

# **The Representation of Queer Identities in Terry Pratchett's Discworld**

Essi Virtanen

Master's Thesis

Language Specialist Degree Programme, Department of English, School of Languages and

Translation Studies

University of Turku

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My thesis offers an analysis and queer reading of a selection of novels from Terry Pratchett's Discworld series. I have divided my analysis into chapters concerning different groups of characters within the series such as the witches, the undead, and the dwarfs, as well as dedicating a separate chapter for the novel *Monstrous Regiment*. I aim to show that the Discworld series features a rich and diverse queer minority, as well as stories that explore queer themes related to gender and the development of queer identities.

My analysis leans primarily on queer theory, specifically on Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity, as well as other literature related to both Discworld itself as well as queer themes in literature, and the lived experiences of the queer minority.

In my thesis I conclude that in his writing Pratchett showcases the normative and restrictive nature of societal norms related to gender and sexuality. He writes about queer identities in a positive light and normalizes identities beyond the heteronormative and cisnormative narratives of society. These normative structures result in the assumption that heterosexuality and not being transgender are the default and baseline of normalcy and thus place identities beyond these in the position of the Other. Pratchett's work brings these norms to question and works to dismantle them by the means of parody and humour, as well as the creative adaptation of some of the common tropes of fantasy literature.

**Key words:** *Discworld*, Terry Pratchett, queer theory, queer reading, fantasy literature, gender, identity

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## 1 Introduction

As the global queer minority continues to strive and struggle for their human rights, and to hold on to the rights they might have already gained, the way the community is represented in the media and in fiction becomes increasingly important. The media has considerable power to affect the way we view the world and the people in it, and thus analysis on the different ways this representation is given can help us understand the positive and negative effects of representation. Such analysis does not, however, have to be limited to the most recently published works. Classics and other works that maintain their popularity year after year, will also continue to reach new audiences. This is why in my thesis I will analyse the representation of the queer minority in the Discworld series.

The Discworld series (1983-2015) is a collection of satirical fantasy novels written by the late Terry Pratchett (1948 –2015). The series consists of 41 novels and various pieces of extra material including atlases, travel guides, and even a folklore book. While at first glance the series might seem completely detached from our present real world, with its descriptions of a disc shaped magical world set on top of four gigantic elephants, who stand on the shell of a gargantuan turtle swimming through space, the Discworld is described as “a world and a mirror of worlds” (*Guards! Guards!* 1989, 411). With the series Pratchett holds up a mirror of satire at the reader to make them think about these real-world issues through the means of fantasy and humour.

In my thesis I will explore the representations of queer identities in the Discworld series through character studies and queer readings regarding selected characters or character groups within the series. I aim to show that when read through a queer lens Pratchett has left ample opportunities for queer readings of his work and represents various facets of the queer minority in his novels in a way that normalizes queerness through means of parody and satire rather than making them into the punchlines of the jokes. Pratchett provides a rich world of varying representations of queer identities in his works, even without the use of direct vocabulary related to these themes and uses means of parody and satire to point out the senselessness of discrimination.

I will first introduce the basis of queer theory I will be using in my analysis, as well as the primary vocabulary that will be frequently featured throughout this thesis. Next, I will provide further insight into the practice of queer reading, and to the significance of queer

representation in fiction. This will be followed by chapters in which I will discuss various minority groups within Discworld including dwarfs, witches, and the undead, and finally the individual characters who do not fit into any of my other chosen categories. I have chosen to give the novel *Monstrous Regiment* (2003) a chapter of its own as themes of gender and sexuality are far more prevalent throughout the novel than in the average Discworld novel, and thus the novel provides ample material for analysis.

The topic of this thesis has interested me for years both as an academic and a queer person who has had to seek out representations of my own lived experiences from fiction with a fine-toothed comb for all my life. However, I acknowledge my position of privilege as a cisgender woman in comparison to the experiences that, for example, the transgender part of the queer community has. Thus, I do not intend to speak on behalf of the transgender community while writing about my own queer readings related to gender. I have chosen this topic, in addition to its personal meaning, because I strongly believe that fantasy and satire are both excellent tools for the promotion of social justice. Simply because a piece of literature is deliberately comedic does not mean it cannot also make important and serious statements and influence its readers. I have also noticed that while multiple feminist readings of Discworld novels have been made before I have yet to find much queer theoretic studies.

Due to constraints both in time and thesis length, I have not analysed the full series of the 41 Discworld novels in detail for this thesis and have chosen to instead focus on those novels from within this series that have an overarching queer-related theme within them.

Furthermore, I focus only on a selection of the Discworld novels directed to adult readers, and have thus excluded the series of books focusing on a young witch, Tiffany Aching. The novels I have chosen to focus more deeply on in my analysis are: *Equal Rites* (1987), *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), *Witches Abroad* (1991), *Lords and Ladies* (1992), *Maskerade* (1995), *Feet of Clay* (1996), *Carpe Jugulum* (1998), *The Fifth Elephant* (1999) and *Monstrous Regiment* (2003). Novels that I have not analysed in equal depth, but have included sections from, are *The Truth* (2000), *Thud!* (2005), and *Unseen Academicals* (2009), along with very brief quotes from a handful of other novels. When quoting and referencing to the novels throughout my thesis, I will be providing the title of the novel, the publishing year, and the page number, instead of Pratchett's surname, to avoid unnecessary repetition.

## 2 Queer Theory

The concept of gender performativity is prevalent in many Discworld novels. Due to this I have chosen Judith Butler's work as one of my main theoretical points of reference for this thesis. Her book *Gender Trouble* (the 2002 *Tenth Year Anniversary Edition*, originally 1990) has been regarded as one of the most significant works of both queer and feminist literature of the recent decades, bringing to question the very basis of such basic societal concepts as gender and sex. However, as her work is not focused on literary theory specifically, I will also be integrating information from Andrew Bennet and Nicolas Royle's *Literature Criticism and Theory* (2009), specifically from the chapter on queer theory. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (Pearson 2009) will also provide some genre specific insight into queer themes in literature. While the Discworld novels are most often classified to belong to the fantasy genre, Pratchett also wrote science fiction and included themes from this genre into Discworld, thus I see no issue in analysing Discworld through this point of view as well. Other articles, related to the fantasy genre, to Discworld, or to the experiences of queer people, will also aid me in my analysis.

Pearson states that "queer theory was a powerful tool for the utopian project of rethinking the politics and history of sexuality" (2009, 298) which it still is, and why it is important to continue looking at different forms of fiction through the queer theoretical lens. The queer minority is still globally fighting for equality, and bringing attention to the community's struggles, educating the majority population on queer issues, and normalising the existence of queer people are among the ways of promoting this equality. In practice queer theory focuses on the cultural issues surrounding the categorization of humanity into such boxes as "homosexual" and "heterosexual", and what affects this has on peoples' lives, not so much into what it means to be either of these things. Queer theory questions the norms of Western cultures and societies, and in literary analysis can focus equally as much on works not focused on sexuality and gender as it does on overtly queer texts (Pearson 2009, 303).

I have chosen to use the term queer as the umbrella term over, for example the acronym LGBTQ+, due to its broadness. As Pratchett never directly uses terms such as transgender or homosexual in his works, there is no way of knowing the true identity labels of the characters I will be analysing in this thesis. Regardless, when read through the lens of queer theory, there is something unquestionably queer about many Discworld characters. Bennet & Royle describe queer as an all-inclusive term (Bennet & Royle 2009, 217). It gives one liberty to

simply set themselves apart from the normative identities of heterosexual – being only attracted romantically or sexually to a gender different to one’s own (Stonewall UK n.d) – and cisgender (Stonewall UK n.d) – identifying with the gender assigned to one at birth – without having to disclose anything else about their identity. It is a term reclaimed from its use as an offensive slur by the community it targets into; “a term of pride and celebratory self-assertion, of difference affirmed and affirmative difference” (Bennet & Royle 2009, 217). In their text Bennet and Royle also bring up Butler’s view on gender and sexuality, and the performative natures of these concepts; how in life all expression of gender and sexuality is essentially a drag act based on societal norms and opinions on what a man, a woman, a heterosexual person or a homosexual person, should be (Bennet and Royle 2009, 223). A similar sentiment is often repeated albeit subtly in various Discworld novels, and thus her theories will be reoccurring throughout my thesis.

Another unifying aspect between Discworld and queer literature is the practice of parody and satire. Pratchett explores concepts and issues of reality through a set of fantasy-coloured lenses, perhaps to soften the blow of criticism towards our world, through the means of poignant satire. Paulina Palmer points out in her book *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* that satirical subversion of norms and tropes, as well as humour in general, is often employed in contemporary queer narratives (2012, 166).

While I aim to avoid assigning labels and identities to characters none of them have been explicitly written for, the transgender experience does feature prevalently in my thesis. Later on in the thesis, when discussing characters I interpret to mirror the transgender experience, I do not intend to claim they are undeniably transgender in the same sense as the term is used in current society – to describe a person who does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth (Stonewall UK n.d.) – but, instead, to show that the characters’ experiences strongly mirror those of transgender people and parallel them in a way that still gives the reader a chance to see them as representations of aspects of the transgender experience, or even as relatable characters to transgender readers. I will go further into depth on this in later chapters.

As must have become obvious by now, my thesis features a large array of terminology readers not versed with queer theory or queer literature might not be familiar with. Here I will offer definitions to some of the ones I will be most prevalently using that I have yet to define. While heterosexual and homosexual, cisgender and transgender, will hopefully now be clear in their meanings, I have also mentioned the concepts of gender and sex. These are the

societal structures which imply that a person has a biological sex, pertaining to their anatomy, primarily to the reproductive organs, which is in most cases either male or female. In addition to this a person has a social gender, which relates to the way they express either femininity or masculinity, or potentially neither, by their behaviour, physical appearance, and so on (Stonewall UK n.d.). Separate from one's gender identity comes their gender expression. It is not uncommon for one to identify themselves as, for example, a woman, but to express their gender in a distinctly masculine way and thus not conform to the societal norms associated with their gender. From here on the terms I will be using when referring to biological sex will be male and female, terms referring to gender identity will be man and woman, and terms pertaining to gender expression will be masculine and feminine. However, nonbinary – “an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman’” (Stonewall UK n.d.) – is also a term that will feature in later chapters.

I have mentioned societal norms in my text already. Due to this it is high time to bring up the terms cisnormativity and heteronormativity. In conjunction, these terms refer to the societal attitudes that uphold the idea that the default human being is cisgender and heterosexual until proven otherwise, as well as the thought that these identities are also superior to any alternative (OED, s.v. “heteronormative,” adj.). A part of this is what Butler refers to as “the heterosexualization of desire” where it is assumed that for two individuals to desire one another romantically or sexually there must be a binary division into the masculine and the feminine role between them, as well as the simple assumption that masculinity and femininity are somehow naturally in opposition, or in a hierarchical relation, to one another (Butler 2002, 23). As Pearson states, the heteronormative mindset also presupposes that heterosexuality should also occur in adherence to the strict gender norms of modern, Western, society that are assumed to be based on the “natural” differences of biological males and females. Heteronormativity does not thus mean that all relationships between men and women are automatically accepted, since for example a relationship between an openly transgender and masculine man and a cisgender, feminine, woman would be seen abnormal, despite it being a ‘heterosexual’ relationship. Even a very masculine cisgender man in relationship with a very masculine cisgender woman would be scrutinized under the extreme heteronormative lens. Anything outside of the strict gender norms is deemed “abnormal” and “perverted” (Pearson 2009, 303).

This leads us to the concept of “compulsory heterosexuality” which is one of the structures under institutionalized heteronormativity. With the societal presence of heteronormativity

people are essentially socialized from birth through everything, from media to education, to think they must be heterosexual, and to ignore any indications otherwise. This makes it more difficult for queer people to discover their identities. The regulatory practices that enforce ‘compulsory’ heterosexuality also play into the effects of heteronormativity and cisnormativity on relationships; women are feminine and subservient to their masculine male partners (Butler 2002, 42 , 93). Queer literary theory aims to bring such practices under scrutiny, and analyse the presence of such norms, or the effect of them, in texts. This can be conducted through the practice of queer reading, which I will delve further into in the following chapter.

## **2.1 Queer Reading**

Bennet and Royle describe the hidden canon of queer literature in the history of English literature, but also bring to light the fact that any literature can be open to a queer reading. This is indeed true and conducting queer readings of literary works is not limited to analysing texts with overtly queer themes or works that are written by queer people. The queer lens can be placed over any text, regardless of the author and the contents of said text. While there is a somewhat established canon of queer literature, both in the theoretical and academical realm, as well as in fiction, the canon of straight literature is also inhabited by queer authors (Bennet & Royle 2009, 218). Likewise, it is also possible for what appears to be straight literature, or at least not overtly queer themed literature, to also include queer themes. And even with overtly straight literature queer readings can be done to them.

Due to Pratchett not using very explicit language to write about private relationships, attraction, or identities of his characters, some level of queer reading is necessary in my research. To some readers it might feel obvious that a character who is said to, for example, prefer the company of their own sex is queer, while some might deny this purely on the basis that the word homosexual, or gay, was not used, concluding that nothing is confirmed about the nature of their relationship. This does not, however, mean that there is no possibility of seeing queer identities represented in these novels. As Bennet and Royle note that any text which “offers a singular space which they offer for thinking (differently) about gender and sexuality” (2009, 218) gives ample opportunities for a queer reading. This does not automatically mean that the source text is inherently queer and intended as such. It simply means that reading the text through a queer lens and analysing how the text challenges the

cisnormative and heteronormative thought processes of society (Bennet and Royle 2009, 220) and subverts them as the default assumptions about the nature of humanity.

Some parts of literary queer theory are extremely focused on the sexuality of the author themselves, and it is also the focal point of Bennet & Royle's (2009, 216-225) text, but in the end I do not think this is of any consequence. Queer authors often write stories about heterosexual and cisgender people, and straight authors can just as well write literature with queer themes. I am not here to speculate about Pratchett's own identity, as it is wholly irrelevant for my thesis. My intention is to show that Pratchett's Discworld – depending on the strength of the queer lens you regard it through – is filled with queer themes that can work to normalise the presence of these identities in the real world. Through parody Pratchett also shows the illogicality of the prejudices held against queer people and shines light on the arbitrary nature of the norms surrounding gender.

Catlin Ryan and Jill M. Hermann-Wilmarth conducted a study in 2013 titled: *Already on the Shelf: Queer Readings of Award-winning Children's Literature* that aimed to show that queer readings of texts that are not explicitly queer are both beneficial and possible to conduct. Pratchett's oeuvre is neither explicitly queer nor directed to a queer audience, however, he does write about characters whose journeys, and identities, can be read as queer. Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2013, 14) also emphasised that analysing a text by the means of queer theory does not necessarily mean assigning sexuality to the material itself, but instead it aims to show that any material, no matter how heteronormative, can be interpreted in multiple ways, and that questioning that heteronormativity is a part of queer reading as much as finding queer within the text can be. Interpretations of works of fiction are always subjective, and these new interpretations can work to broaden one's worldview to see alternative, transgressive, meanings within different texts (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth 2013, 145). One can read the Discworld novels and simply see humoristic fantasy, but there is so much more under the surface if one simply adjusts to their point of view. And if one is open to seeing the social commentary within these novels, they can potentially experience a shift in their own view of our society, through fantasy.

Queer reading can also be practiced non-academically. Anyone reading fiction can have the desire to see themselves reflected in the text. This is also true for queer audiences. Stephen Craig Kerry (2019) conducted a study amongst a group of Australian science fiction fans on their favourite works of fiction and on how these fans read queer into the fiction they

consume, whether it is overtly in the work itself or not. Discworld is often seen almost as its own genre; not quite fantasy, but not quite science-fiction. Pratchett also co-authored a science fiction series *The Long Earth*, and his long-time assistant Rob Wilkins described him to have been “a fantasy author with the mind of a sci-fi author” due to him exploring themes in his novels that usually could be deemed too sci-fi to have in fantasy novels (*Magical Mind: The World of Terry Pratchett* Gaiman, Wilkins and Pratchett 2020). Thus, I see it appropriate to treat Discworld as a sort of an almost-sci-fi work and deem this source useful. In Kerry’s study participants of various genders, sexual orientations, and ages were interviewed, but all of them identified themselves to belong under the queer umbrella (Kerry 2019, 102-108). They were requested to list their favourite works of fiction and rate how queer-friendly they thought they were (Kerry 2019, 103). Science fiction, much like fantasy, is an excellent tool of escapism and challenging the norms of our contemporary (Western) society. However, many of the participants in this study told that science fiction goes deeper than mere escapism, and offers, instead “many personal, social, and cultural functions” (Kerry 2019, 100).

In relation to the above, members of the queer minority might have a difficult time finding overt representations of their own life experiences in fiction, and perhaps their experiences have been negative enough that they would like to find fictional representations, where people like themselves do not encounter similar struggles as they do, or stories where such struggles are overcome. It can be enough to be able to read a character in fiction as queer, instead of them being canonically so, to feel empowered by their story. In Kerry’s (2019, 110) study it was indeed found that many queer science fiction fans chose to read queerness into a literary, movie, or television show, instead of waiting for queer characters to be written *in* them. This, in my experience, is true with fans of Discworld as well. But why is this so important? I will go further into this topic in the following chapter.

## **2.2 The Significance of Queer Representation in Fiction**

Representation as a term can both mean “the political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy” of a minority, but also is “the normative function of a language which is said to either reveal or distort what is assumed to be true” about the minority (Butler 2002, 3-4). Butler is writing about specifically the representation of women in these definitions, but I find these definitions to be true for all minorities. How we use language when referencing minorities, and how we choose to represent them in fiction can, and do, both have a

significant influence on how those minorities are seen in reality. A study by Lauren B. McInroy and Shelley L. Craig concluded that representation in media can form positive or negative stereotypes about minorities. Displaying minorities as the villains, only as victims of violence, or enforcing the negative stereotypes associated with them can be just as harmful than leaving them unrepresented, invisible, altogether (McInroy & Craig 2015, 607). In addition to this, Heidi M. Levitt and Maria R. Ippolito (2014, 1740) found that transgender narratives in works of fiction, which question society's gender norms, aided transgender people in self-acceptance and exploration of their identity. Thus, consuming media featuring queer people can not only normalize the existence and experiences of this minority to the majority, and potentially make them more accepting towards these minorities, but also help queer people feel more at home in their own identities. Nicolas M. Teich presents the issue well by stating, through the viewpoint of the transgender community, that when someone is unable to understand matters such as gender diversity, it might lead them to consider gender minorities as the "other" or even "freaks" (Teich 2012, 98–99). Seeing fictional characters representing groups a person does not belong in, or groups they do not often encounter in their everyday lives, normalises the existence of these minorities to people and can even erase negative stereotypes they might have held before. However, representations that are tokenistic or stereotypical can also contribute to the discrimination of minorities, which is why it is vital to discuss both the quality and quantity of minority representations in media (Capuzza & Spencer 2016, 215).

Stephen Kenneally states in his study *Queer Be Dragons: Mapping LGBT Fantasy Novels 1987-2000* that fantasy as a genre would be a fundamentally great platform for exploring queer themes, and that possibility has not been taken advantage of nearly enough (2016, 9). I agree with this. Fantasy, at its core, has no rules. There are tropes, conventions, and clichés, but in the end every author is only as bound to them as they allow themselves to be. So why not explore themes outside of the norm? In comparison to Kenneally's study, Discworld novels were published between the years 1983 all the way to 2015. That is 31 years of novels in comparison to the 13 that Kenneally's study focuses on. Pratchett is mentioned twice in the study, but no mention of possible queer characters in his works is made. This, to me, shows that no matter how established an author Pratchett still is, the presence of the queer community in Discworld is going unnoticed and unappreciated in its impact. As Kenneally says, fantasy is full of key elements that allows the genre to incorporate queer elements to it, such as questions of identity, and going against the normative definitions and boundaries of

society (2016, 19). The perspective of a story taking place somewhere completely different to the “real” world, while still featuring familiar structures or struggles, allows the reader to see their own world through a different lens, and gives the author freedom to display these themes in new ways. This is exactly what Pratchett does with his satire. As Butler writes: “Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic— a failed copy, as it were” (2002, 186). By presenting gender and sexuality, and attitudes towards them, in a completely different context, Pratchett holds up a mirror towards the illogical aspects of the norms present in Western society.

Richard Mathews’ book, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* features very little information about queer fantasy literature, only mentioning in passing a novel titled *Queer* in a passage describing an era when fiction first started being used to explore more taboo themes (2002, 32). Those literary works of the fantasy genre that do feature queer characters often have the character’s journey of coming out or being oppressed for their orientation, or finding their true love, as a central aspect of the plot itself. Many literary works that feature fantasy worlds and explore queer themes simultaneously also happen to fall under the increasingly popular “young adult” or “YA” category of literature (Balay, 2012, 926). Furthermore, as Kenneally says: “The majority of the lesbian novels in the genre clearly constitute deliberately lesbian literature, not simply containing representations of lesbians but representation by and for lesbians” (2016, 207). Stories like this are of course important, but from my own position as an adult member of the queer community, sometimes reading stories with queer people simply existing, with the focus of the story not being their identity, ought to be written.

Claude J. Summers’ book *Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* states that the genre of fantasy allows “alternate sexualities” (2002, 598) to emerge in fantasy literature thanks to the presence of magic that estranges the world of the novel from reality. In some novels strong same-sex love enables a character to tap into their magical powers (Summers 2002, 598).

While giving queer characters unique power based on their love alone is on one hand empowering, it does still alienate the queer characters from every-day society, maintaining their status as abnormal whether the intention is good or not.

One might argue that because Pratchett does not explicitly label the identities of his characters in the text, that they do not qualify as queer representation. However, this practice is true for both those in – what can be assumed to be – heterosexual relationships and otherwise. There are no grand romance scenes and larger-than-life love confessions between any couples found

in the series, but the relationships between a male and a female character are just as clearly expressed as those between two men or two women. There is a significant difference between writing something into the text, while not spelling it out, and leaving things fully out of it. One might also question if Pratchett intended some of the characters that I will bring up in my thesis to be read as queer or not. This musing brought me to an article by William Irwin titled “Authorial Declaration and Extreme Actual Intentionalism: Is Dumbledore Gay?” (2015) related to the media frenzy surrounding the popular Harry Potter series after the author J.K. Rowling declared the character of Albus Dumbledore to be homosexual, without there being a mention of this in the novels themselves. This garnered much criticism, from both the queer community and those in opposition to them, towards Rowling, and even Pratchett himself wrote his own response to the announcement on the Discworld Emporium forum: “Rincewind would like to announce that he is gay. Since he never gets any, it really doesn’t make much difference which any he doesn’t get, and at least he might get a brief reputation for social awareness:-)” (Pratchett 2006). Rincewind is the wizard protagonist of various Discworld novels, but as the novels he features in do not quite as strongly focus on themes of gender or sexuality, I will not be conducting an in-depth queer reading on him in this thesis. Pratchett’s comment might be a joke and commentary on Rowling’s possible ulterior motives behind the statement, however, his declaration might even hold more weight – a joke or not – than Rowling’s due to one simple reason. Pratchett wrote same-sex relationships into his novels while Rowling did not (Irwin 2015, 142). Irwin states in his article: “Meaning is what an author intends to communicate, whereas significance is any understanding that goes beyond, or is apart from, authorial intention” (Irwin 2015, 144). I will show in my thesis that Discworld holds both meaning and significance regarding queer representation. Out of these two I do still find significance to be more important than meaning. Pratchett himself said in a speech he held in the 1985 Novacon science fiction convention – focused on the differences between witches and wizards in fantasy – that “fiction invents reality.” What we write, and read, in fiction will influence our thoughts on reality too. And by writing about the problems of our reality in a fictional context, parodying those issues and our responses to them, Pratchett subverts tropes in both fiction and reality. He finished his Novacon speech as follows: “It’s going to be a long time before there’s room for equal rites” only to publish the novel *Equal Rites* two years later, which heavy-handedly parodies the concept of gendered magic.

### 3 Queer in Discworld

The Discworld is a fantasy world through-and-through. There are magical beings, magical powers, such classic plot elements as a hero saving a city from a dragon, and mystical beings appearing through a circle of stones around Midsummer. However, such descriptions only scratch the surface with this series. Every novel tells its own stand-alone story, however, however much cross-over with reoccurring characters happens between the stories, so a reader can find multiple protagonists throughout the series. Every novel provides satirical commentary on some affair or phenomenon from our everyday life. Commentary about everything, from war and xenophobia to rock music, Christmas, and the freedom of press can be found within these novels. Pearson points out that as it is our cultures that determine what we view as normal, it is through the power of fiction and imagining alternative possibilities to these norms that we can come to challenge the *status quo* (2009, 306). The Discworld series does just this. The series features cultures that are close enough to the ones we know to feel relatable and familiar, but by the means of parody he brings to question some of the very basic concepts of these cultures. Pratchett wrote about nearly every aspect of the human experience, themes of and gender identity included. Especially questions of gender and the arbitrary nature of gender norms are prevalent in multiple Discworld novels, and while Pratchett does is not a romance author, a handful of queer relationships can also be found in the series.

My initial idea for this thesis began when I was working on my bachelor's thesis. In the BA thesis I focused on but a single character from the novels, whom I will also feature analysis on in this text but will expand on my thoughts from then. Since my previous thesis I have come to realise simply how special Pratchett's way of writing about gender truly is. Pratchett creates an entirely new cultural viewpoint to gender with the dwarf species of Discworld, while also writing fascinating and empowering stories about womanhood with the aid of his witch characters. This along with the novel *Monstrous Regiment*, which deserves its very own chapter, create a world that is filled with parodic interpretations of the performative and normative nature of gender, and can make a reader question, perhaps for the first time, just why do we think about gender and sex the way we do.

As said, Pratchett was not an author of romance, instead choosing to present intimate relations mostly as a private matter between the parties involved and keeping romance – while present – at the side-lines of the narrative, in a supporting position rather than as central. He does,

however, also normalize many kinds of relationships by doing this, and even includes sex workers in his novels as an integral and respected group within society. The attitude towards sexuality in the Discworld novels is best summarized in this quote:

“He’d noticed that sex bore some resemblance to cookery: it fascinated people, they sometimes bought books full of complicated recipes and interesting pictures, and sometimes when they were hungry, they created vast banquets in their imagination – but at the end of the day they’d settle quite happily for egg and chips. If it was well done and maybe had a slice of tomato.” (The Fifth Elephant 1999, 294)

Romance, sex, and relationships in general are a part of the human experience, which is why they are present in Discworld as well. But much about these things are private, and Pratchett often respects his characters’ privacies. Due to this, analysing romantic relationships in these novels, or lack of them, will require a stronger queer lens. This does not mean queer sexuality or romance does not exist in Discworld. But first, I will focus on what started my interest in this analysis.

### **3.1 The Dwarfs of Discworld – A Gender Revolution**

In this section of my thesis, I will focus on the journey of a character called Cheery Littlebottom, and the results of the cultural shift she creates within the dwarf population in Discworld. While my primary focus will be on Cheery and her journey, I will also provide some insight into dwarf species and their culture in Discworld in general, and how Pratchett uses tropes related to this species in fantasy to showcase the strangeness of some of the normative ideas on gender present in our reality. The Discworld novels I will be focusing on in this section will be *Feet of Clay* (1996) and *The Fifth Elephant* (1999), but some additional material will be featured from *The Truth* (2000) and *Unseen Academicals* (2009). In my research I have not come across any other analysis conducted on the dwarfish culture of Discworld especially focusing on their unique thoughts on gender and gender expression, so I will base my own analysis more on queer theoretical studies related to the gender experience, mainly with the intention to show that there are significant parallels to the societal challenges transgender people – especially transgender women – face to those Cheery faces in her journey. These sources include Teich’s book *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue* (2012) and Levitt and Ippolito’s study *Being Transgender: The Experience of Transgender Identity Development* (2014) alongside Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (2002).

### 3.1.1 Dwarfish Culture – A Single-Gender Homonormative Society in Flux

Butler asks in *Gender Trouble*: “If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently?” (2002, 11). In the dwarf culture of Discworld, it indeed is. But before elaborating on this, I feel it is necessary to provide some further insight into dwarfs in fantasy literature in general. With the term “dwarf” I refer to the fictional humanoid species commonly found in the high-fantasy genre of fiction, the unspoken king of which is J.R.R Tolkien with *The Hobbit* (1937), and *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy (1954, 1955), and the Norse Epic of *Edda* (Snorre [1901] 2006) which Tolkien used as basis for his dwarfs, among many others. Dwarfs are also commonly found in other forms of popular culture such as videogames and tabletop roleplaying games of the fantasy genre, such as *The World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment 2004), and *Dungeons and Dragons* (TSR Inc. 1974). The Discworld series parodies nearly every trope related to dwarfs that are featured in these works of fiction. Humorous allusions to the dwarfs of Disney's film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Walt Disney Productions 1937) are also made in the form of dwarfish naming conventions. For example, the dwarfs of Snow White are named with adjectives such as Happy and Grumpy, while Discworld features dwarf characters with names such as Cheery, Dozy, and Bashfull (Pratchett & Simpson [2008] 2014, 66) among more Scandinavian folklore-inspired names.

Dwarves are a species much shorter than humans, who all grow long beards, and wear heavy armour. Most of their kind found in fiction are miners and crafters and are known for excessive alcohol consumption, loud singing, as well as being fierce fighters if they feel so inclined. These Norse-inspired features of their species can be traced back to *Edda*, since it is the text Tolkien used as the main inspiration for the dwarves of Middle Earth; his fantasy realm which has become a corner stone of the fantasy genre. A fascinating aspect in all this is that most dwarfs met in fiction tend to be men, or at least all the tropes that set them apart from other species of fantasy creatures are attributed to male dwarfs. However, in Discworld there is a catch: all dwarfs are referred to as men, but not all of them are male. Only one pronoun is in use in their own language – a masculine one – and whatever every dwarf happens to have under “his” layers of chainmail and leather is his and his partners business only (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 52).

This does not mean that female dwarves do not exist in Discworld. While many other species of Discworld – humans, werewolves, and so on – hold the misconception that dwarfs do not recognize a difference between sexes to begin with, this is not the case (*Feet of Clay* 1996,

86). Dwarven culture recognizes two sexes, but only one gender; they do acknowledge a physical difference between those of their kind who, for example, nurse the children, and those who do not, but everyone presents themselves in the similar masculine fashion that their societal norms predetermine. Gender expression is highly limited and is only acceptable when it is masculine. Dwarf marriages are formed “between dwarf and dwarf” (*The Truth* 2000, 254). From a perspective outside of the dwarfish culture this appears to be a marriage between two men, and as both parties would traditionally be referred to with the pronoun “he”, there is no reason to assume otherwise. However, not even other dwarves can truly know if a married couple consists of a male dwarf and a female dwarf, two males, or two females. Even amongst the more culturally inclined human population in Discworld, a dwarfish opera “Bloodaxe and Ironhammer” is known as “one of the great romances of history” (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 281) despite the titular dwarves both being men (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 282). The sexes of a dwarf couple are not a matter for other dwarfs to consider, being as private of a culture as they are (*The Truth* 2000, 255). This indicates that the dwarfish culture is not a heteronormative one. One could even call it homonormative, as the default assumption is that the people involved in the most normative dwarf relationship are both men.

In her book, Butler brings up one of Luce Irigaray’s feminist theories, which suggests that culturally one could say that there actually is only one sex: the masculine, and that anything that is Other to that can be defined as feminine (2002, 24). This rings surprisingly true in the context of the dwarfs of Discworld. Their culture is strictly masculine. Anything that is dwarfish is masculine. And thus, being feminine is – at least initially – seen within the more conservative dwarfish population as un-dwarfish and worthy of discrimination. While it appears that sexual orientation is not a cause of any concern for dwarfs, gender nonconformity is strictly frowned upon. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

### 3.1.2 The Coming Out of Cheery Littlebottom

The character of Cheery Littlebottom is first introduced in the novel *Feet of Clay* (1996) and she is the first dwarf in all of Discworld to ever identify herself as a woman. She is featured as a secondary character in most of the novels focused on the Ankh-Morpork city watch, where she works as a forensic alchemist. In *Feet of Clay* her process of exploring her gender identity and coming out as a woman is a significant sub-plot, and the effects of her expanding the concept of dwarfish gender expression can be seen in multiple subsequent novels, even including ones she does not feature in. Throughout *Feet of Clay* Cheery explores her gender

identity and its expression through changing her appearance and the pronouns she wishes to be referred to by, as well as balancing between expressing her cultural identity as a dwarf as well as her newfound gender identity. This is all met with bafflement, denial, and even aggression from her fellow dwarfs (*Feet of Clay* 1996).

Butler brings up a fascinating question that I find is partially provided an answer to in this parodic exploration of culture and gender: “To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix?” (2002, 9). It seems the answer, at least in the conservative dwarfish culture, is: to a large extent. Sexual orientation is not an issue in dwarfish culture. Dwarfs are not concerned with heterosexuality or lack of it. But the sudden presence of potential femininity ends up causing outrage amongst many of them, and rouses fear that their culture could be endangered by this change. It is a double-edged sword, in a sense; giving dwarfs further liberties in their gender expression, but also bringing in the potential of the unnecessary complication of the heterosexual matrix they see in the culture of humans.

When analysing a culture that thinks of sex and gender in such a differing way to the one we are used to, the question of whether gender is something intrinsic or something constructed becomes more difficult. It is traditional in dwarfish culture to uphold the image of maleness in their gender expression towards both fellow dwarfs and other beings alike. However, when Cheery arrives to a large multicultural city and meets people who call themselves women, she encounters femininity for the first time in her entire life, and it dawns on her that that a masculine gender expression is not the only option there is. Not only that, but being a man is not the only option there is. She can be a “she”, and she could be feminine, which feels far more comfortable than the culturally imposed identity she has upheld all her life (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 86). Butler refers to Simone de Beauvoir’s theory about womanhood being something one “becomes” out of cultural compulsion, once again raising the feminist theory of womanhood being the second gender, defined by the Otherness to masculinity (Butler 2002, 12). In this manner Cheery discovers a culture where womanhood is suddenly an option for her, and by adopting the concept of womanhood into her dwarfish culture, becomes the first dwarf woman. And much like how Butler proposes would happen to womanhood in our society – were it indeed “a becoming” and a construction (2002, 43) – dwarfish womanhood continues to evolve throughout the Discworld series. I will introduce a dwarf woman from closer to the end of the series later in the chapter, to display the ongoing evolution of the gender revolution Cheery starts. In *Folklore of Discworld* the movement is referred to with

the terminology of “coming out” (Pratchett & Simpson, 2008 [2014], 73) which only increases the queer impression Cheery’s journey evokes. This phrase most commonly refers to a queer person openly expressing their identity either to individual people or to the world around them as a whole.

But what exactly are the steps in Cheery’s journey that make it so similar to the experiences of transgender people? I have compared the changes Cheery makes in her gender expression, as well as the struggles she faces in the novels *Feet of Clay* and *The Fifth Elephant* with research in Levitt and Ippolito’s (2014) study. With the usage of grounded theory analysis Levitt and Ippolito analysed interviews conducted with test subjects representing varying unconventional gender identities, and from these interviews they gathered clusters of commonly repeated words and terminology, which were then formed into full statements by the usage of hermeneutic interpretation. The statements regarding the transgender experience referenced in the following paragraphs have been deemed accurate the interviewees of Levitt and Ippolito’s (2014, 1731–32) study and I will be using them as the basis for my queer reading of Cheery’s coming out experience.

The transition process of a transgender person is not at all simple. It is a process of balancing and prioritising the changes one makes to feel more comfortable with their identity and being their true self, with the potential financial and social cost it might have, and even the potential threat to their own safety depending on the social and cultural environment the transition is taking place in (Levitt & Ippolito 2014, 1744). Cheery’s struggles mirror this balancing act; she knows she will feel happier and more fulfilled in her life if she expresses herself in a more feminine way, and so she chooses to face the risk of adversity and discrimination from her own community. Levitt and Ippolito describe the process of of a transgender person finding the best way of expressing their identity as having to “develop colour vision in a monochromatic world” (2014, 1746). Cheery goes as far as creating an entirely new way of being a dwarf.

Teich states in his book that for a transgender person to “live life as the genuine you, it’s necessary to come out in at least some areas of life” (2012, 37). For Cheery this is a gradual process instead of a loud proclamation. In more areas of life than just her identity she has at least initially a shyer personality, and does not draw attention to herself. Due to this it is with the support of only one friend that she begins to implement these gradual changes towards femininity into her gender expression. The presence of affirmation and support can provide a

transgender person courage to explore their identity and find the means of gender expression that they feel most at home with (Levitt & Ippolito 2014, 1740). Teich points out that it is a very natural and commonly seen way of coming out to gradually ease into these new ways of gender expression. The example of a transgender woman's slow coming out and transition in her workplace that he provides holds a striking resemblance to what Cheery goes through in *Feet of Clay*. She begins with very small changes, such as wearing earrings with her usual thick leather and chainmail clothing (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 168), this is followed by her putting on lipstick some time after (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 174), then a skirt (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 213), and finally high heeled boots (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 270). While these changes are very stereotypically heteronormative, and femininity does not always by default indicate womanhood, clothing and makeup tend to be some of the first simple changes a transgender woman might introduce to her gender expression as she transitions (Teich 2012, 44). Cheery originates from a culture where the only accepted gender expression is very traditionally masculine, so I see it as only natural that as she tries to seek out a new expression which would be more comfortable for her, she seeks out ways of expressing herself that might be presented traditionally in opposition to the ones she is accustomed to. Cheery herself does not draw attention to the fact that this change is occurring and does not announce her womanhood to the other members of the city watch, but the more undeniably she displays femininity the more attention she draws. While the non-dwarfish people around her are simply confused, other dwarfs show obvious distaste towards her femininity (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 233). Unfortunately, negative reactions can also be expected from those witnessing the transitioning and coming out process of a transgender woman too (Teich 2012, 44). These reactions are based on what specific cultures deem appropriate or inappropriate regarding gender expression. Those whose identity cannot be easily labelled with something societally accepted might even be regarded as lesser people, or not people at all (Butler 2002, 23).

It could be argued that since Cheery is confirmed to be female – by a werewolf member of the city watch quite literally smelling it on her (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 86) – her choosing to present a feminine gender expression is not queer. However, when regarding her situation through the context of her culture and its view on femininity it is undeniable that her gender expression is outside of the gender norms of dwarfs. Just like transgender people, Cheery has to risk “the danger of isolation amid stares” (Levitt & Ippolito 2014, 1738). Choosing to express femininity, which is simply not done in dwarfish culture, she opens herself to the risk of discrimination that no “normal” dwarf would ever face. Her fellow dwarfs see her femininity

as her flaunting something that should not be shown, something improper and even perverse (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 232).

Cheery's journey in *Feet of Clay* ends positively, however: Cheery has become braver in expressing and defending her own femininity, and has even gathered tentative interest from other dwarfs who might wish to be more feminine themselves. Cheery's supportive friend is gifting her some of her extra dresses at the end of the novel, and Cheery reveals that some other dwarfs in the city watch might be interested in the garments as well. She is very excited to refer to these dwarfs as *ladies* (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 331), and this is only the beginning. Her coming out continues to inspire other dwarfs as her story goes on in other novels.

Cheery's identity evolves further between the novels. In *Feet of Clay*, Cheery considered changing her name (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 195), and closer to the end of the novel was referred by the name Cheri. However in *The Fifth Elephant* she has chosen to simply pronounce her name this way, while the original spelling of Cheery is kept (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 51). The transition process and journey of exploration for transgender people is often not linear, and this kind of experimentation and change is often seen during these processes (Levitt & Ippolito 2014, 1743). Her name is not the only thing to change: Cheery's work uniform has been altered to show a more feminine figure and now permanently features her long skirt and high heeled boots (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 219). Despite all of this, she has still kept her long beard, and her clothes do still consist of leather and chainmail, as she relates these things more towards her cultural roots, rather than masculinity (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 52–53).

The themes of gender, and cultural and societal change, are even more prevalent in *The Fifth Elephant* than they were in *Feet of Clay*. In this novel Pratchett offers the reader a glimpse into the world of a queer person who has found their identity and is living comfortably within it, and then must return to a more conservative area and face a hostile environment where their identity and personhood is brought to question. Cheery and some other members of the city watch are sent on a diplomatic journey to another country, Uberwald, a very old nation where dwarfs are far more conservative, and where the gender revolution Cheery initiated has yet to reach. While Cheery seems to have found a comfortable way of expressing her gender identity it is questioned immediately upon arrival to Uberwald (Pratchett & Simpson [2008] 2014, 73). Not even the dwarf community of Ankh-Morpork is wholly accepting of the concept of dwarf women just yet. She is misgendered at times, with older dwarfs refusing to refer to her as "she". Despite this she has also been met with encouragement and support, and

the number of dwarf women who demand their identity to be respected is only growing (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 52). In this novel Cheery faces a common challenge of balancing her own happiness with a “need to survive under discriminatory political, social, and economic conditions” (Levitt & Ippolito 2014, 1746). During the journey to Uberwald Cheery would have the option to forgo makeup and her feminine clothing, and to behave in a way expected of a “normal” dwarf, but she chooses to face discrimination instead. She feels it is important for her to bring this option of broadening the concept of dwarfish gender to her homeland, and as she has supportive friends with her, she feels strong enough to do so despite likely hostility. This is shown in a scene that could be all too familiar for a transgender reader. When first arriving to Uberwald a fellow dwarf sees Cheery and calls her a “*ha’ak*” this remark makes Cheery flush red, and one of her non-dwarf friends threatens the speaker with violent repercussions, stating that even he knows this word should not be used about another person (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 184). No translation is provided for the word, but the context it was spoken in gives away that it is a slur used to refer to those dwarfs who refer to themselves as women and openly show a more feminine gender expression. Slurs and other types of offensive language are an unfortunate part of the reality of transgender people to this day.

Regardless of the challenges she faces, in the end Cheery’s arrival and presence as a diplomat in the conservative dwarf community has only positive repercussions. Cheery finds herself and her identity respected by the most surprising direction: the king of dwarfs. The king is a pope-like figure of authority in the dwarfish culture, and the newly crowned king refers to Cheery as “Miss Littlebottom”, compliments her for dress she is wearing for the audience, and is offered to shake the king’s hand. Such an event is a shock to all dwarfs who witness it, and news of the event start spreading immediately: “[The King] had shaken the hand of a self-declared female” (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 455). The key expression in this scene is “self-declared female”. This indicates that regardless of their sex, it is up to the individual dwarf to determine their femininity or masculinity. No one will demand to know if they are truly physically male or female. This showcases the difference in the dwarfish culture in comparison to the human one both in Discworld and in reality; gender and sex are completely separated from one another, and the traditional concept of gender in dwarf culture is constructed completely differently to the binary man-woman, male-female combination seen in Western society. This different paradigm is so fundamentally dwarfish that not even after the introduction of a feminine gender does the dwarfish view on gender turn towards the insistence of all males being men and females being women.

When reading further along the series, after *Feet of Clay* and *The Fifth Elephant* a reader can gradually see a change in the dwarfish culture occur. In *The Truth* (2000) the reader meets a dwarf couple saving money for their wedding, and they are described to both look “like small barbarian warriors with long beards (255)” so it appears that heteronormativity has not spread into dwarf culture despite the gradual increase of openly feminine dwarfs. One of these openly feminine dwarfs is featured as a minor character in *Unseen Academicals* (2009). She is a true display of the leaps and bounds the gender revolution has taken since Cheery’s coming out. This character – Madame Sharn – owns a high-end clothing store catering mainly to dwarfs, wears an expensively decorated breastplate, enough rings to look like she’s wearing gauntlets, and her voice is “like the darkest and most expensive type of dark chocolate, possibly smoked” (*Unseen Academicals* 2009, 196). Her looks, and very extravagant personality are both still culturally dwarfish, but with an expensive kind of femininity that no other named dwarf character in the Discworld series presents. She still has a beard (*Unseen Academicals* 2009, 195) but refers to herself as “she” and even “Queen” (*Unseen Academicals* 2009, 197). In her we can also see yet another realization of one of Butler’s hypotheticals: “When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (2002, 10) In a sense, this applies to the change seen in dwarf culture. The dwarfs that come out as women still present features that are traditionally read as masculine, such as continuing to grow beards. But for them it is not a feature of maleness, it is a feature of dwarfness. In the end, thanks to Cheery initiating this gender revolution, a male dwarf can be a woman, a female dwarf can be a man. Any dwarf can express their gender in any way they desire, and what is under their chainmail and leather remains the business of themselves and their potential partner. The heterosexual matrix has not infiltrated dwarfish culture. This kind of a cultural evolution could bring hope to transgender readers, especially transgender women, about their identities being more respected in our society too. Another significant result of stories like this, and Pratchett using means of humour and satire related to narratives of gender expression, can be that non-queer readers might also see the senselessness in discriminating someone simply based on their gender expression. Cheery is a self-declared woman, and there is no question of her womanhood. So why would someone in our real every-day world declaring herself as a woman, regardless of what they have under their clothes, be cause for discrimination?

### 3.2 The Queer Womanhood of Witches

Magic is equally a foundational aspect in Discworld novels as in any other fantasy saga, but not even this aspect evades Pratchett's parodical jabs. The magic users among the populations of Discworld consist of human witches and wizards. All witches are women, and all wizards are men. Or so it seems to be. The nature of magic appears to be inherently gendered, in a very binary way as well, but this only serves as a platform for societal criticism about the nature of restricting gender roles in our world. In Discworld there is "wizard magic [and] women's magic" (*Equal Rites* 1987, 33) and women's magic is "magic out of the ground, not out of the sky, and men never could get the hang of it" (*Equal Rites* 1987, 10). In contrast to this statement from a witch, a common view from wizards tends to be that wizard magic is not appropriate for women, as it requires a "great clarity of thought" (*Equal Rites* 1987, 124). However, the fact that the nature of magic in Discworld appears to be strictly binary is anything but cisnormative in its end message. Through a queer reading – and given the themes in the novels focused on Discworld's witches – this can instead be seen as a tool to shine light to the fragility of the binary, and how it is only upheld by arbitrary rules set by people themselves, not any law of nature (Walker 2021, 131).

In this chapter I will analyse six of the Discworld novels: *Equal Rites* (1987), *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), *Witches Abroad* (1991), *Lords and Ladies* (1992), *Maskerade* (1995), and *Carpe Jugulum* (1998). These novels focus primarily on a group of characters known as the witches of Lancre, or the Lancre Coven – from the kingdom of Lancre – excluding *Equal Rites* which showcases the journey of the first female wizard of Discworld; Eskarina Smith (hereon referred to as Esk, as she is in the novel). The protagonists of the other novels I will be focusing on are Esmerelda "Granny" Weatherwax and Gytha "Nanny" Ogg. My argument is that these characters – especially Granny – represent a queer sort of womanhood and bring to light the harmful nature of binary gender norms, heteronormativity, and the restrictive discourses associated with them. I will be referring to Butler's theory on gender performativity, as well as Lian Sinclair's study "Magical Genders: The Gender(s) of Witches in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett's Discworld" (2015) and Abigail Walker's "Witches and Their Queer Representation of Gender in Terry Pratchett's *Equal Rites* and *Weird Sisters*" (2021).

In his "Equal Rites" speech in the 1985 Novacon, Pratchett himself spoke of the gendered way we view magic, and its effects in history:

“Magic, according to this theory, is something that only men can be really good at, and therefore any attempt by women to trespass on the sacred turf must be rigorously stamped out. Women are regarded by men as the second sex, and their magic is therefore automatically inferior. There's also a lot of stuff about man's natural fear of a woman with power; witches were poor women seeking one of the few routes to power open to them, and men fought back with torture, fire and ridicule.” (Pratchett [1985] 1986)

These women, who were historically recorded to have been persecuted for being witches, were often the kinds of women who did not conform to the gender norms established in Western society (Walker 2021, 131). Similar fates appear to have befallen women in the history of Discworld as well. In the novel *Carpe Jugulum* (1998, 279) Granny Weatherwax states that the old stories about followers of a specific religion having burned witches in the past are most likely inaccurate and: “Probably they burned some old ladies who spoke up or couldn't run away”. Being a witch has thus been both a title, but also an accusation thrown at women who have not conformed to the heteropatriarchal society.

As stated earlier in this thesis, Pratchett went on to write a novel sharing the title of this speech only a short while after giving it. While a significant shift has occurred in the recent years within the fantasy genre, regarding different representations of minorities, the situation was quite different back in the 1980s and 1990s when the first Discworld novels were published. However, novels that focus on gender equality as a theme continue to be a minority in the genre to this day, despite the slow improvement (Sinclair 2015, 8). This makes Pratchett's witches and their uniquely queer attitude towards their identities as witches and women still significant even in the scope of today's fantasy literature.

### 3.2.1 Outside of the Binary of Witch and Wizard

The clear criticism towards heteronormative gender roles is well displayed beginning from the very first novel featuring the witches of Discworld. In *Equal Rites* a female child is born into a position where normally a male one would be granted the gift of magic, thus making her a wizard (1987, 7). She is granted this power before the people present realise that she is in fact female. This girl, Esk, grows to become the first and only named female wizard in Discworld. Through a queer reading, and interpreting the terms “witch” and “wizard” to represent “woman” and “man” this story is one of subverting gender roles and norms, and potentially one of the development of a nonbinary gender identity as well.

Butler describes in *Gender Trouble* how culture can be made into destiny. In a culture where the construct of gender is regarded at the same level as a law of nature, the cultural norms one regards biology through form a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. The vague concepts of gendered norms and practices become law (Butler 2002, 12). Or in the case of Discworld the *lore*.

A reoccurring statement in *Equal Rites* is that a woman being a wizard is “against the lore” (1987, 151) this is a play on words, as the words lore and law are pronounced the same way in many English accents. Lore in this case could also simply be read to mean “norms”, as well as the attitude that these matters have always been this way, and thus should not be changed. Culture has become destiny. Young Esk is put under the tutelage of Granny Weatherwax, who is initially determined to teach Esk how to be a witch. In fact, she is vehemently against Esk becoming a wizard (*Equal Rites* 1987, 35). However, this becomes an increasingly burning issue, because the magic she uses, and her attitude towards magic, is inherently different to that of Granny. She is not a man, so she cannot be a wizard, but she uses wizard magic, so she cannot be a witch (*Equal Rites* 1987, 64–65).

Eventually Granny does bring her to the best wizard school in Discworld, but Esk is only allowed to stay there as a maid, not as a student, solely due to her sex. After Esk has spent some time at the university, Granny comes to visit her and suggests they go find the university’s Great Hall. Esk states that “women aren’t allowed in” (*Equal Rites* 1987, 186). Esk has already begun to internalize the *lore* she once wanted to defy. This shows the strength of culture as a formative aspect of one’s view of the world. It is difficult to defy norms when you feel as if you are the only one doing so. No doubt many queer people can relate to Esk’s struggle. *Equal Rites* is at its core about the importance, and difficulty, of challenging the heteronormative and cisnormative views on gender (Sinclair 2015, 11). The clearest act of defiance towards these norms the reader sees from Esk is when she firmly decides that she refuses to choose between the two options presented to her: “She’d be both, or none at all.” (*Equal Rites* 1987, 125). When giving a queer reading to this quote, through the lens of witchcraft representing womanhood and wizardry representing being a man, Esk seems to represent a third gender, or a gender outside of the binary between man and woman. She shows the fragility of these constructed concepts by stepping outside of them and queers not only the nature of gender in Discworld, but the nature of magic too (Walker 2021, 142). Her decision becomes true at the end of the novel; Esk is gifted a blue, pointy hat, with silver stars on it. In Discworld wizards often wear robes decorated with stars, and witches have their

signature pointy black hat. Esk gets something that is both, but also neither (*Equal Rites* 1987, 235). The way this story challenges and breaks the rules of society is quintessential fantasy (Kenneally 2016, 15), but challenges concepts of identity and gender in a way that is very queer at its core. It is a bildungsroman about the first female wizard, or perhaps the first non-binary mage, in Discworld.

### 3.2.2 Witch or Woman?

While Esk is the most overt subversion and parody of the Western gender stereotypes, the stories focused on the Lancre Coven do also display some significant criticism regarding the gender norms of Western society. However, the witches have also norms of their very own. Being a witch in Discworld is a very specific kind of womanhood, queer womanhood. Butler problematizes the term “woman” altogether since defining an entire group of people with just a single noun can never be exhaustive, as gender is always constructed in the context of culture, history, and the intersections of ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other identity markers (2002, 6). Being a witch could be seen as one intersection of being a woman, but I say it is also a very specific way of *not* being a woman. At least Granny Weatherwax appears to be quite adamant in resisting the notion whenever anyone refers to her as a woman, or “missus” or “madam” (*Wyrd Sisters* 1988; 78, 83, 109). Granny resists being defined by her gender, and instead prefers being defined by her identity, and societal position, as a witch. Granny deliberately sets herself beyond the notions of gender and thus into an overtly queer position of otherness (Walker 2021, 138). I suggest that in Discworld witchhood is akin to woman-adjacent queer identity, not simply another intersection of womanhood, and that these novels show the power of queer otherness in broadening the horizons of the different identities one can embrace. Pratchett uses stereotypes related to womanhood, and once again subverts expectations and uses parody to display the restrictive nature of gender norms.

The most overtly subversive of the Lancre Coven focused novels in the series is *Witches Abroad* (1991). In this novel Granny Weatherwax’s sister Lily, who is also a witch, has overtaken a distant kingdom and is controlling it through her magic and the power of what is known throughout the Discworld series as “narrative causality” (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 2), meaning the traditions and tropes of stories that continue to repeat themselves. *Witches Abroad* is full to the brim with references to old fairy tales and popular culture, which thinly veil a strong message: stories shape people, and the more a story is repeated the more difficult it becomes to not be shaped by it. Through a queer lens, narrative causality closely resembles

the power of heteronormative and cisnormative societal discourses. It could even be seen as a metaphor for gender theory (Sinclair 2015, 15). The primary conflict in *Witches Abroad* stems from Lily revelling in being in the centre of stories and controlling them. She finds comfort in them and thinks that patterns repeating themselves is the only right way for everything to go forward (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 279). In contrast to this Granny cannot stand the thought of her sister: “Goin’ around inflicting happy endings on people whether they wants them or not” (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 117). In a direct parallel to this, people impose traditional gender roles – and the narratives related to them – on others in our world too. Some do so with the belief that this is what is right, a law of nature, and will make people happiest in the end. But one cannot tell someone’s story on their behalf, and one cannot decide what is best for someone on their behalf. As Croft says in her analysis, the primary message of this novel is, in the end, that “stories cannot be allowed to dictate roles to people” (Croft 2008, 154). This novel also shows the character growth Granny has gone through since *Equal Rites*. She has grown to hate everything that predestines people (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 245). Seeing Esk flourish after being allowed to step outside the binary of witch and wizard seems to have taught her something about allowing people to live their lives in the way they see most comfortable.

Perhaps there was always a potential for breaking norms in Granny, even before witnessing Esk’s journey; as it becomes apparent in a later novel, *Lords and Ladies*, that Granny herself once went against a well-established tradition. It is customary that an older, more accomplished witch chooses a girl to train in the craft. Granny, however, decided as a young woman that she will become a witch, and demanded to be taught, as such, before anyone had chosen her as a successor (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 110). If one sees being a witch, through a queer lens, as a woman-adjacent, yet alternative form gender expression, Granny’s choice feels even more like a subversion of societal norms; she goes against the identity assigned to her. Sinclair even states that it is the delicate balance between subverting the norms of narrative causality, and taking advantage of the stereotypes within them, that gives a Discworld witch more power than her magic does (2015, 15). Situations like this can be seen throughout the novels: Granny often positions herself outside of the restrictions culturally assigned to older women, such as not going to the theatre alone (*Wyrd Sisters* 1988, 30), or falling asleep during the day (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 96), but the narrator mentions repeatedly that Granny approves of these restrictions only when they do not apply to her. These norms are there for her to take advantage of when it is necessary, as is seen in *Witches Abroad* when Granny puts on the act of being a feeble and silly old lady, to disarm and defeat in a card

game, a group of gamblers Nanny has lost the Coven's travel budget to just moments before (1991, 99).

Sinclair brings up some previous commentary related to Granny and her attitudes. An article has proposed that, since Granny displays power in a non-feminine way, she must be more of a man than a woman. I agree with Sinclair that this is gender essentialist and implies both that women cannot be powerful to begin with, and that the only available options regarding gender are being a man or a woman (Sinclair 2015, 12). Granny does not simply switch between the binary ends of the gender spectrum, but steps outside of them, which only makes her more powerful, just as it made Esk.

Nanny also takes advantage of the gender stereotypes associated with womanhood, but in a different way to Granny: "It was central to Nanny Ogg's soul that she never considered herself an old woman, while of course availing herself of every advantage that other people's perceptions of her as such would bring". (*Maskerade* 1995, 232). Nanny also has an uncanny ability to get along with people (*Maskerade* 1995, 212), making them comfortable around herself, and using this to be inconspicuous in any situation, both to gain entrance to restricted places, and to gain information from people. She too puts on the mask of an old woman over her deeper identity as a witch to make use of the loopholes in narrative causality. She makes sure to give off a very specific impression of herself that in some ways contradicts her true nature completely (*Carpe Jugulum* 1998, 113). Granny and Nanny both present a Butlerian gender performance of an old woman when being a witch does not serve them and are able to change the roles they perform when being a witch is the most advantageous.

The witches play the gender performance of womanhood when it is convenient to them, but what are the performances associated with being a witch? Physical appearance plays a big part in this. As mentioned before, a witch must wear a pointy hat: "Otherwise who's to know?" (*Equal Rites* 1987, 223). By wearing the black pointy hat, a witch shows to others that she is not just any woman, but indeed a witch. Further notions about the importance of looks for a witch include: "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" (*Wyrd Sisters* 1988, 88). And: "It's not much use being a witch if you don't look like one" (*Wyrd Sisters* 1988, 102). When reading a witch as a woman-adjacent alternative identity it does appear that witches have their own outward gender expression, too. This expression is challenging to the heteropatriarchal order, as most of the features associated with witches;

lack of conventionally attractive femininity and not being defined by their relationships to men, challenge this order by their mere existence (Walker 2021, 140). Granny is described as “striking, or even handsome, but she couldn’t be called beautiful” (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 13) while Nanny is described to have “the face of an elderly apple” (*Maskerade* 1995, 141). Simply the fact that these two protagonists, highly valued and respected, powerful in their craft, go against the idealised image of womanhood by being old, unattractive, and lacking in traditional heteronormative relationships makes them, as Walker calls them, “queer icons” as well as occasionally even non-women with how far they step from the accepted guidelines of womanhood (2021, 141). Butler points out that these limitations and guidelines are exactly what restricts the gender expression of women (2002, 19-20) which is why I find the presence of these characters in literature so significant: they both broaden the image of womanhood and offer a queer narrative in contrast to the narratives engrained to Western society. Gender norms and the discourses related to these norms constrict us, and subverting these narratives is what will empower us in the end. The witches hold a delicate balance in performing the female gender while also gaining power in their community through subverting the norms related to womanhood (Sinclair 2015, 7). Being a witch is being queer.

### 3.2.3 The “Maiden” Crone

But are the witches queer only in their subversive expression of gender? I find that Granny Weatherwax displays some characteristics that, through a queer reading, could be seen as indications of asexuality and aromanticism. These terms, respectively, describe queer identities in which an individual does not feel sexual or romantic attraction (Stonewall UK n.d.). Another related term, as defined by the Ace and Aro Advocacy Project, is amatonormativity, which goes hand in hand with heteronormativity: “Amatonormativity is a term coined by Elizabeth Brake that refers to the disproportionate focus on and prioritisation of a singular romantic relationships above all else and the widespread assumption that finding romantic love is a universally shared goal. Amatonormativity describes the systemic way in which these sociocultural ideas and norms are upheld – this includes the formal institution of marriage and the thousands of legal benefits it confers” (Ace and Aro Advocacy Project n.d.). Such a societal structure, combined with heteronormativity, leaves asexual and aromantic people prone to discrimination.

Indications of Granny resisting both amatonormativity and heteronormativity can be seen throughout the novels. In *Equal Rites* Esk wonders why every adult she knows is married,

except for Granny. Her response to this is that she simply “never got around to it” (1987, 38). However, in novels that came after that Granny’s attitude towards marriage is seen to be far more oppositional than this statement might first indicate. In *Wyrd Sisters* Granny concedes “very reluctantly” (1988, 26) that it is not forbidden for witches to be married. The depth of her reluctance is revealed later in *Lords and Ladies* (1992) when a man, nowadays an accomplished wizard, returns to Lancre, and turns out to have been Granny’s old suitor. One that even proposed to her at the time, but who she declined. Granny is not even remotely as invested or interested in the reunion, or the consequences of narrative causality associated with the reunion of old potential partners, as he is (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 193). The unspoken law – or lore – of romance here would rule that the pair should have a magical reunion, a rekindling of their relationship, and that this re-kindling romance ought to be a subplot for the novel. Any such things are, however, thwarted by Granny, as she is more focused on stopping the antagonist of the novel from taking over Lancre. This antagonist is the Queen of the Elves, and even she uses the amatonormative rhetoric against Granny. She mocks her, tries to get under her skin, by stating that Granny has “never touched a heart” (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 286). The Queen thinks that since humanity holds romantic love above all, it ought to hurt Granny to be told has not experienced this. The attempt of course fails, as Granny has deemed many other things vastly more important. She has even admitted in a previous novel she has no romance in her soul (*Witches Abroad* 1991, 138).

Granny could be seen as excellent representation of an aromantic and asexual person who is living a long and fulfilling life outside of the constraints of amatonormativity; she is confirmed to be a virgin (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 323), who never married, and never had any interest in neither sexual nor romantic relations. In fact, Nanny states that had there not been a suitor involved, these matters would have never crossed Granny mind in the first place (*Lords and Ladies* 1992, 324). A tradition in Discworld dictates that if a group of witches is to form a coven, it is to be done in a group of three consisting of “the maiden, the mother, and the crone” (*Maskerade* 1995, 4), but Granny is described to be all of these things in one (*Maskerade* 1995, 10), due to being unmarried, tending to the people who need her like a strict mother, and being a somewhat stereotypically cantankerous old woman. These things place Granny even further in the position of Otherness, as heteronormativity is not only limited to disallowing relationships between people of the same sex, but also places under scrutiny the lack of one in the first place (Pearson 2009, 304), but she shows that resisting these normative expectations has not left her unfulfilled. She is a respected member of her

community, a witch of immense power, and shares a close long-term friendship with Nanny Ogg. She is not lonely, has no regrets about having grown old without a romance or sexual intimacy in her life, and prides herself in her success. While aromantic people in our world are often told that a “committed monogamous romance is not only an essential life milestone and the epitome of human experience, but also a biological need, and an inevitable eventuality (Ace and Aro Advocacy Project n.d.).” Granny proves otherwise both to queer readers seeking someone to relate to, as well as those who might still hold an amatonormative worldview. Yet again Pratchett has represented a queer identity in a positive light.

### 3.3 Monstrous Regiment – Gender and Sexuality in a Regimented Society

*Monstrous Regiment* (2003) might just be the most overtly queer novel of the Discworld series. It tells the story of a young woman, Polly Perks, whose homeland of Borogravia is at constant war with its neighbouring countries, to the extent that their army is running out of young men to conscript. To go looking for her enlisted brother, Polly disguises herself as a young man and enlists herself as Oliver Perks. The story of a cross-dressing young heroine is not an unfamiliar one in folklore, literature, and media, but the story of *Monstrous Regiment* explores a far more queer level of this trope. With the support of Butler’s theory of gender performativity, I will analyse how this novel undermines the constructed nature of gender by the means of parody, while also showcasing one of the rare same-sex romantic couples throughout the Discworld novels, without leaning into the usual stereotypes queer love might fall victim to in fantasy literature. As this chapter only concerns a single Discworld novel, I will be only using the publishing year and page number in my references to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The trope of the cross-dressing heroine in *Monstrous Regiment* does not stop at its protagonist. Throughout the course of the novel Polly comes to learn that every recruit to the regiment, as well as some other key figures in her nation’s military, are secretly female. As some of these characters go by nicknames through most of the novel, I have chosen to refer to them with the nicknames or names the narrator most often uses for them instead of their possible birth name. I have left my analysis focusing on one member of the regiment to a later chapter: “Other Notable Queer Readings”. This character is a vampire and analysis focused on their identity is more pertinent to the section of my thesis focused on the community of undead characters in Discworld, and their queerness.

### 3.3.1 Parodic Copies and Accurate Performances

Discrimination is ingrained into Borogravian society in a very concrete way. The nation, while technically ruled by a woman known as the Dutchess, is under the control of a living God known as Nuggan who actively updates the religious doctrine with new “abominations” which are turning more and more outlandish and difficult to avoid as the years go by. Gender norms are also enforced by Nuggan’s abominations: women are allowed to learn how to read, but not write (2003, 48), men are to only wear masculine clothes, and women only feminine. Doing otherwise would get one beaten (2003, 80). This goes nearly beyond satire and simply directly parallels the way those going against the societally accepted gender norms and practices – who do not perform their gender in a correct manner – are dehumanised and punished in society (Butler 2002, 23). Polly has fully embraced the thought of becoming an abomination long before she even leaves to join the army. She is in fact so beyond caring about these societal norms, that she only feels guilty about her own lack of guilt as she cuts her hair short (2003, 9). During her life living and working at maintaining her family’s inn she has carefully observed the behaviour of men and practiced mimicking them in preparation to her escape to the army. Her observations include: “Fart loudly [...], never hug anyone and, if you meet a friend, punch them” (2003, 12–13) as well as the way young men walk. It appears later on that the other recruits have made somewhat similar observations, as during their first night under the same roof, while thinking everyone but themselves are male, the recruits burp and fart noisily for an extended period of time, presumably to try and enforce the masculinity they are all trying to perform (2003, 47). I agree with Vandana Saxena’s observation that Polly’s “exaggerated mimicry” displays just how easily masculinity and its related normative practices can be appropriated and performed (Saxena 2012, 284). This, I find, is one of the primary messages of *Monstrous Regiment*: gender is simply an arbitrary performance our society has once agreed on showing, but why would we follow the choreography if it does not make us happy? As Butler says, gender is merely a “repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (1990, 33).

Polly’s own biases and normative ways of thinking can easily be seen in the way the narrator shows her to think about the other members of her regiment. One of the first of them she meets is a troll later found out to be called Jade. The trolls of Discworld very large, somewhat brutish, and are silicone and carbon-based lifeforms, thus appearing to be entirely made of stone (Pratchett & Simpson [2008] 2014, 121). Jade is initially referred to by the narrator with

the pronoun “it” and never states her gender or sex, but once she states her alias “Carborundum” and begins to speak in a usual troll-like gravelly tone, Polly – and thus the narrator – continue referring to her as “he” (2003, 41). Her maleness is completely based on assumptions and how well she performs. Later on, when her gender identity is revealed, Jade explains some of the gender norms related to the ways male and female trolls are expected to present themselves: male trolls can be ‘craggy’ whereas female trolls should be smoother and expected to polish themselves. Female trolls are also expected to be bald, and to have moss and lichen growing on a troll’s skin is seen as something very masculine (2003, 175). With this thinly veiled parody of the amount of hair expected of men and women in Western society, Pratchett uses parody to display how absurd the norms related to masculinity and femininity can be.

Another tool that Pratchett uses in *Monstrous Regiment* that reveals the drag-like nature of gender are socks. Polly is given an extra pair of socks by an anonymous good Samaritan while she is in an outhouse. This initially unknown person is aware of her sex and encourages her: “Shove [the socks] down the front of your trousers” (2003, 51). The socks continue to be an metonymy to both male genitalia and the mental source of masculine behaviour throughout the rest of the novel. An example of this comes when the regiment arrives to a new location and Polly addresses some strangers with:

‘Excuse m-’ she began, and then remembered the socks, raised her voice and tried to sound angry.

‘Hey, where’s the lieutenant?’ (2003, 103)

Polly seems to go through multiple moments of questioning her gender identity. Through the narrator the reader sees Polly thinking that she needs to consider how easy it is for her to go from boy to girl and back “just by thinking it” (2003, 136), as well as stating that while she wanted to leave her identity as a girl behind, she was not quite able to (2003, 190). Later in the novel the regiment infiltrates a military stronghold by disguising themselves as washerwomen. This causes an interesting thought loop, as they are then girls disguised as boys disguised as women: “Wow, Polly thought, look at us, we’re dressed as *women!*” (2003, 346). This shows yet again how fluidly Polly has become capable of switching between genders; she is, in the moment, so deep in the mentality of a boy that feminine clothes feel strange. While she continues to identify as a woman throughout the novel and ends up being openly a woman in the end, it is an important aspect of the story that Polly has these thoughts. There is no reason why cisgender people could not question and explore their identity, and it

can reveal much about them even if in the end they do still identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

As Saxena says, Polly uses both her girlhood and boyhood as a convenient mask to be donned whenever necessary. She has long since learned that gender roles are but an illusion, and they can be replicated (Saxena 2021, 292). She has taken advantage of this even before joining the army, by getting old soldiers to teach her how to swordfight, by very deliberately seeming to be bad at it throughout the lessons. “She’d be funny just as long as she was useless, and safe as long as she was funny” (2003, 60). This is a harsh description of her reality, given the humoristic nature of Pratchett’s works, and displays her societal position as a member of an oppressed sex and gender identity. This is what Butler calls: “a strategy of survival within compulsory systems” (2002, 178). Polly has learned what the performance of the feminine gender requires, and what she must do to perform it correctly and continue to humanize herself in the eyes of her conservative elders.

The power of this conservatism – as well as the power of hypocrisy – is revealed later in the novel, when Polly and the regiment end up being the driving force of the uprising that ends with the important military stronghold back under Borogravian control. The regiment releases Borogravian soldiers from their cells, but immediately when the upper hand is gained the members of the regiment are put into cells themselves, as by then their identities as women have been discovered (2003, 411). The regiment is put in front of a military court for their acts of abomination. They have not performed their gender correctly, and the plan is to make them suffer consequences for it. However, rescue comes in the form of the regiment’s Sergeant, Jack Jackrum, who knows each member of the Borogravian army leadership from the years of his long military career. As the trial progresses Jackrum threatens to reveal some very significant secrets about the leading men of the Borogravian army, and requests some of the ones not involved in these secrets to exit the room. When only a select portion of the army leaders, Jackrum, the regiment, and their appointed lawyer are present, he threatens to reveal to the entire nation that this portion of the military generals were born female, if they refuse to give credit to his regiment for their heroism (2003, 435). Once more Pratchett drives home Butler’s idea of gender being simply a collective unwritten contract to perform and sustain these gender roles, and that by punishing those who fail to perform we enforce and maintain the belief that these roles are somehow necessary (Butler 2002, 178). Jackrum’s threats prove effective though, and it is agreed upon that the Borogravian army will welcome women – as women – from now on. However, there is the significant detail: those who are already in the

army and have been serving as men are free to remain so if they wish (2003, 447). This could simply be read as the higher-ranking officers not wanting to confess to their own lies and hypocrisy over the decades, but through a more queer reading I find it is an opportunity to those within the army who are female, to continue their lives as men, if they find this gender identity more suitable for themselves.

Unfortunately, the change does not lead into a vast societal and cultural paradigm shift within Borogravia. Women do enter the army, but the nation remains belligerent and conservative. A separate military uniform is designed for women, though it is frillier, and for Polly seems almost costume-like. She does still return to join the army once her brother is returned home safely, wearing this feminine uniform and determined to continue to drive change (2003, 492). The Borogravian society continues to be a binary one, and the oppressive gender structures maintain their position, albeit minutely shifted, allowing Polly room to try and continue to change these structures, but only if she submits to them first (Saxena 2012, 278). However, the message the story sends goes beyond simply what the result of the Monstrous Regiment's efforts is. Butler states: "Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic— a failed copy, as it were" (2002, 186). And that is exactly what is repeated in this novel. Displaying the arbitrary nature of gender norms by the means of parody. Pratchett makes masculinity and femininity into exaggerated jokes; acts that can be replicated and reproduced by anyone. It brings to question the very nature of the binary gender division. What is truly so different between men and women that we must consider these identities complete opposites, and the replication of the norms associated with them a law of nature that is necessary to be followed?

There is one character in *Monstrous Regiment* that reads as queer in perhaps even more revolutionary way than others. In a previous chapter I wrote on the dwarf women of Discworld, and how they could be read as an allegory for the experiences of transgender women in our world. However, I think that *Monstrous Regiment* features the story of a transgender human man: Sergeant Jack Jackrum. He is the officer that guides the regiment from the very beginning and gives them the training and leadership they need to survive to commit their heroic deeds. From the very beginning he is described in a very masculine and conventionally unattractive way: "The word 'fat' could not honestly be applied to him, not when the word 'gross' was lumbering forth to catch your attention. [...] Sun and drink had burned his face red. Small dark eyes, twinkled in the redness like the sparkle on the edge of a

knife.” (2003, 17). The narrator, seeing the world through Polly’s mind, leads the reader to also by default assume Jackrum is male. He continues to be described based on how red his face is, how fat he is, and how small and gleaming his eyes are (2003; 215, 432). However, it is revealed later in the novel that he was born female (2003, 475).

There are multiple aspects to this character that gain new colour when reading the novel a second time, with the knowledge of his past. An older member of the army reveals that Jackrum has gotten severely injured in battles in the past yet has never allowed field medics to tend to him (2003, 114). Jackrum also has what is almost a slogan he repeats on multiple occasions: “Upon my oath I am not a [violent/shouty/dishonest/etc.] man, but” (2003; 133, 213, 221, 241, 260, 435) often preceding him being violent, or shouting, or lying. This, knowing his history, is not exactly a lie. When Polly first sees Jackrum’s pensively looking at a locket around his neck, containing a picture of him in his youth as a woman, and his old male partner, he tells Polly the picture features “just a... girl I knew” (2003, 278). Once again he does not exactly lie here. An interesting detail, however, is that the narrator never directly calls Jackrum a woman, not even after Polly realises that he was once just like the members of the regiment; a young woman disguised as a man. They discuss the matter in a roundabout way, wondering what Jackrum will do going forward. He has no intention to state his sex publicly, which is quite understandable given his legendary position in the army, and the time he has spent hiding. Even in reality transgender people have good motive to hide their identity in the army. For example, just a decade ago there was still a danger that being transgender would deem a person unfit for service in the United States Army (Teich 2012, 111). Polly wants him to have a happy rest of his life, and suggests that he goes to find his son, telling he is in fact his father, instead of outing himself as female (2003, 475–80). Jackrum has never considered this possibility and is quite stunned, but in the end takes her advice, as Polly finds out when he sends her his old cutlasses and a new family portrait depicting him in the centre with his son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, as proud patriarch and grandfather (2003, 487). A detail which makes Jackrum perhaps the most obvious nod towards the transgender community is the fact that the narrator only refers to Jackrum with the pronoun “she” on one occasion – during the scene where his sex is revealed – but returns to referring to him as “he” during the next sentence: “Jackrum had turned her chair to the fire, and had settled back. Around him, the kitchen worked” (2003, 482). Jackrum lives the rest of his life happily as a man, not out of force, but his own choice. He has fully transitioned, perhaps initially for his own safety in the army, but has found comfort and joy in his identity as a man, and the

narrator respects this too. Much like Cheery's journey could bring hope to transgender women seeking to be accepted in their identity, I find that Jackrum could do the same to transgender men.

### 3.3.2 "They were holding hands" – Normalizing Queer Love

Pratchett states himself in an interview that he did "a lot of interesting work for Monstrous Regiment in lesbian book shops." (Gaiman 2011). This research shows perhaps the clearest in the characters of Magda "Tonker" Halter and Tilda "Lofty" Tewt. They join the regiment soon after Polly and, much like Jackrum, are some of the most overt representations of queer identities in the Discworld series. Through them Polly comes face to face with her own heteronormative biases, which can also help readers see through their own. I will feature more direct quotations from the book here than in previous chapters, as both the narration and dialogue provide significant insight into this relationship.

Tonker, while Polly still thinks she is a boy, is described to be "another youth wearing second-hand clothes and an air of nervousness that didn't quite conceal some bubbling anger. He was big and red-haired, but it was cut so close it was just head-fuzz" (2003, 56). Lofty's physical description comes later in the novel, after Polly stumbles across her relieving herself in the woods and discovers her to be a girl. By Polly's description Lofty is short, "dark and dark-haired and had a strange self-absorbed look". She also makes a note about not really having looked at Lofty properly before this discovery, because she was always beside the much louder and more noticeable Tonker (2003, 79). At this point in the story the reader is given the first glimpse on just how heteronormative the society of Borogravia is, because Polly, a born and raised citizen of the nation, instantly assumes that Lofty has joined the regiment to "follow her boy" (ibid.). This conception is however disturbed later when another character reveals to Polly that Tonker is also a girl. The following discussion ensues:

'Tonker nearly gutted him. There's a girl with what I'd call unresolved issues.'

[...]

'Tonker?' said Polly.

'Oh, yes. Hadn't you spotted her? She went mad when the man charged at Lofty.'

[...]

'But Lofty and Tonker...' Polly began, running to keep up. 'I mean the way they act, they... I thought she was his girl... but I thought Tonker... I mean, I know Lofty is a gi—'

Even in the dark, Maladict's teeth gleamed as he smiled. 'The world's definitely unfolding itself for you, eh? [...] Every day, something new.'

(2003, 128)

I find that this conversation perfectly displays the nature of Tonker and Lofty's relationship. Polly held the impression that they were romantically involved when finding out that one of them is a girl but is stunned to find them both to be so. The heteronormativity ingrained in her makes it difficult to see two women being romantically involved an option in the first place, but as she clearly sees that they are involved, and girls, she is forced to face the possibility. This leads to yet another subtle lesson in diversity for both Polly and the reader. It shows the effect of compulsory heterosexuality in both Borogravian society and ours, as maintaining heterosexuality as the "natural" way of being requires the presence of a regulated masculine and feminine binary and upholding the notion that desire between the two binary options is a law of nature (Butler 2002, 30). As in the Nugganite religion women doing masculine things is an abomination, I find it plausible that other such regulations related to the gender binary, and relationships, would be present, despite them not being explicitly mentioned in the novel. Polly's confusion also shows how pervasive heteronormativity and the binary gender norms can truly be. The norms related to sex and gender feed the representations of each other. People who regard the world through a binary male-female system will seek to reproduce and see that system in everything and assign those identity markers even to contexts where they're not needed or even accurate (Butler 2002, 11). While Maladict has seen beyond these identity markers and sees Tonker and Lofty as the young women they are, Polly is blind sighted by the heteronormativity ingrained in her from birth, until Maladict pops the bubble from around her bias.

Polly and Maladict are not the only people during the course of the novel who take note of how close Tonker and Lofty are. When Tonker offers to take a turn keeping watch that the regiment's sergeant, Jackrum, has assigned to Lofty, he asks: "What are you, married?" and is frustrated with Tonker often taking on jobs assigned to Lofty (2003, 167). While this can also be interpreted as Jackrum being annoyed at his orders not being instantly obeyed, his choice of words is significant in pointing out just how inseparable the duo appears to be. Later in the novel, as Polly is revealing to the regiment's lieutenant that all of them are female, we see another similar occurrence. The section of the conversation concerning Tonker and Lofty goes thusly:

'And private Halter?'

'Yes, sir.'

'*And Lofty?*'

'Oh, yes, sir. Both of them, sir. Don't go there, sir.' (2003, 390)

The lieutenant clearly displays shock over both Tonker and Lofty being women, and I see it plausible that he undergoes a similar bubble-popping as Polly did when the couple's identities were revealed to her. He has seen that there appeared to be romantic feelings between them, but as one of them was more obviously feminine both of them assumed Tonker to be male and Lofty to be female, as the heteronormative law of nature would regulate. This is why the matter turns complicated and confusing to them when they must quickly process that these people are both women, but the signs implying to a romantic relationship are still so blatantly there that it cannot be simply passed as close female friendship. Polly, however, displays a very subtle sign of allyship and acceptance here, with her statement of "Don't go there, sir." Tonker and Lofty's relationship is their own, a private matter that no one else needs to prod into. This statement could also be interpreted as Polly being unsure how to approach the matter herself and being unwilling to discuss it due to still processing the information, but it does not erase the fact that she is showing indirect support by not giving the lieutenant any change to question the nature of their relationship.

As mentioned before, Polly, through the narrator, notes that Lofty is always shadowing Tonker, that Tonker often takes on tasks on Lofty's behalf, and the two often talk quietly amongst themselves. These can all be signs of a close friendship. However, I find that there is one far more significant moment, that displays the true depth of their relationship better than any other and makes it undeniable that their relationship is intended to be read as romantic. During this moment Polly is approaching the pair as they are sitting on watch one night, intending to bring them tea.

And there they were, sitting side by side on a fallen tree, staring down the slope. They were holding hands. They always held hands, when they thought they were alone. But it seemed to Polly that they didn't hold hands like people who were, well, friends. They held hands tightly, as someone who has slipped over a cliff would hold hands with a rescuer, fearing that to let go would be to fall away. (2003, 271)

This detailed description of the nature of their hand holding, and the depth of emotion conveyed through mere sight of it, speaks volumes. In a society that both discriminates them as women and does not even consider their love an option that could exist, the biggest most intimate gesture they can share is holding hands. As mentioned before by Summers, some fantasy works feature queer love as a source of magical power (2002, 598). Tonker and Lofty do not have this. They are not users of magic, they do not win the war, and save the day with the power of love. They help in saving the day by being capable members of a team that has

the motivation and skill to try and save the day. Their relationship is a subtle yet significant presence in the story, normalizing queer love both for the protagonist and for the reader.

### 3.4 Other Noteworthy Queer Readings

Discworld is a vast series and due to constraints related to time and length I have not been able to analyse every single novel in detail. I left out the four Discworld novels Pratchett wrote for a younger audience telling the coming-of-age story of a young witch named Tiffany Aching, as well as novels concerning the wizard Rincewind whom I mentioned earlier in the thesis, among many others. However, even in the limited scope of novels I have analysed there are still queer themes to be addressed. In this chapter I will delve deeper into the queer readings that do not comfortably fit under any of the previous topics, or those that relate more strongly to a different theme. In *Monstrous Regiment* the reader meets a character called Maladict, one various undead species found in the Discworld: a vampire. I have chosen to analyse them separately in a section specifically related to the undead minority, instead of the *Monstrous Regiment* chapter. This is due to the fact that themes of horror and gothic have often walked hand in hand or at least shared themes of otherness with queer literature, and the undead minority in Discworld shows various parallels to the queer community. I have also dedicated a separate section to the city of Ankh-Morpork and the handful of characters residing there who present queer aspects in their characterization, but also did not fit under any of the previous sections.

#### 3.4.1 “Glad to be Gray!” – The Undead Community as an Allegory for the Queer

The concept of otherness has been present in literature for centuries and has served both in othering those who are different, but also bringing together those who are classified as Others. Both the fantasy and the horror genre often feature stories of the Others, and the gothic has for a long time walked down a dark alleyway hand-in-hand with the queer. Palmer talks about the transgressive nature of the gothic in her book *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* – which I will be using as a significant frame for my analysis in this section – and emphasizes that this transgressive aspect truly shines in the genre when in conjunction with queer themes. Through motifs and metaphors the gothic has been used as a tool to “investigate homosexual and lesbian desire and society’s attempts to suppress it” as well as the repressed fears and desires of both individuals and societies, along with exploring identities deemed “perverse” by the heteronormative majority (Palmer 2012, 11). In this chapter I will showcase

the ways the undead community of Discworld mirrors the queer community of our world both overtly and covertly.

In Discworld the presence of the tropes found in gothic horror manifest in the form of a selection of species known as the undead. They are found in the fringes of society, or in their own communities, slowly integrating into the mainstream population already inhabited by humans, dwarfs and trolls. These species include, for example, vampires and werewolves, as well as others I will elaborate on more later. Most of these species originate from the land of Uberwald; an ancient land of large castles, dark forests, and weather that knows when a situation calls for a dramatic roll of thunder or a bolt of lightning. It is also the old ancestral home of dwarfs, as mentioned in subchapter 3.1. While dwarfs are already so well established as a species throughout the Discworld, and are not considered undead, such lesser known and less respected species as werewolves are in fact considered undead, despite not being essentially living corpses the way vampires and zombies are.

Palmer points out that fiction that embraces the monstrous and the queer, while giving a new viewpoint to themes of monstrous otherness through the means of parody, can serve to reframe this monstrosity as something liberating (Palmer 2012, 166). Pratchett does this with fairly clear nods towards the queer community in his jokes related to the undead of Discworld. Examples of this are found throughout the series, for example in the novels *Reaper Man* (1991), *The Truth* (2000) and *Thud!* (2006) through the existence of what is known as “The Fresh Start Club” and the bar known as Biers. The Fresh Start Club is a support group for the undead, founded by a deceased ex-revolutionary zombie named Reg Shoe with a passion for undead rights. The club members may wear badges with slogans such as “Glad to be Grey” (*Reaper Man* 1991, 105) which is a direct nod to the “Glad to be Gay” badges of the queer rights movement based on Tom Robinson’s 1976 song “(Sing if You’re) Glad to be Gay” that Tom Robinson Band recorded in 1978. Another such nod is this discussion about a member of the said club:

‘He’s a bogeyman,’ said Windle.  
 ‘I thought you only get them in closets and things?’ shouted Ridcully.  
 ‘He’s come out of the closet,’ said Reg Shoe proudly. ‘And he’s found himself.’  
 (*Reaper Man* 1991, 253)

Much like the queer community of our world, the undead of the city of Ankh-Morpork also have their own bar (*Thud!* 2006, 320). This bar, Biers, does not have a sign indicating its existence out to the street to avoid anyone unaware of the bar’s clientele wondering inside:

“For the vampires, it was a place to hang up. For the werewolves, it was where you let your hair down. For the bogeymen, it was a place to come out of the closet.” (*The Truth* 2000, 227). Pratchett uses the “coming out of the closet” analogy in multiple novels throughout the series. As the Discworld novels can be read in any order, this gives the impression that the nature of the bar is significant. It is a place for members of a discriminated minority to be themselves and to not worry about how people around them will react. The workers and clientele of Biers also “tolerated anyone who wasn’t too normal” (*Thud!* 2006, 320) which gives the impression that members of any minority seen as abnormal would be welcome there. It would be no wonder if the undead community in Ankh-Morpork would welcome queer people amongst them as well, as homophobic discourses often dehumanize queer identities by associating them with the monstrous. Queer relationships and identities that challenge the established cultural norms are thought to be unnatural and disrespect such basic constructs of society as the family unit. The fact that queer sexuality is often invisible unless the queer person themselves consciously displays it, or their identity is revealed against their will, might exacerbate the outrage and hatred directed at them, as those against these identities might feel they have been betrayed and cheated in some way (Palmer 2012, 153). This does not differ all that much from the narratives of the hidden monster among us, often found in gothic fiction.

Vampires in fiction have often represented queer monstrosity by embodying transgression of what are seen as natural borders, such as life and death, and queerness and heterosexuality (Thomas 2012, 99). The vampires of Discworld are no different. They are blood-sucking humanoids that are harmed by sunlight, have an aversion towards garlic, and can turn into bats. Some of them have decided to try and integrated better into the Discworld’s version of modern society by becoming teetotallers and forgoing blood. They are bound to many of the stereotypes associated with them by “cultural conditioning”; the fact that everyone knows the taboos and stereotypes related to them, and the power of this belief maintains their truthfulness (Pratchett & Simpson [2009] 2014, 139). Being a vampire is all about adhering to stereotypes (*Carpe Jugulum* 1998, 82) and often for the vampires of Discworld their vampirism is not transferred to them via a bite, but through family lineage. As one vampire states about their bloodlust: “In any case it’s not our fault. We were *born* vampires” (*Carpe Jugulum* 1998, 107). A member of any minority can most likely relate to being judged over an aspect of their identity that they were born with.

However, some vampires choose to rebel against these stereotypes in various ways. In *Monstrous Regiment* (2003) the reader meets a charming vampire known through most of the

novel as Maladict, which is the name I will use for them as well, along with the pronouns “they” and “them” as I find that their gender identity is left somewhat ambiguous at the end of the novel. The narrator, through the eyes of the protagonist, describes the vampire by saying: “He was short and quite slim [...] he was dressed in black and expensively, like an aristocrat” (*Monstrous Regiment* 2003, 34). Maladict is assumed male instantly by their clothing and general masculine aristocratic impression. Maladict is one of the first people to express to Polly that they know of her true sex, and even about most of the members of the regiment. They also take care to hide, or at least not explicitly mention, their sex throughout most of the novel, even when a chance to express solidarity to the regiment arises were they to come out as female (*Monstrous Regiment*, 2003, 149). Maladict’s behaviour in these situations indicates a hesitation to relate to femininity, and in my opinion, leaves open the question whether Maladict is a woman in the first place. More situations like this arise when sergeant Jackrum reveals he has known the humans of the regiment to be female from the very beginning, but he was never “sure about Maladict and still aren’t, because with a vampire, who knows?” (*Monstrous Regiment* 2003, 326). Similarly, another officer escorting the regiment addresses them thusly: “Ladies, [...] and you too, er...” he looked quizzically at Maladict, who stared right back ‘...sir?’ (2003, 427). Time and time again Maladict is given the chance to correct people on their gender identity, but opts to remain silent and either allows them to proceed in referring to them as a man, or leaves them guessing. Even when they do, near the end, admit to Polly and another regiment member to be named Maladicta, it is with an air of secrecy which is instantly followed by: “Now, I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking: vampires have a pretty good time of it whatever sex they are, right? But it’s the same everywhere. Velvet dresses, underwired nightgowns, acting crazy all the time [...]. You get taken a lot more seriously if they think you’re male” (*Monstrous Regiment* 2003, 455). While this could be read as displeasure about the inherent sexism found in the stereotypes related to vampires, the fact that Maladict does not reveal this to anyone apart from these two people in the entire novel speaks volumes. Maladict would be a war-hero regardless of sex at this stage, and still chose to remain male in the eyes of the military. At the end of the novel Polly returns to the army, in a uniform specifically designed for women. She meets Maladict on the way, who also has the intention to re-enlist, who is described to be “in full uniform”, but not which one (*Monstrous Regiment* 2003, 492–93). Regardless of the pronouns the narrator uses, or if they are Maladict or Maladicta, the vampire leaves a distinctly gender-ambiguous impression.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of the vampire experience is a character called Otto Chriek. He is a vampire teetotaler, who has directed his passion towards finding victims to suck blood from, into flash photography – or iconography as it is known in Discworld – (*The Truth* 2000, 134) and is has taken a very different approach than Maladict. Otto embraces the stereotypes related to vampires, but more specifically the more carnivalesque ones:

Little fussy Otto, in his red-lined black opera cloak with pockets for all his gear, his shiny black shoes, his carefully cut widow's peak and, not least, his ridiculous accent that grew thicker or thinner depending on whom he was talking to, did not look like a threat. He looked funny, a joke, a music-hall vampire. It had never previously occurred to Vimes that, just possibly, the joke was on other people. Make them laugh, and they're not afraid. (*Thud!* 2006, 18)

Otto deliberately makes himself seem like a caricature of a vampire to render himself non-threatening. Instead of hiding his monstrous identity he chooses to lean into the silliest stereotypes. He is easily identifiable as a vampire, but also the kind of vampire that does not threaten the stability of any normative lifestyles. He is not seductive and does not even pose a danger of turning those around him into vampires, as he no longer drinks blood. This is nearly akin to the popular “gay best friend” trope that has been found in media for decades. A very openly effeminate gay man with limp wrists, a slight lisp, a sashaying walk; easily identifiable as a queer man, but one people are used to laughing at, and one that poses no threat in disrupting the heteronormative relationships around him. With characters such as Otto Pratchett does exactly what Palmer describes as utilizing humour to criticize normative conventions and the contradictory and exclusionary nature of these norms (Palmer 2012, 166). Otto sees the way the majority population views vampires and takes advantage of this by knowing exactly how to present himself to go so far beyond the stereotypes that he stops being a threat, but a joke himself. But the point is, as the previous quote says, that the joke is on the people seeing him as a walking stereotype. Otto himself is not the punchline of the joke; those who believe his act are.

The final significantly queer vampire character I will introduce is Salacia “Sally” von Humpeding. She is first featured in the novel *Thud!* (2006, 62) as she joins the Ankh-Morpork city watch, and is described to be young, short haired, and looking “if not like a boy, then like a girl who wouldn't mind passing for one”. However, her queerness is more plainly seen through the way another character, reacts to her presence as her new colleague, and how the two interact. Due to this it is necessary to first give a brief introduction to this other character: Angua von Uberwald is both the first woman and the first werewolf in the Ankh-Morpork city

watch (*Men at Arms* 1993). Werewolves in popular culture have always been a very masculine creature so simply with the presence of a female one Pratchett subverts yet another trope. The werewolf is also an excellent representation of the monstrous queer, as it mirrors “the disconcerting sense that the queer individual sometimes has of living in two interlinked but disparate worlds, the heteronormative and the less immediately visible one of the lesbian or gay subculture” (Palmer 2012, 13). Lycanthropy in Discworld is hereditary, and most other species find werewolves frightening, so they often hide their identity. Regular wolves also detest werewolves, so in the end there is no community left for them but themselves. This might ring true to some bisexual people. Angua even refers to her particular type of lycanthropy as being a “bi-morph”. (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 202) Pratchett and Simpson even refer to this as “passing” as a human ([2009] 2014, 152–53), which is very queer terminology often related to how well a person can stealthily fit in to heteronormative society without their queer identity being easily identified by others. Angua herself despairs over her identity in *The Fifth Elephant* (1999, 179): “I can look like a wolf but I’m not a wolf. I’m a werewolf! I’m not human either. I’m a werewolf! Get it?”. This mirrors the experience of many bisexuals – people attracted to more than one gender (Stonewall UK n.d.) – quite well, as they unfortunately sometimes face distrust from both the heterosexual and the homosexual community, being seen as Other since they seem to have the ability to live and switch between these two worlds. But Angua’s potential as a representation of bisexuality does not stop at her identity as a werewolf. This is where we return to Sally. Throughout *Thud!* Angua seems to develop a strange, somewhat hostile, obsession with the vampire, while also praising her at every turn. Angua describes Sally to be “exuding an air of effortless ease, confident in any company” (2006, 25), “so perfect [...] so... cool, so in control” (2006, 154) and that a dress had “become stunning the moment she’d put it on. She looked fabulous.” (2006, 234). These feelings are not helped by the fact that Sally shows her own implied queerness by flirting with Angua on more than one occasion. The tension between the two comes to ahead when both of them, after turning back to humans from their respective wolf and bat forms, begin arguing and the following conversation ensues:

‘Yes. We’re both wearing nothing, we’re standing in what, you may have noticed, is increasingly turning into mud, and we’re squaring up to fight. Okay. But there’s something missing, yes?’

‘And that is...?’

‘A paying audience? We could make a fortune.’ Sally winked. (*Thud!* 2006, 207)

As well as when Sally, along with some other women, convince Angua to come along for a girl's night out. Angua is reading the drinks menu and asks what a "Screaming Orgasm" is, to which Sally responds: "Looks like we got to you just in time, girl!" (*Thud!* 2006, 303). This seems to be an obvious jab at Angua's relationship status. From the first novel she appears in she has been in a somewhat complicated relationship with a fellow city watch member: a handsome and heroic man called Carrot. In more than one novel Angua struggles with the relationship, and her loyalty and affection for Carrot, while also feeling like they might not work in the long term due to him being married to his work as a watchman, as well as her complicated life situation due to her undead identity. Angua seems to be struggling with compulsory heterosexuality; Angua, and often specifically her canine side, quite literally feel the urge to be subservient to Carrot, while her norm-breaking human identity does not want to conform to this. Sally herself points out that while the two do seem to genuinely like each other, the dynamic between them might not be what Angua truly wants (*Thud!* 2006, 287). Coupled with the trope – and threat – of the queer vampire also familiar from multiple works of gothic literature (Thomas 2012, 100), this is more than enough to cause her what seems to be a crisis of sexual identity.

Palmer states that while the concepts of the monstrous and the other are often tools of stigmatization towards the queer minority, a writer can challenge these harmful tropes by the means of parody (2012, 154). Pratchett has achieved this in his writing about the colourful cast of undead characters I have just described. Subversions of tropes related to both gender and sexuality, as well as direct nods to the queer rights movement, are shown throughout the novels, making the undead community of Discworld appear as both an allegory, and perhaps even a part of the queer community.

### 3.4.2 Ankh-Morpork – Where the Unnatural Is Only Natural

For the final chapter concerning those characters that do not quite fit into any of the previous groups, I have chosen the backdrop of the city state of Ankh-Morpork. It is the largest city, and city state, in Discworld, and represents the cultural melting pot metropolis setting much akin to London during the industrial revolution. It is the setting for the beginning of the dwarfish gender revolution, the home of the Fresh Start Club and the Biers bar, but the presence of minorities does not end there. The city is ruled by a self-proclaimed tyrant, a patrician named Lord Havelock Vetinari, who has established many societal changes in the city. For example, he has improved the frame of influence and power of the city's guilds. One

of the oldest of these guilds is known as the Guild of Seamstresses – this is an euphemism for sex workers – and it is ran by a Mrs. Rosemary Palm who is a very respected figure amongst the guild leaders of the city (*Feet of Clay* 1996, 175), but also beyond. In the novel *Maskerade* Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg reside in Mrs. Palm’s brothel for their stay, and Granny states that Mrs. Palm is “practic’ly a witch” (1995, 104). Knowing now what queer witchhood can be, this is a significant statement. The council of the Seamstresses Guild also has a member called Mr. Harris. He is the owner of the Blue Cat Club, which is an erotic entertainment establishment for those who appreciate the male form, as opposed to the Pink Pussycat Club. Some of the guild members were originally in opposition to this, but Mrs. Palm vetoed any objections by stating that “unnatural acts were only natural” (*Jingo* 1997, 320). It appears that all groups in Ankh-Morpork somewhat outside of the common norms of society tend to stick together.

There is also one more group of creatures in Discworld who stretch gender norms, or more specifically, one member of this group of entities. She is known as Gladys the Golem. While originally beings from Jewish folklore, the golems of Discworld are “large powerful creatures made of baked clay, humanoid in form but seven or eight foot tall. They need no food or sleep; they can work underwater or in extreme heat or cold, or in total darkness; they cannot feel pain or boredom. They can repair themselves, and last for centuries” (Pratchett & Simpson [2008] 2014, 146). They are, essentially, the Discworld equivalent of a robot. As Palmer points out, humans have had a fascination to the uncanny nature of the automaton for a long time (2012, 161). While the golems of Discworld are not included in the undead category, they are still a somewhat gothic entity, evoking thoughts of androids and man-made humanoids such as Frankenstein’s monster. In Discworld they are also all by default referred to as “he”. All except Gladys.

Gladys was a golem, a clay man (or for the sake of not having an argument, a clay woman) [...] She – well with a name like Gladys ‘it’ was unthinkable and ‘he’ just didn’t do the job – wore a very large blue dress. [...] Miss Maccalariat [...] had objected to a male golem cleaning the ladies’ privies. How Miss Maccalariat had arrived at the conclusion that they were male by nature rather than custom was a fascinating mystery [...]. And thus, with the addition of one extremely large cotton print dress, a golem became female enough for Miss Maccalariat. The odd thing was that Gladys *was* female now, somehow. It wasn’t just the dress. She tended to spend time around the counter girls, who seemed to accept her into the sisterhood. (*Making Money* 2007, 18)

Gender, with a golem like Gladys, appears to be in its most literal form a “construction” (Butler 2002, 43). Miss Maccalariat is under the normative assumption that masculinity, and thus maleness, is the default state, and that femininity is the outlier that is defined by what is Other to the masculine. Much like how Butler refers to de Beauvoir’s theory about the way women are under cultural compulsion to “become” women (Butler 2002, 12), Gladys quite literally is made into a woman for the comfort of a conservative woman. But perhaps against all odds she also learns to embrace womanhood, and she is also openly accepted as such. As Péter Hajdu says: “It is the social environment that engenders the golem” (2020, 81). Gladys’ existence brings to question why a genderless and sexless being with sentience is automatically assumed to be male. She lacks any physical indications of these things, and thus it appears that in her situation her body has nothing to do with how she is gendered (Hajdu 2020, 81). Even before Gladys’ debut in the series golems were featured, most centrally in *Feet of Clay* (1996) However, in this novel the question of gendering the golems was not a theme, but instead the sovereignty of the species itself, and the concept of free will. A review of the novel by the *Gay Times* of London in 1996 does, regardless, see a point of contact between the rights of the golems and the rights of the queer minority: “A nod at Cheers, but also, perhaps, a nod at queers too.”

A far more overt nod at queers can be found in the character of Bengo Macarona. He is a wizard, and a member of staff in the wizard university mentioned in section 3.2.1. He is perhaps the most obviously homosexual male character in the series, and somewhat surprisingly the very traditional university seems to have improved in their stance towards minorities since Esk walked in through their doors. The university staff have made note of Bengo’s sexuality but the university’s Archchancellor very openly accepts it, and even mentions other past notable wizards of the university who he knows to have been queer:

‘A lot of that sort of thing about, apparently,’ said Ridcully. ‘People make such a fuss. Anyway, in my opinion there’s not enough love in the world. Besides, if you didn’t like the company of men you wouldn’t come here in the first place.’  
(*Unseen Academicals* 2009, 190)

It is not only the female characters in the Discworld novels who bend the limits of gender expression. Perhaps the most obviously parodical display of what Butler calls a “failed copy” (2002, 186), a parodical and mimetic display of the arbitrary nature of gender roles, is found in Nobby Nobbs. He is a member of the Ankh-Morpork city watch, and male. He does, however, come to find significant joy in the act of cross-dressing. In *The Fifth Elephant* he is

on an undercover police mission as a sex worker, in a lacey dress of some kind (1999, 34-35). His female co-worker is confused by the level of detail he has put into his disguise, and the fact that it is he who the undercover decoy while she is the backup (*The Fifth Elephant* 1999, 36). She even asks him if he “knows what people call men who wear wigs and gowns”. Nobby seems to either not know the answer, or to ignore the more insulting option, as he offers such possibilities as “lawyer” and “actor” (1999, 37). Later on, in a context where he is not actively in undercover duty he is described to be a “vision in organdie” (1999, 104) whatever fabric this would be, showing that he has continued this practice even outside of his work duties. He also refers to himself as a “lady” later on, outraged after an angry troll hits him, and exclaims that it “shows what kind of a troll he was, striking a lady” (1999, 108). While all of this is played as jokes, it is still representing a male character stepping outside of gender norms and seeming to find joy expressing his gender in more feminine ways every now and then.

Finally, there is Havelock Vetinari, whom I mentioned earlier in this section. With him, it is important to bring up the concept of “queer coding”. Koeun writes in their essay “Queer-coded Villains (And Why You Should Care)” (2017) about the very common practice of queer coding – fictional characters displaying stereotypical queer behaviours and traits, while not being explicitly stated to be queer (Koeun 2017, 156) – especially regarding the villainous characters in media. The history of the phenomena stems from avoiding censorship laws related to homosexuality in movies and television by subtly hinting at these identities through stereotypes, to these stereotypical mannerisms now having evolved to be signs of deviancy and thus evilness (Koeun 2017, 158). This of course has a negative impact, as it teaches us to associate queerness with evilness as well and enforces stereotypes. How does this relate to Lord Vetinari? Through a queer reading it appears that Vetinari is “villain-coding” himself. He calls himself a tyrant, maintains a subtly threatening impression, and is immensely private about his personal affairs. Despite all of this he is not the antagonist in any of the novels, but only maintains this social impression for the sake of his position as the city’s ruler. He also happens to fit the bill regarding some physical characteristics associated with queer coded villains. These include: “Finer bone structure, high cheekbones, [and] thin bodies unlike the masculine forms of the heroes” (Koeun 2017, 159). Vetinari is described to have a “pale equine face” and that people find it surprising that is not more deviant in nature: “He appeared to have no vice that anyone could discover. You’d have thought [...] that he’d incline towards stuff with whips, needles, and young women in dungeons.” (*Guards! Guards!* 1989, 101–02).

The mention of young women in this quote could bring someone to point out, that he cannot be queer coded, as people do not presume he would be engaged in these matters with men, but the matter is more subtle than that. Society is heteronormative, and while this earlier Discworld novel associates him entirely with women, in a later novel the discussion has gained new shades of grey:

'I meant, I'm just a little surprised there isn't a Lady Vetinari. As it were. Ahem.'  
'Oh well, you know what they say,' said Mr. Windling. (*The Truth* 2000, 420)

At this point in time there appears to be further rumours about the nature of Vetinari's private relations. This is yet again seen in *Unseen Academicals* when the narrator states: "No one was sure which side of the bed [Vetinari] got out of, or even if he went to bed at all" (2009, 166). A queer reading of this statement heavily implies that there are rumours about not only if he is heterosexual or queer, but also if he is asexual. He appears to show a similar, albeit less vehement, disinterest towards relationships as Granny Weatherwax does.

## 4 Conclusions

In this thesis I have showcased what a diverse cast of queer and potentially-queer characters are represented in Terry Pratchett's Discworld, and how Pratchett has used means of parody and satire to normalize queerness rather than joke at the expense of queer identities. The concept of gender performativity posed by Judith Butler is found throughout the Discworld novels I have analysed, and time and time again narratives within these novels show that gender is a product of culture, and only dictated by societal norms, that can be broken and changed, or alternatively used to one's advantage if the situation calls for it.

Pratchett stretches the very concept of gender with his storyline focusing on the gender revolution occurring within the dwarf species of Discworld. He both parodies the common tropes of the fantasy genre related to dwarfs, such as them being miners and crafters, to drink abundant amounts of alcohol, to be keen merchants, and that all of them are masculine with their long beards and Viking-like clothing. The concept of a culture with two sexes, but only one gender, and only one accepted form of gender expression is a fascinating thought experiment, which can bring to question the very concepts of sex and gender, and their relation – or lack of it – to each other. Through the journey of Cheery Littlebottom the reader witnesses a similar journey of transformation as that of a transgender woman, as Cheery gradually realises she would be happier living her life as an openly feminine woman, which is unheard of in the dwarf culture. Cheery faces discrimination, but in the end is the starting force of a gender revolution in her culture. The cultural shift within the dwarf community is displayed in the character of Madame Sharn, who is an openly feminine dwarf, very successful and respected, and confident in her gender expression. Storylines such as these can serve to normalize queerer gender identities to readers and empower queer readers to embrace their own identities.

Similar themes feature in the novels concerning the witches of Discworld. Pratchett establishes a seemingly strict binary magic system, but in the end this only works as a basis for stories of subverting norms and finding power in forming your own way of expressing and embodying your identity. Placeholders for a concept such as “gender norms” in these stories are such things as “lore” and “narrative causality”, age-old traditions that have always been followed simply because they are traditions. A queer reading can easily mirror these concepts with the influences of heteronormativity and cisnormativity in our society. The witch-focused novels show Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg adapting their gender performances

between old women – pleasant, feeble, motherly, or hag-like – and powerful witches depending on which is more beneficial for them in the moment. Witchhood is presented both as an intersection of womanhood, but also a queer identity related to subverting the stereotypes related to being a woman. A witch can go against stereotypes and challenge the expectations related to womanhood and still be a respected, valued, and powerful member of her community. Granny also challenges the amatonormative notion of a romantic relationship being essential in a person’s life and could be seen as asexual and aromantic. A Discworld witch is a queer icon that can broaden the image of acceptable womanhood, even to the extent of perhaps not being a woman at all. This is shown in the story of Esk, who subverts gender norms and the “lore” in a powerful and queer way. She is both a witch and a wizard, both a man and a woman, or perhaps she is something entirely new.

In the novel *Monstrous Regiment* the continuing theme of gender performativity prevails. The protagonist’s journey featuring both exploration of her own gender identity and using gender stereotypes to her advantage serves to showcase the culturally constructed and arbitrary nature of gender, and can prompt a cisgender reader to consider their own identity and inner biases more deeply. As a further example, the usage of a fantasy creature such as a troll complaining about the arbitrary gender norms of her culture; female trolls having to be bald, and to remove any moss and lichen growing on them, as it is a sign of masculinity, creates a parodic mirror to display the senselessness of norms related to body hair in our society. Jokes such as this, and other exaggerated displays of masculinity for the sake of presenting manhood serve to prove that gender is truly an act that can simply be replicated. So why is there a binary gender division in the first place? The lack of a large societal change in result of the regiment’s brave actions might be frustrating to a reader, but it also shows that change is gradual, and that Polly is determined to continue furthering it as a woman in the army that just recently only accepted men. This, as well as the existences of Sergeant Jack Jackrum, who in my opinion is not just an allegory for a transgender man, but truly is one, and the presence of Tonker and Lofty’s queer romantic relationship can empower queer readers and normalizes the existence of these queer identities with the positive representation.

Many tropes and turns of phrase often related to the queer community can be found in relation to the undead community of Discworld. The relation of the monstrous, the gothic, and the queer are featured in narration related to the undead characters: the undead have their own support group promoting their rights and announcing that they are “Glad to be Grey!” and there is an exclusive bar only for the undead, but which also accepts in anyone who is not “too

normal". Many of the vampire characters in the novels also display signs of queerness, or tropes commonly related to queer people. Maladict joins the regiment, and to the very end hides that they are female, and their gender identity is left somewhat ambiguous. Otto Chriek uses stereotypes related to vampires to his advantage to make himself into a carnivalesque caricature of a vampire, thus avoiding discrimination. Sally, with her confident and flirtatious behaviour mirrors the commonly seen trope of the promiscuous queer vampire, inducing a crisis in sexual identity in Angua, who is a werewolf. Angua's character produces fascinating queer thought experiments with her two-sided identity as a werewolf; not a human, not a wolf, but both and neither, in turn mirroring the struggles of many bisexual people. Some themes of struggling with compulsory heterosexuality can also be seen in the way her wolf side draws her towards her male human companion, while her human side shows interest in Sally. The undead community features a diverse selection of queer identities, and represents them as multi-faceted individuals who can be both allegorical to the struggles of queer people, but also members of the community.

Even outside of established groups of characters Discworld features characters that read as queer. In the cultural melting pot of Ankh-Morpork many individual characters bend the norms of both gender expression and sexuality: Gladys the Golem is the first golem to identify as a woman, while being a fully sexless being. Bengo Macarona is an openly gay wizard, and even the conservative institution of the wizard university has accepted him as who he is; and Nobby Nobbs is a man who practices cross-dressing, and while often shown in a parodic light, still serves to expand the scope of masculinity. Even the ruler of the city is surrounded by rumours about his sexuality, which could be stemming from his image as a villainous tyrant, as features often related to queer stereotypes can be used as indications of villainy.

While I have only been able to bring in analysis and quotes from 16 of the 41 Discworld novels into this thesis, it is evident from only this selection that the Discworld features both a rich and diverse selection of queer characters, but also stories with queer themes in them. If this limited selection has produced such ample selection of queer representation, I can only imagine what fruitful analysis is left waiting to be done from the remaining novels, and even from the ones I have featured. I hope to have cracked open the door of studying Discworld through a queer theoretical lens, and shown that through the means of parody and humour one can truly work to normalize queer identities, and bring to question the restricting norms of society, as long as one knows where to direct the punchline.

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## Appendix – Finnish Summary

Pro gradu-tutkielmani keskittyy queer identiteettien representaatioon Terry Pratchett'in (1948–2015) *Discworld*-kirjasarjassa (suom. Kiekkomaailma) ja siihen miten Pratchett parodian ja satiirin keinoja sekä fantasiagenren tunnettuja trooppeja soveltaen luo positiivista kuvaa queer-vähemmistöistä, kyseenalaistaen yhteiskunnan rajoittavia sukupuolinormeja.

Tutkielmassani analyysini aineistona ovat 16 sarjan 41:stä romaanista. Akateemisina lähteinäni käytän queer teoreettista kirjallisuutta, nojaten erityisesti Judith Butlerin teoriaan sukupuolen performatiivisuudesta, sekä muuta queer-teoriaan-, queer-vähemmistöihin- sekä *Discworld*-sarjaan keskittyvää materiaalia.

*Discworld*-kirjasarja on fantasiagenreen kuuluva vahvasti satiirinen kokoelma tarinoita, joiden teemat käsittelevät kaikkea sodan kauheudesta rock-musiikkiin ja sukupuolinormeista lehdistönvapauteen. Ensinäkemältä kirjoissa esitelty kiekon muotoinen maailma, joka lepää neljän valtavan elefantin päällä, jotka vuorostaan seisovat vieläkin valtavamman kilpikonnann kuorella, joka ui avaruuden poikki ja jossa taikuus, kääpiöt, peikot, velhot ja noidat asustavat, voi vaikuttaa aivan liian abstraktilta pitääkseen sisällään merkittävää yhteiskunnallista kritiikkiä. Näin ei suinkaan ole. Käsittelen tutkielmassani joitakin tuon maailman hahmoryhmiä omissa luvuissaan, sekä erillisessä luvussa *Monstrous Regiment* romaania (suom. *Hirmurykmentti*, 2011), sillä kaikista valikoimistani romaaneista juuri se sisältää kokonaisuudessaan eniten queer teemoja. Olen valikoinut analysoitavaksi rajatun määrän romaaneja, jotka mielestäni käsittelevät kaikista selkeimmin queer-teemoja

Ensin kuitenkin pohjustan analyysiani määrittelemällä tutkielman keskeisiä käsitteitä sekä teoreettista pohjaa. Queer-teoria keskittyy niihin kulttuurisidonnaisiin ongelmiin, joita ihmisten lokeroiminen sellaisilla termeillä kuin ”homoseksuaali” ja ”heteroseksuaali” synnyttää. ja mitä vaikutusta näillä asioilla on ihmisten elämään, eikä niinkään siihen miten näiden seksuaali- ja sukupuoli-identiteettien kirjoa kattavien termien määrittelyyn kuuluu, tai mitä tarkoittaa olla jotain näistä identiteeteistä. Queer-teoria kyseenalaistaa länsimaisten kulttuurien ja yhteiskuntien normeja ja erityisesti kirjallisuusanalyysissä queer teoreettista analyysia voidaan queer-teemaisten tekstien lisäksi soveltaa myös teksteihin, jotka eivät välttämättä suoranaisesti käsittele seksuaalisuutta tai sukupuolikysymyksiä.

Tutkielmani keskeisin käsite onkin juuri ”queer”. Termi on vähemmistön itse takaisin ottama termi, jota alun perin käytettiin loukkauksena. Nykyään se on kuitenkin kattotermi

käytännössä kaikille heteroseksuaalisuuden – viehäytys vain sukupuoleen, joka ei ole henkilön oma – tai cissukupuolisuuden – henkilö mieltää itsensä olevan sitä sukupuolta, joka hänelle on syntymässä määritelty – ulkopuolelle jääville identiteeteille. Koska *Discworld*-romaaneissa ei käytetä tarkkaan hahmojen seksuaali- tai sukupuoli-identiteettejä määritteleviä termejä, on tällainen kattotermi mielestäni sopiva.

Koska Pratchett ei suoranaisesti määrittele hahmojensa identiteettejä vaan suurin osa sukupuolta ja seksuaalisuutta koskevia asioita jätetään tulkinnanvaraisiksi, on queer-lukeminen keskeinen osa analyysiani. Queer luennan voi tehdä mistä tahansa tekstistä, joka jollain tapaa tarjoaa alustan, jolla käsitellä sukupuolta tai seksuaalisuutta yhteiskunnan normien rajoja venyttäen tai murtaen. Tekstin ei tarvitse suoraan edes liittyä seksuaali- tai sukupuolivähemmistöihin tarinallisesti, jotta sille voidaan tehdä queer-luenta. Tällaisia luentoja voidaan tehdä joko akateemisen analyysin muodossa tai vain harrastelukijan toimesta. Käsittelenkin erikseen myös queer-representaation merkitystä queer-vähemmistöjen näkökulmasta, sekä siitä miksi valtaväestön on tärkeää nähdä queer-vähemmistöjä edustettuna fiktiossa. Positiivisesti ja normalisoiden edustetut queer-teemat ja -hahmot fiktiossa voivat avartaa katsojan omaa näkökulmaa, mutta toisaalta fiktiolla on myös valta vahvistaa negatiivisia stereotyyppioita vähemmistöistä. Queer-yhteisön jäsenet taas voivat saada voimaantumisen kokemuksia kuluttaessaan mediaa, johon voivat samaistua identiteettinsä kautta.

Aloitan analyysini keskittymällä yhteen *Discworld*in maailmassa elävään ryhmään ja heidän kulttuuriinsa: kääpiöihin. Termillä viitataan tässä kontekstissa fantasiagenressä usein esiintyvään ryhmään, jotka ovat lyhyitä humanoideja; usein parrakkaita ja taistelutahtoisia kaivos- ja käsityöläisiä sekä kauppiaita. Yleisesti tunnettuja tarinoita, joissa kääpiöitä esiintyy ovat esimerkiksi J.R.R Tolkienin *Taru Sormusten Herrasta*-trilogia sekä Disneyn *Lumikki ja seitsemän kääpiötä*. Pratchett parodioi romaaneissaan trooppia siitä, että koska kaikki kääpiöt ovat aina parrakkaita ja ronskeja miehiä, oletetaan usein ettei kääpiönaisia ole olemassa lainkaan. Näin ei *Discworld*-sarjassa ole, vaan Pratchett on luonut täysin uudenlaisen kulttuurirakenteen, jossa kääpiöt tunnustavat kaksi fyysistä sukupuolta, mutta vain yhden sosiaalisen sukupuolen: mieheyden. Ainut sallittu sukupuolen ilmaisu on maskuliinista ja se, mitä kullakin kääpiöllä on rengaspanssari- ja nahkavaatekertojensa alla, on hänen itsensä, hänen vanhempiansa sekä hänen mahdollisen kumppaninsa välinen yksityisasia. Kääpiöiden kulttuurissa ei tunnusteta siis sosiaalista naiseutta ja feminiinisyyttä lainkaan. Tämä luo mielenkiintoisen kulttuurikontekstin, jossa homoseksuaalisuus on täysin hyväksyttävää, mutta

moninainen sukupuoli-ilmaisuu on tabu. Tämä kuitenkin muuttuu, kun nuori kääpiö nimeltä Cheery Littlebottom (suom. Iloinen – myöhemmin Ilona – Pikkuperä) muuttaa Ankh-Morporkin suureen kaupunkivaltioon ja kohtaa ensimmäistä kertaa elämässään avoimesti naisellisia naisia. Hän käy läpi prosessin, jossa hän omalla tavallaan korjaa sukupuolensa hitaassa muutosprosessissa, joka vastaa monin tavoin prosessia, jonka transsukupuolinen – henkilö, joka kokee olevansa eri sukupuolta, kuin joksi hänet syntymässä määriteltiin – nainen saattaisi käydä läpi tullessaan ulos kaapista. Cheery muuttaa ulkonäköään meikin ja feminiinisten vaatteiden avulla, mutta pitää pitkän partansa, koska mieltää sen olevan enemmän osa hänen kulttuurista identiteettiään kääpiönä kuin hänen sukupuoli-identiteettiään. Hän kohtaa sukupuoli-ilmaisunsa vuoksi syrjintää ja vastustusta, mutta päätyy kuitenkin laittamaan alulle kulttuurisen vallankumouksen kääpiöiden keskuudessa muidenkin itsensä naisiksi kokevien kääpiöiden alkaessa ilmaista feminiinisyyttään ja vaatimaan sen kunnioittamista. Tämä muutos sekä Cheeryn identiteetin kehitys on nähtävissä myöhemmissä romaaneissa. Tällainen ajatusleikki käyttäen pohjana fantasiagenrestä hyvin tunnettuja trooppeja on omiaan osoittamaan myös todellisuudessa läsnä olevan sukupuoleen pohjautuvan syrjinnän järjettömyyden.

Seuraavassa tutkielmani osiossa keskityn *Discworld* sarjan noitiin, erityisesti hahmoihin nimeltä Esmerelda ”Granny” (suom. Muori Säävirkku) sekä Gytha ”Nanny” Ogg (suom. Nanny Auvomieli) ja siihen miten noita on identiteettinä fundamentaalisesti queer-identiteetti. Noitia käsittelevissä romaaneissaan Pratchett käyttää taikuuden binääristä sukupuolittamista velhojen ja noitien taikuuden välille, sekä ”narratiivisen kausaalisuuden” konseptia, pohjana rajoittavien yhteiskunnallisten normien parodioimiselle. Ensimmäisessä näistä romaaneista, nimeltä *Equal Rites* (suom. *Johan Riitti!*, 2001), olosuhteissa, joissa poikalapselle annettaisiin velhon taikavoimat, syntyykin tyttö. Eskarina ”Esk” Smith (suom. Eskarina Seppä) asetetaan Grannyn oppiin opiskelemaan noidaksi, vaikka hänelle annettu taikuus onkin velhojen taikuutta, koska perinteiden mukaan vain miehet voivat olla velhoja ja vain naiset voivat olla noitia. Asia ei kuitenkaan ole loppujen lopuksi niin yksinkertaista, vaan lopulta sekä Grannyn että kunnioitetun velhojen yliopiston opettajakunnan täytyy myöntää se tosiasia, että Esk on naispuolinen velho. Noita ja velho identiteettinä ovat tarinassa hyvin sukupuolisidonnaisia ja ne voidaankin queer luennan kautta tulkita tarkoittamaan suoraan naista ja miestä. Tällaisen luennan kautta Eskin tarina ei ole vain nuoren naisen kasvutarina, jossa hän rikkoo yhteiskunnan normeja, vaan myös muunsukupuolisen identiteetin kehitystarina. Tämän romaanin aikana Granny myös oppii, ettei ihmisten identiteettejä voi määrittellä heidän

puolestaan. Seuraavissa romaaneissa, varsinkin *Witches Abroad*-romaanissa (suom. *Noitia maisemissa*, 1997), kantavana teemana on ihmisten itseilmaisua ja elämää vaikeuttavat normatiiviset rakenteet ja niiden vastustaminen. Granny ja Nanny osoittavat monin tavoin tietävänsä miten hyväksikäyttää sekä niitä stereotypioita, joita heihin vanhoina naisina kohdistetaan, että niitä, jotka johtuvat heidän identiteetistään noitina. Noitina he ovat voimakkaita taiankäyttäjiä ja arvostettuja yhteisöjensä jäseniä ja rikkovat naisiin liitettyjä ihanteita ikänsä, ulkonäkönsä sekä siviilisäätynsä johdosta. He ovat vanhoja, eivät viehättäviä, eivätkä naimisissa. Vaikka heidän noituutensa on vahvasti sidottu naiseuteen, noituus laajentaa heidän mahdollisuuksiaan niiden normien ulkopuolelle, jotka edelleen sitovat naisia. Queer-luenta Grannyn romanttisten suhteiden puutteesta sekä hänen asenteestaan niitä kohtaan antaa myös viitteitä siitä, että hän voisi olla aseksuaali ja aromanttinen, eli henkilö, joka ei tunne romanttista- tai seksuaalista viehätystä muihin ihmisiin. Granny rikkoo kulttuurista oletusta siitä, että ollakseen onnellinen henkilön täytyy jossain elämänsä vaiheessa rakastua ja olla vakiintuneessa parisuhteessa.

*Monstrous Regiment* romaania käsittelevässä osassa analysoin sekä romaanin kantavaa viestiä sukupuolen performatiivisuudesta ja tiukkojen normien rajoittavuudesta, että kahden naispuolisen sivuhahmon välistä parisuhdetta ja sen representaatiota. Romaanissa miljöönä toimii Borogravian sotaisa pieni valtio, joka on sotinut naapurimaidensa kanssa jo niin pitkään, että sotilaskelpoiset nuoret miehet ovat alkaneet loppua. Päähenkilö – nuori nainen nimeltä Polly – pukeutuu pojaksi lähteäkseen etsimään rintamalle kadonnutta isoveljeään. Tarinan aikana hän oppii, että kaikki hänen kanssaan samaan rykmenttiin värväytyneet henkilöt ovatkin biologisesti naisia. Polly on koko ikänsä seurannut perheensä majatalossa työskennellessään miesten käyttäytymistä ja pystyy toisintamaan tätä uskottavana performanssina, jonka kautta Pratchett osoittaa koko sosiaalisen sukupuolen käsitteen häilyvyyden ja sukupuoliroolien ja normien rajoittavan turhuuden. Polly myös kyseenalaistaa oman sukupuoli-identiteettinsä useaan otteeseen huomatessaan kuinka helppoa on vaihtaa miehen ja naisen mentaliteettien välillä. Hän päätyy lopulta kuitenkin jatkamaan elämäänsä naisena, mutta mielestäni on tärkeää, että tarina antaa tilaa myös cissukupuoliselle hahmolle tutkiskella identiteettiään. *Monstrous Regiment*-romaanin hahmokaartissa on mukana myös kersantti Jack Jackrum, joka oman queer luentani mukaan on transsukupuolinen mies. Häntä kuvaillaan koko romaanin ajan hyvin maskuliinisin sanakääntein ja häntä puhutellaan kirjan kerronnassa englannin kielen feminiinisellä pronomiinilla vain kerran hänen biologisen naiseutensa paljastuttua, mutta jo seuraavassa lauseessa tämä korjataan takaisin

maskuliiniseksi. Jackrum myös elää loppuelämänsä onnellisesti miehenä. Tarinassa myös kuvailaan kahden naisen välistä romanttista suhdetta hyvin queer-rakkautta normalisoivalla tavalla. Pollyn kanssa samaan rykmenttiin liittyvät lempinimillä Tonker ja Lofty kutsutut naiset ovat aina toistensa lähellä ja kun Polly saa tietää ensin Loftyn olevan nainen hän olettaa tämän seuranneen poikaystävänsä rintamalle. Eräs toinen rykmentin jäsen kuitenkin paljastaa Pollylle myös Tonkerin olevan nainen, jonka seurauksena Polly joutuu kohtaamaan omat ennako-oletuksensa ja laajentamaan maailmankuvaansa. Polly ja hänen moninainen rykmenttinsä saavat lopulta aikaan lakimuutoksen, jonka johdosta myös naisten sallitaan liittyä armeijaan, mutta muuten Borogravian yhteiskunta pysyy konservatiivisena. Polly kuitenkin jatkaa armeijan palveluksessa tavoitteenaan ajaa suurempaa muutosta. *Monstrous Regiment* osoittaa parodiallaan sukupuolinormien kummallisuuksia sekä kuvaa seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen edustajia tavalla, joka normalisoi heidän olemassaoloon ja ihmisyyttään.

Tutkielmani viimeisessä osiossa keskityn *Discworld* sarjan epäkuolleiden yhteisöön allegoriana queer yhteisölle, sekä mainitsen muutaman muun hahmon, jotka eivät sopineet aiempien otsikoiden alle, mutta ovat silti mainitsemisen arvoisia queer-teemoja käsiteltäessä. Epäkuolleiksi hahmoiksi Discworldin eri kulttuureissa luetaan usein goottilaissävytteisessä kirjallisuudessa tavattavia olentoja kuten vampyyreja, ihmissusia ja zombeja. Epäkuolleilla on Ankh-Morporkin kaupunkivaltiossa oma tukiryhmänsä sekä baarinsa ja heistä puhuttaessa käytetään usein hyvin queer-sävytteistä sanastoa, kuten ”tulla kaapista”. Näistä hahmoista erityisesti vampyyrit ovat usein queer-teemoja toisintavia. Ihmissusihahmo Angua taas peilaa ihmisen ja suden välillä riitelevällä identiteetillään biseksuaalisuuden – viehätyksen useampaan kuin yhteen sukupuoleen – haasteita. Ankh-Morporkissa on myös useita muita queer-teemojen ympäröimiä hahmoja, kuten fyysisesti täysin sukupuoleton savesta rakennettu golem nimeltä Gladys, joka kokee olevansa nainen, ja kaupunginvartioston ristiin pukeutumista harrastava jäsen nimeltä Nobby Nobbs. Myös kaupungin hallitsijaa ympäröivät huhut hänen seksuaalisuuteensa tai sen puutteeseen liittyen.

Lopputuloksena analyysistäni on se, että parodian, huumorin ja fantasiakirjallisuuden yleisten trooppien avulla Terry Pratchett osoittaa romaaneissaan yhteiskunnan sukupuolinormien rajoittavan vaikutuksen ja pohjimmiltaan performatiivisen luonteen. Hän myös normalisoi queer identiteettien olemassaoloa vitsailematta kuitenkaan heidän kustannuksellaan. Toivon, että tutkielmani valottaa queer teoreettisen tutkimuksen mahdollisuuksia Pratchettin tuotantoon, ja yleisemmin fantasiakirjallisuuteen, liittyen ja rohkaisee lisätutkimusta aiheesta.