titania, for example); or are entirely demonised, like the Weird Sisters of *Macbeth*. However, sometimes we see male characters, such as Oberon, taking on many Circean traits previously possessed by female figures without being presented as overly dangerous or evil. This trend continues with Prospero, who has many of the same Medean and Circean witch-skills as Sycorax, whom he demonises throughout *The Tempest* while denying the strength of her magic. Prospero, however, is presented as a benevolent

magician, complete with a staff and cloak, while she was a wicked witch, who within the text never possesses that Circean object of power, the staff, or a wand. None of the magical female characters in Shakespeare's plays has access to this symbol of magical power, much like Spenser's very Circean Acrasia, who is also without a wand. Therefore, the wand, or staff, can be seen as symbolic of male magical power in early modern literature, without any apparent negative connotations when used by a male character, a trend that has continued in modern Fantasy novels.

Another symbol of Circe's powers, her cup, has also been largely divorced from female magic users and has become a metaphor for what men do to themselves by drinking too much. Women such as Cleopatra are described as having Circe's seductive nature but without her magical powers. These seductive women are often blamed for drunkenness and dereliction of manly behaviours; yet they do not have the power literally to transform their lovers, unlike earlier Circe figures. The magical language previously associated with Circe figures, including terms such as charm, bewitch, and enchant, frequently appears in non-magical contexts, especially about love or lust. Circe's most lasting influence on the figure of the witch in literature from the early modern period onwards is the fact that non-conforming or dangerous sexuality became virtually inseparable from the idea of the witch. There are no examples of female magic workers or even those accused of doing magic in Shakespeare, whose sexual integrity is not also questioned. Also, female characters who, like Circe, use their sexuality as a way of gaining power are frequently described as witches or witch-like, even when they do not use magic.

During the early modern period, the terms witch and whore were frequently deployed as derogatory terms for non-conforming women, regardless of their actual social transgressions, and this still occurs today. Another recurrent trope in early modern literature was the image of the hag witch. In Spenser, we saw some evidence of this trend, but largely thanks to *Macbeth*, the idea of the witch as an ugly old woman has now become

stereotypical. Restoration revisions of Shakespeare's plays, and later Victorian Masquerades and Pantomimes, all reinforced these two main strands of witch stereotypes, and utilised elements like the pointy hat and flying on broomsticks which had not previously been popular features in the Story of the Witch. The first strand in the Story of the Witch is based on Circe, the beautiful seductress who uses love potions to transform the hearts and minds of her victims, if not their bodies. The second, based on Medea, offers the better-known stereotype of the witch: the ugly old hag, who dresses in black, flies through the air, has a cauldron, and is a danger to children. Both of these strands of the Story of the Witch are a strong influence on representations of magical women, most commonly called witches, in the modern Fantasy fiction genre, and it is this misogynistic view of women that Pratchett firstly parodies, and later re-writes in his representations of witches.

Pratchett's Good Witches

By the time Pratchett encountered literary examples of magical use, different styles of magic had formed themselves into gendered stereotypes, most noticeably the wicked female witch, the good fairy or fairy godmother and the male wizard or sorcerer who could be either good or evil depending on his context. Pratchett explores, parodies, and sometimes reinforces these stereotypes in many of the Discworld novels, particularly those featuring witches and wizards as the main characters.

One of the reasons for the portrayal of Circe and Medea as dangerous witches was their ability to 'unman' the males they encountered. This element of their myths was absorbed into general witch stereotypes during the early modern period, thanks at least in part to Spenser's reinterpretations of their myths, and appropriations of Circean- and Medean-elements for use with bad women more generally. Due to the similarities between ancient Greek or Roman and early modern English gender norms, what made a woman 'bad' in Circe and Medea myths would have been very similar to what made her 'bad'

during the early modern period. By setting the Discworld in a fantasy world strongly influenced by early modern and Victorian Britain, Pratchett is better able to examine stereotypes such as those based on gender, which while still relevant in contemporary society are not as obvious now as they were during earlier stages of human history. In several instances, Pratchett's witches reinforce the status quo or even attempt a return to traditional ideas of 'good' female behaviour. As will be examined in more detail, Tiffany Aching learns to become a witch by using the 'traditional method' based on oral traditions and practical application in a type of apprenticeship to senior witches.

One of the largest early modern changes to witch stereotypes is the combining of fairy tropes, folktales, and historical sources of early modern witch stories with literary representations of witchcraft. Located on the cusp of these changes, largely using established sources of Circean and Medean myths, but also including elements of early modern English fairy-lore, folk tales and stories of witches are Spenser's texts. In the Discworld novels we find elves or fairies, clashing with witches on numerous occasions, but particularly in *Lords and Ladies*, *The Wee Free Men* and *The Shepherd's Crown*. Because they are inclusively parodic or satirical novels, there are not many literary and cultural stereotypes that do not appear in the Discworld stories, at least in passing, and this includes the idea of the Hag or wicked old witch.

Up until the early modern period, witches in literature were just as likely (if not more likely) to be beautiful young temptresses, as they were to be ugly old women. Thanks to authors like Spenser and Shakespeare, who have several witches of the latter variety (including some like Duessa who initially disguise themselves as the beautiful young type), the idea of the witch became permanently linked to the image of the Hag during the early modern period. According to Dorothy Stephens, old women were objects of scorn during the early modern period, so Spenser's treatment of Glauce, Britomart's nurse, is not surprising: "Because of her chiefly comic role thus far, with her ineffectual folk medicine

and her old-womanish fancies ...[she] has very nearly become invisible in a heroic context."[3] Glauce and several others of Spenser's old women, both good and bad, have a few characteristics that we later find in Pratchett's witches, particularly Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax. Even the term Crone is not one liked by Pratchett's witches, often referring to the three archetypal witches as "The maiden, the mother and the ... other one."[4]

The stereotypes that originated during the early modern period based around the Hag gave rise to our culture's image of what is known in the Discworld novels as the 'storybook witch'. There are several variations to the stereotype, but the primary characteristics are: an old woman, warts, hooked nose, bad teeth, bad hair, nails like talons (which are sometimes black). She (witches are always women in stories) is known for dressing in black, wearing a black pointy hat, riding on broomsticks, having a tendency to cackle and, on rare occasions, green skin.[5] Pratchett's witches sometimes even use this image to their advantage, as a means of ensuring the villagers respect them and believe in their abilities. The idea of the witch as an outsider is constant throughout literature and history, such as in Homer's Circe, whose island is like another world, and Ovid's Medea, who does not fit in anywhere, even being different in the place where she was born. This idea of the witch as a foreigner or outsider can also be seen in most early modern English examples of Circe and Medea figures and witches generally in literature. While they try to set themselves apart, Pratchett's witches are embedded in the communities they serve. They more closely resemble the white witches of the early modern period, cunning-women (and men) than they do the wicked witches of stories that they align themselves with, such as Granny Weatherwax's predecessor, Black Aliss.[6]

Granny Weatherwax

Esmerelda (Esme) Weatherwax, also known as Mistress Weatherwax or Granny Weatherwax is one of Pratchett's most powerful, yet good, witches. She appears in all six

of the adult Discworld Witch novels (and a short story) as well as the five novels marketed for children or young adults that comprise the Tiffany Aching series. Her first appearance in *Equal Rites* presents a Granny Weatherwax who is more strongly influenced by the witch stereotype than the Granny whom a reader encounters in the subsequent witch novels, where she forms part of a Triad, firstly with Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick, and later with other witches. Granny recognises that witches are part of stories and that they have the ability to manipulate the outcomes of the stories that form around them.

The 'performance' of witchcraft and being a witch is a repeating theme of the Witch novels, as is made clear in the opening pages of *Wyrd Sisters*, (an obvious parody of Shakespeare's *Macbeth).* The performative nature of witchcraft will be examined firstly in relation to Granny Weatherwax, and then later in relation to the other witches studied in this chapter. Granny Weatherwax is most often defined by what she is not. She is not a Circean sorceress like her sister Lily, and she is not a Medean danger to children, like the vampires. Many pages throughout the series are dedicated to how much harder it is for a witch like Granny to be 'good', and to not give in and use the vast power she has access to for unethical purposes. Granny Weatherwax has a clear investment in and resistance to witch stereotypes, particularly when these stereotypes intersect with Circean and Medean tropes.

Performance and the Witch Stereotype

Unsurprisingly, given the influence of medieval and early modern literature and drama on the fantasy genre (and the styles of magic to be found in that genre), Pratchett's witches strongly resemble early modern magic users—although they arguably more closely resemble the benign cunning women of early modern English villages than they do the dangerous witches whose name they share. Their closer resemblance to cunning women does not, of course, prevent other characters, such as Duke Felmet, from trying to present

them as dangerous Circean and Medean figures, or as maleficent witches such as those found in early modern English trial pamphlets. In *Wyrd Sisters*, according to Shawn Ogg, people are saying lots of bad things about the witches: "'All sorts of things. Like, old Verence was a bad king and you helped him on the throne, and you caused that bad winter the other year, and old Norbut's cow dint give no milk after you looked at it. Lots of lies, m'm,' he added, loyally." (*WS*, 134). This brief description reflects the way literary ideas about witchcraft, such as messing with politics and controlling the weather, which can be traced to Circe and Medea myths, appear in plays such as *Macbeth* while being combined with village concerns such, as witches affecting milk production. In all of Pratchett's witch novels, we get to see how his witches react to and frequently resist these ideas about what it is to be a witch, often with large doses of humour to help the message about reductive stereotypes go down.

"Essential to performance is costume, of course, so it can come as no surprise either that Discworlders exhibit an extreme anxiety over the clothes that they wear or that their sartorial inclinations are invariably couched in terms of dressing for an audience."[7] The witches of Lancre are included amongst the examples that Andrew Rayment gives in his chapter about the use of masks and costumes in Pratchett novels. Of all Pratchett's witches, Granny Weatherwax is the most vocal about the performative nature of witchcraft in the Ramtops, discussing it with another character in most of the witch novels. An example of this is when Granny laments not wearing her own clothes in *Witches Abroad*, stating: "'Black's the proper colour for a witch.'", indicating she feels the white outfit she is wearing is somehow hindering her performance of being a witch (*WA*, 329). The idea of witches wearing black exists in many literary sources, due to their association with darkness, but it can clearly be traced to Shakespeare's black and midnight Hags in *Macbeth*.[8] Another repeatedly mentioned costume item for Pratchett's witches is the pointy hat. Despite the stated fact that: "The pointy hat carried a lot of weight in the Ramtops.

People talked to the hat, not to the person wearing it."(*CJ*, 19), his witches are often noted for not wearing a hat. This includes at various points, Magrat, Nanny, and Tiffany. Much like a uniform, it demonstrates the social purpose of the person wearing it. "She had put her pointed hat on, and the long black cloak which she wore when she wanted anyone who saw her to be absolutely clear that she was a witch." (*WS*, 101).

The emphasis on performing the role of a witch in the Discworld novels is also a reminder of how the symbols of witchcraft can come to erase the individual fulfilling that office. The role of the witch, while filled by powerful female characters, is largely not a position of overt power within Pratchett's novels, and as Granny herself notes, she is: "grateful that long-standing tradition didn't allow the Crafty and the Wise to rule. She remembered what it had felt like to wear the crown, even for a few seconds." (*WS*, 103). As this reference demonstrates, Pratchett's witches struggle with the dangerous temptation of using their magical power throughout the novels, particularly Granny, and later Tiffany. This denial of power by Pratchett's witches, with their preference for just meddling a bit, puts them in opposition to dangerous women who try to rule, especially those who usurped power, such as Lady Felmet, and Lady Lilith. This theme of dangerous female power goes back to early modern reinterpretations of Circe and Medea including Spenser's evil female rulers, and Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth amongst others.

Circean

Given the novels' preoccupations with stereotypes and stories, it is not surprising that many of the witches of the Discworld novels, as well as other characters, have been influenced by Circe and Medea myths, sometimes referencing other mythic figures these two witches were associated with, such as Venus. For example, when Granny Weatherwax, "rose from the ditch like Venus Anadyomene, only older and with more duckweed," she wears a lot more clothes than Venus does in the 1520 oil painting by Titian (*WS*, 168).

Pratchett compares Granny to a goddess, even if he then puts her in a humorous predicament. The goddess in question, Venus, is linked to Circe figures due to their shared attributes, one of which is prostitution—as can be seen in *The Faerie Queene* and other early modern texts. Therefore, this comparison of Granny to Venus is an indirect link between her and Circe figures but in a humorous as well as obviously reductive way. Adding to the humour is, of course, the idea of the virginal, old maid, Granny Weatherwax as a Venus or Circe figure. Despite this, Granny Weatherwax has several Circean—and Medean—attributes. As is the case with a lot of earlier positive Circean as well as Medean figures, these attributes are largely divorced from the less savoury elements of these two mythic archetypes, such as dangerous sexuality, permanently transforming people into animals and excessive violence or murder.

In Pratchett, the less socially desirable traits of Circean and Medean witch figures tend to be displaced from his witches onto other characters, be they magical or not. None of the good witches of the Discworld novels resembles courtesan Circe figures such as are found in early modern texts, even though Granny Weatherwax humorously pretends to be a wealthy courtesan in *Maskerade*.[9] However, we do find prostitutes in the periphery of their stories, including oblique references to women who are 'no better than they should be' and, more overtly, in the shape of Mrs Palm and the Guild of Seamstresses in the Ankh-Morpork based City Watch novels.[10]

As opposed to the frequently powerless, or at least, non-magical prostitutes scattered throughout the novels, many of Pratchett's evil others, whom his witches combat, are more dangerous examples of Circean-Medean figures. One example is the Queen of the Elves', who is physically similar to Duessa, Lucifera and other dangerous Circe- or Medea-figures from *The Faerie Queene*. Like them, for example, she is dark-haired and wearing red (*L&L*, 10). The young Esmerelda (Esme, Granny Weatherwax) when she first encounters the Queen is full of pride (as yet unearned), much like Spenserian Medea-

figures. This section, where the Queen tempts her with knowledge and power, is about her choosing not to accept evil, but to become a witch instead. By not succumbing to the temptation of power, Granny stays a virgin. The non-virginal Grannies of alternate timelines are not necessarily bad, but even Pratchett cannot escape the difficulties of combining strong female sexuality with magical or temporal power, while still presenting a good or at least benign figure. This became increasingly difficult during the early modern period and remains so to some degree in contemporary literature.

Lord Felmet demonstrates the strange ideas books can impart about what witches are capable of:

> ‘I expect she said some magic words, did she? I’ve heard about witches,’ said the duke, who had spent the night before reading, until his bandaged hands shook too much, some of the more excitable works on the subject.* ‘I imagine she offered you visions of unearthly delight? Did she show you—’ the duke shuddered – ‘dark fascinations and forbidden raptures, the like of which mortal men should not even think of, and demonic secrets that took you to the depths of man’s desires?’[11]

This sharing of strange ideas also happened in the early modern period, when the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and similar demonological works, influenced trial records due in part to leading questions asked by examiners gleaned from these works. However, this being Pratchett, the idea of his witches, especially an old woman like Granny, offering ‘forbidden raptures’ is a ridiculous notion that no one but a madman or fool would credit. In doing so, Pratchett desexualises his witches, thereby denying them the power of feminine sexuality (at least at this point in their lives). Pratchett does, however,

demonstrate some skill in examining the nature of transformations of many kinds within his witch novels.

In *Witches Abroad* the reader encounters many forms of animal transformations, including Granny Weatherwax's rather mild punishment of making a man think he is a frog. Most animal transformations performed by the witches are usually mental, not physical, and not permanent. However, when a wand is used, as occurred in earlier versions of Circe myths, the transformations become both physical and sinister. By the early modern period, there was a definite trend, in literature, of witches transforming themselves into animals as often (if not more often), than they were responsible for the transformation of others into animals. This trend continues with the 'good' witches of the Discworld novels, but in the 'bad' Fairy Godmother, Lilith, we see a return to an earlier, and much more powerful version of Circean transformations of men into animals, produced by a wand-wielding woman. There is even a direct reference to Circe in *Witches Abroad*:

> 'I remember hearing once,' said Nanny, with the occasional glance at Granny Weatherwax, 'about some ole enchantress in history who lived on an island and turned shipwrecked sailors into pigs.'
>
> 'That's a terrible thing to do,' said Magrat, on cue.
>
> 'I suppose it's all according to what you really *are*, inside,' said Nanny. 'I mean, look at Greebo here.' Greebo, curled around her shoulders like a smelly fur, purred. 'He's practically human.'
>
> (*WA*, 171)

Nanny and Granny do not judge Circe here the way Magrat does, suggesting she could not have turned the men into pigs if they were not already halfway there. It is also important to

note that they do not call her a witch. She is designated as an enchantress and is, therefore, different from them. In his appropriation of the term, 'Witch,' for his positive female characters, Pratchett must distance them from their more negative literary antecedents. This section of the novel is about the witches releasing an animal that Lilith has transformed magically into thinking it is human, with their point being that it is wrong because it is against the animal's nature. Later in the novel, the three witches turn Nanny's cat Greebo into a man, justifying their actions by saying it is different from when Lilith transforms animals because they are the good ones, it is temporary, and Greebo is nearly human (*WA*, 280). Although admittedly even Greebo is happier as a cat: "Then he scratched his ear with his back leg. Humanity's a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there" (*WA*, 353). In *Maskerade*, Greebo revisits humanity a few more times when it suits him and the witches. Tellingly, despite the fact that the witches have Magrat's wand, they do not use it to transform Greebo into a human. However, Lilith uses her wand to turn coachmen into beetles. Ella informs the reader she then "*trod* on them" thereby removing any possibility of the spell's being reversed, with or without a wand. All of this, of course, adds to Lilith's identification with evil witches from literature (*WA*, 268).

A way of tracking Pratchett's changes to the story of the witch is the use of and desire for a wand as it appears in the various novels. The idea of possessing a wand is a topic repeatedly raised in *Witches Abroad*, as well as later in the Tiffany Aching novels, and Pratchett's use of the wand demonstrates the changes to it as a magical object in literature. In most of the Discworld novels, regular witches do not have wands, rods or staffs; only supposedly good fairy godmothers and wizards do. The novels demonstrate one of the changes to Circe-figures in literature, the loss of her wand, the result being that most female magic users, particularly those identified as witches, do not use wands. We should bear in mind that Pratchett is primarily writing based on established traditions in the fantasy genre and that the first Harry Potter novel, in which everyone regardless of gender

has a wand, was not published until 1997, or shortly before the publication of *Carpe Jugulum*. The interval between that novel and *The Wee Free Men*, saw the release of the first few Harry Potter movies and Tiffany's desire for a magical school reflects this. The witches of Rowling's novels have more in common with the wizards of Pratchett's novels in the style of magic they perform, and the world they exist in has very different expectations of gendered behaviour than Pratchett's quasi-historical Discworld, as Janet Brennan Croft examines in her 2009 article.[12]

However, this does not mean that Pratchett's witches do not, on some level, desire the power they recognise as inherent in the symbol of the wand. After discovering that Desiderata has left her "slim white rod" (*WA*, 45) and the job of fairy-godmother to Magrat, Granny commands Magrat to give her the wand as they cause nothing but trouble. The other female character in this novel that has a wand is the other fairy-godmother, Lady Lilith de Tempscire, who takes on many characteristics usually associated with evil witches in literature, particularly Circean traits. She is one of the most recognisable Circean figures in Pratchett's novels, and one of the most dangerous. She is dangerously sexual, as evidenced by her three husbands, all deceased, and there is mention of her wanton behaviour when she was younger. She uses a magic wand to transform humans into animals, and vice-versa. She lives in a castle and traps people using stories. She is foreign, beautiful and has goddess-like power over peoples' lives. She is the 'evil Sother', whom Pratchett's good witches must defeat in this novel, (this occurs in most of the Witch novels). Not surprisingly, the 'evil other' often has characteristics more commonly attached to witches in earlier literature, that is, the stereotypes Pratchett is reacting against with his witches. Much like early versions of Circe and Medea, magic runs in Granny Weatherwax's family, along with Sapphire blue eyes (*WA*, 137). However, unlike her very Circean and Medean sister Lily, also known as Lady Lilith, Granny does not do much 'real' magic because she knows she would be too good at it. She knows that power can be

very tempting. In Pratchett's witch novels, powerful females who try to rule countries are still scary, aligning Lilith even more with Circe and Medea figures from early modern texts.

After *Witches Abroad*, where wands are so central to the story that one appears on the cover of the edition of the book used for this thesis, wands do not appear much until the Tiffany Aching novels.[13] In these, as will be examined later, wands are shown to be both dangerous in the wrong hands, with a possessed Tiffany turning someone into a frog (with bits left over), and denied any inherent power as they are merely tools used by a magical person. However, even in the Tiffany novels, Fairy godmothers retain the use of wands for animal transformations, "'It's serious magic, turning someone into a toad but leaving them thinking they're human. No, it was a fairy godmother. Never cross a woman with a star on stick, young lady. They've got a mean streak.'" (*WFM*, 81). The animal transformation effected here using a wand puts supposedly good fairy godmothers in direct opposition to Granny, who, "[de]spite many threats, […] had never turned anyone into a frog. The way she saw it, there was a technically less cruel but cheaper and much more satisfying thing you could do. You could leave them human and make them think they were a frog, which also provided much innocent amusement for passers-by." (*WA*, 199). Even this she does not make permanent, as it wears off after a couple of days. Granny's favoured form of animal transformation reverses early versions of Circean transformations: instead of turning people into animals and leaving their human minds, as some versions of Circe do, she leaves them human and transforms their minds.

The most common form of a human to animal transformation within the Discworld novels is not strictly speaking a transformation; it is called Borrowing, and Granny is the character most likely to practise it. "She Borrowed. You had to be careful. It was like a drug. You could ride the minds of animals and birds, but never bees, steering them gently, seeing through their eyes. Granny Weatherwax had many times flicked through the

channels of consciousness around her. It was, to her, part of the heart of witchcraft. To see through other eyes ...” (*L&L*, 76). There is a delicate balance involved, whereby Granny is always sure to thank the animals she borrows by feeding them. The villagers do not quite understand how Borrowing works and their thoughts on it reflect early modern English beliefs about witches and animal transformations from folklore, and later witch trials and plays, as is examined in Chapter Four of this thesis. An example of this from the novels can be seen below:

> ‘But they do say she creeps around the place o’nights, as a hare or a bat or something. Changes her shape and all. Not that I believes a word of it,’ he raised his voice, then let it sink again, ‘But old Weezen over in Slice told me once he shot a hare in the leg one night and next day she passed him on the lane and said “Ouch” and gave him a right ding across the back of his head.’
>
> (*L&L*, 182)

Thatcher is partly correct, as Granny does go about at night; but she does so only mentally. She does not change her shape, as an earlier and more dangerous Circe figure would have.

Medean

Stories about witches play a significant part in Pratchett’s witch novels, and in many ways, these witches represent a desire to rescue the potentially positive figure of the witch from the wicked witch stereotypes. As is evidenced by the references to the burning of witches in several of the novels, Pratchett does this through the cultural lens of the ‘Burning Times’, based on some not particularly accurate histories of witchcraft.[14] Despite this, he regularly uses themes found in real early modern witch trials, including the social or

village influences on witch beliefs and accusations, as well as the familial nature of witchcraft, particularly including the belief that witchcraft runs in families. However, mostly what the novels are reacting to is stories, including the ancient ones such as those in which witches are a danger to children and babies. Ideas such as these go back to Medea and her murder of her children, and are present in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where the idea of witches being a danger to babies became linked to old witches or hags through the ingredients they place in their cauldron.

Pratchett's use of *Macbeth* (specifically the most prevalent version of the play with no Hecate scenes and only three witches), is pervasive in *Wyrd Sisters*, as one would, of course, expect in a parody, although arguably this novel is far more than a parody.[15] The extensive connections between the two texts, however, does mean that Pratchett's witches are a direct reaction to the Medean witches found in *Macbeth*, and they are constantly negotiating ideas expressed by other characters, about what it is witches do, based on those in Shakespeare. These include, amongst other things, controlling the weather, prophecy, and working via cauldrons, including the gruesome and often infanticidal ingredients that cauldrons were said to contain in early modern texts.[16] A particularly Medean attribute that, Pratchett's witches repeatedly need to refute, is that they are a danger to babies and children:

> 'And the child? He was given to the witches? Do they do human sacrifice?'
>
> 'It would appear not,' said the duke. The duchess looked vaguely disappointed.
>
> 'These witches,' said the duke. 'Apparently, they seem to cast a spell on people.'
>
> 'Well, obviously—'

> ‘Not like a magic spell. They seem to be respected. They do medicine and so on. It’s rather strange. The mountain people seem to be afraid of them and proud of them at the same time. It might be a little difficult to move against them.’
>
> ‘I could come to believe,’ said the duchess darkly, ‘that they have cast a glamour over you as well.’
>
> (*WS*, 62)

The Duchess here is a stand-in for the evil witch of this novel. She is a female character who wields power malignantly, who has no qualms about killing a King or a child, and—much like her inspiration, Lady Macbeth—she has many Medean attributes, despite not attempting to do magic herself. She also resembles Shakespeare’s hags, “[t]he duchess rubbed her chin, which made an audible rasping noise,” making her a shaved bearded lady (*WS*, 176). At the end of the novel, much like early classical versions of Medea, the Duchess escapes punishment by humans. However, like many early modern Medea figures in literature, she eventually meets a sticky end at the hands of the kingdom itself in the form of the claws and fangs of its creatures (*WS*, 326-27).

Unlike the very Medean Duchess and the other witch-like, evil others of the novels, such as the Vampires of *Carpe Jugulum*, Granny would never do anything that might hurt a child (*CJ*, 199). This concept is repeated several times throughout the novels, reminding us how different from early modern Medean witches, Granny is. However, the story that witches are a danger to children is one that many characters find difficult to let go: “There had been a crowd around the gate leading into the field, but there was something about the ‘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,” (*HFofS*, 287). In defence of these mothers, it is important to note that another common theme in the Witch novels, is the fact that:

"'...You'd have to go a long day's journey to find someone basically nastier than Esme,' said Nanny Ogg, 'and this is me sayin' it. She knows exactly what she is. She was born to be good and she don't like it,'" (*WA*, 138). In the Discworld novels, being bad is a lot easier than being good, and usually a lot more fun. Also, another theme repeated throughout the novels, especially in regards to Granny, is that being good is not the same as being nice, and being nasty is not the same as being bad, even though people tend to get these terms confused.

Granny Weatherwax as a character, both possesses early modern Medean traits, including her advanced age, and is a reaction against early modern Medean witches, such as lacking some crone attributes by having teeth and no warts. Like Medea figures, she has powerful emotions. However, she controls them:

> Granny Weatherwax was often angry. She considered it one of her strong points. Genuine anger was one of the world's most creative forces. But you had to learn how to control it. That didn't mean you let it trickle away. It meant you dammed it, carefully, let it develop a working head, let it drown whole valleys of the mind and then, just when the whole structure was about to collapse, opened a tiny pipeline at the base and let the iron-hard stream of wrath power the turbines of revenge,
>
> (*WS*, 284)

Even the revenge mentioned here is not the same as that of earlier Medea figures, as, within the novels, Granny only directs her revenge at the justly deserving, usually the 'evil others' of that particular novel, turning it into a positive force.

Throughout the novels, it is made clear that Granny Weatherwax is a powerful witch.[17] The fact that she controls her power makes her stronger than the wicked old witch Black Aliss, who is the representative of storybook witches throughout many of the novels.

> 'The trouble is, you see, that if you do know Right from Wrong you can't choose Wrong. You just can't do it and live. So ... If I was a bad witch I could make Mister Salzella's muscles turn against his bones and break them where he stood ... if I was bad. I could do things inside his head, change the shape he thinks he is, and he'd be down on what'd been his knees and begging to be turned into a frog ... if I was bad. I could leave him with a mind like scrambled egg, listening to colours and hearing smells ... if I was bad. Oh, yes.' There was another sigh, deeper and more heartfelt. 'But I can't do none of that stuff. That wouldn't be Right.'
>
> (*M*, 347)

Granny then gives a very unnerving chuckle resembling a witches cackle, which indicates she is a hair's breadth away from evil, cackling being symbolic of turning bad in the witch novels.[18]

In the final Discworld novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*, which was written in 2014 and published posthumously in 2015, Death asks Granny why she was content to stay in Lancre when she, "could have been anything and anybody in the world?", implying that she could have been ruling the world, she replies that she simply wanted to help people in her part of the world.[19] The lack of ambition from Pratchett's witches, and their often self-sacrificing nature is what separates them from earlier witches in literature, and the evil characters they must defeat within the novels, such as the Elves, Vampires, and the Felmets. "Esme Weatherwax hadn't done nice. She'd done what was *needed*. She'd been

there for them when they called at the cottage, she'd come out at whatever time of day or night when asked (and sometimes when *not*, which hadn't always been comfortable), and somehow she had made them feel … safer." (*SC*, 73). This idea that witches do what needs doing, particularly if no one else is willing to do it, is repeated throughout Pratchett's witch novels. The key word here is safer, making her the opposite of what the traditional figure of the witch represented.

Nanny Ogg

Arguably one of Pratchett's most powerful witches, Nanny (Gytha) Ogg is undoubtedly one of his most entertaining. As a mother and grandmother, she is more deeply embedded within village life than Pratchett's other witches, and this may contribute to her being less concerned than Granny Weatherwax about going 'bad'. Possibly due to this, she is often the character who gives voice to the witches' darker desires. Nanny is equally unconcerned about 'performing' her role as a witch as Granny is; she mostly just gets on and does what she wants, but she still understands the importance of advertising, as the following section will demonstrate. It is more often the case with Nanny that she takes care to lead people to underestimate her, not alerting others to just how powerful and clever she is. Her cleverness is one trait she shares with Medea, although as will be examined shortly, she is mostly the antithesis of wicked Medea types. She can also take Circean traits that would be considered dangerous and threatening in a younger, more traditionally beautiful witch, and render them both humorous and harmless.

Nanny appears in all of the Discworld Witch novels, except for *Equal Rites*, and even makes a cameo appearance in *Thief of Time* where she acts as a midwife for Time.[20] Out of Pratchett's main witch characters, Nanny Ogg, with her lack of teeth and surfeit of wrinkles, most resembles the Hag witch stereotype with its origins in Medea myths we are so familiar with from early modern literature and drama (*WA*, 75). In typical Pratchett

style, she, therefore, does not take on the role of the crone or hag in his triad of witches but is the mother. Her first words in the series highlight her role as a mother and grandmother, as well as making very clear the parodic nature of Pratchett's witches, who turn the Sabbath-like cauldron scene from *Macbeth* into more of a women's meeting with tea and scones (*WS*, 5-8). Nanny also bears a glancing physical resemblance to one of the wicked-witch substitutes in *Wyrd Sisters*, Lady Felmet, with her stubbled chin and generous girth, who is a true Medean figure.[21] Similar to Pratchett's other witches (including Granny); Nanny is defined by what she is not almost as much by what she is. Nanny is not a bad mother who is a danger to children like early modern Medean witches, and she is not a sexually dangerous Circe type. She is, however, willing to have a bit of fun with the stereotypes that originated with Circe and Medea while fulfilling her role as a village witch.

Performance and the Witch Stereotype

While there has been some debate over whether Shakespeare's Weird Sisters were in fact witches in the earliest performances, by the time Pratchett encountered the text, they were largely considered to be witches, as is indicated by the dramatis personae of most editions.[22] The opening of the book is a direct parody of the start of the play (including a dramatis personae), and "As the cauldron bubbled an eldritch voice shrieked: 'When shall we three meet again?'" (*WS*, 5). Only this cauldron is only boiling water to make tea, and the witches enter a discussion about their availability which highlights both their individuality as women and their differences from the witches in *Macbeth* (*WS*, 8). The image of the cauldron is one that is repeatedly undercut in Pratchett's witch novels, but its use, particularly in *Wyrd Sisters* highlights the strong connection between cauldrons and Hag-style witches and witchcraft in performances. This connection between witchcraft and performance can be traced back to Diodorus Siculus when she disguises herself as a hag,

and 'performs' a miracle using a cauldron to trick Pelias' daughters into patricide.[23] In the Discworld, where being a witch is part innate talent, but is mostly about manipulation of expectations and performance, the cauldron as a symbol of witchcraft deserves closer examination.

In *Wyrd Sisters*, much of the language associated with cauldrons is directly linked to *Macbeth* and is used to demonstrate Pratchett's witches' resistance to the witch stereotype seen in that play. As such, we see an actor dressed as a witch, channelling Lady Macbeth with the line "I have smothered many a babe," which is a gentler form of infanticide than that imagined in her I have given suck speech.[24] The witches in the play within the novel gather around a cauldron, and Nanny Ogg is not pleased when they say that she shipwrecked someone (*WS*, 281). Both of these things were associated with early modern witchcraft, mostly in drama, but sometimes in real trials, like the witches who supposedly tried to kill King James in Scotland. Baby killing is very rare in trial records but is fairly common in literary witches, thanks to Medea.[25] Nanny starts objecting to how witches are represented on stage when they say she puts babies in cauldrons and wants to stop the play. However, Granny knows that doing so would only make things worse, that they need to use the language of the stage to fight the words employed in the play (*WS*, 283).

Direct references to Macbeth are not the only uses of cauldrons within Pratchett's witch novels. Their use, which in early modern representations was primarily to contain the gruesome ingredients of magic potions, is frequently subverted in the Discworld novels, as was noted earlier with the tea making, and includes when Nanny hits the Duchess over the head with one (*WS*, 307). However, the cauldron is still an image more commonly associated with witches, and Pratchett even compares it to what is in Lancre castle's kitchen: regular pots.[26]

The witches do understand that there are expectations that objects like cauldrons will be present in certain situations, such as coven meetings or Sabbaths:

> Nanny had placed the cauldron in the middle of the floor for the look of the thing, although an indoor coven meeting didn't feel right, and one without Granny Weatherwax felt worse. Perdita said it made them look like soppy girls playing at it. The only fire in the room was in the huge black iron range, the very latest model, recently installed for Nanny by her loving sons. On it the kettle began to boil.
>
> (*CJ*, 204-05)

This scene both demonstrates the performative nature of witchcraft, especially in Pratchett, while also a reminding the reader that Nanny has living adult sons, which shows her distance from dangerous Medea figures while gathered around an object symbolic of Medean style witchcraft, namely, the cauldron.

Pratchett's witches do not even need cauldrons to perform magic spells. In *Wyrd Sisters*, they summon a demon using items found in Nanny's washhouse. Magrat thinks: "'[…] You need a cauldron, and a magic sword. And an octogram. And spices, and all sorts of stuff,'" (*WS*, 93). However, Granny and Nanny show her otherwise:

> '*We conjure and abjure thee by means of this*—' Granny hardly paused—
> 'sharp and terrible copper stick.'
> The waters in the boiler rippled gently.
> '*See how we scatter*—' Magrat sighed — 'rather old washing soda and some extremely hard soap flakes in thy honour. Really, Nanny, I don't think—'
> 'Silence! Now you Gytha.'

> '*And I invoke and bind thee* with the balding scrubbing brush of Art and the washboard of Protection,' said Nanny, waving it. The wringer attachment fell off.
>
> (*WS*, 93-94)

The words could be pulled straight out of a book on demonology or a manuscript on magic from the early modern period, or from any number of fantasy novels where wizards are working magic, except that here they are reimagined in a humorous context.[27] This explains Granny's reaction to the whole scenario:

> Granny was also a little uneasy. She didn't much care for demons in any case, and all this business with incantations and implements whiffed of wizardry. It was pandering to things, making them feel important. Demons ought to come when they were called.
>
> But protocol dictated that the host witch had the choice, and Nanny quite liked demons, who were male, or apparently so.
>
> (*WS*, 94)

Granny has internalised the notions of natural, earth-based medicines and magics being the province of women and called witchcraft, as opposed to magic which involves summoning demons, sorcery, magic circles, and the magical practices linked to wands and, as exercised primarily by men, and called wizardry. By contrast, Magrat places too much value on the objects and the ceremonial aspects of magic that the older witches associate with wizardry. However, Nanny is Pratchett's most pragmatic witch, and uses whatever she can to get what she wants, even if it means pretending a copper stick is a sword. Therefore, Nanny can be seen as the happy medium between these two ideas of magic.

Just as stereotypical ideas about witches vary by geographical location in the real world (although not as much as you might expect), so too do representations of magic workers in the Discworld, as seen in this exchange between Nanny and Mrs Gogol in Genua (also known as 'foreign parts'):

> 'Where I come from, we call it witchcraft,' said Nanny under her breath.
>
> 'Where I come from, we call it voodoo,' said Mrs Gogol.
>
> Nanny's wrinkled forehead wrinkled still further.
>
> 'Ain't that all messin' with dolls and dead people and stuff?' she said.
>
> 'Ain't witchcraft all runnin' around with no clothes on and stickin' pins in people?' said Mrs Gogol levelly.
>
> 'Ah,' said Nanny. 'I see what you mean.'
>
> She shifted uneasily. She was a fundamentally honest woman.
>
> 'I got to admit, though ...' she added, 'sometimes ... maybe just one pin ...'
>
> Mrs Gogol nodded gravely. 'Okay. Sometimes ...maybe just one zombie,' she said.
>
> (*WA*, 219)

Witchcraft and Voodoo stereotypes are sometimes based on what magic workers did, including witches who stuck pins into representations of people, and Nanny almost certainly ran around with no clothes on as well when she was younger. One of the ideas highlighted by Nanny's conversations with Mrs Gogol is that while their appearance might be different, as is the magic practised by Mrs Gogol, the way in which she plays with the narrative expectations of the general public is very similar to how the witches operate in the Ramtops. An example is seen in their exchange about their 'familiars' or pets:

> ‘This is Legba, a dark and dangerous spirit,’ said Mrs Gogol. She leaned closer and spoke out of the corner of her mouth. ‘Between you and me, he just a big black cockerel. But you know how it is.’
>
> ‘It pays to advertise,’ Nanny agreed. ‘This is Greebo. Between you and me, he’s a fiend from hell.’
>
> ‘Well, he’s a cat,’ said Mrs Gogol, generously. ‘It’s only to be expected.’
>
> (*WA*, 222)

Their dialogue is also an example of how Pratchett took elements of witchcraft, such as demonic familiars, that would have been quite scary to an audience at the start of the early modern period, and used it in a joke.

Medean

Mrs Gogol’s style of magic utilises much in common with that practised by Medea in early myths. She is darkly exotic, and creates strange brews in a cauldron-like pot, seeing the future in gumbo or jambalaya which is no more unusual than Medea’s prophecy based on a clod of earth.[28] As well as seeing the future and messing with successions, not unlike *Macbeth*’s witches, Mrs Gogol brings people back from the dead. This makes her similar to Ovid’s Medea who, however, only brought someone back from the edge of death. Another not so subtle difference between Medea and Mrs Gogol is that the latter does not kill her offspring, but then again Mrs Gogol is not a woman scorned. Magrat still is not clear on the difference between good and bad when it comes to other witches: “‘was Mrs Gogol really good or bad? I mean, dead people and alligators and everything ...’” (*WA*, 360). Granny points out that it is not as simple as being good or bad. This moral ambiguity was regularly present in classical versions of Circe and Medea in myths but is missing in most early modern reinterpretations of them.

Many other Medean traits and imagery appear in Pratchett's witches, including Nanny Ogg, such as cleverness: "Nanny Ogg, rumoured by some to be cleverer than Granny Weatherwax, and clever enough at least not to let her find out."[29] Predominantly, Nanny's character is the opposite of Medea's in many ways, the most obvious being that she is a good mother who would not consider harming a child. Nanny Ogg is the undisputed matriarch of an extended family, and motherhood (and grand-motherhood) is central to her characterisation within the novels. However, it is clear that no matter how nasty she can be when she desires (especially to daughter-in-laws) she is a good mother.[30] "Nanny Ogg had been married three times and ruled a tribe of children all over the kingdom. Certainly, it was not actually forbidden for witches to get married. Granny had to concede that, but reluctantly." (*WS*, 32). Granny's ambivalence about witches getting married reflects the characterization of witches in the fantasy genre before Pratchett, where for a witch to be considered good, she needed to virginal and submissive, not unlike Spenser's positive Circe and Medea figures. However, witches on the Discworld like to form triads, and how else can one have a Maiden, a Mother and a Crone, unless some of the Maidens become mothers. Motherhood and witchcraft have always been linked, particularly in literature, only witches were more frequently presented as bad or dangerous mothers, such as is seen in Medea figures.

Nanny's other Medean traits include her, "pragmatic attitude to the truth; she told it if it was convenient and she couldn't be bothered to make up something more interesting," (*L&L*, 104). Unlike most Medea figures, however, she does not use her deceptions to cause harm to others. As with her being accused of harming children, Nanny vehemently objects to most Medean traits she is said to possess: such as when Felmet locks up Nanny Ogg, accusing her of trying to poison him, much like when Medea attempted to murder Theseus. As has been mentioned previously, despite being a good witch, and a good mother (or possibly because she is a good mother), Nanny is the witch most likely to express violent

desires and has looser ethical standards when it comes to what she will do to protect her family and her community. This is shown by Nanny's desire to torture the elf they captured:

> 'Well, they used to carry off babbies. I ain't having that again. The thought of someone carrying off our Pewsey—'
>
> 'Even elves ain't that daft. Never seen such a sticky child in all my life.'
>
> Granny pulled gently at Diamanda's eyelid.
>
> 'Out cold,' she said. 'Off playing with the fairies.'
>
> She picked the girl up. 'Come on, I'll carry her, you bring Mr Tinkerbell.'
>
> (*L&L*, 148)

During the early modern period traits previously associated with fairies became attributed to witches, such as stealing babies or children. Here, Pratchett, by making witches the good characters, reinstates ideas about elves and fairies to be found in early modern English folklore—of course, with the addition of contemporary, intertextual humour. The idea of the elves being wicked-witch substitutes that the witches must defeat will be examined in more detail in the next section in relation to Magrat Garlick, who can potentially be regarded as the protagonist in the novel in which they feature, *Lords and Ladies*. Nanny Ogg is deeply involved in the witches' battles against characters such as the vampires, the elves and the Felmets. However, she usually leads from the side, with Granny more frequently appearing to be the primary agent.

Circean

> Tiffany stared into dark, twinkling eyes. Don't try to trick her or hold anything back from those, said her Third Thoughts. Everyone says she's

> been Granny Weatherwax's best friend since they were girls. And that means that under all those wrinkles must be nerves of steel.
>
> (*ISWM*, 207)

The passage above is a reminder of Nanny's sharp intellect and magical capabilities while also subtly pointing out she is older and therefore no longer beautiful. However, "Nanny Ogg was an attractive lady, which is not the same as being beautiful" (*L&L*, 236). Many elements go into attractiveness, such as is seen in Shakespeare's Cleopatra, another Circean figure. Her twinkling eyes are reminiscent of those belonging to other witches in literature and are in effect a watered-down version of Circe and Medea's fiery eyes. Dark eyes are also associated with lascivious or dangerous dark ladies, like Duessa, and Shakespeare's Dark Lady of the Sonnets. In many ways, particularly when she was younger, Nanny Ogg is the most Circean of Pratchett's good witches, at least, sexually; however, unlike Spenser's Acrasia, who represents non-reproductive sexuality, Nanny Ogg has 15 children. These 15 children do not all have the same father, and her youngest, Shawn was born well after her most recent husband had died, which lends credence to allusions made throughout the novels to Nanny's loose sexual morals. The novels include a repeating joke about her having many husbands during her life, three of them her own.[31]

Sex is largely absent in Pratchett novels, except for as veiled allusions and jokes. However, the cultural baggage associated with sexuality, particularly female sexuality and magic use, is so extensive, it is not surprising he largely avoids it. Within the witch novels, the only sex that is of any interest is that which disqualifies a young woman from the role of the maiden in the coven, or that which results in offspring and shotgun weddings. It is, therefore, predictable that alternate sexualities are largely absent from the witch novels. The witches in Pratchett often find it difficult to establish a happy medium between the virginal good magic users in stories, and Circean strumpets, or worse, the black widow-

style women like Lilith, Granny's sister and evil opposite in *Witches Abroad* (*WA*, 239-240).

In the Discworld novels, it is a character's intentions and desires, rather than just their personality traits or behaviours, that determine if a character is good or bad. Nanny Ogg and Lily Weatherwax were both promiscuous, but where Nanny was just out for a bit of fun, the impression given in *Witches Abroad* is that Lily had ulterior motives, including her ambitious desire for power and wealth. Throughout the novels, Granny and Nanny repeatedly discuss whether a witch should be single or married (i.e. a mother) which ends with Granny implying that Nanny was a trollop and Nanny saying that everyone called Granny the Ice Maiden (*WS*, 123). In this section, it is clear that neither sexual promiscuity nor virginity is a good idea in the Discworld, but there is nothing wrong with being a witch and being married with kids. Meanwhile, Nanny Ogg is clearly an older woman within the novels, and therefore it is unsurprising that a relatively young Pratchett chose to present her sexuality as a thing largely in the past, with the exception of bawdy jokes and innuendo. As seen in the following passage: "Sausage is all right in its place, and its place ain't in bed. And don't you say a word," as Granny cuts off the inevitable comment from Nanny who has a lot more experience with sausages in bed.[32]

As was just seen, part of Nanny's sexual humour is to point out phallic significances, such as is seen in her song "A Wizard's Staff Has A Knob On The End" although she could also be referring to the knobbiness or stupidity of Wizards (*WA*, 151). This humour is also found in the witches' desire for magic wands:

> 'It goes with the job. It practic'ly *is* the job.'
>
> 'Well ... maybe I just wanted to look at it,' Granny admitted. 'Just hold it a while. Not *use* it. You wouldn't catch me using one of those things. I only ever saw it once or twice. There ain't many of 'em around these days.

> Nanny Ogg nodded. 'You can't get the wood,' she said.
>
> (*WA*, 39)

Besides from the possible *double entendres*, they are referring to Desiderata's magic wand, a key component of fairy godmothering. In joking about the phallic nature of the wand, Pratchett adds another layer to the witches' desire for this object of power. In *Witches Abroad*, which is a novel based on fairy tales, which are described as "rural myths" within the novel and as stories where everyone knows someone who knows someone else who had it happen in his or her area (*WA*, 146). Fairy tales often centre on sexual initiation: "'All this for one prick. As if that was the end of the world,'" as Granny puts it, which elicits a massive grin from Nanny (*WA*, 147).

While on the subject of sex and stories, it would appear that Pratchett has at the very least read bits of romance novels, as evidenced by his Comus-like Greebo in human form:

> Perhaps it was the pheromones, or the way his muscles rippled under his black leather shirt. Greebo broadcast a kind of greasy diabolic sexuality in the megawatt range. Just looking at him was enough to set dark wings fluttering in the crimson night.
>
> (*WA*, 266)

The reference to the diabolic nature of his sexuality is a reminder that in earlier literature and plays, witches were thought to have sex with devils, sometimes in the form of a familiar animal. This is reinforced by the fact that Pratchett regularly joked about Greebo being demon like or evil in most of the witch novels.[33] Much like Milton's Comus, Greebo can be seen as a male Circe figure, and since the sexuality in Pratchett is heteronormative,

it is assumed that it is only females that are affected by Greebo (*WA*, 265-66). As was mentioned earlier in relation to Granny and wand use, this transformation of Greebo into a human is one of the few instances of a physical animal to human or human to animal transformation performed by the witches in Pratchett. Granny prefers to Borrow the minds of animals. However, Nanny does not participate in this version of Circean transformations. "Insofar as a witch could consider things uncanny, Nanny Ogg considered it uncanny," (*L&L*, 72). Nanny Ogg much prefers to go directly to humans for her information, rather than to use the eyes and ears of animals to discover things. "Tiffany talked as she hadn't talked to anyone before. It must be a kind of magic, the Third Thoughts concluded. Witches soon picked up ways of controlling people with their voice, but Nanny Ogg listened at you," (*W*, 209). The idea of a Circean voice used to control others occurs in most of the witch novels. However, Nanny takes it to a whole new level. She also has, "an extremely good singing voice for one old woman with one tooth," (*ISWM*, 294). This one line reminds us that Nanny could be seen as an old hag old but still in possession of the Circean trait of a good singing voice.

Another Circean trait associated with Nanny Ogg, especially after the changes in representations of Circe during the early modern period, is drinking. Nanny is infamous in her ability to drink to excess, often to the detriment of the male characters she drinks with, such as the sergeant who "thought he could out drink Mrs Ogg!'" (*ISWM*, 310). Even in Pratchett, drinking with witches is a dangerous thing to do, only for a much funnier reason than those associated with Circe's cup in early modern plays and medieval allegories. As is noted by Tiffany in *Wintersmith*, Nanny Ogg has a quite a 'grand' house by village standards, however, "Nanny ambled around in her rather worn black dress, not grand at all," (*W*, 209). The humility of Pratchett's witches is part of the reason they are not seen as 'bad witches', as they lack the ambition for political power which would make them like non-magical Circe and Medea figures from the early modern period. Nor do they use their

strong magical powers to achieve personal gain, or very much at all. A repeating theme throughout the Witch novels is that the most important thing for a witch to learn is how not to use magic, as will be examined later in the Tiffany Aching novels. Nanny is most certainly unlike the more traditionally Circean Lady Lilith, nor is she like the Medean Lady Felmet, who both more closely resemble witches from early modern texts than do any of Pratchett's witches.

Using her grandchild, Nanny Ogg teaches people what it means to be a witch in Lancre: "'*Is a witch someone who would look round when she heard a child scream?* / '*And the townspeople said, Yess!*'"(*L&L*, 102). Presenting Granny in a more favourable light than the young witch Diamanda, who thinks witchcraft is all about power. This scene highlights the differences between Pratchett's witches, and their early modern counterparts, as in early modern texts it was usually the witch causing the screaming. However, because Pratchett's witches are 'good' they are 'good mothers' not the 'anti-mother' so strongly connected with early modern witches by Diane Purkiss.[34] While being a good mother, Nanny is not unambiguously good. "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). This philosophy sometimes puts her in opposition to what is considered to be appropriate behaviour for a woman in the Ramtops, based as it is on old ideals of femininity. In this, she resembles a younger Medea, whose magical abilities enable her to act outside of acceptable female behaviour, and get away with it. Expectations of behaviour are clearly gendered in Pratchett's witch novels. However, it is made clear repeatedly throughout the novels, that Witches are not expected to abide by most of the rules which apply to women. Being exempt from the rules is clearly understood by Nanny and Granny at the start of the novels. However, it is something that the younger witches, such as Magrat, have to learn as part of their development as witches.

Magrat Garlick

The Third Witch, the one who first takes the role of Maiden in Pratchett's witch triads, is Magrat Garlick. She gives up the role to other young witches when she gets married and becomes a mother in later novels. Magrat, like most of Pratchett's young witches, spends much time considering what it means to be a witch, and she places more value on the tools and rituals of witchcraft than the older witches do. Magrat only plays a major role in four of the witch novels, *Wyrd Sisters*, *Witches Abroad*, *Lords and Ladies*, and to a lesser extent in *Carpe Jugulum* where her role as Maiden is revised to that of Mother before she reverts to being a Queen. As with Nanny and Granny, Magrat is defined primarily by what she is not. Magrat is not a beautiful and dangerous female magic user, like her evil opposite, the very Circean Queen of the Elves. Also, despite her knowledge of herbs, and fascination with magical knives, she bears no resemblance to a Medea as Hag type of witch made popular during the early modern period, and only a little to the jealous Medea of Greco-Roman myths, when the Queen of the Elves steals her fiancé. In many ways, including her temporary ownership of a magic wand in Witches Abroad, Magrat is set up to take on the role of a Circean witch, only to frustrate a reader's narrative expectation by being virtually the antithesis of early modern Circean figures. Magrat is, however, is a humorous representation of a modern New Age Witch, who battles with a lack of self-confidence, contributed to by her recognition of the sexy young witch stereotype, and the fact that she does not fit it. One of the strongest influences on her development as a character is the need to reject stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a witch and learning to work others' expectations to her advantage.

Performance and the Witch Stereotype

Expectations about what it is that witches do is a major theme of Pratchett's witch novels, as is clearly demonstrated at the beginning of *Wyrd Sisters* by the parodic cauldron scene. It was Magrat who suggested they form a coven. However, the older witches mention activities associated with witches' sabbaths only to dismiss them as things they are not going to do, like dancing and, "messing about with ointments" (*WS*, 9). However, they do eat some bats, a very Medean animal often found in the gruesome lists of ingredients in early modern cauldrons. Well, they eat scones with bat designs on them and currants for eyes (*WS*, 9). This scene exemplifies Pratchett's use of witchcraft stereotypes: his witches are way too funny to be scary. However, unlike many early modern Circean and Medean figures, the humour does not stem from their inept use of magic (as Pratchett's witches are quite powerful magic users), but from their interactions with witchcraft stereotypes themselves.

Unlike the older witches, who are based on the wicked-old-witch stereotype, which has its origins in early modern hag witches based on Medea, Magrat is more a response to New Age witches or Wiccans. Throughout the novels, Magrat's style of new age witchcraft is contrasted to Granny and Nanny's old style practical magic in a derogatory way. For the older witches, a witch who needs to use special objects is seen as less of a witch.

> 'And all them robes and wands and things too.'
>
> '*Modern*,' said Granny Weatherwax, with a sniff. "When I was a gel, we had a lump of wax and a couple of pins and had to be content. We had to make our *own* enchantment in them days.
>
> (*WS*, 32)

The tools Granny admits using were the tools of witches and cunning folk from the early modern period, as opposed to Magrat's magical paraphernalia which could have belonged to an early modern magician, or a follower of Alistair Crowley.[35] Despite Granny's misgivings about Magrat's style of magic, she is still recognisably a witch, with genuine powers. She looks after her village, "whose good-natured inhabitants were getting used to ear massage and flower-based homeopathic remedies for everything short of actual decapitation,*". As the footnote points out: "*They worked. Witches' remedies generally did, regardless of the actual form of delivery," (*WS*, 89). The idea that the method used to work magic is irrelevant was shared in a negative way by early modern authors and judges because they believed the devil was working through the witch. Therefore, the method of delivery did not matter. Sorcery and other forms of magic often required the practitioner to use tools or follow a specific recipe. Complex forms of magic were gradually taken away from women (such as Medea with her detailed potions) in representations, and more commonly attributed to men, as has been examined earlier in this study regarding Prospero and Sycorax in *The Tempest*.

Magrat and the other young witches in Pratchett have a particularly uneasy relationship with witch stereotypes. Unlike the older witches, they are not ready to embrace the crone witch stereotype, but they do not necessarily suit the more Circean strand of witch stereotypes, the dangerous seductress. These types are not unheard of in the Discworld novels, as Verence notes when discussing their pending marriage with Magrat: "'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 can 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. The witching's a problem, is it?'" (*L&L*, 30). The concept of Magrat being that sort of a witch queen is quite laughable, as will be examined next with respect to her general dissimilarity to early modern Circean figures.

Circean

At many stages in the history of literature, when a few witches get together, the young one would be a seductress. The young witch, Magrat, who would be the obvious choice to fulfil the role of the witch as a seductress in Pratchett, does not have the confidence to be particularly attractive, marking her as un-Circean. In the early novels, the only exception to this is when Granny hypnotises her in *Witches Abroad* so she can be the "mysterious and beautiful stranger" at the masked ball and much to Nanny Ogg's surprise she ends up acting a lot like Cleopatra (*WA*, 276, 290). Self-confidence and pride or, in early modern literature, 'forwardness' are all traits associated with Circe- and Medea-figures and other unruly women, including witches. A repeating theme is that Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg have confidence in spades and that their self-assurance is necessary for them to do their jobs as witches. "You ain't a witch if you ain't got self-confidence." (*L&L*, 82). Most of the other characters recognise and respect this trait, including Casanunda, who says he likes dominant women, referring to Granny Weatherwax (*WA*, 296). One of the differences between Pratchett's witches and early modern examples of dangerous women, such as Spenser's Duessa, and Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or Tamora, is that the former know that pride has its limits. Granny recognises that she is so proud of her powers she forgets about people sometimes (*L&L*, 74). They also regularly enforce humility on each other—as is repeatedly seen in the Tiffany Aching novels, where she learns what it means to be a witch in the Discworld.

One could add here that hair is a marker of character types associated with the recreations of Circe and Medea. Beautiful loose flowing hair, often fair or blond, can be a marker of the seductress or sorceress type that ultimately has its origins in Circean myths. Meanwhile, wild or unkempt hair, particularly dark hair, is often a marker for the mad woman or witch character-type that originated with Ovidian and Senecan Medeas. As with many fictional markers, Pratchett regularly subverts readers' expectations, as is seen with

Magrat, who is well positioned to be a Circe figure. However, she is almost an anti-Circean with her timidity, obedience and desire to keep the peace, as well as her physical non-conformity to ideals of feminine beauty, including her inability to tame her long blonde hair.[36]

> It is one of the few unbendable rules of magic that its practitioners cannot change their own appearance for any length of time. Their bodies develop a kind of morphic inertia and gradually return to their original shape. But Magrat tried. Every morning her hair was long thick and blonde, but by the evening it had always returned to its normal worried frizz.
>
> (*WS*, 65)

Here Pratchett varied significantly from early modern accounts of witches, particularly those in Spenser's texts, who were able to turn themselves from ugly old hags into beautiful seductresses for extended periods (although also not permanently). Magrat focuses on her hair, which has long been a symbol of the seductress, but she fails to change it, again differentiating her from dangerous young (beautiful) witches from literature.

A character who does have beautiful hair in the Discworld novels is Agnes Nitt, one of the young witches from Lancre, although, as is evidenced by the numerous fat jokes, and her wonderful personality, she too does not conform to ideals of feminine beauty. She does, however, have another Circean trait, namely, a magical voice. This second trait is one shared to a lesser extent by nearly all of Pratchett's witches, although it differs from the 'witching words' and seductive songs of Spenser's Circe-figures such as Phædria, in that their voices are overtly compared to that of a mother or a nursemaid. Here Pratchett takes a potentially dangerous and powerful tool and links it repeatedly with traditionally good female figures, the mother or nursemaid who has the children under

control. "Even Nanny Ogg, who took a fairly cheerful view of the world, would have been hard put to say anything complimentary about Magrat's voice. But it fell on the Fool's ears like blossom," (*WS*, 115). Magrat does not have a particularly Circean voice, but it is still attractive for the Fool, her future husband in later novels. This scene when she meets the Fool highlights her anti-Circean qualities, while also making fun of Petrarchan and Romance novel tropes, such as running away like a timid gazelle. It is also a reference to Ophelia's mad ravings about herbs in *Hamlet*, which adds an extra intertextual layer, given that the Fool has a few similarities with Hamlet, including commissioning a play. He ends up being royalty by the end of the novel. In case this section of the novel did not have enough layers of significance, the Fool is described as "a large red-and-yellow demon," with three menacing horns, playing on the early modern idea that witches have relationships with demons. Only, of course, this one runs away once he realises he has disturbed a witch (*WS*, 115-16).

The fool has heard stories about witches, which is why he later asks Magrat, "'If I kiss you … do I turn into a frog?'" (*WS*, 200). He does not as it turns out, which is predictable as, despite possessing a magic wand in *Witches Abroad*, the closest Magrat comes to a human transformation is changing what she thinks about a situation when plunging from the sky (*WS*, 190). Magrat does not participate in Borrowing like Granny, and the only animal transformation she accomplishes is that of Greebo into a human with the help of the other witches, and without the Circean wand. Despite being the rightful inheritor of Desiderata's wand, Magrat is incapable of doing anything with it except turn things into pumpkins. She does, however, express many ideas about how wands and fairy godmothers work. When first described, the wand is called a "slim white rod," (*WA*, 45). White is a colour associated during the early modern period with legitimate rulers and 'divine' power, especially when applied to wands or rods. It is also described as a 'rod', like Circe's wand was in earlier versions of her myth. Magrat instantly recognises that

possessing the wand changes her from being a regular witch and makes her "a fairy godmother!'" (*WA*, 45). Now that Magrat has a wand, she wants to use it, even suggesting they use the wand to free some trapped dwarves, "'I don't trust that wand,' said Granny. 'It looks wizardly to me.' / 'Oh, come *on*,' said Magrat, 'generations of fairy godmothers have used it.'" (*WA*, 69). Granny as a representative of tradition, objects to the wand as a tool used by men, whereas Magrat, who is more modern in her thinking, reclaims it as a tool used by many women, going back generations, although this reclamation is still limited to fairy godmothers and not regular witches. Throughout the novels, the lines between what is associated with witches, or with fairies in stories are repeatedly blurred, as it frequently was in early modern texts. Magrat uses this confusion to her advantage when dealing with Little Red Riding Hood:

> 'You're not the wicked witch, are you?' she said.
>
> Nanny Ogg coughed.
>
> 'Me? No. We're – we're—' Granny began.
>
> 'Fairies,' said Magrat.
>
> Granny Weatherwax's mouth dropped open. Such an explanation would never have occured to her.
>
> 'Only my mummy warned me about the wicked witch too,' said the girl.
>
> She gave Magrat a sharp look. 'What kind of fairies?'
>
> 'Er. Flower fairies?' said Magrat. 'Look, I've got a wand—'
>
> (*WA*, 153)

Magrat, who reads lots of books, knows that a girl is more likely to accept help from fairies, particularly 'safe' flower fairies. The girl appears to be a foolish child for not recognising that they were witches from the hats and other symbols of witchcraft they

possess. However, Magrat's wand seems to convince her, as 'everyone' knows fairies have wands, but not witches. In *Witches Abroad*, as has previously been shown, Pratchett reverses the idea of the 'good' fairy godmother, and the 'wicked' witch, in *Lords and Ladies*, he further examines the notions shared since the Victorian period that fairies or elves are good, and witches are evil.

Elves (Circean and Medean)

Lords and Ladies, as its title would suggest to anyone with some knowledge of English folklore, is all about fairies, or as they were interchangeably known, elves. The novel continues the parodying of Shakespearean plays which started in *Wyrd Sisters*, this time with a focus on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This use of Shakespeare's play highlights the changes to fairy stereotypes heralded by that play, as was examined in an earlier chapter, that is, the miniaturising and infantilising of the previously human-sized fairies of medieval and early modern folklore. While Granny uses the power of words, using names directly out of Shakespeare's text, to reduce the power of the elves by renaming them, it highlights the differences between these elves and those found in Shakespeare (*L&L*, 341). The reduction in power and size of fairies since Shakespeare is one of the reasons that Pratchett refers to them primarily as elves in this book, even though they are very much based on the fairies of English folklore and legends at the start of the early modern period.[37] A modern reader, particularly one familiar with the fantasy genre (including Tolkien's works), would know that elves are human-sized magical beings, although Pratchett's elves are as much a reaction to the noble and mostly benign elves of Tolkien and the fantasy novels inspired by his works, as they are to storybook fairies. This mixed origin of his elves is evident in this section:

> People remember badly. But *societies* remember well, the *swarm* remembers, encoding the information to slip past the censors of the mind, passing it on from grandmother to grandchild in little bits of nonsense they won't bother to forget. Sometimes the truth keeps itself alive in devious ways despite the best efforts of the official keepers of information. Ancient fragments chimed together now in Magrat's head.
>
> *Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen ...*
>
> *From ghosties and bogles and long-leggity beasties ...*
>
> *My mother said I never should ...*
>
> *We dare not go a-hunting, for fear ...*
>
> *And things that go bump ...*
>
> *Play with the fairies in the wood ...*
>
> Magrat sat on the horse she didn't trust and gripped the sword she didn't know how to use while the ciphers crept out of memory and climbed into shape.
>
> *They steal cattle and babbies ...*
>
> *They steal milk ...*
>
> *They love music, and steal away musicians ...*
>
> *We'll never be as free as them, as beautiful as them, as clever as them, as light as them; we are animals.*
>
> (*L&L*, 287-88)

The passage above references three separate texts, one is a prayer, one is a poem, and one is a skipping rhyme, except for the poem, these were originally orally transmitted.[38] This section is all about the power of oral culture to enable us to remember things that are no longer 'believed in'. The qualities attributed to elves here, like stealing babies and milk,

were also associated with witches, due to the confusion in the early modern period, between witches and fairies in many demonological and trial texts.[39] The elves or fairies are therefore an obvious choice for an evil other for Pratchett's witches to confront, and due to the connections between witches and fairies during the early modern period, it is unsurprising that Pratchett's elves have many Circean and Medean qualities.

Some Circean qualities possessed by the elves, both male and female, is their beautiful (if illusory) appearance and magical singing voice.

> And we're stupid, and the memory plays tricks, and we remember the elves for their beauty and the way they move, and forget what they *were*. We're like mice saying, 'Say what you like, cats have got real *style*.' ... We only remembers that the elves sang. We forgets what it was they were singing about.
>
> (*L&L*, 136-37).

The elves only 'seem' to be beautiful, they have: "shiny hair and shiny eyes and shiny gold, going sideways through life, always young, always singing, never learning." (*L&L*, 342). Making them very similar to Circe figures including Spenser's wicked women and other Circe and Medea figures from the early modern period. They also sing, as do Spenser's Phædria and Homer's Circe, neither of whose words are recorded—only that the singing is beautiful. The Queen of the Elves' Circean nature is even more evident when she is compared to Magrat, especially when she creates an illusion where she appears to be a more attractive version of Magrat, with sleek blonde hair (*L&L*, 334). The Queen's beauty is not the only Circean and Medean attribute seen in Spenser's dangerous females; another is a love of power and tempting others. "And let me tell you something. About beautiful women in red with stars in their hair. And probably moons, too. And voices in your head

when you slept. And power when you came up here. She offered you lots of power, I expect. All you wanted. For free.'" (*L&L*, 138). Granny speaks to Diamanda primarily about magical power but implies political and physical power as well.

Just like many early modern Circe and Medea figures, The Queen seeks to rule where she has no right. In the Discworld novels, where eyes reveal the truth about a character, the Queen's eyes reveal that she considers the humans around her to be like animals, which also makes clear she would be a tyrannical and unjust ruler.[40] Her eyes combine the Circean trait of unusual eyes with the idea of human to animal transformations, even if it is just in her mind. The basis of Elf magic is illusions and control over people's minds; and, throughout the novel, Elves repeatedly try to make people believe that because elves are so superior then consequently humans are little more than animals in their presence. It should be noted that, apart from their appearance (which can be revealed using iron weapons), the elves do not cause any lasting physical transformations within the novel. The language associated with early modern Circean figures is also more likely to found in association with elves than with witches in Pratchett, such as terms like the "mists of enchantment."[41] Even though the Queen of the elves is a prominent Circe and Medea figure, all of the elves have Circean and Medean elements, which means that, in Pratchett's witch novels, the dangerous elements associated with Circean and Medean figures are not strongly related to malignant femininity as they are in early modern texts.

Pratchett cannot, however, escape from patriarchal ideas embedded in his source texts, and it is quite telling that Nanny Ogg approaches the King of the Elves to reign in his wife's power play (*L&L*, 310-11). The shift in power from a Queen to a King is clearly traceable to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as, before this, Fairy Queens were stronger than any consort they may have had.[42] This King is himself an amalgam of various figures, including the Horned god of Gardnerian Wicca and Celtic traditions,

sometimes known as Cernunnos, Satyrs from the Greco-Roman tradition as well as early modern representations of Satan (*L&L*, 310). Despite the connections between *Lords and Ladies* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is primarily the language the Elf King uses that connects him to Oberon, who is more commonly represented as a handsome nobleman, rather than a partly animal god. His appearance is a reminder to the reader of the numerous traditions that Pratchett draws on for his representations of witches, as well as other characters, although he does frequently draw on older English traditions, such as the idea that fairies (elves) are dangerous. Pratchett also includes the traditional idea that the elves and other dangerous characters are most likely to appear at times of great change in people's lives, such as births, deaths and marriages. In the early modern period, these times of change were also when people were believed to be most susceptible to witchcraft (literary witches including Medea also favour these times). Therefore, it is predictable that the dangerous witch-substitutes of the various novels tend to appear at times of change, and that Pratchett's good witches are repeatedly said to 'watch the edges', or to be on guard against the dangers inherent in these times of change.[43]

Medean

As has previously been mentioned, changes made to Circe and Medea figures during early modern reinterpretations of their myths, mean that witch stereotypes come in two major strands, the young sexually dangerous witch based on Circe, and the Hag-witch based primarily on Ovid's Medea. As has already been demonstrated, Magrat is not a mighty enchantress like early modern Circes, and although she is clearly not a Hag, she is good with herbs (*L&L*, 334). While denying the more Circean element as it was in earlier books, her combined Circe and Medea element (which is now part of the general tropes of witchcraft), her herb use, is emphasised. Repeated reference to Magrat's knowledge of herbs is made throughout the novels, including in *Witches Abroad* when the witches

encounter Absinthe. Magrat points out that this is just another name for wormwood, and that her early modern style herbal, with its long s (f), says it is: "good for stomach diforders and prevents sicknefs after meals," (*WA*, 116). Medea-like knowledge of herbs is the butt of a joke in this section of the novel, as the three witches who are supposedly knowledgeable in herb lore, do not know that wormwood is also an hallucinogen.

Early modern Medea figures were known for performing spells and using tools to work magic, and the possession of overtly magical tools was a dangerous thing at many points in history. Pratchett's older witches, therefore, do not rely on them:

> What might be called the classical witch comes in two basic varieties, the complicated and the simple, or, to put it another way, the ones that have a room full of regalia and the ones that don't. Magrat was by inclination one of the former sort. For example, take magical knives. She had a complete collection of magical knives, all with the appropriate coloured handles and runes all over them.
>
> It had taken many years under the tutelage of Granny Weatherwax for Magrat to learn that the common kitchen breadknife was better than the most ornate of magic knives. It could do all that the magical knife could do, plus you could use it to cut bread.
>
> (*WA*, 249-50)

Knives are a very Medean tool, being what she used to kill Pelias, and her children in Ovid's version. In *Witches Abroad*, the knife is used to destroy a dress. It is also notable that the other use of the knife mentioned is a strictly domestic one, that of cutting bread. Pratchett's witches find knives to be useful tools on occasion, but the characters who use

knives in violent situations are inevitably the ones the witches are battling, such as Lord Felmet who uses a dagger to murder the King in *Wyrd Sisters* (*WS*, 10-11).

Another trope strongly associated with witches, thanks to early modern uses of Medea figures, was their strong connection to Hecate, or the triple goddess, in the Witch triad of the Maiden, Mother and Crone. Nanny and Agnes discuss the three witches concept in some detail in *Carpe Jugulum* (*CJ*, 130-32). They consider that Granny may feel as though she is not needed anymore because, now Magrat is a mother, there are three witches able to fulfil the traditional roles without her. However, the fluidity of these stages in women's lives is highlighted, as Nanny can never represent anything but the mother aspect, no matter how crone like or haggish she looks. Meanwhile, Magrat is still learning how to be a mother, and in this case, a working one, as she cannot just give up the job of being a witch to sit at home with the baby. This idea of witchcraft as a job, or calling, is repeated throughout the novels. While Verence is mostly supportive of what Magrat wants or needs to do, he occasionally expresses doubts: "'Magrat, my love,' he murmured, 'it seems so shaming if the King can't fight.' / 'You are a very good king, Verence,' his wife said firmly, 'but this is witches' work. And someone has to look after the people and our children.'" (*SC*, 297). As this demonstrates, Magrat is still defined as a wife and mother; however, it is also evident that the things that make her a good wife and mother are vastly different to those expected of regular women in Lancre, especially in the earlier novels. The section above is also an example of Pratchett's gender reversals, which permeate his later novels, particularly his last novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*.

As has been demonstrated with Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg, Pratchett's witches define themselves against old ideas about witches: that is, that they are bad women or bad mothers. Magrat is no exception to this; if anything, she is, particularly in the earlier novels, more concerned than the older witches with appropriate feminine behaviour. An example of this is in *Wyrd Sisters*, where she says she had not been to the theatre, because,

"' 'Tis not right, a woman going into such places by herself.' / Granny nodded. She thoroughly approved of such sentiments so long as there was, of course, no suggestion that they applied to her." (*WS*, 36). Pratchett, via characters like Granny, and other older women, occasionally demonstrates that patriarchal ideologies are reinforced as much by women as they are by men. What the younger Magrat forgets is that as a witch she stands outside of rules to constrain female freedom, but unlike early modern witches, this operating outside the rules of acceptable female behaviour does not mark her as a dangerous woman or wicked witch. This level of freedom is possible because Pratchett's witches operate under their own set of rules, with other witches regulating their behaviour. What it means to be a witch, and the ways to avoid going bad when one has access to huge amounts of magical power, are the major themes of Pratchett's young adult witch novels featuring Tiffany Aching.

Tiffany Aching

The Tiffany Aching series builds on themes developed in Pratchett's first six witch novels (marketed to adults); however, it is largely separate from them. The five Tiffany novels frequently feature references to other witches, including the three already examined in this study; and Granny, Nanny, and Magrat even make cameo appearances. These novels are primarily concerned with how Tiffany grows and learns how to be both a witch and a good person. A major influence on some of the differences between the Tiffany novels and earlier ones was that J.K. Rowling's first Harry Potter novel was published in the UK in 1997 with the first movie released in 2001, which was too late to influence popular ideas about witchcraft when Pratchett was writing his adult witch novels (*Carpe Jugulum* was published in 1998). However, the Tiffany novels address the forms of magic used in the Harry Potter novels' which are marketed to largely the same audience. Their influence can be seen most clearly in Tiffany's desire for a magical school she can attend, and her

eventual realisation that life is the school, and a witch can only learn witchcraft by doing it.[44]

In learning what it means to be a witch in the Discworld, Tiffany addresses many issues regarding witch stereotypes, in particular, the idea of the Story Book Witch, or the Hag who is a danger to children and who has her origins in early modern Medea figures. Many of the wicked witch substitutes that Tiffany battles in the novels are firmly influenced by Circean and Medean tropes, as well as directly echoing early modern Circe and Medea figures, including the Titania-like Fairy Queen who, like her fairy horde, is very Circean, with also more than a few Medean elements. In her battle against the Cunning-man in *I Shall Wear Midnight*, many of the stereotypes are turned against Tiffany, and she is accused of being a Circean and Medean figure herself. Tiffany's desire for Circean and Medean tools, such as wands, cauldrons and goblets, is a theme repeatedly addressed across the novels, but in the most detail in *A Hat Full of Sky*, where the danger of unchecked power is a major theme.

Performance and the Witch Stereotype

Use of the term 'Hag' is always derogatory in early modern texts, as it mostly is in Pratchett until the Tiffany Aching novels. It goes from being a term used to describe old witches (in line with English stereotypes of witches) to being utilised by the Nac Mac Feegles to describe all witches. Many instances of humour are created (using a potentially derogatory term) when the adolescent Tiffany is repeatedly called the "Big Wee Hag" and similar seemingly nonsensical names.[45]

> Hag! It didn't sound pretty, but every witch was a hag to the Feegles, however young she was. ... it was not their fault that to anyone not six inches tall the word meant someone who combed her hair with a rake and

> had worse teeth than an old sheep. Being called a hag when you are nine can be sort of funny. It isn't quite so amusing when you are nearly sixteen and have had a very bad day and very little sleep and could really, really do with a bath.
>
> (*ISWM*, 42).

Tiffany does not look like a stereotypical witch, given that she is: "Light pink, with brown eyes, and brown hair. Nothing special." (*WFM*, 15). She is average for a white girl in the UK or similar countries and therefore quite different from earlier versions of Circe and Medea who were beautiful temptresses. She also recognises that her name is not one associated with witches in the popular imagination (*WFM*, 11). However, unlike the girls in *Lords and Ladies*, Tiffany does not attempt to give herself a new name.[46] A recurring theme throughout the Tiffany novels is the importance of looking like a witch, or not looking like a witch, as the situation demands; and the desirability of showcasing your role as a witch varies considerably across the novels according to geographical location and social expectations. For example, Miss Tick, when travelling in the Lowlands (and other places that do not respect witches), disguises her hat (*WFM*, 23). The Older Tiffany who travels through time in *I Shall Wear Midnight* dresses as a witch, with a black dress and boots and a pointy hat (*ISWM*, 332). However, in most of her novels, Tiffany rejects the traditional witches' outfit in its entirety, but from *Wintersmith* onwards, she does wear the pointy hat.[47] The pointy hat is an essential item of a witch's costume in many parts of the Discworld, as can be seen when Tiffany takes her hat off for the day of the scouring fair and Amber almost does not recognise her (*ISWM*, 337). The pointy witch's hat itself is almost entirely a fictional construct and has its origins in the steeple hats associated with witches in Restoration Witch dramas and later pantomimes.[48]

A theme that also repeats throughout the Tiffany novels is the idea that not all women who match the hag witch stereotype are in fact witches.[49] An example of this is Mrs Snapperly, who was persecuted and eventually died because she resembled a storybook witch and had no one to defend her (*WFM*, 45). Tiffany is rightly sceptical of stories that lead to this sort of thinking and behaviour, because: "if she could magic away a boy and a whole horse, why didn't she magic away the men who came for her?" (*WFM*, 47). Stories can change realities, such as in the early modern period where fictions about witches and their abilities were used in Demonologies and therefore eventually influenced trial records. In *Wintersmith*, Tiffany thinks Miss Treason might be taking her to something like the "famous 'dancing about without your drawers on' that I've heard so much about? ... It was something people thought witches did, but witches didn't seem to think they did it," (*W*, 47). At least in England, there was a decided absence of witches dancing around at Sabbaths (naked or otherwise) in most trials, but mentions of it in the literature, and pictures of it in woodcuts.[50] The image of the dishevelled and naked witch goes back to Medea's gathering materials for spells while largely undressed and Circean figures, such as Spenser's Acrasia, being usually scantily clad. It is a symptom of the idea of the witch as an unruly woman in early modern texts. However, this being a Pratchett novel, with their propensity to multiple intertextual references, it is also a jibe about the Sky-clad ceremonies of Gardnerian witchcraft.

Tiffany has a complicated relationship with stories about witches, especially as found in her book of Fairy Tales.[51] From the very beginning of the Tiffany novels, she resists the idea that witches have to be wicked, and that they are all little old ladies, deciding that she wants to be a witch since she lacks the blonde or red hair of the princess in stories. Tiffany recognises both the power of stories and their limiting nature. "If this was a story, she thought bitterly, I'd trust in my heart and follow my star and all that other stuff and it would all turn out all right, right now, by tinkly Magikkkk. But you're never in

a story when you need to be." (*HFofS*, 292). Except that she is in a story, and on the Discworld narrativium is a real force, similar to gravity, and at particular points on narrative arcs, stories can change. Here, the text is denying its nature (this is a story written for children in which everything does work out all right in the end) to demonstrate the need to take responsibility for the shape of your life, and not just trusting to fate or magic or silly things like that. However, to defeat the Hiver, Tiffany has to try to figure out the significance of three wishes in stories, and like the older witches in *Witches Abroad*, at many points throughout her novels, she needs to recognise narrative patterns to be able to change the outcome.

The older witches in the Tiffany novels frequently use stories to their advantage, including Miss Treason who utilises the image of the storybook witch to generate fear and respect in her villagers. Another is Miss Tick, who "had written *Witch-hunting for Dumb People*, and she made sure that copies of it found their way into those areas where people still believed that witches should be burned or drowned." (*W*, 56). By doing so, she made sure that at least she would have an easy way to escape if they did try to drown her, and a cup of tea and a warm bed the night before. This book's similarities to the *Malleus Maleficarum* is a reminder, if needed, that Pratchett writes against the stereotype of burning witches that was based on continental ideas of witchcraft.

One aspect of historical witchcraft in England that is an influence on Pratchett's witch novels is the Cunning Woman or white witch of the early modern period. Due to this, his good witches are often skilled midwives and healers, similar to positive Medea figures in Spenser and Lyly, and Granny considers these to be useful skills to have (*WFM*, 303).[52] As Tiffany has learned by the end of Wee Free Men, being a witch is something you just are:

> ‘You can’t give lessons on witchcraft. Not properly. It’s all about how you are ... you, I suppose.’
>
> ‘Nicely said,’ said Mistress Weatherwax. ‘You’re sharp. But there’s magic, too. You’ll pick that up. It don’t take much intelligence, otherwise wizards wouldn’t be able to do it.’
>
> ‘You’ll need a job, too,’ said Mrs Ogg. ‘There’s no money in witchcraft. Can’t do magic for yourself, see? Cast-iron rule.’
>
> (*WFM*, 303)

Some early modern cunning people subscribed to this idea that they could not make money from magic, but some did not; and as we see in *I Shall Wear Midnight*, not all the witches of the Discworld subscribe to this idea either, although Tiffany does. However, in these novels, and in early modern plays, genuinely good witches or cunning-women, such as Lyly’s Mother Bombie, notably do not accept remuneration for their services (Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, 3.4.194). “It seemed to be a world made up entirely of women, but occasionally, out in the lanes, a man would strike up a conversation about the weather and somehow, by some sort of code, an ointment or potion would get handed over.” (*HFofS*, 107). The novels present the Ramtops and even the Chalk as mostly not cash-based societies, therefore people ‘pay’ for the witches’ services with goods or services when they can. Miss Level uses this system to make sure that everyone helps each other when help is needed. Storing food in people’s bellies, and getting them to pay it forward (*HFofS*, 108). One of the many theories on why witchcraft accusations occurred in early modern England is that in societies which operated like that which Pratchett describes, witchcraft trials took place when this system broke down, and people started to resent each other and their obligations.[53] One tool used in early modern English villages to encourage social conformity and cohesion were shaming rituals like Skimmington rides, such as appears in

Brome and Heywood's *Witches of Lancashire*.[54] Pratchett has his version of this, called the rough music. Whereas in Brome and Heywood's play it is the witches which cause the social upheaval that necessitates the skimmington, in *I Shall Wear Midnight*, it is a witch, Tiffany, who spares a man from the lynch mob the rough music represents (*ISWM*, 30).

One of the most notable differences between the witches in Pratchett's novels, and early modern Circean- and Medean-witches is that the former are embedded in their society, and far from disrupting social cohesion, they more usually facilitate it by looking after those most in need of assistance. "And mostly, it turned out, what Miss Level did was chores. Endless chores. You could look in vain for much broomstick tuition, spelling lessons or pointy-hat management. They were, mostly, the kind of chores that are just ... chores." (*HFofS*, 88). As becomes more and more obvious in the Tiffany books, being a good witch is mostly about being good at all things domestic, and being of service to the community. While noble in many ways it is also another way of restraining and controlling a powerful young woman such as a witch. For the witches of the Discworld, the options appear to be limited to subscribing to the peer-controlled service ethos or to risk going bad, like Lilith in *Witches Abroad*, or the Hiver-controlled Tiffany of *A Hat Full of Sky*.

Tiffany's mother thinks that magic should be able to solve all problems, including domestic drudgery, but Tiffany points out that this can be dangerous as magic does not understand what dirt is (*W*, 342). It is interesting to note, that apart from Brownies or Fairies helping with chores, magic was not usually linked to housework in literature, at least in traditional English tales. Also, when witches were involved in domestic tasks, it was usually as a disruptive force, not as cleaners. There are some instances of witches who are maids using magic to get out of work in Restoration witch plays, but it is not until Disney's versions of fairy tales that magic is used for cleaning; even then it frequently creates more problems than it solves.[55] In the character Annagramma Hawkins, one can see the more subtle dangers that can be caused by how a magical female is educated. "She can

do magic, Tiffany thought. She's just not good at witchcraft. She'll make a mess of it. She'll make a mess of *people*." (*W*, 272). Annagramma has not been given the same humbling, practical training that all the other young witches like Tiffany have received. Therefore she does not really know how not to use magic. This is an important theme in Pratchett's witch novels: knowing when and how not to use magic; and it is one that Tiffany learnt the hard way in *A Hat Full of Sky*. Fortunately for Annagramma, and the people in her village, the other young witches help her to learn witchcraft and to eschew the 'magickal' paraphernalia and showy magic she had been so proud of performing.

In *A Hat Full of Sky*, Annagramma presides over a Sabbath similar to that held by the young witches in *Lords and Ladies*; only these are real witches getting trained properly by older witches, not girls playing at being witches (*HFofS*, 137). The other witches all think it is a bit silly, since it is magic out of a book. As such, it is not surprising that the magic they are performing (or attempting to perform, as they are humorously inept at this style of magic), has much in common with early modern male magical users. It also contains the use of wands, cups and cauldrons familiar from maleficent Circe and Medea figures from the literature of that period *(HFofS*, 140). "Granny Weatherwax always said that what Mrs Earwig did was wizard magic with a dress on, and Annagramma certainly dragged a lot of books and wands along to the meetings. Mostly, the girls did a few ceremonies to keep her quiet, because for them the real purpose of the coven was to meet friends," (*W*, 122). The witch that Annagramma takes over from, Miss Treason, understands the importance of putting on a show: "Oh, yes, you don't need a wand or a shamble or even a pointy hat to *be* a witch. But it helps a witch to put on a show! People expect it. They'll believe in you. I didn't get where I am today by wearing a woolly bobble hat and a gingham apron! I look the part." (*W*, 90). Aside from a potential jibe about Mrs Weasley from the Harry Potter books, Miss Treason sums up the relationship between Pratchett's witches and the tools traditionally associated with figures such as Circe and

Medea. Witches do not need them to perform magic, but they are strongly associated with the 'performance' of witchcraft, and can, therefore, be used to manipulate expectations.

Circean

In *A Hatful of Sky*, Tiffany, while she is under the control of the Hiver and all the minds it had absorbed before her, including that of a wizard, uses a wand with a humorous inscription (*HFofS*, 188). What she does with it is turn Brian, the shop boy, into a frog with lots left over because of the conservation of mass. Brian's transformation makes her very Circean and very dangerous; however, this occurs with a tinge of humour, as the left-over bits of Brian are floating near the ceiling. As another character points out, "'That wand shouldn't do that!' he said. / 'Of course it can't. It's rubbish. But I can,' said Tiffany," (*HFofS*, 193). It is not the wand that has the power; it is merely a conduit for the magic of the person holding it. Fortunately for Brian, Tiffany turns him back into a person (*HFofS*, 194), making Hiver Tiffany more like a classical version of Circe, who restores Odysseus' men, than early modern reinterpretations of Circe, like Acrasia, who does not restore the knights she transformed.

Another young witch who has wizardly influences, and chooses to transform a young man into an animal, is Esk, in Pratchett's first witch novel, *Equal Rites*. Esk's staff is not just an old stick; it is central to her being a wizard, or not just a witch, at least in Granny's mind.[56] This section shows the extent to which a tool (staff, rod or wand), used by a witch in literature, Circe, had become a tool strongly associated with male magical practitioners, especially the Wizards (like Gandalf) of popular fantasy fiction. Esk, using the staff given to her by a wizard (thinking she would be the eighth son of an eighth son), transforms her brother Gulta into the pig he reminds her of (*ER*, 89-90). When Esk turns him back into a boy she notes that "Granny Weatherwax had never been known to turn anyone into anything," (*ER*, 91). At this stage of the novel, we do not know that this is not

because Granny cannot transform people; it is because she chooses not to. In fact, in *Equal Rites*, Granny participates in a duel with a wizard, in which they both transform themselves into numerous animals (*ER*, 224). In most of the later Discworld novels, the wizards are presented as humorous academic types, rather than magic wielding sorcerers.[57] *Equal Rites*, as has been noted many times before, including in Lian Sinclair's recent article, "Magical Genders: The Gender(s) of Witches in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett's Discworld" is Pratchett's first attempt at exploring the gendered nature of magic in the "consensus fantasy universe".[58] As such, his ideas surrounding the nature of witchcraft, gender, and the performance of magic, evolve over the course of his novels. In the much later Tiffany novel, Granny reiterates the idea of wands having no power of their own when she picks up a stick and makes a green flame jump out of it:

> 'It's a stick. Now maybe I made a flame come out of it, or maybe I made you *think* it did. That don't matter. It was *me* is what I'm sayin', not the stick. Get your mind right and you can make a stick your wand and the sky your hat and a puddle your magic ... your magic ... er, what're them fancy cups called?'
>
> 'Er ... goblet,' said Tiffany.
>
> 'Right. Magic goblet. Things aren't important. People are.'
>
> (*HFofS*, 340)

Wands, cups, and similar objects of power taken from Circe and Medea figures (or witches) by early modern authors do not matter because magic users do not need them. However, their use by female characters in Pratchett often indicates they are not good witches, in that they lack skill or self-belief; or, like Lilith, they are bad because they forget that people are what is important.[59] By *I Shall Wear Midnight*, Tiffany is starting to truly

understand when not to do magic, as despite thinking, "A day as a pig might help him mend his ways," she promises not to transform Amber's abusive father (*ISWM*, 193).

Pratchett's witches frequently have voices that encourage obedience without further recourse to magic, as seen in the Tiffany Aching novels, including *A Hat Full of Sky*. There we read: "'Shut your eyes, Miss Level!' And there was something in the voice, some edge or strange tone that made Tiffany shut her eyes too. … So *this* is witchcraft too, Tiffany thought. It's like Granny Aching talking to animals. It's in the voice! Sharp and soft by turns, and you use little words of command and encouragement and you *keep* talking, making the words fill the creature's world, so that the sheepdogs obey you and the nervous sheep are calmed ..." (*HFofS*, 246). As can be seen here, a witch's voice does not only command people; it can be used to control animals, another Circean skill that has been divorced from the less savoury elements of the Circe myth when it is used for Pratchett's witches. Pratchett also demystifies the power of his witches' voices, by showing how it works, although, as is repeated many times throughout the witch novels, it does not cease being magic just because you know how it is done, and Tiffany herself possesses a commanding voice (*ISWM*, 88).

In general, the witches of the Discworld novels have a close connection to animals, and this is a theme that grows in strength over the course of the novels. In his final Discworld novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*, the familiar-like animals are somewhat magical in their own right. For example, when Tiffany asks Granny's cat a question, not expecting an answer:

> 'Where is Granny Weatherwax, You?' / There was a pause, and the cat made a long *meow*, which appeared to end, '*Meow ... vrywhere*.' And then purred, just like any other cat, and rubbed her hard little head against Tiffany's leg.

(*SC*, 332)

This uncanny 'familiar' animal theme is not present in his earlier adult witch novels, such as in *Witches Abroad*, where Greebo and Legba are presented as familiars but are clearly just animals (*WA*, 222). Another innovation in the final Discworld novel involves a young man who appears to have a way with animals (*SC*, 166). Geoffrey Swivel, having heard about a girl who became a wizard, decided he would like to be a witch (*SC*, 148). He appears to have many of the skills required (most similar to those possessed by Nanny Ogg), and he has a familiar-like goat named Mephistopheles.[60] From the beginning of the series, many of the witches have pets or familiars, as well as chickens, goats and other animals for food, including pigs, an animal long associated, of course, with Circe. Some of Pratchett's witches also undergo a form of mental transformation into animals when they 'borrow' the minds of animals, a skill described in detail in several of the novels. Tiffany is such a naturally powerful witch that she taught herself to Borrow or put her mind somewhere else, just because she did not have a mirror (*HFofS*, 175). Granny Weatherwax teaches Tiffany how to Borrow safely, as her early attempts enabled an entity called the Hiver to inhabit her body (*HFofS*, 346, 192). While under the control of the Hiver: "Tiffany looked at her arm. It had scales on. Now it had hair on it. Now it was smooth and brown, and holding—" (*HFofS*, 163). She undergoes a mental metamorphosis, similar to the physical ones experienced by Proteus in Greco-Roman myth, and Tam-Lin in English folktales, due to the many minds within her remembering their many forms. The Hiver also changes into its past shapes while fighting the Feegles on a dream plane (*HFofS*, 234).

One of the Hiver's memories to temporarily have control of Tiffany's body was a very dangerous woman, of the style of Circe and Medea (*HFofS*, 240). Much like the older witches of previous novels, Tiffany, as a good witch, is defined by not being particularly Circean or Medean, so, therefore, it should be unsurprising, that she most frequently

demonstrates Circean and Medean attributes when under the influence of the Hiver. When she is just Tiffany, her appearance is too average to be notable. The Hiver is not the only entity which 'shares' Tiffany's body for a time as, thanks to joining in a dance she was not supposed to, Tiffany temporarily takes the place of the personification of Summer. In doing so, Tiffany takes on many of her attributes. However, she does not become "fairer than all the stars in heaven" although Nanny does suggest she could try doing something with her hair (*W*, 221). None of Pratchett's good witches is beautiful, which is not the same as saying they are not attractive, but they are not dangerously attractive in the manner of Circe.

While the Summer Lady is in the underworld, she takes on the outward appearance of Tiffany; however, when she opens her eyes Roland can see straight away that she is not Tiffany (*W*, 374). Particularly in Pratchett's novels, eyes are a way of knowing the real nature of a character. What the Summer Lady's eyes show, is that she is a potentially dangerous goddess, with the golden eyes of a snake, an animal linked to both Circe and Medea in myth. Being Summer, she is also akin to being a sun goddess, which is another similarity to Circe and Medea, who are descendants of the Sun. She is not particularly pleasant, but neither is the height of summer in the desert; and imagery such as that of fire and heat is central to descriptions of her. However, she shows similarities to several ancient goddesses, especially those involved in the return of spring and the growing of crops, and even though Tiffany temporarily has her cornucopia, it acts to highlight that Tiffany is not a divinity. Tiffany, like all of Pratchett's witches, is not a beautiful, powerful, magical goddess who can be benign or dangerous like classical versions of Circe, and to a lesser extent, Medea. They are clearly human, and as such are held accountable for their actions.

Despite being only human, young witches, in particular, are still affected by stories about beautiful younger and seductive witches based on Circe. A humorous instance of this

is at the Scouring Fair when we read that, "Tiffany hadn't had a kiss, but after all, she was *the witch*. Who knew what you might get turned into?" (*ISWM*, 12). This joke suggests the danger of kissing a witch could lie in a Circean transformation of a young man into an animal. Later in the same novel, we see an equation of young witches with dangerous sexuality when Miss Spruce calls Tiffany a Brazen hussy (not unlike Medea and Circe). However, she also calls her a black and midnight hag, which is a direct reference to the older Medean/Hecatean witches found in Shakespeare (*ISWM*, 79). While Miss Spruce is confusing her witch stereotypes in her bigotry, Mrs Proust, another witch, also calls Tiffany a Hussy, having caught the witch-hating contagion based on stories about witches spread by the Cunning-Man (*ISWM*, 139, 130). The persistence of the sexually alluring young witch stereotype is seen in *The Shepherd's Crown* when Becky and Nancy (prospective witches) think magic can be used to make you beautiful, and make boys like you (*SC*, 157). These two girls also believe that witches can control the weather, which is another skill primarily found in literary representations of witches based on Circe and Medea, especially in England, where it is rarely found in trial records. "Why were people so keen to look at a sunrise, a rainbow, a flash of lightning or dark cloud and feel *responsible* for it? She knew that if either girl really believed they could control a storm in the skies, they would be running home, screaming in terror—" (*SC*, 160). Powerful witches, including Tiffany, can control or influence the weather to a certain extent in the Discworld novels; however, they largely choose not to. As has repeatedly been demonstrated, a central character trait for Pratchett's good witches, choosing not to use their power, is one of the primary differences between them and the early modern Circe and Medea figures that influenced witch stereotypes.

Medean

Just as in the adult witch novels, Pratchett often displaces Medean characteristics associated with witches onto other characters. An example is the Baron's son, Roland's, Aunts, who are an evil female force in *Wintersmith*. The Aunts usurp power in the Baron's household and attempt to disrupt the male succession. Although it is not stated outright, it is implied that they are using 'medicines' as poisons to keep the Baron incapacitated. They are also described as crow-like, a description in literature more commonly applied to witches, and they bear more than a passing resemblance to early modern hag witches from literature (*W*, 345). These non-magical women have more in common with early modern Medea figures than does the young, yet magical Tiffany.

In *I Shall Wear Midnight*, after noting that Tiffany is quite young, has nice white teeth and is wearing green, Mr Carpetlayer the coachman questions whether Tiffany is a witch. Having solved his conundrum by falling back on the idea of the attractive young Tiffany being a good witch, and old hag witches being the evil ones about whom he has heard stories of stealing babies, the coachman is quite happy (*ISWM*, 114). This section reflects two changes made to witch stereotypes during the early modern period. The first is that missing children, particularly babies became more distinctly linked to the figure of the witch, whereas, at the start of the period it was more likely to be the fairies who stole babies, as it is in Pratchett novels where fairies or elves are present.[61] In trials, witches were more commonly blamed for the illnesses and deaths of older children than accused of harming small infants, which is also consistent with Medea myths.[62] The second change to witch stereotypes being demonstrated by Mr Carpetlayer's statement is the rise of the old hag witch, often tied to the figure of Medea as a murderous mother. Before the rise of the hag, it was mostly seductive young witches who were truly dangerous, for example, Ovid's Circe and Medea—and the temptresses and rebellious, unwomanly young women based on them.

Despite the coachman's identification of Tiffany as a good witch because she is not a Medean hag, she does bear more than a passing resemblance to classical Medea myths, but with important differences. Unlike Ovid's Medea, who killed her baby brother because it was expedient, Tiffany does not try to kill her brother, but she is willing to use him as bait for a dangerous creature (*WFM*, 43). In a later novel, when Tiffany is known to be a witch, she is accused of stealing away a baby:

> 'No, Dad, I stole away with the baby. Listen, Dad, do get it right. I buried the child, which was dead, I saved the man who was dying. I did those things, Dad. People might not understand — might make up stories. I don't care. You do the job that is in front of you.'
>
> (*ISWM*, 66)

As has been covered earlier, stealing babies is a common charge levelled against witches in stories, despite that previously being associated with fairies, and not featuring in trial records. Unlike the Medean hag witches of early modern literature, Tiffany, like the older witches of Pratchett's earlier novels, would risk herself to save a child, and would never intentionally hurt one. In fact, Tiffany uses attributes previously associated with vengeful Medea figures, fire and flying, to save a little girl from the truly Medean figures in Pratchett, the elves:

> Tiffany's broomstick could not go fast enough. In a piece of woodland she found a group of three elves toying with the little girl, and what was inside her was not anger. It was something more forensic than that, and as the stick went onwards, Tiffany let her feelings flame up … and *release*.

> The elves were laughing, but as Tiffany swooped down, she sent fire blazing from her fingertips and into them and watched them burn. She was shuddering with her fury, a fury so intense it was threatening to overcome her. If she met any more elves that night, they too would be dead.
>
> (*SC*, 239)

She is of course "appalled" at what she had done, and worries that she has gone to the dark (*SC*, 239-40). She is rightly concerned, because she is using a tool (magical fire) strongly associated with dangerous witches in literature, in particular, Medea, whose magical fire was also fuelled by anger, although hers was jealous anger, not righteous anger to protect a child, like Tiffany's. "Tiffany knew that if a witch started thinking of anyone as '*just*' anything, that would be the first step on a well-worn path that could lead to, oh, to poisoned apples, spinning wheels and a too-small stove … and to pain, and terror, and horror and the darkness." (*SC*, 240). So after taking the baby home, she knows she needs to talk to another witch, as witches are each other's moral compasses.[63]

Tiffany is set up to play the role of a Medean woman scorned in *I Shall Wear Midnight*, as Roland is marrying a 'princess' instead of Tiffany, having been called "her young man" in earlier novels (*ISWM*, 91; *W*, 158). After she is accused of the Medean crimes of harming a child and killing an old man, Roland tries to exile Tiffany, but she refuses, similar to how Medea delays her exile when Jason wishes to remarry (*ISWM*, 211). Roland calls her a wayward daughter, another thing she has in common with Medea. However, as she reveals, Tiffany is not scorned by Roland because they never really had a relationship, just a strange type of friendship because they were both different (*ISWM*, 213). She is however still prone to irrational jealousy when it comes to Letitia, Roland's bride-to-be:

> Here was a person whose mere existence had led Tiffany, one evening, to wonder about that whole business of sticking pins into a wax figure. She hadn't actually done it, because it was something you shouldn't do, something that witches greatly frowned on, and because it was cruel and dangerous, and above all because she hadn't been able to find any pins.
>
> (*ISWM*, 222)

The use of wax figures for revenge is something greatly feared of witches during the early modern period, and it appears in some trials. "And, in truth, there had never been that much hatred, more of a kind of *miffed* feeling. She'd known all along that she'd never be a lady, not without the long blonde hair. It was totally against the whole book of fairy tales. She just hadn't liked being rushed into accepting it." (*ISWM*, 222). This novel, with the Duchess and the Cunning Man fuelling hatred of witches, is preoccupied with stereotypes and stories, and Pratchett is reminding us that they often do not match reality. Tiffany is not a woman scorned, like Medea, and she is most definitely not the type of witch she is accused of being throughout this novel.

Like many witches in literature, including Medea, Tiffany's witchcraft appears to be at least partly hereditary, as her Granny Aching had many witch-like attributes, although having a witch in the family is not a requirement to be a witch in Pratchett (*WFM*, 39). Granny Aching's sheep dogs were like her familiars, and she knew all about herbs, and she brought lambs back to life, being apparently able to cure anything (*WFM*, 40). This recalls Medea, who used herbs in effect to bring an old ram back to life, turning it into a lamb. Granny Aching does that however with a big black oven, not a big black cauldron (*WFM*, 41). Granny Aching's reputation works in Tiffany's favour in getting the people of the Chalk to accept her as a witch, "We got a witch now, and she's better'n anyone else's! No one's throwing Granny Aching's grand-daughter in a pond!" (*HFofS*, 347-48). Part of

their fear of witches was based on the idea of the witch as a foreigner or outsider, which goes back to Circe and Medea, at least in literature; in actual early modern trials it was just as common for witches to be neighbours.[64]

Part of the reason the hereditary aspect of witchcraft is not as important in Pratchett's novels is the apprenticeship system used for training new witches in the Discworld. One of the witches that Tiffany learns from is Miss Level, a research witch: "She tries to find new spells by learning how old ones were really done. You know all that stuff about 'ear of bat and toe of frog'? They never work, but Miss Level thinks it's because we don't know exactly what kind of frog, or which toe—' " (*HFofS*, 37). Fortunately for Tiffany's sensibilities, she only uses creatures that are already dead. These ingredients are firmly associated with early modern Medean witches, particularly in Shakespeare. Shakespeare is also the primary reason the Medean tool of the cauldron is still so integral to witch stereotypes, as can be seen here:

> No witch she'd met had done anything with a cauldron apart from make stew, but somehow people believed in their hearts that a witch's cauldron should bubble green. And that must be why Mr Boffo sold Item #61 Bubbling Green Cauldron Kit, $14, extra sachets of Green, $1 each.
>
> (*W*, 390)

In Pratchett's witch novels, cauldrons are still commonly found in kitchens, and in the Tiffany novels, cauldrons are not used (for any purpose) as frequently as they are in the earlier witch novels. A cauldron does appear when Tiffany meets with the other young witches at a Sabbath style gathering (*HFofS*, 140). One of the only characters to use a cauldron for magical purposes is the Feegle Kelda, Jeannie, who uses a leather cauldron to connect with past and future Keldas (*HFofS*, 154).[65] *In I Shall Wear Midnight*, which

focuses more on the negative stereotypes associated with witches than have the other Tiffany novels, the drunken cook implies that Tiffany makes baby frogs appear in the cauldron that had puddings boiling in it. She also outright accuses her of killing the old Baron because everyone thinks that Roland 'scorned' her by getting engaged to Letitia (*ISWM*, 207). Fortunately, Preston makes them all laugh at Tiffany to relieve the tension caused by the cook's rant (*ISWM*, 210). Pratchett certainly understands the value of humour as a release valve, and it is frequently used by his witches, most commonly Nanny Ogg, to help others to see them as less threatening.

As Tiffany learns, particularly in *I Shall Wear Midnight*, public perceptions are more important than the truth. "It seemed to Tiffany that people lived in a very strange world sometimes. Everybody knew, in some mysterious way, that witches ran away with babies and blighted crops, and all the other nonsense. And at the same time, they would come running to the witch when they needed help." (*ISWM*, 67). The mysterious way they 'know' is through stories, books and pamphlets written by priests and judges, or in this novel, rumours spread by the Cunning Man, who was once a witch-hunting priest. Fire is the key to beating the Cunning Man, and it is one of Tiffany's favourite elements, as well as a Medean one (*ISWM*, 277). Tiffany uses fire for positive purposes in this novel, for example, to perform a wedding ceremony for the young man everyone thinks scorned her, and as a method of cleansing (*ISWM*, 319 and 77). In *Wintersmith*, Annagramma suggests a more traditionally Medean use of magical fire as a tool to defeat enemies, but the other young witches dislike this notion and her showy use of magic (*W*, 123).

The most common use of fire by Medea figures is in conjunction with her uncontrolled anger and jealousy. Pratchett's witches, as was mentioned earlier when Tiffany destroyed the Elves, can channel their anger so that it serves a positive purpose, even if it is still destructive (*HFofS*, 255). Another negative Medean trait, which becomes positive when possessed by Pratchett's witches is pride: "'Miss Aching, you are showing

an almost sinful self-assurance and overwhelming pride and certainty, and I may say that I wouldn't expect anything less of a witch.'" (*ISWM*, 276).

Pratchett's witches, including Tiffany, recognise that how one witch is viewed affects perceptions of witches in general:

> When you were a witch, you were all witches, thought Tiffany Aching as she walked through the crowds, pulling her broomstick after her on the end of a length of string. It floated a few feet above the ground. She was getting a bit bothered about that. It seemed to work quite well, but nevertheless, since all around the fair were small children dragging balloons, *also* on the end of a piece of string, she couldn't help thinking that it made her look more than a little bit silly, and something that made one witch look silly made *all* witches look silly.
>
> (*ISWM*, 10)

This section summarises the central ideas behind this study, which is that stories representing witches as funny or silly, contribute to them being seen as less dangerous or scary than they previously were. In Tiffany's case, it is her broom, an object that literally puts her above others, and could have potentially marked her as dangerously superior, that becomes humorous. Later in the same novel, "Tiffany thought; laughter helps things slide into the thinking." (*ISWM*, 330).

The Chalk does not have a tradition of witches of the cunning women type the way the Ramtop Mountains do. At many stages in the Tiffany novels, witches are needed but not wanted, which is why Granny Aching, who was quite witch-like: "was a wise woman, and was wise enough not to be a witch." (*ISWM*, 17). Tiffany, over the course of the five novels substantially changes the perception of witches in the Chalk country she calls home:

> The storybook pictures of the drooling hag were being wiped away, every time Tiffany helped a young mother with her first baby, or smoothed an old man's path to his grave. Nevertheless, old stories, old rumours and old picture books still seemed to have their own hold on the memory of the world.
>
> (*ISWM*, 17)

Amongst other things, Pratchett's final Discworld novel, which just happened to be his last witch novel, and the final Tiffany novel, reminds his readers that although stories have a tendency to repeat themselves, it is always possible to change them.

Conclusion

Pratchett's novels challenge the gendered Story of the Witch, as seen in the popular fantasy fiction that the Discworld books parody, in three ways. The first is by making them 'the good ones'. In doing so, they have much more in common with historical early modern cunning women than with witches in literature. The Story of the Witch is strongly connected to the idea of the witch as a bad, power seeking, dangerous woman. Therefore, one of the ways in which Pratchett illustrates his witches' 'goodness' is by making them conform to some (old fashioned) ideals of feminine behaviour, including good housewifery. In the Tiffany Aching novels, the older witches explain to Tiffany that they go round the villages acting like District Nurses, and perform numerous tasks of domestic drudgery, to 'find their balance' or in other words keep themselves humble. A redeeming factor in this regard is that, generally speaking, appropriate feminine behaviour in Lancre, like being obedient to husbands, and not going to plays, is not expected of Pratchett's witches. Aside from following their own moral code and only using magic when it is truly

needed, conventionally female rules of behaviour are mostly there for other people. Another sign to the reader that Pratchett's witches are good is that they are usually local, an embedded part of village life, while also (due to the nature of their vocation) being slightly outside it and not dangerous foreigners, as witches in earlier stories often were.

Another distancing tool from the story of the Witch, particularly the Circean strand, is that within the novels Pratchett's good witches are largely non-sexual beings. As was mentioned in relation to Nanny Ogg, sex is mostly absent in Pratchett novels, except via veiled allusions and jokes. However, the cultural baggage associated with sexuality, particularly female sexuality and magic use, is so extensive that it is not surprising he largely avoids it, by making his witches too busy for sex because they are helping others. Within the witch novels, the only sex that is of any interest is that which disqualifies a young woman from the role of maiden in the coven, or that, which results in offspring and shotgun weddings. Alternate sexualities are also largely absent from the witch novels. The witches in Pratchett often find it difficult to discover the happy medium between virginal good magic users, such as those found in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Circean strumpets—or worse, the black widow-style woman, like Lilith, Granny's sister and evil opposite in *Witches Abroad* (*WA*, 239-40).

As mentioned earlier, the witch in literature has often been representative of the 'evil other', set up to be feared by the community and therefore to reinforce shared social values. This leads us to the second way in which Pratchett challenges the gendered story of the Witch. In appropriating the term 'witch' for his good women, Pratchett has created a need to find other characters to fulfil the role of 'evil other'. The characters he uses possess many traits associated with Circean and Medean witch figures from literature. However, he does not limit himself to using the feminine gender for them. In *Wyrd Sisters*, the 'evil others' are Lord and Lady Felmet, based on Macbeth and his wife. In *Witches Abroad*, it is the traditionally good, Fairy Godmother figure, Lady Lilith (who is one of the most

Circean characters in Pratchett) using a wand to transform animals into people, and actively seeking power over people. She is only matched by the elves (also known as fairies) of both genders, in particular, their Queen, and later Lord Lankin. They feature in many novels, including his last, *The Shepherd's Crown*, where the Queen receives a name and is redeemed by learning empathy, and one of her treacherous Lords becomes the true villain. Male villains, including vampires, but particularly those representing the evil found within regular people, become more common in the later novels. However, this is an idea that Pratchett had been interested in since *Equal Rites*, where The Things from the Dungeon Dimensions are reflections of your fears and beliefs. Completing the inversion of early modern terms for good and bad magic users is the 'evil other' of *I Shall Wear Midnight*, who is called the Cunning Man, and whose goal is to destroy all witches. One of the ways he attempts to do this is by reviving old stories of the wicked old witch, who steals children, and kills livestock.

That leads us to the third way in which Pratchett's witches change the story of the witch, that is, their appropriation of such stories for their own purposes. The stereotypes that originated during the early modern period based around the Hag gave rise to our culture's image of the 'storybook witch', as she is referred to in several of the Discworld novels. Pratchett's witches sometimes even use this stereotype to their advantage, as a means of ensuring that the villagers respect them and believe in their abilities. Two such witches are Miss Treason and later Annagramma Hawkins, who takes over from her. These witches cultivate elements of the image to set themselves apart, which emphasises their difference so as to create respect and a type of fear. Even Granny plays on the fear of the villagers to keep people out of her garden in *The Shepherd's Crown*. Pratchett's younger witches often reject this stereotype to a large extent, with Magrat choosing to dress like a modern Wiccan, and scandalising Granny Weatherwax by wearing trousers in *Witches Abroad*; and Tiffany says that "When I'm old I shall wear midnight," (*HFofS*, 333).

I would like to end with two major points. First, although Pratchett was not a chauvinist, he was still a male writer, writing within generic and other literary traditions that favour and privilege the male subject in a patriarchal culture. The particular genre chosen by Pratchett for the Discworld novels, parodic or satiric fantasy, did allow (if not require) him to challenge and reconfigure the dominant ideologies to be found in fantasy fiction, and in British culture overall. He does this with varying degrees of success, for despite his attempts to step outside what might still be called the dominant ideology; he was, by nature of his upbringing and education, immersed in it. His reinterpretation of witch figures, demonstrates the pervasiveness of the idea of the witch as a personification of a "bad woman" in British literature and culture, so much so that even Pratchett's sympathetic portrayal of witches could not escape this idea. Second, Pratchett is sometimes called a feminist writer because of his willingness to use female characters as protagonists, and in doing so create female characters to whom female readers can relate and therefore perhaps like. There are now many strong, powerful, and positive varieties of witches in fiction and film, but Pratchett was one of the first in fantasy fiction to change the Story of the Witch.

1. John Stephens, "Not Unadjacent to a Play About a Scottish King: Terry Pratchett Remakes Macbeth," *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 7, no. 2 (1997); Kristin Noone, "Shakespeare in Discworld: Witches, Fantasy, and Desire," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 21, no. 1 (2010). Others, while addressing his Witch novels, do not look in detail at his witches in relation to the broader history of witches in literature, such as Janet Brennan Croft, "Nice, Good, or Right: Faces of the Wise Woman in Terry Pratchett's "Witches" Novels," *Mythlore* 26 (2008); Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, "The Charity of Witches: Watching the Edges in Terry Pratchett's Tiffany Aching Novels," *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 24, no. 2 (2016); Caroline Webb, "'Change the Story, Change the World': Witches/Crones in Novels by Terry Pratchett and Diana Wynne Jones," ibid.16 (2006); John Stephens, "Witch-Figures in Recent Children's Fiction: The Subaltern and the Subversive," *Contributions to the Study of World Literature* 120 (2003).

2. Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

3. Dorothy. Stephens, *The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative: Conditional Pleasure from Spenser to Marvell.* (Cambridge [England];New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 66, 71.

4. Terry Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* (London: Random House, 1992), 81. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *WA.*

5. "In these prints the witch is identified by her steeple hat, point-apron, broomstick, and cat: a fossilized image of the plebeian countrywoman of the late seventeenth century, and a stereotype which has persisted into the children's books of the late twentieth century. […] Only in the course of the eighteenth century, after the supply of real victims had dried up, did the image of the witch become fixed as its last incarnation: as the plebeian woman of the late seventeenth century, in an appropriate and easily identifiable costume. This was

the costume that was popular at masquerades through much of the eighteenth century: and it might be said that it was at the masquerade that the image of witch was first really fixed." Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations, C. 1650-C. 1750* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 170. Jane P Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural: The Dark Side of European Culture, 1400–1700* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2012), 57, also addresses this image and notes the addition of the green face is largely due to the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*.

6. Black Aliss is the Archetypal fairytale witch, mentioned repeatedly in the Witch novels (*WA*, 144, 182-4 and in various locations in other novels).

7. Andrew Rayment, "'Feigning to Feign': Pratchett and the Maskerade" in Jacob M Held and James South, eds., *Philosophy and Terry Pratchett* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 47.

8. *Macbeth*, 4.1.64.

9. Terry Pratchett, *Maskerade* (London: Random House, 1996), 227. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *M*.

10. Mrs Palm, the madame of a very successful whore house is according to Granny, "Practic'ly a witch." (*M*, 132) demonstrating that she is a lot more open minded than Nanny thought she was.

11. Terry Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters* (Random House, 1989), 57. It includes the footnote "*Written by wizards, who are celibate and get some pretty funny ideas around four o'clock in the morning." Pratchett's wizard's are notably priest like in many ways, including celibacy, and this section is probably also a reference to Umberto Eco's 1980 book *The Name of the Rose*, or the movie based on it, which was released in 1986, two years before *Wyrd Sisters*. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *WS*.

12. Janet Brennan Croft, "The Education of a Witch: Tiffany Aching, Hermione Granger, and Gendered Magic in Discworld and Potterworld," *Mythlore* 27, no. 3-4 (2009): 129..

13. The cover of my copy is a photograph by Johnny Ring, designed by N. Keevil and features a wand with a star on the end. The cartoon-style cover by Josh Kirby also features a star tipped wand. The wand featured in *WA*, has a noticeable absence of a star at the tip, however, in Terry Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men* (London: Random House, 2004), there is a joke about a star on a stick on page 81. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *WFM*.

14. *Wintersmith* (London: Random House, 2007), 56. *Carpe Jugulum* (London: Random House, 1999), 59, and 289. All further references shall be to these editions and in text using the abbreviation *W* for Wintersmith, and *CJ* for to Carpe Jugulum. The concept of burning witches is also mentioned elsewhere in many of the novels. Purkiss, amongst others, examines the Feminist misuse of the Myth of the Burning times and refutes the 'history' it is based on in some detail in *The Witch in History*.

15. Jennifer Clement, "Remaking Shakespeare in Discworld: Bardolatry, Fantasy, and Elvish Glamour," *Extrapolation* 54, no. 1 (2013). Edward. James, Farah. Mendlesohn, and Andrew M. Butler, eds., *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Old Earth Books, 2004). Also see note 1 above.

16. *WS*, 19, 21 and passim. See Chapter Four for an examination of cauldrons and their links to Medea.

17. Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky* (London: Random House, 2005), 269, and passim. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *HFofS*.

18. Cackling is addressed throughout the novels including (*WS*, 260), and in the Tiffany series (*WFM*, 305).

19. Terry Pratchett, *The Shepherd's Crown* (London: Random House, 2015), 37. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *SC*.

20. *Thief of Time* (London: Doubleday, Random House, 2001), 11-14.

21. "Nanny scratched her chin, making a sandpapery sound." *Lords and Ladies* (London: Random House, 1993), 298. This makes her a bearded lady, like Shakespeare's weird sisters, only here it is emphasising her age more than masculinity, as it does in *Wyrd Sisters* when he uses a similar description for the duchess (*WS*, 176). All further references to *Lords and Ladies* shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *L&L*.

22. See Laura Annawyn Shamas, *"We Three": The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 12.

23. Siculus Diodorus, *Diodorus of Sicily* trans. C.H. Oldfather, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann, 1933-1967), 4.45.

24. *WS*, 280; *Macbeth*, 1.7.54-9.

25. In trials, witches were more frequently accused of killing or harming older children or adults. Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 162.

26. Even the 'evil others' of the novels, like the vampires have a cauldron in their kitchen, only it is not for magic potions, it is for horrible gruel to feed to the servants (*CJ*, 257).

27. Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). There are also overtones of modern Wiccan rituals in this scene.

28. *WA*, 102; Pindar, *Odes of Pindar*, trans. Richard. Lattimore (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1976), Fourth Pythian Ode, l.50.

29. Terry Pratchett, *I Shall Wear Midnight* (London: Random House, 2010), 287. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *ISWM*.

30. On extended family see (*WA*, 47); on daughter in-laws see (*L&L*, 24).

31. The last example of this joke is in Pratchett, *The Shepherd's Crown*, 67.

32. *WA*, 94. A whole book could be filled with Nanny's sexual innuendos, and within the novels she writes one called, "The Joy of Snacks", as mentioned in *Maskerade*, (*M*, 49).

The real world equivalent, has quite a few sexual innuendos, although not as many as I was expecting, see Terry Pratchett, Stephen Briggs, and Tina Hannan, *Nanny Ogg's Cookbook* (London: Random House, 2001).

33. For example, "a large grey cat watched Tiffany with a half-open eye that glinted with absolute evil." (*W*, 209).

34. Diane Purkiss, "Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child," *Gender & History* 7, no. 3 (1995). Also see in particular, chapter four in *The Witch in History - Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996). Louise Jackson also addresses this topic see: "Witches, Wives and Mothers: Witchcraft Persecutions and Women's Confessions" in Brian P Levack, ed. *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, vol. 4. Gender and Witchcraft (NewYork/London: Routledge, 2001).

35. Contemporary witchcraft beliefs and the Wiccan religion are covered in the final section of Oldridge, *The Witchcraft Reader*.

36. Magrat's lack of beauty, is repeatedly remarked on in the earlier witch novels, including page 115 of *WS* when she meets the fool (her future husband) for the first time, and is compared to women he had dreamed about.

37. Terry Pratchett and Jacqueline Simpson, *The Folklore of Discworld* (London: Random House, 2010), 55-69. Pratchett does, however, slip occasionally, such as when Nanny calls her the Queen of the Fairies (*L&L*, 297).

38. The sources can be found online on The Annotated Pratchett File v.9.0 –

[p. 207] "Ancient fragments chimed together now in Magrat's head."

The six lines given make up three different poems. From *The Fairies*, by Irish poet William Allingham (1850):

Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen

We dare not go a-hunting for fear of little men

From a traditional Cornish prayer:

From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggety beasties

and things that go bump in the night

Good Lord deliver us

And finally from a traditional school girls' skipping rhyme:

My mother said I never should

Play with the fairies in the wood

If I did, she would say

You naughty girl to disobey

Your hair won't grow, your shoes won't shine

You naughty little girl, you shan't be mine!

39. Regina Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006).

40. *L&L*, 142-43.

41. *L&L*, 249. The term enchantment is occasionally used in relation to Pratchett's witches, but is more common in relation to the 'others' they confront in the novels.

42. Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women*, 71-73.

43. Rosario, *The charity of witches.*

44. (*WFM*, 59), at the end of novel where Tiffany realises that the world is the school (*WFM*, 302-03). Croft, "The Education of a Witch: Tiffany Aching, Hermione Granger, and Gendered Magic in Discworld and Potterworld."

45. It is a running joke in the Tiffany Books including in: (*WFM*, 66), and (*HFofS*, 12). Hag is not a Scots (which the Feegle language is loosely based on) word for witch, but Carlins or Cailleachs are, and are often described as both witches and Hags, so it is obvious to see where Pratchett gets the idea.

46. *L&L*, 78-9. As the Annotated Pratchett file website points out in a note keyed to page 57 (the hardback edition), these names have numerous sources, including to the 'witches' accused in the Lancashire trials. http://www.lspace.org/books/apf/lords-and-ladies.html.

47. At the end of *The Wee Free Men*, Granny Weatherwax gives Tiffany an invisible pointy witches hat (*WFM*, 307). It is implied that the people of the chalk are not quite ready to have a witch yet, at least a recognisable one. Tiffany cannot yet 'perform' witchcraft here, but she can be a witch.

48. "Some few wore pointed hats but only if they happened to be late 16th- or early 17th-century English women who customarily wore hats like that." Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural*, 58.

49. Notably Mrs Snapperly (*WFM*, 45), and Mrs Obble (*W*, 252).

50. Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural*, 62, looks at this image in European sources. Davidson also notes that representing witches and their activities, was often used as an excuse to present nudes or pornography, *Early Modern Supernatural*, 66-7.

51. Many have written on Pratchett's use of Fairy tales and narrative structures, including: Jessica Tiffin, *Marvelous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009). Although more work could be done on his use of Fairy Tales in the Tiffany novels.

52. See chapters one and two of this study for examples in Spenser and Lyly respectively.

53. Malcolm Gaskill, "Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent: Stereotypes and the Background to Accusations," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Also see Robin Briggs' chapter in the same book, "'Many reasons why': witchcraft and the problem of multiple explanation."

54. Brome and Heywood, *Witches of Lancashire*, 4.3.44.

55. “I saw thee make thy / broom sweep the house without hands t’other / day!” (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.6.24-6) and the flying milk pail (*Witches of Lancashire*, 2.6.46). In the Disney animated films *The Sword in the Stone*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and the Sorcerer’s Apprentice scene of *Fantasia*, using magic for domestic tasks creates other difficulties.

56. Terry Pratchett, *Equal Rites* (London: Random House, 1987), 83. All further references shall be to this edition and in text using the abbreviation *ER*.

57. The wizards of the Discworld novels have not been looked at in depth in this study, but a detailed comparison of them with the witches is a potential avenue for future research. They have featured in previous work on Pratchett’s novels including James, Mendlesohn, and Butler, *Guilty of Literature*. For an extensive list of work on Pratchett, including an annotated bibliography and dissertations, see Anne Hiebert Alton and William C. Spruiell, eds., *Discworld and the Disciplines: Critical Approaches to the Terry Pratchett Works*, vol. 45, Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014).

58. Lian SincLair, “Magical Genders: The Gender(s) of WitchSes in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld,” *Mythlore* 33 (2015).

59. This can be seen when we find out how the Toad was transformed: “‘It’s serious magic, turning someone into a toad but leaving them thinking they’re human. No, it was a fairy godmother. Never cross a woman with a star on stick, young lady. They’ve got a mean streak.’” (*WFM*, 81)

60. This being a Pratchett novel, the goat is also called The Mince of Darkness, and battles Elves (*SC* p302-3). The full significance of Geoffrey as a male magic user who self identifies as a witch (even though the witches do not call him such), cannot be explored here, but does present an avenue for further study.

61.Emma Wilby, “The Witch’s Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland,” *Folklore* 111, no. 2 (2000). Like Wilby, Regina Buccola, and Diane Purkiss,

among others have noted the conflation of fairy beliefs with witchcraft and diabolical spirits in trial records from the early modern period, from many countries including England.

62. This is noted by many historian's working on Witchcraft. Indeed, infanticide and the danger of witches to older children can be treated as similar but separate phenomena, as in: Frances Elizabeth Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 14. The danger of fairies to babies in particular is examined throughout: Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

63. (*SC* p241), Jennifer Jill Fellows "Categorically not Cackling: The Will, Moral Fictions, and Witchcraft," in Held and South.

64. For the social tensions involving neighbours which led to witchcraft prosecutions, see, among others: Clive Holmes, "Women, Witches and Witnesses" in D. Oldridge, ed. *The Witchcraft Reader*, Second ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

65. Feegle society, and in particular their almost goddess like matriarchs and the magic they possess, present an area for further study.

Conclusion

This thesis has been principally guided by recent thinking on New Historicist methodologies, versions of the New Formalism and by theorizing of myth. The resulting historically and culturally aware close reading of the texts selected was also undertaken with an eye to gender, performance and adaptation studies. One goal of this study has been to examine continuities and innovations in textual representations of Circe and Medea (and therefore witches) and what these reveal about the societies and cultures which created them. Witchcraft in literature is a substantial subject area. The scope of this thesis has been limited, in the first instance, by focusing on reinterpretations of Circe and Medea figures, and therefore on the witch stereotypes that emerged from their uses. Secondly, the study also focused on popular or canonical early modern texts (which unsurprisingly were written by white males) and on works by a single contemporary author, also known for the popularity and accessibility of his novels, Terry Pratchett. The texts examined were selected because they can be said to be reflective of or reactions to the popular cultures of the societies which produced them. Also, the canonical nature of the early modern texts selected, in particular, the cultural impact of Shakespeare's texts, made them suitable targets for Pratchett's intertextual references and parody, as the value of these textual approaches is dependent on audience familiarity with any given source text.

Stating the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

Focused as it was on primarily canonical texts, there are many early modern voices that this study has not examined. In regards to contemporary texts, only Terry Pratchett's witch novels from the Discworld series were studied. Some recently published theses and scholarly articles examine Pratchett's witches in relation to witches in texts by female authors, and on television or in movies.[1] However, this is an area that could be explored

further, particularly by examining the use of Circean and Medean traits and imagery, and how these intersect with notions of power and forms of humour. One of the reasons this study has examined only Pratchett's novels out of all the possible contemporary texts about witches, was to compare (as much as is possible over such an extensive period) apples with apples. In this instance, white English males producing texts primarily for personal gain, to other white English males doing the same.

However, because of how the texts were selected, there are many texts relating to witchcraft in literature and drama that have not been reviewed. An obvious area for future study would be marginal texts about witches by women, both in the early modern period and in contemporary texts. Some work has been done in this area, particularly by witchcraft historians, including examinations of trial records for the voices of the accused. Yet, many studies focused on witches in Literature are based around the gendering of witches as women, mostly by male authors, particularly the demonologists whose treatises influenced them, and referenced fictional representations of witches. Since I commenced this thesis, there have been several scholarly studies undertaken on Witches in early modern English literature, notably by Marion Gibson, whose forthcoming title *Rediscovering Renaissance Witchcraft* is scheduled to be published in December 2017.

Summarising and reporting Key results

Spenser

Belief in witches was arguably still strong at the time Spenser was writing, but there is scant evidence they were considered to be a major threat to members of the court, Spenser's desired audience. Therefore, magic and magic users were not yet seen as necessarily evil or dangerous, and there are numerous male and female characters in Spenser's poem that possess Circean and Medean traits and use magic for positive

purposes. However, one can see a general reduction in the political and magical powers of all female characters and the loss of symbolic objects of power. For example, as regards Circe's wand, not even obvious Circe figures, such as Acrasia, have access to this symbol of power. She does still possess a Circean cup, an object that has power, but is more strongly linked to wine and excess than it was in Homer. This reduction in female power coincides with growth in the gendering of styles of magic. In particular, male characters perform educated or Wizard-style magic principally using books, and hag witches make potions. However, styles of magical use are still fairly fluid at this point in literature.

Spenser's text, *The Faerie Queene* demonstrates many trends in reinterpreting Circe and Medea figures which also appeared in later early modern texts. The most obvious changes made include the combination of early versions of Circe and Medea from classical myth with witch traits from English folklore and fairies, the latter arguably appearing as primarily good characters for the first time in literature. The poem also contains elements of the witch triad, presenting young witches, bad mothers and ineffectual crones. The latter is part of a larger trend in Spenser to increasingly represent witches as hag like, especially in conjunction with Medean traits, and as inept or humorous magic users. *The Faerie Queene* contains several very recognisable Circe and Medea figures, but there is an obvious use of Circean and Medean traits for dangerous women generally, including vengeful rebellious women and ambitious female rulers who misuse power and disrupt patrilineal successions. One can also clearly see the start of the two major witch stereotypes, based on Circe (the seductress) and Medea (the infanticidal Hag). Many magical traits belonged to both Circe and Medea, and quickly became part of general witch traits, such as using herbs to make potions, and the illusory nature of magic, including their lack of power over love. Medea's cauldron is not yet associated strictly with magic in this text, although Medea's Hecatean influences, particularly in her crone aspect, can be seen in

relation to the idea of the hag witch. Spenser's hags are also notably ineffectual magic users.

While animal transformations are more often associated with Circe in myths, Spenser's combining of Circean and Medea traits in figures such as Duessa demonstrates that representations of witches can utilise transformations of all types. Much as in earlier English folklore, Spenser's witches are as likely to transform themselves as they are to transform others. However, Spenser makes clear that most of these metamorphoses, including changes to the witches' appearances, were not permanent but merely illusory. Beauty within *The Faerie Queene* is therefore often problematic, especially when used as a marker for character types, such as the carefully restrained hair of the idealised feminine characters, or the wild locks of the more dangerous women. This illusory nature of the appearance of characters, such as Duessa, who is truly a hag witch, or the Snowy Florimell, who in a parody of courtly romance is a male demon, is often quite humorous. It is, however, fairly dark humour, and older female characters, especially any attempting to use magic, are often grotesque in their ugliness and betray the misogyny that underlies many representations of the feminine within Spenser. This humour is major trait which we can find repeatedly associated with reinterpretations of Circe and Medea, and therefore witches, throughout early modern English texts.

Classical Witches in Early Modern Plays and Masques

Many of the trends in reinterpretations of Circean and Medean witches in *The Faerie Queene* are found in numerous plays and Masques from the early modern period. One of these trends includes the frequent appearance of grotesque hags, who are also often funny: for example, Lyly's Dispas, and Marston's Erictho. All of the texts examined in this chapter of the study feature the two principal strands of witch stereotypes, namely, the beautiful seductress and the evil old hag, but the hag is clearly more popular and is

regularly deployed. These texts, with their strong influence from classical versions of Circe and Medea combining with some local English beliefs, contain quite diverse representations of magic users. One can still find examples of good or benign magic users, such as Lyly's Mother Bombie, who is a traditional cunning woman, and his Cynthia who is a positive Circean figure in *Endymion*. Even as late as Milton's *Comus*, we find Sabrina, a good female magic user, although something all these female figures share with their counterparts in Spenser is their chastity. Meanwhile, we can also see demonic representations of witches in Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, and fraudulent magic use in Heywood's *The Wise-woman of Hogsdon*.

Excepting Milton's *Comus*, which has more in common with Spenser's and Lyly's texts than it does with contemporaneous plays such as Heywood and Broome's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, there is a general trend over time in these texts towards the less successful use of magic. By Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, witches are ineffectual magic users, and this trend is most pronounced after King James's ascension. As the second chapter of this study demonstrated, audience concern about the possible powers of witches affects their representations in literature, and it would appear that witches have more access to believable magical power on stage in inverse proportion to how feared they were off it.[2] (This correlation between representations on stage and concern about the dangers of witchcraft as evidenced by trial documents and other primary sources would certainly benefit from further study.)

Meanwhile, the genre of the masque, with its inbuilt disingenuousness, allows for reinterpretations of Circe and Medea myths that are primarily concerned with presenting its patron in a flattering manner. As such, in *The Masque of Queens*, the spectre of the Medean and Hecatean hag witch is raised in the anti-masque simply so it can be banished. Despite the gruesome nature of the witches' cauldron ingredients (similar to those used by Seneca's Medea) and the grotesqueness of their appearance, they never successfully

perform any magic and are metaphorically laughed off the stage. Milton's *Comus*, however, focuses on the other strand of witch stereotypes, that is to say, the idea of magical seduction. However, he reverses the gender of the threat by making Circe's son seek to entrap the young lady. At the time of *Comus*' production, Circean seductions, particularly those involving magical power, were relatively rare, with most representations of witches drawing primarily on the Medean (and therefore Hecatean) hag witch image.

Shakespeare

Mostly thanks to *Macbeth*, the image of the hag witch who was a danger to children (complete with a cauldron of grotesque ingredients) became a major part of witch stereotypes in British literature. Many of the cauldron's ingredients come from those connected with Seneca's Medea, and are often Hecatean in origin, as they were in most cauldron scenes in early modern drama. The Weird Sisters, still have some access to magical power as they report causing harm to others, and also summon spirits for a prophecy on stage. It should be noted, however, that they, like the other female magic users in Shakespeare, do not use staffs or wands, and mostly draw from imagery in Medea myths. The Circean staff is a symbol of male magical power by this stage in drama. It should also be noted that wand or staff wielding male magicians, such as Prospero, can be presented as good, or at least benign, whereas his counterpart, Sycorax, is notably wandless and a wicked witch. In Shakespeare, dangerous women were even equated to witches when they did not use magic. Prospero also demonstrates another trend which continues in Shakespeare's texts—that of male characters taking power held previously by females in source texts—another example being Oberon and Titania.

Witches, fairies and devils are frequently conflated, particularly in the earlier and later plays, which also tended to have more supernatural elements. There is also an increase in spectacle and special effects associated with magic in later plays. Their

presence in plays at many points during the early modern period demonstrates an ongoing audience interest in witches and the supernatural. However, what matters most here is that with the rise in popularity of Medean hag witches, many Circean traits were less overtly associated with witches than they were in Spenser's texts. Within Shakespeare's texts, Circe's cup is often associated with drinking and has no power to transform men from their proper shape literally. For example, a Circean Cleopatra tempts men away from manly action using sex and drinking but has no access to magical power. The language of lust and magic is conflated, even when no magic is involved, as is evidenced by terms such as 'enchanted' or 'bewitched'. Throughout the plays, female sexuality and magic are strongly connected, with magic users' sexuality and integrity being routinely questioned. Equally telling, women of questionable sexual morals were often called witches.

Almost no female characters in Shakespeare have positive Medean attributes; Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well* is one of the few with healing powers. As with other usurpations of magical powers in Shakespeare's plays by male characters, males mostly do what little healing that occurs within the texts. The result of the general reductions in the power of Circe and Medea figures in Shakespeare is that witches become objects of ridicule, for example, Falstaff pretends to be the witch of Brentford. They are presented as ineffectual, as is Joan of Arc (who is also called a hag), or they are dehumanised, as is Sycorax or the Weird Sisters. Even Fairies, which had previously been quite dangerous in folkloric sources, became sources of amusement in Shakespeare's texts.

Stuart Drama

During the rather large period covered in the fourth chapter of this study, there were very few major changes to representations of witches on stage. There were, instead, continuations and strengthening of trends started in earlier texts, many of which, including

Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, were a direct influence on many of these more spectacular productions.

In the case of later Jacobean plays and through to Restoration comedies, magic is performed on stage, but the texts routinely raise questions of its believability. Witches fly, transform into animals, and cause buckets to carry themselves. Yet this is all evidently stage magic, and the trials these plays were based on excluded many of these events from the charges due to their very lack of believability. At any time in history, how texts represent witches does depend on how threatening the intended audience would likely find witches to be, and the more funny witches are found on stage, the less scary witches are seen to be in trials.

The connection between fear and humour is also clearly tied to larger social and political events, with more political stability frequently equating with fewer successful prosecutions for witchcraft. The Caroline and Restoration periods also contain evidence of the biggest drops in belief in witchcraft, at least at an elite level, and this is reflected in characters such as the sceptical Squire Generous of Heywood and Brome's *The Witches of Lancashire*. One has to bear in mind that, however sceptical some characters are, or however humorous or frivolous representations of witches appear to be, the last witch hanged in England was in 1682, the year after the play by Shadwell examined in this study was performed. The fact that the plays discussed in this study were primarily produced for a London audience may be a contributing factor, as London had not seen an execution for witchcraft for many years and in 1682, despite many witnesses, a jury was unable to find Joan Buts guilty of bewitching a woman to death.[3] This trial indicates the complicated nature of beliefs about witchcraft at the time the play was performed, as enough lay people believed in witchcraft to testify, but others had insufficient belief or fear of Joan's capabilities to execute her.

Another complicating factor of representations of witches in literature was the ability of authors to draw on literary representations of Circe and Medea from earlier periods. However, one of the enduring attributes of witches in literature and drama until recently is that they were all notionally bad or dangerous women, and what supposedly made a woman evil in early modern England was not so very different from what was held to make her allegedly evil in Ancient Greece or Rome. It would also appear that what were considered undesirable traits in a woman during the early modern period remained undesirable until recently, particularly in the fantasy fiction genre. Therefore, we can see strong links between stage witches from this period and twenty-first-century witch stereotypes in popular culture.

Pratchett

Early modern and medieval history and texts have clearly proved to be a major influence on the fantasy fiction genre. Terry Pratchett wrote both within and against the fantasy genre or what he referred to as "the consensus fantasy universe" and the gendering of types of magic use is a major theme in his texts.[4] Writing against tradition, Pratchett makes his witches good women, and therefore more like early modern cunning women. Part of being a good woman in Lancre is being a good housewife (even sans husband) who carefully prepares for the future and helps others to do the same. The social expectations of regular women in the Ramtops region of the Discworld (including Lancre) have much in common with those of early modern English women in villages which Lancre resembles (just as Ankh-Morpork resembles first an early modern, and later a Victorian London). Pratchett's witches are very much local and embedded in village life, while also being outsiders. They are also healers and peacekeepers within their communities. Being as they are on the margins of society, the witches of Lancre, in particular, do not necessarily conform to societal expectations in the same way as other women. However, as has been examined by

Jennifer Jill Fellows in "Categorically not Cackling: The Will, Moral Fictions, and Witchcraft", they do operate under a moral code that is policed by other witches.[5]

Because Pratchett's witches have become upstanding moral citizens, he substitutes 'evil others' as the antagonists of the novels. These are not witches but have many traits associated with Circean and Medean witches in earlier texts. The antagonists are thus in effect dangerous Circean and Medean figures; however, they are no longer just female (as they primarily were in the early modern period). Many of them are males, such as The Hiver, The Cunning Man, and ordinary humans. This disconnection of the feminine gender from dangerous Circean and Medean traits includes the evil, human-sized Fairies or Elves who appear as both genders, as do the Vampires (the most dangerous being Count de Magpyr). Nor should we forget the Wizards of Unseen University, who, like their early modern predecessors such as Prospero, wield staffs and enormous powers of transformation, but almost never do anything useful with their magic. When the Wizards use magic, it tends to create more problems than it solves, a concept well understood by Pratchett's witches, who spend much of their apprenticeship learning how not to do magic.

Although Pratchett has liberated his witches from being 'the bad ones', they are still very much constrained by notions developed during the early modern period, such as the idea that women who have access to political or magical power are dangerous. An example of the persistence of this idea is Lilith in *Witches Abroad*, who is arguably one of the most Circean and Medean figures in Pratchett. However, we should keep in mind that Pratchett's novels demonstrate an antipathy to authoritarian regimes in general, and are equally scathing of males attempting to usurp power or abuse magic to control others. Another limitation in Pratchett's reinterpretation of witches is that his witches are mostly non-sexual beings, at least in the novels. However, they are not all virgins, as they would have been in Spenser, so the texts can claim some progress towards witches who truly resemble real women.

Pratchett did manage to make some major changes to how magical women can be perceived in literature, particularly in the fantasy fiction genre. It is not unreasonable to suggest that, prior to his novels, witches in literature were almost exclusively evil old hags, or perhaps seductresses, and were hardly ever good, or even benign.[6] Pratchett's witches may embrace the hag witch stereotype, but they are far from evil, and the idea of them being seductresses is depicted as humorous within the texts. In fact, humour is an essential element in Pratchett's representations of witches, and as it did in early modern texts, it presents them in a less threatening light. The witches themselves utilise humour to manipulate outcomes within the novels: most notably Nanny Ogg, who regularly employs humour, particularly the double entendre, to defuse tense situations.

In many ways, the social forces during the times in which they were written are reflected by Pratchett's innovations in his representations of witches. During the late 1980s and 1990s, when Pratchett wrote most of his adult witch novels, there was a general optimism about the ability of society to move towards true equality of the sexes, with the attendant possibilities for women regarding education and employment.[7] Granny Weatherwax would argue (most likely with Magrat, Pratchett's most obviously feminist witch) that any woman who wants to be equal to men is not trying hard enough; and, by and large, they are presented in the novels as being superior in many ways to the male characters with whom they interact. However, they are arguably good witches because they are good women, and many of their traits are framed by strongly positive notions of the feminine, including taking care of others—often at the expense of oneself. However, even this concept of the feminine is sometimes resisted within the novels. In *I Shall Wear Midnight*, the witches, including the wife, mother, and Queen Magrat leave the men at home to take care of the children, while they go out to actively engage the Elves in battle.[8]

Commenting on the key results

This study demonstrates the extent of intertextual connections between 'fictional' witches and 'historical' witches during the early modern period, with the former even being used as proof of the capabilities of supposedly 'real' witches. Meanwhile, this study's primary contribution to work on witches in English literature is the examination of the witches of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels and their interactions with the witch stereotypes that developed during the early modern period based on reinterpretations of Circe and Medea figures. Previous studies have examined reinterpretations of Circe and Medea myths separately, with some even examining recent reinterpretations of these figures. However, this study is the first to use reinterpretations of Circe and Medea in popular or canonical texts from the early modern period in conjunction with reinterpretations of them in the popular novels of Terry Pratchett, so as to examine witch stereotypes and how they interact with societal expectations, particularly those concerning gendered behaviour.

The major findings of this study include connections between representations of witches and the cultural and political conditions of their production, particularly when humour is employed in the text. The magical effectiveness or the power witches were said to possess was also directly linked to the probable beliefs and fears regarding witchcraft of the audience for which the texts were primarily produced. This study also demonstrates that, over the early modern period, there are noticeable changes in representations of witches that include reductions in magical power and the believability of the magic they are said to possess, usually in conjunction with an increase in their humorous treatment in texts. There is also a clear trend of male characters usurping magical skills previously associated with Circe and Medea figures while maintaining the perception that they are good or (at worst) benign characters. These early modern changes to the representations of witches were a major influence on the fantasy fiction genre, which by and large, did not question the gendered nature of magic use, and perpetuated the misogynistic stereotypes

which were largely in place at the end of the early modern period. Terry Pratchett's texts, while evidently not perfect feminist rewritings of the figure of the witch, do take them beyond the stereotypes that they themselves manipulate. Granny, Nanny, Magrat, Tiffany, and most of the witches to appear in the Discworld series are not just types: they are vividly realised individuals. As Granny says to Mightily Oats, "sin, young man, is when you treat people as things. Including yourself. That's what sin is." (*CJ*, 314). It would appear that, as much as possible, Pratchett attempted to give his witches autonomy and treat them as individuals, not things to fear: a surprisingly simple, yet powerful, innovation in reinterpreting the figure of the witch.

1. Paulina Lymbou, "The Wicked Witch of the Discworld: A Re-Examination of Magical Authority and Gender Politics" (MA, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, 2015); Rebecca Anne Forbes Robinson, "'A Different Kind of Witch': Rewriting the Witch in Terry Pratchett's Discworld" (MA, University of Canterbury, 2016).

2. Several studies on witchcraft have indicated that it is at times of political instability that the legal mechanisms for witchcraft trials were most often utilised to prosecute witches. For an example, see James Sharpe and Richard M Golden, eds., *English Witchcraft 1560-1736: Early English Demonological Works*, 6 vols., vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto Ltd., 2003), xii.

3. A useful tool for examining witches in English history is http://witching.org. There the story of Joan Buts and many others accused of witchcraft can be explored in primary sources.

4. Terry Pratchett, "Why Gandalf Never Married" (1985) in Terry Pratchett, *A Slip of the Keyboard: Collected Non-Fiction* (London: Random House, 2014), 86. This speech, according to Pratchett, "*was written while* Equal Rites *and its female wizard heroine Esk, were taking shape. Shortly after that, similar ideas about women seemed to turn up in the zeitgeist*." "Why Gandalf Never Married", 85.

5. Jennifer Jill Fellows. "Categorically not Cackling: The Will, Moral Fictions, and Witchcraft", in Jacob M Held and James South, eds., *Philosophy and Terry Pratchett* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

6. An exception to this is Frank L. Baum's Wizard of Oz series, with its good and wicked witches. It was however written for children and arguably stands outside the consensus fantasy universe of the sword and sorcery variety that Pratchett was writing against.

7. Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 255-71.

8. Terry Pratchett, *The Shepherd's Crown* (London: Random House, 2015), 297, 302-06.

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