

# Deities of Death in Contemporary Popular Fantasy Media

KRISTIN AUBEL

*This paper compares the philosophies of death embodied by death deities from three successful fantasy series with each other through Derrida's and Tolkien's notions of death as a gift. Hades in Percy Jackson (2005–2009, 2023–present), the Raven Queen in Critical Role: Vox Machina (2015–2017), and the Many-Faced God in A Song of Ice and Fire (1996–present) all take on various forms, making their true essence a secret. Death can therefore never be fully known. It is fearsome, but also connected to mercy and change. While death is portrayed as inevitable, its finality as well as the deities' impartiality are questioned to varying degrees.*

*Dieser Artikel vergleicht die Todesphilosophien, die durch die Todesgottheiten aus drei erfolgreichen Fantasy-Serien verkörpert werden, anhand des Konzeptes von Tod als Geschenk bei Derrida und Tolkien. Hades in Percy Jackson (2005-2009, 2023-Gegenwart), die Raven Queen in Critical Role: Vox Machina (2015-2017) und der Many-Faced God in A Song of Ice and Fire (1996-Gegenwart) nehmen verschiedene Gestalten an und machen so ihre wahre Essenz zu einem Geheimnis. Der Tod kann daher niemals wirklich gekannt werden. Er ist angsteinflößend, steht aber auch für Gnade und Veränderung. Obwohl der Tod als unausweichlich dargestellt wird, werden sowohl seine Endgültigkeit als auch die Unparteilichkeit der Gottheiten in unterschiedlichem Maße in Frage gestellt.*

## Introduction

Death is a ubiquitous experience of humankind and as such of immense cultural relevance: Imagery of death can be found in most if not all cultures and religions (Vinczeová 67). Often, death is anthropomorphized, making “[p]ersonifications of death [...] some of the oldest stories we have” (“Trope Talk” 1:35). Nowadays, much of fantasy literature is “in one way or another about death” (Gray 1). Since the purpose of death narratives is “to act as subliminal ways of naturalizing the fear of death and dying” (Kundu 10) and since

fantasy “can be a strategy for coming to terms with reality thorough [sic] a process of mourning, rather than merely being a form of delusional escapism” (Gray 5), it will be interesting to investigate how this process is embodied by fantastic death deities. This paper will therefore analyse deities of death in three contemporary fantasy series that are already firmly established and currently being extended. Comparing these three will thus provide an insight into a specific moment of perspectives on death in contemporary cultural production. First, the three series and their respective death deities will be introduced, followed by a brief overview of the idea of death as a gift and a detailed analysis of the philosophies of death embodied and represented by each deity.

### **Death in Contemporary Fantasy Series**

This paper analyses the representations of death in the novel series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2005–2009, 2023–present) by Rick Riordan, the actual play Table-Top Role-Playing Game (TTRPG) series *Critical Role: Vox Machina* (2015–2017) by Critical Role Productions, and the novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996–present) by George R.R. Martin. *Percy Jackson* has multiple follow-up series, such as *Heroes of Olympus* (2010–2014), and a new trilogy continuing the ‘original’ series starting with *The Chalice of the Gods* (2023). All of Riordan’s series take place in the same universe of a contemporary United States of America in which the ancient Greek deities (and later other pantheons) are still present and conceive demigod children (often referred to as “half-bloods”) with mortals. The series mostly deal with the quests of adolescent demigods to save the world from evil. The actual play series *Critical Role* takes its play mechanics and the basis of its Tolkien-inspired classical fantasy setting from the TTRPG *Dungeons & Dragons* (5<sup>th</sup> edition) but establishes its own magical world of Exandria, which has to be saved from various threats by a group of adventurers. *Vox Machina* is its first campaign. In its recently finished third campaign (*Bells Hells*, 2021–2025) as well as several mini-series, Exandria’s pantheon of deities is further developed. *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which deals with

intrigues in a fantasy world inspired by the European Middle Ages, consists at present of five novels with Martin (presumably) working on the sixth and seventh volumes, as well as publishing various stories taking place in the world of the series and reference material about it. In all three narratives, a deity of death plays a pivotal role: Hades in *Percy Jackson* changes from an antagonist to a world-saving ally, the Raven Queen in *Critical Role: Vox Machina* imbues the player character Vax'ildan in particular with powerful gifts, and the Many-Faced God in *A Song of Ice and Fire* becomes an essential part of the journey of the character Arya.

This paper focusses on deities of death, referring to personifications that both represent and/or rule the domain of death and are revered and prayed to by others, excluding those personifications that merely fulfil the function of a reaper or psychopomp, that is, of a guide for dead souls.<sup>1</sup> As deities, these characters do not only represent death, but also have power over the process of death, thus revealing its exact conceptualisation. As objects of worship, they furthermore provide projection surfaces for the mortal characters, therefore revealing their attitudes towards death. The characters' agency, however, allows them to react to how they are treated. The three deities analysed in this paper represent varying approaches to the creation of goddesses and gods in fantasy media: Hades is of Greek mythological/religious origin and is embodied as a character. In contrast, the Raven Queen is similarly embodied but of mythopoetic origin. The Many-Faced God is not technically a character, but he is fervently represented by his priests, the Faceless Men, who imbue him with character traits such as gentleness and impartiality (*Crows* 138; *Dragons* 975). The Many-Faced God is thus a death deity of mythopoetic origin who is represented through his followers.

---

1 Stories with these characters “don't usually have much to say about death as a whole” (“Trope Talk” 4:55–5:00) – as long as they stick to this limited function.

## Death as Gift

While death is often a source of fear, as mentioned above, the conception of death as a gift is also well established. In *The Gift of Death* (1995), philosopher Jacques Derrida dissects the relationship between the concepts of responsibility, gift, and death (and – especially religious – secrecy):

The crypto- or mysto-genealogy of responsibility is woven with the double and inextricably intertwined thread of the gift and of death: in short of the *gift of death*. The gift made to me by God as he holds me in his gaze and in his hand while remaining inaccessible to me, the terribly dis-symmetrical gift of the *mysterium tremendum* only allows me to respond and only rouses me to the responsibility it gives me by making a gift of death [*en me donnant la mort*], giving the secret of death, a new experience of death. (Derrida 33; original emphasis)

Death is therefore a gift from God but not necessarily connotated positively since it is dispensed without choice by a higher, “inaccessible” and therefore unaccountable being. Since it is a great (and terrible) secret, death will also always remain an individual, and presumably lonely, experience.

The idea of death as a gift entered fantasy literature based on European mythology through J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55). Similar to Derrida’s notion of death, the gift of death in Tolkien’s works has a religious, Christian connotation as it is depicted as the gift of the one God to humanity (Sterling 17–18). It is, however, ambivalent, being “bitter to receive” and at the same time “the inevitable counterpart of the gift of life, and nothing to be feared” (17). This duality of grief and acceptance is represented by all three death deities in this paper, albeit in different ways.

## Accepting Death: Hades in *Percy Jackson*

In Greek mythology, Hades is the god of the dead and king of the underworld.<sup>2</sup> In the *Percy Jackson* series, he still fulfils this role. His initial characterisation in the first novel is that of an unpleasant, even fearsome, distant loner. He has neither a throne on Olympus nor a cabin in Camp Half-Blood (Riordan, *Thief* 113). These cabins are usually intended as homes for the respective deity's demigod children, but childless major deities such as the virgin goddess Artemis still have an honorary cabin. Hades, however, does not belong: "He sort of does his own thing down in the Underworld. If he did have a cabin here [...] Well, it wouldn't be pleasant. Let's leave it at that" (113). Since World War II is rewritten as "basically a fight between the sons of Zeus and Poseidon on one side, and the sons of Hades on the other" (114), Hades is furthermore associated with the Axis Powers. His great potential for evil thus stated, it makes sense that he is assumed to be the one responsible for stealing Zeus' lightning bolt and so provoking a war between Zeus and Poseidon:

Someone who harbours a grudge, who has been unhappy with his lot since the world was divided aeons ago, whose kingdom would grow powerful with the deaths of millions. [...] The Lord of the Dead is the only possibility. (143)

Parallely, the protagonist Percy mourns the (presumed) death of his mother Sally: "My mother was gone. The whole world should be black and cold. Nothing should look beautiful" (59). The existence of an underworld as physical space, however, makes death seem less final (78). In the beginning, death and the god of death are therefore depicted as threats that must be defeated while its counterpart, immortality, seems "like a pretty good deal" (68).

When Percy meets Hades, the initial negative connotations are seemingly confirmed: He is described as having a "mesmerizing, evil charisma" (*Thief* 309). His form, which is "at least three metres tall" (309), makes him intimidating – and intentionally so, as the

---

2 While Thanatos, the actual embodiment of death from Greek mythology, makes an appearance in the sequel series *The Heroes of Olympus*, his function in this narrative is mostly that of a reaper and subordinate to Hades.

gods can shift their shape at will (*Curse* 37), with their true form being deadly for mortals to see (*Thief* 331). Hades as embodiment of death can thus never be truly known, fitting Derrida's notion of death as a great and terrible secret.

It turns out, however, that Hades does not want a war, as more dead people would merely raise his administrative efforts and costs, implying a rather pragmatic approach towards death, and that his mistrust of the Olympian gods led to him being manipulated by the same twist villain (Kronos) as the protagonists (*Thief* 311–13). While Hades remains antagonistic towards the protagonists, he is re-characterized from a scheming villain to a god of his word: "Even the Lord of Death pays his debts" (345).

In the following novels, both the ostracization of Hades, his children, and thus of death itself and the (ostensible) allure of immortality are further explored and ultimately reversed: Death is revealed as good and immortality as bad. In the third novel, *The Titan's Curse* (2007), it is ironically two not ageing, and therefore virtually immortal, hunters of Artemis, who are the first major deaths in the fight against Kronos. The irony is further amplified by the fact that one of them, Bianca di Angelo, is a daughter of Hades. It is thus made clear that there are no exceptions from death. In the case of Zoë, who has been a hunter for millennia, death is, in opposition to Bianca's here and Sally's in the first novel (*Curse* 198; *Thief* 53), seen as a relief: "Rest. At last" (*Curse* 277). Her immortality, by contrast, is connected to stagnation and the inability to self-improve (203). In the fourth novel, *The Battle of the Labyrinth* (2009), this idea is emphasised further: The character Eurythion describes choosing immortality as the "[w]orst mistake I ever made" (160), and Daedalus' life extension methods are described as "not natural" (295) as well as "hiding from death", "cheat[ing] death" (282), and "avoid[ing] death" (295); all negatively connotated word choices. In the end, Daedalus lets himself die, deciding to "trust in the justice of the Underworld, such as it is. That is all we can do, isn't it?" (334–35), associating death (and Hades) with fairness and inevitability.

In the same novel, Bianca's brother Nico, also a child of Hades, struggles to accept his sister's death, constantly trying to summon her spirit. While this is possible, again questioning the finality of

death, this power is, just like Daedalus' immortality, described as "unnatural" (*Labyrinth* 163). Similar to Zoë, Bianca has already accepted her own death (166), and it is the survivors who have to go through an arduous process of grief and anger in order to reach this state – which Nico does at the end of the novel: "Bianca has passed. She must stay where she is" (335).

While the children of Hades thus accept their very limited power over death, they are themselves not welcomed into demigod society because of these powers – they make others "uncomfortable" (*Labyrinth* 296). Since there is no cabin for Hades in Camp Half-Blood, Nico literally does not have a place there (344), and Hera reinforces this notion of not-belonging by stating that neither Hades nor Nico are truly part of the Olympian family (350).<sup>3</sup> Only when Nico convinces his father in the series' finale to join this family together in their fight against Kronos and thus to become the "saviors of Olympus" (*Olympian* 317), the status quo changes: Hades does not receive a throne, but at least a seat on Olympus (346), as well as a cabin in Camp Half-Blood (353), where Nico is finally accepted: "nobody seemed to think this was out of place" (371). In a parallel conclusion to this acceptance of death, immortality is rejected: At the end of the series, Percy is offered to become an immortal god himself, but he refuses this gift (351), deciding against stagnation and for change and ultimately death: "I didn't want things to stay the same for eternity, because things could always get better" (373).

Throughout the series, the characters' attitude towards death slowly changes, which is mirrored by their attitude towards Hades and his children. Initially portrayed as fearsome, acceptance of death and its representatives becomes connotated with the natural order of things. As characters, Hades and Nico themselves have agency in this development. While both act at times antagonistically (also in response to how they are treated), they ultimately decide and prove to be valuable and powerful allies. Immortality meanwhile turns out to be more of a curse than a blessing. This development mirrors other fantastic children and young adult literature

---

3 In Greek mythology, Hades is indeed not an Olympian but a Chthonic god. This series, however, moralizes this distinction and uses it to discuss conceptualisations of family and familial unity.

(CYAL), as these novels “help readers to form an (almost) angst-free outlook on death” (Kokorski 356).<sup>4</sup>

### **Death as Powerful Gift: The Raven Queen in *Critical Role: Vox Machina***

During *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, the character Vax'ildan (or Vax) sacrificed himself close to when his player, Liam O'Brien, lost his mother: “But his character’s story was ‘one of accepting a fate that he fell into,’ and that helped O'Brien process the same problem” (More), highlighting that TTRPGs can fulfil a similar cathartic function as CYAL. In their study on playing death in *Dungeons & Dragons*, Sidhu and Carter note that “[f]or two of our participants, death in *D&D* had provided an explicit outlet to reflect on and come to terms with a real-life death they had recently faced” (Sidhu and Carter 1056). In *Vox Machina*, this journey of acceptance is closely tied to Vax’s relationship with the goddess of death, the Raven Queen or Matron of Ravens.

The Raven Queen as she appears in *Vox Machina* is a modified version of the character from the Forgotten Realms setting of *Dungeons & Dragons*’ 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Having successfully ascended as a mortal to replace the former god of death, she is the current deity of death, winter, and fate (“Duskmeadow” 57:08–45). Although she is merely in charge of the transition from life to death and does not rule over an underworld (58:11–13), she does exceed the function of a reaper as she determines the conceptualisation of death in this world: She “has taken what was once a tyrannical position of death and afterlife and souls and took it instead as the natural transition that it is” (57:45–55). This notion of death as natural is not the only similarity between the Raven Queen and the portrayal of Hades in *Percy Jackson*. She also is a keeper of her word and is mistrusted by the other gods (“Chapter” 1:32:28; “Duskmeadow” 58:08), making both of them outsiders within their respective pantheon.

4 Kokorski herself refers to, for example, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *House of Night* by P.C. and Kristin Cast, and *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling.



The Raven Queen is able to shapeshift and appears in various forms, for example as a spectre in “a dark female form” (“Tomb” 4:30:20) with a “formless” and “blurred” face (4:31:32–42) or during a ritualistic communion as a “massive form” with a “porcelain face like a mask, long jet-black hair, her body encasing you like a physical cage” (“Family” 55:00–08). The Raven Queen’s shapeshifting and unknown face is strongly tied to questions of power and identity, as she, similar to Hades, uses her shapes to exert power while and through hiding her true form. She and Hades thus both fit Derrida’s idea that death will always be a secret.

The Raven Queen is very much aware of how mortals see her, and while she reacts much more gently and understandingly to this rejection than Hades, her reasoning why death is good and necessary is very similar to the one in *Percy Jackson*:

I know that you hate me. I know that you fear me. Most do. But only because they are without understanding. Without death, life has no meaning. Finality drives change, innovation, greatness. It is the end that I bring that drives all of your gracious creations of this land to make the world better than we did, than those before me did. (“Duskmeadow” 1:09:44–10:16)

While it is ironic that someone who has overcome their own mortality now advocates for the finality of life,<sup>5</sup> her own experiences make her more sympathetic towards mortals: “I understand the impulse of mortality” (“Chapter” 1:32:05). This understanding in connection with her dominion over fate makes her comparatively flexible regarding the exact moment and the finality of death: “[D]eath is sacred. But not all deaths are destined, in that moment. Some destinies require one to endure beyond the moment. To meet that moment many times before the final death is to come” (“Duskmeadow” 1:11:44–56).<sup>6</sup> Practices of necromancy and undeath, however, are rejected as “abomination” (1:11:24–29).

5 In contrast to the bitter immortals in *Percy Jackson*, there is no indication here that the Raven Queen regrets her ascension. On the contrary, by advocating like this, she strengthens her position and protects herself from possible imitators.

6 This statement also refers to the game mechanics of *Dungeons & Dragons*, where characters can theoretically be resurrected with a single spell such as Revivify (“Tomb” 4:26:37), although some game masters make this harder (4:27:41) or even impossible in order to make death less trivial (Sidhu and Carter 1055).

The Raven Queen describes death as “one of the most important gifts of all” (“Duskmeadow” 1:15:34), again fitting Derrida’s description. This gift is powerful on an abstract level, driving improvement and granting people their deserved “eternal rest” (“Fate-Touched” 59:20), but also manifests its power directly through the game’s mechanics. Vax at first acts very defiantly towards the Raven Queen, even when attempting to sacrifice himself in exchange for his sister’s life, exclaiming “Take me instead, you raven bitch” (“Tomb” 4:30:36–40). While the Raven Queen does accept this deal (4:31:53–32:00), she does not claim Vax’s life but instead his servitude. Vax slowly learns to accept this fate: “You know, I’ve never put much stock in faith... You weren’t my first choice, but I’m over that. And I’m ready” (“Dawn” 2:59:34–3:00:23) and is in turn rewarded with new abilities and powers. While some of these are received by multiclassing into a Paladin (“Umbrasyl” 55:51), a class in *D&D* that is able to channel divine magic, other granted powers exceed class features, such as being resurrected as a temporarily immortal being (“Fate-Touched” 1:00:50–04:37). After fulfilling his purpose in life, however, Vax has to join the Raven Queen as eternal servant, leaving his grieving friends and family behind (“Chapter” 1:27:44–42:39).

Death in *Critical Role: Vox Machina* is thus a powerful gift with unavoidable consequences, for “[w]ith power comes a price” (“Chapter” 1:32:29). While the relationship between Vax and the Raven Queen can be described in Derrida’s terms as “dissymmetrical” (33), the goddess of death is not the initiator of the deal and reacts with generosity, even compassion, and a certain flexibility to the mortal’s wishes. Learning to accept death and its representative is again a journey, but one accompanied by direct empowerment. Acceptance and empowerment have a circular relationship here: Acceptance provides power, but the received power also facilitates acceptance.

## Death as Service: The Many-Faced God in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

The cult of the Many-Faced God is one of several religions practised in the world of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. According to its priests, however, many, if not all, of the other gods are simply aspects (or faces) of the Many-Faced God, as is suggested by the thirty statues of different gods in his temple, the House of Black and White (Martin, *Crows* 136, 445–47). The claim of universality for this god is justified by the universality of death for humanity: “All mankind belongs to him...else somewhere in the world would be a folk who lived forever” (722).

The Stranger is both a face of this god and one aspect of the one god in the Faith of the Seven (*Crows* 447), showcasing both the flowing transitions between these religions and the elusiveness of death. The Stranger has many characteristics in common with Hades and the Raven Queen, as he has various forms, is an outcast, cannot be fully known, and makes people uncomfortable:

[T]he Stranger was neither male nor female, yet both, ever the outcast, the wanderer from far places, less and more human, unknown and unknowable [...]. It made Catelyn uneasy. She would get scant comfort there. (*Clash* 496).

Since the Stranger is one face of the Many-Faced God, these character traits are also a part of him. The idea that death’s true form cannot be known reaches its peak here, as the Many-Faced God neither has a name beyond this descriptive one nor is there even a true form, as all of the faces together are him.

There are, however, core truths taught by his priests, the Faceless Men. Their aphorism-turned-salutation consists of two parts: *valar morghulis*, all men must die, and *valar dohaeris*, all men must serve. Death is inevitable but gentle: “[A]t the end of every road stands Him of Many Faces, waiting. He will be there for you one day, do not fear. You need not rush to his embrace” (*Crows* 138). Death is peaceful and merciful: “His gift to us, an end to want and pain” (449), echoing the Raven Queen’s sentiment of death as gift, but evaluating it even more positively. The Faceless Men see themselves as “his servants, sworn to do his will” (445), which translates

to killing others in his name. By spreading his gift, they successfully eliminate Derrida's dissymmetry of the gift-giving and the anxieties coming with it. In order to become perfect servants and extensions of the Many-Faced God's will, the priests, however, have to first kill their individual selves. During her apprenticeship, Arya is repeatedly asked who she is, repeating the answer "no one" (*Dragons* 986) until it becomes either the truth or a very convincing lie (986). The fully initiated priests only use names temporarily, if at all, and are for example referred to as "the kindly man" (*Crows* 444). While Hades's servants, the Furies, are similarly called "Kindly One[s]" (Riordan, *Thief* 19), this is a euphemism spoken in fear. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the expression is taken literally: Kindliness is the face of (a servant of) death confronted without fear (Martin, *Crows* 139), implying that being afraid is not the effect of death being terrible but its cause, reversing Derrida's hierarchy of giver and receiver. The idea of death being elusive and unknowable, on the contrary, is emphasised and extended to death's servants. Not only do the priests not have names, but they are also able to shape-shift using a vast collection of faces as masks (*Dragons* 980). The notion of death as gift is thus, similar to *Critical Role*, connected to (magical) powers.

The religion of the Many-Faced God originated from slaves praying to be released from their suffering (*Crows* 458), but soon was extended to killing third parties as well – for a price:

The gift was given only to those who yearned for it, in the beginning... but one day, the first of us heard a slave praying not for his own death but for his master's. So fervently did he desire this that he offered all he had, that his prayer might be answered. And it seemed to our first brother that this sacrifice would be pleasing to Him of Many Faces, so that night he granted the prayer. (*Dragons* 698)

The idea of the merciful (or kind) gift, despite all claims of the priests to never kill for their own benefit or profit (974), is thus imbued with a neo-liberal logic, becoming essentially a paid-for murder service. This transactional logic can best be observed in Arya's first encounter with a Faceless Man. After she has saved the life of Jaqen H'ghar and two of his companions (*Clash* 226), Jaqen

contacts Arya to make a deal: “‘A man pays his debts. A man owes three.’ ‘Three?’ ‘The Red God has his due, sweet girl, and only death may pay for life. This girl took three that were his. This girl must give three in their places’” (464–65). Death becomes a commodity that is not gifted but exchanged. The entirely benevolent descriptions of death by the priests can thus also be read as a sales pitch.

Interestingly, Jaqen refers to the “Red God” (*Clash* 465) and not to the Many-Faced one, suggesting that R’hllor, whose priests are able to resurrect (certain) dead people, most prominently Beric Dondarrion (*Storm* 535–36), is one of the many aspects of this deity as well. These deaths and resurrections slowly destroy the recipient’s body and memory and with that their identity, only leaving their unfulfilled purpose in life behind (463, 536). Death is thus again neither absolute nor final. All men must die is superseded by the aphorism’s other half: All men must serve – until they fulfil their purpose. In the case of the Many-Faced God and his priests, it is not death that is bestowed dissymmetrically, but this painful extension of life. In contrast to their kindly killing and Vax’s servitude to the Raven Queen, there are no contracts for this process, making this deity truly inaccessible and unaccountable – even to the reader, since he never appears on the pages of the novels himself.

## Conclusion

In all three fantasy series, death is portrayed as the natural and inevitable end for all mortals. Accepting this fact as well as forming a meaningful relationship with the respective personification of death (or his son) takes effort and time. The duality of death is still present: Grief and mourning are made easier but are not entirely eliminated. All three death deities take on various forms, making their true essence a terrible secret in Derrida’s sense. While *Vox Machina* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* both incorporate the notion of death as gift, they focus on different aspects of it, namely its function as driver of change and as mercy, respectively. Both ideas are also present in slightly different ways in *Percy Jackson*. The supposed finality of death and impartiality of its embodiment are, however,

limited to varying degrees. In *Percy Jackson*, the afterlife is a physical space that can be visited, and ghosts can be summoned (although this is described as unnatural). In *Vox Machina*, the Raven Queen proves to be somewhat flexible with respect to temporary and final deaths, and in *A Song of Ice and Fire* the Faceless Men can simply be paid in order to end someone's life. Since all three series have been and/or are currently being adapted into big and small screen versions, it will be interesting to see if and how these representations of death also change through this process.

## Works Cited

- “At Dawn, We Plan!” *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 53. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 29 June 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nfcja-6hr24>.
- “The Chapter Closes.” *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 115. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 24 Oct. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrKcdyV0eq4>.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. U of Chicago P, 1995.
- “Duskmeadow.” *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 57. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 10 Aug. 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMBS\\_TC5R4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMBS_TC5R4).
- “The Family Business.” *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 47. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 18 May 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqU5pqKoH2c>.
- “The Fate-Touched.” *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 103. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 2 Aug. 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HOdxvQ\\_ydU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HOdxvQ_ydU).
- Gray, William. *Death and Fantasy: Essays on Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, and R.L. Stevenson*. Cambridge Scholars, 2009.
- Kokorski, Karin. “Death Is but the Next Great Adventure: Representations of Death and the Afterlife in Fantastic Literature for Children and Young Adults.” *Death Representations in Literature: Forms and Theories*, edited by Adriana Teodorescu, Cambridge Scholars, 2015, pp. 340–58.

- Kundu, Devaleena. "The Paradox of Mortality: Death and Perpetual Denial." *Death Representations in Literature: Forms and Theories*, edited by Adriana Teodorescu, Cambridge Scholars, 2015, pp. 8–23.
- Martin, George R.R. *A Clash of Kings*. Bantam Books, [1999]2011.  
---. *A Dance with Dragons*. HarperVoyager, [2011]2012.  
---. *A Feast for Crows*. Bantam Books, [2005]2011.  
---. *A Storm of Swords*. Bantam Books, [2000]2011.
- More, Maggie. "For Some D&D Players, Tabletop Roleplaying Is More Than Dice and Magic – It's a 'Sanity Saving' Mental Health Boost." *LX News*, 19 Sep. 2022, <https://www.lx.com/health/mental-health/for-some-dd-players-tabletop-roleplaying-is-more-than-dice-and-magic-its-a-sanity-saving-mental-health-boost/58032/>.
- Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. Puffin, [2005]2013.  
---. *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. Disney Hyperion Books, [2008]2009.  
---. *The Last Olympian*. Disney Hyperion Books, [2009]2011.  
---. *The Titan's Curse*. Disney Hyperion Books, [2007]2008.
- Sidhu, Premeet, and Marcus Carter. "Pivotal Play: Rethinking Meaningful Play in Games Through Death in *Dungeons & Dragons*." *Games and Culture*, vol. 16, no. 8, 2021, pp. 1044–64.
- Sterling, Grant C. "'The Gift of Death': Tolkien's Philosophy of Mortality." *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1997, pp. 16–18.
- "The Sunken Tomb." *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 44. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 27 Apr. 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHsA0R\\_GovU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHsA0R_GovU).
- "Trope Talk: Personifying Death." *Youtube*, uploaded by Overly Sarcastic Productions, 20 Oct. 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx4ByQpIMBE>.
- "Umbrasyll." *Critical Role: Vox Machina*, episode 55. *Youtube*, uploaded by Geek & Sundry, 21 July 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6ma5W\\_TSDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6ma5W_TSDE).
- Vinczeová, Barbora. "Death Has a Name: The Personification of Death in British Fantastic Fiction." *American & British Studies Annual*, vol. 13, 2020, pp. 67–81.