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A manuscript review

Title: **Dead or Maybe Not: A Collection of Essays on Dying and Death**

Author: Vesna Lopicić

Reviewer: Soňa Šnircová, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice

Vesna Lopicić's book is a thematic collection of previously published articles that discuss insights into the phenomenon of death presented in various works by Canadian, American and British authors. The book includes Introduction, ten essays divided into three main sections and Conclusion. The Introduction provides a lucid explanation of the author's interest in the complex network of ideas about the inevitable finality of human life, the liminal states between life and death, the explorations of the after-death continuum of energy and about the art of dying as an integral part of the art of living.

The three main sections titled *How to die?*; *What happens after dying?*; *Dead or maybe not: What does science say?*, present a rich variety of creative works and genres, novel, short story, drama, film and even a richer variety of theoretical frameworks used by the author to approach the theme of death in selected texts. The author's interdisciplinary erudition is impressive, including theoretical perspectives on the topics related to death from such diverse fields as feminism, theology, history, Kristevan psychoanalysis, Jungian psychology, philosophy, quantum physics, Buddhism, metamodernism, multiverse theories and many others. The choice of creative texts allows the author to treat the artistic representations of death both from historical and contemporary perspectives; combining new insights into Shakespearean moral dilemmas with the original insights into the most recent moral and ethical issues that arise from the catastrophic visions of the Earth's future and from the human attempts to escape the annihilation by interplanetary travel.

All articles provide intriguing ideas presented in a lucid and engaging style of writing and encourage the reader to immerse into the thought and contemplation about the issues that are often ignored, suppressed, or consciously avoided in the everyday existence saturated in materialistic lifestyles. The author does not only present fresh interpretations of such well-researched texts as Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* but does not hesitate to explore such under researched and taboo topics as the positive artistic representations of necrophilia. On the whole, the book does not only offer a high quality erudite discussion on the multiple issues and perspectives related to the artistic representations of death but also encourages the reader to actively engage with moral and ethical implications of the art of dying that, as the author of the collection suggests, should be more actively incorporated into the art of living.

Without a doubt, the book can be equally enriching and inspiring for mature scholars and young students, but the added quality of the book in the context of pedagogical process results from its ability to take students beyond the limits of the narrow world of a (literary, media or other studies) specialisation to the multiverse of ideas and fields that address the complex process of human living and dying. The added appeal of the book arises from the well-chosen examples of visual art's representations of death and from the Conclusion that, instead of imposing the author's 'finalisation' of her discussion on readers, gives voice to the artistic texts that encourage the readers to contemplate their own mortality.

On the basis of the above review I recommend Prof. Vesna Lopicić's book for publication having no doubts about its valuable contribution to the contemporary academic discussions about the meaning and quality of human life.

Košice 9.6. 2023



Assoc. Prof. Soňa Šnircová, PhD