

# Death, the Wintersmith and Dorfl: The Human in the Non-human

Exploring characters and themes in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Terry Pratchett (1948-2015) oli Iso-Britannian menestyneimpiä kirjailijoita. Elämänsä aikana hän julkaisi 41 romaania, jotka sijoittuvat hänen <i>Discworld</i>-fantasiasarjaansa ja samannimiseen fantasiamaailmaan. Lisäksi hän kirjoitti useita teoksia kyseisen sarjan oheiskirjallisuudeksi, ja myös muita romaaneja ja tarinoita. Uransa aikana Pratchett tuli tunnetuksi Alzheimerin tautiin sairastuneiden puolestapuhujana kerrottuaan diagnoosistaan julkisuudessa vuonna 2007. Hän oli humanisti, mikä näkyy myös hänen romaaneissaan ja niiden teemoissa.</p> <p>Tutkielmassani käsitelen Pratchettin ihmiskuvaa kolmen hänen <i>Discworld</i>-sarjansa hahmon avulla. Hahmot, joita tutkimuksessa tarkastelen ovat Death, kuoleman henkilöitymä; wintersmith [sic], talven henkilöitymä; ja golem Dorfl. Golem on juutalaisessa kansanperinteessä esiintyvä savesta muotoiltu olento. Tutkielmani luo katsauksen Pratchettin romaanien teemoihin ja hahmoihin, sekä siihen, miten niissä kohdataan ihmiselämän kysymyksiä ja niiden mahdollisia vastauksia.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni aineisto koostuu neljästä <i>Discworld</i>-sarjan romaanista: <i>Mort</i> (1987), <i>Reaper Man</i> (1992), <i>Feet of Clay</i> (1997) ja <i>Wintersmith</i> (2006). Hahmoja ja romaanien teemoja tarkastellaan lähiluvun ja hahmo- sekä kirjallisuusanalyysin avulla. Piirteitä, joita hahmoissa tutkitaan, ovat ulkonäkö, ääni, suhde muihin hahmoihin, hahmopiirteet ja pronominit. Hahmojen tarkastelussa hyödynnettävät kategoriat ja tutkimuksen käyttämä määritelmä hahmosta pohjautuvat Uri Margolinin luonnehdintaan fiktiivisistä hahmoista epätodellisina henkilöinä (<i>non-actual persons</i>). Tutkittavien romaanien teemat ja tarkasteltavien hahmojen inhimilliset piirteet taustoittuvat Terry Pratchettin humanistiseen vakaumukseen. Deathin, wintersmithin ja Dorflin hahmojen avulla romaaneissa pohditaan ihmisyyttä ja inhimillisyyttä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksestani käy ilmi, että romaaneissa, joissa Death on päähenkilönä (<i>Mort</i> ja <i>Reaper Man</i>), korostuu ihmiselämän rajallisuus, sekä ajatus oikeuden ja armon sidoksellisuudesta yksilöön ja hänen tekoihinsa. Pratchett tuo esiin näiden käsitteiden inhimillisen alkuperän vastoin käsitystä niistä korkeamman olennon asettamina voimina. <i>Wintersmith</i>-romaanissa puolestaan näytetään, että ihminen on muutakin kuin keho ja aivot. Romaanin ja wintersmithin hahmon kautta Pratchett korostaa, että ihmiset tarvitsevat toisia ihmisiä ja tarinoita kasvaakseen tasapainoisiksi henkilöiksi. <i>Feet of Clay</i>-romaanissa Dorflin hahmon kautta pohditaan yksilön oikeuksia ja velvollisuuksia, sekä valinnanvapauden mukanaan tuomaa moraalista vastuuta. Golemeita kohdellaan orjina ja niiden on noudatettava käskyjä, joita ne saavat omistajiltaan ja paperiliuskoista (<i>chem</i>), jotka pohjautuvat uskonnollisiin teksteihin. Romaanissa Dorfl saa vapaan tahdon ja ryhtyy korostamaan omien valintojen ja tekojen moraalista vastuuta.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen kohteena olevat hahmot ja romaanit heijastavat Pratchettin humanistisia arvoja. <i>Discworld</i>-romaneissa käsitellyt teemat ohjaavat lukijoiden ajattelua kohti pohdintaa yksilön vapauksista ja oikeuksista, sekä ihmisenä olemisen vahvuuksista ja heikkouksista. Hahmoanalyysi työkaluna mahdollistaa teemojen syvällisen käsittelyn ja näin kiinnostavan näkökulman teoksiin ja Pratchettin arvoihin.</p>			
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# 1. Introduction

Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* is filled with gods and goddesses, dwarfs, vampires, werewolves, golems, anthropomorphic personifications, zombies and other non-human beings. Despite the fantasy setting, the problems and issues that the characters face are very real. The main setting of many of the novels is the city state of Ankh-Morpork, a melting pot of races and cultures.

*Discworld* is a comedic fantasy series of 41 novels, which parodies many aspects of fantasy, science fiction, popular culture in general and human nature. In this thesis I analyse and compare the characterisations of three characters in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series: Death, a personification of death; the wintersmith, a personification of winter and Dorfl, a golem. Both Death and the wintersmith are personifications, which means that they are abstract concepts represented as characters (Eder et al, 45). Death makes an appearance in most *Discworld* novels, but he has a major role in five: *Mort* (1987), *Reaper Man* (1992), *Soul Music* (1994), *Hogfather* (1996) and *Thief of Time* (2001). I have chosen the first two for closer study, as *Mort* and *Reaper Man* form a continuity focused on Death discovering what human life is like. Unlike Death, the wintersmith makes his only appearance in the eponymous novel *Wintersmith* (2006). Dorfl is introduced in *Feet of Clay* (1996) but he makes an appearance also in later *City Watch* novels. Through his non-human characters Pratchett explores the human condition from the outside point of view of an impartial observer.

The characters' appearance, voice, character traits, relations to other characters and the pronouns that are used of them are examined through questions posed by Uri Margolin in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, which I will expand on in the second subchapter. Understandably this is a limited overview, as I only examine three characters and four novels out of a series with 41 novels. In this thesis I seek to answer how the non-human characters written by Pratchett exhibit humanity in a world inhabited by humans and non-humans alike, and what it means to be a person, although a fictional one, according to Pratchett.

In the subchapter below I will present a short biography of Terry Pratchett and an introduction to the *Discworld* and some of the fantasy world's mechanics. In the second subchapter I will introduce the background and theory of character used in the thesis, and in the remaining three subchapters I will present synopses of the three novels to be analysed.

## 1.1. Terry Pratchett and his Discworld

Terry Pratchett was born in England in 1948 ('About Sir Terry'). In *Terry Pratchett: The Spirit of Fantasy* Craig Cabell examines Terry Pratchett's life and his early works. Pratchett published his first short story 'The Hades Business' in 1963 at the age of fifteen, having written it two years earlier (7). He applied for work in a local newspaper called Bucks Free Press, and once hired left school in 1965 to work as a journalist, publishing his short stories in his own column in the paper (10). He worked as a journalist for most of the 1970s until 1980 when he quit journalism to be a press officer for nuclear power stations (28). His early works were stand-alone novels (*The Carpet People*, 1971; *The Dark Side of the Sun*, 1976; *Strata*, 1981) before *Discworld*, the series he is most well-known for (20). His first work situated in *Discworld*, *The Colour of Magic* was published in 1983 (46). Pratchett has said that he began writing *Discworld* as an 'antidote to fantasy', having felt that in the 1980s the genre was filled mostly with copies of Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings* (BBC4, 00:01:35-00:02:08).

Pratchett was a supporter of the British Humanist Association and appeared in their projects such as Humanism for Schools where he would talk on videos about humanist values and secular life ('Andrew Copson', 00:00:12-00:00:38). In 2007 Pratchett made his diagnosis with early-onset Alzheimer's disease public, and he continued to speak about the disease and its effects on his and other peoples' lives in interviews (Shakespeare). He also became a vocal proponent of assisted dying – his most famous appearance on the subject being his 2010 Richard Dimbleby Lecture, where the actor Tony Robinson read his essay 'Shaking Hands with Death' at his request due to the progressing disease. In 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015 his passing was announced in a series of three prewritten tweets posted on his twitter account by his friend and personal assistant Rob Wilkins (Sampat; *Discworld.com*).

*Discworld* itself is a disc carried on the backs of four elephants, who stand on the shell of a turtle, the Great A'Tuin, who swims through space. It houses numerous races familiar to many from fantasy fiction and folklore, such as dwarfs, elves, trolls and goblins, but also igors, a humanoid clan, its' descendants being stitched out of mismatching body parts and usually can be found serving vampires or mad scientists (*Folklore of Discworld*, loc. 1618). Though the fantasy world owes much of its inhabitants and descriptions to the fantasy works of Tolkien, for example, Pratchett has made it his own by developing the fantasy creatures and the world's physics in his own direction, like the igors described earlier. Many of the beings in *Discworld*, as previously mentioned, have their counterparts on Earth. *Discworld*'s physics also seem strangely familiar, because even though it is a fantasy world, it has a

physics of its own, namely magic. The magic that runs Discworld is called *the narrative imperative*, in other words stories have the power to change reality (*The Science of Discworld*, 10). Every atom has *narrativium*, the building block of stories in it. Pratchett says that *narrativium* ‘causes [things] to be what they are’ (10), without it they cease to exist as can be expected of a world that is built on stories.

## 1.2. Character, Character Traits and Characterisation

In this section I will present the theory and terms used further in the thesis, namely *character* and *characterisation*.

Characters are often taken for granted when reading or watching films or television series. They bring life to the story world and are what most readers focus on in the story. Film theory, psychology and literary studies define characters differently and focus on different aspects in characters. Definitions on character are as numerous as the sciences that study them. In *Characters in Fictional Worlds* (=CFW) Eder et al. present that characters are often framed as ‘fictive persons’ or as ‘fictional analogues to human beings’ (7).

The authors recognise that while these kinds of definitions are intuitive to most people, they are not without their own problems, since they exclude non-human or non-anthropomorphic characters, such as ents from *The Lord of the Rings* and Hedwig from *Harry Potter*. Even *Discworld*’s Death’s status as a character could be seen as questionable, as he is an anthropomorphic personification and not a human. As debating the ontological status of characters is not the focus of this thesis, I choose to use a definition of character as ‘a narrative agent’, a participator in the story world, as presented by Uri Margolin in his essay ‘Characterization in Narrative: Some Theoretical Prolegomena’ (1).

Characterisation is a process of connecting properties, traits and other information on surroundings, appearance, actions and relationships to a character, which contribute to how the character is perceived by readers. Extratextual information on popular character types as well as knowledge about real life phenomena and culture also affect the inferences people make of characters (CFW, 33). Eder et al. describe characterisation as a continuum between *direct characterisation* and *indirect characterisation*, *alterocharacterisation* and *self-characterisation*. Examples of more direct characterisations are textually explicit descriptions or statements on a character: age, personality (extroverted, shy, flirtatious, etc.) and gender. More indirect instances of characterisation are inferences that can be made for example about descriptions of a character’s appearance (clothes, expressions of style, facial expressions, etc.)

the state of their location (e.g., clean or messy room) and actions. Alterocharacterisation and self-characterisation differentiate between the characterisation statements made by other characters and the narrator, and those made by the characters about themselves. As Eder et al. point out, characterisation statements made by characters about themselves or other characters are restricted by subjectivity and influenced by motivations and values and can thus lead to indirect self-characterisations when these statements are proven to be false or unreliable.

Uri Margolin, influential in narrative and character studies, in his chapter on character in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* distinguishes between three major theoretical points of view for character (66): characters as artificial literary figures, made to some purpose by the author; characters as non-actual individuals existing in fictional worlds; and characters as mental images in the reader's mind. In the context of this thesis I am not interested in the ontological questions on character, as noted earlier. What I am interested in are the types of properties that the characters have, and ways to categorise those properties. For this purpose, I will use the three questions presented by Margolin on examining character identity (72): 1. What is the given individual like (appearance, behaviour, thoughts)? 2. What distinguishes it from all other coexisting individuals? 3. What kind of an individual is it? . These questions act as the basis for my categorisation of character properties under appearance, voice, how other characters view the character being analysed, character traits and pronouns. However, let me first introduce the novels to be studied.

### 1.3. *Mort*

*Mort* is the story of Mort, short for Mortimer, who is taken by his father to a market in the hope of someone taking him in as an apprentice. At the stroke of midnight, a hooded stranger arrives on his horse. The figure is revealed to be Death and he is looking for an apprentice. Death takes Mort to his Domain, a space created and shaped by him. There he meets Ysabell, Death's adopted human daughter, and Albert, Death's manservant.

Out on his first assignment with Death, they come to collect the soul of a king that is assassinated. Mort feels sorry for him and drawn towards his daughter, Princess Keli. When working on his own for the first time, he is sent to collect Princess Keli's soul. Mort goes against history and saves her life on a whim. Because of this, a pocket reality forms around the castle and the area surrounding it, inside which the princess is still alive, but it grows smaller. The rest of the world carries on as if she has died: people continuously forget that she is still alive. Death decides to give more of his duties to Mort, so that he (Death) can 'see'

more of life (*M*, 137). Death tries to have fun by having a go at life's four pleasures: fishing, dancing, gambling and drinking.

While Death is having 'fun', Mort is looking for a spell to stop the pocket reality from growing smaller. Together with Ysabell he finds out that Death's manservant Albert is actually the founder of the Unseen University, a university for wizards. While becoming familiar with human pastimes, Death discovers that he is glad to be alive and that he would rather not be Death. Death goes to the Discworld equivalent of an employment agency and is given a job as a cook in an eatery. Mort, Ysabell and Albert begin worrying over Death's disappearance, and try to keep up with his duties.

The more Mort works as Death, the more Death-like he becomes. Albert marks that Mort is not just Death, but 'Death with all the human seasonings of vengeance, cruelty and distaste', as Mort is pressuring him for help to save the Princess Keli, as she could die when the pocket reality disappears (*M*, 245). After Albert reluctantly reveals that there is a spell to slow down the shrinking of the pocket reality, Mort and Ysabell are off to complete a few final assignments before the rescue. Albert wants the old Death to return as he worries over Mort's transformation, so he leaves Death's Domain to go to Ankh-Morpork and orders wizards to help him perform the Rite of AshkEnte, a spell to summon Death. This spell draws together Death, and the Death like qualities that Mort has developed making Mort human again and returning Death back to himself. Mort and Ysabell try to rescue Princess Keli once more by taking her and her court wizard Cutwell to Death's Domain. In there, Death is waiting and Mort challenges Death to a duel with his (Mort's) life on the line in order to save his friends. Death has the upper hand and as he is about to strike Mort, Ysabell throws back at him a phrase that he and Mort as Death have repeated throughout the novel 'THERE IS NO JUSTICE. THERE'S JUST ME'. Mort and Ysabell together convince him that he has taken things too far and he is being vindictive. As a form of apology, Death arranges with gods for the reality with Princess Keli alive to become the predominant reality. The novel ends with the marriage of Mort and Ysabell, where Death is invited to as a guest and all is well.

#### 1.4. *Reaper Man*

In *Reaper Man* entities called the Auditors of reality have decided to retire Death, as they dislike him having a personality which according to them leads to 'irregularities' (*RM*, 6), so referring to the events of *Mort*. Death is given a lifetimer of his own by the auditors, with sand running through it. Lifetimers are introduced in *Mort* as hourglasses that show how



much life a person has left: all living beings have one. For the first time Death has time that is going to run out, he is going to die. Death decides to spend the time he has left living and experiencing.

In Ankh-Morpork a wizard named Windle Poons is waiting for his life to end. Wizards and witches know when they are going to die a natural death, a special courtesy of Death's. According to tradition, the wizards organize a surprise going-away party for Windle Poons, which does not run as smoothly as expected since the guest of honour, Death himself, does not arrive. Windle's death comes late, but because Death does not come to guide his soul forwards, he has nowhere to go except back to his own body thus making him undead, a zombie. The wizards try to help him stay dead, without success. As Death is not doing his work, and a new Death has not formed out of the imagination and belief of the humans yet, nothing is dying. Other beings with less imagination have received their own Deaths, including rats and fleas. The surplus life energy caused by people not-dying is causing poltergeist-like activity around the city. Small, round and mysterious snow globes appear around the city. They are parasites that hatch into objects that resemble shopping trollies, which later conglomerate into a gigantic shopping centre which threatens to absorb and enslave the whole city of Ankh-Morpork. Meanwhile Death finds work as a farmhand for a Miss Flitworth at her farm.

Death creates an alias as Bill Door. Bill Door becomes familiar with the surrounding town and the people in it and finds satisfaction in his work, reaping the hay with a scythe and helping with the harvest. He rescues Sal, a small girl, from a fire despite knowing that doing so would be risking the very balance of reality. He gives her some of his time, leaving him with less. Miss Flitworth discovers his identity. Together they decide to try to fight against the new Death. In order to do so they sharpen a scythe using anything they can find, steel, satin, silk, cobweb, a breeze and finally daylight to make it sharp enough to serve Death. Bill Door takes the newly sharpened scythe to the blacksmith to be destroyed, so that it is 'killed' and that its ghost can be used by Death. The blacksmith, called Simnel, presents to Bill Door his invention: the Combination Harvester [sic]. Bill Door is unimpressed by the contraption and worries over what the harvest will think of it, as it is not given the same careful attention that he is used to, cutting each blade one at a time.

When the sand runs out of Bill Door's lifetimer, he faces the new Death in town square at the twelfth stroke of midnight. The blacksmith has not destroyed the scythe, so Bill Door chooses to use the ordinary scythe he used to cut the harvest with. Bill Door is struck down by the new Death and as he is about to advance on him, they are surprised by the sound of sand

running inside the timer that had just run out. Miss Flitworth gives some of her time to Bill Door, distracting the new Death for long enough for Bill Door to slash him with his scythe now sharpened by anger. The new Death doubles over and disappears in a column of smoke, leaving Death victorious. The Auditors of reality try once more to get rid of Death, this time by possessing the Combination Harvester that Bill Door has tampered with, causing it to break down. Death must leave to take care of the excess life energy and the undead people, but he assures Miss Flitworth that they will meet again soon.

In Ankh-Morpork the wizards manage to destroy the shopping centre, returning things back to normal, if there is such a thing as normal in Ankh-Morpork. After Death has caught up with his work, he is left with one more lifetimer on his table. He goes to meet Azrael, the Death of all Deaths. To balance things out, he asks for more time for Miss Flitworth, because she gave him some of hers. It is time to meet with Miss Flitworth, but he feels that he owes something to Bill Door, so he does what is expected when romancing a human woman: he gets chocolates, a bouquet and the largest diamond on the Disc. He takes her dancing and as the sun rises, she discovers that she had already died when he came to pick her up. Death arranges for her to go to the afterlife with her fiancé who had died years ago in an avalanche. He meets with Windle Poons on a bridge in Ankh-Morpork, where they discuss life for a moment before finally Windle Poons passes on.

### 1.5. *Feet of Clay*

*Feet of Clay* is a *Discworld* novel focusing on the City Watch, the police force of Ankh-Morpork, where there have been mysterious murders of a priest and a dwarf museum keeper. Alarmingly the ruler of the city-state, the Patrician Lord Vetinari, has been poisoned. The Watch and its commander Samuel Vimes are out of their depth until a golem named Dorfl turns himself in for the murders. Golems are ancient beings shaped out of clay and brought to life by priests, programmed to follow the orders written on slips of paper called chems inside their heads, a holy text without which they are inanimate. Golems are used to do the dirty and dangerous work in the sewers, underwater and in other environments dangerous to humans, day and night, since they can withstand almost anything, and thus do not get tired and are viewed as machines. A golem must work, and it must have a master. Together, the golems of Ankh-Morpork have created a new golem out of their clay, named Meshugah (Yiddish for ‘crazy’) by its owner, to be their king and to lead them to freedom. Because golems need masters to give them orders, the golems sell Meshugah to the owner of a candle factory. The

chems that they have placed in Meshugah's head have made it mad, causing it to kill those who have helped in its creation. Ashamed by its actions, the golems draw straws to see which one of them will turn themselves in as the murderer, and Dorfl gets the long straw.

Captain of the Watch, Carrot, thinks Dorfl is an unlikely murderer as golems are not allowed to hurt people, and he questions him. It is clear that Dorfl does not know how the murders were committed, and he is apparently taking the blame for someone else. However, the rumour mill begins turning and soon all golems are suspects, since they are disliked and considered monsters by the populace. While the Watch is trying to find the murderer, several golems are found destroyed or witnessed destroying themselves. The clues found at the murder sites lead the Watch to realise that the golems are unwittingly behind the murders.

With the poisoning of Vetinari, the major guilds of Ankh-Morpork are concerned about the future leadership of the city-state and together they plan to crown a puppet king to rule under their command. Commander Samuel Vimes has an appointment with the heraldist, Dragon King of Arms, who tells Vimes that he cannot have a coat of arms to his name, as his ancestor Old Stoneface Vimes murdered or executed (depending on who you ask) the last king of Ankh-Morpork, a tyrant who had unsavoury machines in the castle's dungeons. Dragon also reveals to Vimes that a corporal Nobby Nobbs of the Watch is the only living heir to the Earl of Ankh.

After a mob tries to destroy Dorfl and his owner refuses to take him back, Carrot offers to buy Dorfl from his owner and places the receipt showing the change of ownership inside Dorfl's head, thus making him the owner of himself. As a master of himself, Dorfl now has free will, which he uses to free animals at a slaughterhouse. Corporal Cheri Little-bottom, Carrot and his werewolf girlfriend Sergeant Angua confront the king golem at the candle factory. The three of them are no match for the golem and things look dire, until Dorfl comes to their rescue, doing considerable damage on the king golem before the top of Dorfl's head is sheared off and the chem inside it is destroyed. As the king golem is about to kill Carrot and crew, Dorfl is suddenly there to stop it and he shatters its head with a swing of his fist before crumpling back to the ground, scrawling a message with his finger before the light in his eyes dims: 'Words in the heart can not be taken'.

Dorfl is put back together and given a voice, which is deemed blasphemous by the local religious authorities. Vimes puts two and two together and realises that the person responsible for the poisoning of Vetinari and complicit in the deaths of two civilians is the heraldist Dragon who wishes for a monarchy to return to Ankh-Morpork and has been using people to accomplish his plan. Vimes and Dorfl arrest Dragon and he is imprisoned temporarily, but as

he is a respected political and civic figure, the city council decide to release him. Vimes then hires Dorfl as part of the Watch, which Dorfl joins gladly and plans to save his wages to free other golems.

## 1.6. *Wintersmith*

*Wintersmith* is a part of the Tiffany Aching series in *Discworld*, aimed at younger readers. In *Wintersmith* Tiffany Aching is a 12-year old witch in training. Her mentor Miss Treason takes her to witness the Dark Morris, a counterpart to the Morris dance which is danced in May. The Morris is a dance to welcome summer, whereas the Dark Morris is to welcome winter. Tiffany joins the dance against Miss Treason's warnings, and she runs into Winter and Summer. Because of this intermingling, Tiffany receives some of Summer's powers, causing grass and flowers to grow wherever her feet touch the ground, but unfortunately for her it also raises the wintersmith's interest in her.

The wintersmith is winter personified and he causes trouble for Tiffany by acting like a boy who has never seen a girl, which is essentially true: Winter and Summer never meet, except fleetingly during the Morris dance. The wintersmith tries to impress Tiffany by making icebergs shaped like her, writing her name on windows in frost ferns and by creating a snowstorm out of snowflakes with her image on them. To make Tiffany accept him, the wintersmith tries to become a human, first by taking on a human shape, then looking for the things that make a human: iron, lime, water, sulphur, potash, gold, silver, lead, phosphor, poison, strength, love and time, as mentioned in a rhyme that a group of children teach him.<sup>1</sup> The wintersmith is logical and thus takes the poem by its word: he is unable to find the three final ingredients, strength, time and love.

While the wintersmith is searching for the human ingredients, Tiffany is given advice by the older witches, Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Miss Tick, on how to best deal with an ageless elemental as an admirer. Granny Weatherwax wants Tiffany to follow the story that she has danced herself into and finish what she started. Nanny Ogg's approach is more down to earth: she wants Tiffany to face the wintersmith like the over-enthusiastic suitor he is and set him straight. Miss Tick is a witch finder, who travels the land looking for promising young girls and sends them off for suitable mentors to teach them the trade. Miss Tick is more academic and knows the lore and legends on Winter and Summer. According to

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<sup>1</sup> The poem can be found in the appendix.

a legend, Summer hides in the underworld which causes a long winter. A hero rescues her and so summer returns.

Based on this legend, Granny Weatherwax orders the Nac Mag Feegles (small blue picsties, not to be confused with fairies) to train a hero out of Roland, Tiffany's close friend, and the future Baron on the Chalk where Tiffany is also from. Roland and Tiffany meet for the first time in the first novel of the *Tiffany Aching* series, *The Wee Free Men* (2003), where Tiffany rescues Roland from the evil Queen of the Fairies, causing them to establish an awkward friendship.

Tiffany leaves for home when a long winter caused by the wintersmith is threatening to cover everything in snow. There she faces with the wintersmith and is taken to his castle made of ice, meanwhile Roland is off to recover Summer from the underworld. In his castle, the wintersmith explains to Tiffany how he plans to take her as his queen and to rule together over the world of eternal winter. He plans to eradicate suffering and death by killing all living beings on the Disc and filling the earth with people made out of snow, like him. Tiffany calls the heat of the sun to her and channels it through a kiss to the wintersmith, causing him and the castle to melt. Together, Roland bringing Summer back to the surface and Tiffany melting the wintersmith, they push the seasons back into their natural cycle. All that is left of the wintersmith is an iron nail. At the end of the novel Tiffany is witnessing the Morris danced in May, when she is approached by a Fool with eyes like the wintersmith's, purple-grey, who asks for a coin. Tiffany gives him the iron ring she made out of the nail left by the wintersmith, and the Fool in return gives her a chilly kiss on the cheek, hinting that the wintersmith is not gone.

## 2. Death

Death is an anthropomorphic personification of death (*M*, 43-44, 216) and as such his appearance and form have been shaped by people's beliefs, as in *Discworld* belief creates the objects of belief (*RM*, 104). Through his point of view readers are invited to laugh at and think about the human peculiarities he sees as strange. In the subchapters below, I will analyse different aspects of Death's character, ending in a conclusion where I will present my interpretation of what Pratchett was trying to do with him, and what it says of humanity and of being a person. In *Reaper Man* Death adopts an alias as Bill Door. Because Death considers Bill Door as a separate aspect of himself, and he is called Bill Door by the narrator, I will also refer to him as Bill Door when the novel does so.

### 2.1. Interpretations of Death in Folklore and Popular Culture

Death as an anthropomorphic personification has had many appearances in popular culture and folklore. In *The Folklore of Discworld* Pratchett and Jacqueline Simpson recognise the New Testament's Book of Revelation as the origin of Death, in the form of the Fourth Horseman, 'whose name was Death, wearing a crown and flourishing a sword' (loc. 5084). A 1934 film *Death Takes a Holiday* directed by Mitchell Leisen is based on the premise that Death has taken human form on Earth to learn from humanity, he even falls in love. In her thesis 'Not Cruel, Blessed, or Merciful: Pratchett, Gaiman and the Personification of Death' Kiki Canon takes a brief look at different personifications of Death in popular consciousness. She mentions *Death Takes a Holiday* and an episode of *Twilight Zone* as examples of Death as a love interest and Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957) as an influential film in the portrayal of Death in the modern era (6). In *The Seventh Seal* Death is challenged to a game of chess by a human opponent to buy time for himself and his party of people, though Death eventually claims them all. Similarly, Mort in *Mort* challenges Death to a duel to protect himself, Ysabell, Keli and the wizard Cutwell from his anger.

### 2.2. Appearance and the Voice of Death

The image of death as Grim Reaper, a skeleton wielding a scythe, was popularised in the Middle Ages in Europe in art and folklore (Korpiola and Lahtinen, 2). *Discworld's* Death has the stereotypical appearance of a Grim Reaper: he is a skeleton wearing a black hooded

cloak, his eyes are blazing blue pinpricks of light, and he uses a scythe to separate the soul from the body.

A common theme in Pratchett's writing is that belief has the power to shape reality. In *Mort* this comes up several times, as for example when the wizard Cutwell explains that belief is what creates gods: without it they die (*M*, 177), the same rule applying to other beings on the Disc. Another example is when Mort begins to exhibit Death-like qualities and powers, because as he learns about his trade, he begins to think of himself as Death. As Ysabell puts it 'You're whatever you think you are' (*M*, 271), but also, you are whatever others think you are (*M*, 273). Another theme often encountered in Discworld is that shape defines function. In the BBC4 Book Club discussion on *Mort* Pratchett answers a question on Death's likeability as a character as follows:

'I treated him [Death] as a human character, I mean Death is the classic death out of Medieval folklore [...] but he's human shaped. *The theme that extends through Discworld is that shape to an extent defines function* [...] He has the same shape as us, and he constantly is puzzled by humanity, we only have 70 maybe a hundred years if we are lucky and we spend all our brief life making it as complicated for us as we can. We are a source of endless fascination to him...' (emphasis added, 00:04:49-00:05:38).

Being shaped like a human skeleton causes Death to acquire human-like traits, both positive and negative, which he cannot escape.

In *Reaper Man* Death finds work as a farmhand on Miss Flitworth's farm, where he exchanges his characteristic black hooded robe into well-worn overalls and a broad-brimmed straw hat (*RM*, 93). This change is preceded by him adopting the alias Bill Door. In appearance, the new Death born out of humanity's imagination is unlike the old Death: he is robed in a dark cloak but underneath it there is no skeleton, only black smoke topped by a golden crown near where the head should be. Bill Door is outraged by this. With a crown the new Death is not just the reaper man, but a ruler, which the old Death never wanted to be: 'A CROWN? His voice shook with rage. I NEVER WORE A CROWN! *You never wanted to rule*' (*RM*, 230).

Death's change in attire, out of the stereotypical hooded cloak into the attire of a farmhand, reveals how he embraces his new life as Bill Door. Death's form as a human skeleton demonstrates his close connection to humans. He has been shaped by their imagination. The humble appearance of a reaper man who takes care of his harvest sets him apart from the new Death who is formed out of smoke and wears a crown. The new Death is impersonal and cold, everything that the old Death was not.

The outfit and Bill Door's person are also a reference to the image of Death as the reaper of harvest, made literal in the novel for comedic effect. It also sets the scene for the confrontation between the old and the new, farmhands against the combination harvester, old Death against the new Death, individuality against uniformity. I will expand on this in the concluding subchapter.

What separates Death from the other characters of Discworld in the textual format is his voice, portrayed in SMALL CAPITALS and without quotations. Another character to use small capitals is an aspect of Death, the Death of Rats introduced in *Reaper Man*, who speaks in SQUEAKS. There are only a few other characters whose speech is portrayed in a similarly distinct manner in the novels examined here. The new Death, the Auditors of Reality and Azrael the ultimate Death all speak without quotation marks. The lack of quotation marks can be read as the speech being unvoiced. In the case of the Auditors and Death, their voice is said to appear in the receiver's head without 'bothering to pass through the ears' (*M*, 21). In the novels other characters and the narrator describe Death's voice as 'lead slabs being dropped against granite' (*M*, 11).

In *Mort* Death spends time away from his work which leads to him gradually losing his powers and becoming more human-like. He loses his signature style of small capitals, as his voice becomes presented in a regular type case when he finds happiness working in a kitchen, occasionally scratching cats behind the ears (*M*, 228). He recovers his voice using small capitals as he is summoned by the Rite of AshkEnte and the Death-like traits acquired by Mort are summoned alongside him, recombining (*M*, 274).

Visually Death's voice being presented in small capitals helps to set him apart from other characters and it points to his otherworldly, larger than life itself, nature. The distinct typeface and its absence signal to readers when Death is changing from an anthropomorphic representation into something more human in *Mort*.

### 2.3. Other Characters on Death

Death is misunderstood or considered mysterious by the other characters. Ysabell, Death's adopted daughter, was taken in by Death after her parents died. She says that he does not have feelings, as he does not have anything to feel with, lacking the necessary 'glands' because he is a skeleton (*M*, 144). She calls it 'thinking sorry' instead of 'feeling sorry' when Mort questions that maybe Death adopted her because he 'felt sorry' for her. This is quite contrary to what readers see of Death in the course of the novel. In his own words, he gets



upset, even angry sometimes, when he finds a sack of drowned kittens in an alley (*M*, 32). According to Ysabell, Death likes to act as a human being, and the arrival of Mort is a catalyst to his acting even more human. She recognizes the change as Death is ‘trying really hard at the moment’ (*M*, 143). During Death’s duel with Mort she steps in. She is angered by his hypocrisy, as he lashes at Mort for meddling with faith, when he himself has meddled with her life and Mort’s, and the lives of those whose lifetimes are knocked down and shattered during their duel, thus killing them before their time (*M*, 307). She reminds him of his words ‘There is no justice, there is just you’. As Canon points out, there is no personification of Justice on Discworld, it is a human construct (42). Eventually everyone dies, even the gods who play games with people, and Death is there to escort them to the afterlife they believe in. Ysabell realises that the only justice that exists in the world is that which is brought into it. She sees Death’s actions in the moment as unjust: he holds himself above the self-same rules and judgement that he acts out on Mort.

As Death’s apprentice, Mort spends time with him in his work, seeing a side of him that Ysabell and Albert do not. As Mort goes to collect the soul of the witch Goodie Hamstring, she says that Death does not like witches and wizards, because they ‘give him trouble’ (*M*, 97). Mort however in his thoughts disagrees: ‘He doesn’t care if people are good or bad as long as they’re punctual. And kind to cats’ (*M*, 97). Mort refuses to strike Death in their duel when he has the chance, showing him mercy (*M*, 305). Death uses his hesitation to his advantage and when he is about to swing his blade on Mort he says: ‘YOU DON’T KNOW HOW SORRY THIS MAKES ME’ to which Mort replies ‘I might’ (*M*, 308). Mort’s answer surprises Death so that he begins laughing. Death is surprised that a human can truly sympathise with him. Mort is one of the only human characters who understands Death. He has been him and has felt his loneliness.

Albert’s relationship with Death is not a simple one. He has been working for Death as his man servant for thousands of years. He came into Death’s service by finding him when he felt that his time was coming to an end. When he leaves Death’s Domain to summon him back with other wizards, he realises that he missed having power, and now wants to use it to subordinate Death to him. To his dismay he is inside the circle when Death appears, who becomes very angry when he hears what Mort has done. Unfortunate Albert is taken away with Death to wait for Mort and Ysabell in the Domain. When Mort asks Albert about Death’s realm, if he really made it all, Albert says that he supposes Death wanted somewhere to feel at home (*M*, 50). Albert has grown to know Death’s peculiarities and his so-called moods, which he follows with some trepidation.

In *Reaper Man*, Miss Flitworth recognises almost instantly that Bill Door is more than he says he is, as humans tend to notice there being something odd about him. Humans are however reluctant to allow themselves to see him clearly, until they are dead (*M*, 34). Readers are reminded of his effect on humans often in the series. For example, when in *Reaper Man* Miss Flitworth assesses Bill Door:

‘ “You look half starved, to tell the truth. More than half, really.” She squinted at the figure. Somehow it was very hard to be certain what Bill Door looked like, or even remember the exact sound of his voice. Clearly he *was* there, and clearly he had spoken – otherwise why did you remember anything at all?’ (*RM*, 64).

Children however are immune to Death’s powers and are able to see his true form. In *Reaper Man*, a human girl named Sal wonders why he is a ‘skelington’ and how drinks do not fall through him (*RM*, 95). Here belief also plays a part. Human adults cannot see Death because they would rather not face him (who would want to see a seven-foot-tall skeleton with a sharp scythe and a robe?), whereas children have no difficulty in accepting things that others claim as non-existent.

Wizards and witches have a special relationship with Death. Though the wizards are familiar with him, they feel nervous around him. When other wizards in *Reaper Man* are reluctant to summon Death to find out what is causing the unusual phenomena around the city, Mustrum Ridcully, the Archchancellor of the Unseen University dismisses their worries by claiming that Death is a professional and fair fellow (*RM*, 98). Besides being recognisable by his bony appearance, Death is known to the inhabitants of the Disc as just and fair.

The characters who interact with Death are human, which provides ample opportunities for symbolism and exploration of how humans interact with death. By writing of an anthropomorphic representation of Death as a character, Pratchett encouraged his readers to consider their own relationship with death and their feelings towards it. In *Discworld* readers encounter many sides to Death as he interacts with other characters. Particularly to Ysabell and later to his granddaughter Susan, Death is nurturing. He cares for them, like he cares for other living beings under his care. To Mort and Albert, Death is their master or employer, though Albert has more liberties and is on a more equal footing with Death than Mort, who is first Death’s apprentice, and later his son-in-law.

#### 2.4. Character Traits and Pronouns

In many ways Death is unlike the stereotypical Grim Reaper. He eats, although it is not a necessity to him and he feels affection towards living beings, especially cats, and an intrigue towards humans and life in general. Death gathers humans for his company and seems to enjoy spending time with them, as is indicated by his adoption of Ysabell, the hiring of Albert and later taking on Mort as an apprentice, as explored in the previous subchapter.

In *Mort*, Death is kind. He is fascinated by humanity and through the years has gained some understanding of them, though he still has much to learn. He gives Mort a warning and a lesson that he himself has trouble following in *Mort* and in *Reaper Man*: ‘YOU CANNOT INTERFERE WITH FAITH. WHO ARE YOU TO DECIDE WHO SHOULD LIVE AND WHO SHOULD DIE?’ (*M*, 65). Death breaks the same rules as he meddles with the lives of Ysabell and Mort, and the lives of those whose lifetimers are destroyed during his duel with Mort.

Death’s impartiality and fairness is called into question when Mort’s presence and his questioning seem to awaken something in him: he becomes absentminded and melancholic. Death ponders over the approaching death of the 15-year old princess Keli, lamenting her youth (*M*, 76). He asks Albert: ‘WHAT IS THAT SENSE INSIDE YOUR HEAD OF WISTFUL REGRET THAT THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY APPARENTLY ARE?’. Albert replies that it is called sadness, to which Death replies ‘I AM SADNESS’ (*M*, 77). Death begins to question his duty, as he suggests that Mort can work on his own: ‘PEOPLE CAN’T EXPECT TO HAVE ME RUNNING AROUND AFTER THEM THE WHOLE TIME’ (*M*, 77). Death takes an evening off to go fishing and dancing, to learn of the human past-times, leaving Mort to take care of his work. He is surprised by his good mood, which seems to last until he goes to a bar to try another form of human entertainment, drinking. Death speaks to the barman and confesses what has been bothering him: ‘THEY ALL HATE ME, EVERYONE HATES ME. I DON’T HAVE A SINGLE FRIEND...I MEAN, WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOOK FORWARD TO? WHERE’S THE SENSE IN IT ALL? WHAT IS IT REALLY ALL ABOUT?’ (*M*, 199-200). Though the image of an inebriated Death in the role of a bar drunkard is intended to be humorous, his existential questioning is sobering in its humanity. As we later learn from Mort, what he remembers from his time as Death was his loneliness. Even Death himself grows lonely and questions the meaningfulness of existence.

Death has not acquired only the good qualities of humanity. He becomes angry as he learns what Mort has done and he has a cruel streak to his words: ‘YOUR ILL-TIMED ACTIONS HAVE DOOMED YOUR COMRADES TO OBLIVION. THE GODS WILL DEMAND NOTHING LESS (*M*, 298)’. Mort asks him to let his friends go, to which he replies that he owns them now. He mocks Mort by calling him an ‘it’ and during his duel with him they both accidentally shatter

lifetimers, causing their owners to die before their time. Death shows cruelty and vindictiveness that is out of character for him. Death's vindictiveness and arrogance is mirrored by Mort as Mort becomes more like Death: '...he saw not just Death but Death with all the human seasonings of vengeance and cruelty and distaste...' (*M*, 245). To make-up for his actions, Death negotiates with the gods for Princess Keli to remain alive, and he makes peace with Mort and Ysabell.

In *Reaper Man*, the events of *Mort* spur the Auditors into action and Death is forced to retire. He has to face his new-found mortality when he is given a lifetimer. Death is initially optimistic of dying, because it is a new experience to him. He does not know how to be afraid, which he learns as Bill Door (*RM*, 17). Bill Door's first experience with sleep is an alarming one as he realises that while he is asleep, he loses hours of his lifetime (*RM*, 89-90). Later, Bill Door becomes hyper-aware of the time passing and cannot stand the sound of ticking clocks (*RM*, 126). He questions how humans can stand them when their noise spells their oncoming death with every tick. His first nightmare, and dream, is also related to mortality. He dreams that he is given his work back and his first task is to reap the soul of Miss Flitworth, which scares him awake (*RM*, 127-128). He is disturbed by the dream and has something of an existential crisis as he realises for the first time what dying means to living beings:

'I SUDDENLY KNOW THAT WE ARE GOING TO DIE. She watched him thoughtfully. "Well, so does everyone...I wouldn't worry about it, if I was you. The best thing to do is to keep busy and act cheerful, I always say." BUT WE WILL COME TO AN END! "Oh, I don't know about that...It all depends on what kind of life you've led, I suppose." ...YOU MEAN THAT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU WHEN YOU DIE IS WHAT YOU BELIEVE WILL HAPPEN? "It would be nice if that was the case, wouldn't it?"... BUT, YOU SEE, I KNOW WHAT I BELIEVE. I BELIEVE...NOTHING' (*RM*, 129).

Bill Door's reaction is very human, but unlike the humans of Discworld, he knows that there is no afterlife for him. Miss Flitworth asks Bill Door why he does not want to die, and he answers: BECAUSE THEN THERE WILL BE NOTHING. BECAUSE I WON'T EXIST (*RM*, 146). Life carries on, but the individual will not. Bill Door knows that he cannot escape death by running away from it, many have tried. Yet when the new Death approaches him, he takes off in a run because he knows that he must fight the oblivion (*RM*, 228). Bill Door's fear of death is familiar to many who have contemplated the end of life, and what comes after. As Bill Door, Death learns to appreciate the time and life that he has been given, but he also learns what it means to use it for the good of others. Miss Flitworth is looking for a way to rescue the girl

Sal who is stuck inside a burning building, but Bill Door protests out of a sense of self-preservation and his knowledge as Death that ‘THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYONE TO DIE (*RM*, 137). Miss Flitworth slaps him in anger and rushes to help. Through her anger Bill Door realises that he must act on the present, not the possible future:

‘The future flowed into the past, and there was a lot more past than there was future, but he was struck by the fact that what it flowed through all the time was *now*’ (*RM*, 138). It is the choices that he makes in the present that matter, not the possible future he has ahead, when there is a life in danger. Because he is Death, Bill Door knows that saving even one person who is supposed to die could lead to the destruction of the whole world (*RM*, 138). His sensibility as Death is put aside however, as Bill Door, who does not care about the rules of the universe, rescues the girl (*RM*, 142). As Canon points out, Death is not without compassion (37). He provides the type of compassion that is possible in his work: ‘A SHARP EDGE’ (*M*, 65). Canon’s interpretation is that Death shows his compassion by minimising the pain and suffering that mortals encounter when dying. To that, I would like to add that Death’s compassion is not only a sharp edge, as his rescue of Sal indicates. Canon attributes the rescue to Bill Door understanding the emotional weight of the situation, despite not having feelings himself:

‘Miss Flitworth, his boss on the farm, shows him what a real human thinks of fate versus the life of a child with a forceful slap to his skull. Finally realizing the emotional weight of such action, a mortal Bill Door walks into a burning building to rescue one child’ (33).

Bill Door’s rescuing Sal can be interpreted as him realising that a swift end is not the only mercy and compassion to wish for living beings but that life itself is important.

Death learns about the realities of life as Miss Flitworth introduces Bill Door to rat poison. Death does not kill; he escorts people to the afterlife. As he puts it: ‘IT WOULD BE A BLOODY STUPID WORLD IF PEOPLE GOT KILLED WITHOUT DYING’ (*M*, 24). Killing does not come naturally to him. Killing however is a part of life on a farm, as Bill Door discovers when Ms Flitworth wants him to help her get rid of rats by using the rat poison, and to wring the neck of a chicken for dinner. For the first time Death kills instead of taking a life that was already over, and Bill Door feels ‘like a murderer’ for doing it (*RM*, 131).

Bill Door is particular in his work as a farmhand, he refuses to cut grass in swathes. Instead he cuts each blade of grass one by one, like he would reap the souls of the living. In her article ‘The Care of The Reaper Man: Death, The Auditors, and The Importance of Individuality’ Erica Neely assesses Death’s compassion and care for the human individual as

follows: ‘Because Death was forced to become mortal, he began to feel viscerally the importance of specific people, rather than only experiencing people in an abstract sense’ (12). As he spends time among the villagers, he learns to recognise them as individuals, when before they were all like stalks of corn in a field, indistinguishable from others (*RM*, 167). Consequently, he is deeply suspicious of the blacksmith Simnel’s Combination Harvester, which cuts the harvest faster and more efficiently.

Death has a need for companionship. After losing his powers, Mort remembers the loneliness that he, the original Death, feels (*M*, 279). For Death to understand humans, and thus a part of himself, he must be placed in their position. Bill Door learns to understand the need for companionship, that perhaps unconsciously, Death has carried since and even before the events of *Mort*. He encounters the Death of Rats, an aspect of Death who is formed in his absence, as are other Deaths, (e.g. the Death of Trees, the Death of Fleas, the Death of Mayflies...) and for the first time he understands:

‘Bill Door remembered visiting an old man once – only once – who had spent almost his entire life locked in a cell in a tower for some alleged crime or another, and had tamed little birds for company during his life sentence. They crapped on his bedding and ate his food, but he tolerated them and smiled at their flight in and out of the high barred windows. Death had wondered, at the time, why anyone would do something like that. [...] And now he understood (*RM*, 136).

Death compares himself to the old man locked in a cell, and the Death of Rats to the little birds. Another interpretation to this story however is easy to make, where Death is still the prisoner, but the little birds are the humans whom he meets fleetingly as he guides them forward, him staying behind as they move on.

The Death of Rats shares Death’s instinct for survival, as can be seen in it clinging to existence when Death summons his aspects back to himself (*RM*, 248), like Death later refuses to be reaped by the new Death. When Death discovers that the Death of Rats and the Death of Fleas still exist, he intends to absorb them back to himself, but changes his mind:

SQUEAK? Death shook his head. NO, I CAN’T LET YOU REMAIN, he said. IT’S NOT AS THOUGH I’M RUNNING A FRANCHISE OR SOME THING [...] NO. THIS SHALL *NOT* BE. I AM IMPLACABLE. I AM DEATH...ALONE. He looked at the Death of Rats. He remembered Azrael in his tower of loneliness. ALONE... (*RM*, 287).

He remembers the loneliness of Azrael in his astral plain, surrounded only by galaxies and stars, and presumably also the loneliness he suffers in *Mort*.

Ysabell tells Mort that Death made ponds and landscape to surround his Domain, because he thought that it would make her happy, but the events in *Reaper Man* allow for the question that maybe Death did it for personal reasons. Near the end of *Reaper Man* Death shapes some of the firmament surrounding his Domain into a field of swaying corn. A sentimental action, as he spends the novel working as a farmhand on fields, but also a symbolical one: he is the reaper man. Though people are more than corn, every single stalk is different, like human lives and the people who lead them are (*RM*, 286).

Death's understanding of humans deepens during his time as Bill Door: he learns to see them as individuals and to appreciate what life and dying are like. He is also humbled by the experience. In *Mort*, Death claims that time is unimportant as it is adjustable (*M*, 53). Time however becomes precious to him once he is given a lifetimer of his own. For the first time he has time to spend, but also time to lose. As Death he is able to control time and exist outside of it. As Bill Door, he is bound to it. He finds the way humans like Miss Flitworth surround themselves by clocks horrifying, because he experiences the ticking of a clock as a constant reminder of his own impending death. Death's struggle with the knowledge of mortality and the limited span of human life allow for introspection in a culture where death and dying are often seen as private. Death's person and subjectivity become threats to the Auditors of reality, whose mission is to try and restrict chaos and change in the world. Pratchett sees them as the enemies of life itself (*FD*, loc. 593), thus ironically, making Death the champion of life, as without death the world would stay the same.

Death's individuality is punctuated by the personal pronoun *he* that is used for him. In *Reaper Man* as the new death is forming, Miss Flitworth refers to it as a 'he', which Bill Door negates and says that 'it won't be a He yet', since it is still being formed by the beliefs of people (*RM*, 208). The Auditors of Reality discuss Death and getting rid of him in the beginning of *Reaper Man*. The events of *Mort* convince them of Death's inefficiency: what they abhor is personality. They want order and simplicity. In their own words, personalities come to an end and bring irregularities. Death being a he instead of an impersonal force makes him inefficient to them. The Auditors refer to themselves only as *one* or *we*, and when one of them slips and uses the singular *I* pronoun, they cease to exist and are replaced by an identical 'sibling' (*M*, 6).

In *Reaper Man* pronouns are linked to individuality: the Auditors avoid using gendering or singular pronouns of themselves as that would denote personality. The new Death that arises from humanity's imagination, more terrible than the old Death, is an it, an impersonal force without the personality and compassion of the old Death.

## 2.5. Concluding Remarks

The opposition of the old Death and the new Death in *Reaper Man* serve to highlight the larger theme of progress in the novel. As Erica Neely points out, the Combination Harvester that the blacksmith Simnel has invented acts as the challenger to Bill Door and the old way of life (6). The Combination Harvester's existence threatens to make the farmhands obsolete by its speed, just as Death's challenger the new Death is created to make the old Death obsolete. This is also reflected in the new Death's scythe that is described as having 'a scythe in its ancestry, in the same way that even the most cunningly-fashioned surgical implement has a stick somewhere in its past' (*RM*, 212). Bill Door prefers the more personal approach to harvest, whether it is grass blades or souls, unlike the new Death and the Combination Harvester that reap by the multitudes.

In 2007 Pratchett announced publicly his diagnosis with posterior cortical atrophy, a rare form of early onset Alzheimer's disease (Shakespeare). At the time of writing *Reaper Man* Pratchett had not yet been diagnosed with the disease, which later prompted him to speak for euthanasia and assisted dying. On the subject of euthanasia, in his essay 'Terry Pratchett: Shaking Hands with Death' presented by Tony Robinson at a Richard Dimbleby lecture in 2010, Pratchett writes:

'As I've said, I'd like to die peacefully with Thomas Tallis on my iPod before the disease takes me over and I hope that won't be for some time to come, because if I knew that I could die at any time I wanted then suddenly everyday would be as precious as a million pounds. If I knew that I could die, I would live' [40:59-41:22].

A similar view is voiced by Death when he explains to Albert why he must leave now that he has a lifetimer of his own: 'MUSTN'T WASTE TIME!...SEE! I HAVE TIME. AT LAST, I HAVE TIME!...I'M GOING TO SPEND IT' (*RM*, 18).

Death's humanity shows in him appreciating the life he is given and hanging on to it much like a human would despite being old as time. As Albert notes: Life is a habit that is hard to break (*RM*, 17). Pratchett made his Death very human, which endears the character to his readers. In *Reaper Man* Death as Bill Door realises that every human eventually will die. Through his panic, Pratchett guides his readers through the questions that any person faced with their mortality might have: what it is like to know, or not know, what happens after dying. In *Discworld*, after they die, beings go to the afterlife that they believe in. However, Death believes in nothing. To him, dying is the cessation of existence. Pratchett provides



people, whether they are religious or irreligious, a narrative for exploring their relationship to death and dying.

Death's speech to Azrael, the ultimate Death can be understood as Pratchett imploring his readers:

THERE IS NO HOPE BUT US. THERE IS NO MERCY BUT US. THERE IS NO JUSTICE. THERE IS JUST US...ALL THINGS THAT ARE, ARE OURS. BUT WE MUST CARE. FOR IF WE DO NOT CARE, WE DO NOT EXIST. IF WE DO NOT EXIST, THEN THERE IS NOTHING BUT BLIND OBLIVION (*RM*, 264).

As Canon reflects, justice is a human construct (42). As humans we are responsible for our choices, and the only justice and mercy that exists in the world is what we choose to work into it. Death's speech to Susan in *Hogfather* also reflects this ethos: YOU NEED TO BELIEVE IN THINGS THAT AREN'T TRUE. HOW ELSE CAN THEY *BECOME*? (409). Through Death, Pratchett teaches his readers, young and old, religious, questioning and non-religious, the importance of believing in the things that make us human: responsibility, choice, mercy, justice and love. It is as if Death maintained that we need to believe in the little lies, like the tooth fairy, Santa Claus and gods, to believe in the big ones.

### 3. The Wintersmith

The wintersmith is the personification of winter. He came into being when humans started telling stories about the dance between summer and winter to explain the changing of the seasons (*W*, 216). In the following sub-chapters I analyse the different aspects of his character, and in my concluding remarks I conclude my analysis and interpretations on his character, and Pratchett's intention in creating this character.

#### 3.1. Appearance

In the wintersmith's first appearance in the linear plot he appears as a human shape outlined by falling snow, with purple-grey dots floating where the eyes would be. This is quite different from his image in a book on mythology featured in the story, where he is pictured as the stereotypical Old Man Winter or Jack Frost-type of character with icicles in his beard (*W*, 73). His appearance becomes more human-like as the story progresses. The second time the wintersmith and Tiffany meet face to face, he has the appearance of a young man, with a 'handsome face' (*W*, 179).

The wintersmith tries to take on an appearance of a human for Tiffany, but he is still made out of snow and ice. Tiffany accidentally gives him a push forward, when she says that she is a human made out of human things. This becomes his next goal: to find out what humans are made of so that he can become a human (*W*, 180). Here the Discworld rule of 'shape defines function' comes into play again ('James Naughtie'). The wintersmith begins to see the world in a different way as he takes the form of a human and makes himself a brain out of snow and ice. Having a brain and a body makes him an individual, that is, he becomes apart, when once he was a part of everything (*W*, 302-303). As winter, he is everywhere but as he builds himself a body, for the first time in his existence he is a separate being, an individual. His appearance, despite looking like a human, is not enough to make him one. Despite gathering the ingredients, the iron nail he has found is still just an iron nail, it does not become blood.

The answer to whether the wintersmith ever could become a true human is left unanswered. At the end of the novel, the Morris Dance is taking place once again and Tiffany along with other witches is there to witness winter making way for summer. An older man, dressed as the fool approaches Tiffany, looking at her with purple-grey eyes, asking for a coin. Tiffany gives him the iron ring she made out of the nail that the wintersmith left behind,

and he gives her a kiss on the cheek that is ‘only slightly chilly’ (*W*, 397). The open end does not tell if the old Fool is the wintersmith habiting a body temporarily, like Summer whom Tiffany notices glinting in the eyes of the spectators, or if he now has a more permanent body of his own.

Either way, the wintersmith’s appearance is the tool of his motivations in the story: it is how he tries to make himself more approachable to Tiffany and how he discovers individuality.

### 3.2. Other Characters on the Wintersmith

What is brought up in *Wintersmith* and the other novels in the Witches’ series is the concept of cackling: if a witch is alone too much and begins to think herself wiser and better than others, it will drive her mad.. This is what Tiffany is reminded of when she faces the wintersmith near the end of the novel:

‘He thinks like a human who’s never met another human...(h)e just doesn’t have a clue what “human” means...he doesn’t know what horrors he’s planning’ (*W*, 373).

Wintersmith has grasped human appearance and movement, but he has not been socialised to act as a human being would, because as winter he does not know what cruelty is. Winter is not cruel when it freezes animals or humans to death, it is just the way it is. Tiffany recognises that the wintersmith’s thinks like a very sensible, mad human would (*W*, 373).

Tiffany is initially curious about the wintersmith and there exists a mutual fascination between them. She feels flattered by his attentions, which changes into exasperation on her part as his approaches become more insistent and ostentatious. Tiffany’s friend Petulia remarks that the wintersmith’s behaviour is much like a boy’s: he disappears when he is surprised by Tiffany screaming in pain when she holds the necklace that he hands out to her, giving her a frostbite, and he is seen as silly by both girls because of his actions, making frost ferns and snowflakes in her shape (*W*, 127). The discussion is characteristic of two teenage girls discussing boys and what to do with them, which is essentially what the situation is like, and what the counsel Tiffany receives from the older witches revolves around.

Nanny Ogg is the witch with more worldly experience: she has had many husbands, sometimes those of other women. She is tasked with teaching and talking to Tiffany about love and sex:

‘I didn’t mind the snowflakes,’ said Tiffany. ‘But the iceberg – I think that was a bit much.’ ‘Showing off in front of the girls,’ said Nanny, puffing at her hedgehog pipe.

‘Yes, they do that.’ ‘But he can kill people!’ ‘He’s winter. It’s what he does. But I reckon he’s in a bit of a tizzy because he’s never been in love with a human before.’ ‘In love?’ ‘Well, he probably thinks he is’ (W, 210).

Wintersmith has never had to deal with feelings before, and now that he has them, there is no one to teach him how to control them.

Granny Weatherwax is curious, but cautious about the wintersmith. She sees him as a semi-god, powerful and unpredictable like the winter, imbued now with human feelings, making him dangerous. Weatherwax theorises that when Tiffany entered the dance with Summer and Winter, not only did she absorb some of Summer’s qualities, but that the wintersmith absorbed some qualities of Tiffany’s:

‘Summer, Winter and Tiffany. One spinning moment! And then they part. Who knows what got tangled? Suddenly, the wintersmith is acting so stupid he might even be a wee bit...human?’ (W, 132).

She is quick to remind Tiffany of his elemental nature and of the wintersmith being ‘(a)n it that thinks it’s a he’ (W, 182-183).

Nanny Ogg and Miss Treason have similar thoughts on the wintersmith: he is interested in Tiffany because she dared to dance with him, but he does not know what to do with her because he has not interacted with humanity before. Nanny Ogg makes the following observation on his nature:

‘He’s an elemental and they are simple, really, [...] But he’s trying to be human. And that’s complicated. We’re packed with stuff he doesn’t understand’ (W, 210).

Because of Tiffany’s influence, the wintersmith strives to become human, however, without human socialisation and company he cannot learn what being a human is about. According to Granny Weatherwax, the wintersmith received some traits of Tiffany’s during their dance, but more importantly, he received traits from a human teenager. Adolescence is the time when humans often go through physical changes, and in western culture the time when questions of identity become important: who and what one is becomes unclear, which Tiffany at 13 years old is also going through (W, 27). The wintersmith’s growth into a man is referred to in the novel, as Tiffany describes him as looking older when they meet after a pause (W, 314). The wintersmith acts as a counterpart to Tiffany, as the seasons complement each other.

### 3.3. The Voice of the Wintersmith

The wintersmith's voice in type does not differ from the voices of other characters for the most part. He speaks for the first time in conjunction with Summer as Tiffany joins the dance: 'A voice said: "Who Are You?" It had an echo, or perhaps two people had said it at almost the same time' (W, 52).

As Winter, his voice is part of the elements until he has a mouth to speak with. At one point his voice is carried by the wind, or it is the wind itself: "'How *do* you think he'd sound?" said Petulia. The wind gusted across the clearing, making the pine trees shake and roar. "...Tiffany...be mine..." (W, 137)

On the wintersmith's and Tiffany's second encounter he can mimic the form of a young man by using snowflakes, but he has not yet learned to speak naturally, which Tiffany notices: 'The voice wasn't right. It sounded...fake, somehow, as if the wintersmith had been taught to say the sound of words without understanding what they were' (W, 180).

Only when the wintersmith speaks as an elemental, that is, when he is incorporeal, is his voice written in italics without quotation marks. This is not clear however, as in one passage his voice appears first in italics, and in the next sentence his reply to Tiffany is written in regular font, including quotations: 'The voice was all around her. *Who commands the wintersmith?* "I am the Summer Woman" ... "Then why do you hide from me?"' (W, 279). When his voice begins to fade the typeface returns to italics: '*Then there will be snowflakes, my lady, until the time we dance again. And we will, for I am making myself a man!* The voice of the wintersmith...went' (W, 280). Italics are used to show an ethereal or alien quality to his voice as they appear when he materialises to Tiffany, and fades. The same type is also used by the Summer Lady as she speaks in Tiffany's mind (W, 281). Italics are also used to describe events happening elsewhere, by the narrator possibly (e.g. W, pp. 298, 299 and 300), as the effects of the wintersmith's winter are presented in between regular narration:

'Petulia had fallen asleep on her stick and ended up in a tree two miles away. Tiffany had slid off once and landed in a snowdrift. *Wolves entered the tunnels. They were weak with hunger, and desperate*' (W, 299).

Interestingly, as the wintersmith gains the final piece of the human ingredients, an iron nail, his voice in the wind is portrayed in small capitals like those used by Death (cf. this thesis, p.9):

'It spun gently in the air, and the voice of the wintersmith could be heard in the wind that froze the treetops: "IRON ENOUGH TO MAKE A MAN!" (W, 300).

The wintersmith's voice is part of the process of his trying to become human. It indicates how he knows the building blocks of being a human, but not the meaning. This becomes apparent when he is testing his voice after he has built his body. He sings a musical piece he once heard, but instead of singing only the human parts, he sings the entire piece of music, instruments included. He understands the principle, but not the meaning.

#### 3.4. Character Traits and Pronouns

The wintersmith has no concept of right or wrong. He realises that to die is terrible, which is why he is so happy when he explains to Tiffany his plan of eternal winter that would kill all in its way – removing death from the world as there would be nothing left alive (W, 372).

The wintersmith's is curious: after his brief encounter with Tiffany during the dance, he looks for her, because he thinks that she is the Summer Lady. He wants to know how she is walking in his winter (W, 180). Miss Treason speculates that his interest comes from Tiffany's forwardness (W, 78). As she points out, many people have joined the dance of the seasons, but none of them have become entangled in the story like Tiffany.

After their encounter he keeps reaching out towards Tiffany, much to her embarrassment. Originally, he wants to become a human to please Tiffany and to be with her, but once he has built his body, he realises that he enjoys being an individual. He is excited by all the new experiences: seeing, hearing, feeling, and touching (W, 303).

The wintersmith tries to be kind as he approaches Tiffany, returning the necklace she lost during the dance (W, 80-81). As the older witches note, the wintersmith acts much like a boy would, skirting around a girl he is interested in (W, 82). In what is almost a stereotypical scene out of a romance novel, the wintersmith listens to a conversation Tiffany has with Petulia. His eyes follow Tiffany as she enters her room, lights the candle, and he stares outside at her window until the light goes out. In a romantic gesture, he creates a patch of roses made of ice for her (W, 130, 136-137).

In *Wintersmith* the wintersmith discovers what individuality is like, as he makes himself a brain out of snow and ice. The wintersmith enjoys his new-found individuality:

‘The wintersmith had never seen before, never felt before, never heard before. You could not do those things unless you were...apart, in the dark behind the eyes. [...] The dark behind the eyes...what a precious thing. It gave you your...you-ness.’ (W, 302-303).

His individuality stems from ‘being apart’ and having a physical body. The wintersmith is referred to mostly by using the pronoun *he* by Tiffany and Nanny Ogg, especially in instances

where they liken his actions and behaviour to human boys trying to impress girls (W, 210). Granny Weatherwax and Miss Tick refer to the wintersmith by the word *it*, although this is not consistent as Granny Weatherwax also uses the pronoun *he* occasionally (W, 212). When chastising Tiffany on her carelessness regarding the wintersmith she makes a point to Tiffany on how he is not a human being by using the pronoun *it* (W, 191). Tiffany is determined to use the pronoun *he* for him, as that is how she sees him, or at least what she wishes him to become.

### 3.5. Concluding Remarks

In the *Wintersmith*, prevalent themes are the human condition (what makes a person) and personal responsibility. Being a human and a person is explored in the novel through the wintersmith learning what being a human is about. It is not enough to simply look and act like a human being, as the wintersmith thinks. It is about learning, change and stories.

In his article ‘Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories’ in the *Folklore* journal, Pratchett explains a theory he has that has helped him in developing *Discworld*, called *narrative causality*: ‘the idea that there are “story shapes” into which human history, both large scale and at the personal level, attempts to fit’ (166). In other words, the more a story is told and acted out, the stronger it grows. The story of the dance of Winter and Summer is old. When Tiffany enters the dance, she takes on the role of Summer, and she must fulfil the role by killing winter (W, 217). Even with the determinacy of the narrative causality, Tiffany has to make the choice for herself. This is what separates her from the wintersmith and why he is unable to become a human. Tiffany says to the wintersmith:

‘Please,’ she said, ‘take the winter away. Go back to your mountains. Please.’... ‘No. I am winter. I cannot be anything else.’ ‘Then you cannot be human’ (W, 381-382).

The wintersmith is literal. As he says to Tiffany, ‘We do not mean, we are’ (W, 180). Humans however thrive on meanings, imagination and belief. They construct themselves and their surroundings through stories. Indeed, humans themselves are made of the stuff of stories: besides the elements that are listed in the poem the wintersmith overhears (phosphor, sulphur, iron, etc.) humans in *Discworld* also contain narrativium, which is the basic element of stories (W, 326). Boffo, a joke shop in Ankh-Morpork comes to symbolise this human tendency to build reality on belief. The late Miss Treason built a reputation and a mythos around herself through the usage of the joke shop’s merchandise, such as skulls and cobwebs as decoration,

to inspire awe in her villagers. If she had been known as a small, old and frail lady, they would not have listened to her advice or feared her as they did (W, 186).

The themes of justice and responsibility over one's choices are present in most *Discworld* novels and also in *Wintersmith*. Granny Weatherwax especially is a strong proponent of responsibility and duty, of doing the right thing especially when it is difficult, as she explains to Tiffany:

‘You’ll have to be a summer in winter until winter ends,’ she added flatly. ‘That’s justice. No excuses. You made a choice. You get what you chose’ ‘Couldn’t I just go and find her and say I’m sorry–?’ ... ‘No. The old gods ain’t big on “sorry”...(t)hey know it’s *just* a word’ (W, 220).

Responsibility does not end in apologising – it is the beginning of making reparations, not the whole process. Tiffany chose to dance with the wintersmith and Summer Lady, so she must be a part of the story and see it to its end.

Pratchett called humans *homo narrans*, natural story tellers (‘Imaginary Worlds’, 166). The story of *Wintersmith* carries the meaning of there being more to humans than simply the body, the brain and the logic which is often overemphasised.

Though the wintersmith is set up as the antagonist to Tiffany in the novel, his actions are not done out of malice but because he believes that he is doing something good: erasing death from the world. Farah Mendlesohn touches upon this in his chapter ‘Faith and Ethics’ in *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*. There he points to how the nature of evil in Pratchett’s novels stems not from people wanting to hurt people or be evil for the sake of being evil, but from people believing that what they are doing is right, and for a good cause, whether it is for god(s) or the greater good (244-248). Mendlesohn argues that this evil in Pratchett’s work is caused by people placing ideologies over individuals. Thus, the wintersmith thinks of the absence of suffering trumping the short-term suffering of individuals. His evil stems from treating people as means to an end, as things.



## 4. Dorfl the Golem

Golems in *Discworld* are modelled after the Jewish folkloric creature of the same name. I will use the first subchapter to explain the background and history of the character and its story and how it relates to the novel. I will also compare the golem in both its original mythos and later *Discworld* counterpart with examples of similar narratives in science fiction. The remaining subchapters will focus on analysing the different aspects of Dorfl's character with short conclusions at the end of each subchapter.

### 4.1. Golems in Jewish Folklore, as Robots, and in the Discworld

#### Jewish Folklore

*Golem* as a word appears for the first time in the Bible and later in the Talmud, where it is translated as *embryo*, or as *unformed* (Rozenberg, xiii). In the Middle Ages, the word took on the meaning of *artificial man* or a *creature of clay*. In *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague* Yehudah Yudl Rozenberg explains that golems cannot speak, as they do not have souls. In Genesis God is said to have 'breathed into his (Adam's) nostrils the breath of life and man became a living creature' (Rozenberg 188, Wilson 82). Rozenberg notes that the Aramaic translation of the text states: 'man became a speaking creature' (188). Similarly, in *Feet of Clay* it is considered blasphemy for a golem to have a voice. In the context of the novel it is not explained why. Instead of speaking, golems communicate by writing on slates or other surfaces available, because having a voice is equated with being alive. During the events of *Feet of Clay*, new golems have not been made in years due to a religious ban, because only gods should create life (*FC*, 10, 175). A debate on whether golems are alive or not is carried throughout the novel by multiple characters, between characters and within the characters themselves.

In her article 'The Golempunk Manifesto: Ownership of the Means of Production in Pratchett's *Discworld*' Janet Brennan Croft references a Jewish story of Rabbi Judah Loewe who creates a golem, and as the golem becomes more human and harder to control over the years the Rabbi erases the word in the golems head thus killing it (2). Whether or not it is murder to kill a golem is challenged in *Feet of Clay* by Captain Carrot. When an angry mob tries to destroy Dorfl as he is suspected of murder, Carrot argues that if golems are not

considered to be alive, then destroying or killing them would be destruction of property. As an object or a tool, the golem cannot commit murder any more than a sword can be a murderer (*FC*, 294).

The beliefs and stereotypes that surround golems in *Feet of Clay* are contradictory. Golems are claimed to be dumb and are considered unable to think for themselves, yet at the same time they are accused of scheming and plotting. In the same way, making golems is seen as creating life, yet they are not regarded as living creatures. Dorfl turns these contradictions to his advantage at the end of the novel as he debates with priests whether he is alive or not (*FC*, 409). He agrees with them that they can grind him to dust and they likely will not find an atom of life in his remains but:

‘However, In Order To Test This Fully, One Of You Must Volunteer To Undergo The Same Process.’...’That’s not fair’, said a priest, after a while. ‘All anyone has to do is bake up your dust again and you’ll be *alive*...’ (*FC*, 409; emphasis added).

Dorfl having to prove that he is alive leads to an interesting comparison between golems and androids and robots in science fiction, which I will explore in the next section.

### Golems as Robots

In the novel there are more and less overt references to the robot-like aspects of golems. Some of the characters in *Feet of Clay* also make these comparisons, for example by calling golems machines (*FC*, 300). Brennan Croft compares Isaac Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics and the chems inside golems’ heads, as the Words in them give the golems their purpose and commands to control their behaviour (3). The three laws by Asimov, which appeared for the first time in his short story ‘Runaround’ (1942), are: A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws (Wikipedia, ‘Three Laws of Robotics’).

Golems in *Discworld* and robots in science fiction both share narratives with chattel slavery. In her book *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema and the Cultural Work of Artificial People* Despina Kakoudaki discusses the discourse on robots as slaves using the short story *The Bicentennial Man* (1976) by Isaac Asimov and the 1999 film of the same title as examples. In the story an android servant/slave called Andrew tries to establish himself legally as a human being (130). Kakoudaki comments on how often in robot narratives

differentiation between robots and humans is established: robots and androids have been created to be useful to humans, whereas humans have no set purpose. She points out that ‘their difference from the human evaporates’ in narratives where the artificial human or humanoid has not been created for or given a specific purpose. As examples of these narratives she mentions the Replicants from the 1982 film *Blade Runner* and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein’s monster (131).

In such stories the ambivalence of human existence due to mortality and the human search for meaning and purpose in life are shown from the artificial being’s point of view. The Replicants in *Blade Runner* look for their creator so as to lengthen their purposefully shortened lives and find photographs important for making their own memories alongside their fabricated ones. Frankenstein’s monster is shunned by humans for his appearance and thus seeks revenge against his creator for having abandoned him. In both of these stories the wronged search for retribution against their creators. This is a common trope in science fiction: a human-made creation turns against its creators. Like Brennan Croft, Lewis Glinert in his article ‘Golem! The Making of a Modern Myth’ posits that stories of golems in the public consciousness of Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries inspired stories of other such automatons, such as the Frankenstein’s monster and later the robot (90-91). In *Feet of Clay* this trope is transformed. It is the golems themselves who create a new golem with the help of the priest and the dwarf museum keeper, who are both later killed by Meshugah. As Carrot notes: ‘It knew who to blame’ (*FC*, 366).

When Carrot asks Dorfl what it is that golems want, he answers: ‘Respite’ (*FC*, 267). Although the golems’ purposes were originally peaceful, their creation turns against their best intentions. As artificial beings, golems in Discworld have been created to obey commands: the words of purpose in their heads dictate their existence and give them life. Dorfl’s breakthrough allows him to work towards a new purpose: to buy the freedom of as many golems as he can.

### Golems in Discworld

Unlike the storyline in *Blade Runner* and *Frankenstein* where the disenfranchised creature turns against its creator, in *Feet of Clay* the disenfranchised have created their own monster that turns against its intended purpose. However, the golems ultimately succeed and Meshugah fulfils its purpose when Dorfl achieves his freedom: ‘Time slowed. Nothing moved in the whole universe but Dorfl’s fist. It swung like a planet, without any apparent speed but

with a drifting unstopability. And then the king's expression changed. Just before the fist landed, it smiled' (*FC*, 373). Meshugah's smile can be understood in two ways in the context of the novel: either its madness is deliberate and now that Dorfl can function without his chem Meshugah has achieved its purpose or in its last moments Meshugah has regained its sanity and smiles, knowing it has succeeded. In *Feet of Clay*, the golems create Meshugah to be their king and to teach them freedom in their hour of need, thus drawing parallels to Rozenberg's story of Rabbi Judah Loewe, who creates a golem to protect the Jewish community of Prague against blood libel and persecution (Glinert, 78).

The golems in *Feet of Clay* fulfil the same functions as the androids and other humanoid creations of science fiction, and their narratives are also similar. Pratchett's golems share the mechanics of their predecessors in Jewish legends, for example the words written on their heads give them life and the erasure of those words extinguishes that life. Pratchett's golems are however refashioned to highlight their machine-like qualities. This is apparent mainly in the function of the chems that resemble the programming of robots in science-fiction, since the words written on slips of paper are modifiable and changeable and written in a foreign, albeit religious language drawing parallels to code. Pratchett has closed the circle beginning with the golem: golems inspire the stories of Frankenstein's monster and robots, and robots and Frankenstein's monster act as inspiration for Pratchett's golems.

#### 4.2. Appearance and Voice

Dorfl is described as looking like a 'child's clay model of a man' (*FC*, 9). When Angua and Cheri go to the slaughterhouse to question Dorfl, having never seen a golem before, Cheri mistakes him for a troll that was made to look like a human. To this Angua replies that golems are machines made to look like humans (*FC*, 135). Dorfl's appearance is patchy: he has repaired himself countless times over the years, so the original attempts at human musculature have been covered in the repairs (*FC*, 134). All golems are made of clay and their heads are hollowed so that the chem(s) can be placed inside. Dorfl's eyes are glowing red embers, which go dark when the chem is removed from his head. Dorfl's appearance remains constant throughout the novel. Even when he is shattered in combat against the king golem, he is put together as he was, except that he is given a voice. How this happens is not revealed in any detail. Janet Brennan Croft speculates that as in Discworld belief begets beings, so the act of writing a chem for a golem infuses a soul or life force into the golem (4). Another explanation could be that, according to the rules of Discworld, shape defines

function, or as in the cases of Death and the wintersmith, being shaped like a human makes you act like one (BBC4 Book Club).

Dorfl's appearance sets him out from other characters and helps readers to see him as an individual, unlike the other golems of whom little is known. He is recognisable as a golem which affects how he is treated. However, he has also been made into the shape of a human, much like the robots of science fiction. Angua marks on Dorfl's appearance that he looks hand-made, which he is: 'The thing *looked* hand-made. Of course, over the years it had mostly made itself, one repair at a time' (*FC*, 134).

Dorfl's direct characterisation as hand-made and indirect characterisation as self-made are indicative of his later turn in the novel and the development that is overtaking him and the other golems: no one else is taking care of them, so they must look out for themselves. The more metaphorical interpretation is in the definition of the word *self-made*: 'used to describe people who have become successful and rich through their own efforts, especially if they started life without money, education, or high social status' (Collins Dictionary). The definition is apt, as Dorfl figuratively rises from rags to riches: from a slave to a recognised member of society.

Dorfl does not have a voice as such for most of the novel, as golems are not supposed to have one, but they communicate by writing on slates. The speech written by golems is marked in the novel by a font resembling Hebrew style lettering, a reference to the Jewish origin of golems, and it looks approximately like this: 'WE HEAR YOU WANT A GOLEM' (*FC*, 9).

Like Death, Dorfl's speech is unlike that of other characters. Once Dorfl can speak his speech is marked in quotations and does not stand out, apart from every word beginning with a capital letter (*FC*, 392). Dorfl's voice is both symbolical and literal: its absence is justified by him being an object, unalive. Dorfl receiving a voice is brought about by his death and subsequent rebirth and being recognised as a person by others, since now he can speak for himself and other golems.

#### 4.3. Other Characters on Dorfl

Commander Samuel Vimes is initially prejudiced, even hostile towards Dorfl and golems in general (in fact, he is hostile towards most people). He finds it hard to believe Carrot who tells him that golems have never committed a crime or attacked anyone before the events in the novel (*FC*, 166). Even after Dorfl's chem is removed and he is inanimate, Vimes

finds it hard to see him as harmless. He thinks that the potential to harm and violence is built into them (*FC*, 168).

Vimes, who is usually on the side of the downtrodden finds his first inklings of sympathy towards golems, when he recognises that they are mistreated: ‘Given how we use them, maybe we’re scared because we know we deserve it...’ (*FC*, 168). This view is quickly replaced when he reverts to his prejudice of thinking of golems as only clay and magic words. When he finds out that the golems have been meeting in secret, he suggests that they should be destroyed, as they are only objects, like shovels (*FC*, 175). Vimes changes his mind as he sees how Dorfl and the golems are treated by others. After Dorfl is shattered by Meshugah, Carrot is the first to suggest that they rebuild him, but Vimes says they should give him a voice (*FC*, 375). Having seen what golems are put through and sympathising with them, possibly because he recognises them as underdogs, Vimes acknowledges Dorfl as a person.

Later on, Lord Vetinari orders Vimes to destroy Dorfl, which Vimes refuses to do as Dorfl is alive. Vetinari objects that he is made of clay, to which Vimes replies that according to religious scriptures, so is everyone else. Vimes’ reason is that Dorfl thinks that he is alive, and that is enough for him (*FC*, 400).

Sergeant Angua is also prejudiced. Like most of the characters in the novel, she does not think of the golems as persons, but as lifeless machines. When Angua and Cheri Littlebottom question Dorfl, Angua explains to her what it is that golems do, and Cheri, horrified, calls it slavery, to which Angua replies that you cannot call it slavery, as it would be the same as enslaving a doorknob (*FC*, 137).

Angua wrestles with her feelings on golems, her initial dislike towards them stemming from the fact that as a werewolf she herself is not entirely human, and thus needs to hide her condition from others because of the fear that werewolves inspire. Golems, however, do not hide despite being non-alive which she finds unfair (*FC*, 300). This initial distrust towards Dorfl and other golems is shaken when she begins to see golems as people. She follows the golems’ trail to a cellar, referring to them as ‘people’ (*FC*, 171). Later, when she reports to Commander Vimes, she says she felt sadness in the room, which seems to puzzle her as much as it does Vimes (*FC*, 176). She disagrees with Carrot on the subject of the golem’s being persons. As Carrot calls them killing themselves suicide, Angua says that you cannot take a life you do not have (*FC*, 217).

Captain Carrot is the first character from the Watch to show sympathy and understanding towards Dorfl and the other golems. He does not believe that Dorfl or the golems as a race are responsible for the murders. An important exchange between Dorfl and

Carrot occurs that plants the seed of trust between the two. This confirms Carrot's views on golems and sparking Dorfl's budding trust towards the Watch. He reanimates Dorfl by placing the removed chem in his head so that Dorfl can be questioned. Carrot removes his sword and armour in order to show that he is not a threat and stays still when Dorfl takes a swing at him, because Carrot is confident that Dorfl cannot hurt him (*FC*, 264-265). Carrot plays out a classic good cop/bad cop routine, when Dorfl is not willing to co-operate:

'Carrot sighed. "Well, I won't force you." He grinned. "Although, you know, I could. I could write a few extra words on your chem. Tell you to be talkative." The fires rose in Dorfl's eyes. "But I won't. Because that would be inhumane. You haven't murdered anyone. I can't deprive you of your freedom because you haven't got any"' (*FC*, 266-267).

As Brennan Croft points out, Carrot's actions are the turning point in golem freedom efforts: as he buys Dorfl and gives the receipt to him, Dorfl becomes the master of himself (4).

Through the eyes of the other characters, readers see how Dorfl is treated and how he interacts with the world, thus helping readers form their image of Dorfl's character, whose point of view is only shown through the words in his head. Only in such instances do readers catch a glimpse of how he sees the world, even though they are already likely to sympathise with him as they see how he is mistreated.

#### 4.4. Character Traits and Pronouns

Dorfl is described as a gentle person by Captain Carrot (*FC*, 166). He shows sympathy towards other beings. This is evident when Dorfl tries to help Father Tubelcek (killed by Meshugah), the priest who wrote Meshugah's chem, by placing a scrap of paper with words written on it in his mouth, thinking that this might revive him, to which the dying priest replies that humans make their own words (*FC*, 14). The words that Dorfl wrote on it are the same ones that are written on his chem: 'Thou shalt labour fruitfully all the days of your life', 'Thou shalt not kill' and 'Thou shalt be humble' (*FC*, 14). Dorfl also crosses the priest's hands across his chest and closes his eyes, thus showing courtesy to the dead (*FC*, 14, 66). Despite being described as a machine or a thing by Angua (and several others), Dorfl has a sense of irony. When asked by Angua if he has time off work, he writes 'To make a hollow laughing. What would I do with time off?' (*FC*, 137).

After Carrot has given Dorfl the receipt for himself and says, you own yourself, Dorfl retreats to a cellar where readers can see how he thinks. The universe is muted to Dorfl, being

walled by the Words ‘Golem Must Have a Master’ that control him. Carrot’s words help him break through, and Dorfl realises that he is now responsible for himself, that he owns himself. This is described as Dorfl realising that he has a place in the universe: he ‘belonged to It’ and ‘It belonged’ to him (*FC*, 322-323). Dorfl takes his new self-ownership seriously. When he helps Vimes arrest Dragon he states that he could kill Dragon, as a free-thinking individual it is an option available to him, but he will not do it ‘Because I Own Myself And I Have Made A Moral Choice’ (*FC*, 392).

Dorfl takes off to free those he sees as enslaved. He destroys a treadmill at a clothes workshop where a few golems work turning the treadmill, and he also frees the animals at the slaughterhouse he worked at. On the walls Dorfl writes ‘No master...’ and ‘Workers! No master but yourselves!’, in an echo of Marxist thought (*FC*, 335-337, 351). In fact, the Marxist undertones are present throughout the novel, whether it is Dorfl storming the clothes workshop and destroying a treadmill or owning himself, just as Marx suggested that workers should own their labour. Brennan Croft suggests an interpretation that goes deeper: golems can be seen both as the labour that worked in industrial-era factories and as the machines that powered it (2).

Dorfl’s proclamation of moral choice is in line with Pratchett’s stance on individual responsibility and the importance of choice. In her chapter “Faith and Ethics” in *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, Farah Mendlesohn examines the roles of belief and ethics in Pratchett’s writing. Her interpretation on Pratchett’s moral structure in his works emphasises Pratchett’s belief in choice and individual responsibility, which feature in many of his novels (239). She speaks of what she calls his *romans à thèse*, novels that purposefully aim to impart a lesson to their readers. *Feet of Clay* can also be counted as a *roman à thèse*, as through Dorfl and Carrot Pratchett underlines the importance of free will, self-determination, choice and individual responsibility.

Once Dorfl gains ownership of himself he states that he is an atheist (*FC*, 402). This can be seen as a continuation of his commitment to free-thinking and of him leaving behind what is quite literally the religious Word he had in his head. He states that he will believe in any god whose existence can be proven through logical reasoning in a debate (*FC*, 409). Pratchett leaves no room for religion or self-deceit to act as a scapegoat for the choices and actions of individuals, when Dorfl discovers the new-found responsibility for his actions:

‘You couldn’t say, “I had orders.” You couldn’t say, “It’s not fair”. No one was listening. There were no Words. You *owned* yourself...Not *Thou Shalt Not*. Say *I Will Not*’ (*FC*, 323).



Dorfl is treated as an object for most of the novel, which is most evident when he is addressed as an *it* by main and side characters (*FC*, e.g. 134-139, 164). The fact that he is recognised as a person, a living creature, is shown in that the characters begin to use the pronoun *he* for him. Dorfl is referred to as a *he* for the first time when Fred Colon comes up to Carrot to tell him that Dorfl has turned himself in. Colon uses the pronoun *he* when he presumes to have caught the murderer, as in ‘We’ve got ‘im!’’, just as Carrot does when answering him: ‘Is he a golem?’ (*FC*, 157). Carrot and the other officers refer to Dorfl initially as an ‘it’ (*FC*, 160-161). However, as Carrot asks Dorfl to show his chem, Dorfl reacts and the sentence ‘He stepped forward, fists upraised’ can be read as referring to Dorfl, as he is the one mentioned in the previous sentence. Here is the passage in full: ‘The light from the golem’s flaring eyes filled the room. He stepped forward, fists upraised.’ (*FC*, 162).

Carrot begins using the pronoun *he* of Dorfl when he recognises his humanity. The first clear mention of Dorfl as a ‘he’ is by Carrot as he theorises, correctly, that Dorfl has placed the scrap of paper inside Father Tubelcek’s mouth to resurrect him (*FC*, 165). For the rest of the novel Carrot continues to refer to Dorfl as a *he*, unlike the other Watch members. Sergeant Angua follows Dorfl’s scent to a cellar, where she contemplates Dorfl’s and the other golems’ motivations. There she refers to Dorfl as a ‘he’ (*FC*, 172). At one point, Commander Vimes slips when referring to Dorfl as a ‘he’ but self-corrects by calling him an ‘it’ again (*FC*, 280).

Pronouns are important when making distinctions between objects and beings. The pronouns we use reflect what we think of their subject and how they wish to be addressed. Another example of changing pronouns in the novel is Corporal Cheri Littlebottom, formerly Cheery. She is a new dwarf officer and contrary to dwarf customs, where everyone is presumed to be male and to act like one, she wishes to appear and be recognised as a female. Her pronouns when first introduced are ‘he’ and ‘his’, but once Angua owing to her lupine sense of smell realises that Cheri is female, the pronouns used by narration also change (*FC*, 112, 114).

The pronouns that the other characters use of Dorfl show how their feelings about him and their behaviour towards him change as they learn more about golems in general and him in particular: ‘it’ switches to ‘he’. Parallels are drawn between Angua’s quick acceptance of Cheri’s preferences and her dislike of golems, and Carrot’s defending of Dorfl and questioning of how Cheri presents herself. Despite appearing to be open minded in most ways, Carrot is very much influenced by his dwarf upbringing: even he cannot escape the words in the head, whether they come from Vimes or his culture.

#### 4.5. Concluding Remarks

Pratchett has a way with words that disarms his readers. Gideon Haberkorn notes on *Discworld*, and more specifically on Pratchett, that with his humour and irony, he creates a safe space for readers to question their thought patterns and assumptions (*Discworld and the Disciplines*, 182). The golems force readers alongside the main cast of characters to face their preconceptions and established thought patterns surrounding the moral dilemmas of artificial life, what a good life is like and when if ever humans should have a say over other beings.

Golems in *Feet of Clay* serve many of the functions that androids and robots fulfil in science fiction: they represent a tireless workforce for the good of humans (and other species in Discworld) and are considered things that can be destroyed when inconvenient, as suggested by Vetinari and the priests. What makes their situation truly horrific is that they are clearly sentient and suffering: they have no choice but to obey the commands they are given and the words in their chems. They cannot defend themselves from attacks as their chems forbid them from harming others.

Dorfl's character acts as the bridge between the Watch, Ankh-Morpork at large, and the golems. He and Carrot establish a trust in each other that allows for mutual understanding. He is partly complicit in the murders by having helped in Meshugah's creation. He helped in shaping it and moulding it. He and the other golems give it too many words that drive it mad. Dorfl is a part of Meshugah, as are all the golems who created it by using some of their own clay. However, Dorfl takes responsibility for Meshugah's actions and sacrifices himself to stop its murderous rampage. In him are embodied many of the qualities that Pratchett values in his ethics: social responsibility, a search for personal freedom without hindering the freedom of others, rejection of dogmatism and rationality. Farah Mendlesohn notes that the issue that features in most of Pratchett's works is choice and the actions of individuals, which can also be seen in *Feet of Clay* (239). It takes Carrot and Dorfl both doing what they know to be right to save the day.

Three major themes that come across throughout the novel are monarchy, genealogy and the humanist ethos, which includes greatest possible freedom without infringing on the rights of others, rationality, democracy, personal liberty, social responsibility and rejecting dogmatism ('The Amsterdam Declaration', 2002).

The idea of monarchy is prevalent in the novel: the golems create Meshugah to be their king; Carrot's kingly lineage is noted; Nobby is to play the last king of Ankh Morpork in a historical re-enactment play and later the guilds try to persuade him to become the new king. Finally, there is the main villain of the story, Dragon King of Arms, who is a king in title only

but who bears the negative traits associated with monarchy in the novel: seeing people and living beings as subjects to use and command, like creating an arrangement for a shield of arms. Vimes particularly abhors kings:

‘It seemed to be a chronic disease. It was as if even the most intelligent person had this *little blank spot in their heads* where someone had *written*: “Kings. What a good idea.” Whoever had created humanity had left in a major design flaw. It was its tendency to bend at the knees’ (*FC*, 96, emphasis added).

The non-too subtle reference to words in the head occurs here even outside the context of chems and golems. Finally, in the novel Nobby plays the role of a human golem. The guilds hope to use him as their puppet king, as someone who is told what to do, to put it plainly, words are put in his head.

Genealogy plays a part through heraldry and the family trees that Dragon keeps. Family trees include a metaphor for roots, a sense of being born from something, whether it is golems being made for slavery, Carrot being born for kingship, Angua born a werewolf or Vimes born out of a family of a king killer yet rising above that. Despite their origins Dorfl gains ownership over himself, Carrot has no interest in being a king or rising in power despite his capabilities, Angua resists the werewolf impulses and strives to be a better human and Vimes has married into an aristocratic family, albeit he is reluctant to make use of his status. It is not what we are born as but what we choose to become that defines us: we make our own words.

Pratchett’s humanist ethos is apparent in all his writing and *Feet of Clay* is no exception. The enslavement of golems goes against personal freedom and treating them and other people as objects is in the words of Granny Weatherwax: ‘...sin, young man, is when you treat people as things. Including yourself. That’s what sin is’ (*Carpe Jugulum*, 299). Despite writing about sin or gods, Pratchett preferred to say that he was not religious in any way. In a 2009 *Guardian* Book Club panel/interview, an audience member asked Pratchett about his belief in god(s) and his opinion on belief. He answered that in his religion ‘such as it is’, humans are ‘shaped’ by the universe to be its consciousness, ‘we tell the universe what it is’ [2:30-2:45]. He listed himself among sceptics and agnostics such as Albert Einstein, Baruch Spinoza, Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan. Pratchett also said that in his religion ‘the building of a telescope is the building of a cathedral’. He held human innovation and imagination in high regard, as can be gathered from a famous quote of his by Death in *Hogfather* (1996): ‘HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE’ (408). Pratchett returns to this quote in the *Guardian* Book Club interview: ‘Within the story of evolution is a story far more interesting than any in

the Bible'...' I would much rather be a rising ape than a falling angel' [6:06-7:25]. In his view religion is far too often used to indoctrinate people and used by people themselves as justification for their actions or opinions. It is based on rules set in ancient times that do not bear closer scrutiny. Dorfl's awakening to his own will and mind is a powerful moment in *Feet of Clay*, as it challenges readers to question the justifications that they use. Ultimately Pratchett teaches a valuable lesson, that it is possible to change the words in the head so as to follow the words in the heart.

## 5. Conclusion: What Makes a Human?

‘...strength enough to build a home, time enough to hold a child, love enough to break a heart’ (W, 382)

As Nanny Ogg says in *Wintersmith*, being a human is complicated (W, 210). Death struggles with his human traits in *Mort* and *Reaper Man*: happiness, anger and fear are difficult enough to navigate throughout a lifetime, more so an eternity. Though he knows that all things must eventually die, he does not fall into the impersonal hubris of the Auditors who see all life as distractions. Rather, he finds humans fascinating. Death’s brief experience of mortality as Bill Door impressed him with the importance of care. Without care, mercy or justice, humans are nothing. The wintersmith tries to become a human by imitating human form and gathering the necessary ingredients, but he cannot find the most important ingredients: strength, time and love. He is logical and cannot be anything else, when humans are anything but logical – they are always changing and creating stories. What a human is, is learned from others through watching and listening to stories that eventually make us who we are. Dorfl is not a human, nor does he try to be one, but he shares the struggle common to humans and other non-human beings in Discworld: finding their own words and purpose in the world.

Pratchett grounded his *Discworld* novels in his humanism: he believed humans to be the makers of their own meaning in the universe, that is, we tell the universe what it is. Whether it is justice, mercy, love or hope, it is us who give it shape and meaning. He spoke openly about his struggle with Alzheimer’s disease and was a proponent of assisted dying. In his life as in his writing, he chose to speak openly and frankly. Pratchett was the bestselling author in the United Kingdom in the 1990’s, until he was later overtaken by J.K. Rowling and the success of her Harry Potter series (Weale, par. 2.). His novels have gathered a huge following that spans spinoff works such as *The Science of Discworld* and *The Art of Discworld*, board games, video games, films and recently in the works a television show inspired by his Watch series planned for release in 2020 on BBC America (Anthony-Rowlands). Pratchett has left an unquestionable legacy: his works have been translated to 37 languages (‘Terry Pratchett’). There are also multiple fan-run conventions some of which are organised biennially, for example the International Discworld Convention in the United Kingdom (‘A Guide for Newbies’), the North American Discworld Convention in the United States organised thus far

every two to four years ('LINKS'), the Irish Discworld Convention held in Ireland ('So what is the Irish Discworld Convention?') and the Australian Discworld Convention in Australia ('Nullus Anxietas 7a').

In my thesis I have sought to explore the humanity in some of Pratchett's non-human characters. I have examined their characteristics and how they are tied to Pratchett's humanist values. A more extensive study looking into the other novels in the Death series (*Soul Music*, *Hogfather* and *Thief of Time*) and other novels featuring golems, for example *Going Postal*, could give a more fleshed out image of the humanity of Death and the themes Pratchett has explored with golems. Other non-human characters that could provide interesting points of discussion are the much-loved Librarian, a human who due to a magical accident became an orangutan and chose to stay that way, and the werewolves and vampires of Discworld, humanoid creatures that are considered monsters in the most negative aspects of the world. The detailed analysis, though taxing, was also rewarding in that I could have a more detailed perception of the characters and the language used that a broader overview could have possibly missed.

Discworld and Pratchett's other novels will doubtlessly bring joy for many more generations to come. His view of humanity and his wit, though sharp and dark at times, were, and continue to be a source of discussion. As a fantasy writer and a human being, I hold Pratchett among the best. GNU Terry Pratchett.

## Appendix

1. These are the things that make a man (W; 239, 240, 325, 382)

‘These are the things that make a man,

Iron enough to make a nail,

Lime enough to paint a wall,

Water enough to drown a dog,

Sulphur enough to stop the fleas,

Potash enough to wash a shirt,

Gold enough to buy a bean,

Silver enough to coat a pin,

Lead enough to ballast a bird,

Phosphor enough to light the town

Poison enough to kill a cow,

Strength enough to build a home,

Time enough to hold a child,

Love enough to break a heart’

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