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TOWARDS POSITIVE PLACES OF DEATH

Fantastic Landscapes of Death in *Reaper Man*, *Mort* and *The Graveyard Book*

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ABSTRACT

Stella Puhakka: Towards Positive Places of Death Fantastic Landscapes of Death in *Reaper Man*, *Mort* and *The Graveyard Book*
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This thesis discusses landscapes of death in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Terry Pratchett's *Mort* and *Reaper Man* focusing on the construction of places of death and the purpose of using imagery related to death and dying. It posits that while these three novels happen in places of death, their landscapes subvert existing ideas surrounding places of death and attempt to alleviate the existential dread often associated with death.

For the purposes of this thesis, the landscapes of death within the novels are divided into three main types: places of the living, places of the dead and Death's domain. These are studied in conjunction with fantasy theories, theories on space and place, narratological approaches on the construction of space and place as a vehicle for plot, as well as historical and literary treatment of death. With the help of the theories on space and place, these three main types of landscapes of death are further divided into smaller subcategories that are more capable of revealing how death can be understood and estranged through a fantasy environment. Places of the living consist of places of dying, which are transitional in nature and highlight the difference between the perspectives of the young and the elderly, and places of mourning, which are both traditional and unconventional and highlight time as a healing factor. Places of the dead, on the other hand, are broadened from consisting solely of places of the afterworld, which function to make what comes after death less frightening, to also include places of the undead, which are possible because of the nature of the fantasy genre and show that immortality is not desirable. Additionally, Death's domain is studied from the perspectives of the immortal and the mortal, which helps normalize the concept of death.

Although *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* succeed in partially alleviating some of the fears commonly associated with death and dying, the novels seem more concerned with making death itself visible and acceptable in a society that often refuses to discuss death.

Keywords: fantasy, space, place, landscape, death studies, dying, cognitive estrangement, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett, *Mort*, *Reaper Man*, *The Graveyard Book*,

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tarkastelen pro gradu -tutkielmassani kuoleman maisemia Neil Gaimanin *The Graveyard Book* -teoksessa ja Terry Pratchettin *Mort* ja *Reaper Man* -teoksissa keskittyen kuoleman paikkojen sanalliseen rakentumiseen sekä kuolemaan ja kuolemiseen liittyvien kuvien käytön päämääriin. Vaikka teokset tapahtuvat kuoleman paikoissa, niiden maisemat kumoavat kuoleman paikkoja ympäröiviä olemassa olevia ideoita ja asenteita sekä pyrkivät lieventämään kuolemaan liittyvää eksistentiaalista pelkoa.

Tutkielmassani keskityn romaanien sisältämiin kolmeen kuoleman maisemien päälajiin: elävien paikat, kuolleiden paikat ja Kuoleman valtakunta. Näiden tutkimisen apuna toimivat fantasiateoriat, paikan ja tilan teoriat, narratologisia lähestymistapoja tilallisuuteen ja paikan käyttämiseen juonen ilmaisuvälineenä, sekä kuoleman historiallinen ja kirjallinen kohtelu. Paikan ja tilan teorioita hyödyntäen kuoleman maisemat on jaoteltu alalajeihin, joiden avulla on mahdollista nähdä, kuinka kuolemaa voidaan ymmärtää ja vieraannuttaa fantasiamaailmassa. Elävien paikat koostuvat siis kuolemisen paikoista, jotka ovat luonteeltaan ja osoittavat erot nuoren ja vanhan näkökulmien välillä, ja suremisen paikkoihin, joita on sekä perinteisiä että epätavallisia ja jotka nostavat esille ajan parantavana asiana. Kuolleiden paikat, puolestaan, laajenevat määrältään koostumaan tuonpuoleisen paikkojen, joiden tehtävänä on tehdä kuolemaa seuraavista tapahtumista vähemmän pelottavia, lisäksi myös epäkuolleiden paikoista, jotka ovat mahdollisia fantasiagenren tähden ja osoittavat kuolemattomuuden huonot puolet. Kuoleman valtakuntaa puolestaan tarkastellaan kuolemattomien ja kuolevaisten näkökulmista, jotka auttavat normalisoimaan kuoleman käsitteen.

Vaikka *Mort*, *Reaper Man* ja *The Graveyard Book* onnistuvat osittain helpottamaan kuolemaan ja kuolemiseen yleisesti liittyviä pelkoja, nämä romaanit ovat kiinnostuneempia tekemään kuolemasta itsestään näkyvää ja hyväksyttävän osan elämää yhteiskunnassa joka usein kieltäytyy keskustelemasta kuolemasta.

Keywords: fantasia, tila, paikka, maisema, kuolema, kuoleminen, kognitiivinen vieraannuttaminen, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett, *Mort*, *Reaper Man*, *Viikatemies*, *The Graveyard Book*, *Hautausmaan Poika*

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to discuss landscapes of death in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and Terry Pratchett's *Mort* (1987) and *Reaper Man* (1991) with particular attention paid to the construction of places of death and the purpose of using imagery of death and dying. In the Western world, landscapes of death such as graveyards and different afterlife options are typically surrounded by fear and sorrow. People are generally speaking afraid of death and in the 20th century death itself has become a subject not suitable for polite conversation. It is considered morbid and when someone is dying or dies, the job of those around the mourners is to cheer them up. For anything that is alive, dying is inevitable. Yet we know very little about what lies beyond death. Religions, scientists and philosophers have many theories but empirically death and what may be beyond cannot be studied. Certainty cannot, therefore, be achieved. Scientists have, however, made lists about why people are afraid of death:

> Fear of dying painfully
>
> Fear of hell or of some kind of painful experience in after life
>
> Fear of the unknown […]
>
> Fear of absolute solitude, isolation from others […]
>
> Fear of separation from my loved ones
>
> Fear about the earthly fate of my loved ones after I die
>
> Fear that my hopes, goals, and aspirations will be unfulfilled
>
> Fear of being forgotten
>
> Fear of nonbeing, of my total annihilation as a person. (Davis 4)

These fears are ranked differently by people (Davis 4-5). Some find the total annihilation of self the lest terrifying while others are most afraid of it (Davis 5). These are also the fears that

Mort, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* deal with when they discuss death and landscapes of death. These three fantasy novels are stories that make their readers confront death on every page as characters die, mourn, awaken as the undead and have discussions with Death.

Landscapes of death typically include places of burial, places of dying, the hereafter (both the good and the bad kind) and the in-between places of ghosts, such as purgatory. Earlier cases of such places in literature have often heavily relied on religion, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and its description of heaven and hell, or mythologies of the Ancient Greek and Roman variety, like Henryson's *The Tale of Orpheus and Erudices his Quene* (c. 1470), that draws on the myth of Orpheus bringing Eurydice back from the Greek underworld. With the exception of depictions based on heaven or good afterlife scenarios, these places are not usually seen as safe or kind places for the living but rather as sad or even scary. Places where characters die have also been important in literature from Socrates's execution by poisoning in Plato's texts to the prolonged and dramatic scenes of death in tragedies, such as Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Hakola and Kivistö vii). This has also been the case in fantasy where battle scenes, heroic deaths and prolonged deaths of figures important to the heroes are described in detail, as is the case in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) or the *Harry Potter* -series (1997-2007). For heroes in particular, the death scene may be what finally gives meaning to his existence (Hakola and Kivistö viii) while in other stories death functions as a plot device for either opening or ending a particular narrative (Hakola and Kivistö x). Fantasy stories are no different on this front as stories like *Skulduggery Pleasant* (2007) begin with the character losing someone they love while others like *A Storm of Swords* (2000) use a character's death to give his life meaning and to function as a catalyst for further actions by the other characters in the stories. *The Graveyard Book* subverts some of these expectations as the story's protagonist lives in a graveyard with ghosts: it is his safe haven and his home. At the same time, however, the novel does follow a narrative of growing up and avoiding untimely death.

Pratchett, on the other hand, gives Death a home of his own and in doing so creates a new place of death that is not for the dying or the dead but for the personification of death alone. Both authors construct mostly hospitable landscapes of death instead of places filled with fear.

The landscapes of death in *Mort*, *Reaper Man*, and *The Graveyard Book* are divided into three categories: places of the living, places of the dead, and Death's domain. The chapter on "Places of the Living" will examine places of dying and mourning where the ideas of emotional space and death's position as a natural part of life are central to understanding the perceptual changes that different characters experience during the novels. The chapter on the Places of the Dead", on the other hand, will study places of the undead and places of the afterworld where immortality becomes undesirable. The stories attempt to alleviate the fear of the unknown. Finally, in "Death's Domain" the discussion will centre on the differences between the immortal and mortal perspectives of Death's home and whether this makes the concept of death more approachable. These chapters respond to the following questions: How do the selected texts construct hospitable landscapes of death? How do these landscapes subvert stereotypes of fear surrounding death? And finally, What are the narrative and thematic structures used to construct places of death in fantasy literature? In order to respond to these research questions, the landscapes of death present in the novels will be analysed not only by taking into account the literary devices of fantasy, such as estrangement, but also through the use of relevant theories on fantasy settings themselves (Ekman, 2013). These fantasy settings are then studied with the help of theories on construction of place and space, particularly leaning on definitions of place and space (de Certeau, 1991 and Tuan, 1987), chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981) and Zoran's thoughts on literary spaces (1984). The aim is to better understand how hospitable landscapes of death are constructed and what subverting the stereotypes of fear looks to accomplish.

The choice of primary material for this thesis was motivated by a general interest in fantasy, its settings and their ability to present readers with a new perspective on a familiar topic. Neil Gaiman's *Graveyard Book* (2008), Terry Pratchett's *Mort* (1987) and *Reaper Man* (1991) provide an easy way into themes of death and related landscapes because of their large variety of landscapes of death: places of dying and mourning, places exclusively for the dead, and the interesting addition of the domain of Death himself. These places are intertwined with the growth and emotional experiences of characters within the novels, and, therefore, with the reactions of their readers. The way in which Death's apprentice sees death and the places associated with it change with his experiences of them (*Mort*) and Bod's, who is a boy living at the graveyard, experience of the graveyard as his home invariably change the perspective from which he sees this classic landscape of mourning (*The Graveyard Book*). Additionally, the analysis takes note of psychological and experiential factors that are closely connected to the construction of these spaces, particularly where negative human emotions are transformed into more positive ones. The thesis posits that while *Mort*, *Reaper Man*, and *The Graveyard Book* happen in places of death, their landscapes subvert existing ideas surrounding places of death and attempt to alleviate the existential dread often associated with death.

2. Death, Fantasy and Place

Any study of death in literature must first understand the cultural and historical context that the studied literary works were written in. For this thesis, this means understanding both longstanding traditions of death in and outside of literature and the short-term implications for novels written between the late 1980s and early 2000s. It is through this context that a study of *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* as fantasy novels that deal with places of death becomes possible. This exploration in turn is not possible without defining space and place and discovering how the narrative contributes to how these places are seen. Therefore, this chapter will dive into the ideas about death as a cultural phenomenon and death in literature as well as fantasy, place and narrative that will make an analytical discussion of places of death possible later. *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* are able to create landscapes of death that subvert the culture of death denial because of the tools of fantasy at their disposal.

Death as a Historico-Cultural and Literary Phenomenon

Mort, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* are literary works that openly discuss death as the act of dying, going into the afterlife and mourning. They are necessarily interested in places related to dying, the reactions characters may have towards death and dying, the places we go after we die and the places we go to bury our dead and mourn them. They seem to step away from ideas directly provided by the society surrounding them, namely the United Kingdom, and instead dive into the discussion with their own ideas about what death is supposed to look like and how we are meant to handle it. However, these choices made by their authors are difficult to understand without a historical and cultural context for the time of their writing and an understanding of death's overall treatment in literature and, indeed, in literary studies.

Historically death research is characterized by an interest in ceremonies, burial, and bereavement, ideas surrounding the afterlife, and attitudes towards death in general. But death, as Bronfen and Goodwin point out "is genuinely of universal interest and every discipline, scholar and reader have something relevant to add" (1993, 3). Despite this, death is often a culturally forbidden subject to discuss that is therefore "necessarily constructed by culture" (Bronfen and Goodwin, 4). Since death is culturally constructed, its representations in literary works are dependent on their historical context and the culture they arise from. This also applies to *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* which must not only follow the conventions of their genre, fantasy, but also those of their time, late-1980s to 2009. They are more unified by a question of attitude than one of ritual, which may be for the best as rituals surrounding death have remained largely unchanged for centuries.

Mort and *Reaper Man* are only a few years apart as the former was released in 1987 and the latter in 1991 and as such, one would assume their surrounding culture to be rather similar. In modern, liberal societies like the United Kingdom, death has become a private and rather taboo topic: mourning was something not to be spoken about (Kaczmarek, 26). Death and mourning had become an individual experience "devoid of social framework and public status" and due to its move into the "context of biological and anthropological laws, which by nature are scientific", death was no longer linked to group sensitivity (Kaczmarek, 27). Death's inevitability and irreversibility as something natural that evades known concepts (Kaczmarek, 27) is probably at least partially to blame for why it evokes anger and fear. *The Graveyard Book*, on the other hand, was released in 2009 nearly twenty years after *Reaper Man*. This time gap also coincides with what Adriana Teodoroscu claims has been "a void … [in] the field of *death studies* by the sharp decrease of publications on death representations in literature" since the last major contribution in 1993 (1-2. Emphasis in original). It is only in the early twenty-first century that we fully decline to acknowledge or notice death as we would rather see it as

a metaphor than an "authentic and unavoidable experience" (Kaczmarek, 40). It is this denial that makes death so difficult to deal with in contemporary society as we are expected to simply breeze through when it touches our lives. Perhaps this is why both Pratchett and Gaiman feel the need to make death entirely visible and place it front and centre in their respective stories.

Discussion of death in literature is by no means a new concept as characters in Western Literature have been killing one another and being killed since Ancient Greece (Kundu, 10). Although the arts are often considered to be the media allowed to discuss all aspects of life, the degree to which literature has explored the implications of a character's death or death in general has varied throughout the years, presumably in part due to the taboo nature of death. Where society around art does not embrace death, falls the duty to do so on art (Kaczmarek, 30). According to Teodorescu, "the relationship between literature and death tends to be trivialized" by which she means that "death representations are interpreted in an over-aestheticized manner" (1). As a result death in literature is often only seen to have value for literary studies and not as something anchored in the social reality and persistent clichés have risen with claims such as that literature has the power "*per se* to annihilate death" (Teodorescu, 1. Emphasis in original). Not all literature achieves immortality, but some of it may help their readers accept one's own mortal nature (Teodorescu, 5).

Our understanding of death is necessarily shrouded in mystery as human intelligibility is incapable of entering the possible territories beyond death and, as such, cannot ascertain factual information about the afterlife which in turn makes us afraid of what is beyond the veil (Kundu, 11). In early twentieth and early twenty-first century literature (*The Makropulos Affair* 1922 and *Death at Intervals* 2008), death denial - that is the denying of one's own inevitable death and assuming that one will live forever - has become particularly rampant and immortality re-established as a pertinent desire (Kundu, 13-15). However, some of these stories also debunk immortality: In The Mortal Immortal, the immortal becomes "desirous of death,

yet never dying" (Shelley, 1833 as quoted in Kundu). Debunking immortality "projects death as the complementary imperative of life" (Kundu, 19). Where the literature of death denial reveals what attempting to circumvent death could cause, the literature of death and dying opens up the reality of death to its readers (Kundu, 19). That is to say that literature that deals with death and dying, as *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* all do to varying degrees, explores the emotions surrounding death while it manipulates the reader's responses to it (Kundu, 21).

Research on death in fantasy literature has largely concentrated on heaven (Boesky, 1996) and hell (Pope, 1950), purgatory (Greenblatt, 2013), vampires and immortality (Yoke 1985), death and dying (Amendt-Raduege, 2017), and the personifications of death. In fact, Pratchett's *Mort* and *Reaper Man* as well as Gaiman's *The Sandman* have been studied through their personifications of death (Saliba, 2011). William Gray has a collection of essays on death in fantasy wherein he explores various works from the perspectives of dealing with death and, indeed, using death in fantasy (2008). He argues that fantasy uses death to achieve growth in both a spiritual and a psychoanalytical sense (1). According to Gray, death is treated as a means to an end partially due to its allowance for new life either in an afterworld or among the living (1-2). This is important for my exploration of death as this connects to death denial (Kundu 19), the possible construction of the places of the dead and the fears the idea of death as a means to an end can subvert. Gray also argues that death in fantasy can be an attempt to deal with death for the characters and the author (1): this is also visible in the three novels this thesis is concerned with making Gray's ideas useful in the later discussions of places of the living and places of the dead.

Space, Narrative and Fantasy

While *Mort* and *Reaper Man* are interested in the character of Death and the spaces his actions necessarily take place in, *The Graveyard Book* is more concerned with the dead, their domain, and the different spaces in which the living may interact with them. From the very beginning, *The Graveyard Book* raises places of dying, mourning and the dead into its focus as the story begins with murder and happens thereafter mostly in a graveyard. For *Mort* and *Reaper Man* the focus is more on the places of dying, places where the dead meet Death, and Death's home. This focus on places of death and mourning makes it necessary to also understand the construction of space and place in both the real world and in the narrative worlds of fantasy. In order to discuss these landscapes of death, we must therefore first understand their genre and the specific features of narrative and spatial kind their fantasy setting provides. This exploration in turn is not possible without defining space and place and discovering the necessary narratological approaches to further understand how they function in literature.

Scholars like Jackson (2005) and Attebery (1992) have ventured to define fantasy as a genre, and researchers have landed on a sort of a "'fuzzy set', a range of accepted critical definitions of fantasy" from which definers may be chosen in accordance with "the area of fantasy fiction or the ideological filter" that they are interested in (Mendlesohn, xiii). Loosely defined fantasy is a literary genre that creates new realities (Timmerman, 1) that are usually either partially or wholly impossible (Jackson, 26-27): they require that the reader accept the fantastic or impossible as possible for the duration of the fantasy story (Jackson, 28-29). This loose definition does, however, face some issues as it could apply to science fiction and speculative fiction, both of which have a close history with fantasy. To differentiate fantasy from these two, it is necessary to note that as a genre it must always deal with the fantastic in some way and is reliant on "the dialectic between author and reader for the construction of a sense of wonder" because it is "a fiction of consensual construction of belief" (Mendlesohn,

xiii). This dialectic, in turn, must accommodate the genre expectations around identifiable rhetorical techniques that its reader expects from that particular category of fantasy (Mendlesohn, xiii). There are clearly defined frames as a relationship between the fantasy world and our own is established all the while they are kept separate by the narrative devices utilized (Attebery, 66) and alongside this established relationship, each fantasy story must establish its own rules and internal probabilities for the fantastic (Clark, 125-126), so that the reader's acceptance of the world in front of them is not shattered. Therefore, fantasy must not only function with a set of its own rules but it must do so within the expectations of those reading it. These expectations and rules in turn are affected by the type of fantasy that the story wishes to present its readers.

Fantasy scholars have categorized fantasy stories and worlds into different types depending on the fantastic and narrative elements present in these stories. They do, however, readily admit that these definitions are not all encompassing and that stories may fit into multiple different categories at once (Mendlesohn, 246-267). For the purposes of this thesis, however, these simple definitions will be useful as the focal point is that of place, not of fantasy in of itself and understanding the ways in which the fantastic exists or enters the narrative is helpful for understanding the spatial elements that exist within it. *Mort* and *Reaper Man* are both set in Discworld which, although an independent and fully functioning world, often eludes to our own in order to satirize it. It is Discworld's existence as independent of our own that is of interest when defining its fantasy world: it is an immersive fantasy that assumes the reader is as much part of its world as the characters they read about (Mendlesohn, 59). *The Graveyard Book*, on the other hand, appears on a surface level to happen in a world much like our own that just happens to feature aspects that we would never consider possible. The novel's protagonist, Bod, also steps through a portal to a sort of a hellscape (69-72) and he is only allowed to see the ghosts because he has been granted right of abode at the graveyard (25).

With both these aspects in mind, *The Graveyard Book* might be characterized as both an intrusion fantasy where the fantastic enters the world and disrupts normality (Mendlesohn, 115) as Bod's parents are killed by the man Jack, Bod joins the ghosts of the graveyard (*The Graveyard Book*, 3-8) and Jack finally finds him to attempt to kill him (238-239), and a portal quest where the protagonist enters into the fantastic through a portal of some sort but the fantastic cannot cross back with them (Mendlesohn, 1-3) as Bod steps in and out of the hellscape (*The Graveyard Book*, 69-72 and 85-87) and moves between the graveyard and the rest of the world (173-175).

Theories and concepts similar to those used to study real spaces and places are important in understanding how *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* construct their imagined places. Ideas surrounding space have changed over time, partially because in addition to traditional spaces, like churches and shops, humanity has manifested new kinds of space, such as augmented reality and entirely virtual online spaces. The nation state and related territorial thinking have become increasingly outdated and instead of thinking of themselves as just citizens of a nation, people are now more likely to view themselves as citizens of the world. Somewhat as a result of an existing tension between global and national landscapes an equally important cultural crisis between these two types of identities has emerged. With the changes in spaces available for study and the tensions between different types of landscapes, it comes as no surprise that interest in the study of space and place in the literary sphere has been renewed: spatiality is now a key concept in both literary and cultural studies (Tally, 4).

Geography and social sciences, more specifically sociology, have both ventured to define space and place, and generally what they have found is that the two definitions are interlinked. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan says that spaces become places when people give them value: place, therefore, implies security while space is openness and freedom, even threatening to some degree, but people are only able to see their qualities in relation to one another (1987,

6). Social scientist Michel de Certeau, on the other hand, states that "space is a practiced place", wherein actions and operations happen, while place is more formal in that it is what a location was designed to be but where no action (practice) has taken place yet to transform it into space (117-118). Although Tuan and de Certeau use the two words in almost the opposite way, the two agree that one becomes the other when people or their actions give these landscapes meaning. This thesis will favour *place* to mean the more abstract and undefined landscapes, and *space* for the places that have been given meaning. De Certeau also notes that stories constantly make places into spaces and spaces into places as they either clinically describe the place or throw their readers into the action in these places thus transforming them into spaces (de Certeau, 118). Therefore in a literary text, space is perhaps more often described through actions that happen in them while places may receive a more static treatment of straightforward description.

In an exploration of death and its many realms, place necessarily intertwines with time: we speak of time of death and the timeliness of death, we are interested in the locations dying happens and where people go after their death. In *Mort* and *Reaper Man*, time functions differently in the realm of Death, who comes for the living when it is their time to die, than it does on the rest of the Disc while in *The Graveyard Book* the perspectives provided by the ghosts and by Bod are all altered by time. As such, we cannot study *Mort*, *Reaper Man* or *The Graveyard Book* through their locations without taking time into account. These connections between the temporal and the spatial, or chronotopes, are expressed "artistically" in literature: the indicators of space and time are fused into a concrete whole that makes time visible and space "responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin, 84). Therefore, the practices that transform places into spaces for de Certeau (117-118) also imply time and its passing. Zoran sees literary spaces as constructions whose structuring has three different levels: 1. "the topographical level: space as a static entity", 2. "the chronotopic level: the structure

imposed on space by events and movements", one such imposition could be by chronotopes, and 3. "the textual level: the structure imposed on space by the fact that it is signified within the verbal text" (315). As such, the spaces this thesis is concerned with are discussed with Zoran's thoughts in mind paying attention especially to their chronotopic and textual levels which are visible in texts on a narrative level. Additionally, time's visibility is further emphasized in novels where characters get to grow and change in the sense that places themselves change over time as they are affected by both internal and external forces (Buell, 67) but I would argue that in addition to the change already happening in a place, the human perception of places changes as we grow and gain experience.

Zoran's chronotopic and textual levels are necessarily narrative in nature and as such, one of the more useful tools for studying spaces in literature is that of narratology. It is, therefore, unfortunate that space has often been seen as a mere "backdrop to plot" as studies in the sphere of narratology have concentrated more on the temporality of the narrative (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 1). Narrative space is the environment in which characters exist (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 3), which for the purposes of this thesis will be the fantasy worlds of the discussed novels. David Herman calls narrative "a blueprint for constructing a world" (quoted in Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 16), which means that space is one of the requirements for mentally reconstructing the narrative world because "the imagination can only picture objects that present spatial extension" and even time is often presented in spatial metaphors, because imagination requires two or more dimensions (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 16).

Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu present what they call the five basic levels of narrative space of which 1. Spatial frames, 2. Story space, 3. Storyworld, and 4. Narrative universe are of interest for this thesis. The first of these, the spatial frames, consist of shifting scenes of action that flow into each other (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 23). They are the immediate surroundings of the characters that are filled with individual things and defined by the items in them (Ryan,

Foote and Azaryahu, 23). The spatial frames of *The Graveyard Book* relevant for this thesis include the Owens's grave, the graveyard and Bod's parents' house while for the two Discworld novels these would be Death's domain and the many different places of dying Death must visit. These are of interest because of the implications of the items that form (in particular) places of mourning like gravestones and their significance. The second, story space, consists of the space relevant to the plot that is mapped by the character's actions and thoughts: it includes spatial frames and all mentioned locations by the text where no actual events take place (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 24). These may include places that characters in the stories reference in conversation, as is the case with all afterworld places described in *Mort* and *Reaper Man*. The third, storyworld, is the space that the reader's imagination completes based on a principle of minimal departure: it is "coherent, unified, ontologically full, and materially existing geographical entity" (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 24). For *The Graveyard Book* this is the graveyard and the town in which it is as the world outside these places does not connect to the entity that the story explores. This also means that places in the afterworld are outside the storyworld for the most part as they must be entered to via a gate or through death and are considered separate by characters in all three novels. The final category of the narrative universe is the world that is presented as actual by the text itself and everything it constructs through the thoughts and emotions of its characters (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 24). This is of particular interest for the two Discworld novels, because Pratchett has invented the narrative universe of Discworld specifically for the purpose of telling stories like those of Mort or Windle Poons that could never happen in our world.

These different types of narrative space are then expressed on a micro- and macrolevel by the narrative choices themselves. The microlevel is divided into perspectivist and aperspectivist description wherein perspectivism is focalized on a character or the narrator whose perspective provides the description of a scene with a specific point of view while

aperspectivist narration provides a perspective much akin to an object floating freely in space (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 25-26). *The Graveyard Book* is very clearly told from the perspective of different focalizing characters while the two Discworld-novels include both types of narrative description. The description in both the Gaiman novel and the two Pratchett novels are also more map- than tour-like, where map-like description is that of seeing and tour-like that of going (de Certeau 119). That is to say that in the novels areas are described not in a manner where a character or narrator necessarily moves through the area but rather from that of looking at the area from the inside and gesturing towards directions and depth. All of the places are, however, not described at once. Instead readers are presented with the spatial frames they need when they need them. This is not to say that the novels would not also utilise tour-like description but that the map-like one is more in focus. The opening sequence of *The Graveyard Book* is a good example of the combining of these two types within the story as Bod's journey from the house into the graveyard is described both through the movements he and the man Jack make and through lengthier descriptions of views encountered (3-8). The combination of descriptions allows the novel to also shift between landscapes of death as space that is experienced and as abstract places with preconceived notions attached to them.

Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu argue that "space can be regarded as an indispensable element of plot" (35). They rely heavily on Lotman's observations on the "language of spatial relations" as a "basic mean of comprehending reality" (as quoted in Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 35). That is to say that the human mind often associates spatial conceptual pairs with nonspatial ideas making them into "empty signifiers capable of being filled with a wide variety of meanings", for instance high-low can stand for good versus evil (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 35). This spatial imagery operates in literature across cultures and individuals and these conceptual pairs that underlie narrative texts are made possible by a more fundamental spatial concept: topographical concept of boundary (ibid.). This boundary structures the storyworld

into zones that have their own rules (ibid.), like the Disc and Death's world. Although these boundaries prevent crossing, they are "not impermeable enough to prevent violations" (ibid.). Their simultaneous structural and ambiguous nature is "fundamental to eventfulness" which in turn is a "cornerstone of narrativity" (ibid.). "The event or movement of the plot is", according to Lotman, "the crossing of the forbidden border which the plotless structure establishes" (as quoted in Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 35). It is not enough for him that the hero simply moves within the space he has been assigned but rather the plot must always cross the basic topological border within its spatial structure (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 35). If as Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu claim the eventfulness is entirely dependent on the border's strength (36), then the first time Bod leaves the confines of the graveyard (109-110) or when he enters the realm of the ghouls (69-72) could both be considered narratively significant events that are meant to shape the character's and, therefore, the reader's perception of both the places and the events that follow. It is also stated that the move between the biological boundaries, that is to say the move from living to dead, is a narrative crossing that is relevant to plot (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 36). From a death studies perspective, the boundary between life and death is one that people are usually afraid of crossing and spend significant amount of their time attempting to avoid. Characters in *Reaper Man* are, however, disappointed by their inability to cross this boundary which suggests an understanding of the necessity of death. Similarly, I would argue Mort becoming Death's apprentice and moving into his home is a crossing of a relatively strong border as his realm was never meant for the mortals (*Mort* 308) and Death's becoming mortal and moving into the realm of the living (*Reaper Man* 34) fall into this category of crossing of a topological border.

For a study on places of death, a more important division of narrative space is that of a contrast between emotional and strategic space. Emotional spaces matter due to the feelings they inspire and memories they bring to mind, strategic space is that of simple actions that they

allow to be performed (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 38-39). A graveyard is typically associated with death, sorrow and even fear but when the novel's protagonist makes that his home (*The Graveyard Book*, 20-25), it becomes also emotionally associated with safety and happiness. Similarly, the graveyard is later used in a strategic manner as Bod and the rest of the graveyard's residents plot the man Jack's demise (*The Graveyard Book*, 245-267). It is through these emotional and strategic divisions that the narrative itself may interfere with what the reader thinks or how they feel about the places they are presented. These are also closely connected to the ways in which characters' experiences of space exists as a prominent narrative theme (Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu, 37) in all three novels. The graveyard is symbolically both a place of death and a place of safety, and it connects at least three different worlds seamlessly together in its existence. It gifts Bod with power and the ability to survive while he still holds enough imagination to remain (286-289). For Death, the golden field of corn he eventually plants in his home realm after his stint as a mortal man ends up symbolizing the preciousness of life (349-350). Places like this with the reactions and meanings characters and readers attach to them are what makes Death seem human and these places perhaps a little less threatening.

The ability of *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* to present death in a positive light is at least partially possible due to their fantasy settings, which provide the novels with an opportunity to present their subjects in a new light. In creating new realities, fantasy responds to our craving for otherness and provides us with ways to see a problem from a new angle and to find new answers (Timmerman, 1-2). Placing a familiar subject like death in the unfamiliar setting of a fantasy world can change how the reader views it. This is what in science fiction studies is called cognitive estrangement, where by allowing readers to imagine strange worlds they are allowed to see their "own conditions of life in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective" (Parrinder, 4). Like science fiction, fantasy is often set in a strange or altered world and as such, can provide its readers with these same opportunities for viewing their own

conditions through a new perspective. This means that the addition of the undead in *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* can allow readers to see how exhausting life beyond its natural conclusion might be. Seeing characters in *Mort* interact with the dead and Death can also allow readers to understand their own fears in relation to death and perhaps even alleviate those fears. The other important distinction to make is that of mode, wherein *The Graveyard Book* may be purely in the field of fantasy but Pratchett's Discworld novels carry their signature brand of parody and satire, which may alter the uses Pratchett has for cognitive estrangement and how his readers see the landscapes of death presented in *Mort* and *Reaper Man*. If Pratchett's two novels are, indeed, satirizing and parodying the attitudes and ideas surrounding death, part of the power of these will arise directly from their existence within a fantasy world capable of estranging the subject.

Scholarly explorations of fantasy have largely concentrated on characters and plots, but interest in fantasy locations themselves has been sparse (Ekman, 2). Fantasy settings have been treated more as plot elements or characters than as places or landscapes in their own right. Ekman (2013) looked to fill this gap with an in-depth study of fantasy settings and maps and their interactions with other elements of fantasy. *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings* includes an analysis of the idea of polders and their boundaries or borders in Prathcett's *Pyramids* (Ekman, 117-123), and Ekman also notes that Pratchett's Discworld is a secondary world that demonstrates that secondary worlds do "not have to be set in a hemisphere" (Ekman, 29). Ekman's ideas on fantasy settings in conjunction with Mendlesohn's thoughts on the types of fantasy worlds in which these stories take place will make it possible to analyse the spaces described not only in their fantasy context but also alongside the aforementioned theories on space, place and time.

In an intersection of death, fantasy and place, this thesis is interested in adding to the academic discussion surrounding both death and fantasy through the landscapes present in

Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Pratchett's *Mort* and *Reaper Man* as they step away from the idea of death as taboo in their positive spaces of death. It is through a combination of narrative structures, spatiality and fantasy's penchant for the impossible that such a positioning of at least some of death landscapes as positive is possible. These spaces are instrumental to the plots of these three novels and the crossing of their many boundaries can act as either that of defiance or that of acceptance depending on the character's perspective. Although their readers are in the position of a spectator, by exploring death and dying the novels also force their readers to confront their own mortality.

3. Places of the Living

A discussion of landscapes of death would be rather fruitless without understanding their relation to the living. There are places of death that are exclusively reserved as transitional places from the living to the dead, which will be referred to as places of dying from here on out, and places where the living go to remember and mourn the dead, which would best be characterized as places of mourning. In *Graveyard Book*, *Mort* and *Reaper Man* these places of mourning are not always used in their traditional sense: the graveyard in *Graveyard Book* is Bod's home and therefore the element of sorrow can be entirely ignored where discussions of his experiences of the graveyard are concerned whereas other living characters in the story have attitudes ranging from fear to curiosity towards the graveyard. *Mort* and *Reaper Man*, on the other hand, discuss places of dying almost exclusively from the perspective of Death and his apprentice, Mort, whose experiences of dying can at best be characterized as a job where he fetches the dead when it is their time.

These places of death are much more closely related to the living and, as such, usually coloured by our own emotional experiences therefore more veering towards emotional space over strategic space. This does not mean that stories looking to break the conventions landscapes of death and help us see them in a more neutral light cannot also use these spaces strategically. The significance of positive places of death stems entirely from how they are used and what kinds of associations they might be able to subvert with the stories that happen in them.

Places of Dying

> Deaths didn't normally take place *in* tombs, except in rare and unfortunate cases. The open air, the bottoms of rivers, halfway down sharks, any amount of bedrooms, yes - tombs, no.
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Reaper Man*

Places of dying are transitional spaces where one thing becomes another: the living become dead, the man Jack a mass murderer, Bod an orphan, and a witch's last will and testament truly becomes her last commands to others. *The Graveyard Book*, *Mort*, and *Reaper Man* all present places of dying mainly through the actions that take place in them, although some static description of important details is also involved. Even in the case of murder these three novels have almost a matter-of-fact attitude to death and dying as the act itself is shown to be common place and ignored unless something goes terribly wrong. The focus is either on the living left behind or entirely on the soul after its earthly home has ceased to house it, and the way death is framed depends entirely on whose perspective we view it from.

The opening scene of *The Graveyard Book* shows Bod's family home from two different perspectives: that of a murderer, the man Jack, and that of a toddler, Bod. Through these two perspectives, the novel contrasts adulthood with innocence. By telling its readers first that "there was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife" (*GB* 3), the novel juxtaposes our expectations of murder with the idyllic rooms of a family home. Readers are provided with both the imagery of fear and descriptions such as "brightly coloured bedroom, surrounded by toys and half-finished models" that under other circumstances might be considered happy and comforting. An open door that allows "wisps of night-time mist" to "slither and twine into the house" (*GB* 3) signifies a border that has been crossed by the dangerous outside world into what formerly was a safe home. Where this door in the man Jack's side of the scene appears to

allow the darkness in, it is "open and inviting" when it provides the child with escape into the outside world, where "fog wreathed around him like a long-lost friend" (*GB* 7). By describing the fog in this way, the novel changes the perception of the outside world from dangerous to safe and friendly. On both sides, however, these scenes are told through actions and decisions the characters make: the door is only significant in as much as Jack "had slipped in" through it and must find it fully open upon his return downstairs, whereas the child manages to avoid what Jack has planned for him by going to explore the outside world through it. It is through this mirroring of Jack and the child that this particular scene of death is allowed to remain mostly devoid of fear.

In *Reaper Man* the wizards' ability to celebrate the life of their loved one before his passing does not alleviate their anxiety where their own death is concerned even though it makes their loved one's death easier. On Discworld, witches and wizards know exactly when they are going to die (*Reaper Man* 19-20). With this knowledge they may prepare as they see fit and even warn their friends of their impending death. In the case of Windle Poons, this leads to a going away party for the 130-year-old wizard whose life is to end precisely at half past nine (*RM* 26). Wizards of the Unseen Academy take celebrating the life of their dearly departed to be very seriously and, as such, the act of dying happens surrounded by the family, friends and colleagues that they have left after living such long lives. Pratchett chooses to describe this party setting only through the few changes it means to the usual décor of the great hall at the Unseen University:

> The party was in full swing. The banner with the legend 'Goodebye Windle 130 Gloriouse Years' was drooping a bit in the heat. Things were getting to the point where there was nothing to drink but the punch and nothing to eat but the strange yellow dip with highly suspicious tortillas and *nobody minded*. (*Reaper Man* 25-26)

For the most part, a party in full swing with banners seems to point towards a happy occasion during which the life and actions of their dying friend are to be celebrated but there are a few things that are mentioned that may express at least some unease on the partygoers' part:

> His gaze slid sideways to a small table at the side of the room. Despite the fact that the room was quite crowded, there was an area of clear floor around the table, as if it had some kind of personal space that no one was about to invade. (*Reaper Man* 27)

The food, party hat and glass of wine on the table are for Death, who is supposed to arrive personally to collect the soul of any wizard and whom all the wizards are able to see (*RM* 27-31). This distance between the crowd and the table might simply signify an unwillingness to mess up the decorations on the table as special instructions had been followed to set it up properly but it seems likelier that they are attempting to create distance between themselves and Death. A similar phenomenon happens with the wizards and the distance they put between themselves and Windle Poons when his time draws near: "Windle was at the centre of a very tactfully widening circle" (*RM* 31) No one is avoiding Windle but rather they are expectantly "glancing at the door" through which Death is meant to be entering imminently. The wizards attempt to create distance between themselves and death, because, as Gray found with C.S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed*, real death can shatter the ideas that they have spun to protect themselves (60). Aside from the distance characters may be putting between themselves and their dying friend, the event and the space come across as dignified and celebratory instead of sorrowful. They are all expecting Death and, as such, they know that they have had their chance to say goodbye at the very last second. Their circumstances, however, are ideal. In general, people do not know when they are going to die and therefore cannot celebrate in advance. Although the idea of knowing exactly when life must end may itself be comforting to some, this knowledge could also be disturbing. People who are told that they are going to die because

of a disease they have usually go through a few stages of coping with (Leishman 20-21) and grieving their own death (Miori 289-290).

Mort shows that the acceptance of mortality is easier after a long life than it is at the beginning of one. Like Windle Poons, some of the dying who Death's apprentice, Mort, goes to collect know when they are going to die. As a result, they even converse with him while attending to the more practical matters of their own death. But even under these circumstances, it is more usual for them to die at home than surrounded by a crowd celebrating their life. An elderly witch aware of her own death does not bother to have a logpile waiting for the rest of the winter as she would not be there to see it: "but there wasn't a logpile here, even though spring was still a long way off" (*Mort* 94). Later she would die peacefully outside after finishing with everything she needed done in her low-ceilinged kitchen in the light of a single candle and the fading fire from "the cave-like inglenook", where the last log burned (*Mort* 95). Again the readers are provided with a snapshot of something in the room while the rest of what is done is indicated in movement and conversation as the witch has a plan for how her death should go. Although this suggests that the witch understands that death is a necessary and mundane part of life, it also shows a need to control her circumstances even as death itself is something she cannot control. She totters across the floor, shoos Mort out into the snow, follows him out there and locks the door (*Mort* 97-99). Death is ordinary and to be expected, therefore one should be prepared for it. The witch wishes to leave this life seated in her favourite spot looking out into the valley beyond her circle of woods so that is what she does. For the witch doing as she wishes and the actions that she takes to get there are deliberate and positive, but from the perspective of Mort all death is negative. The wintry version of the view consists of "black rocks against a sky from which little flakes of snow were now tumbling" (*Mort* 98), which could be using winter as a reference to death and even the hopelessness and despair that Mort himself feels. It is interesting that the witch's favourite spot is also where she

wants to die, as this suggests that in addition to the control of the uncontrollable situation that she needed to have, she also wanted her death to be pleasant and peaceful in some way. As the witch dies, Mort hears a chorus of howling around the valley and in the woods, the most mournful thing he had ever heard (*Mort* 99). Despite the calmness with which the witch approaches her own death, Mort is still saddened by her passing and, as a result of this sadness, he associates the howling with the witch's death instead of seeing it as coincidental. The main differences between Mort and the old witch are age and magic, which on Discworld seems to largely consist of thinking critically. Of these two, age is probably the more important factor here: like Windle Poons in *Reaper Man*, the witch is more than ready to die as she has already lived a full life and her body is beginning to become frail. Mort, on the other hand, is young and not yet used to his new job as death. Additionally, after the witch's death, it is Mort who will have to live with having seen her die while the witch can simply choose to move on in her new ghostly form. For Death, who is used to this sort of thing and did not begin life as a human, collecting the dead is a much easier job than for young Mort, who may still be in that phase of his life where he would like to believe himself invincible. Being constantly faced with the deaths of other people forces him to confront his own mortality, to have the experience of realizing "that death is not something that just happens to other people" (Gray 104).

It is precisely the fact that Mort is young and mortal that makes his view on dying different from that of Death. One would expect that his humanity also makes him pay attention to slightly different things in the places that people die. His first job ever with Death is to attend the assassination of a king at a party the king is hosting. Unsurprisingly, a king dies in a setting that is considerably fancier than that of the witch's death, Mort's first job alone. His celebration is hosted in a room tall enough to have banners hanging from the ceiling casting shadows on it, to have minstrels performing on an upper balcony and for himself to be surrounded by aristocrats (*Mort* 58-65). Aside from the focus on the banners and their shadows, Death and

Mort's entire time there is described through actions. These actions create a sense of the space and suggest that there is an immediateness to life and death. Because Death and Mort arrive early, they have time to stop to eat, drink and have a conversation but when the king dies, the sequence of related actions is described at a faster pace. The novel seems to almost both want to step around the king's actual passing and show in detail what characters think and how they react to his murder. This simultaneously suggests a level of unease with the actual act of dying and a need to alleviate that unease through rationale like, "WHEN IT'S TIME, IT'S TIME" (*RM* 61). The main reason Mort is concerned with the death of the king is because he feels it is unfair for him to die when his cousin is the one that "goes around killing people" (*RP* 60). Mort feels sorry for the king and the king's daughter, and in his naïve youth does not understand that regardless of the fairness of it all, we all must eventually die. This same descriptive style is used for Mort's second solo collection of an abbot, who habitually reincarnates. This time, however, the man is not surrounded by a party and his death seems expected: "Mort […] ran through the silent cloisters to the room where the 88th abbot lay dying, surrounded by his devout followers" (*Mort* 104). The only details of the room that Mort has enough time to pay attention to are those of the "intricate mosaic floor" and the bed which he must reach in order to collect the abbot (*Mort* 104). The death of an elderly abbot surrounded by his loved ones does not incite the same reaction of pity and unfairness from Mort as the king's death had. Either he has grown and learned between these two jobs, or the character does not feel that the death of an old man is as unfair as the assassination of a family man. It is likelier to be the latter because only after his first two solo jobs does Mort decide to break the rules and save someone. As he continues to do the job and Death vacations, Mort begins to transform more and more into Death. As a result, he is not fazed at all by his last job as death during which he sees a servant girl die in King Zetesphut's treasure filled tomb (*Mort* 270-271). Mort appears to transform

from a caring and sensitive individual to a more pragmatic figure as he grows more accustomed to watching others die.

In the novels death is normalised through characters who come to understand death as a necessary part of life. *Reaper Man* and *Mort* in particular succeed in showing their readers many different settings and ways that dying might happen while adding a bit of humour to the mix. Although the characters in the story are familiar with death because they themselves are dead, *The Graveyard Book* treats dying itself as a plot device that moves Bod from his parents' home to the graveyard. The deaths of his family are never fully described even as the places that they are left in are. None of these novels describes dying itself in full detail but rather the focus is on the conversations, actions, thoughts and places around and with those either killing or dying. Where more expected deaths, such as dying from old age (*Mort* 104), happen, however, characters are ready to go because their lives have reached an acceptable conclusion, which perhaps is the one kind of death all three novels wish to show is not such a big deal. They are simply crossing a biological border from one state of existence to another. By showing their characters experience either their own death or the death of someone else, the novels estrange loss and the act of dying. This estrangement allows for the examination of the reactions and thoughts of both the character dying and the one witnessing death. The characters witnessing death come across as selfish, immature and generally afraid of an aspect of dying, while those dying seem mature, unafraid and prepared for their lives to come to an end. Just as the deaths themselves are a necessary part of life, the places where death happens are not ones we would traditionally associate with death: instead, characters die at home or during a party in their honour. The fact that we do not strongly associate these places with death (Maddrell and Sidaway 1) despite how common it is for people to die in them suggests an association not with the act itself but either with where the deceased's body is lain to rest or with other emotions related to those spaces.

Places of Mourning

Places of mourning in this context mean either places traditionally used when mourning the dead from chapels and churches to graveyards or places where we end up remembering our loved ones, such as rooms they used to spend time in or places somehow significant to our lives with them. These traditional places are mostly not used for their normal purpose in these three novels, which makes their new iterations as homes, playgrounds and storage spaces interesting as death is still ever-present in all of them. Although one could consider this shift from the traditional to the more unconventional an indication of how the grieving process has changed, it may be more reflective of how mourning has always been a part of our daily lives rather than something one may simply switch on and off at will. Although we memorialize the deceased in their gravestones and during their funeral, people do not only grieve while they are at the gravesite. Instead characters in these novels carry their grief with them wherever they go.

In *Reaper Man*, characters are shown to mourn in non-traditional places that they connect emotionally to the people they have used them with. Although one might think that Death is very familiar with mausoleums and graves, dying normally happens elsewhere. Only kings who think they may take everything with them to the afterlife actually go into their graves to die. With that in mind, it is comical that in his time as Bill Door, the farmhand, Death should find himself sitting in a room that more resembles a mausoleum than a parlour discussing one of the men he had collected in his former occupation as death (*RM* 149-153). It was a room that Miss Flitworth admitted to rarely using (*RM* 151) but that "looked like the tombs of those kings who wanted to take it all with them" (*RM* 149). This collection of ornaments and items may simply be because Miss Flitworth wanted to remember those she had used it with: her father and her fiancé. As a result, the room had become a collection of items that might remind her of them and so the room itself had become a memorial to those she had lost. This is a more

unorthodox way of remembering and mourning those lost than visiting their grave or going to church to pray, but equally important as it is likely that many people live with the memories of those they have lost on a daily basis.

The Graveyard Book shows that human perception of space is closely related to the emotions that people are experiencing. When Bod has been at the graveyard for eleven years, Silas, his guardian, decides it is finally time to tell him what happened to his family. The conversation takes place in an old chapel at the graveyard that used to be the place the dead were blessed before they were buried, but as a result of their conversation it also transforms into a more concrete place of remembrance and mourning for Bod. Their conversation, during which the boy finds out that his family was murdered, is interlocked with descriptions of the atmosphere in and around the chapel. This is the only time the chapel in which Silas resides is given any kind of negative description from Bod's perspective. It becomes a place no longer only of safety but also of shadows: "Inside the old chapel, it was all shadows" (*GB* 165) and "Silence. Only the patter of rain and the wash of water from the drainpipes. A silence that stretched until Bod thought he would break" (*GB* 165). These descriptions are not, however, due to any actual negativity associated with the place itself, instead they are an added effect on the conversation itself. As an idea dawns on Bod, the rain stops "and the cloudy gloaming [becomes] true twilight" (*GB* 166). He asks to go to school outside the graveyard and presents Silas with a disturbing thought when coming from an eleven-year-old: Silas has been asking the wrong question. "If I go outside in the world, the question isn't, 'Who will keep me safe from him?' … It's 'Who will keep him safe from me?'" (*GB* 167). Anger is a natural response to finding out that your family has been murdered and here Bod's emotional landscape is reflected in his actual surroundings as an emotional space.

The Graveyard Book juxtaposes the graveyard as a place of fear and sorrow with the graveyard as a safe space. The first time the graveyard is described in *The Graveyard Book*, it

is done through a series of statements of what it might have looked like if the reader themselves were walking up to it. These descriptions are mostly neutral in tone and simply provide its readers with a series of facts about the graveyard, such as "abandoned funeral chapel, iron doors padlocked" and "stones and tombs and vaults and memorial plaques" (*GB* 7) and what it looks like in the dim light of the half-moon with thinner fog at the top:

> You could see the abandoned funeral chapel, iron doors padlocked, ivy on the sides of the spire, a small tree growing out of the guttering at roof level. You could see stones and tombs and vaults and memorial plaques. You could see the occasional dash or scuttle of a rabbit or a vole or a weasel as it slipped out of the undergrowth and across the path[.] (*The Graveyard Book* 7)

This more static, aperspectivist description of the graveyard is a way of introducing the reader to the storyworld of the graveyard that most of their time with Bod will be spent in. The graveyard is shown as a place filled with reminders of death that are in the process of being reclaimed by other life forms. "The abandoned funeral chapel" suggests that no one else is going to be buried there and presumably not many people have a reason to visit a graveyard that is no longer in active use. At this stage there is no need to tell the reader how safe the graveyard will be or to create an emotional attachment as the further actions of characters relevant to the narrative will later help create a sense of home for Bod and the readers. This way of describing the graveyard also allows the establishment of a clear boundary between the graveyard and everywhere else particularly as the character of Mrs. Owens, who has been dead for a few hundred years already and shares a tomb with her carpenter husband, is introduced just before the readers are told that the gates are locked.

> The gates were locked. They were always locked at four in the afternoon in winter, at eight at night in summer. A spike-topped iron railing ran around

> part of the cemetery, a high brick wall around the rest of it. The bars of the gates were closely spaced: they would have stopped a grown man from getting through, even stopped a ten-year-old child… (*The Graveyard Book* 78)

This border becomes important almost immediately after the Owens couple discover Bod in the graveyard as his safety is still being threatened by the man who is following him. While Jack struggles with the lock and eventually finds a way over the wall (*GB* 912), the Owenses decide to take Bod in, thus strengthening the border between the outside world and the graveyard. The outside becomes associated with the man Jack, the rattling of the lock, the chilly breeze that scatters the fog and danger, while the graveyard transforms from a place of fear into a sanctuary for the young boy. This new emotional connection with the graveyard must thereafter struggle with our own associations of sorrow and fear so that the novel may begin to change our perception of this particular place of death.

Some of the most cheerful descriptions of the graveyard and the nature inside it in the entire book are reserved for Bod's time with his new friend Scarlett, a small girl whose parents are university teachers, at approximately five years old. These descriptions highlight the difference that experiencing space with a friend or at a younger age can have on how people see places similar to it. Although mostly their experiences of the graveyard are all described through Bod and Scarlett walking up and down paths, playing between gravestones and having conversations, some static description is interjected between the fun they have to foreshadow happy events:

> A sunny day: bumblebees explored the wildflowers that grew in the corner of the graveyard, dangling from the gorse and the bluebells, droning their deep, lazy buzz, while Bod lay in the spring sunlight watching a bronze-

> coloured beetle wandering across the stone of G^{eo} Reeder, his wife Dorcas and their son Sebastian (*Fidelis ad Mortem*). (*The Graveyard Book* 33)

Immediately after this description of a sunny day, Scarlett speaks to Bod for the first time after spotting him through the gorse. In this particular passage, the graveyard is shown as a space entirely filled with life from wildflowers to bumblebees. The bumblebees in particular are similar to the children in the scenes that follow in that the bumblebees are exploring flowers and buzzing together as a group rather than by themselves. These descriptions that pause to look at the scenery are also interlinked with the actions that either the children or animals take to create a sense of space. However, not all of these descriptions of perfection exist solely to foreshadow happiness:

> It was a perfect spring day, and the air was alive with birdsong and bee hum. The daffodils bustled in the breeze and here and there on the side of the hill a few early tulips nodded. A blue powdering of forget-me-nots and fine, fat yellow primroses punctuated the green of the slope as the two children walked up the hill toward the Frobishers' little mausoleum. It was old and simple in design, a small forgotten stone house with a metal gate for a door. Bod unlocked the gate with his key, and they went in. (*The Graveyard Book* 43)

The different spring flowers in the passage suggest that it is early spring and summer is still some time away. The children are not afraid to go into a locked "small forgotten stone house" which shows a lack of understanding for the potential dangers of entering any abandoned building. It is not that they think themselves invulnerable but that they are too inexperienced to know what is and is not dangerous. Forget-me-nots on the slope along the way to mausoleum are in direct opposition with the fact that the house has already been forgotten and as has what

is buried in the hill. These descriptions of the perfect spring day are juxtaposed with the inside of the grave, which to Scarlett is completely dark and she may only experience it through touch and Bod's assistance. A similar description of the day follows immediately after the two have explored the grave and spoken with the Sleer. Going into this grave to satisfy their curiosity also gets Scarlett in trouble, which equally contradicts the happiness attached to the descriptions of the setting in which these events take place: the graveyard is full of sunlight during the perfect spring day, but also full of police and Scarlett's parents are worried, sad and angry (*GB* 50-51). Scarlett, being a child, thinks of the graveyard as just another place to explore and play in, and as the home of Bod, who her parents have assured her is just her imaginary friend. Because of this she finds it difficult to understand the fear her parents experienced when they could not reach her. To her parents the graveyard becomes something sinister and closely associated with the momentary disappearance of their daughter (*GB* 50-51) and like the children, they will never be able to forget these events. Although they had told her consistently to remain on the path and not go too far, they blame themselves for even allowing her to play at a graveyard (*GB* 51). It is three weeks later that Bod sees Scarlett on a grey afternoon for what they both think is to be the last time they will spend time together, where the weather reflects the sadness caused by her parents' commands (*GB* 52-53).

By showing gradual change in a character's perception of the graveyard, *The Graveyard Book* reveals a connection between our experiences of a particular place, our descriptions thereof and what we pay attention to when we are in that place. Many years later a 15-year-old Scarlett returns to town after her parents' divorce and stumbles upon the graveyard by accident. Her perception has changed from that of a child and she sees things at the graveyard differently from how she saw them as a child, like the church which she describes as "a sinister blocky little Gothic building of grey stone, with a jutting spire" (*GB* 205). Later, however, she states to Bod that Mr. Frost, who is Jack in disguise pretending to study carvings at the graveyard,

thinks that graveyards can be “the most peaceful places in the world” (*GB* 220) which would suggest that some adults can have a relationship other than one dictated by fear with graveyards. Bod and Scarlett’s time together is again marked by “bright and sunny” mornings, even as they argue about the information that they may share with one another (*GB* 224). This seems to at least partially reflect the happiness they feel when they reconnect. Normally such good weather would be associated with bright and happy things happening for the main character, but as it is directly followed by an argument, the association is more with an earlier statement by Scarlett “It’s beautiful up this way” (*GB* 223) and her changing attitude towards the graveyard. She begins to connect the graveyard more with her happy childhood memories and her friendship with Bod than with death. The better she gets to know Bod again the safer she feels in the graveyard with him and the more the story itself highlights the positive things from sunshine to beautiful flowers around Scarlett. This suggests that as her emotional landscape changes so do the things that she pays attention to around herself. The safety she feels comes to a quick end when Bod and the man Jack finally settle the score between them and Jack’s organisation. Although Bod does not understand Scarlett’s emotional change, the novel uses it to highlight that strong negative emotions can easily overwhelm a myriad of positive memories. For Scarlett, seeing Bod allow the Sleer take the man Jack into its clutches is too much (*GB* 265-268) but it is not clear if it is her perception of the graveyard or of Bod that changes as a result of this action. It is, however, clear that Scarlett has lost some of that childlike innocence that she formerly possessed because of her experience. Her experience seems to have also damaged that sense of invincibility that a teenaged Scarlett still felt.

The Jacks are not frightened of the graveyard because they feel a sense of control over life and death but like all living things, they discover that they are not in absolute control. During this time the graveyard is strictly described through borders, actions and conversation: dismantling an organisation is basically an organisation’s death after all. This use of the

graveyard is more strategic than emotional, although it and the dead do attempt to protect him by hiding him from those he would fight (*GB* 248). Every move is deliberate and designed to send a Jack either through a border between worlds into another dimension, namely Gûlheim, or into a trap he cannot get out of. Even the conversations that Bod has during the battle are strategic in nature as other characters inform him of where the Jacks are and what they are doing (*GB* 249-250) or he gives instructions to someone about what to do next (*GB* 248). For the Jacks the graveyard is not a friendly place, though they do not know it until it is too late for them. It is sectioned off from the rest of the town and the Jacks have to either jump over the border or find another way through (*GB* 245). This particular border is open during the day, but at night when this battle happens it is more solid but porous if those who wish to cross it are determined. On the other hand, the border between Gûlheim and the graveyard is more solid and characters can only go through it in specific places if they know how to open them. Entry into Gûlheim could spell certain death for the two Jacks that Bod sends through the ghoul gate (*GB* 254-256). The only times the graveyard is described from a Jack's perspective are at the gates, when they fall into a trap and while the man Jack is searching for Scarlett: "he pulled down the coffins, one by one, from their shelves, and let them clatter on to the ground, shattering the old wood, spilling their contents on to the mausoleum floor" (*GB* 257). The attitude of the Jacks towards the graveyard is not one of fear or mourning, instead they view the graveyard as a hunting ground as they attempt to transform this place of mourning into one of dying. They exhibit control over other people's deaths and because of this, they feel at ease in landscapes of death. Although they feel in charge of their own and other people's destinies, *The Graveyard Book* shows that ultimately no one controls their own life and death. This is not a comforting thought but it does mean that we are all equally struggling for control because it makes us feel better.

Until this point, *The Graveyard Book* has allowed Bod to exist on the border between the worlds of the living and the dead in an effort to highlight the difference between the childlike wonder that made it possible for Bod to accept the fantastic as real and adulthood. Before the battle, the graveyard had become Bod's domain, his safe place, which he loved despite missing the outside world (*GB* 213). He had discovered, however, that there were areas of the graveyard that were not safe because they were overrun by a tangle of ivy and trees (*GB* 215). This suggests that even as a home, the graveyard is not without its dangers: the aim is still to avoid untimely death and to live a full and happy life. After the battle with the Jacks, Bod's ways of interacting with the graveyard continue to alter as he grows and begins to lose the ability to see the dead and communicate with the animals he had watched grow up (*GB* 277). Bod's ability to slip through different solid objects also begins to limit his access to the graveyard as new, stronger borders arise between him and where he used to be able to go (*GB* 277278). As he can no longer see in the dark, pass through walls and increasingly often no longer see the ghosts of the graveyard, his family bid him adieu and sent him out into the world. The gate, formerly a solid border that he would not cross, opens to allow him passage into his life (*GB* 287). The graveyard is no longer home, it is just a place and like many children who grow up, Bod is likely to forget about all the fantastical things that happened to him in his youth. His perception of the graveyard is forever altered by all the barriers and borders that have re-established themselves so that the world might return to its natural order where ghosts can see people but people cannot see them.

According to the novels, we see these places of death quite differently depending on our age and our experiences. There is no one right way to mourn or to see these places because everyone's experiences are different. What *Mort* and *Reaper Man* attempt to make visible in particular is the idea that no one can avoid death and the ways we are going to go are very different. As Mort struggles to come to terms with seeing people die, Miss Flitworth carries

the pain of her loss to her grave and Bod is filled with anger towards Jack long after he has been punished, it becomes clear that no matter how sudden or who we were, death seems to always be more painful for those left behind than it is for those dying. They are left behind to pick up the pieces of the death of someone they may have not had a chance to say goodbye to or someone who has left their affairs in disarray. The novel shows that graveyards, chapels and places people have died should not, however, be a source of great fear for us because the borders they have crossed are not ours to cross yet. What is a graveyard if not a repository of life stories, as Bod finds out while living in one?

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From the Living to the Dead

In *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book*, characters seem to only spend a little while in places of dying. Their transitions from the living to the dead are mostly painless, although the possibility of getting stuck as an undead is raised by both stories. The stories show that sorrow is at least partially selfish as characters speak of those they have *lost* and, in some cases, seem to feel sorry for themselves. These emotions are what colours characters' perception of different places and transforms their everyday spaces into those of mourning. This does not, however, make their experience any less valid and might actually explain their attitudes towards death and dying and the places related to them. The graveyard is only terrifying to these characters because they naturally associate it with death and the unknowns related to death, not because of what the graveyard itself is like. A person's perception of the graveyard can be changed by the experiences they have in it. Similarly the novel estranges the graveyard enough to potentially alter its reader's viewpoint as well. Therefore, a natural next step is to discuss places of the dead as characters and religions in these stories seem preoccupied by the questions "what happens when we die?" and "where do we go when we die?" What better way to find out more about the attitudes *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* portray and

the barriers their stories seem to be breaking down than to continue into a discussion of the places of the dead and how their experience of familiar spaces is altered by their death.

4. Places of the Dead

> As soon as a living thing was even dimly aware of the concept of suddenly becoming a non-living thing, there was Death.
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Reaper Man*

This second set of the landscapes of death is a little more elusive than those experienced by the living: places of the dead consist of the possible options the dead have after dying. *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* approach this in two ways: places of the undead and places of the afterworld. Places of the undead spring into existence because some of the dead either choose to or are forced to remain in the world of the living. This alters how they approach and interact with the world. The existence of the undead also creates new spaces because some spirits are required to also view the human body from the inside. Places of the afterworld, on the other hand, are exclusively for the dead and usually beyond human perception. These are described mainly by creatures who believe in them but have never personally witnessed them on account of still being alive. This makes their accounts unreliable at best but this does not seem to matter to those around them.

Though most of these options provided by the novels are surrounded by positive descriptions and remarks by the dead, some seem less desirable. Characters that choose to or are forced to continue in the world of the living can do so in the traditional ways of becoming an undead or reincarnating as someone else, whereas those entering a different plane are not shown after they have moved on. Even as the novels reassure readers that anything is possible, the characters cannot find this information for themselves because no one ever comes back to life with a message from the afterworld. This means that largely the places of the afterworld are part of the story space but entirely disconnected from the storyworld: characters in the

Discworld's narrative universe, for instance, never do anything in the afterworld even though they frequently discuss the different options. However, *The Graveyard Book* provides a significant exception through the introduction of the ghouls who are allowed to continually move between their world and that of the living. The three novels subvert the fears of 1) absolute solitude, 2) separation from loved ones, 3) hell or some kind of painful existence in the afterlife and 4) the unknown by providing the dead with afterlives full of life and with access to their loved ones, and by constructing multiple belief-based afterworlds that allow readers to continue believing in their own.

Places of the Undead

> If we could all hold hands and leap together into the void, perhaps death would not be so frightening
>
> Stephen T. Davis: *After We Die: Theology, Philosophy, and the Question of Life after Death*

In *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book*, the dead are provided with two options of how they may remain in the world of the living after they have died: 1) they may re-enter their bodies and continue existing in full control of their bodies as zombies, or 2) they may return as ghosts and work with the limitations of a bodiless existence. Both of these options change the way they experience the world from who they can communicate with to how they interact with the physical objects in the world. Their main limitations arise from the fact that people are either afraid of them or cannot see them, and, in the case of ghosts, how solid they themselves are. This change in perception provides places built for the living a new function as spaces of the undead. In the novels the undead are feared by the general populace, but their preconceived

notions of the undead are altered through their interaction with the undead and the undead's interaction with the world.

In allowing the dead to become zombies, *Reaper Man* provides the undead with a new space they have to be able to control, their own bodies, makes the continuance of life beyond its natural conclusion unappealing. Windle Poons, the zombie in question, had previously not needed to consciously control every part of his body. Faced with the task, he finds it daunting:

> He surveyed himself from the control room of his skull. He looked at the silent chemical factory of his liver with the same sinking feeling as a canoe builder might survey the controls of a computerised super tanker. (*Reaper Man* 38)

This new space comes with a requirement of constant concentration that at first hinders his use of his faculties as he attempts to get used to this new existence. However, it also allows Windle's spirit to stroll "around the inside of his own head" (*RM* 42). The problem is, however, that the body is still "basically dead" and will continue decomposing while Windle is living inside it (*RM* 42). This means that although Windle's mind is now clear, his body can only continue whole for so long before it begins to fall apart. On this front, *Reaper Man* is denial literature that deals with the ramifications of circumventing death (Kundu 19): Windle's released life force was returned to his dead body making him incapable of actually dying even as he wishes to do so. What is also interesting is that Windle's desire for death is happening in reverse to what is happening to Death who finds that becoming mortal has made him afraid of dying to a nearly paralysing degree (*RP* 251).

While they are learning to understand the new space of their own bodies, the undead of *Reaper Man* are feared because the way they interact with the world has also changed which

in turn changes how they perceive the world. Zombies like Windle Poons become stronger than they previously were:

> The door to the chapel was locked. However, Windle found that the merest pressure was enough to pull the lock out of the woodwork and leave fingerprints in the metal of the doorhandle. (*Reaper Man* 37)

For a 130-year-old dead wizard, who had previously been confined to a wheelchair, pulling "the lock out of the woodwork" would have previously been impossible. This alone would be enough to make him terrifying to the other wizards, but on top of that, he is also dead. The other wizards "[fall] over themselves in an effort to get away" from him (*RM* 39) which shows their fear of the undead wizard and creates distance between them and Windle who now embodies death and the decay that comes with being a zombie. Windle's story is told from his perspective, which allows the novel to show what living in a body well past its expiration date is like. His mind has become more active than before (*RM* 42) and as a result his perception of the university changes. Windle had spent years waiting to die, but after his death the university begins to feel like a mausoleum full of daft old men (*RM* 46) who are not smart enough to keep up Windle's renewed mind nor do they concentrate on the right things, namely helping Windle die. Instead of climbing the wall – the border – between the "mausoleum" and the outside world, he simply crashes through it (*RM* 46-47) and begins to explore the world in a way that he had not previously done. In doing so he not only breaks the routines of his old life, but also escapes from the confines of what could have become his new prison. Although crashing through the border between the university and the city symbolises how Windle has been thrown into a new phase in his life, he is not ready to accept this new state of affairs. He attempts to die by drowning in the river (*RM* 53-54), by stabbing (*RM* 57) and even allows his colleagues to bury him alive (*RM* 71) to no avail: his living right, the ability to die, continues to elude him. Unlike the university wall, the border that people normally cross in death is impenetrable for

Windle. The combination of the continual denial of his wish to cease to exist and other people avoiding him make Windle feel cheated and unloved while his clearer mind makes it possible for him to notice things he might have previously missed. His undead existence allows him an experience rarely afforded to the dead: additional time to do something significant.

In addition to the undead's altered understanding of the world around them, places traditionally associated with the dead are given a new spin in *Reaper Man* by placing one of the undead in them. In an effort to die again, Windle Poons allows his former peers to place him in a coffin. The coffin is filled with darkness and the sounds of the outside world make it in even through the soil atop it (*RM* 74). Windle is in this traditional place of death because he wants to die. This transforms coffins and graveyards into spaces filled with frustration instead of fear. Windle's way of looking at the space and society around himself is altered when he finds a card on the inside of his coffin:

Dead? Depressed?

Feel like starting it all again?

then why not come along to the

FRESH START CLUB

Thursdays, 12pm, 668 Elm Street

EVERY BODY WELCOME. (*Reaper Man* 75)

The message separates *every* from *body* to highlight that those it is seeking for this Fresh Start Club are expected to be dead. This separation also suggests that *everybody* can only be used to speak of the living, not of the dead and adds an additional separation between the living and the undead. Although Windle is clearly still himself and still kind of alive, his loved ones do not know how to deal with him in his new state and Windle would quite like to die. Through its advertisement of the club, the message also adds advertising space and potential hope of not

being alone into the frustration that has already become associated with the coffin. By presenting Windle with a mystery, the card becomes the catalyst for Windle's quest to find Death so that he might finally die (*RM* 76). In a way, the coffin becomes the birth place of Windle's fresh start as he digs his way out from his own grave (*RM* 77). The coffin goes through a metamorphosis from a space of frustration into a space of newly found hope.

Unlike *Reaper Man*'s less than ideal representation of life as one of the undead, *The Graveyard Book* creates a comforting scenario where the dead remain as ghosts where they are buried. This makes it possible for them to listen when their loved ones visit their graves subverting what Stephen Davis calls the "fear of separation from loved ones" (4) and for them to be a part of a new ghost society. This society does, however, only function at night:

> There were, all told, some ten thousand souls in the graveyard, but most of them slept deep, or took no interest in the night-to-night affairs of the place, and there were less than three hundred of them up there, in the amphitheatre, in the moonlight. (*The Graveyard Book* 17)

This is perhaps the most noticeable way that their perception of the world has changed. They rarely, if ever, see the world in sunlight: Their world is illuminated by the moon and stars, but this does not matter to them because they can see it in the dark (*GB* 70). Like the border between night and day, the graveyard's borders also limit the world of the ghosts:

> 'I cannot. My bones are here. And so are Owens's. I'm never leaving.'
> 'it must be good,' said Silas, 'to have somewhere that you belong. Somewhere that's home.' There was nothing wistful in the way he said this. His voice was drier than deserts, and he said it as if he were simply stating something unarguable. Mrs Owens did not argue. (*The Graveyard Book* 22-23)

Despite this limitation, the ghosts of the graveyard view it as their home, not a prison – Silas is not buried at the graveyard and therefore, it is not his home in the same way that it is Mrs. Owens's. Even with his freedom to come and go as he wishes, Silas sees having "somewhere that you belong" as a good thing. He does not long for a home for himself but that does not negate the factuality of what he states. Unlike Silas, the ghosts have their own graves to sleep in during the day, and plenty of company in the three hundred souls that do take interest in the night-to-night affairs of the graveyard. The readers need not, therefore, be afraid of "absolute solitude" in death (Davis 4), because, at least according to *The Graveyard Book*, they can have just as much company as they would like when they die. This ghost society is also a significant form of wish fulfilment where the fantasy novel provides its reader with the opportunity to embrace their unconscious (or conscious) desire for a pleasant continued existence after death.

In addition to their own ghost society at the graveyard, the ghosts are allowed to cross the border of the graveyard during the Danse Macabre, which allows them to dance with the living on the Old Town square and come into contact with their descendants. This border crossing makes the dead and the living equal for one night (*GB* 147-148). Both the living and the dead feel safe in their dance, but as the clock strikes twelve the living forget it ever happened. It is interesting that the living will forget their interaction with the dead. This could be a psychological defence mechanism to deal with their own fear of death and to stop their own worldview from collapsing as it seems unlikely that many of them would believe in ghosts. After the dance, the town square is left "covered with tiny white flowers" that make it look like "there had been a wedding" (*GB* 151). In a sense the Danse Macabre is a marriage between the worlds of the living and the dead, if only for a night. It shows that the line between the worlds of the living and the dead will always be one way: only the living may become dead but the dead cannot be brought back to life. It also shows that the two worlds are in constant interaction with one another even as the two sides may not be equally aware of their interaction. The living

remember those that they have lost, and if there is an afterlife, as *The Graveyard Book* suggests, the dead are constantly reminded of the living. However, both types of existence have their own time: characters must live before they may join the world of the dead and the dead must accept that they have already had their lives. In real life such a dance would not be possible, but *The Graveyard Book* reminds its readers of the fact that they do not have to forget but they are allowed to let go of their grief.

Places of the Afterworld

> YOU SHOULD HAVE WORKED OUT BY NOW THAT EVERYONE GETS WHAT THEY THINK IS COMING TO THEM. IT'S SO MUCH NEATER THAT WAY.
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Mort*

Mort, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* further subvert the stereotypes of fear that surround death by creating places of the afterworld that are described with positive adjectives, shown to only accept the deserving and that signify a crossing from one plane of existence to another. Places of the afterworld comfort people with the knowledge that those who deserve it are taken care of and those who do not are punished for their deeds. In real life this has been the case in Odysseus that presents the Ancient Greek idea of an underworld where great sinners are punished for their actions against gods (Mikalson 321) and for the Ancient Egyptians who believed everyone would be weighed and found either without or with fault and rewarded accordingly (Teeter 147). *Mort* and *Reaper Man* provide their readers with many options of where the dead might go after they are separated from their bodies. These are divided into better, worse and neutral places. Better and worse places (as their names suggest) are either

desirable or undesirable outcomes that people believe they will face after their demise. The third option of a neutral place is simply added because some of the beliefs only have one outcome which is neither good nor bad. Instead some characters believe in an afterlife that does not seem all that different from their life. Because all the dead in Pratchett's novels always face what they believed they would, his aim seems to be to avoid judging people's personal beliefs: if you believe it, it might be true. *The Graveyard Book*, on the other hand, has clear rules on what will happen: while most remain at their respective graveyards as ghosts, the more callous ones have a realm accessible via ghoul gate.

In the two Discworld novels, the better place is tailored to appeal to those who believe in it, making its descriptions a comforting experience for those who hear about the better place. *Reaper Man*'s opening sequence is interlaced with descriptions of where the living of some species think that their dead have gone: this interjection highlights similarities between all living things where death and the afterlife are concerned. A mayfly's paradise, "a land flowing with water" (*RM* 16) is not the "Better Place" that trees imagine (*RM* 19). This connects with the utopian tradition, where writers have independently imagined different utopias from one another (Firchow 1-2), suggesting as the mayflies and trees do in *Reaper Man*, that all living things do not find the same things fulfilling and paradise-like. The mayfly and the tree are, however, united in their uncertainty where their destinies are concerned: the mayfly "was at a loss" (*RM* 16) while the tree openly admits that they are "not sure […] but [they] think it involves …sawdust" (*RM* 19). Every description of an afterlife is a guess at best, because, by the very fact that the speakers are alive, they have never been to this better place (Davis 1-3). However, it is evident in their discussions with the younger of their species that the idea of an afterlife is comforting to them. The youngest mayfly points out that "no-one ever wants to come back", which must mean that it is "really good there" (*RM* 16), while the older trees have a somewhat matter of fact attitude to death: "It happens, lad" (*RM* 19). This is, however,

followed by assurances to the younger one that the afterlife their dead friend has been taken to is "a Better Place" because "he was a *good* tree" (*RM* 19). This expresses the familiar idea that there are separate afterlives for the deceased of different moral qualities (Davis 8-9): the good have the better place while the bad go to the worse place.

Although the existence of a better place suggests that a worse place must also exist, the two Discworld novels avoid discussing the worse place. While some readers may find this avoidance comforting, others may be unsettled by it because they might believe that they themselves are not good enough for the better place. The novel does show options that help alleviate this latter anxiety that will be discussed later. The only description of the worse place in *Mort* is brief but suggests that the worse place is also the creation of the dead's actions and beliefs:

> There were shadows forming in the air behind the Vizier's soul. Several of them wore emperor's robes, but there were plenty of others jostling them, and they all looked most anxious to welcome the newcomer to the lands of the dead. (*Mort* 258)

This passage draws on the Vizier's earlier attempts to poison the emperor and suggests that those "anxious to welcome" the Vizier were previously similarly wronged by him. The novel leaves the rest to its reader's imagination as this passage is the extent of its discussion of the possible ramifications of being bad in life. Mostly the novel suggests that death comes with no justice as everyone faces what they expect after death: "THERE'S NO JUSTICE. THERE'S JUST YOU" (*Mort* 139). Although this is not what religions such as Christianity teach their believers, the idea that eternal damnation is not waiting for each of us allows *Mort* to subvert the fear scenarios commonly attached to dying, namely as Davis puts it: "Fear of hell or some kind of painful existence in the afterlife" (4).

Unlike the other two novels, *The Graveyard Book* does not shy away from a discussion of a more negative afterworld, Ghûlheim. Although Ghûlheim is described in negative terms from Bod's perspective during his portal quest, the ghouls living there have nothing but good to say about it. The two perspectives intermingle as the narrator of the story describes Ghûlheim one way while the ghouls provide an alternative point of view during their conversations with Bod. Ghûlheim has a sky that is "an angry, glowering red, the colour of an infected wound", the air is cold, and the sun is small and seems "old and distant" (*GB* 71). These descriptions are placed in direct opposition with what the living would prefer. Ghûlheim's sky is not "the warm red of a sunset" (*GB* 71), but instead evokes the idea of an infected wound with its colouring. Despite its shade of red that brings to mind thoughts of the hot skin around an infected wound, the air is cold where humans would prefer a bit of warmth. It is clear that Ghûlheim is not exactly suitable for the living and their preferences. The ghouls, on the other hand, see their world as the best with "the best life, the best food" and "the best city" (*GB* 73) – they cannot imagine why anyone would not want to be one of them and live in their world. Their "best city" engulfs Bod with an emotion "that mingled repulsion and fear, disgust and loathing, all tinged with shock" and according to the narrator "no one but the ghoul-folk could have wanted to stay there, or even to approach" the city of Ghûlheim (*GB* 74). Bod's fears are alleviated by the night-gaunts and his teacher's arrival (*GB* 85-86), which they are the only things in the ghoul-folk's world that makes them afraid (*GB* 77). This disconnect between their reactions to the world surrounding the ghouls suggests that whether a place of the afterworld is a better or a worse one is a matter of perspective - similar to the way in which one man's utopia might be another's dystopia (Burns 123).

Through its descriptions of the more neutral places the dead might go, *Mort* suggests that where the afterlife is concerned, no belief is too outlandish and attempts to bring the continuous discussion surrounding death to a mutually satisfactory ending. These neutral

places can simply be a continuation of their mortal lives as one of the dead in *Mort* believes: "'I shall be a concubine at the heavenly court of King Zetesphut, who will dwell among the stars for ever'" (271). In this case the only difference between their mortal life and their afterlife seems to be that they are moving to "the heavenly court" and will "dwell among the stars". This seems ridiculous to other characters in the story but as Mort himself puts it: "IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN … HE'LL DWELL AMONG THE STARS IN HIS OWN MIND" (*Mort* 272). Every character is allowed to believe what they want about what will happen after their death and each of them will experience exactly that, because on Discworld strong belief makes things happen:

> Belief is one of the most powerful organic forces in the multiverse. It may not be able to move mountains, exactly. But it can create someone who can. (*Reaper Man* 128)

This is one of the benefits of discussing death in a fantasy environment. With established rules like that of belief being capable of creating and changing things, it is possible for the author to explore many different options of afterlife and do so without creating existential dread in any of the novel's readers.

The (Un)dead and Death

Mort, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* discuss places of the dead from the perspectives of both the living and the dead. In *Mort* and *Reaper Man*, the focus is on the fact that death affects all living things from trees to worlds the same way. The living have a set amount of time to live before they must die: a mayfly has a day, a tree hundreds of years and a world millions. Death is the great equalizer even if all dead beings have very different afterlives waiting for them. The three fantasy novels are able to discuss the inevitability of death partially

because of their ability to estrange death by treating all forms of afterlife like they were commonplace. On Discworld becoming a ghost is just as likely as nothing happening at all, while *The Graveyard Book* treats a ghostly existence as perfectly normal. Through these depictions, readers are allowed to enjoy the experiences that the dead have without being judged for their own beliefs in the process. By showing life through the eyes of a zombie, who wants nothing as much as he wants to die, *Reaper Man* highlights how tiring life in a body that is past its expiration date would be for an active mind, while *The Graveyard Book* proposes that being dead does not have to be boring. These descriptions give rise to positive landscapes of the dead where characters are happy to be dead and therefore, in a better place.

Despite not being allowed access to an afterlife, Death is not afraid of dying, just unwilling to die. Because Death is both freshly mortal and the only character in the novels not allowed access to an afterlife, his perspective on dying is crucial for the full understanding of the treatment of death in these particular novels. With a few hours left on the Disc, Death realises that he has no desire to die yet. This realization that he does not want to die is swiftly followed by the explanation, "BECAUSE THEN THERE WILL BE NOTHING. BECAUSE I WON'T EXIST" (*RM* 179). This suggests that a lack of fear is not impossible even when characters have no desire to die. Instead, the desire to continue living or existing can function as a catalyst for life saving and improving inventions, because "Where there's life … There's hope" (*RM* 181). In fact, a healthy amount of fear can function as a driving factor for such inventions and for sensible actions during one's own life.

The different places of the dead and the dead's interaction with Death raise questions about where Death goes when s/he is not on duty. Undeath in *Reaper Man* is caused by the fact that Death has been retired whereas the ghouls seem to be created by the ghouls themselves from the living. On the other hand, the ghosts in *The Graveyard Book* cannot exactly be seen as undead as there appears to be nowhere else for them to have gone. This continued existence

at the graveyard appears to be the extent of their afterlife, unless they choose to join the ghouls. Despite this level of predetermination, *The Graveyard Book* has a death character whose duty it is to take everyone to their final resting place on her grey horse (*GB* 150). The existence of these personifications of death suggests that they must have somewhere to go when no one is dying. Only the two Discworld novels openly admit to Death having a home, which seems to mainly exist in an effort to make the concept of death appear less frightening.

5. Death's Domain

> 'I was expecting a castle at least,' she said. 'Big and black, with great dark towers. Not an umbrella stand.'
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Mort*

Although places of dying and mourning are visible in our everyday lives and most people are also familiar with different afterlife options, places solely for Death to exist in or rule over are not often discussed in literature because focus has largely been on characters other than death. Pratchett's Discworld novels provide Death with his own pocket dimension, a spatial frame that is largely disconnected from the rest of the storyworld, that functions as his home. This act of giving Death a home makes death more approachable and mundane. However, in the two Discworld novels, his domain is only seen from four main perspectives: Death's, Mort's, Albert's and Ysabel's. Although a family of four is a standard amount for a home in the West, it does mean that Death's domain differs from the rest of the places of death due to the limited amount of perspectives that the story is capable of providing its readers. It is important to note that aside from Death, everyone else is mortal and has been invited to stay in Death's home. Therefore, their perspective is that of a mortal and changes as they become more comfortable with their new surroundings. Similarly, Death's domain may be a new experience to the readers of *Mort* and *Reaper Man*, but that does not mean that they do not have expectations – some that are met and others that only arise in their ability to make fun of our attitudes towards death. Death's home is not a castle as characters in *Mort* expect (297), but it is, at least, black (51).

Death's Home

> Death stood at the window of his dark study, looking out on to his garden. Nothing moved in that still domain. Dark lilies bloomed by the trout pool, where little plaster skeleton gnomes fished. There were distant mountains.
>
> It was his own world. It appeared on no map.
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Reaper Man*

From Death's perspective, his world is his home, his office and a reminder of the worth of every life. This immortal perspective highlights the mundanity of death and the cyclicity of life. Death uses his own world as both his home and his base of operations. This means that both his house and its surroundings must be functional for both purposes. Despite this requirement of double functionality, Death appears to spend most of his time in his study where he writes in notebooks (*Mort* 50-51) and reads maps (*Mort* 48) and node charts, which show him who is supposed to die and when (*Mort* 222-224). Characters like Death, whose job it is to guide souls to the afterlife, are called psychopomps and from the Ancient Greek Thanatos to the Grim Reaper, nearly every culture has its own figure to represent death (Miori 281). These anthropomorphic personifications appear to largely exist in order to help humanity understand the concept of death (Miori 282) but an addition of a home for the psychopomp rather than for the dead and the god of that realm is unusual. Giving Death a home and showing him interact with it, helps subvert the human fear of nonbeing a little and makes the concept of death more approachable.

Death's lifetimer room in *Reaper Man* highlights the cyclicity and mundanity of death. *Reaper Man* takes place after Death has had to let go of both his apprentice and his daughter (*RM* 152) and because of this, Death is excited to experience a world outside his own. From his perspective, the lifetimer room is "the room where the future pours into the past via the pinch of the now" and inside the timers is not sand, but "seconds, endlessly turning the *maybe*

into the *was*" (*RM* 12-13). Because days do not exist in Death's world (*RM* 13), Death's life could never be transformed into the *was* as everyone else's life can: in the same way, Death's original timer contains no sand (*RM* 22). In the beginning of *Reaper Man*, Death is the picture of efficiency as he interacts with the lifetimer room:

> Picture the scene… and now add the sharp clicking of bone on stone, getting closer. A dark shape crosses the field of vision and move sup the endless shelves of sibilant glassware. Click, click. Here's a glass with the top bulb nearly empty. Bone fingers rise and reach out. Select. And another. Select. And more. Many, many more. Select, select. […] Click, click, as the dark shape moves patiently along the rows [.] (*Reaper Man* 13)

The description of the room is entirely dependent on the movements of Death and the sand in the lifetimers. Without these movements, the lifetimer room would be left on its topographical level where it would exist as a static entity. With the swirling, emptying and clicking, however, the text reveals both the space as being responsive to these movements and the time that passes while Death is in the room. It also reveals that Death and the lives represented by the lifetimers are dependent on one another. The act of dying requires that life, the sand in the lifetimers, ends. Only when that happens is Death required. Death, as his name suggests, is nothing more than his job and the room is built for efficiency and convenience with the job in mind. There are no decorations that require mentioning, only shelves upon shelves of glassware. The room is functional but not exactly descriptive of the gravity of the situation for the people whose names are carved on each lifetimer. If anything, the scene reveals a somewhat matter-of-fact attitude towards death and an excitement towards life and its infinite possibilities: death always looks the same in a lifetimer, empty, while life swirls around and creates a soft hiss of people living.

Becoming mortal for a while has an effect on the way Death sees his home. Returning home in a partially human state changes how he experiences spaces he remembers enjoying, such as his study:

> One minute on horseback, the next in the study, with its ledgers and timers and instruments.
>
> And it was bigger than he remembered. The walls lurked on the edge of sight. That was Bill Door's doing. Of course it would seem big to Bill Door, and there was probably just a bit of him still hanging on. The thing to do was keep busy. Throw himself into work.
>
> There were already some lifetimers on his desk. He didn't remember putting them there, but that didn't matter, the important thing was to get on with the job… He picked up the nearest one, and read the name. (*Reaper Man* 156-157)

Bill Door, the personality Death has taken on while in the mortal world, seems to have allowed Death to have feelings and regrets, which he had not experienced before. As a result of these new feelings, his study, in which he used to feel at home, has become unfamiliar to him. The room seems considerably larger than he remembers it being. The items in the study are still ones he is capable of working with, even if this happens with such automation that he manages to forget moving them around. Death's life before Bill Door centred on work and his job is the only way in which he knows to deal with his new found emotions. This in between state of being half-Death and half-mortal shows Death in the middle of an identity crisis, where his understanding of his role even in his own world has been shaken by his mortality.

After reabsorbing nearly all of the smaller deaths and being reinstated in his role as Death, his return to his study is less difficult and the study is no longer described as being

anything but the way he remembered. He is, however, clearly still affected by human emotions as he sits in his study staring at a lifetimer on his desk. The room is mainly described through the different sounds and movements within the room,

> Swivel, swivel. Swivel, swivel. In the hall outside, the great clock ticked on killing time. Death drummed his skeletal fingers on the desk's scarred woodwork. […] He got up and stalked to a window and stared out at his dark domain, his hands clenching and unclenching behind his back. Then he snatched up the lifetimer and strode out the room. (*Reaper Man* 318)

These actions from "drumm[ing] his fingers on the desk" to "snatch[ing] up the lifetimer" and sounds from the swivelling of the chair to the ticking of the clock "killing time" imply impatience and irritation on Death's part. Like the clock ticks as it kills time, Death is merely killing time while he waits for it to be time to go collect one of the people that he grew close to during his time as Bill Door. Death's "stalk[ing]to a window and "clench[ing] and unclench[ing]" his hands also suggest that he is upset or even angry because of the upcoming death of his friend. His actions in a space largely unrelated to his friend's death already indicate that he is pre-emptively attempting to cope with the events to come. His home transforms into one of the more unconventional spaces of mourning as Death works to understand his own emotions and to control them. This interaction and the space created by it do not only humanize death but they also show that even Death does not control when people die. This means that although dying is generally undesirable death is not something the living have control over to a degree where they would be able to avoid dying entirely. According to the novel, this lack of control does not, however, mean that people are not allowed to grieve those they have lost or are about to lose.

The concept of death is further humanized through Death's newly found understanding of mortality as he is shown to become more appreciative of humanity's quirks and begin to understand the pain associated with loss. Death had been happy previously in his "still domain" where he had everything he could possibly want (*RM* 348). Death's experiences are now described in a combination of what he sees and what he does from his stalking "through the black orchard" and on until he climbs "a small mound on the edge of the garden" (*RM* 348). He is no longer mere action but instead as his perspective has changed so has his interaction with the world around him. Death looks at the unformed land beyond, that he had never had any reason to define further than the existence of sorts he had formerly given it (*RM* 348-349). After years of having his home exactly the same way, he decides to make an addition that will remind him of his experience living among humanity. This addition is the first in a colour other than dark or black:

> He snapped his fingers. Fields appeared, flowing the gentle curves of the land. 'Golden,' said Albert. 'that's nice. I've always thought we could do with a bit more colour around here.' Death shook his head. It wasn't quite right yet. Then he realised what it was. The lifetimers, the great room filled with the roar of disappearing lives, was efficient and necessary, you needed something like that for good order. But… He snapped his fingers again and a breeze sprang up. The cornfields moved, billow after billow unfolding across the slopes. (*Reaper Man* 349)

In real life corn is not typically golden in colour when it is still in the fields. This change from a combination of green and yellow to gold suggests that the lives that Death says the corn is a metaphor for (*RM* 350) are precious. The cornfield is paralleled with humanity in the corn's differing lengths that are like lives (*RM* 350) and are "alive, whispering in the breeze awaiting the clockwork of seasons" (*RM* 351). Like the corn is planted and cut at specific times in

accordance with “the clockwork of seasons”, human lives begin and then eventually end. There will always be more corn, and the same way there will always be another generation of humanity. This parallel allows the novel to present death as a natural part of life while emphasizing that the life preceding it is also important. From the perspective of eternity, a life no matter how long or short is always the same length but ”from the point of view of the owner, longer ones are best” (*RM* 350). Unlike the lifetimers in their organized and efficient room, corn is messy and each one of them is equal in worth as they are not defined by an amount of sand left or the height of the stalk itself. This does not, however, mean that the owner of that life would not feel better if they could guarantee that they will have a long life. Death cannot ignore or make invisible the life that is present in every corn. This inability is what allows the corn to function as a reminder of the preciousness of every life to an immortal who would otherwise only ever see them as mere moment in eternity.

Like the existence of all deaths beginning with “Azrael in his tower of loneliness” (*RM* 351), the life of Discworld’s Death appears to be a lonely one: it is his own world that appears on no map (*RM* 348) and that he shares with none other than Albert and the Deaths of Rats and Fleas (*RM* 350-351). This means that no matter how much anyone would like to visit Death, they cannot find his house for that visit. Although giving Death a home, companionship, and emotions cannot remove the uncertainty associated with dying, it can make the concept appear less like the enemy that the living often see it as.

Mortal Perspectives

> He eased open the heavy oak door, and felt oddly disappointed when it failed to creak ominously.
>
> Terry Pratchett: *Mort*

Opposed with Death's immortal perspective are three main mortal perspectives through which Death's home is described in *Mort*. These three perspectives differ mainly in the amount of time that the mortals have been exposed to Death's world: this world is entirely new to Mort, Ysabell has lived in it for thirty-five years (*Mort* 149) and Albert for thousands (*Mort* 205). This means that the freshness of their respective perspectives significantly affects the way they react to their surroundings.

When Mort begins his apprenticeship, he expects his surroundings to be much more frightening than they actually are but the environment does not match his expectations. This is first shown when he wakes up in Death's home on his first day there as he attempts to decipher where he is (*Mort* 39). Mort has been given his own room, by Death, which is described primarily through the different sensory experiences Mort has of it:

> First of all it was large, larger than the entire house back home, and dry, dry as old tombs under ancient deserts. The air tasted as though it had been cooked for hours and then allowed to cool. The carpet under his feet was deep enough to hide a tribe of pygmies and crackled electrically as he padded through it. And everything had been designed in shapes of purple and black.
> *Mort* 39

The reader is provided with what is a full body experience: sight, touch and taste. Although more in the colours of a funeral parlour than those of teenager's bedroom, the room is much larger than what Mort would know what to do with suggesting a level of generosity on his host's part. Its air of funeral home does not end there: the description of how the room tastes evokes thoughts of mustiness and stifling air while the carpet suggests plushiness and domesticity. This tension between what Mort feels, sees and tastes foreshadows the problems of having a young mortal in the timeless place of death. A regular home would not be akin to

a funeral home, musty and filled with plush carpeting unless something terrible has happened but where Death's home is concerned, the combination evokes thoughts of something abandoned and unclean – perhaps a home that someone had died in some time ago but that had not yet been given to the next person to live in. This tension between the soft domesticity and the musty, stifling air is further reflected in Mort's actions and the lack of something "ghastly happening" to him (*Mort* 40). Additionally, the décor in the room is not particularly homey as the chair is "delicately carved with a skull and bones motif" but at least the heavy oak door does not creak ominously (*Mort* 39). Mort's expectations are what drive his actions during this first morning, where "he negotiated" a staircase "successfully without anything ghastly happening" (*Mort* 40) but they do not reflect what the house is actually like. In his defence, the rest of the house is even more akin to a funeral home than his room.

By making this alien place of Death's home approachable and comforting, *Mort* suggests that the more people are exposed to concepts and ideas that they find uncomfortable the easier it becomes to look at them objectively and accept them. Mort's, and therefore the reader's, experience of the house starts transforming almost immediately as they are introduced to the juxtaposition between the bare corridors with their bone motif arched doors and, for instance, the kitchen, which is traditionally considered the heart of the home.

> There was a kitchen on the other side of the door - long, low and warm, with copper pans hanging from the ceiling and a vast black iron stove occupying the whole of one long wall. An old man was standing in front of it, frying eggs and bacon and whistling between his teeth. The smell attracted Mort's taste buds from across the room, hinting that if they got together they could really enjoy themselves. He found himself moving forward without even consulting his legs (*Mort* 41)

The kitchen is just like any other kitchen in any other home: full of warmth and the smell of good food. It is also surprising in that it seems rather unlikely that Death, who is a skeleton, would need a kitchen if he were to live by himself. The different rooms are mainly shown as Mort uses them and he quickly becomes more and more comfortable with Death's domain after encountering the kitchen. His work in the stables, for instance, leads him into the garden, which is described as being "big, neat and well-tended" and "very, very black" but after a while Mort begins to believe that he can see "different colours of black" (*Mort* 48). Mort's ability to notice details like the different colours of black suggests that the more time he spends around Death and Death's home, the easier it becomes to look past his own feelings. Death is no longer a monster that steals those Mort loves away from him but a person simply trying to do his job and dying begins to seem more like a natural part of life.

Death's adopted daughter, Ysabell, is not allowed out of her father's home dimension (*Mort* 149) and although she appreciates being taken in, this affects how she functions in the space she has lived in for thirty-five years. She has taken to keeping to her room or riding a pony on the black moors above the cottage (*Mort* 68). Despite whatever boredom she may have experienced due to nothing being real (*Mort* 145) and the unfortunate condition of being stuck at sixteen for such a long time (*Mort* 149), she still loves the places Death has made to keep her amused (*Mort* 145). There is, however, an important distinction she makes between what Death has done and what people are capable of doing while talking to Mort: "He can't create, you see. […] It's a copy of one he saw somewhere. Everything's a copy" (*Mort* 145). This suggests a lack of imagination on Death's part, despite his ability to appreciate the things he sees humanity make. This connects to the many different ways in which characters in the novels die from old age to assassination and the fact that Death needs to read node charts in order to know when and where he is supposed to collect the next soul. The same way Death lacks the imagination to create something entirely new, he also lacks the imagination to independently

invent hundreds of thousands of different circumstances and ways for people to die. This means that Death is not the villain Mort saw him as in the beginning – Death is simply an inevitable part of life.

Unlike the other two human inhabitants of Death's world, Albert has been with Death for a couple of thousands of years (*Mort* 205). Despite his intense fear of dying or, more likely, because of it, he has chosen to remain in this timeless place and serve Death in exchange for this (*Mort* 243-247). He experiences the house mainly through the different chores he does and his interactions with Death. Albert is at peace in Death's domain precisely because of its timeless nature, which allows him to continue living. He does, however, have some criticism for his master's creative skills: "It's just that when it comes to colour, he hasn't got much imagination" (*Mort* 51) and his craftmanship: "It's not very good job of work, to tell the truth. I mean the garden's okay, but the mountains are downright shoddy. They're fuzzy when you get up close. I went and had a look once" (*Mort* 52). Like Ysabell's comment of Death only ever copying things he has seen, Albert seems to be suggesting that Death lacks imagination, creativity and, perhaps, has no time to look at his world more closely and, therefore, does not mind that the mountains are fuzzy up close. This and the fact that while on duty, Death is only ever seen in his office, the lifetimer room or on his way to or from the stables would suggest that despite having all of these beautiful things that he made around him, Death only plays at being human. He does not enjoy the same level of freedom or frivolity as Albert and Mort can, because if he stopped doing his job, the universe might end.

Criticizing Death on the things he is not good at is easy for Albert, Ysabell and Mort, but they soon discover that their clinical discussions and experiences of death on paper can never fully reflect the reality of watching someone's time run out. The longer these mortals remain in Death's world, the less afraid of all the strange things they are:

> Mort knew that if he listened hard enough he could hear the insect-like scratching of the books as they wrote themselves. Once upon a time Mort would have found it eerie. Now it was reassuring. It demonstrated that the universe was running smoothly (*Mort* 119)

The safety arises solely from the fact that the universe is still running smoothly, even as he knows that it is no longer running in the right direction. Even with access to reading all the lives that had ever existed, Mort still never reads his own biography and is not interested in seeing how many pages he has left to fill. This suggests that despite the safety he feels, he has not yet come to terms with his own mortality. Therefore, the safety that he feels does not mean that he is alright with any other implications of mortality around him: "'It's no worse than the library,' said Mort, and almost believed it. But in the library you only read about it; in here you could see it happening" (*Mort* 240). In Mort's realization the novel also reminds its readers that it and any other book they might read cannot fully prepare them for death itself.

It is openly stated throughout the novel that death, which happens to everyone, is the only thing at the end: not justice, just Death. It becomes equally clear that the more deathlike Mort becomes, the safer and more at home he feels in Death's world, but not in Death's study. Death's study appears to be the room in the house that all three mortals associate him with the most, which is why they all panic when he is not in his chair on the very same morning the three enter the lifetimer room. It appears that despite all the effort the Discworld novels go to describe a world all Death's own, even the characters within the novels mainly associate Death with his study and the stables, both of which directly lead to his work. Ultimately, it becomes clear that no matter how much we humanize death, it is still something that inevitably happens to everyone. That, however, does not mean that death is somehow evil or that we should be afraid. Rather the opposite: death simply is and if we all lived forever, the world would stop moving forward.

6. Conclusions

Mort, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* construct landscapes of death that alleviate some of the fear, sorrow and loss traditionally associated with death and dying by showing these landscapes through the perspectives of the living, the dead and Death. The novels separate traditional landscapes of death from the realities of death as they remind their readers that people do not generally speaking die in graveyards and tombs but rather in everyday places like homes and hospitals. While the novels acknowledge the mortal experience of fear of death, they attempt to relieve it through discussions directed at specific subsets of this fear.

The Graveyard Book creates emotional space in order to connect the graveyard – a place of mourning – with more positive imagery of home and community. The novel is able to show a different side of the graveyard by allowing Bod to make it his home. Instead of a dark, scary place, the graveyard becomes a space of light and happiness where the boy is raised by a community of the dead. Not only does this create positive associations of home for the graveyard, but also it shows the dead as not being alone. This is a significant move on the novel's part as it allows the story to respond to the fear of absolute solitude that makes some people so afraid of dying. The novel makes death a pleasant experience where people meet other dead people and live happily ever after. It is also where the novel steps into wish fulfilment in its response to this fear. By allowing characters to continue a form of life on Earth with other dead characters, the novel replaces fear with a sense of hope similar to those already provided by religious afterlives. The nocturnal inhabitants of the graveyard are in a different rhythm from the outside world and their interactions with the living are limited. As a result, although they are allowed to remain in the world of the living, they are also usually unable to interact with the living. This separation reminds its readers that those who have died first cannot

communicate with the people they left behind but this does not mean that they should not be remembered.

The novels show characters remembering and mourning their loved ones in multiple different ways and in more unorthodox locations. Their treatment of mourning shows grief as an everyday activity with no set location and as at least partially selfish. Characters mourn their loss and are not capable of understanding that after a long life and the degeneration of the human body associated with age death can be a blessing. Like *The Graveyard Book* making a place of mourning someone's home, *Reaper Man* brings mourning home and therefore creates tension between the home that is associated with safety and happiness and the mourning that is usually an act of sorrow. This tension highlights that places do not have to only transform into one type of space but they can instead be a multitude of things or even transform over time. The grieving process, though ultimately selfish, is an important part of dealing with and psychologically coming to terms with someone else's death. It is a process that cannot be hurried or skipped which the novels show to be as multifaceted as those in mourning. Characters are reminded of their loved ones in spaces that they used to spend time in together, which then transforms how the space is perceived. It also follows that a large portion of everyday places are transformed into spaces coloured by the mourning brought into the space by these characters. Over time the grief these characters feel lessens and they are able to think of their time with the person they lost fondly. By showing grieving in this manner, the novels suggest that the pain of loss will eventually lessen and one day people who have lost someone will be able to remember their loved ones, not just mourn them.

The Discworld novels are able to subvert fears related to life (or lack thereof) after death by being non-judgemental about what their readers might believe. This lack of judgement allows readers to continue believing in whichever afterlife they might choose while reading about the many options that the novels present. These options are carefully constructed to show

more positive or neutral facets of the afterlife as characters experience exactly what they believe. Although this makes the afterworld a place of complete equality, it also means that death does not come with any kind of justice unless characters believe that their earthly actions should lead to punishment. To a degree, these careful constructions partially work to only mask anxiety felt by some of the characters in the novels This may, however, be because they are not aware of the fact that they will go to whichever afterworld or afterlife they believe in. In this sense most of the characters of the Discworld novels are in no better position than their readers are. With the multitude of afterlife options and relatively painless deaths, the novels provide their readers with an escape from the realities of their own world. Even as the novels do not limit their characters' afterlives to their morality, the novels do draw on ideas of existing religious afterlives. Creating many different places in the afterworld allows the novels to discuss the inevitability of death and to remind their readers that part of why others may believe in a different afterlife than they themselves do is that they find different things comforting and frightening. The main idea behind places of the afterworld seems to be precisely that all who will die and all of those they have left behind find comfort in the idea of a continued existence of the deceased in some form. Like religious afterlives, the afterlife options in these novels rely heavily on a desire for the continuance of life after death.

Interestingly, however, the novels do not present an option beyond Death himself where there is nothing after death. It could be that the authors do not think that people who believe in what Davis calls the annihilation of self in death (4) are afraid of what follows death. They do not need to believe in an afterlife in an afterworld because they have already accepted that death is irreversible. The things about dying they find terrifying could, however, be very different. Perhaps they are worried about the people they love, their legacy, not accomplishing everything they wanted, or dying painfully (Davis 4). In fact, Davis even states that some people find the idea of an afterlife more terrifying than the annihilation of the self (4-5), in

which case these novels are likely to make some readers more uneasy than before. In *Reaper Man* these people are shown that those they leave behind can have a full and happy life without them but will not forget them. The novels also show multiple different ways that people might die, which in turn reminds readers that not all ways of dying are painful and often, even with deaths that might be imagined to be painful, dying is generally quicker than anticipated. On the other hand, the mortal Death finds himself not afraid of dying but not wanting to die because when he does, "THERE WILL BE NOTHING" (*RM* 179). Although he finds himself afraid, the conversation he has begins with resignation but ends with the discovery of hope, because where there is life, there is hope (*RM* 179-181). While the novel states that it is alright to want to not die, it also suggests that the will to live is the mother of invention. When characters in the novel actively look for ways to fix their respective situations or invent a way to avoid circumstances that could lead to their death, the novel remarks on the preciousness of all life and on the appreciation characters in the novel have for their own ability to continue living.

All three novels show that our perspective and our experiences of landscapes of death transform how we describe and experience those places thereafter. Bod's perspective through most of *The Graveyard Book* is that of a child whose home is the graveyard while *Mort* is told from the perspective of a mortal doing the job of an immortal. While change in perspective is possible, it takes time and people are more likely to hold on to their negative experiences of space. The novels simply suggest that we may need a change of perspective in order to defeat our death related fears. The novels also provide their readers with the perspectives of the undead and Death. Through the undead, it is possible to see why after a certain point death might become desirable. Their perspective also shows that despite loving these people when they were alive, the boundaries that they cross in order to die and then return change them irreversibly. The human body was not designed to continue living beyond a certain point and the human mind was not designed to control all of the body consciously. Although death does

not have to be seen as the total annihilation of ourselves as a person, it does need to eventually happen.

As a timeless place Death's home is full of tension between the mortal and immortal and their related perspectives. In *Mort* the mortal characters that have lived with Death for longer repeatedly mention Death's lack of imagination, which raises questions of why Death would need a home in the first place and why his dimension mimics humanity to such a large degree. The simple answer is that Death only plays at being human. At this stage, Death has never been mortal and cannot fully appreciate his dimension as a home. The psychopomp spends most of his time working to either find out who is going to die where or collecting souls. Death is basically characterized by his job as he attempts to learn more about humanity. His apprentice, on the other hand, begins the novel entirely afraid of Death and is initially also frightened by Death's home. This home is full of tension between the mundane, everyday things and the items entirely related to Death's job. Although they initially seem at odds with one another, the novel normalizes them through Mort's experience of the space. As Mort sees these items every day alongside all the normal domestic things, they begin to seem normal to him and therefore not worth thinking about. While *Mort* humanizes Death by giving him a home and a family, it is only after his stint as a mortal during *Reaper Man* that he learns that life is precious beyond its ability to keep the world working. As Death becomes appreciative of life, the novel hopes to make its readers appreciative of death as a necessary part of life. Neither the concept of death nor Death could exist without life but a life that continues forever might leave people will Death's earlier limited understanding of the world at large. Other characters in the novels are creative because they are mortal and that makes it necessary for them to keep inventing new things – Death is unimaginative because he has never needed to face mortality. This suggests that the human ability to invent life improvements and create art is partially because of our mortality. Although this might not alleviate the fear of death or dying

that someone can have, it does create an interesting viewpoint: would we have all these items and art works if we were not at least a little afraid of death? It also suggests that a small amount of fear for our lives is useful as long as it does not become paralysing.

More important than their attempts to create positivity and to subvert the negativity surrounding death is the fact that the novels dare to bring death to the foreground of their stories. Death and dying are made mostly visible. However, the novels do not spend a lot of time looking at the act of dying itself, which suggests that either the characters themselves are not entirely comfortable with watching someone die or dying is seen as such a normal act that it does not require embellishment beyond saying that the character died. Death has been almost a taboo subject in polite society where someone's imminent death in particular has been something to conceal and avoid. Instead of silence or denial of their friend's upcoming death, characters in *Reaper Man* celebrate their friend's death in a manner similar to the way we might celebrate someone's retirement. *Mort*, *Reaper Man* and *The Graveyard Book* force their readers to look at death in the face: death discussed cannot be denied. The novels accept death as an inevitable part of life that cannot be escaped. Eventually everyone will die and that, the novels say, is perfectly alright because they will have had a life first.

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