

Crone

- talking back to my future

"'It's this business with ... you know ... three,' she said. 'the maiden, the mother and ...'

'- the other one,' said Agnes

'Can't say I fancy being a crone. I ain't the right shape and anyway I don't know what sound they make.'" ⁴

Anti-ageing products annoy me. I have enough trouble with the aches and pains of ageing without the implication that such irrelevancies as wrinkles and hair colour require a shamefaced concealment. Conventionally attractive femininity has never been a large part of my identity (I've never had much) so its loss is insignificant compared to the loss of mobility, strength and intellectual capacity.

There are few positive images associated with ageing in Western culture. Other cultures seem to have had wise and respected elders, whereas we have daft old biddies and boring old farts. Is it really true that there's no upside, that in our fast moving, technology driven culture, youth and flexibility are the arbiters of value and older people have nothing to contribute? Is everything I have learned throughout my life becoming redundant, so that when am old all I shall be able to contribute is bad smells and senile ramblings?

A small girl will sometimes play with a Barbie doll as a way of trying to understand the scary, exciting possibilities of her future female identity, as if she is asking herself, 'What will it be like to have boobies, and a handbag, and a boyfriend?'

In making 'Crone', I have been playing with clay in an attempt to come to grips with all my questions about ageing, from the trivial 'What is it going to be like when I have to get someone else to cut my toenails, because I can't reach them any more?' to the terrifying 'Will I become a burden? Will my children suffer the guilt of realising that they are looking forward to my death?'