

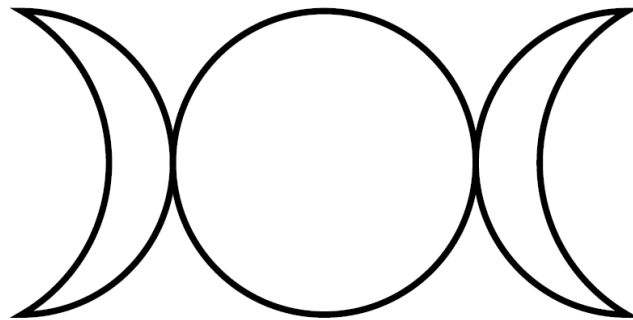
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Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair: The Portrayal of Witches in
English Literature



Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne

Karolína Kůrková

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Introduction

Fascination with magic and witchcraft is consistent over many centuries. It is the way of approach towards it that is changing. Extraordinary abilities, which could not have been explained by the achieved knowledge at the time, have been seen as evil for many centuries. It started changing with the rise of spirituality. The change is most apparent in the recent years as the young generation struggles to follow their parents' religions that they view as obsolete. One of the goals of this thesis is to clarify the connection between the positive portrayal of witchcraft in books and rise of the witchcraft in the real life.

The revival of the pagan religions and fascination by witchcraft is also supported by data. According to United States Census Bureau there was around 342,000 Wiccans in the United States in 2008. Compared to the branches of Christianity, it might not seem as significant number. What makes the number interesting is the growth the Wiccans experienced. There was only 8 000 respondents identifying as wiccans in 1990, it already was 134,000 in 2001.¹ In the year when this thesis is being written there is a new census in process. Considering the growth of the past three decades there is certainty that the count for 2020 should be significantly higher as well.

This change, however, did not happen suddenly. Process of a villainous witch becoming loved and desired was complicated and not arbitral. The progress will be demonstrated on following literary works. It begins with the classic folk tale about King Arthur as retold by Sir Malory in *Le Morte Darthur*. Next the focus will be the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that greatly contributed to establishing the Early Modern image of a witch. The slow breaking of the stereotype is shown in Lyman F. Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The final transformation of understanding of a witch will be presented in the most modern adaptation created by Terry Pratchet and Neil Gaiman in *Good Omens*. Though the witch will be considered from a feminist point of view all the discussed authors are male. The reason for this decision is the fact that who or what a witch is has always been predominantly determined by men. Therefore the change in understanding of a witch should be compared between those who first defined them.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Population: 1990 to

The first chapter will summarize the history of witchcraft in England and subsequently America. In the second chapter there will be an overview of more literary works that were written considering the topic and could not be included fully as a part of the thesis. The next chapter will examine the topic of witches from the point of view of feminist theory. Following chapters will be concerned with the portrayal of witches in the aforementioned literary works.

Assumption is that the female witch characters gained more popularity in the recent years because they fit into the feminist idea of a female hero that does not subdue to men and is rather equal to them. As the position of women in the society is changing so should be changing the way of portraying witches in literature.

1 The History of Witchcraft in England

Magic is a world-wide phenomenon. Every culture bears signs of magic, witchcraft or occultism in different shapes and forms. For instance the terms for "Witch" and "Wizard" originate in Old English: "Wicce" and "Wicca" with their original meaning being "wise woman" and "wise man".² Witchcraft as identified as female exclusive activity has been mentioned as soon as 890. Even then it was supposed a crime and was looked down at.³

This chapter mostly sourced from the book series from Palgrave Historical Studies "*Magic and Witchcraft in Europe*" specifically the last three volumes *The Period of Witch Trials*, *The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* and *The Twentieth Century*.

1.1 The First References to Witchcraft on the British Isles

Before the Anglo Saxons, the original inhabitants of Great Britain were Celts. Part of their culture were druids and druidesses, they were one of the highest authorities but also for example healers or spiritual leaders. From the little that is known about them it can be said with certainty they were connected with magic and nature. Druid beliefs also were great inspiration for the new religion of witchcraft. With the arrival of Christianity, oppression of every belief that was not taught by the Church began, this of course also included druidism.⁴

Witchcraft has been associated with harmful doing since the eleventh century when there was an increasing hunt after heretics. The Pope Gregory established the papal inquisition in attempt to deal with them in 1233. At that time was however also widely spread idea that witchcraft is an illusion and thus there were not many who believed in it. The fascination by the dark and unknown resurfaced again during the

² Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 345.

³ "Witch: Search Online Etymology Dictionary." Index, n.d.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=witch>.

⁴ Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 97-100.

thirteen and fourteen centuries. The increasing interest of theologians and demonologists also caused the more severe vilification of it.⁵

1.2 Period of Witch Hunts

Period of the witch-hunts and witch-trials is roughly dated to last from 1450 to 1750. What has preceded this period is continuous effort of the church to rid the world of every teaching deviating from the ones taught by the church. Witches became the main interest of the inquisition in 1484 due to the bull of Pope Innocent VIII. Other fact that contributed to start of the witch hunts was release of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, also known as *Hammer of Witches*, in 1486. It was written by Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger. Introduction of the book is the aforementioned bull of Pope Innocent VIII and rest of the book provided instructions for witch hunters how to identify, prosecute and punish witches. It was also the *Malleus Maleficarum* that tightly connected females to witchcraft and maleficium;⁶ hence the high count of female victims during the witch hunts. The book however had little to no impact in England since it was translated into English nearly a century later in 1584.⁷

1.2.1 Witch hunts in Britain and Scotland

Compared to the rest of Europe, Britain adapted the first anti-witchcraft act quite late; it was under the rule of Henry VIII in 1542 and was aimed purely against malicious acts of witchcraft or sorcery. These acts were punishable by death if necessary. This act was later repealed but since the panic was increasing in 1560s Queen Elizabeth I was pressured to pass a second act against witchcraft which came into force in 1563. The act made the punishments even more severe.⁸

Similar act came into force also in Scotland under the rule of King James VI. In Scotland the witch hunt was more ruthless as it considered punishable crime any kind of witchcraft (not only the malicious one) and it punished also those who associated themselves with someone who used witchcraft or pretended to have any knowledge of

⁵ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 177-179.

⁶ Maleficia = Malicious acts attributed to witches and sorcerers in times past that caused harm or death to humans, animals or crops. Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 222.

⁷ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 379.

⁸ Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, 64-65.

witchcraft.⁹ In Scotland also prevailed the favour to burn the witches unlike in England where was preferred the hanging. The accused was not necessarily burned at the stake alive, more common were acts of mercy when they were strangled first and tied to the stake either dead or unconscious.¹⁰ During the Scottish witch hunts the burning was also accompanied by inhumane torture under which the accused either was killed or plead guilty. After becoming the king of united England and Scotland in 1603, James VI, now James I, passed a year later a third witchcraft act that was even more callous. The penalty of hanging was appealed for after any act of witchcraft with harmful intentions, until then the capital punishment was only applied if somebody was killed as a result of witchcraft. The act remained in force until 1736 essentially until the end of the witch hysteria. What should be noted is the fact that though the law was strict the witch hunt was not as severe as it could be expected. For example in Essex between the years 1560 and 1680 of all people executed for crimes, the witchcraft presented only a minimal percentage of it.¹¹ The last trial in Ireland happened in 1711 and the accused were not even executed, they only suffered a mild punishment. For England the last trial was in 1717 and the Grand Jury did not even consider the case. In Scotland the last trial supposedly occurred in 1727 while the accused witch is said to be burned but there exists little documentation about this case.¹²

Witch hunts that lasted from fifteenth to early eighteenth century claimed many victims, final numbers of whose remains a topic of many discussions. Overall for European witch-trials there is suggested count of 100,000 executions at most.¹³ Encyclopaedia Britannica suggests even lesser count of 40,000 to 60,000 executions which is doubtlessly less than exaggerated count of 9 million from the nineteenth century.¹⁴

1.2.2 European colonies in America

North America as known today originally consisted of European colonies. Many Europeans were relocating to the new continent to start a new life there. These people obviously did not get rid of their European beliefs and traditions completely. First

⁹ Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, 65.

¹⁰ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 42.

¹¹ Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, 77.

¹² Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 380.

¹³ Scarre, and Callow. *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe*, 19

¹⁴ Lewis, Ioan M., and Jeffrey Burton Russell. "The Witch Hunts." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 22 Aug. 2016, www.britannica.com/topic/witchcraft/The-witch-hunts.

explorations and settlement establishments were happening during the first half of the seventeenth century when the fear of witches was still prominent.

The Native Americans usually were thought to have dealt with the Devil rather than being judged for witchcraft. To be accused of such they would first have to be Christianized. Victims of the trials were mostly similar to the European tradition – elder women or cunning folks. Similarly to England witches were not burned but hanged.¹⁵

In American colonies there were not as many trials as in Europe. While the biggest witch hunt of 1645 was happening in England, America was experiencing one of its first trials. In 1651 husband and wife Parsons were among one of the first successfully accused of witchcraft.¹⁶ Among the few trials, however, was one of the most well known – the Salem witch-hunt. William Burns in introduction to his *Encyclopaedia of Witch Hunts in Europe and America* states that: "The Salem witch-hunt has been called the best-known event in American history between the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock and the American Revolution."¹⁷ The process was the last large scale one, it was also one of the last ones in general as it happened in 1692. What makes the case important is the fact that the hysteria that was caused was based on false accusations and enhanced by a rivalry of two families in the village. The persecutions ended up with twenty deaths. Nineteen persons were executed (fourteen women and four men) and one man was tortured to death by piling heavy stones on his chest. Soon after the trials everyone included admitted that it was mistake and state offered compensations to the affected people.

The most important aftermath of the trials were the adjustments to the American law as the Salem trials were mainly possible due to allowing the "spectral evidence."¹⁸ To avoid this in the future the idea to separate the Church and the State was adopted. The tragic trials also became inspiration to many New England writers, notably Nathaniel Hawthorne who's great great grandfather John Hathorne was one of the

¹⁵ Burns. "New England, Witch-hunting in." *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: an Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press, 2003, 209-213.

¹⁶ Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*. Pages 262-263.

¹⁷ Burns. Preface. *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: an Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press, 2003, XVII.

¹⁸ Evidence based on a vision. Witnesses could claim that they saw the spirit (a spectral projection) of accused in their dream and the jury would accept it as a valid evidence.

judges.¹⁹ As the accusations in the end turned out to be false it also raised doubts about witchcraft. Once the reality of it has been doubted end of the trials was near.

1.3 Decriminalization of Witchcraft

Decriminalization of witchcraft was protracted process that started in the first half of eighteenth century. At its beginning only few kingdoms banned the witch trials completely. For England and Scotland the year 1736 marks the official end of the witch hunts. From that year came into force the new law that repealed old act passed under James I and its Scottish Witchcraft act counterpart.²⁰ It did not decriminalize the witchcraft fully; it banned trials and death penalties setting out the maximal penalty to be a year in prison. The view on witchcraft changed, as stated by historian of science Roy Porter in his essay on decline of magic: "Witchcraft had come to be represented as a conflict not between God and Satan but between civilized gentlemen, flanked by Church and State, and brutal rustics."²¹ Due to bigger popularity of science and scepticism believing in magic became unpopular. In other words the belief that magic is not real reappeared and by law were punishable only those who pretended to execute any acts of witchcraft, sorcery, spells, or pretended to be a fortune teller.²² Under this law also occurred the last accusations in twentieth century against false mediums, which also caused the act to be repealed in 1951 and replaced by more purposeful act against fraudulent mediums.

Another reform was in terminology where there were attempts to better distinguish between what kind of a witch the accused was and what kind of magic they used. For example those who used white magic: blessing, healing, love magic, etc., were charged less than those who used maleficent witchcraft. The negative connotations with the words "witchcraft" and "witch" prevailed, yet the people never stopped turning to folk magic and sorceress wishing for luck or fertility spells. This was the form in which the witchcraft survived till late nineteenth century when spiritualism became

¹⁹ Burns. "Salem Witch Trials". *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: an Encyclopedia*. - Greenwood Press, 2003, 257-260.

²⁰ Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe - The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 44.

²¹ Porter, Roy. "Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic and Liberal Thought" *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe - The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 196.

²² Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe - The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 74-75.

popular. With the popularity of spiritualism, however, many cases of fraudulent mediums also emerged hence the reshaping of the Witchcraft act in 1951.²³

1.4 Modern Day Witchcraft

The new religion of witchcraft was created by Gerald B. Gardner. There are some uncertainties about Gardner's claims about not exactly founding Wicca and rather rediscovering it. He is, however, considered the most important person as he was the source of most information about the rediscovered religion. It was not a coincidence that he released his book *Witchcraft Today* where he informed the world about witchcraft's survival in 1954. Gardner could finally do that without facing any juridical consequences as since 1951 witchcraft was not punishable by law any longer.²⁴ The new religion of Witchcraft is also the first testimony of organized religion of witchcraft (it has covens, ceremonies, holy days...) until then it existed only as a mixture of folklore, occultism and paganism.

The term "witch" stopped being female exclusive and many male followers of the religion adapted it for themselves as well. The terms witch and witchcraft are not currently used by all practitioners though. Many followers of contemporary religion of witchcraft prefer the term Wiccan and Wicca. Both terms have roots in Old English and meaning closely connected to witchcraft with the benefit of not carrying the negative connotations unlike their counterparts. Some differentiate between the modern religion and the old craft by using Wicca instead of witchcraft. Others believe that it is important to pursue the usage of words witchcraft and witch as it is the only way to truly rid them of their negative meanings. Wicca or the "Old religion" as it is sometimes called due to it having pagan roots, follows simple eight word creed: "*An' it harm none, do what ye will.*" Origin of it is unsure. Usually it is expected to be quite recent - second half of the twentieth century. It is possible that it is the modified version of Aleister Crowley's²⁵: "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*" From the creed it is apparent that the modern day witchcraft wants to be connected with helping and freedom rather than with malicious acts and being bonded by the Devil's pacts.²⁶

²³ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 381-382.

²⁴ Ankarloo, and Clark. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe - The Twentieth Century*, 43-48.

²⁵ Aleister Crowley- pagan, magician and occultist; often connected to witchcraft he was however not a witch. He disliked witchcraft, most probably because of the great female influence in it.

²⁶ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 383-384.

The religion experienced a huge growth of interest in the 1960s and 1970s during the rediscovered interest in occultism²⁷. With growing popularity was also growing the reach of the religion, spreading to United States and all over the world. This spread also resulted in loss of the uniformity and creation of new different traditions in each coven. Modern day witchcraft is the religion of acceptance and individuality where changes and adaptability to them are seen as positive. It has great autonomy since there is no highest authority or clearly stated dogma that has to be followed. Most important are smaller groups, where the highest authority has a high-priest or high-priestess, each having different traditions, rituals and beliefs. What should unify every witch in the world regardless on coven they belong to, is acceptance and respect for nature.²⁸

²⁷ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 383.

²⁸ Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 346-350.

2 Witches in English Literature: an Overview

Since this thesis deals with portrayal of witches in English literature it would be appropriate to present an overview of it through centuries. There is lot of writings that deal with witchcraft however it would be impossible to fully include all of them in this work. This overview should briefly mention the works this thesis will not deal with yet they are too important not to be mentioned at all.

The Arthurian legend that will be dealt with became popular due to the work of chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth. This happened in the twelfth century. *Beowulf* on contrary has been orally transmitted since circa eight century. First written manuscript then dates to around tenth and eleventh centuries.²⁹ The work however was not completely suitable since the character of a witch is a matter of discussions. The monster Beowulf kills, Grendel, gets later avenged by its mother. Her true nature though is disputable. Mostly she is described to be a monster of a woman, in fewer cases to be a sea witch. She could fit into the witch stereotype since she is very strong which is intimidating to men. It is easier to describe her as a monster rather than admit that a woman could match their skills. Grendel's mother should be considered to be a warrior rather than a monster or a witch because according to researcher Christine Alfano a correct translation of the Old English "*ide, aglæcwif*", that is used in the manuscript to describe her, should be: "*lady, warrior-woman*"³⁰

Representing the English Renaissance there is William Shakespeare and his portrayal of the supernatural elements in many of his plays. His way of portraying witches in *Macbeth* became iconic form many centuries. In his other plays he chooses to portray magic differently, for example Sycorax in *Tempest*, or usage of witchcraft in *Henry VI*. These however were not as influential as the Weird Sisters.

After the end of the Witch hunting period writers took new interest in magic. For example Samuel Taylor Coleridge who, together with William Wordsworth, is considered to be founder of Romantic Movement. In his poem *Christabel* there is mysterious character Geraldine who could be considered a witch. In juxtaposition with

²⁹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Beowulf." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 Aug. 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/Beowulf.

³⁰ Alfano. "The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity: A Reevaluation of Grendel's Mother." *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1992, 12.

lady Christabel she does not praise the lord, has evil intentions and represents sexuality. Geraldine uses spell on Christabel when they go to bed so she does not remember what did happen that night yet she wakes up with the feeling of having sinned. Reader is left to wonder what had happened that night. Was it some kind of evil pagan or satanic ritual? Did they indulge in lesbian sex? Intentions of Geraldine are never clearly stated, reader only knows it must be something evil (even though in the end of the poem due to her disguise as a daughter of Lord Roland she reunites two rival lords). Problematic of this poem is the fact that it remains unfinished and many questions it raises remain unanswered as well.³¹ Another Romantic poet who portrayed image of beautiful girl with magical powers and evil intentions was John Keats in his *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. Woman, probably a fae, tries to lure a knight into his death hiding her true intentions behind the promises of love.

Though poets tended to use motif of witches using illusions to achieve their goals, novelist Robert Louis Stevenson in his short story, set in 1712, *Thrawn Janet* (1881) decided to portray witch in rather Shakespearean way. Janet is an old crone, outcast of the society due to her differences from the normal. It is however disputable to what degree Janet was a witch and to what degree it was demonic possession. The story deals with the idea of sin and witchcraft opposed to the faith in God and morality. Famous for dealing with similar themes is American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. He uses same themes in his short story *Young Goodman Brown* (1835) and novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) both set in seventeenth century. *Young Goodman Brown* is set in Salem around the time of the infamous witch trials of 1692, he mentions names of women accused in the trials throughout the story. Goodman Brown gets convinced through dream or hallucination-like experience that the whole city is part of devil-worshipping cult and not the good Christian community he believed them to be. His loss of faith leads him to his life of misery and gloom death. In *The Scarlet Letter* he again uses historical figure of Ann Hibbins who was executed for witchcraft. She tempts the main character of the story, Hester Prynne, to turn away from God towards the witchcraft. In this case the Devil loses and Hester remains faithful to God. These works are very influential however they are based on historical context and spirituality,

³¹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Christabel." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 17 Aug. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/Christabel.

leaving lot of space for imagination rather than stating magic as a fact unlike the works that are being the main subjects for this thesis.

For these reasons the next main literary work is *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* from Lyman Frank Baum written in 1900. His take on witches as not only wicked but good as well. He presents them in better, more liberated way. View of witchcraft started changing during the twentieth century. Even C. S. Lewis looking at the witch in *Lion, Witch and Wardrobe* (1950) or *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) from very Christian perspective, gives her some traits of liberation. Jadis is supposedly daughter of Adam's first wife Lilith and other part of her blood line are giants. Even though she is clearly an antagonist of the story, she is representation of strong female character that can take care of herself.

With the feminism being more prominent in the society more women are starting to associate themselves with the witches. The original villains are starting to be seen more human. Novels that add on the origins of witches like *The Mists of Avalon* (1983) or *Wicked: The life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995) are gaining popularity. Many books are being written on the topic of witches and witchcraft. A witch is finally truly beginning to lose the negative connotations and gaining the positive ones. Children books are being written where main protagonist are witches and wizards. Notably Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (1974) about all girls' school of witchcraft. Later the concept was followed by J. K. Rowling in her worldwide phenomenon *Harry Potter* (1997).

3 Witches in Light of Feminist Theory

The dictionary definition of feminism is: "the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes."³² Though the history of recent feminism is shorter than the history of witchcraft they share similar problems. For instance both are still sometimes perceived as pejorative terms. Those against whom they were used adapted them as a way of empowerment.

3.1 Short History of Feminism

First time when women really came together, unsatisfied with their position in society, was at the end of nineteenth century. They were unhappy with Victorian era values that reduced them to feeble and fragile; barely human beings who seemed to have only purpose of bearing children and looking pretty. However there were still many women who complied with the norm of the era and no significant change occurred. It was in the twentieth century when voices of women were heard.³³

One of the most inspiring writers of feminism is considered Virginia Woolf together with her publication of *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She presented one of the most important thoughts of the feminist movement which was the fact that woman should have right to be self sufficient. The self sufficiency was important in order to be successful.

Women started to organize into groups that were demanding better conditions in the 1960s and 70s. The movement was called *Women's liberation*. They choose that as the word "feminism" was still used as pejorative. In the United States was also founded during the 1960s a feminist organization under the name W.I.T.C.H. which was an acronym for "*Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell*". If needed there were also other, more serious, interpretations of it, yet the humorous reading explains the spirit of the organization. The way of their protest was meant to be witty and witch-themed, not forgetting to point out the serious social issues. Their connection to witchcraft is in an understanding of it. Their belief was that any woman can claim

³² Burkett, Elinor, and Laura Brunell. "Feminism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Mar. 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/feminism.

³³ Walters. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, 1-2.

herself to be a witch and any group of witches can therefore start a coven of their own.³⁴ The idea was later adapted by many following witches and covens as it meant complete liberation of having anyone superior to initiate the novices. Such idea helped to form even more equal community.

3.2 Misogyny

Misogyny or in other words hatred towards women was one of the bases for the great witch hunts that happened. *Malleus Maleficarum* has a whole chapter that consists of identifying women as weak morally and intellectually. The book made women the most common targets of accusations. Many women suffer from male misogyny to this day. Some men still feel that woman should be inferior to them and do not see her as an equal. Hatred towards feminism also sources from the fear that feminists want women to be superior though the reality is that they only ask for the equality of genders.

During the witch hunts men have been prosecuted for witchcraft as well as women, however, in significantly smaller numbers. According to Geoffry Scarre and the historian John Callow,³⁵ in around 80 percent of trials the defendant was a woman.³⁶ As defined by Christianity, the women are to be blamed for the first sin. On this idea was also based the belief that that woman has natural predispositions for sin and to be attracted to Devil and every maleficent force.³⁷

Opinion, which to a certain extent prevails even to this day in some cultures, is that a woman should have barely any free will. During the history women were essentially property of men. When they were born their father had all might over them and later it was their husband and that lasted until the death of one of them. In the world of patriarchy it was hard to imagine a female that does not have to be fully dependant on man without using some kind of sorcery. This contributed in many victims of trials being middle-aged women, widows and spinsters - the embodiment of woman that necessarily does not need men to survive.

Fear of witches could be as well be described as fear of independent women. Alternatively a witch could be also called a woman that simply upsets men. On one of

³⁴ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 376-77

³⁵ Geoffry Scarre - professor of philosophy at the University of Durham, mainly focuses on topic of applied ethics; John Callow - a historian, wrote widely on Early Modern culture, belief and politics

³⁶ Scarre, and Callow. *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe*, 12

³⁷ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 223-224.

the most basic levels she can upset him by not being interested in them for example. As woman could have been persecuted for being too sexually liberated, she could have been persecuted for not being interested in men as well. This initiated the existence of lesbian feminism in order to help homosexual women to get liberated as well. One of the main points was that nobody threatens the male supremacy better than a woman that does not need a man even for her pleasure.³⁸

3.3 Dianic Wicca

Traditional Wicca worships all kinds of deities that are considered to be different forms of the two beings: the Horned God and the Goddess. The Goddess is also considered as a trinity of maiden, mother and crone alluding the three moon phases. Idea that makes Wicca so desirable to women is also one that the W.I.T.C.H. had also promoted; woman should see herself as beautiful and free individual not restrained by men. Unsurprisingly the religion became widely popular during the feminist uprising in the 1960s-70s.

As there were many version of Wicca being created due to its individual nature (without set doctrine, rules or practises; unlike institutionalized religion like Christianity) the paths began to run different directions. Zsuzsanna Budapest,³⁹ the creator of Dianic Wicca choose very different path from the Wicca that originated in Great Britain. Instead of using Gardner's vision of dual deity (somewhat leaning more towards the Horned God), she saw the need for religion that would be female-cantered as most of the others have male deity.⁴⁰ She prioritized the Goddess and only women were allowed to participate on the rituals.⁴¹

It has the name "Dianic" after the Roman goddess of moon Diana. The idea of her being accepted also as the goddess of witches comes from the nineteenth century Italy from surviving old cult of her worshippers. Apart from this Diana, or her Greek counterpart Artemis, was also considered to be the virgin goddess that sworn to never marry a man, thus the avoidance of men in this path of Wicca.⁴²

³⁸ Walters. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, 107.

³⁹ Hungarian author and activist, born in 1940, lived in the United States

⁴⁰ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 40-42.

⁴¹ Velkoborská. "Wicca in the USA: How a British-born Religion Became Americanized." *Theories and Practice: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on English and American Studies*, 249.

⁴² Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 89-92.

4 Witches in the Middle Ages: Arthurian Legend

One of the most famous witches of British legends is Morgan le Fay. Her character underwent many changes over time depending on what period writer worked with her. This chapter will concern the work of Sir Thomas Malory and his *Le Morte Darthur* that has been written around 1470 and is a collection of known French and English legends of its time. It was printed in 1485 by William Caxton who also edited the book. Since the original manuscript has been lost, this print is the closest to it.⁴³

During these times Christianisation aimed at eliminating everything pagan or supernatural. Arthurian legend lies somewhere in between since there are magical elements treated as both good and evil. What should be noted is the period typical misogyny when Malory changes the character of Morgan le Fay reducing her from a complex character into essentially evil only villain of the story in juxtaposition to Merlin, who he wrote more consistently good.⁴⁴ Another magical female of the story is Nimue, the second lady of the lake. Though she is also using magic and could be considered a witch, she uses it for good purposes. In other words she can be considered using white magic rather than the black one. This also shapes her personality differently from Morgan le Fay.

4.1 Appearance

Although the main subject of this thesis is Morgan le Fay there are other characters with magical powers that should be considered in comparison with her. This chapter will deal with Morgan le Fay, Nimue and Merlin respectively.

4.1.1 Morgan le Fay

First impression is connected with the name. One theory traces hers name to Celtic goddess Morrigan. She could be seen as either interpretation of all three aspects of the Goddess (as known as in Wicca) or specifically the Crone - the death aspect.

⁴³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Le Morte Darthur." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 19 Feb. 2018, www.britannica.com/topic/Le-Morte-Darthur.

⁴⁴ Enstone. "'Wiccraft & Vilaine': Morgan Le Fay in Medieval Arthurian Literature." 215-216.

Another hint towards the supernatural is her last name "le Fay" from French "the fairy".⁴⁵

Considering names it is important to distinguish between Morgan and her sister Morgause (alternatively spelled Margawse). In Malory's version of the legend, it is Morgause who commits incest with her half-brother Arthur, giving birth to Mordred who will cause the ultimate end of Arthur's kingdom. In modern versions the two sisters are sometimes not distinguished at all and are rather united under the character of Morgan. Uniting their characters adds another negative aspect to Morgan. However this part of her history is usually excused as the incest happens when the lovers are not aware of being half-siblings or even siblings by some retellings.

Her deeds are usually rather evil than good in nature. More interestingly she escapes any punishment. Nowhere in the book is it explicitly said yet it is plausible that she charms or enchants her way through the misfortune. She is a very talented magician who is able of not only enchantments but shape shifting as well. Morgan is running from her punishment after an unsuccessful assassination attempt and after stealing the Excalibur's scabbard. Once she realizes that there is nowhere for her to escape, she is able to turn herself and all her men and horses into a stone: "Then she rode into a valley where many great stones were, and when she saw she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment unto a great marble stone."⁴⁶ Nowadays people who call themselves witches do not believe in metamorphosis in this way. Formerly it however was a popular belief that witches could transform themselves (usually into animals) in order to escape their punishment, exactly as Morgan did in this case.⁴⁷

King Arthur was in a pursuit of Morgan and when he gets close to catching her he sees the petrified scenery. It is apparent that he is not aware of her powers, or more probably chooses to ignore them, as he thinks that the sudden petrification is an actual punishment from God. He shows sorrow towards the fate of his sister even though she plotted against him and wanted him dead. This act shows him to be truly Christian as one of the bases of the faith is being forgiving and merciful towards others. This differentiates him from Morgan who never stops seeking her vengeance even after her failed attempt. She seems to remain hateful towards her King until the ultimate death of Arthur which will be discussed later.

⁴⁵ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca; Third Edition*, 236.

⁴⁶ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book IV. chapter XIV, 124.

⁴⁷ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 231-232.

4.1.2 Nimue

In opposition to Morgan is Nimue – the Lady of the Lake. Both ladies have similar powers they however choose to use them in very different directions, one to protect men and the other to rule over them.

There are some disagreements on the count of ladies of the lake, for purposes of this thesis Nimue is considered to be the second lady of the Lake with the first lady remaining unnamed.⁴⁸ Another title given to the second Lady of the lake later in the story is the "chief Lady of the Lake."⁴⁹ Her first appearance occurs at a celebration of Arthur's and Guinevere's wedding:

With this there came a knight riding all armed on a great horse, and took the lady away with him with force, and ever she cried and made great dole. When she was gone the king was glad, for she made such a noise.⁵⁰

Nimue ends up being abducted by a knight and King Arthur does not seem to care for her fate. He is actually glad that she is gone because she was screaming. Merlin has to step in with a warning that it would be dishonour to let such a thing be unpunished. He then sends knight Pellinore to save her. Unlike Morgan le Fay, Nimue is represented as an ideal courteous lady. Her first introduction is as a damsel in distress desperate for the help of men. Generally throughout the story she is portrayed as kind and helpful:

When the Damosel of the Lake beheld Arthur, how full of prowess his body was, and the false treason that was wrought for him to have had him slain, she had great pity that so good a knight and such a man of worship should so be destroyed.⁵¹

One of such cases is Arthur being nearly killed in an unfair fight. It is clear that she has deep respect for him and opposite to Morgan le Fay she wants his creation of chivalric society to last. On most occasions she used her powers or knowledge for good with only disputable part of her story being her relationship with Merlin. Reader learns that her knowledge of magic she learns from him is at a cost of being harassed:

⁴⁸ Holbrook. "Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake, in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*." 762.

⁴⁹ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 2, book XIX. chapter XI, 427.

⁵⁰ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book III. chapter V, 85.

⁵¹ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book IV. chapter X, 117.

And within a while the Damosel of the Lake departed, and Merlin went with her evermore wheresomever she went. And ofttimes Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts; then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will.⁵²

Clearly Merlin wants to have Nimue sexually and not only teach her the magic. He apparently resorts to use the magic to get some privacy with her. Nimue, being a chaste lady, protecting her virginity (as it was considered a virtue at the time) makes him swear not to enchant her. This fact shows how severe his oppression must have been. She fears that Merlin will want to take her by force since under the power of enchantment it would not be a consensual sex. At this point she is misleading him though as she promises him that he will have her one day if he distances himself from using magic. Her choice to lie can be excused as she never openly fights men and is mostly submitting to them (at least seemingly). After promising him this she never shows any interest in him other than in his knowledge. Merlin's advances towards Nimue persist to a degree when it gets unbearable:

And always Merlin lay about the lady to have her maidenhood, and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afraid of him because he was a devil's son, and she could not beskift him by no mean.⁵³

Merlin's lust becomes fatal to him. Nimue, knowing she alone will not be able to overpower him, tricks him into trapping himself under a rock where he is supposed to meet his death. After that she takes his place as King Arthur's magical advisor. Later she becomes loving wife to Sir Pellas while still managing to stir the court to acting the right way. It can be said that as Morgan le Fay is everything the chivalric code dismisses, Nimue is being praised for being the living representation of it.

4.1.3 Merlin

Character of Merlin is complicated and mysterious, similarly to Morgan, his intentions are not clear. He uses his power of predicting the future but rather than stopping people from falling into misfortune he usually suggest them to do or not to do something (E.g. Suggesting Arthur not to marry Guinevere, knowing it will not end well). Source of his powers could be the fact that he is son of human mother and some

⁵² Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book IV. chapter I, 102-103.

⁵³ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book IV. chapter I, 103.

kind of spirit, here interpreted as the Devil. The idea is he does good in order to atone his origin. His deeds sometimes tend to be dubious. One of the greatest examples is the May-day massacre:

Then King Arthur let send for all the children born on May-day, begotten of lords and born of ladies; for Merlin told King Arthur that he that should destroy him should be born on May-day⁵⁴

This happens after King Arthur learns about future foreseen by Merlin where his son conceived with his half-sister will mean his doom. It shows how much was Arthur under Merlin's impression. He was willing to contribute to biblical-like massacre of children. Such act could make him seem in eyes of his subjects as cruel as king Herod once was. What actually helped to save his reputation was the fact that many rather blamed Merlin than Arthur. It was due to the fact that many of them never trusted Merlin completely due to his probable infernal powers.

Merlin remained with King Arthur until the second lady of the lake, Nimue, trapped him under the stone for life in order to protect her honour from him. Despite his actions Merlin remains beloved figure of the Arthurian legend. He is often one of the most well known representations of wise old wizard with parts of his not so glorious history being forgotten. Merlin gaining the positive perception while Morgan le Fay changes from the healer to one of the main villains shows sexism and possible misogyny that is slowly being repressed in twenty first century.

4.2 Interpretation

Around the time when Sir Malory collected the legends, even though it was before the peak period of witch hunts, overview on magic was already negative. For example *Malleus Malleficarum* went into print only one year after Mort d'Arthur. Till the end of the fifteenth century understanding of a witchcraft consisted of: "...Devil's pact, secret, orgiastic sabbats, infanticide, cannibalism, renunciation of Christianity and desecration of the cross and Eucharist."⁵⁵ Essentially it is the embodiment of everything that was against the Church. In the William Caxton's preface it states that King Arthur is seen as the most renowned Christian king and in opposition to him is Morgan, not

⁵⁴ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book I. chapter XXVII, 47-48.

⁵⁵ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 379.

subjecting to anything he stands for. She wants to ruin the kingdom he has build. It is not clearly stated why she wants to do this, probably to establish the old pagan customs again.

Foreshadowing of Morgan le Fay being rather suspicious character is in the first sentence she is mentioned where it is stated that she was schooled in nunnery where she "learned so much that she was a great clerk of necromancy"⁵⁶. Necromancy in this context should be defined as black magic. Etymologically though necromancy can be also used as a synonym for "black magic". Its original form comes from Old French "nigromancie" (Medieval Latin "niger" = black, and Greek "manteia" = divination) and the spelling fully changed to "necromancy" (Greek "necros" = dead body) in sixteenth century.⁵⁷ Considering *Le Morte Darthur* was written at the end of fifteenth century it is most probable that by necromancy was meant that Morgan has learned the black magic. Modern day definition of necromancy is "art of conjuring the dead for the purpose of divination"⁵⁸ though the more popular interpretation of it as raising the dead from their graves (however this is more typical for Voodoo rather than European witchcraft). What should also be noted is the fact that she learned the craft in nunnery, surrounded by other women not, unlike in other versions of the legend, from Merlin himself. Some versions portray her not only as Merlin's apprentice but as a lover as well unlike *Le Morte Darthur* where Merlin's only object of desire is Nimue.⁵⁹ This leaves out the male element from the apprentice phase of her life making her even more independent of a character.

Morgan extends her independence to the extremes. In the Christian views she is threat because she does not submit to men and has the willpower to do things her own way. This idea of a strong willed woman is counter to chivalric society of Arthurian times. Apart from being firm in her goals, Morgan also show patience while preparing her plans:

Sir, said Merlin, look ye keep well the scabbard of Excalibur, for ye shall lose no blood while ye have the scabbard upon you, though ye have as many wounds upon you as ye may have. So after, for great trust, Arthur betook the scabbard to Morgan le Fay his

⁵⁶ Malory. *Mort d'Arthur*. Vol. 1, book I. chapter III, 4.

⁵⁷ "Necromancy (n.)" *Index*, www.etymonline.com/word/necromancy.

⁵⁸ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 244.

⁵⁹ Holbrook. "Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake, in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*." 770-771.

sister, and she loved another knight better than her husband King Uriens or King Arthur, and she would have had Arthur her brother slain,...⁶⁰

As can be seen in the excerpt, Morgan in Malory's version is Arthur's sister. She must have remained a good sister for long enough for Arthur so blindly trust her. This shows her determination. They are bonded by blood and yet she is ready to betray his trust and have him killed. Morgan apparently does not want to confirm to any rule that the society gives her. Apart from her willingness to turn against her own family, it can be also seen in her not honouring the sacrament of marriage by taking lovers. In this case knight Accolon. It is clear that the bond between them is love, not only manipulation or enchantment. They plan together to kill Arthur and become the new king and queen and Accolon is well aware of the plan as he confess it before he is mortally wounded in fight with Arthur.

Death of Accolon is one of the rare occasions where she can be seen as human even though she is mostly portrayed as evil, heartless sorceress: "...when *Queen Morgan wist that Accolon was dead, she was so sorrowful that near her heart to-brast.*"⁶¹ She is heartbroken. This brief display of humanity does not last long. Morgan chooses not to show any remorse in front of anyone and rather strays further from the light to the dark path of magic by seeking vengeance even more eagerly. In more modern adaptation "The Mists of Avalon" by Marion Zimmer Bradley, the pair of lovers is actually fighting for the old pagan religion, trying to save it from King Arthur's Christianization.

From Morgan's actions it is also apparent that her sense of justice does not align with the court one. She does not fear taking justice in her own hands and dares to decide what is right and what is wrong on her own, rather than taking the dispute to court. An example is a story where Morgan le Fay saves a knight from drowning:

When she saw this knight so bound, she asked him, What will ye do with that knight? Lady, said he, I will drown him. For what cause? she asked. For I found him with my wife, and she shall have the same death anon. That were pity, said Morgan le Fay. Now, what say ye, knight, is it truth that he saith of you? she said to the knight that should be drowned. Nay truly, madam, he saith not right on me. Of whence be ye, said Morgan le Fay, and of what country? I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Manassen,

⁶⁰ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book II, chapter XI, 65.

⁶¹ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book II, chapter XI, 123.

cousin unto Accolon of Gaul. Ye say well, said she, and for the love of him ye shall be delivered, and ye shall have your adversary in the same case ye be in.⁶²

After tricking Arthur that she have turned into the stone she continues in running further away from Camelot. She meets two knights. One of them was tied up and to be punished by drowning for committing adultery with wife of the first knight. Malory unfortunately did not write in many details. It is not clearly stated whether her decision was biased or not. There are some clues though, and they hint towards her deciding with a heart rather than with a mind. Most prominent is the fact that she did not ask for any evidence of the crime. Her decision to believe that the knight Manassen was not guilty was based solely on the fact that he was cousin of her dead lover Accolon. Remarkably, Morgan presents enough of an authority for the men to listen to her. Considering common anti-feminism of the era it is more than impressive that the knights considered listening to her. The text does not explain if she used some enchantment or not, it is highly probable though.

Until Mordred starts his rebellion Morgan remains to be the main antagonist of the story. She did try many times to take Arthur's life and if it was not for the help of Nimue, she would succeed. It is surprising that in the end she is one of the queens that should take Arthur to Avalon (Avilion by Malory) to be healed when he is mortally wounded:

...and there received him three queens with great mourning; and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said: Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me?⁶³

Sir Bedivere later confirms that one of the queens indeed was Morgan le Fay and that Nimue was present as well. Malory decided to keep the idea of Morgan being present during Arthur's last moments; he however provided no background for it. She might have come to the conclusion that with Arthur dying, his chivalric empire will be destroyed and there was no reason to stay enemies. As has been stated before, Morgan can be cruel but she is not heartless or emotionless and in this sense it seems believable for her wanting to spend her last moments with her brother in peace.

⁶² Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 1, book IV, chapter XV, 125.

⁶³ Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Vol. 2, book XXI, chapter V, 492.

It is complicated to clearly and completely understand the true nature of Morgan le Fay in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. In retelling by Malory her character underwent severe simplification and vilification. Her unfounded hatred towards her brother only contributes to her role of a flat villainous character. She can be seen as ambitious, envious and driven by lust as well. In many retellings Morgan le Fay remains the Medieval representation of the danger of uncontrolled female power.

Nowadays she represents a rebel at her times. Female that saw the unfairness of the moral code of the chivalric society. Morgan is one of the first characters that were not purely defined as damsel in distress; she is rather independent woman who is able to save herself. Her ambitiousness and envy can be seen as a desperate desire to be able to compete and be equal to men. Her willingness to succumb to desires of the flesh is another rebellion against the unfair code. It points out the hypocrisy of the society where men are being forgiven if they commit premarital sex. Morgan's attitude towards it clearly shows that she will not let the men (or anyone else) control her body. Her every action is a statement of independency showing that she is the one in control of herself.

5 Witches and Shakespeare

Numbering up several centuries, the view of witchcraft is very different. Arthurian legend and its portrayal of magic and witchcraft can still be considered to be interfering with the pagan roots and somewhat positive overview on magic altogether. This overview shifted in a new direction after the witch hunts began in the fifteenth century. Witches started to be actively associated with the Devil because the witch hunts and trials were issued on the terms of Christianity. As Malory had positive role of Nimue and Merlin in *Macbeth* is the positive outlook on witchcraft unlikely. During Elizabethan and Jacobean Era the hatred and fear toward witches has peaked. Into consideration should also be taken the fact that *Macbeth* was written around 1606 and in 1604 king James I passed the Witchcraft Act that made witchcraft punishable by death after first offence.⁶⁴

Macbeth is the shortest tragedy William Shakespeare wrote. The plot that warns against dangers of being too ambitious is very straightforward as it has no subplots. The play also alludes to some of the most prominent affairs of the time. It is only play happening in Scotland and was written shortly after James took the crown of England. This makes it a tribute to king James I's ancestry. What also has not been left out is happening of 1605 - The Gunpowder Plot, in the play there is warning against Catholics that could be talked into acting treasonously. As King James was obsessed with Witches (and witch hunting) it was one of the topics that could not be omitted in the play.⁶⁵

In the script also appears Hecate, supposed goddess of witchcraft, she however will not be the subject of this chapter since many scholars agree that she was not in the original script by Shakespeare and was most probably added by Thomas Middleton.⁶⁶

5.1 Appearance

Witch as portrayed in *Le Morte Darthur* was normal looking, most probably attractive, using her charms as one of her means of fight; after Shakespeare had

⁶⁴ Purkiss. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations*, 179-194.

⁶⁵ Bevington, David. "Macbeth." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 12 Dec. 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/Macbeth-by-Shakespeare.

⁶⁶ Taylor, and Wells, et al. *The New Oxford Shakespeare: the Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, 2504.

published his play *Macbeth*, the stereotype had changed. Shakespeare used the most commonly accepted idea of a witch during the witch hysteria. Weird Sisters – how the trio of witches is sometimes addressed, present the new stereotype that influenced society's idea of witches for exceedingly long period of time. The Sisters were ominous hags, embodiments of evil and impious.

How influential their appearance was can be deduced from the word *weird* changing its meaning, all thanks to the Weird Sisters. Before that the meaning was more connected to supernatural powers and controlling the destiny. Due to their portrayal as odd or uncanny the word has gained its new meaning.⁶⁷

As has been mentioned the Weird Sisters are representation of "ideal" witch in seventeenth century. They live in isolation from society on place that would look sinister even without their presence. Apart from that in the first act and first scene, when they are getting ready to meet Macbeth, it is stated that they also have familiars: First Witch: "I come, Graymalkin.", Second Witch: "Paddock calls."⁶⁸

Familiar is a lower demon that is given to the witch by Devil himself or can be inherited from another witch. Familiars could take virtually any form or shape. Sometimes it was believed they took grotesque forms of different animals mashed together. Most common though was the belief that they accompanied the witch in the form of: cat, toad, owl, mouse or dog. These beliefs also lead to some cat massacres in Europe. They were supposed to help the witch with her spells and protect her in exchange for her blood. The blood could come from another being or the witches themselves. If donor of the blood was the witch the familiar sucked it from the tips of her fingers or any other protuberance on her skin. This led to the belief of witches having the Devil's mark and general public idea of ugly witch with warts or any other "lumpy" deformations.⁶⁹ In this case first Witch's familiar is *graymalkin*: name given to elderly gray cats; it is combination of adjective *gray* and noun *Malkin* which is diminutive for *Matilda* or *Maud* (meaning untidy, probably association to cat's gray colour)⁷⁰. Second Witch is accompanied by a *paddock*: archaic for a *toad*. It is a diminutive of the word *pad*. Toads were considered ugly and venomous hence the

⁶⁷ "Weird (Adj.)." *Online Etymology Dictionary*, www.etymonline.com/word/weird#etymonline_v_4898.

⁶⁸ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene i, line 10-11.

⁶⁹ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 122-124.

⁷⁰ "Malin (n)." *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

phrase "*Pad in the straw*" meaning something wrong or a hidden danger.⁷¹ These sinister connotations make the toad perfect form for a familiar. In act four, scene one it is stated that Third Witch's familiar is called Harpier: Third Witch: "Harpier cries; 'tis time, 'tis time."⁷²

In printed version of the play that is used for the purposes of this thesis (Collins Classics *Macbeth*, 2010) is given explanation that it could be a mystical creature harpy.⁷³ Lack of supernatural creatures in the play however points towards more real creature. This idea also supports the fact that that during Elizabethan times were ravens called "*harpy*" due to its meaning a "*food snatcher*".⁷⁴ Raven seems to be ideal conclusion also because of their ominous presence and the fact that they are scavengers. That means they not only hunt for food but eat anything that is dead as well. With the knowledge of witches using parts of bodies in their magic (e.g. pilots thumb as in first act, scene three) it makes raven a perfect familiar since it can be useful in search for ingredients. Lastly, ravens are also known for their ability to imitate human speech and as other familiars are silent, or do their natural animal sounds, Harpier is the only one that is reported by the Third Witch to talk.

Another mentioned supposed power of a witch is her ability to change form. In the first act, scene three when they are discussing what were they doing in the mean time while waiting for Macbeth the first Witch explains her anger over rich sailor's wife which did not share her chestnuts with her. She also adds that: "like a rat without a tail"⁷⁵ she will cause them trouble. sAs has been discussed in the chapter on the Arthurian Legend it was believed that witches can change their form. Either in order to escape from their punishment (as Morgan le Fay did) or as a way to intrude households in order to cast spells and curses. In some cases when the supposed witches were convinced that they really shape shifted into an animal it could have been caused by hallucinogenic ingredients in the potions they used.⁷⁶ In this case it is not clear what are the Witches intentions to do, it is clear however that she wants to take advantage of being small and easy to overlook to cause harm and get her revenge. Later the Sisters offer her a help in cursing said sailor to get stuck on the sea for 81 weeks. Willingness to curse the sailor, making him endure horrible things like insomnia and malnutrition,

⁷¹ "Paddock (n.1)." *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

⁷² Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 4, Scene i, line 3.

⁷³ Harpy has woman's face and body but with wings and claws instead of normal hands.

⁷⁴ Dittmann. *The Weird Sisters in Macbeth*, 4.

⁷⁵ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene iii, line 8-11.

⁷⁶ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 231-232.

for such a minor inconvenience as his wife not wanting to share her food with a witch shows them as unforgiving and vengeful. It is clear that Shakespeare does not want to let his audience hesitate even for a second whether the Witches are really connected with the forces of evil.

Contributing to their otherworldly origin is not only the way they look but the way they speak as well. Unlike other characters that mostly speak in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) or prose Witches were written in completely different meter. They speak in trochaic tetrameter with rhymed couplets which makes their speech more like a song or chant, especially when they all speak together at one time. The trochee seems to be an intentional choice for them for it is the exact opposite of iamb. Trochee has stressed syllable followed by unstressed one and iamb is formed the other way around. This alienates them even more from every other speaker of the play and underlines their supernatural presence. Their rhymed and melodic speech and chants basically diminish them and make them seem as a less of a threat since it can be hard to take them seriously with such grotesque way of expressing.

5.2 Interpretation

One of the main themes of the play is uncertainty and ambiguity, in the words of the Witches: "*Fair is foul and foul is fair*".⁷⁷ The saying points towards the fact that appearance can be deceiving and reality is different. This chapter will concern with the true nature of the witches as it is hinted towards in the play.

In this case name helps to determine what kind of witches the three sisters are. They are called Three Sisters or alternatively Weird Sisters. *Weird* in this case should not be understood as purely "odd" or "uncanny". It comes from Old English, where it had a form *wyrd* meaning *fate, chance, fortune, destiny* or *the Fates*. The last is what the three sisters are.⁷⁸ They control human destiny and are supposed to have great knowledge of everything (reason why Macbeth seeks their help again later in the play). Seeing goddesses of fate as trinity is very common through different cultures. Most notable are Greek goddesses Moirai or Norns from Germanic mythology or even Slavic deities of fate ("sudičky" in Czech). Of course three is not the default count given by

⁷⁷ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene i, line 12.

⁷⁸ "Weird (Adj)." *Online Etymology Dictionary*, www.etymonline.com/word/weird#etymonline_v_4898.

every source; it is the most common way to portray them though. Taking inspiration in Old Gods was common even for authors that were influenced by Christianity. It can be seen in Shakespeare's other play as well. Queen of the fairies in *Midsummer's Dream* is named Titania. It leads back to the aspect of goddess Diana who is seen by Wiccans as the Goddess. She is seen as trinity as well with her knowledge and powers being beyond understanding.⁷⁹

The number three and its multiples (especially nine) are emphasized throughout the play because it was believed to be magically potent number.⁸⁰ One of the first chants the Witches do together is based on multiples of three: "Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, And thrice again, to make up nine."⁸¹ Number three is mentioned again in act four: First Witch: "Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd".⁸² The number also influences the numbers of repetitions throughout the play: "And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd."⁸³ or "I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do."⁸⁴ The number of given predictions is also three as well as they hail Macbeth three times:

First Witch: "All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis!"

Second Witch: "All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!"

Third Witch: "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!"⁸⁵

The emphasis on the number three is not coincidental. Shakespeare probably wanted to force the idea upon the audience that they are a trinity. It is possible he wanted to make an allusion to Christianity that recognizes its God as a holy trinity: God – Son – Holy Spirit. In this case the Witches form an unholy trinity. As the God is seen as one with three aspects so can be the Weird Sisters. They are not exactly presented as individuals with individual personalities or even names – they are always referred to as the Weird Sisters or the witches. Their speech contributes to the image as they many times speak in unison or repeat themselves with little variations. The author obviously wants to make them as unlikable as possible and gives the audience nothing to get attached for. Since they have no positive personality trait or excuse for their wicked

⁷⁹ Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 90.

⁸⁰ Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 257, 346.

⁸¹ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene iii, lines 35-36.

⁸² Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 4, Scene i, line 1.

⁸³ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene iii, line 5.

⁸⁴ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene iii, line 11.

⁸⁵ Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Act 1, Scene iii, lines 48-50.

ways it makes them ideal victims during the witch hunting times. Considering King James I., who was funding Shakespeare at the time, disliked witches and determinedly supported the trials and anti witchcraft acts; it is not surprising that the playwright choose to portray magic and witchcraft in a way that pleased the king.

The Weird Sisters were posing a danger because they have supposedly made pact with the Devil from whom they sourced all of their power. Compared to Morgan the reason of their dangerousness is different as well as the portrayal. Though Morgan's actions remain unexplained she is still an individual with a personality who is capable of good and deserve reader's compassion (she is even redeemed in the end) unlike the Weird Sisters.

The negative reading of their characters was desired at the time, this however changed in the recent times. Originally the sisters were posed as mysterious and dangerous, later they served as a comic relief – three weird and crazy women, prancing around the cauldron using funny rhymes. Recently they gained more dignity and more interesting ways of interpretation. Orson Welles in his movie interpretation of *Macbeth* endows the witches with the power of Voodoo where they control Macbeth's fate. He also presents them not as familiar with the Devil but rather representation of the old pagan religion that is being oppressed by the coming of the Christianity. Terry Pratchett in one of his book of the Discworld series – *Wyrd Sisters*, also decided to adapt the Weird Sisters and some other Shakespearean themes as well. In his books he challenges the stereotypes adding a satire to absurdity of some. The idea of prophecies and fate in *Macbeth* also influenced J. K. Rowling while she wrote the *Harry Potter* series. Tribute to the Weird Sisters there is naming a popular band in the Wizard world after them – The Weird Sisters (they are referenced throughout the series). In the third book movie adaptation composer John Williams also uses the "Double double, toil and trouble" sequence in the first scene of fourth act where the witches are preparing a spell as an inspiration for the soundtrack. One of the most recent adaptations of the Weird Sisters is from the show *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* where they are represented as three witch sisters.

6 Beginning of the Change: the Early Twentieth Century

People started admitting the unfairness and inhumanity of the witch trials in the Age of Enlightenment during the eighteenth century. Writers decided to actively romanticize witches and be sympathetic towards them in the nineteenth century. Historically it was not until late twentieth century that witchcraft was not punishable crime any longer. Connected to it is also the change of perception. In this chapter the main topic will be Lyman F. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* which was published in exactly 1900. The book represents the mixture of perceptions; it represents evil, wicked witches but good and helpful sorceress as well. The book also does not represent the stereotype of wise old wizard. In the end it is the witches who are powerful and the almighty wizard of Oz is actually a fraud.

Notable feminist writer of the times was Matilda Joslyn Gage. She was not only a writer but also a suffragist, Native American rights activist, abolitionist and a free thinker as well. In her book *Woman, Church and State* (1893) she deals with ways in which the Church or the State oppresses its women and forces patriarchy on them.⁸⁶ In her chapter on Witchcraft she brings up the unfairness of the trials due to hatred towards women and fear from their intellect. It is possible that Gage's attack on patriarchy and the idea of witches as the most advanced women inspired her son in law L. F. Baum when he was writing his story about the Land of Oz.

6.1 Appearance

In the book there are three important female characters: Dorothy, the Good Witch of the North and the Wicked Witch of the West. Last character is the title character himself – the Wizard of Oz. This chapter will examine these characters respectively in the terms of feminism and Witchcraft.

⁸⁶ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Matilda Joslyn Gage." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 21 Mar. 2020, www.britannica.com/biography/Matilda-Joslyn-Gage.

6.1.1 Dorothy

Character of Dorothy is not the best representation of independent female heroine. She can be brave, she can act on her own yet her only desire through the book is to get back home to her aunt and uncle. She act the way she does only because she is forced by the situation she is in, not because it would be her character. In the context of feminism a heroine should not be determined by her role in the household as is happening here.⁸⁷ Dorothy is not fearless, adventurous soul; she is a little girl who does her best to be good and please everyone who she meets. She confirms to her role as a helpless girls. Everyone who meets Dorothy greets her as an impressive sorceress even though she herself is still unsettled by the idea of witches as she "thought all witches were wicked."⁸⁸ It is apparent that she does not want to be a witch (neither good nor wicked) yet by the accidental killings of both Wicked Witches she is praised as one.

6.1.2 Good Witch of the North and South

Next who appears on the scene (apart from the dead Wicked Witch of the West) is Good Witch of the North. In the book she is described as a "little old woman"⁸⁹ with a sweet voice. This part of her appearance might be a reminder to the stereotypical witch but the rest of her presence more resembles a good magical grandma. She might have been created on the archetype of a Fairy Godmother. The idea of Fairy Godmothers is centuries old as the most well known version appeared in *Cinderella* from 1697 by Charles Perrault.⁹⁰ Godmothers are supposed to provide protection as the Good Witch did by kissing Dorothy on the forehead virtually making her invulnerable.

Characters of Good Witch of the North and South also greatly contributed to the perception of witches. Their adaptation in MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) was revolutionary. For the sake of the movie their characters are merged together naming the Good Witch of the North Glinda (in the book Glinda is the Good Witch of the South and the Good Witch of the North is unnamed). The Witch wears pastel pink, princess-like dress and her beauty is remarkable as well. It was the first time a witch was portrayed in such a delightful way and audience loved it. This concept though confirms

⁸⁷ Burger. "Wicked and Wonderful Witches: Narrative and Gender Negotiations from The Wizard of Oz to Wicked." *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland &, 2010, 127.

⁸⁸ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 22.

⁸⁹ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 20.

⁹⁰ Grant, Clute. "Fairy godmother." *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 330.

to what is expected by the male society. She is very feminine, caring and kind, perfect mothers figure. The reason why she is accepted is not because Glinda is a feminist heroine, who does not subject to others; but rather because she confirms to the norms. Similarly to Nimue in *Le Morte Darthur*, Glinda passes as a good witch as long as she is willing to assume her supposed role of domestic woman.

6.1.3 Wicked Witch of the West

The Wicked Witch of the West is in opposition to Glinda and Dorothy. Reader first learns about her that she "had but one eye, yet that was as powerful as a telescope."⁹¹ This could be tribute to Graeae from Greek mythology. The sisters that were born old, as their name suggests Graeae = the old women (by the grey colour of hair), shared one eye and one tooth.⁹² According to the amount of knowledge they posses, Graeae can be compared in a way to Moirai, Norns and other trinity goddesses that were mentioned earlier. Wicked Witch's eye being able to see everything can be seen as a parallel to the ability to know everything as she basically knows about everything that is happening in her land.

Reason for her wickedness is unexplained. If she is not a flat character who is evil for the sake of being evil (like Morgan le Fay) the reason for her hatred towards everyone can be because of her disfiguration that alienated her from the society. On this topic later elaborates Gregory Maguire in his novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* from 1995. He examines the character of the Wicked Witch of the West adding more to her character than just evilness. Maguire gives the Witch a name. This already changes the relationship a reader can built with the character. As for example the Weird Sisters were nameless, so were the wicked witches in Baum's original story; this decision made it easier not to get attached to them. Wicked Witch of the West is named Elphaba – a tribute to L. F. Baum as it is word play with his initials. Named is also her sister – the Wicked Witch of the East, Nessarose.⁹³

In the original book the witches do not share any relations. First time they are called sisters was in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. This relation adds more depth to the

⁹¹ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 90.
⁹² Smith, William. "Graeae" *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DG%3Aentry+group%3D10%3Aentry%3Dgraeae-bio-1>

⁹³ Burger. "Wicked and Wonderful Witches: Narrative and Gender Negotiations from The Wizard of Oz to Wicked." *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland &, 2010, 123-124.

Wicked Witch of the West as her hatred towards Dorothy and her friends is explained by her grief towards the dead sister.

6.1.4 Oz, the Great and Terrible

Visually it is unknown who the wizard is at first. Good Witch of the North only states that he is a "good wizard" upon being inquired by Dorothy whether he is a good man. Only few people saw him. The first and last time when they had the opportunity was most probably when he first landed in Oz. After that preferred hiding so nobody finds out his true nature. Because he landed in Oz decades before Dorothy people gradually forgot details about the Wizards coming. Oz appears to Dorothy and her friends in four different forms each equally bizarre to confuse them and enhance his reputation as powerful and mysterious. Later it is revealed that he is just a little man, hiding away from facing the reality and consequences of his actions.

Everybody believes that among all witches the most powerful is actually a wizard. At the first sight it seems as if the writer complies to the stereotype of wise old wizard, while female witches are bad or weak. There are some obvious similarities with Merlin. Oz refers to himself as "Oz, the Great and Terrible"⁹⁴ and everyone in the land of Oz encourages it. Like Merlin the wizard is considered to be good but actually he is feared as well. It is not clearly stated whether he actively supports the idea or if he gave the first initiative and let the people of Oz fabricate the rest. Certain is that the myth he created is widely accepted:

"He is powerful and terrible, and if you come on an idle or foolish errand to bother the wise reflections of the Great Wizard, he might be angry and destroy you all in an instant."⁹⁵

The excerpt shows how the guard of the Emerald City introduces the wizard. Such introduction is extremely confusing to Dorothy as she sees good and evil as black and white it is hard for her to accept the reality of someone being ruthless and good at the same time. People respect him for building up the beautiful city for them and for being a great ruler even though he is unable to rid the land of the Wicked Witches. It is obvious that his power is the ability to spread fear and to manipulate people. Combined with him not actually harming anyone it creates an illusion of strong benevolent ruler.

⁹⁴ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 82.

⁹⁵ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 76.

Later, when the heroes find out that he is a "humbug" (old way to say a fraud) it becomes clear that the intimidating persona he built for himself was far from the reality. Oz is just a human who came from Omaha and deceived everyone in an isolated land that he is a great wizard as he ascended from the sky in a hot air balloon. What is striking about his decisions is the fact that he knew that Dorothy came from America. He was aware that she really was just a little girl and not a powerful sorceress. His decision to send her against the Wicked Witch of the West could have been a death sentence for Dorothy. Wizard's fear of being found out to be fraud was greater than his morals. He wants to avoid any responsibility for his actions and blames other for what he has become. This is clear after he uses his art of deception to give the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Lion what they wanted when he exclaims: "How can I help being a humbug, when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can't be done."⁹⁶ After decades of being in Oz, pretending to be almighty wizard he is caught and rather makes everyone silent about the revelation than admitting his mistakes. In the end he leaves the land unharmed, without any consequences to his actions. People forever "remembered him lovingly"⁹⁷ and nobody ever doubts his credibility. In reality the Oz, the Great and Terrible is a weak man who chooses women to fight for him rather than facing his problems himself.

6.2 Interpretation

Real magic in this book is seen as something "uncivilized" as "in the civilized countries there are no witches left; nor wizards, nor sorceresses, nor magicians."⁹⁸ Magic in the Land of Oz survived only due to it being isolated from the rest of the world. This could mean that there is no place for magic and Witches in the world that is operated by logic. Magic is seen as something illogical and unexplainable. Dorothy even quotes her aunt Em that said to her that: "witches were all dead – years and years ago."⁹⁹ The statement can be understood as a sad reminder of witch hunting times. People in the fear of unknown preferred to get rid of the unexplainable rather than try to understand it.

⁹⁶ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 125.

⁹⁷ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 129.

⁹⁸ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 22.

⁹⁹ Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 22.

In the beginning of the book it is stated that the wicked witches are more powerful than the good ones. Explanation for their seeming lack of powers can be provided by the Wiccan rede "An' it harm none, do what ye will". The good witches have lines they will not cross unlike the wicked witches that do not subdue to moral code. On contrary it does not entirely excuses the good witches for not acting against the injustice. In words of Doreen Valiente:¹⁰⁰"This does not mean, however, that witches are pacifists. They say that to allow wrong to flourish unchecked is not 'harming none'. On the contrary, it is harming everybody."¹⁰¹ By unwillingness to cross their boundaries they can be interpreted as bad as the Wicked Witches.

Later in the story it is also stated that "the Power of Good is greater than the Power of Evil."¹⁰² The demonic winged monkeys were unable to hurt Dorothy upon realizing that she is under the protection of the Good Witch of the North. The Wicked Witch was forced to obey the protection spell as well. Explanation for such behaviour can be that the wicked way ensures more power at cost of quality of it. This idea can be compared to cheating. If student cheats in one part of a test it is easier for them at the moment, but the student that patiently learned everything ends up to be more benefited in the end at the final exam. Using the help of dark spirits is the easier way that can ensure strength advantage at the moment. On the long term is more beneficial the one who patiently practises their magic gaining strength gradually.

The Wicked Witch is the obvious villain of the story. However she is not a completely flat villain as she is given some character. For instance she has weaknesses. She fears the darkness. The fear is of course psychologically justified however it seems grotesque in combination with her being a Wicked Witch. It is easy to associate the villains with the darkness and it comes to the reader as a shock that the Wicked Witch actually fears it. This weakness is one of the things that make her more human than a monster. It is easy for the reader to identify with the witch at this point as many of them share the same fear. This way *The Wonderful Wizards of Oz* this way starts a trend of humanizing the witches.

The Wicked Witch of the West became one of the prominent representations of a strong, determined woman who did not want to become the villain. The villainous role was forced onto her: in the book she goes mad, after many deaths happening around her

¹⁰⁰ Writer and Wiccan priestess. Greatly responsible for development of modern witchcraft into what is now known as Wicca.

¹⁰¹ Valiente. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, 36.

¹⁰² Baum. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ; and Glinda of Oz*, 95.

and in the musical it is because she realizes that in the corrupted world she is unable to fight by doing good deeds. Her character becomes loved by masses.

As the witches gain an origin story, explaining their intentions, giving depth to their characters they are becoming more human. The Wizard Oz remains either the same or he undergoes dehumanization instead. With the rising popularity of the feminist movement he becomes more of a representation of male supremacy. Maguire seems to be one of the first to start the trend of redeeming the villains. He took a flat, evil character and gave them a tragic back-story that explains the way they act. More modern example of such trope can be Maleficent (2014), a movie about the Evil Queen from The Sleeping Beauty. Or another case of such story can be Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016) where there is explained Queen of Hearts' (though in the book there should be the Red Queen) madness.

7 Celebrating Strong Women in Late Twentieth Century

With the beginning of the feminist movement and female empowerment the negative connotations with witches in stories start to retreat. By the end of the twentieth and beginning of twenty first century the liking toward magic and witchcraft raises drastically. Many adults growing up in the "nineties" could still recall watching shows like *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (by the comics), *The Worst Witch* (by the book) or *Charmed*. All these shows have in common having a main protagonist who is a good witch and big following of fans.

This chapter's main focus will be the book *Good Omens* from Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. The book was published in 1990 and became one of the bestsellers. Its popularity even 30 years after its publishing proves it to be good representation of the phenomenon.¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴ Anathema Device is one of the first representations of modern day witch as in the terms of feminism so in the terms of Wicca. Undoubtedly her portrayal influenced many readers and helped to form positive connotations to words like witch, witchcraft or the occult.

7.1 Appearance

After long lineage of witches being described as extraordinary in some way, Anathema Device does not subdue to the stereotype. She does not suffer from any disfigurement; she is not old scary woman living in solitude neither is she promiscuous femme fatale. First she is mentioned as eight years old. Anathema is a precocious child; she is bright with tendency to make people uncomfortable. It can be stated that what makes a modern witch is the energy she emits rather than her appearance.

When the reader meets her the second time, eleven years later, she is described as "not astonishingly beautiful" rather "attractive" or "vivacious".¹⁰⁵ Instead of relying on her beauty Anathema relies on her mind and abilities. Her attire is a general one as

¹⁰³ Ray, Michael. "Neil Gaiman." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 26 Dec. 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Neil-Gaiman.

¹⁰⁴ "Good Omens: How Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett Wrote a Book." *BBC News*, BBC, 22 Dec. 2014, www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30512620.

¹⁰⁵ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 96.

well. She does not wear fancy dress or dirty rugs. It is at this point when the book entertains stereotypes again by the statement: "Most books on witchcraft will tell you that witches work naked. This is because most books on witchcraft are written by men."¹⁰⁶ This belief could point to Gerald Gardner's popularization of modern day Wicca. One of the practices he supported was "skyclad" (naked) rituals. To this day in some covens the practice remains however many perform their rituals in robes.¹⁰⁷ Remarkably other than this the reader does not get any other approximation of her look. Only Adam Young decides that she is (at her near twenties) old which is not a useful observation as in the eyes of an eleven years old child almost everyone older than them is "old". She does not get objectivised in any other way; it is unknown what her body type is, how tall is she, what she likes to wear. The book overall enforces the idea that visage does not matter. One of the most notable occasions is being the appearance of Newton Pulsifer – Private Witchfinder. Anathema knew they are destined to get together in their last days, and has some stereotypical expectations such as "tall, dark and handsome."¹⁰⁸ Though Newt, according to her, does (barely) match only two out of three they both find a way to each other's heart deciding to live together and most probably even get married.

Nobody matches the stereotypical expectations, for example Adam was disappointed by Anathema looking "normal" rather than more like the Weird Sisters in Macbeth. Their wisdom can be applied to the situations in *Good Omens* as well: the line between good and evil is blurry and things are not always what they seem to be, or what we expect them to be.

7.2 Interpretation

Anathema prefers to call herself an "occultist"¹⁰⁹ but she is content with being called a witch as well. Definition by Encyclopaedia Britannica says that occultism is: "various theories and practices involving a belief in and knowledge or use of supernatural forces or beings."¹¹⁰ Furthermore it also states that witchcraft is one of the aspects of occultism (together with divination, magic and alchemy). The occultist is

¹⁰⁶ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 96.

¹⁰⁷ Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft, and Wicca*, 385.

¹⁰⁸ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 212.

¹⁰⁹ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 150.

¹¹⁰ Gilbert, Robert Andrew. "Occultism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 22 Apr. 2013, www.britannica.com/topic/occultism.

then a person who studies all aspects of the supernatural who does not necessarily practise the rituals unlike someone who identifies themselves as a witch.

She is not only the occultist or the witch. Anathema is also an environmentalist and advocates for social justice. More of her extraordinary beliefs also include: "seals, whales, bicycles, rain forests, whole grain in loaves, recycled paper, white South Africans out of South Africa, and Americans out of practically everywhere down to and including Long Island."¹¹¹ All these beliefs were just parts of one big mass that formed one seamless belief. The book was ahead of its time as it with this single statement predicted thirty years later widely accepted beliefs. Her character is not only conscious of current issues; there is also clear aspect of feminism. Her gender does not mean any disadvantage to her neither does it determine her character. Anathema has a PhD, which is more than impressive at the age of approximately 19. It shows her huge dedication towards her passions and though her life is greatly instrumented by being a "professional descendant" she still preserves her independency and fierceness.

Other than modern day issues, the book also deals with religious imagery and forces of Heaven and Hell. Notably at no point it means diminishing the magic or the witchcraft. The witch stands aside from the religion and neither does she source her force from the Heaven nor from the Hell. It complies with the fact that Witches/Wiccans do not worship Satan or relate to such Christian beliefs in any way. It raises the question, what is the basis of her powers then? Anathema Device comes from long lineage of cunning women. Their witchcraft is based on the ability of foretelling the future rather than being supernatural beings or having dealt with the Devil. Other than that Anathema's main skill is the ability to see other people auras that can help her determine what kind of person she is dealing with.

In world where is canonical existence of angels and demons it is interesting that the Witch actually stands more in between rather than having to choose a side. Anathema is a neutral character; she wants to help to stop the Armageddon using the prophecies of her great-great-great-great-great grandmother unlike the Heaven and Hell that reinforce the idea of it.

Good Omens challenge many character stereotypes. The Heaven and Hell seems to be represented as archetypes of strictly good versus evil yet in the end they both can be seen as antagonists. The ones who are actually protagonists are those who do not

¹¹¹ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 153.

subdue to their superiors: Aziraphale and Crowley – an angel and a demon. They are both representations of worst cases of their kind which actually makes them good. Another character not fitting the expectations is Adam – the antichrist. In the end he is not the doom of everything. He is just a boy, capable of both good and evil. His image of the world gets strongly influenced by Anathema's insight on things like the environment, nuclear power or recycling. Most important is the fact that though he was theoretically predestined to bring the end of the world, Adam chooses not to have his life ran by any divine decrees using his free will choosing not to cause the Armageddon. In the end of the book Anathema also decides not to live her life by the predictions as well.

Attention deserves the character of a Witchfinder – Sergeant Shadwell. Expected image of witch hunters is completely eradicated during the book. Sergeant Shadwell, a professional Witchfinder, is more of a sad parody of one. He has great knowledge on witches and witchcraft that is rather obsolete and inaccurate. Great example of that is when he accuses his landlord, whose origin is clearly from the East Indies, of practising voodoo and making sacrifices to Baron "Saturday"¹¹² (correct is Baron Samedi) and seems surprised when he is told that the voodoo is originated from the West Indies. Another member of the Witchfinders "army" is Newton Pulsifer. He is a walking disaster and a wages clerk. He however has a great mind and is able to provide useful insight. Other than that he also has an open mind and is willing to accept every new opportunity that comes his way. Shadwell calls himself a professional who is able to know a witch even though he is unable to tell an Angel from a Demon as scene in Aziraphale's book shop proves. To him anything supernatural must be a work of the Devil. His bias seems to be a parable to the unfairness of the witch trials. During the trials men also condemned everything that was beyond their understanding, sending innocent people to their deaths. The two Witchfinders are not immune to feelings though and in the end no witch really gets harmed.

Newton with Shadwell forms together an interesting dynamic duo where each of them has completely different personality, beliefs and motivations yet they both end up in the arms of their enchantresses. Sergeant Shadwell in the end succumbs to Madame Tracy's temptations. She is part time medium (fraudulent one) and intimate massage professional.¹¹³ In the mean time she also takes care of Shadwell as everyone who gets

¹¹² Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 181.

¹¹³ Pratchett, Gaiman. *Good Omens*, 177.

to know him forms an unexplainable affection towards this grumpy old man. Shadwell spends most of his time at least seemingly hating his neighbour. In the end after the apocalypse that did not happen their long lasting unspoken relationship where they actually both care for each other culminates. They decide to move in together and possibly get married. Same happy end awaits Newt and Anathema. With these last two Witchfinders "retiring" it marks an official end to the witch hunts and a start of a new era – era of the Witch.

Since the 1990 numbers of Wiccans and Pagans are only rising and there is no obvious decline in sight. Many books for teenagers or young adults were written on topic of witchcraft more or less corresponding to the tradition. Anathema with her helpful nature, concerns for the environment, and somewhat psychic powers would be now days certainly perfectly fitting in the society of Wiccans. The book has been in 2019 also made into a successful series that remained truthful to the book with some additions by Neil Gaiman himself. Every aspect of the witch remained the same which proves that the popularity persists and characters like Anathema are more than welcomed in the modern society.

Conclusion

Idea of witchcraft underwent many shifts in meaning and understanding. Original pagan religions were diminished by the Church, and later connected to the Devil. Nowadays these stereotypes are changing. Witchcraft is being more associated with the paganism again instead of worshipping Satan. This change can be observed in the literature as well.

Le Morte Darthur by Thomas Malory represents a witch in the pagan sense. She is a victim to Christianization and self-righteous men. As only few people with magical abilities is present in the legend it evokes the idea of magic going extinct together with the spread of the Christianity. Morgan le Fay is confident and ambitious woman. This makes her a threat to the chivalric society that orders women to be submissive, chaste and ideally dissociate themselves from any aspect of sexuality. Morgan does not comply with these rules, she is aware of her femininity, and she knows how to use being a woman to her advantage. The sexist society underestimates her and does not acknowledge her as a real threat thus benefiting her.

During the witch hunting period the witches are associated with the Devil. They are also associated with heresy and barbaric rituals that could consist of orgies, cannibalism or any other sacrilegious act. The Weird Sisters in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* illustrate these believes. They are vengeful, perform blasphemous rituals and generally are cast aside from the normal society. Their ominous appearance and captivating chants set the new stereotype that persisted within society for many centuries. The Sisters' characters were reduced to evil, devil-worshippers that people should fear. Instead of fearful they are later being represented as grotesque hags cackling around the crock pot. Audience usually does not treat them as dangerous witches but as a comic relief. Their power is again in their underestimation. The Weird Sisters stand aside from the plot, not really interfering yet being the causation of it. With their foretelling they awaken the ambition in Macbeth that leads him to his end.

After many years of witches being mostly the antagonists at the end of the nineteenth century the situation starts changing. First works of feminism are being published. They address the unfairness of witch trials and of the patriarchy. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. F. Baum contains one of the first signs of separating the

witchcraft and the religion. None of the witches sources their power from the Devil; the art of sorcery is rather learned. The good witches are not being the best representations of a feminist hero as they comply with the societies' expectances on a woman. Nonetheless they still illustrate a significant shift in what being a witch means. Contrarily the Wicked Witches are not flat characters without any depth or emotion. On the character of the Wicked Witch of the West could be seen a significant development. With many following adaptations she gains more to her story than just evilness. She becomes symbol of a woman that dares to fight against an unfair regime no matter the cost. Towards the end of the twentieth century Wicked Witch's popularity virtually overshadows the original main protagonists.

When witchcraft stopped being punishable by law, first organized religion of Witchcraft emerged. It quickly gained new followers and popularity. Possibility to access new, unbiased information about the witchcraft and the occultism contributed towards positive perception of witches and magic. Authors of fantasy and satire Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman present to readers in their novel *Good Omens* a modern witch. They also attack many stereotypes both visual and principal. They do not objectify the witch. Anathema does not represent a sexual fantasy neither is she an ugly hag, alienated from the society. Anathema is an ordinary person, a part of the crowd, because a witch can be anyone; there is no mark by which they can be identified. There is no connection to the Devil or any other deity and in the end of the book she is liberated from anyone governing her life.

The appearance of the witch underwent many changes. From heartless, monstrous beings they became humans. From alienated individuals a witch started to fit within the society. They still refuse to comply with its outdated demands but unlike back in the past they are not alone to fight against them.

The bases which are assumed for the witchcraft changed as well. The witches that worshipped the old gods and honoured the pagan traditions were by the rise of Christianity reclassified as Devil worshippers. This was seen in the differences between Morgan le Fay, the old witch, and the Weird Sisters, the satanic witches. The link between witchcraft and Satanism remained strong for many centuries. This belief started being disproved during the twentieth century. Neither did the Good Witches nor the Wicked Witches in the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* associate with the devil. Their knowledge was rather learned and not obtained by any kind of pact. Modern day

witches, like Anathema Device, incline to the pagan roots and distance from the Christian view of witchcraft.

The assumption that witches gained more popularity in the recent years because of the feminist overview on them proved to be correct as could be seen on the literary analysis above. It shows that the negative connotations with witchcraft that were set by the sexist society are being eradicated. Women find the witchcraft attractive as the idea of being a witch is based on equality and being aware of one's self worth. Like Anathema in *Good Omens*, neither witches nor women have to ask for the independence, they take what has always been rightfully theirs.

Resumé

Tato práce se věnuje proměně vyobrazení čarodějnic v anglické literatuře. První část práce je teoretická a je v ní vysvětlen kontext pro zbytek práce. Nejprve jsou nastíněny všechny důležité historické okolnosti, které ovlivnily způsob, jakým společnost nahlížela v různých etapách dějin na čarodějnice a magii. Rovněž je v teoretické části věnována pozornost historicky významným dílům, v nichž se vyskytuje téma magie, případně přímo čarodějnictví. Tento přehled doplňuje období mezi jednotlivými zkoumanými díly. Nakonec se tato část věnuje feminismu a jeho propojení s čarodějnictvím.

Pro účel této práce byly k analýze vybrány čtyři knihy. Knihy pochází ze čtyř různých historických období a jsou tedy svědectvím toho, jak bylo v době jejich napsání na čarodějnice nahlíženo. Literární čarodějnice, kterým bude věnována v práci pozornost, jsou: Morgana le Fay v knize *Artušova smrt*, tři čarodějnice ve hře *Macbeth*, Hodné a Zlé čarodějnice v *Čaroději ze země Oz* a Anatéma Novotriková v knize *Dobrá znamení*. Hlavní část práce se zabývá analýzou těchto postav, v kontextu knihy i historickém kontextu, kdy byla kniha napsána. Cílem práce je poukázat na změnu chápání pojmu čarodějnice i konkrétních zkoumaných čarodějnic.

Magie a čarodějnice se v literatuře objevují od pradávna. Už ve starých řeckých bájích a pověstech se vyskytovaly významné ženy obdařené magií, které sloužily jako inspirace pro mnohé budoucí spisovatele, například Kirké nebo Hekaté. Lidé byli vždy fascinováni magií a nadpřirozenem. Způsob, kterým na ně pohlížejí, se ale v průběhu let proměnil.

Jelikož čarodějnice je převážně považována za bytost ženského pohlaví, to jak společnost chápe a pohlíží na čarodějnice, úzce souvisí s tím, jaké mají ženy postavení ve společnosti. V křesťanské společnosti bylo po mnoho století úlohou ženy být manželka, matka případně řádová sestra. Jen výjimečně mohla žena zastávat významnou roli, a pokud tuto roli zastávala, stále by měla zůstat podřízená muži. Z tohoto důvodu byla žena, která se nepodřizovala požadavkům společnosti a nebála se ukázat svůj intelekt vnímána negativně. Změna nastala až během období osvícenství, kdy se začíná projevovat důraz na logiku a humanismus. V tomto období jsou také zveřejněny první požadavky o rovnoprávnost žen a mužů. Od přelomu devatenáctého a

dvacátého století stále větší množství žen žádalo rovnoprávnost. Změna postavení žen byla nevyhnutelná a ovlivnila tak i spisovatele té doby.

V době christianizace se na čarodějnictví pohlíží jako na pozůstatky pohanství a pohanských rituálů. Patrné je to v především v prvním zkoumaném díle, *Artušova smrt* od Thomase Maloryho. Morgana le Fay je jednou z nejznámějších čarodějnic britských legend. V době, kdy začala vznikat první převyprávění Artušovské legendy, byla vnímána jako nápomocná léčitelka a spíše neutrální postava. S nástupem křesťanských hodnot, kterým se vymykala, ji začala být přiřazována záporná role. Malory ji postavil do kontrastu s Merlinem, kterého vyobrazil kladněji, než jak byl vyobrazován doposud. Přestože byl čaroděj, jelikož byl také muž, tak mu moc dle křesťanské tradice přirozeně náležela. V celém díle jsou patrné prvky sexismu typického pro rytířskou společnost. V takové společnosti je žena méněcenná muži. Je na ni pohlíženo pouze jako na objekt, který potřebuje ochranu muže a má mu zato být podřízená. Jako nejdůležitější ženská ctnost je prioritizováno panenství a počestnost. Morgana le Fay se tedy svým chováním staví proti všem těmto hodnotám. V současné době na ni lze tedy pohlížet jako na bojovnici za svá práva, jejíž touha zničit Artušovu nespravedlivou společnost může být vnímána jako touha po rovnoprávnosti. V patnáctém století, kdy tato kniha byla publikována, však Morgana byla reprezentací nebezpečí nekontrolované ženy, na kterou je třeba dát si pozor.

Druhou významnou reprezentací, které je v této práci věnována pozornost jsou sestry v Shakespearově *Macbethovi*. V období honů na čarodějnice dochází ke změně jejich pojetí. Dříve byly asociovány především s pohanstvím, nyní je církev spojuje s Dáblem a kacířstvím. Tato asociace přetrvala v povědomí společnosti po velmi dlouhou dobu a jen velmi pomalu se moderním čarodějnicím daří vyvracet mýtus o spolčení čarodějnic se Satanem. Sestry v *Macbethovi* jsou mstivé, praktikují rouhačské rituály, jejich samotná existence je záhadná a znepokojivá. Straní se společnosti a k jejich odcizení také přispívají jejich ploché charaktery. Žádná ze sester se od ostatních nijak neliší, nemají jména a jedinou jejich motivací je způsobovat utrpení. Hra byla napsána v době, kdy hon na čarodějnice stále probíhal a je nutno také přihlídnout k faktu, že Shakespeare byl v té době sponzorován Jakubem I. Stuartem, který podporoval pronásledování čarodějnic. Je tedy pochopitelné, že čarodějnictví muselo být vyobrazeno velmi negativně i pokud autor sám k němu tak negativní vztah neměl. Charaktery čarodějnic jsou v této hře zredukovány na záporné postavy, které jsou zlé, bez udání jakéhokoliv motivu. Nedá se říci, že by měly jakýkoliv charakter, jsou pouze

karikatury, které později začínají být vnímány jako groteskní. Jejich vyobrazení vytváří stereotyp čarodějnice jako podivných žen, které se hrozivě chechtají a v jednotě recitují zaklínadlo, zatímco bublá kotlík plný odpudivých ingrediencí. Jejich nelichotivé vyobrazení se během dvacátého století začalo měnit. Mnoho autorů si začalo propůjčovat Shakespearovu myšlenku těchto tří čarodějnic a přetvářet ji novým směrem. Dali sestrám důvod k jejich chování nebo je pojmenovali a tím jim dodali na lidskosti.

Čarodějnice byly antagonisty mnoha děl po mnoho let, mezi první čistě pozitivní vyobrazení patří Dobré čarodějnice Jihu a Severu v Baumově *Čaroději ze země Oz*. Je pravděpodobné, že kniha byla ovlivněna feministickými pracemi, které zdůrazňovaly nespravedlnost čarodějnických procesů a společenské nadřazenosti mužů. *Čaroděj ze země Oz* jako jedna z prvních knih také odděluje čarodějnictví a církve. Magie v zemi Oz není založena na paktu s Ďáblem a temnými silami, ale spíše na vlastním úsilí se ji naučit. Z feministického hlediska ovšem kladně vyobrazená čarodějnice Glinda stále není ideální představitelkou ženské hrdinky. Stále podléhá normám a požadavkům společnosti na ženu (pohledná, starostlivá, pečující...). Nicméně i přes to představuje zásadní změnu ve vnímání čarodějnic, jelikož přestože je za čarodějnici označována vykonává dobro. Zásadní jsou i postavy Zlých čarodějnic Východu a Západu. I přes to, že Zlá čarodějnice Západu je hlavní antagonistkou knihy, na rozdíl od Shakespearových sester má rozvinutý charakter, například má konkrétní motivace a jasně stanovené slabiny. V pozdějších zpracováních se Baumovy čarodějnice dočkají většího rozpracování jejich charakterů. Velký nárůst popularity Zlé čarodějnice Západu nastal i po vydání románu *Wicked: the Life & Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, který byl následně inspirovan pro muzikál. Obliba, které se tak původní antagonistka dočkala, nyní bez potíží zastíní i původní protagonisty příběhu.

Novopohanské náboženské hnutí wicca začalo nabývat na popularitě od poloviny dvacátého století. Důvodem jeho vzestupu je fakt, že v roce 1951 v Británii čarodějnictví oficiálně přestalo být trestným činem. Jeho zakladatel, britský okultista, Gerald Gardner tak mohl beztrestně publikovat své poznatky o tomto náboženství. Lidé následně buď pokračovali v následování gardneriánské tradice, nebo zvolili následování nových směrů wiccy. Tyto směry byly i více feministicky zaměřené. Díky tomuto nárůstu popularity čarodějnictví se také rozšířila literatura, která na toto téma byla vydávána. Široká veřejnost si tak mohla přečíst nezaujaté informace o čarodějnicích a magii což přispělo k jejich pozitivnímu vnímání. Autoři humoristického románu *Dobrá*

znamení Terry Pratchett a Neil Gaiman tak čtenářům představují postavu moderní čarodějnice. Tato čarodějnice nepodléhá stereotypům a její pohlaví pro ni není žádnou nevýhodou. Anathema se svými schopnostmi rovná mužům a dalo by se říci, že je v některých ohledech převyšuje. Jedná se o vzdělanou ženu, která ve svých devatenácti letech dosáhla doktorátu. Anathema není brána jako objekt, nepředstavuje erotickou fantazii o čarodějnictví ani není vtělením všeho špatného. Nevyčnívá ze společnosti, ale zároveň si zachovává svůj unikátní charakter. Anathema Novotriková je svědectvím moderní čarodějnice. Není to groteskní figura, která chce pouze páchat zlo. Má svoje motivace, své kladné i záporné vlastnosti jako všechny rozvinuté postavy v knize. Je to člověk z davu, protože čarodějnicí může být kdokoliv, kdo se jí cítí být. Její charakter se tímto velmi nese v duchu moderního čarodějnictví.

Tato literární analýza ukazuje, že literárními reprezentace čarodějnic je úzce spjata s dobovým postavením žen ve společnosti a nahlížení na magii. Většina negativních asociací, které byly kdysi v muži vládnoucí společnosti ve vztahu k čarodějnicím nastaveny, byly do dvacátého prvního století eradikovány. Mnoho žen shledává čarodějnictví atraktivním především proto, že je to směr založený na akceptování všech bez ohledu na postavění, pohlaví či sexuální orientaci. Popularita má za následek, že ženy čarodějnice jsou čím dál více vyobrazovány v knihách či filmech. Buď přímo jako hlavní hrdinky případně alespoň jako postavy, se kterými se ženy mohou ztotožnit.

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Image

AnonMoos. Triple Goddess Symbol, composed of waxing crescent, full moon, and waning crescent. 2005. <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/76/Triple-Goddess-Waxing-Full-Waning-Symbol.png>

Annotation

Name: Karolína Kůrková

Faculty: Faculty of Arts

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Title of the thesis: Portrayal of Witches in English Literature

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

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The aim of the thesis is to summarize the portrayal of witches in English literature. It focuses on the change of the way in which the witches are portrayed. The main part of the thesis consists of an analysis of four works that presented four different iconic approaches to witchcraft in English literature: *Le Morte Darthur* (Thomas Malory), *Macbeth* (William Shakespeare), *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (F. L. Baum) and *Good Omens* (Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman). The main goal is to connect these four representations and using historical context determine what caused the change of the perception.

Key words: Witchcraft, Magic, Witches, Literature, Feminism, Equality

Anotace

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Cílem práce je shrnout způsoby vyobrazení čarodějnic v Anglické literatuře. Zaměřuje se především na změnu stylu, jakým jsou čarodějnice vyobrazovány. Hlavní část práce se skládá z analýzy čtyř různých děl, která představují čtyři rozdílné ikonické způsoby pohledu na čarodějnictví v anglické literatuře: *Artušova smrt* (Thomas Malory), *Macbeth* (William Shakespeare), *Čaroděj ze země Oz* (L. F. Baum) a *Dobrá znamení* (Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman). Cílem je propojit tyto různé reprezentace a za využití historického kontextu určit příčinu změny chápání čarodějnic.

Klíčová slova: Čarodějnictví, Magie, Čarodějnice, Literatura, Feminismus