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THE NOSTALGIA BEHIND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF DEATH AND ITS PERSONIFICATION IN TERRY PRATCHETT'S DISCWORLD[**]

The paper explores the portrayals of nostalgia and the notion of death in the popular fantasy book series *Discworld,* written by Terry Pratchett. In the novels, death is not depicted as a mere natural phenomenon but rather as a recurring, fully developed character whose role throughout the series is manifold and essential to convey the author's underlying doctrine. Firstly, the paper is to briefly demonstrate the relevant perspectives on nostalgia by Davis (1979), Boym (2001,2007), and Salmose (2019) and their relation to the topic of the paper. The following part is to exemplify Pratchett's illustrations of death and the nostalgia they convey, as well as to uncover the philosophy behind the deconstruction of conventional supposition towards humanness and dying. The character of Death simultaneously functions as an objective observer of humanity and a subjective participant who frequently fails to meet the criteria of being a human. It is precisely through these instances that Pratchett invokes the uniquely human mixture of follies and decency he glorifies throughout his oeuvre. The analysis is generated by presenting different narratives centered on the character of Death, which often encompass nostalgic views on the simplicity of life in the past and the loss of human essence associated with the deteriorating social values of the contemporary era. Therefore, the research aims to investigate Pratchett's purportedly nostalgic personification of death in relation to his depiction of the aforementioned concerns.

Keywords: death, personification, nostalgia, human essence, Terry Pratchett, *Reaper Man,*

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INTRODUCTION: GRIM REAPER AND NOSTALGIA

The world that now, in my old age
I go about in,
Is not the world I was born into
Or in which I grew up. It is a world
Changed like the sea in another light,
A storm light. A world
Of raging waves and sudden terror.
Anger . . . and fright.
Legends are lost here, lost and forgotten.
There is no magic here, no ardor—
The full heart, the spirit uplifted—
Its songs are harsh, the sound is deafening.
 - Excerpt from Robert Nathan's poem *The World That Now*

Exploration of human finitude seems to be at the essence of almost every one of Terry Pratchett's works, as his anthropomorphic personification, the beloved character of Death, appears in thirty-nine out of forty-one Discworld novels. Anthropomorphic personifications can serve multiple purposes, and this paper posits that they negotiate and facilitate the acquisition of hard-to-chew notions and influence the audience's attitude toward the subject. For instance, Christina Alm-Arvus (2003:129) claims that by employing personifications, language users can "project their subjective experiences," including the way they behave, think, or react to other things surrounding them. In addition, Barbora Vinczeová (2020:67) explains that attributing human features to the inanimate is "an effort to humanize the strange," while Leilah Wendell (2001:5) emphasizes the necessity to "bring the deities down to a comfortable level for interaction," making *them* "ready to accommodate us." The aforementioned accurately explains the abundance of death-related anthropomorphic personifications in different forms of art through history and, relevant to this research, particularly in popular art, as can be notable in the work of Ingmar Bergman (1957), Alberto Casella (1936), Neil Gaiman (1988), Piers Anthony (1986), and Markus Zusak (2007) among others.

Returning to the subject of Pratchett's Death, he sometimes occupies the role of a peripheral character appearing at the onset of a novel[1] to spirit someone away, while on other occasions he takes the stage as a main character, particularly so in *Discworld's* Death subseries. He is portrayed as a black-robed "seven-foot-tall

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[1] Almost as if Pratchett wanted to convey that every beginning intrinsically comes along with an ending.

skeleton" with eyes like "tiny blue points of light" who smells of "old, forgotten rooms," carries a scythe and rides a living horse Binky[2], and whose voice, due to the absence of vocal cords, is heard inside one's brain[3] (Pratchett & Briggs, 2014: 94). While Pratchett's Grim Reaper might initially be seen as a stereotype, evidential lack of imagination or even a cliché, his anthropomorphic personification, similarly to virtually everything on Discworld, subverts the tropes and reveals there is more than meets the eye, especially so once his fondness of cats, obsession with curry and profound admiration of humanity are uncloaked.

Adriana Teodorescu distinguishes between a specific body of works that trivializes the death-literature relationship, turning it into an over-aestheticized, romanticized, cliché-fueled or even scrupulously glorified attempt to "annihilate death" and, on the other hand, between the literature that cannot "achieve immortality" but is capable of alleviating trepidations and assisting the readership in coming to terms with their own inevitable termination of life (Teodorescu, 2015: 1–5). As opposed to traditional pitiless and religiously inspired representations of the Angel of Death in art, Pratchett strives to depict Death as a pleasant and relatable fellow so that people would "stop looking at death as if it was an enemy" (Kňazeová, 2014: 30). The character of Death is still an omega to life but instead of seeing him as an obliterating mindless force, the readership is invited to put on humane glasses and observe him from a fresh perspective. Though the author of the paper acknowledges that Pratchett's opus can serve as a means to familiarize readership with complex concepts of dying or facilitate facing the inescapable ending, the research aims to shed light on another aspect of Discworld's death — nostalgia.

The etymology of the word nostalgia, coined by Johannes Hofer in his medical dissertation, shows that it is formed from the Greek word *nostos* meaning to return home, and *algia*, a painful condition. Therefore, the term could be roughly translated as a painful yearning to return home (Davis, 1979:1; Boym 2001:15). Nevertheless, the concept is "susceptible to semantic vagueness, drift, and ambiguity" (Davis, 1979:7), and has developed far from being restricted to spatial longing. Rather, it involves a set of personal and social idiosyncrasies, "*home-type* sentiments" intertwined with past or present experiences (Davis, 1979:6). As the same author elaborates, nostalgia is "that subjective state which harbors the largely unexamined belief that THINGS WERE BETTER (MORE BEAUTIFUL) (HEALTHIER) (HAPPIER) (MORE CIVILIZED) (MORE EXCITING) THEN

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[2] "He tried a skeleton horse after seeing a woodcut of himself on one, but he had to keep stopping to wire bits back on."

[3] Death's voice is recognizable in every novel as it is printed in SMALL CAPS.

THAN NOW.[4]" As Boym (2001: 16) acknowledges in this view, "consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales." In other words, nostalgia is triggered by the irreconcilable personal or collective opposition between what Davis refers to as "the Beautiful Past" and "the Unattractive Present" (Boym, 2001:30). As will be demonstrated, the stark contrast between appealing past and present anxiousness originating in anticipation of the future is particularly notable in Pratchett's *Reaper Man,* though a certain amount of nostalgia is present in every Death series novel. Therefore, the paper aims to analyze Pratchett's Death focusing on the deconstruction of the notion of death and its personification anew as a means of conveying nostalgia for the simpler life in the past.

Additionally, it is necessary to note that Pratchett was a supporter of the British Humanist Association (*Terry Pratchett / New Humanist*, n.d.) and prominently engaged in the question of what it means to be a human, or as it will be referred to in this paper – human essence. Humanism, a philosophy emphasizing the intrinsic worth and potential of human beings (Lamont, 1997:14), is beautifully woven into the fabric of Discworld, where characters grapple with existential questions and moral dilemmas. One example is the character of Sam Vimes, the no-nonsense commander of the Ankh-Morpork City Watch, who exemplifies humanist principles through his commitment to justice and the well-being of all citizens, regardless of their social status. Moreover, Pratchett's witches showcase humanism's emphasis on individuality and personal growth. These wise women reject superstition and dogma in favor of common sense and empathy, conveying that being true to oneself and understanding others' perspectives are the keys to a harmonious society. By infusing his fantastical Discworld with these humanist ideals, Terry Pratchett leaves an enduring legacy that inspires readers to reflect on the significance of human essence and the power of compassion. Human essence, can, for the purpose of this paper, be defined as fundamental qualities or characteristics that determine what it means to be human, the core aspects that set humans apart from other beings, which are grounded in rationality, self-awareness, and consciousness as well as the capacity for moral reasoning and the pursuit of meaning and purpose. Thus, the research will delve into the illustration of the conflict between genuine human essence in the past, its waning in the present, and the anxieties about allegedly threatening future (dis)order which consequently awakes nostalgia in Pratchett's Death subseries.

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[4] Capital letters are used in the source text.

WHAT CAN THE HARVEST HOPE FOR, IF NOT FOR THE CARE OF THE REAPER MAN?

As mentioned in the introduction, Pratchett's Death is an anthropomorphic personification depicted as a tall, robed skeleton with a scythe — a traditional, or even trite Western representation known as the Grim Reaper. However, before the finger is pointed at Pratchett's deficient inventiveness, the real culprit is to be revealed — humanity. Namely, as Pratchett explains in *Hogfather:*

> The shape of Death was the shape people had created for him over the centuries. Why bony? Because bones were associated with death. He'd got a scythe because agricultural people could spot a decent metaphor. And he lived in a sombre land because the human imagination would be rather stretched to let him live somewhere nice with flowers (Pratchett, 1998:276).

As the excerpt illustrates, it is humanity that chooses Death's appearance, professional equipment, and even his place of dwelling. In other words, Death is trapped in the shape people have crafted for him and cannot break free from the metaphor which turned real. Pratchett calls this phenomenon *narrative causality*, which refers to the Discworld's creative power to call into being whatever people believe exists (Pratchett, 2012:104). Therefore, allegedly opposite to the belief in our world, on Discworld, "belief predates the object" (Neely, 2014:4)[5] which is the reason for the existence of Discworld's gods[6], Tooth Fairy, Hogfather[7] and, of course, Death.

Narrative causality can be linked with Heidegger's idea of inauthenticity[8], or the inability to escape one's predetermined story – whether it be obeying gender roles, conforming to demands of social environment, submitting to a family's instruction on how to live one's life, etc. — as it governs humanity which rarely seems aware of and in opposition to it (Heidegger, 2008:68-70). As Rana concisely puts it, owing to narrative causality, people are "caught in the idea of what one is *supposed to be"* and consequently, meekly following the narrative, "fail to choose their own paths and construct their own selves" (Rana, 2018:11). The analysis of narrative causality is an adequate beginning of the exploration of Pratchett's nostalgia for the simplicity of life and restoration of human essence. Namely, as will be illustrated in the following part of the paper, the confrontation between individuality, or being oneself, and social

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[5] Or is it just another remarkably witty commentary on Earth's population's absurd naivety?

[6] Including Anoia, the goddess of things that get stuck in drawers.

[7] Discworld's version of Santa Claus.

[8] For further information, address Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* or James B. Steeve's *Authenticity and Falling in Martin Heidegger's Being and Time.*

demands for ordered and uniform members within the present/future paradigm is a frequent theme throughout Pratchett's canon.

The source of Death's fascination with humans could be found within the fact that they did bring him into being or, as Nelly (2014:5) explains, "they created him and influenced his very being." Taking the previous into account, Death acts on a principle of intrinsically human behavior – as a teen adopting the style of their favorite rock star – he attempts to imitate humanity. "He appears to derive his opinion on how he should live by observing people, but the nuances consistently escape him" (Pratchett & Briggs, 2014:94). For instance, he manipulated time and space and erected a deadly-for-the-living Victorian mansion which mirrors the residences of successful craftsmen (as he is undoubtedly the best in his line of work), he hired/adopted a dying wizard as his manservant, and he built bedrooms and bathrooms he has no use of. He even has "a pair of silver-backed hairbrushes and a little glass tray for cufflinks, despite having neither hair nor cuffs. He thinks that's what he ought to have" (Pratchett & Briggs, 2014:94). Death realizes the principle of the universe, as he explains that all Discworld's personifications "PICK UP HUMAN TRAITS" (Pratchett, 2014:86), but unlike the Auditors who loathe anything even nearly related to humans, he seems to thrive on this alikeness. It can be argued that by illustrating Death's lifestyle, Pratchett celebrates humanity, as if reminding the readership to appreciate their existence. To be more specific, Death, who became "long before humans ever considered him" (Pratchett, 2012:104) and is "almost the oldest creature in the universe (obviously something had to die first)" (Pratchett & Briggs, 2014:93), an omnipotent being that could virtually bend time and space, opts for a slightly more human approach to existence. For instance, he adopts a daughter, tries fishing, and creates a pitch-black apple orchard for his beehive interests. Therefore, the paper takes a further step to claim that Death's imitation does not, as Nelly's suggestion cited above points, derive merely from the fact that he was shaped by humanity. Rather, it is precisely Pratchett, with his fondness for human foibles and merits, and his celebratory humanist attitudes who lends the character of Death great admiration for humankind — an admiration intertwined with uneasiness about the humans' future that serves as a source of nostalgia.

Nevertheless, as Death is a personification of death with a job to do, developing too much of a personality is not seen positively by the universe. Consequently, Death's managers, the Auditors, decide to terminate their contract and find a new, less-developed employee, personality-wise. The Auditors are a group of collective "nonlife-forms" (Pratchett, 2014:7) who have an "obsession with order and conformity" (Neely, 2014:5) and who, therefore, supervise and maintain the

paradigm of the universe. Not only do they cherish their unaliveness which grants them immortality, but also foster pure hatred towards the living, particularly so in the case of humans who are unpredictable and thus a threat to the universe's order. In short, humans with their personalities make the Auditor's job burdensome, and Death, having developed a personality, needs to be punished, sentenced to life. The Auditors prefer atoms and physics to humanity for an apparent reason – their predictability and regularity are reassuring and safe. In contrast, humans' individuality makes them inefficient, and their messiness deserves to be obliterated. The extent of the Auditors' loyalty to uniformity as opposed to individualism is particularly notable when they exterminate one of their own under the suspicion of the personality development (Pratchett, 2012:7). The order of the Auditors is a straightforward allusion to the era Pratchett fears Earth is heading towards. Pratchett uses Death's encounters with the Auditors to criticize a bureaucratic and technologically driven form of governance that enforces impersonal conduct and uniformity. In other words, they represent the idea that the world would run more effectively without human essence to separate and individualize. The paper argues that Pratchett's nostalgia originates from trepidations about the future of human nature, as humanity has proven susceptible to manipulation, trends, socio-economical changes, and techno-industrial influences. Though a great enthusiast of technology (Burrows, 2020:38), Pratchett considered it a set of facilitating tools and thus had anxieties about its rapid expansion, dehumanizing potential, and the social consequences it implies. As Boym (2007:8) explains, "nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but it is actually a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams." Thus, similarly to the Auditors, the future era allegedly threatens individuality, the time of slowness, or the authentic simplicity of childhood. Technologically driven future strives for order, assimilation, and uniformity, making human peculiarities less distinguishable since each can be expressed through the binary system of zeros and ones. In relation to this, "nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time," which "desires to turn history into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time" (Boym, 2007: 8). It could be concluded that, though Pratchett is not a typical traditionalist or adversary of future prospects, many of his novels tackle the human advancement and provide commentary regarding its corruption of human essence. Nevertheless, it is not an opposition to the development that arises within his pages. Instead, it is a gentle reminder to preserve humanity, an attempt to evoke the readership's nostalgia for "better time, or slower time—time out of time, not encumbered by appointment books" (Boym, 2007: 8).

In *Reaper Man*, Pratchett conducts a rather interesting subversion of tropes - he converts Death into a mortal, Bill Door, whose clock[9] began ticking away. His whole existence gains a new dimension as now he is painfully aware of the passage of time and the inevitable end, and he cannot but wonder why people use a clock "as though it were a friend" (Pratchett, 2012:126). "Seconds had meant a lot to Bill Door, because he'd had a limited supply. They meant nothing at all to Death, who'd never had any "(Pratchett, 2012: 263). Once his life sand runs out, Death, like every other human being, inherently tries to deny the end, which leads him to a duel with his power-blinded heir, New Death.

It is relevant to underline another instance by which Pratchett illustrates the importance of human individuality in the face of global conformity. As Bill Door reaps, he cuts each blade of grass separately, denoting that he doesn't regard the field as a collective entity to be ordered, shaped, and ruled. Instead, as is notable from the following excerpt, he bestows acknowledgment and appreciation to each blade of grass, just like he used to do as Death with each dying person.

> "But why one blade of grass at a time?"
> "THERE IS ANOTHER WAY? "
> "You can do lots in one go, you know."
> "NO. NO. ONE BLADE AT A TIME. ONE TIME, ONE BLADE" (Pratchett, 2012:107).

As already stated in the introduction, Pratchett's portrayal of human essence can be seen in the deep and complex emotions, thoughts, and motivations of his characters who often grapple with existential questions and moral dilemmas. Pratchett's exploration of empathy, compassion, and the connections between individuals in the Death series suggests that the essence of humanity lies in our ability to understand and care for others, by valuing their unique existence, as illustrated in the example above.

There is a three-way parallel in *Reaper Man* that originates from Pratchett's intention to glorify human essence and its uniqueness which can be observed through the prism of nostalgia. Ultimately, the blades of grass are wiped out by the brand new agricultural machine, Combination Harvester, instead of being graciously and uniquely reaped by Bill Door, equally as the humanity on Discworld is carelessly brought to oblivion by New Death whose sole purpose is not to perform the job but to ruthlessly rule the fearful living – "the reaper does not listen to the harvest" (Pratchett, 2012:280). "In both cases, he fights against the anti-individualistic threat

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[9] Sand in the hourglass, actually.

they pose: the harvester reaps many crops at once with a kind of impersonal behavior, much like the New Death" (Neely, 2014:6). The final aspect of the mentioned triad is also the least obvious one – the future reveals its menace to the human essence, seeking uniformity and obedience, annihilating the oddities and foibles in the name of the efficient and predictable order. Once again, nostalgia arises from the longing for a simpler, more humane attitude toward life when facing the vague yet looming rigidness of the future. Boym (2007: 7) considers nostalgia as a consequence of unfulfilled utopias in the past and dissatisfactions with the present, which, when combined, led to an outmoded belief in the future, "while nostalgia, for better or worse, never went out of fashion." Similarly, Niklas Salmose sees nostalgia as an engaging device, "the present stubbornly rooted in the past" which refuses to yield to the "many tomorrows inherent in every new technology, product, and digitally mediated event" (Salmose, 2019:1). Nevertheless, Pratchett is not blinded by the nostalgic stance of the idealness of the past. On the contrary, he, at times, twists nostalgia into satire, a social commentary on the past ways of humanity. For instance, in *Mort*, the discussion between Death's apprentice, Mort, and Death's adopted daughter, Ysabel, reveals the subversion and deconstruction of nostalgia. While Ysabel stands for nostalgia and glorification of the "romantic" pyramids "by moonlight," Mort's critical observation that they are "mortared with the blood of thousands of slaves" breaks the nostalgic enchantment and underlines the concerns about luxury and human suffering, thus exposing the diabolical truth behind the nostalgic attraction of the ancient monuments (Pratchett, 2012: 225). Boym discusses such an acerbic approach to nostalgia in her distinction between restorative[10] and reflective nostalgia. Namely, she elaborates that reflective nostalgia, the kind the paper argues is present in Pratchett's work, is "ironic and humorous" as it "reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another" (Boym, 2001: 49–50). In other words, in the case of reflective nostalgia, memories of the charming past do not prevent one from employing proper judgment, critical reflection, or basic ethics.

Besides actively participating in human experience as farmer Bill Door in *Reaper Man,* Death has been a keen observer of humans who objectively comments on their everyday absurdities, such as in the following excerpts. " MOST PEOPLE ARE RATHER STUPID AND WASTE THEIR LIVES" (Pratchett, 2013:154) or "HUMANS ARE SO INTERESTING THAT THEY HAVE EVEN INVENTED DULLNESS. QUITE ASTONISHING" (Pratchett, 1998: 433). The two humorous instances rely on satire as a form of criticism. Still, it can be argued that Pratchett points to the meaningless manners in

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[10] For more information, see Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia.*

which humans waste their lives, thus conveying a vital message of the necessity for seeking the purpose or the essence of living. His satire further reveals nostalgia, which corresponds to Davis' (1979: 5) understanding that nostalgia originates from our lives as social actors, especially since it inspects memories of the past with the aim of bestowing meaning in our present and future. Similarly, Pratchett's Death scrutinizes society, observes human roles and ways, explores the changes that the passage of time brings, and attempts to add meaning to his own reinvented human personality.

In *Mort,* as already mentioned, Death, oscillating between his duty and sympathy for humanity, hires an apprentice in an attempt to further explore his nearly compulsive imitation of humanity. As an everyman exhausted with the dullness of his job, he "FELT IT WAS TIME FOR A CHANGE" (Pratchett, 2009:215). Taking up the allegedly great pleasures of life — "fishing, dancing, gambling and drink" and failing to see their purpose, Death hopes to find a more humane employment, preferably something which includes "FLOWERS OR KITTENS" (Pratchett, 2009:207, 227). In his doctoral thesis on Discworld, Özbay (2021:260) considers Death as being "able to look at these things, which people have been taking for granted, from a great distance, just as the fantasy reader is able to look at their own lives and world through the distance created by the author." The explanation aligns with the paper's topic since, intending to resuscitate human essence, Pratchett employs satire intertwined with nostalgia to draw attention to irreversible time spent on futile activities such as making canapes. "THAT'S MORTALS FOR YOU. THEY'VE ONLY GOT A FEW YEARS IN THIS WORLD AND THEY SPEND THEM ALL IN MAKING THINGS COMPLICATED FOR THEMSELVES" (Pratchett, 2009: 48). As an observer of humanity, Death in *Mort* (which chronologically takes place before *Reaper Man),* is aware of the appearance of certain activities but not their purpose, and having experienced them entirely, only grasps their meaninglessness. Finally, overwhelmed by the confusion, he surrenders to the serenity of Ankh-Morpork[11] and experiences his first and genuine moments of happiness.

> The seagulls swooped and dived around him. A one-eyed cat, down to its eighth life and its last ear, emerged from its lair in a heap of abandoned fish boxes, stretched, yawned, and rubbed itself against his legs. The breeze, cutting through Ankh's famous smell, brought a hint of spices and fresh bread. Death was bewildered. He couldn't fight it. He was actually glad to be alive and very reluctant to be Death (Pratchett, 2009:178).

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[11] Which seems to be a unique moment as the city, according to Pratchett, never sleeps.

That is to say, contemporary narrative causality, or comparably, Heidegger's inauthenticity, traps individuals into uniform socioculturally shaped molds, obstructing the pathway to self-discovery. In addition, the futilities imposed by the modern era, or as Death refers to them, weaknesses of the flesh, drag humanity away from true happiness and hinder their recognition of universal harmony and the waning essence of humanity (Pratchett, 2009: 237). Similarly, to Death, Nietzsche's Zarathustra achieves the "perfect moment" by recollecting the essence of his soul while surrounded by nostalgic Alpine tranquillity. Boym (2001: 26) underlines that the Nietzschean epiphany does not originate in urban, cosmopolitan, present, or futuristic conditions, but its source is a nostalgic reminiscence on a mountaintop. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Pratchett's nostalgia for the simplicity of life is also pronounced through strikingly different portrayals of the rural kingdom of Lancre and the urban, cosmopolitan city of Ankh-Morpork. Namely, while the former is filled with organic kind of magic, folk traditions, preservation of the traditional and images of nature, the latter is described as a place where magic is institutionalized, and crimes are legalized and taxed; it is a polluted, yet charmingly hectic environment prompted by capitalist values and aspirations for techno-industrial development. Moreover, in *Reaper Man,* once Death becomes mortal, he is presented with a virtually indefinite spectrum of lifestyle possibilities. Nevertheless, he opts to impersonate a quiet farmer, Bill Door, and spend his life in the comforting serenity of rural life. It is possible that Pratchett poured his own vision of an ideal life into his novels since he spent most of his life in the tranquility of Gayes Cottage, an idyllic place with a garden, goats, and beehives (Burrows, 2020:38).

Finally, it can be argued that the events in *Mort* and *Reaper Man* brought Death to the utter realization of human essence's value, and thus his sheer interest transformed into complete devotion to such extent that he opts to bend the principles of his trade for the sake of humanity as is notable in *Hogfather,* the novel which also tackles the threat of an inauthentic and monotonous future. Namely, Hogfather is abducted as a part of another Auditors' scheme to eradicate humanity, which endangers human belief. Death understands that belief is the very core of being a human and therefore does his part[12] and impersonates the Hogfather to maintain the holiday magic. To put it into the perspective of the paper, it is of utter importance for the belief to be preserved as it is the parallel of the collective reminiscence that characterizes humanity. Hence, as long as the nostalgia for the past holiday traditions and the celebratory magic prevails in the face of an indiscernible future, the Auditors are deflected, and so is the inauthenticity of modernity. In other words, "through plotting this temporary disappearance of the Hogfather,

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[12] Quite literally, as Death, being skeleton and all, dresses up as Santa Claus and saves the holiday.

Pratchett reflects on the existential crisis of fantasy and belief in our contemporary world and addresses a philosophical conception regarding the essential existence of fantasy and belief to define our being human" (Huang, 2018:177). As Death explains to his granddaughter Susan, "IT IS THE THINGS YOU BELIEVE WHICH MAKE YOU HUMAN," since without the belief the sun would be a "MERE BALL OF FLAMING GAS" and the little lies such as Tooth fairies, the Hogfather/Santa Claus are little lies that teach the humans to believe in big ones such as "JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING." (Pratchett, 1998: 409,422). That is to say, the diminishment of belief in the present prompts Pratchett's nostalgia; without it, humanity will revel in the utmost chaos — an entirely opposed paradigm of order from the one the Auditors aim to achieve. Furthermore, Death conveys that the future without belief, and consequently, the essence of humanity will not be merely inauthentic but rather hectic disarray, deprived of basic human principles such as justice, mercy, and duty.

However, the ultimate question may remain — why does Pratchett opt to deconstruct and personify the notion of death to convey nostalgia? Death, as an abstract notion or anthropomorphic personification, certainly connotes inescapability, omnipresence, and finality. In addition, Death is an interspatial and transtemporal carrier of knowledge and experience, an all-encompassing image of the world's wisdom. Nevertheless, the paper argues that it is not his omnipotent might that allows Pratchett's character of Death to resonate with the audience. Rather, it is his undeniable humanness and relatability that enables Pratchett to convey the nostalgic philosophy on the simplicity of life and the very core of being a human, with all the emotions, desires, and the profound connection people have with each other and the world around them. This exploration of the human essence challenges Death's previously detached and distant view of existence, firstly in *Mort,* as he comes to appreciate the richness and complexity of mortal lives, and later in *Reaper Man* and *Hogfather,* where he is forced to experience mortality and vulnerability as well as to bend the rules of the universe to maintain belief for the very sake of human essence survival—all of which further deepens his understanding of humanity and the value of life.

CONCLUSION – NOLI TIMERE MESSOREM

It can be concluded that Pratchett's Death series playfully intertwines the concepts of death and nostalgia. Even though, at first glance, the character of Death appears like a jolly tragicomic imitator of humanity, the more profound analysis unmasks the fact that he might be the most humane Discworld character. In other words, Death is an "entity that we might otherwise instinctively consider humanity's antithesis" (Lockett, 2021:205), who grew to understand the relevance of human essence, initially by

observing and imitating, later by participating in humanity, and finally, by ensuring the veracity of the big lies – justice, duty, and mercy. The concept of death is a fundamental human principle that frequently serves as a sinister remainder of our own mortality. Nevertheless, besides being wonderfully innovative, Pratchett's characterization "showed us that the anthropomorphic personification of death makes the end of our existence just a little less scary" (Miori, 2016:465). However, the paper proves that besides serving to reconcile with our own mortality, Death underlines the importance of belief and carries the nostalgic connotations that allude to the core of a human being. Davis (1979:110) considers nostalgia a "crepuscular emotion" that "takes hold when the dark of impending change is seen to be encroaching, although not so fast as to make a monster loom where but a moment ago stood a coat tree." In a similar manner, Pratchett tackles the encroaching anxieties of the future through the personification of the Auditors. The Auditors and the looming future striving to convert individuality into a homogenous mass is seen as a peril to humanity's essence, which the author intends to mitigate through different means: humor, intertextuality, parody, satire, and, most importantly for this paper — nostalgia. Pratchett's nostalgia not only reenchants and offers shelter from a worrisome future but also confirms Davis' view that nostalgic sensation need not merely feed upon or revel in the past as it can be used as the means of creative expression in the present (Davis, 1979:116). Finally, Bill Door's care for each stalk and Death's appreciation of every human life despite its brevity mirrors Camus' diary entry: *"Disseminated by the wind, harvested by the wind, and yet a creator, this is the man, through the centuries, and proud of living only for a single moment"* (Camus, 2008:184). Hence, regardless of the fantastic in Pratchett's oeuvre, Discworld is bound to reality and particularly so in the case of Death's characterization as he dives into the core of humanity, disclosing the fundamental aspects of human peculiarities, reminding us of the preciousness of life.

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NOSTALGIJA KAO SREDSTVO DEKONSTRUKCIJE I PERSONIFIKACIJE LIKA SMRTI U DISKSVETU TERIJA PRAČETA

Rezime

Rad se bavi pojmom nostalgije u romanima o Disksvetu autora Terija Pračeta čiji je protagnosta Smrt. Teorijski deo rada u vezi sa pojmom nostalgije se najviše oslanja na uvide Svetlane Bojm, Freda Dejvisa i Niklasa Salmosa. Nadalje, rad ispituje prisustvo nostalgije u romanima, polazeći od ideje da je nostalgija u Pračetovim delima protkana nemirima u vezi sa budućnošću i da se javlja kao rezultat razočaranosti sadašnjošću u poređenju sa okolnostima iz prošlosti. Naime, Smrt je

antropomorfna personifikacija predstavljena kao tipični kosač u savremenoj kulturi koji naizgled potvrđuje klišee fantastike. Kako radnja romana odmiče, otkriva se da ovaj protagonista zapravo ima ulogu da sugeriše čitaocima relevantne elemente Pračetove filozofije. Smrt, prvo u ulozi posmatrača, a zatim i kao deo čovečanstva ističe ljudske vrline i mane, istovremeno kritikujući i slaveći čovečanstvo. Rad ima za cilj da pokaže da Pračetova nostalgija iskazana kroz lik Smrti služi kao podsetnik o jednostavnosti života i suštini ljudskosti koje su ugrožene od strane uniformisanog, sistematičnog i dehumanizovanog društvenog poretka budućnosti.

Ključne reči: Teri Pračet, Disksvet,nostalgija, Smrt, antropomorfna personifikacija, *Kosač*

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