

# Fantastic Rites - Analysing Terry Pratchett's Re-imagination of a Coming-of-Age story in *The Wee Free Men*

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## Abstract

Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men* (2003) makes a unique approach to the design of a coming-of-age story. The story, while at the outset appears to be inspired by fairy stories with the structure and characters involved, is perhaps more remarkable for Pratchett's use of the functional elements of a ritual passage. The paper studies his re-imagination of the elements and corresponding processes of a ritual passage employing David Blumenkrantz's concept of the *initiatory constellation* to understand how such a culturally loaded structure was adopted within the fantasy genre for a modern audience and what the reimagination of this rarely used, much more traditional structure brings to the story of Tiffany Aching.

**Keywords:** Coming-of-Age Story; Ritual Passage; Terry Pratchett; *The Wee Free Men*.

## 1.1. Introduction

Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels are perhaps most easily recognized for their creative subversions of the sword and sorcery subgenre of fantasy. Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men* (2003) (*TWFM* henceforth), while forgoing the familiar satirical and parodical elements, retains the Pratchettian willingness for creative reimaginings of conventional story structures.

The events of *TWFM* are set in motion with the appearance of a creature with "a thin face with long sharp teeth, huge round eyes and dripping green hair like waterweed" (5) that Tiffany identifies as Jenny Greenteeth from *The Goode Childe's Booke of Faerie Tales*. An invasion of other fairy story characters tweaked and reanimated in Discworld's eccentricity ensue

as the Nac Mac Feegles, the Queen, Headless Horseman, and the Fairy Land itself, take stage one after the other, establishing a pattern where Pratchett's characteristic meta-fantastic influences in *TWFM* emerges prominently from fairy stories and not fantasy as is common with his previous novels of the Discworld.

*TWFM* exhibits similarities to both characters and plotlines of *Childe Rowland* and the legendary Scottish ballad, *Tam Lin* as it follows a familiar plot in fairy stories, a sister's adventure to save her brother (or brothers). However, the influence of the fairytale genre on the *TWFM* is only partially fulfilled through the elements of quest, helpers, trials, and antagonists<sup>i</sup> as Pratchett commits to the dynamics of another story structure, of the ritual passage of initiation especially the vision quest<sup>ii</sup>.

The Rite of Passage is the ritual an individual undergoes with the help and affirmation of the community to ease their movement through the cycles of life, and between different social roles. Arnold Van Gennep claims the ritual passage fulfills "an intermediate stage" (Gennep 1) between "well defined" (3) roles from "one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another" (10). At the heart of the coming-of-age ritual process, is the function to affirm the initiate's identity, and foster his/her sense of belonging within the community, culture, and beliefs so that they become a contributing member of the community.

To approach a story as a ritual passage is to reorient the emphasis on individual growth in the heroic myth structure adopted and favoured by the fantasy genre and direct it towards individual growth within a complex of relationships, where the initiate grows in relation to the elements in their environment. While the argument stands that "the hero story, or heroic romance, is also an initiation narrative" where it "maps the movement, or rite of passage, from one clearly defined and 'relatively fixed or stable state' within the social order to a new one" (Phillips) the degree of inspiration is relative and dependent on where the emphasis lies, the symbolism involved and the subsequent meaning produced by the work.

## **1.2. Granny Aching – Ancestral guiding spirit of Chalk, the elder and the witch**

The plot of *TWFM* goes so:

Tiffany Aching is a young, precocious child who lives in the Chalk with her family of Achings and wants to be a witch like her grandmother Gran-

ny Aching (an unofficial witch of the Chalk). She is warned by the Nac Mac Feegles, (tiny, pixie-like blue men but boisterous and kilt-wearing) about the river-dwelling monster, Jenny Greenteeth. Tiffany uses her brother Wentworth as bait to lure the creature and hits it with a frying pan impressing the notorious Feegles as well as Miss Tick, a witch who is observing her while in search of young witches to educate with her witch-like behaviour.

Tiffany discovers the Nac Mac Feegles in her house who help her defeat the headless horseman from the Fairy Land. Wentworth, her younger brother is abducted by the Queen of elves, and Tiffany rather than asking for help from the grown-ups who do not believe in fairy creatures or waiting for the return of Miss Tick, seeks the help of the Feegles as she resolves to rescue Wentworth on her own. She is led to the Kelda, a witch/mother figure of the Feegles. The Kelda, who is close to death, appoints Tiffany as the temporary Kelda so that the Feegles are not without a Kelda after her passing and Tiffany may be helped by the Feegles in her quest. Tiffany, armed with an iron pan finds the portal to the Fairy Land with her witch ability of First Sight and enters the Fairy Land with the Feegles leading her.

Tiffany faces grimhounds and then creatures named the dromes that capture Tiffany within a dreamworld from which the Feegles save her. Tiffany finds Roland, the son of the Baron of the Chalk and later Wentworth together with the Queen. While trying to escape with Wentworth and Roland, they are trapped in a dream from which only Tiffany manages to escape. The Queen taunts her for failing to rescue her friends and defeats her. Tiffany has a spiritual experience where her spiritual identity is grounded on the Chalk and together with the spiritual influence of Granny Aching (who appears with her sheepdogs Thunder and Lightning) Tiffany defeats the Queen. Roland, Wentworth, and the Nac Mac Feegles are revealed to have escaped the dream without dying and all of them together return to the Chalk. Tiffany is met by the representatives of the witches who acknowledge her as a witch and Tiffany allows Roland to take credit for their rescue.

Unlike the mythic, fairytale, or fantasy plot where the call for adventure and transformation is often unwelcome, the initiate of a ritual passage only undergoes the ritual passage once they are willing to undergo the process. Blumenkrantz states

There is a strong relationship between sense of community and

the ability to function competently in the community. This factor is essential to contemporary rites of passage in so far as youth learn prosocial skills, achieve a sense of mastery in different environments, and are provided with opportunities, within the community, to demonstrate these masteries, make a contribution in the community, and be recognized and affirmed for these contributions as demonstration of their movement toward maturity and adulthood (Blumenkrantz 71)

Blumenkrantz's concept of the *initiatory constellation* proposes that the initiate belongs to the constellation comprising the "individual, family, community, ancestors, spirit, nature, and the Universe" (Blumenkrantz 55). He remarks the initiate comes of age in relation to each of them for a successful rite of passage and within the "uniqueness of each culture's creation myths, symbols, belief system, rituals, and celebration forms and stories that integrate their history with the larger creation story of the universe" (169).

Once the story of *TWFM* is set in motion, Pratchett is quick to point out that the desired goal or the role/status Tiffany seeks is "to be a witch" (Pratchett, *TWFM* 3, 26, 27) and a witch "like Granny Aching" (30). The prominent contributor to Tiffany's cultural inheritance is the character of her grandmother Granny Aching and her role in *TWFM* is perhaps the most important factor distinguishing it as a coming-of-age ritual narrative.

In the events of *TWFM* Granny Aching has already passed on and we witness her through Tiffany's memories. When Tiffany remembers Granny Aching in *TWFM*, the memories are reported as if they are fables embedded with the mores of the chalk shared by the community in a collective imagination. The stories are also ethical directions for a Discworld witch, and relevant to Tiffany personally as an individual seeking to be initiated in the role. Granny Aching as a symbol in *TWFM* thus acquires a powerful synthesis of mythic and ritual roles as she is both the community's totem and while also fulfilling the roles of an ancestral spirit guide and elder for Tiffany what Granny Aching was, was there. She was always there. It seemed that the lives of all the Achings revolved around Granny Aching. Down in the village decisions were made, things were done, life went on in the knowledge that in her old wheeled shepherding hut on the hills Granny Aching was there, watching. And she was the silence of the hills. (Pratchett, *TWFM* 26) □

Pratchett offers several such tales for Granny Aching across *TWFM*, all of them carrying ethical messages relevant to the Chalk and its inhabitants. In one such tale that Tiffany remembers, the hunting dogs of the Baron kill the sheep of the community and the Baron refuses to accept responsibility for the event. Granny Aching who is asked to arbitrate, asks “A dog that kills sheep, that dog is put to death. Those laws are on these hills and these hills are in my bones. What is a baron, that the law be brake for him?” (Pratchett, *TWFM* 88)□. Subsequently, Granny Aching demonstrates to the Baron the strength hidden in the people and the social law he must follow by placing together an ewe and its lamb with the hunting dog in a barn. The ewe almost kills the dog as “An old ewe will fight like a lion for her lamb” (91) which is the law of nature familiar to the shepherds.

Within *TWFM*, the artificial mythopoeic thought is created with the accretion of stories into the symbol of Granny Aching that follows the totemic trait of what Meletinsky calls “metaphoric quality of mythopoetic thought”

Totemism is possible because of the metaphoric quality of mythopoetic thought, which represents social categories and relationships by means of natural images and codifies natural relationships by using social categories as a model. W.E.H. Stanner, for example, notes that in Australian Aboriginal mythology, human and natural elements are conjoined to become signs of what is human: the souls of new-born babies are linked to particular leaves, to fresh water or to animals, for example. The transforming of natural objects into social metaphors, and vice versa, even occurs in ancient societies, even though totemism may be attested only by some weakly expressed survivals. (Meletinsky, 209)

The metaphoric quality of these tales within the *TWFM* is also consistent with the Aboriginal Dreaming that W.E.H. Stanner, the Australian anthropologist famous for his work with indigenous Australians observes, is a ‘complex of meanings’ where an aboriginal may explain Dreaming as the totem, “the place from which his spirit came”, or consider it causal to “the existence of a custom, or law of life” (Stanner 23) where the stories/myths of the Dreaming are usually related to creation myths, cosmology, and a moral system.

In tribal cultures, where the ritual passages remain true to their original function, ritual transmission is made possible with the hyperreality of mythical consciousness like the Aboriginal Dreamtime. Here, the initi-

ate and the members of the community are steeped in stories and cosmic myths and beliefs that carry a system of ethical values and codes of social conduct and together are symbolically bound to the community's totem spirit, which has physical marker/signifiers as sacred places in the community's environment. Stanner remarks

Everywhere – within the same limit – a variant collocation of facts betokened beliefs in an intimate relation between men and environmental things, including spirits; sign and symbol-systems, using that kind of environmental imagery, had a dominant place in thought and conduct, whether social or religious; and ritual observances tied men, under the sanctions of love and duty, and of respect and fear, to what was thus symbolised. (Stanner, 127)

While the complexity and depth of a collective mythical belief system that strongly influences the everyday physical reality of the initiate like the Aboriginal Dreamtime is integral to ritual passage and cannot be imitated for the readers of a text, Pratchett comes up with astute alternatives.

It is the young Tiffany's unquestioning faith in Granny Aching that allows the readers to approach Granny Aching's character as a totem. Tiffany's memories and her admiration and love for her grandmother substitute for the mythical consciousness and mythopoeic thought of the initiate mediating the ritual passage. Pratchett's familiar trope of establishing his protagonists as reliable and competent by metafictionally questioning and seeing through events and fantasy narrative they are themselves part of can also be observed here and by contriving to make the readers meet Granny Aching through Tiffany's memories (the reliable memories of a reliable character), the memories become surrogate to totemic belief aiding the readers to accept the mystical figure of a totem/ spiritual guide figure.

For Tiffany, the memories also often emerge in response to specific places of the chalk much like how an aboriginal may recall stories of totems when visiting real physical places in their environment. Gary Snyder, notes a totem dreaming place is located in real sites to which the people of this totem often make their pilgrimage. Referring to the totem site of honey ants he says

"It mysteriously connects the essence of honey- antness with the archetypes of the human psyche and makes bridges between humanity, the ants, and the desert. The honey-ant place is in stories,

dances, songs, and it is a real place which also happens to be optimum habitat for a world of ants" (Snyder 85)□

A similar dynamic can be observed in Pratchett's description of Granny Aching's burial ground which becomes a holy ground, a shrine to which the people of the Chalk offered Jolly Sailor Tobacco to find lost sheep and lost sheep of the Chalk often gathered there as if it too was an "optimum habitat".

there were always a handful of sheep at this place now. Strays would turn up there, and lambs would find their way to it when they'd lost their mothers. This was a magic place (Pratchett, *TWFM* 100)□.

This notion of Granny Aching's and the Chalk's spiritual significance to Tiffany's identity spills into Pratchett's other novels as well. Pratchett in *A Hat Full of Sky* (2004) reveals that Tiffany's psychic landscape carries Granny Aching's hut as a safe haven. The Nac Mac Feegles encounters it when they invade her dream to protect her from the Hiver.

This is a wee bit o' her memory, the place o' her granny, the place where she's always felt safe. I'll tell ye I think that we're in the soul and center o' her. The bit o' her that is her (Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky* 245)□

When Tiffany finally builds her own hut in *The Shepherd's Crown* (2015), she builds it with remnants of Granny Aching's old hut.

Tiffany's memories of Granny Aching also evoke the Christ symbol in many ways. She is remembered as a shepherdess who searched for her lambs through the dark night, and healing and reviving them from death. She is also remembered as an agent and arbiter of justice in the Chalk representing the "good Shepherd whose pastoral world sees no winter, the Sun of righteousness that never sets" (Frye 120). Unlike the immersive fantasy world of the other Discworld novels, *TWFM* also employs the framework of a portal fantasy that enables the storyline of a ritual passage with distinct preliminal and liminal stages where the Fairy Land and its magic are representative of the initiate's interiority, spiritual realm, and psychological workings.

### 1.3. The Betwixt and Between

Each stage of the ritual; separation, liminality, and reincorporation, has

varying significance to the specific ritual<sup>iii</sup>. For a Rite of Passage into adulthood, the emphasis falls on liminality. Blumenkrantz says the liminal or second stage is where the initiate is “fully immersed in the experience of ordeal or testing” (105) and “adversity introduces us to ourselves” (83). The liminal stage he remarks, “is the place of betwixt and between, the liminal place of possibility and potentialities waiting to be born” 105).

For the initiate, a rite of passage implies a renegotiation of the balance between individuality and community membership. The coming-of-age ritual passage seeks to cultivate in the initiate greater individuality and freedom for the individual and greater responsibility towards the community. The events in the liminal phase are correspondingly a struggle with the sense of self and the sense of belonging in relation to the initiatory elements or actions that lead to it thus contributing to the growth that the ritual seeks for the initiate.

Within the events that correspond to the liminal stage in *TWFM*, both Kelda and the Feegles test Tiffany. The capabilities she is tested for are the competencies of a Discworld witch (Tiffany’s desired status) like First Sight and Second Thoughts. First Sight is the ability to see things as they are without illusions, prejudice, or prior judgement and Second thought is the ability to be objective. Both are distinct characteristics of a Discworld witch (Köhler)□ while also tools for navigating the world for a healthy adult. While journeying through the Fairy Land, Pratchett also reinterprets and re-integrates Tiffany’s personal traits which she was insecure about, into a healthy ego

You’re going to turn into somebody like Miss Tick, said her Second Thoughts. Do you really want that? ‘Yes,’ said a voice, and Tiffany realized that it was hers again. The anger rose up, joyfully. ‘Yes! I’m me, I am careful and logical and I look up things I don’t understand! When I hear people use the wrong words I get edgy! I am good with cheese. I read books fast! I think! And I always have a piece of string! That’s the kind of person I am!’ (256)

Tiffany’s growth also leads to an evolution and a new dynamic of her relationships with her initiatory constellation. Nearing the end of her quest, Tiffany’s private dislike for Wentworth’s puerility is overwhelmed by a newfound personal sense of duty and responsibility towards him and her community.



And Tiffany couldn't stop her thoughts. I don't love him. I know I don't. He's just so...But her Second Thinking said: He's mine. My place, my home, my brother! How dare anything touch what's mine! (186)

The events of TWFM can be found weakly correlated to Propp's Fairytale functions given the influence of elements and familiar plotlines. Propp's Fairytale Function 14, *The Hero Acquires the Use of a Magical Agent* (Propp *Morphology* 43) is a point of empowerment for the protagonist to face the final test. Tiffany as a subversion of the familiar story point however is not offered a magical weapon as the one Childe Rowland receives from his father. Instead, she carries a common iron pan which in the Discworld lore is as dangerous to the elves.

"Okay, ye have the pan," said Rob Anybody, "but what ye need here is a sword of thunderbolt iron. That's like the, you know, official weapon for invadin' Fairyland...." (Pratchett, *TWFM* 171)□.

The alteration allows for the focus to fall on Tiffany's agentic quality, the prominent quality of the witch as it nullifies the role of fate or the privilege by birth that offers such a magical item. The grimhounds are for Tiffany a trial of courage and the trial of dreams from the dromes demands the insight of a witch.

Blumenkrantz claims the "purpose [of the initiation] is to effect a transformation in the individual in ways that enable them to transcend their own self-interests and move into a place of empathy, compassion, and service to that which is greater than them" (Blumenkrantz 71). If the function of the ritual is to acknowledge the initiate's growth and maturity to fulfil the new role, the trials of the rituals function to test and deter the initiate. Pratchett's queen of elves who is the antagonist within the fairytale structure and the ultimate test in Tiffany's journey is also symbolic of this deterrence towards the initiate's growth. The Fairyland of TWFM in defiance of the ritual passage's goal of growth is a place where the children never face trials and ordeals and are never allowed to grow up as they never learn anything there. On the fate of Wentworth who has been taken to the Fairyland, the Kelda says

'But what he needs is love an' care an' teachin' an' people sayin' "no" to him sometimes an' things o' that nature. He needs to be growed up strong. He willnae get that fra' the Quin. He'll get sweeties. For ever.' (Pratchett, *TWFM* 133)

The Queen also attempts to deny Tiffany her passage by inspiring insecurity and fear of the new identity of a witch.

‘It’s so sad,’ she continued. ‘You dream that you are strong, sensible, logical . . . the kind of person who always has a bit of string. But that’s just your excuse for not being really, properly human. You’re just a brain, no heart at all. (230)□

In this sense, the witch or the witch status is antithetical to the symbol of the queen and representative of a mature adult individual when it represents qualities of autonomy, self-accountability, freedom, and resourcefulness.

#### 1.4. The Rebirth of Tir-far-thoinn

After her preliminary challenges, Tiffany’s journey moves through distinct steps of transformation (of symbolic death and rebirth) in the liminal phase. The imagery here is the manifestation of the internal/spiritual transformation process of ritual passage. Pratchett also invokes the origin myth/spiritual dimension of the community of the Chalk, one of Tiffany’s initiatory elements in this phase.

The Chalk features strongly in *TWFM* as the community element of the initiatory constellation. This is the element that makes a ritual passage so compatible with ecological thought, with the acknowledgement of nonhuman entities and the environment treated as an essential, non-negotiable part of an individual’s sense of community where the individual’s sense of identity involves contracts with these beings and the environment. The Chalk has a strong presence in Pratchett’s narrative from the very beginning of the story.

Early in the novel, Tiffany ruminates “They had these hills in their bones, he [Tiffany’s father] said, and they’d always been shepherds. Tiffany felt quite proud of this...” (8). It may appear to parallel words from the bible, “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground – because out of it were you taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Genesis 3:19) but Tiffany’s words convey ancestry, continuation, codependence, the acknowledgement and inclusion of the land/entity of the Chalk she is living in within her beliefs, and a sense of personal identity, or selfhood emerging from the land which is apparent in her view of the world.

The Discworld witch's characteristics, established by Pratchett's previous witches novels include autonomy, self-accountability, freedom, and resourcefulness reflecting the characteristics demanded by an initiate of a ritual passage as well as a traditional fantasy hero but a witch of the Discworld more importantly and uniquely belongs to their community. This willingness to serve the community is the central characteristic of a witch. Esme Weatherwax in her conversation with DEATH says

‘I don’t know about the world, not much; but in my part of the world I could make little miracles for ordinary people,’ Granny replied sharply. ‘And I never wanted the world – just a part of it, a small part which I could keep safe, which I could keep away from storms. Not the ones of the sky, you understand: there are other kinds.’ (Pratchett, *The Shepherd's Crown*) □

The definition of community is however not limited to humans and the witch sense of belonging extends to the land and all nonhuman life in it assuring their animal nature is fulfilled. To Esme Weatherwax, widely considered the most powerful witch of Discworld, Lancre (her home and community) despite its King, “in a deeper sense...belonged to her” (Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 164) and to the other witches of Lancre. and when later in *TWFM* young Tiffany is shown to stand up to Esme Weatherwax, asking the senior witch not to intrude upon her *business*, Esme Weatherwax concedes “I didn’t have no right to ask you. This is your country, we’re here by your leave” (Pratchett, *TWFM* 294) □. This sense of belonging and desire to protect is intense enough for it to be considered a selfish characteristic and the Queen of Elves recognises this; “Yes, that’s a very witchy thing, isn’t it,...Selfishness. Mine, mine, mine. All a witch cares about is what’s *hers*”. Tiffany in her journey understands it is not selfishness “in the way people meant” (Pratchett, *TWFM*) and embraces this characteristic.

Pratchett also gives the Chalk a dimension of a pagan creation/origin myth that is characteristic of communities in tribal cultures. The origin myth serves the purpose of grounding the initiate in the overlapping physical and spiritual world, a hyper-reality like the Aboriginal Dreamtime. Their sanctity is communicated and cultivated in the initiate through stories that become part of the initiate’s personal belief system and nurture a spiritual, ethical, and emotional relationship between humans and their environment. The Chalk is said to have been “formed underwater millions of years before from tiny seashells” (97) and acquires a personal spiritual significance to the initiate Tiffany when the Kelda says, “In our

tongue you'd be Tir-far-thoinn, Land Under Wave... It sounded like 'Tif-fan'" (110)

In the transformation phase, all of Tiffany's elements of initiatory elements converge to offer a single experience of transformation. The "principles, symbols, and patterns of initiation" Blumenkrantz notes help the initiate to "transcend their own sense of self-importance (characteristic of childhood) and guide them into another space and time for maturation to occur" and the initiate's "ordeal, common among many initiatory experiences and coupled with silence, time alone in nature, reflection, and fasting, is among a number of different patterns of initiation that alter time and space" (99). At the point of transformation in the Fairy Land, Tiffany the initiate fulfils all the requirements of the principles, and symbols, through her beliefs about the Chalk and memories of Granny Aching while her own sense of self has been questioned and reflected upon.

In Tiffany's first encounter with the Queen, she is defeated. The defeat fills Tiffany with doubt, which subsequently leads to deep introspection of her identity and self, "A thought managed to trickle through her freezing mind. Is there any me at all? Or do my thoughts just dream of me?" (270), "She could feel her *self* disappearing, getting lost" (271) [emphasis original]. Tiffany then lies down in the freezing mud believing she has failed her friends and her quest. Subsequently, she is revived by the distinct smell redolent of Granny Aching, "Silence covered Tiffany, and drew her into itself. The silence smelled of sheep, and turpentine, and tobacco" (231). This action of revival imitates the invocation phase of the ritual process where the initiate is brought into "a spiritual or quality of other worldiness" which often involves "burning incense or taking in some kind of substance" (Blumenkrantz 91). Once revived, Tiffany has a spiritual vision and undergoes a spiritual experience bound to and interweaving with the origin myth of the Chalk and Tiffany's identity as *Tir-far-thoinn* or Land Under Wave.

And then . . . came movement, as if she was falling through the ground, very fast. And gentle warmth, and, just for a moment, the sound of waves. And her own voice, inside her head. This land is in my bones. Land under wave...(Pratchett, *TWFM* 231)

Blumenkrantz says the ritual is designed to be a movement from the individual self to a community "which includes nature and Spirit, that fosters a sense of deep connection with that which is greater than one's own self all within the unfolding story of the

Universe" (73). Tiffany's initiation attunes her to a cosmological and mythic consciousness of the Chalk and she becomes part of a cosmic design larger than herself by invoking the creation myth of the Chalk.

This is the million-year rain under the sea, this is the new land being born underneath an ocean. It's not a dream. It's . . . a memory. The land under wave. Millions and millions of tiny shells . . . This land was alive. (Pratchett, *TWFM* 231)□

Granny Aching as the ancestral spirit is also part of this experience and both protects and guides Tiffany through the landscape of her mythic consciousness. Mircea Eliade says "Through initiation, the candidate passes beyond the natural mode – the mode of the child – and gains access to the cultural mode: that is, he is introduced to spiritual values" (Eliade 113). Tiffany is led to the very essence of the creation myth of the Chalk to be given the moral axiom of her new status as a witch.

All the time there was the warm, comforting smell of the shepherding hut, and the feeling of being held in invisible hands.

The whiteness below her rose up and over her head, but it didn't seem uncomfortable. It was like being in a mist.

Now I'm inside the chalk, like a flint, like a calkin . . .

...There's always been someone watching the borders. They didn't decide to. It was decided for them. Someone has to care. Sometimes, they have to fight. Someone has to speak for that which has no voice . . . (232)

Blumenkrantz says that in this process we "identify with something beyond our own ego. We may begin to know something more fully" (91). Tiffany too experiences this out-of-body experience and identifies with the land of the Chalk that is beyond her ego and her spiritual awakening deepens what Blumenkrantz calls the "sense of meaning and connection to all of life" (90). When Tiffany receives the witches' axioms, it is as Blumenkrantz says, the spiritual awakening is accompanied by introduction to the "spiritual values of the culture" (85). Tiffany proceeds to defeat the Queen through her newfound powers awakened by the immersion in the mythic consciousness of the Chalk and by commanding the spirit forms of Granny Aching's sheepdogs Thunder and Lightning.

### 1.5. Conclusion

The differences between a traditional coming-of-age story and one narrated with an understanding of the processes and elements of a ritual passage and its functions are quite stark. Perhaps such an approach may fail to fulfil the desire for the discovery of fantastic lands (maybe one's own familiar land can be defamiliarized sufficiently to negate this aspect) but what it offers in return is unique.

The resurgence of scholarship on the ritual passage in the latter half of the 20th century is down to what is widely believed to be modern society's inability to create life/individuality-affirming rituals for the individual's healthy relationship with the world. The failure of our social systems to offer ritual passage to its members is well documented and criticized for leading to "irrational and self-destructive attitudes toward the natural environment" (xix, Shepard), inability to "meet significant human needs" (Roszak, 22), "psychopathology" (Fisher, 70) and called a "global problem" when the absence of rituals create "serious breakdown in the process of maturing as a person" (Grimes, 91) as the societal structures no longer take responsibility for changing role of the individuals. A slew of terms has also emerged in recent decades to understand the consequences of alienation from the natural world like Ecological Grief (Cunsolo and Ellis), Solastagia (Albrecht et. al.), and Psychoterratic (Albrecht).

*TWFM* is a prototype for addressing these pressing concerns within the most popular literary and visual media genres of fantasy. It ties the nurturing of a healthy ego to a healthy relationship with the community and the environment where individual freedom and maturity are found not in the alienation of one's origins but in embracing it.

### Endnotes

Nikolajeva explains that fantasy novels often inherit the "basic plot of fairy tales: the hero leaves home, meets helpers and opponents, goes through trials, performs a task, and returns home having gained some form of wealth" while also staying true to the "fundamental conflicts and patterns, such as the quest or combat between good and evil". She also observes that most fantasy novels have "inherited the fairy-tale system of characters, set up by Vladimir Propp and his followers: hero/subject, princess/object, helper, giver, antagonist", allowing "freedom and experimentation with gender transgression" (Nikolajeva, "Fairy Tale and Fantasy").

<sup>i</sup>Propp observes a relationship between fairytales and rituals where elements of one form are often promised in the existence of the other. Meletinsky says Propp considered “initiation rites are the main foundation of the fairy tale” (Meletinsky 74) and Liberman notes how “Propp attempted to prove that the structure of the wondertale, as it is described in Morphology, is traceable to the initiation and funeral rites” where the “whole of the wondertale mirrored the whole of the rites” (Liberman).

<sup>ii</sup>Gennep says the stage of separation maybe prominent in funeral ceremonies, incorporation in marriages, and transition with initiation but within the specific quest, all three stages are often not of the same significance.

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