

Univerzita Hradec Králové
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Diplomová práce

Univerzita Hradec Králové
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Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Postmoderní prvky v díle Neila Gaimana

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Autor: Eliška Ladmová
Studijní program: M7503 Učitelství pro základní školy
Studijní obor: Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – anglický jazyk a literatura
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Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jan Suk, Ph.D.
Oponent práce: prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

University of Hradec Králové
Faculty of Education
Department of English language and literature

Postmodern Elements in the Works of Neil Gaiman

Diploma thesis

Author: Eliška Ladmová
Study program: M7503 Učitelství pro základní školy
Field of study: Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – anglický jazyk a literatura
Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – dějepis
Supervisor: Mgr. Jan Suk, Ph.D.
Opponent: prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

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Autor: Eliška Ladmová

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Diplomová práce se zabývá dílem současného britského autora Neila Gaimana, zejména jeho literární a komiksovou tvorbou, která došla velkého uznání již v devadesátých letech minulého století. Cílem práce je prozkoumat vybraná Gaimanova díla v kontextu postmoderní literatury skrze analýzu využití různých žánrů, prvků sci-fi, fantasy a v neposlední řadě přístupu k mytologii.

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Oponent: prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne ...

.....

Podpis

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Děkuji za trpělivost, neutuchající podporu, cenné rady a připomínky vedoucímu mé diplomové práce Mgr. Janu Sukovi, Ph.D. Dále děkuji své rodině a přátelům, kteří při mně stáli v náročných chvílích a pomohli mi je překonat.

Anotace

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Klíčová slova: dětská literatura, fantasy, Neil Gaiman, postmoderní literatura, sci-fi

Annotation

LADMOVÁ, Eliška. *Postmodern Elements in the Works of Neil Gaiman*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education at University of Hradec Králové, 2021. 63 p. Diploma Thesis.

The diploma thesis is focused on the works of contemporary British writer Neil Gaiman, namely his literary and comic book works acknowledged as early as in the 1990s. The major aim of the thesis is to inquire Gaiman's work and determine its place within postmodern literature through analysis of various genres, sci-fi and fantasy features. Last, but not least, the approach to mythology and its elaboration used in selected works is discussed in the thesis.

Keywords: children's literature, fantasy, Neil Gaiman, postmodern literature, sci-fi

Abstrakt

Neil Gaiman je britský spisovatel, který zahájil svou literární kariéru ke konci 80. let 20. století. Prvními z jeho projektů byly kniha *Dobrá znamení (Good Omens)* – román, na němž spolupracoval s Terryem Pratchettem (známý především pro svou sérii knih o Zeměploše) – a *The Sandman*, komiksová série, na níž spolupracoval s dalšími umělci z komiksového světa.

V průběhu let, jak dále psal, tvořil a podílel se na televizní tvorbě nejen svých děl, ale například i *Pána času (Doctor Who)*, stával se čím dál víc populárním. Několik jeho děl bylo přeneseno na filmové plátno buď v podobě filmu nebo ve formě televizního seriálu. Byl natočen film *Hvězdný prach (Stardust)*, téměř hororový animovaný film *Koralína (Coraline)*, seriál *Neverwhere*, seriál *Lucifer* (na motivy postav z děl Neila Gaimana a dalších autorů), nebo seriál *Američtí bohové*. Nedávno bylo dokonce oznámeno plánované natáčení seriálu *The Sandman*.

Gaiman píše a tvoří pro většinu kategorií čtenářů, od malých dětí až po starší dospělé čtenáře. Kromě toho se jeho tvořivost neomezuje pouze na jeden či dva literární žánry. Je schopný napsat téměř cokoliv – pohádky (*Hansel and Gretel, Spáčka a vřeteno – The Sleeper and the Spindle*), fantasy a hororově laděné romány (*Koralína – Coraline, Oceán na konci ulice – The Ocean at the End of the Lane, Američtí bohové – American Gods, Kniha hřbitova – The Graveyard Book*), komiksy (*Sandman – The Sandman, Knihy magie – The Books of Magic*), mytologie a komedie (*Norská mytologie – Norse Mythology, Dobrá znamení – Good Omens*) nebo sci-fi (*Mezisvět – Interworld*), povídky (*Křehké věci – Fragile Things*), a další. Navíc ve mnoha Gaimanových dílech lze najít množství postmoderních prvků.

Cílem této diplomové práce je představit čtenáři knihy od Neila Gaimana a skrze analýzu některých z nich dokázat, že se v nich objevují postmoderní prvky a lze je tedy zařadit do postmoderní literatury, potažmo že lze považovat Gaimana za postmoderního autora.

První dvě části této práce krátce seznamují čtenáře s Neilem Gaimanem jakožto s autorem a také s pojmem postmodernismus/postmoderna. Ty jsou vystavěny na základě studia literatury, jež se zabývá Gaimanem a jeho literární tvorbou, a literatury související s postmodernismem, postmoderním uměním a literaturou. S použitím myšlenek

literárních teoretiků jako jsou Linda Hutcheon, Jacques Derrida Jean-François Lyotard a Ihab Hassan jsou v této části položeny základy pro analytickou část diplomové práce a jsou zde určeny a vyjmenovány postmoderní aspekty vyskytující se v literatuře na něž se práce soustředí.

Dále následují čtyři větší kapitoly. Každá z nich se zabývá jednou z knih nebo knižních sérií určených k analýze. Jedna po druhé rozebírají *Spáčku a vřeteno* (*The Sleeper and the Spindle*), *Americké bohy* (*American Gods*), *Dobrá znamení* (*Good Omens*) a *Sandmana* (*The Sandman*). Tyto konkrétní tituly byly pečlivě vybrány z množství Gaimanových textů tak, aby reprezentovaly co nejširší možnou škálu žánrů. *Spáčka a vřeteno* představuje převyprávěné pohádky. *Američtí bohové* jsou rozsáhlým road-trip románem s příběhem plným starobylých bohů a bytostí, které se snaží najít své místo v dnešním světě. *Dobrá znamení* jsou taktéž román, ale namísto několika různých mytologií (jako je tomu u *Amerických bohů*) se soustředí na téma Apokalypsy a křesťanské mytologie. *Sandman* je pravděpodobně nejkomplexnější ze všech zde rozebíraných děl. Jde o rozsáhlou komiksovou sérii. V příbězích o Sandmanovi se toho děje opravdu hodně a míchají se zde dohromady fantasy, sci-fi, historie, mytologie a další.

Jednotlivé kapitoly sestávají z krátkého úvodu do děje konkrétního titulu a následujících tří podkapitol, v nichž se nalézá rozbor z hlediska 1) Intertextuality a hybridizace (Intertextuality and Hybridization), 2) Parodie a pastiše (Parody and Pastiche) a 3) Výkonu a účasti (Performance and Participation). Všechny zmíněné postmoderní prvky jsou popsány a hlouběji rozebrány v první části práce. V závislosti na titulu jsou dále uvedeny příklady a zdůrazněny další důkazy těchto postmoderních charakteristik. Nicméně u některých děl nejsou tyto tři kategorie kompletně zastoupeny. V některých případech části jednotlivých kategorií chybí, což se promítlo i v názvech kapitol.

Ze čtyř analyzovaných děl pouze *Sandman* splňuje všechny tři kategorie postmoderních prvků, které byly zvoleny za středobod této práce. Ve *Spáčke a vřetenu* nenajdeme parodii a stejně tak bychom ji stěží hledali v *Amerických bozích*. Román *Američtí bohové* také postrádá hybridizaci kromě změní několika mytologií v příběhu. V *Dobrých znameních* hybridizace taktéž chybí a nenašli bychom v nich ani pastiš.

Intertextualita je prvkem, který je přítomný ve všech čtyřech rozebíraných titulech. Hybridizace se vyskytuje jen ve *Spáčce a vřetení* a v *Sandmanovi*. Parodie je taktéž obsažena v *Dobrych znameních* a v *Sandmanovi*. Pastiš je mimo *Spáčky a vřetene* a *Sandmana* i součástí *Amerických bohů*. Co se týká výkonu a účasti, jsou stejně jako intertextualita výrazné ve všech vybraných dílech.

Diplomová práce dokazuje, že v Gaimanových textech se objevuje velký počet postmoderních prvků, a proto by měl být Neil Gaiman na základě analýzy vybraných prací a předložených důkazů považován za postmoderního autora konce 20. a počátku 21. století. Nebo by při nejmenším Gaimanova díla zkoumaná v této práci měla být zařazena mezi postmoderní literaturu.

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Introduction

The main focus of the theoretical part of my thesis is to introduce the reader to Neil Gaiman, his work in general, and postmodernism in literature and the different approaches to and meanings of the term in literary theory. Then, based on the theoretical part, I aim at presenting and analysing chosen works of Neil Gaiman's in the light of several relevant postmodern features that I work with in my thesis and present evidence to prove that his works belong, if not completely then at least partially, to postmodernism.

I chose Gaiman's works as the topic of my thesis because Neil Gaiman became one of the most significant writers worldwide throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century and I thought that his writings deserved more attention. He has been writing since the late 1980s and his works gradually became more and more popular. Some of his early works are being re-published especially with Gaiman's books being adapted as films and TV series. To name the most prominent, it is the movie *Stardust*, *Coraline*, TV series *American Gods*, *Good Omens*, and in 2019 the plan to create *The Sandman* TV series was announced.

When the supposed connection of Gaiman's works with postmodernism was suggested by my supervisor, I looked into it more deeply and I began to see how relevant it really is. I went through many texts dealing with postmodernism and even though it was much more challenging than I anticipated, in the end I drew a picture of what it can be in literature and summarized what the most prominent elements of the postmodern are for the purposes of my thesis. At the same time, I chose several of Gaiman's works, carefully considering what I wanted to include in the thesis and what would be most effective in showing that Neil Gaiman writes in multiple different genres, and I wanted to present as many different books in my thesis as possible without making it too long and immoderate.

I decided to focus on *The Sleeper and the Spindle* as it represents the genre of fairy tales, *American Gods* which is an extensive and complex novel dealing with the gods from multiple pantheons and mythologies, *The Sandman* which represents graphic novels and comic books as an important part of the pop-culture, and *Good Omens* which is the result of two writers joining forces in creating a novel full of parody and good humour although it is dealing with supposedly serious matters. *The Sleeper and the Spindle* is the Snow White and the Sleeping Beauty fairy tales merged and reimagined. More than just fairy

tale for children (and quite dark at that) it is a book for readers of all ages. It is a story of a girl finding her own path in life, defying most of the traditional fairy-tale-writing musters.

American Gods and *The Sandman* are also dark and mysterious stories. *American Gods* is a road-trip novel, unlike *The Sandman* which is a comic book series. Both of them deal with gods and supernatural entities to a certain extent, greater than *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. What *The Sandman* has in common with *The Sleeper and the Spindle* is the graphical aspect of the work. Nevertheless, they are not the same. There is a lot of illustrations in *The Sleeper and the Spindle* accompanying the text of the tale, being a part of the story to such an extent that if we were to leave them out, it would result in a different version of the story altogether and lots of details would get lost. *The Sandman* is comics, and the text and illustrations are essential for telling the story. If we left out one or the other, it would not make sense for the most part and thus the illustrations, and their structure and placement, at the page are depending on the text and vice versa.

Lastly, there is *Good Omens* – a comical novel dealing with the Apocalypse and the many peripeties an angel and a demon, two unlikely friends, undergo in their efforts to prevent it from happening. This novel does not have just one author, it has two – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. With its multiple plotlines it resembles Pratchett's books from the *Discworld* series, or Gaiman's *Stardust*, for example. The book is meant for a wide range of audience, from little children to adults because there are many different levels of content, and each reader can find it relevant and interesting for a different reason.

Upon having chosen the object for my analysis, I went through the postmodern elements and centred on those which seemed most relevant and prominent in the books (intertextuality, hybridization, parody, pastiche, participation, performance) and created an axis on which I continued writing, with making several adjustments throughout the process. Some of the elements are more pronounced in some of the works, some of them less so, or they are missing completely. I decided to divide my thesis according to the books, being further divided into several subchapters – the introduction to the plotline of the book at the beginning with the individual chapters on the postmodern elements found in the book. I was writing the chapters while reading and re-reading the books in question, considering possible angles on how to approach them, studying, and researching the literature and other sources dealing with Neil Gaiman's writings. I analyse the books on

several different levels and through that I provide the evidence to support my thesis that Gaiman's works are connected to postmodernism. Lastly, I summarize my findings and draw conclusions on them.

1 Postmodernism in Literature

Explaining postmodernism might be much harder than it seems at first. The aim of this part of my thesis is not to find a unique definition of it, nor it is to come up with something completely new. My goal is to explore and foreshadow the origin of the phenomenon and elaborate on its meaning, especially when in terms of postmodernism in literature.

In doing so, I draw mainly on the work of a renowned Canadian University professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature (University of Toronto) Linda Hutcheon who specializes in postmodernist culture and critical theory. Several of her books were published and she participated in large, as well as smaller, projects together with hundreds of scholars.¹ Apart from that, I consider Ihab Hassan's point of view presented in one of his essays, and last, but not least, Jean François Lyotard's approach toward the postmodern.

1.1 Hutcheon, Lyotard and Derrida

There seems not to be any clear-cut definition of the term postmodernism which might make my task far easier. In fact, the points of view on what one should imagine under the expression go in their own separate ways in many cases. Even though, to be fair, some of them do share a portion of common ground, but many others less so. The truth is that many critics' perspectives vary considerably. That being said itself supports the statements of supposed multiplicity and complexity of cultural phenomena that might be counted in within the postmodern.²

I think it is this 'insider-outsider' position that sets the postmodern up for the contradictory responses it has evoked from a vast range of political perspectives. What frequently seems to happen is that one half of the paradox gets conveniently ignored: postmodernism becomes either totally complicitous or totally critical, either seriously compromised or polemically oppositional. This is why it has been accused of everything from reactionary nostalgia to radical revolution.³

¹ Linda Hutcheon [online]. Wondershop [retrieved 2020-11-20]. Available at: <http://individual.utoronto.ca/lindahutcheon/>.

² HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. In: MALPAS, Simon a Paul WAKE. *The Routledge Companion to the Critical Theory*. Routledge, 2006, p. 115. ISBN 978-0415332958.

³ HUTCHEON, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 201.; see also HUTCHEON, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 246.

The term postmodernism gained wider acceptance in general in the 1970s. Even though I focus chiefly on its importance in terms of literature, in the 1970s, at the birth of postmodernism, it was closely related to another cultural field, and that was architecture. Nevertheless, in the course of time, it gradually penetrated into other forms of art – among them (not surprisingly) literature.⁴ Regarding the postmodern art itself, there seems to be an impulse to postmodern art, “both to exploit and then to undermine the conventions upon which it depended”.⁵ Hutcheon says that postmodernism is “a phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges”.⁶ That can be basically anything, e. g. values, beliefs, politics, systems of society, and institutions, to name just a few of them. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* Hutcheon presents an insight into the world of postmodernism and postmodern art. She explains the theoretical aspects of postmodernism and promptly gives examples in and analyses postmodern works ranging from architecture through film and photography to literature.

Except for what has already been said, postmodernism can be also viewed “as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.”⁷ This statement expresses the very same ideas presented earlier, only in slightly different words.

Postmodernism, or postmodern, is often being mentioned in relations to poststructuralist theory which among other things deals with meaning in language, or human identity as well. According to Hutcheon, postmodern art, and postmodern theory, viewed as two separate matters, share concerns that overlap and one method that is conjoint to both of them, i. e. “looking for and exposing contradictions in what appeared a totally unproblematic, coherent and unified whole.”⁸

⁴ HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. 2006, p. 115.; HASSAN, Ihab. Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective. *Critical Inquiry*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986, **12**(3), 503-520.

⁵ HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. 2006, p. 115.

⁶ HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. 1988, p. 3.

⁷ AYLESWORTH, Gary. Postmodernism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. Stanford University, 2005 (2015), 30.9.2005 [cit. 2021-5-8]. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>.

⁸ HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. 1988, p. 116.

Moreover, in the 1970s Jean-François Lyotard's book *La Condition Postmoderne* (in translation *The Postmodern Condition*, published in 1984) was published, where Lyotard punctuates the role of language games and concepts from speech act theory in literature, science, and art since the end of the nineteenth century. Lyotard himself characterizes the text as a whole comprising two different language games. The two being a game of the philosopher and a game of the expert, where "the expert knows what he knows and what he doesn't know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions."⁹ Thanks to *La Condition Postmoderne*, the term "postmodern" found its place in philosophical vocabulary.

Additionally, in his other works Lyotard says that regarding the postmodern experience, individuals are exposed to a plurality of games and rules without a concept, or an idea, under which to unify them. Considering postmodernism, Lyotard accentuates the disharmony of imagination and reason, "i. e. the feeling of the sublime." According to him, the postmodern sublime takes form when there are many unrepresentables, by which the individual is affected, and there is no reference to reason as their uniting origin. As far as the relation between modern and postmodern goes, Lyotard explains that "a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unrepresentable."¹⁰

In relation to postmodernism, it is important to mention the theory of deconstruction which was coined by a French philosopher Jacques Derrida.¹¹ The theory of deconstruction says that "any seemingly coherent whole (self) carries within itself the deconstructable traces of its own contradictions (other)." Therefore, it should be possible to find these traces even in a literary piece of postmodern art the same way they might be discovered (in one form, or another) in a piece of architecture, for instance, or any other

⁹ AYLESWORTH, Gary. Postmodernism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. Stanford University, 2005 (2015), 30.9.2005 [cit. 2021-5-8]. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>.

¹⁰ See AYLESWORTH, Gary. Postmodernism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. Stanford University, 2005 (2015), 30.9.2005 [cit. 2021-5-8]. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>.

¹¹ See Jacques Derrida. *Encyclopædia Britannica* [online]. Encyclopædia Britannica 2020 - [retrieved 2020-11-20]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jacques-Derrida>.

product of a cultural field affected by postmodernism for that matter. After all, deconstruction can be demonstrated on the very term postmodern.¹²

Deconstruction in philosophy describes certain strategies for creating and reading texts. It is a form of analysis. Nowadays, deconstruction is often viewed as criticism of tradition and traditional modes of thinking. Through the analysis the subject in question is shown to be a “construction” of the text rather than something standing independently of the text.¹³

While discussing postmodern and postmodernism, it is only appropriate to consider Linda Hutcheon’s distinction between postmodern and postmodernity as well. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out what is really meant by these two expressions. Hutcheon says postmodernism is chiefly about cultural and artistic dimensions as such, whereas postmodernity has above all a social and a political context.¹⁴

As I already said, postmodernism does challenge various features of our world, our reality, but it does not deny them. It does not toss them away with either positive or negative commentary. It does not offer clear-cut answers, often it does not offer them at all. Instead, it raises and puts forward questions (much like Lyotard’s philosopher). Questioning of what is, or was, of that which postmodernism uses and abuses, seems to be a dominant characteristic of this notion.

Postmodernism refuses the concept of one singular truth and one singular goal. It strives for pluralistic approach to and perception of the world. Apart from that, it criticizes progress, refuses any superiority of western culture whatsoever, as well as the superiority of reason and rationality within the process of cognition. Rather, it stresses out intuition and emotions. Postmodernism in literature is a reaction to what has been going on in our world, what has changed and thus has shaped the form of the contemporary reality we

¹² See HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. 2006, p. 116-117.; Here Hutcheon demonstrates deconstruction of the word postmodernism by dividing it to words *post* and *modernism*, elaborating further on the origin of the expression and the meaning embedded in it.

¹³ AYLESWORTH, Gary. Postmodernism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. Stanford University, 2005 (2015), 30.9.2005 [cit. 2021-5-8]. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>; Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Deconstruction". Encyclopaedia Britannica, 20 Oct. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/deconstruction>. Accessed 9 May 2021.

¹⁴ See HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. 2006, p. 119.

find ourselves in. These changes are the notion that leads to merging of fantasy and reality, different timelines, and even mixing various styles, genres, and approaches in literature. It is also common for postmodern literature to interconnect the “high” and the “low” art, therefore not only comics, or sci-fi, but also pulp fiction (and many others) are being resurrected and brought to the front.¹⁵

Typically, the postmodern texts allow ambiguous interpretation to what is being read. On one hand, there is the adventurous, thrilling, or otherwise appealing plot of the story. On the other, there are various philosophical meanings and contemplations. Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* is a very good example of these two layers of the story overlapping. All of these are emphasized by a complex composition with multiple layers and multiple meanings. Intertextuality, another important aspect of postmodern writing, contributes to the above mentioned. It is essentially a mutual connection of literary works by means of quotations, hints or borrowing of other existing texts for the author's purposes.¹⁶ Except for intertextuality being present in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, it can be found in Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood*, for instance. The name of the novel itself refers to a song written and performed by The Beatles, and it is referred to several times throughout the book.

It is imperative to be aware of the fact that in postmodernism the literary work often fends for itself, existing independently of the author and it does not necessarily have to be the expression of the author's originality. The work has a life of its own, and the one who interprets it for themselves and fulfills its meaning is the reader. Sometimes the author even provides the reader with information of the process of writing and creating the book, thus bringing to life a sort of an intellectual game.¹⁷

Besides, Hutcheon stresses out the role of parody in postmodernism, and argues that it is not pure emptiness and pastiche (here Hutcheon mentions Fredric Jameson's point of view, which is basically opposite to hers).¹⁸ On the contrary, she sees it as embodiment of a postmodern paradox. Parody is also seen as an important part of the list of postmodern elements accentuated by Ihab Hassan. Many readers are familiar with Jane

¹⁵ Postmodernismus. *Unium: Vše pro studium* [online]. 2019, 2019 [cit. 2021-6-20]. Available at: <http://www.unium.cz/materialy/0/0/postmodernismus-m26310-p1.html>.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ See HUTCHEON, Linda. Postmodernism. 2006, p. 122.

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. But there is also a book that's a parody of the famous novel – it is called *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and it was written by Seth Grahame-Smith. As the name of the novel foreshadows, it is indeed the Jane Austen story with zombies in it, and quite humorous at that.

Another intriguing notion is that postmodern is not ahistorical and that in reality fiction and history are both discourses, i. e. ways of describing the world, that are created by humans. Throughout both of them we are capable of making sense of the past and the present.¹⁹ In order to describe reality, we need representations thanks to which the meaning and value can be conveyed to us and the world we live in. According to Hutcheon, the meaning is never considered single, authentic, pure, closed, and homogeneous. Instead, it is plural, hybrid, shifting, open and heterogeneous which inevitably evokes certain form of collaboration with the reader. Following what has been said so far, postmodernism is connected to the past. The so-called “presence of the past”²⁰ is often apparent in literary works. For instance, Dan Brown's novel *Angels and Demons* is a sort of an adventurous and detective story that deals with the consequences of the past, be it the past of the Church as an institution, the Illuminati, or the characters like Robert Langdon or the Camerlengo. The past is present throughout the whole story, even though some of the facts presented in the novel were made up by the author or shifted and shaped into a form suitable for his story.

What is more, postmodernism is drawn to pop culture, be it in terms of films, photography, or literature. Postmodernism's tendency to challenge that which is according to Hutcheon “used and abused” does include challenging the art forms and genres, and with that follows change in the target audience. A graphic novel is a good example of that. It does not have to be considered a part of high literature, but it is literature, nevertheless. A relatively new genre at that, genre which developed mainly during the second half of the twentieth century, targeting at various and wide range of audience. Over its existence, the graphic novel has evolved and changed over the years and with that also the intended perception by the reader (how it should be perceived by the reader) as well as the actual reader's perception (how the reader perceives the

¹⁹ HUTCHEON, Linda. *Postmodernism*. 2006, p. 122.

²⁰ HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 20.

graphic novel or its part in reality) changed.²¹ There are rules in literature – rules, that yet again are being challenged by postmodernism. Something seemingly as unimportant as the direction in which we read written text, for instance. In European society, you take a book, you turn pages from right to left, you read from left to right. That is what graphic novel can oppose, do it differently – it is not necessarily bound by those rules. Is it a given that everything has to be written and read according to these rules? Of course not. But it is a tradition, a convention. What are the limits of postmodern art? Where is the imaginary border of this storytelling without a particular order, for instance, for the author as well as for the reader, does it still represent what the author desires to convey and does the reader find meaning in it, maybe several various interpretations of possible meaning, or none at all? Even these questions may be the true aim of the author. To make the reader ask them, think about them, and try to seek the possible answers – again to make the reader an active participant of the storytelling, participating audience. In my thesis, I work with the graphic novel *The Sandman*, but I could give examples of other comic books by D. C. Comics, Marvel and others.

Next, I would like to discuss paradoxes and irony (Hutcheon also mentions them in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*).²² Paradoxes are one of many features of postmodern art, as well as irony. Hutcheon says about postmodernism “to include irony and play is never necessarily to exclude seriousness and purpose in postmodernist art”.²³ It means that even serious topics, issues, and purposeful notions have their place in postmodern writing. This is one of the beauties of postmodernism right there – the contradictoriness of the forms and aspects of postmodernism. But it is also one of the reasons contributing to the fact that it is so complicated to state clearly what postmodernism is.

Moving on from irony, another aspect of postmodernist writing is parody. Often postmodern art in general, but also postmodern literature more specifically, uses parody to achieve the desired effect on its audience. Hutcheon points out that parody is of vital importance to postmodern art:

The multiple, the heterogeneous, the different: this is the pluralizing rhetoric of postmodernism that rejects both the abstract category of single otherness created by

²¹ *On perception and meaning-making see HUTCHEON, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 80.*

²² HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 20.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

“coercive separation and unequal privileges” (Said 1985, 43) as well as by the more concrete relegation of the other to the role of “object for enthusiastic information-retrieval” (Spivak 1985, 245). The language of margins and borders marks a position of paradox: both inside and outside. Given this position, it is not surprising that the form that heterogeneity and difference often take in postmodern art is that of parody – the intertextual mode that is paradoxically an authorized transgression, for its ironic difference is set at the very heart of similarity (see Hutcheon 1985).²⁴

Apart from that, parody correlates with pastiche, though there is a difference between the two. Unlike pastiche, parody imitates other works in order to make fun of them, and even though the tone of pastiche is often humorous, its main aim is to pay respect to the works it imitates. Pastiche honours the genre, or the author, that it imitates. Neil Gaiman’s *Norse Mythology* is practically a pastiche of the Prose Edda and other sources of Scandinavian mythology that Gaiman used as a basis for his book about the Norse gods and mythical beings.

1.2 Ihab Hassan

While on a quest to find the answer to the question of the character of postmodernism, I encountered another rich source for my work. It is Ihab Hassan who was an American critic and writer, originally coming from Cairo. His main focus throughout his career was aimed at the realm of New Criticism and Postmodernism. He wrote fifteen books of essays and memoirs, and many short stories, which were published in several journals.²⁵

In the following text, I shortly ponder on Hassan’s essay called *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*. The reason for doing so are the elements, or “a catena of postmodern features” included in this particular piece of writing.²⁶

At the very beginning of the essay, Hassan brings forward the question “What is postmodernism?” and continues with an outline of this central topic. He names all the various areas of culture in which the influence and tendencies of postmodernism found fertile ground, without wonder, literature included.

However, the most intriguing part to my efforts is where the most distinct features of postmodernism, as seen by Hassan, are named. Together with listing eleven of them in

²⁴ HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 66.

²⁵ Ihab Hassan. In: *AGNI* [online]. Boston: Boston University 2018 - [retrieved 2020-11-20]. Available at: <https://agnionline.bu.edu/about/our-people/authors/ihab-hassan>.

²⁶ HASSAN, Ihab. *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*. 1986, p. 504.

total, there is a relatively short, but apt description, or definition, of each of them supplied with several examples.

In short, Ihab Hassan enumerates these eleven attributes of postmodernism: 1) indeterminacy, 2) fragmentation, 3) decanonization, 4) self-less-ness, depth-less-ness, 5) the unrepresentable, unrepresentable, 6) irony, 7) hybridization, 8) carnivalization, 9) performance, participation, 10) constructionism and 11) immanence.²⁷ I will go through all of them and explain what I understand by them.

First of all, Hassan mentions indeterminacy, which he describes as “all manner of ambiguities, ruptures and displacements affecting knowledge and society”.²⁸ Nothing is explicitly said, expressed as a certainty, and it is up to the reader to make sense of what they are presented with. For example, in Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist* the reader dives into a story of a young man who travels to fulfill his “Personal Legend”, trying to understand the “Soul of the World”. All in all, it is a very spiritually oriented book, and the writer does not definitely determine what exactly the reader should understand by it and how they should perceive and understand the story. Yet it is a very powerful story that affected millions of people worldwide, and maybe the indeterminacy of *The Alchemist* is exactly the reason why it has been so popular. Each reader’s point of view is different and influenced by different experience, therefore each reader puts something of themselves into the story they read. It is all up to the reader.

Fragmentation is the second feature presented in the essay. I do not agree with Hassan’s statement that “The postmodernist only disconnects; fragments are all he pretends to trust.”²⁹ I do not think that this must be necessarily true for all postmodern artists or authors. However, I give an example of fragmentation in a book by David Mitchell. It is called *The Cloud Atlas* and it is a book that tells several seemingly unrelated stories of characters that might, or might not, have something in common. To some readers the book can just give the impression of confusion, at the beginning as well as at the end. To others it might convey some deeper meaning if the reader sees whatever symbolical connections that are to be found in the book.

²⁷ For each of these, see HASSAN, Ihab. *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*. 1986, s. 504-508.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 504.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, s. 505.

When speaking about decanonization, Hassan understands it as revision and/or derision of all canons, all conventions of authority. We can decanonize culture, knowledge, and other constructs of human society. Hassan says that derision and revision of authority are versions of subversion, and that subversion can “take forms of minority movements or the feminization of culture, which also require decanonization.”³⁰

Next, Hassan elaborates on “Self-less-ness, Depth-less-ness”.³¹ He says that the postmodern art is often simulating erasing of self and consequently being flat, that is without depth.

Hassan’s fifth point on the list is “The Unpresentable, The Unrepresentable”.³² Postmodernism often puts forward “The Unpresentable, The Unrepresentable” in order to present itself. Here Hassan quotes J. Kristeva who explains that the unrepresentable is something “intolerable, unthinkable: the horrible, the abject”.³³

As I already talked about irony earlier in this chapter, and about parody which correlates with hybridization, I move on straight to carnivalization. Carnivalization, according to Hassan, includes all that was mentioned above, that is indeterminacy, fragmentation, decanonization, selflessness, irony, and hybridization in one whole.³⁴

Closing the list, it is important to talk about performance and participation. This chapter dealt with these only briefly so far, so I stress them out again. They are both connected with indeterminacy which by itself asks for participation: “gaps must be filled”:

The postmodern text, verbal or nonverbal, invites performance: it wants to be written, revised, answered, acted out. Indeed, so much of postmodern art calls itself performance, as it transgresses genres.³⁵

Performance and participation are followed by constructionism. In postmodernism, the writer often constructs, creates fiction, new worlds, and characters in it. They create new realities with “the growing intervention of mind in nature and culture”.³⁶

³⁰ HASSAN, Ihab. *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*. 1986, p. 505.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 506.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 507.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

Last, but not least, Hassan's essay deals with immanence. The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the word immanent as "existing or operating within" and "(of God) permanently pervading and sustaining the universe". Immanence is then listed as its derivative. Hassan says that immanence in postmodernism "refers, without a religious echo, to the growing capacity of mind to generalize itself through symbols" and that "Languages (...) reconstitute the universe (...) into signs of their own making, turning nature into culture and culture into an immanent semiotic system."³⁷

The list of elements of postmodernism that I went through in this chapter is important for my work as I mean to look for evidence of some of them in chosen writings of Neil Gaiman's in the analytical part of the thesis. Namely, I am targeting intertextuality, hybridization, parody, and pastiche (which I put into one category, because they are very similar), and performance and participation.

I focus on four works carefully selected in order for them to represent pieces of literature of a particular character within Gaiman's production. More specifically I break down *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, *American Gods*, *Good Omens*, and *The Sandman*.

³⁷ HASSAN, Ihab. *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*. 1986, p. 508.

2 Neil Gaiman and His Work

Neil Gaiman gradually established his rightful place chiefly within comic book and fantasy literature during the 1990s. Nowadays, his writings pervade the realm of world literature. He is very well known in English-speaking countries and slowly, but gradually, his works become popular in the Czech book market as well.

It is not a simple endeavour to say directly why Gaiman's stories are so popular – there is usually that special something, which only a few authors are capable of embedding into their writing, that makes the reader dive into the storyline, a hint of a different reality; feeling all the various emotions that, in the end, make one long for more and come back repeatedly to the stories and books one has already devoured once.

In an interview for a Slovak magazine about books conducted by Martin Kasarda³⁸, Gaiman says that even though the fantastic stories tell about non-existent people and creatures living in a made-up world, these characters still have feelings, relationships, and moods similar to the ones people have in the real world. He describes it as a mirror of our world. Everything in the work of fiction must be believable – the reader must believe it as if it were real and true.

Personally, if I consider that and think about the stories I have read by Neil Gaiman, I must agree – what he suggested in the interview is applied to many of his writings and the reader can see it.

When asked what the differences are (if any) working on a book versus working on a graphic novel,³⁹ he does admit that there are differences, but all in all, it is strangely the same – he makes things up and prefers to make things up above anything else. That seems to be *the it* that drives him to continue writing and creating in a manner that attracts more and more readers worldwide.

Moreover, the protagonists and other characters of Gaiman's stories are not the typically good and perfect heroes that appeal to a great number of readers even nowadays. On the contrary – his characters are often flawed; they make mistakes as well as we do in our everyday lives, and they change and evolve – they often undergo a certain

³⁸ KASARDA, Martin. Neil Gaiman: Hrdinovia nemôžu byť dokonalí. Magazín o knihách, October 2019, vol. 28, no. 10, pp. 1 and 6.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

kind of metamorphosis as the storyline they figure in unfolds. In my opinion, this is one of the major attributes of his work that make the readers relate to them, enjoy reading about them and finally come back for more.

As to what genres can be found in Neil Gaiman's wide range of works, quite an extensive list could be made. Lots of them can be enlisted to fantasy – and it is no coincidence that fantasy is also Gaiman's favourite genre. Apart from that, sci-fi, horror, graphic novels, books for children and not-so-classical retellings of classical fairy tales largely figure in the myriad of his creations. Not only is he a successful literary author but also a film and TV series screenwriter, not being a stranger to taking a part as an actor.

Furthermore, his readers' base is quite extensive and cross-sectional, because Neil Gaiman writes stories for children, young readers, and adults.⁴⁰ Some of them were made into films or television shows where he usually takes an active part in the final production.

Gaiman's literary pieces and movies or TV series based on them often share two features – it is humour and horror. The stories frequently comprise one or the other, sometimes both, which might be yet one more characteristic drawing readers' attention towards Gaiman's works.

⁴⁰ Neil's Work. In: Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers, [retrieved 2020-09-03]. Available at: neilgaiman.com/works/.

3 The Sleeper and the Spindle

Every Neil Gaiman reader can confirm that in case of fairy-tale retellings, one should not expect any “Once upon a time...” openings, nor “...and they lived happily ever after.” closings. Gaiman’s fairy-tale stories are retellings, yes, but not in the traditional sense.

As mentioned before, he enjoys making things up. In this particular case, he makes up a lot – different points of view on the stories and the roles of the main characters. Switching the heroes for the villains and vice versa or adding a completely unexpected plot twist into the structure of classical fairy-tales is typical of Gaiman’s writing.

In the following part of my thesis, I will elaborate on the fairy-tale retelling *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. This book is a result of Neil Gaiman’s cooperation with famous illustrators. *The Sleeper and the Spindle* book was illustrated by Chris Riddell, an artist who worked also on *Coraline*, *The Graveyard Book* or *Art Matters!*. Another fairy tale retelling *Snow, Glass, Apples* is a properly crafted achievement of Colleen Doran, a writer and cartoonist who took part in creation of Vertigo’s *Sandman* or *Lucifer*, but in comparison to *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, it is a comic book, which the latter is not.

The Sleeper and the Spindle is the story of a queen who does not want to get married just yet. Instead, she sets out for an adventure, accompanied by three dwarfs, to a neighbouring kingdom that has been under a wicked sleeping spell for some time. The queen is the hero of the story whose aim is to save the kingdom and the sleeper from the curse. In the end, she succeeds but everything has its cost as the queen is forced to realize under the circumstances.

3.1 Intertextuality and Hybridization

The Sleeper and the Spindle is a fairy-tale hybrid retelling of Neil Gaiman’s. He managed to intertwine two different fairy tales together to create a completely new story with a surprising twist. These fairy tales being the story of *Snow White* (though in retrospective and not introduced directly) and the story of *Sleeping Beauty*. Together with many others, such stories were originally told to adults and comprised many horror

features. Then they were adjusted numerous times in order to be more suitable for younger audiences.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Neil Gaiman takes a step back in that matter and gives life to a grim, horror-like retelling of one of the most popular fairy tales of all times. This kind of story is perhaps more suitable for young adults and adult readers than for children.

Though it is a novel version of a classical tale, the reader should not expect a prince in shining armour galloping on his horse to a rescue of a beautiful maid cursed to sleep for eternity. The hero of the fairy tale is a queen whose name is not once mentioned throughout the story. After all, "The queen had a name, but nowadays people only ever called her Your Majesty. Names are in short supply in this telling."⁴²

But thanks to bits and pieces scattered throughout the whole book, one can deduce that the heroine is Snow White. First, it is suggested by the fact that the dwarfs are her companions. But it is a little strange that there are only three of them and the reader does not learn why, there is not even a suggestion of a higher number of dwarfs than just three.

Second, one of the dwarfs mentions that the queen also slept for a year and later in the story it is said that the queen lived with them for some time.⁴³ That is yet one more piece of evidence in favour of the queen being Snow White.

Later on, when walking through the forest, the queen experiences visions of her dead father, stepmother and mother. In this section the influence of Brothers Grimm's Snow White is quite clear.⁴⁴ Moreover, an apple can be seen in the hand of Snow White's stepmother in the illustration accompanying this part of the tale.⁴⁵

⁴¹ POKRIVČÁKOVÁ, Silvia. *Anglophone Literature for Children and Juvenile Readers*. University of Trnava, 2018, p. 17.; COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 133, 137.

⁴² GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 23.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 20 a 23.

⁴⁴ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 133.

⁴⁵ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 41.

As far as *Sleeping Beauty* (compared to Charles Perault's version)⁴⁶ is concerned, the plot twist of Gaiman's version is unexpected.⁴⁷ Almost till the last moment, the reader does not get many clear clues, and it all starts to make sense in one of the last pages of the book. From the classical story the true love's kiss is known to be the means of breaking any curse. Normally the prince rescues the princess by kissing her – in case of Neil Gaiman's *The Sleeper and the Spindle* the prince is substituted by brave queen Snow White who, in an attempt to help the neighbouring kingdom and to save her own in the process, kisses the sleeper.

But the sleeper is a creature of darkness, despite her youth and beauty she is the actual villain of the tale. This is where Gaiman again defies the rules of the fairy tale characters' features in a way - the beautiful sleeper was evil, whilst the ugly old woman was a good person who took care of others.⁴⁸ In the classic fairy tales, the appearance usually mirrors the inner qualities of the character – such as evil witches being ugly and hunched versus good princesses being beautiful and brave princes charming.

3.2 Parody and Pastiche

The Sleeper and the Spindle is not a parody, but it is a kind of pastiche. On one hand, it gives us a story of the queen (Snow White) after her nearly happily-ever-after. The reader gets to know what happens next. On the other hand, there is the story of a sleeping beauty that can be woken up only by a kiss. Thus, Gaiman honours the fairy-tale genre and at the same time gives the story an unorthodox twist and a darker tone, while creating a unique piece of literature.

The story starts at the point when the queen (Snow White) has already been saved by the handsome prince and she is getting ready for her wedding day. Strangely enough, she is not very enthusiastic about becoming a wife, as one might suspect on the basis of the original Snow-White story, or any well-known fairy tale princess on that matter. The

⁴⁶ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 137.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁴⁸ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 33 and 49.

queen wakes up in her bed chamber and her expression in the two-page illustration seems to be miserable and even a little numb.⁴⁹

The wedding dress on a stand can be seen next to the bed in one part of the room. In the other, however, a discarded armour and a sword lay on the ground. The armour is supposedly a reminder of the queen's past. The wedding dress, on the other hand, a foreboding of her future. A future that she did not choose herself.

It seemed both unlikely and extremely final. She wondered how she would feel to be a married woman. It would be the end of her life, she decided, if life was a time of choices. In a week from now, she would have no choices.⁵⁰

There is a strange feeling of surrender to one's fate in these words. The princess has been saved, she became the queen, and she is supposed to marry. In the picture on the following page, the queen brushes her hair with an expression of unhappiness and quiet resignation in her face. Her fate was decided by tradition, by someone else. She sees the marriage as "constricting".⁵¹

There is no wonder that the queen seizes the opportunity of postponing the planned wedding in order to investigate and perhaps to do something about the curse spreading in the neighbouring kingdom. Instead of wearing the wedding dress, the queen puts on her armour and sets for a journey to an unknown adventure.⁵²

As one can see, the queen's character steps out of the bubble of traditional fairy-tale heroines. Coste points out that "The infantilization and feminization of the prince underscore Snow White's queerness, while the emphasis on her control of her kingdom reinforces the subversion of the gender norms that accompany traditional fairy tales."⁵³ Even though she seems to have given up at first, in the end she does not submit to the

⁴⁹ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 12, 13.

⁵⁰ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p.14.

⁵¹ RUSSELL, Danielle. Damsels in Deep Rest No More: The Coalescence of Light and Dark in *Blueberry Girl, The Wolves in the Walls, and The Sleeper and the Spindle*. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 179.

⁵² See both the text and the illustration: GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 21.

⁵³ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 138.

patriarchal concept of marriage and living happily ever after (which she does not even believe in) and instead she sets out to make her story, to do what she feels is right, thus breaking all the rules of female characters' role that they usually have. This is among others one of the reasons why Coste counts Gaiman among "feminist fairy-tale writers, a complicated, postmodern cohort itself".⁵⁴ Besides, his characters much like the characters of feminist writers in the 1970 "[allow] the heroines control over their own sexuality and marital choices".⁵⁵ The queen in *The Sleeper and the Spindle* decides to act upon her own desires and wishes, and thus breaks the convention of becoming a wife of the prince that saved her.

She is the one to go on a journey to investigate what happened to the neighbouring kingdom and to break the curse, eventually. She is also the one who wakes up the sleeper with a kiss, so here "Riddel and Gaiman break from the heterosexual narrative."⁵⁶ The kiss itself is depicted on pages 50 and 51, as well as on the cover of the actual book: "She lowered her face to the sleeping woman's. She touched the pink lips to her own carmine lips and she kissed the sleeping girl long and hard."⁵⁷

There is a juxtaposition between the illustrations and the description of the kiss in the text. While the text describes the kiss as quite deep and passionate, the illustration shows it as soft and "chaste".⁵⁸ This is an example of the ambiguity that relates to postmodern writing. Moreover, Russell puts kissing the sleeping girl in contrast to the queen kissing the prince who she is supposed to marry, and rightfully so. The farewell kisses seem inconsequential and petty in comparison to the kiss the queen shares with

⁵⁴ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 130.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ RUSSELL, Danielle. Damsels in Deep Rest No More: The Coalescence of Light and Dark in *Blueberry Girl, The Wolves in the Walls, and The Sleeper and the Spindle*. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 178.

⁵⁷ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 49.

⁵⁸ RUSSELL, Danielle. Damsels in Deep Rest No More: The Coalescence of Light and Dark in *Blueberry Girl, The Wolves in the Walls, and The Sleeper and the Spindle*. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 178.

the sleeping girl. It also “opens a space for an alternative to the heterosexual norm which dominates in children’s literature.”⁵⁹

When the sleeping girl awakens, the queen gradually gets to know the truth of what happened so many years ago and who the sleeper and the old woman she found in the tower, really are, and concludes: “The queen looked at the girl, and saw what she was searching for: the same look that she had seen in her stepmother’s eyes, and she knew what manner of creature this girl was.”⁶⁰ There is a direct connection to the queen’s past within the text. She realizes what kind of creature she encountered based on her experience with her stepmother in the past. It is the unexpected twist in the plot that ultimately changes the whole reader’s view on the story they have just read. After all, “the postmodern fairy tale borrows from generic conventions in folklore and the literary fairy tale alike, subverting and twisting and transforming traditional tales.”⁶¹

Here Gaiman relies on the reader’s knowledge of the traditional fairy tales (Snow White, Sleeping Beauty) and builds his version of the story upon that knowledge, as many postmodern fairy tale writers do.⁶² Without the foreknowledge of the original tales, the author’s attempt to present a completely new version of the story would be in vain, and it would not reach the intentional effect on the audience. It makes them doubt, reconsider, ponder on the presented point of view.

The story closes to the end with the old woman, formerly a princess of the neighbouring kingdom, taking the situation in her own hands and making the decision to stand up to her oppressor and kill her with the spindle. The creature that stole her youth and beauty during her long sleep changes into a pile of dust and bones, so the wicked girl is vanquished. But there is no katharsis in the old woman gaining her youth and beauty again, that is what Gaiman and Riddell deny to the reader. There is no traditional happy ending for the victim of the evil machinations. Instead, we can see the old woman lying in

⁵⁹ RUSSELL, Danielle. Damsels in Deep Rest No More: The Coalescence of Light and Dark in *Blueberry Girl, The Wolves in the Walls, and The Sleeper and the Spindle*. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 179-180.

⁶⁰ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, s. 54.

⁶¹ COSTE, Jill. Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman's Feminist Fairy Tales. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, p. 129-130.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 130.

her bed (on page 64 and 65) with a peaceful expression in her face, resting and content, with white roses blooming on the bedpost.

The Queen then destroys the spindle, burns it and with the help of the dwarves buries its remains under a tree. In the last few pictures of the book, there are no roses, or skulls to be seen, as if suggesting that thanks to the confrontation with the wicked creature, the queen also confronted her fears and somehow dealt with the demons of her own past as well. Now, she is herself. Not purely good, not even bad, but something in the middle, within the “grey zone” as people mostly are, and that is presented in the picture on page 67. There is a mighty big tree in the centre of the picture and the queen is sitting under it, her eyes fixed in front of her, supposedly at the reader. Only a girl, a woman sitting under a tree.

Not even the queen is provided with a traditional fairy tale ending and walking towards the sunset at the end of the story. It rejects such finality. The very last words of the book are: “They walked to the east, all four of them, away from the sunset and the lands they knew, and into the night.”⁶³ They walk from the familiar and known towards an unknown adventure and life yet undiscovered, as the last illustration suggests by showing the figures of the queen and the dwarfs looking up to the sky at a dragon-like creature symbolizing something new to come.⁶⁴ The reader does not know whether the queen comes back to her fiancé and marries him to live up to the promise she made at the beginning of the tale. That stays undetermined.

It is a postmodern fairy tale which brings together two original stories, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, but presents them in a completely new light and surprises with the unconventional approach towards heroes and villains of the story. Lastly, it makes the reader an active participant, who needs to perform while reading in order to make the most of the story that is being presented to them. They must employ their previous knowledge of the classical tales and only then by drawing on it can they understand and truly experience the story being told.

⁶³ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

3.3 Performance and Participation

In contrast to Gaiman's *Snow, Glass, Apples, The Sleeper and the Spindle* is not a graphic novel. Nevertheless, the illustrations accompanying the text tell the Neil Gaiman's version of the Sleeping Beauty in a different light than if they were not a part of the book. Some parts of the story are even told only by the pictures, not being mentioned in the text at all. Thus, making it a rare piece of literature in the world of fantasy genre.

The illustrations are crucial also for another significant reason – there is a lot of symbolics hidden in them for those who are willing to search for it. If seen separately, the reader would most likely have difficulties distinguishing the various symbols within the particular pictures. That is because they are often interconnected, so that they make sense only if put together.

For instance, the reader is not given any explanation or reason whatsoever for the skulls decorating the queen's bed and armour in the text.⁶⁵ But they might signalize something dark residing deep in the queen's very nature. Something that she was confronted with in her life (the evil stepmother), and which changed her forever. However, not even the pictures themselves are self-explanatory in all cases, but they often give at least a hint of what the reader should pay attention to in order to discover any hidden meaning. This omitting of certain parts of the story in the text strongly resembles *the iceberg theory*, or *the theory of omission*. *The iceberg theory* is a style of writing created and used by Ernest Hemingway. It is called *the iceberg theory* because "only a small part of an iceberg is visible above water", the same way Hemingway's writing gave away only a part of everything what was actually going on.⁶⁶ The omitted part of the story might be revealed to the reader later, or it does not have to be revealed at all. In that case, the reader is supposed to figure out that which has been omitted from what the author decided to share with them. It is supposed to be the strongest part of the story, which means that revealing it later, or leaving the reader to find it for themselves should have a very strong effect for the unfolding of the storyline. I believe that it was Gaiman's intention to leave out certain information about the queen and her story, so that the reader can figure out

⁶⁵ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 12, 13, 22, 24 and 41.

⁶⁶ The Iceberg Theory. *Private Security Professionals of America* [online]. 2021 [cit. 2021-04-09]. Available at: <https://www.myspsa.org/article/more/the-iceberg-theory>.

for themselves with the hints left in the form of the book's illustrations using their imagination and perhaps any previous knowledge that might be related to it.

Moreover, the pictures give us a certain kind of subtext to work with within the storyline and have the potential of leaving the reader with an even more magnified impression of the literary work. While at the same time nothing is being served directly which leaves enough space for speculation and reforming one's opinion, to use their imagination freely.

Those skulls figuring in the queen's wardrobe suggest that there is something mysteriously dark, scary, maybe even deadly about her – something just out of reach that is impossible to fully grasp.

Furthermore, the reader finds the motive of skulls in pictures with the spindle and the bed occupied by the sleeper – covering mainly the head of the bed and the bedsheets.⁶⁷ There is no doubt that these are related to the at first seemingly innocent young girl sleeping there. But they are a warning that something is not right – suggesting something evil and rotten.

On the other hand, the reader is presented with drawings of roses, in particular white roses. There is a bloom of white rose weaved into the queen's raven-black hair right before she kisses the sleeper⁶⁸ – the white rose being possibly a sign of hope, something pure and good. The same white rose falls apart in another picture right after the sleeper is revealed as an evil being of ancient times.⁶⁹ That might foreshadow the loss of an ideal the queen held setting off for the quest, loss of hope perhaps.

After the dark creature was defeated by the old woman who turned out to be the princess, white-rose blooms appear at the head of the bed and on the bedsheets once the princess lies in her bed again.⁷⁰ Perhaps signifying her strength and goodness of her character, or the victory of good over the evil.

The fact that after the death of the ancient creature there are no more skulls visible in the pictures in the rest of the book suggests a symbolical change, a shift between the

⁶⁷ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 39, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, 60 and 63.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 50, and 51.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

situation the old woman and the kingdom were in *then* and *now*.⁷¹ Let us consider for a moment that it is intentional. Although the queen lost her white-rose blossom at one point, she somehow also got rid of the darkness she had had inside herself, too, the darkness represented by the picturing of the skulls. Or she did not get rid of it entirely, but rather reached a certain balance of good and bad in life. Balance that was further empowered by her decision, her choice, not to get married just yet at the end of the tale.

Such an unusual approach to storytelling is not found very often even in today's literature. The author makes the text only a part of the whole piece he created together with the illustrator – and I do not mean that as the cooperation that is necessary for creating a graphic novel. Because *it is not* a graphic novel. At least not in the traditional sense of the word. This approach to storytelling is something else. The other part of *The Sleeper and The Spindle* is embedded within the illustrations that accompany the text, and perhaps, vice versa. The written part of the story would not be complete without the visuals. The visual part would not be complete without the written one in the same way. It is quite unique and considerably effective in terms of invaluable enriching the actual story of the book by deeper meaning. Meaning that can differ from reader to reader. In this case the result of the author's and the illustrator's work gives us a direction in which we should walk, but we are not given precise instruction which path to choose, metaphorically speaking. The reader gets the text, and the illustrations, but the whole meaning-making of the story and its individual aspects depend on the reader themselves. The reader is both in this case – member of the audience, and the one who actually performs (or chooses not to perform) in order to give the clues presented to them deeper purpose, employ any previous knowledge of symbols shown in the story and draw conclusions upon these, possibly using their imagination.

⁷¹ GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014, p. 66, 67 and 69.

4 American Gods

The story of *American Gods* begins with the protagonist being locked up in prison. A man that wants to come back home to his wife and start with a clean slate after doing his time. Shadow spends days reading and learning coin tricks in order to kill time in prison. However, he is released from the prison earlier than expected due to an unforeseen unfortunate event – the death of his wife Laura. On his way home, he encounters a mysterious man who calls himself Wednesday and offers Shadow a job. Shadow refuses the offer because he thinks that he already has a job waiting for him at home, in his friend Robbie's fitness centre. When he finally arrives home, he learns that there is no place for him anymore since his deceased wife had an affair with Robbie and that both of them died in a car accident.

Later on, Shadow changes his mind, decides to work for Wednesday and accepts his offer. Soon, Shadow discovers that his wife is not dead anymore – a coin which Shadow got from a leprechaun called Mad Sweeney reanimated her again but did not bring her fully back to life. And this is not the only strange thing that appears in Shadow's life since he started working for Mr Wednesday. Even though it is hard for him to believe it at first, he gradually realizes that gods and supernatural beings truly exist (though he still has doubts about certain thing later in the story). Shadow dreams strange dreams and he is unwillingly thrown into what seems to be a war between the old and the new gods. He travels the States with Wednesday (an incarnation of Odin) who recruits other gods (such as Czernobog, the three Zoryas, Easter, Anansi, Thoth, Anubis, and so on) to fight in the final battle on his side.

During their road trip across America, they are sucked into skirmishes with the new gods, resulting in Wednesday's death. Moreover, Shadow's former cell-mate Low Key Lyesmith takes the new gods' side, being the god of lies and mischief (Loki) in reality. Shadow decides to keep vigil for dead Wednesday, as it was a part of their initial agreement when Shadow first started working for him. Thanks to spending several days bound to an ash tree without drink or food, he walks the underworld, and he learns the truth about himself and about the assumed war between the gods. Shadow finds out that he is Odin's son and that there is no actual war going on. Only an elaborated scheme of Odin and Loki's to get more power for themselves. Shadow dies on the ash tree, but later

he comes back to the world of the living again and he prevents the slaughter of the gods from happening.

American Gods is an expansive road-trip novel that includes characters of gods from several pantheons of various world religions and their side-plotlines, as well as stories of not only descendants of the people who came to America and brought their gods with them. It is a funny, dark, and mysterious story of the gods of old times and the gods and powers that move our modern world, both trying to find their place in space and time that is not friendly to them, and they are no longer desirable there.

4.1 Intertextuality

Three different levels of intertextuality can be found in *American Gods*. Firstly, there are quotations of poems, songs, and other literary pieces of art at the beginning of each chapter in the book. Secondly, there are references to songs, movies and books present in the text (the story) of the book itself. And thirdly, there are made up stories presented as histories in Mr Ibis's (Thoth's) journal, which is fictional in our reality, but it exists in and for the sake of the novel. Moreover, the basis of some of those stories lay in folklore.

Regarding the first category of intertextuality, the particular pieces also differ from one another. For instance, at the beginning of Chapter One we read an extract from *The American Joe Miller's Jest Book*: "The boundaries of our country, sir? Why sir, onto the north we are bounded by the Aurora Borealis, on the east we are bounded by the rising sun, on the south we are bounded by the procession of the Equinoxes, and on the west by the Day of Judgement."⁷²

The name of the source itself gives out the genre of this short extract – it is part of a jest, a short anecdote, or a joke. This and the other quotations at the beginning of each chapter are usually connected to the content of the chapter on some level. In this case I believe that the author wanted to express the multiplicity of values and beliefs in different parts of the world and in different cultures. And it is also related to this chapter where Shadow has a bad feeling but cannot really put a finger on its cause, his wife dies, he is

⁷² GAIMAN, Neil. *American Gods*. London: HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP, 2017, p. 3.

released from prison and thrown into the hands of Odin (Mr Wednesday), not knowing what to think of this new world, new reality he finds himself in.

In Chapter Three, we are given a saying: “Every hour wounds. The last one kills.” This one is related to Shadow’s wife, Laura. Shadow meets Laura even though it goes against his common sense, because she is supposed to be dead and buried. This particular saying deals with the topic of life and death, so it is only appropriate for it to be at the beginning of the chapter where we meet the living-dead Laura.⁷³

Next, Chapter Four is introduced by a stanza of a song:

Let the Midnight Special
Shine its light on me
Let the Midnight Special
Shine its ever-lovin’ light on me

– *The Midnight Special, traditional*⁷⁴

This is a song that has been performed by various artists (such as Creedence Clearwater Revival) and adapted in different versions, but it is originally a folk song that was presumably sung by prisoners in the American South.⁷⁵ In Chapter Four, Wednesday and Shadow go to Chicago to visit Zorya Utrennyaya, Zorya Vechernyaya, Zorya Polnochnyaya and Czernobog. Wednesday wants to persuade Czernobog to join him in the fight. Thanks to Shadow, Czernobog promises to come with them. At the very end of the chapter, Wednesday tells Shadow that they are going to rob a bank.⁷⁶ The extract from the song suggests that they attempt to rob a bank, to commit a crime for which they could eventually get caught and imprisoned. It is also a sort of a pre-emption of the next chapter where they really are robbing a bank together.

This example of a song in *American Gods* overlaps into the second category of intertextuality. Songs are, on several occasions, mentioned within the text, most likely to underscore the mood of a particular scene of the story. Some more examples follow:

1 Shadow pushed open the door, back into the bar. The air was blue with smoke, and the Dixie Cups were on the juke box singing ‘Iko Iko’. Shadow smiled, slightly, in recognition

⁷³ GAIMAN, Neil. *American Gods*. London: HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP, 2017, p. 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

⁷⁵ Midnight Special (song). *Wikipedia* [online]. 2021 [cit. 2021-6-20]. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midnight_Special_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midnight_Special_(song)).

⁷⁶ GAIMAN, Neil. *American Gods*. London: HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP, 2017, p. 101.

of the old children's song. The barman pointed to the table in the corner. There was a bowl of chili and a burger at one side of the table, a rare steak and a bowl of fries laid in the place across from it.

Look at my King all dressed in Red,

Iko Iko all day,

I bet you five dollars he'll kill you dead,

Joekamo-feena-nay⁷⁷

2 The rhythm of the *Blue Danube* waltz rippled and rang and sang in his head, the lights of a thousand chandeliers glinted and prised, and for a heartbeat Shadow was a child again, and all it took to make him happy was to ride the carousel: he stayed perfectly still, riding his eagle-tiger at the center of everything, and the world revolved around him.⁷⁸

3 An old song his mother had loved, *Walking in the Winter Wonderland*, began to run through his head, and he hummed it through closed lips, kept pace to it as he walked.⁷⁹

Apart from that, references to films and TV shows also give the reader a sense of familiarity and relatability (maybe even more than songs). These make the story even more realistic to the audience and that is one of the reasons why Gaiman's writing is so appealing. It gives the sense of relatability towards the characters and the events that take place in the story.

1 *Flip*: an episode of *M * A * S * H* ended and a *Dick Van Dyke* episode began.⁸⁰

2 The picture dissolved into phosphor-dot buzz. When it came back, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* had, inexplicably, become *I love Lucy*.⁸¹

On the other hand, there are references that the reader might not understand simply because they do not have previous knowledge of the literary pieces, songs or shows. Then the reader must make a choice: either they will conduct their own little research and read about the works, listen to the songs or watch the shows, or they will decide to ignore them and move on without getting any chance of knowing why the author chose this particular song in that particular scene, for example. I often searched for

⁷⁷ GAIMAN, Neil. *American Gods*. London: HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP, 2017, p.36.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p.141.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 284.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p.188.

additional information myself while reading the book. I talk more about this approach to reading Gaiman's *American Gods* in the chapter on performance and participation.

Lastly, there are extracts from Mr Ibis' (Thoth's) journal that describe the events that lead to the Coming to America, basically telling about how the gods from other lands came to be in America. The first extract describes a story of the arrival of the vikings who brought the All-Father and other gods with them tens of years before Leif Erikson.⁸² The second extract tells a story of a maid who brought the faerie folk to America in her mind.⁸³ The third story introduces the fate of presumably magical twins who were separated as little children and forced to live as slaves, who also brought their gods to America with them.⁸⁴ The last extract tells a tale of a mammoth god that was brought by his people to America, but was eventually entirely forgotten because no one who would remember and believe in him remained there.⁸⁵

These parts of the Thoth's journal are made up by the author of the book, so it is a book within a book, and I perceive that as a twisted or even reversed intertextuality. Nevertheless, the characterization of gods in these tales and in the main plotline of *American Gods* all have a basis in orally passed tales, legends and myths. Again, they make the fictional storyline of *American Gods* even more real and believable to the reader, as many people grow up listening to or reading various folktales, myths and legends of one kind or another, and are familiar with them.

4.2 Pastiche

There is a great amount of pastiche to be found in *American Gods*, because the main characters themselves are based on different mythologies and folktales. Characters from Gaiman's story are new incarnations of the gods, so to speak. They are given a different new setting, a different new life and place in the modern world, they are generally given a new story.

The protagonist, Shadow, is Wednesday's (Odin's, Wotan's, Grimnir's, All-Father's) son. He himself is considered by some to be parallel to Balder, Odin's son who was killed by a twig of mistletoe, although there are only a few hints in the actual novel to support

⁸² GAIMAN, Neil. *American Gods*. London: HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP, 2017, p. 75-78.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 103-113.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 345-363.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 445-451.

that claim of Shadow's identity as Balder. The link of Shadow to Balder is made clear in an *American Gods* novella called *The Monarch of the Glenn*.⁸⁶

This is yet another clearcut connection to the Norse mythology, together with the characters of Mr World (Loki) and Mr Wednesday (Odin). But it is not only Norse mythology being prominent in this road-trip novel. There is an obvious "abundant use of Slavonic, Egyptian, and African myths and legends."⁸⁷

From Slavonic mythologies the reader encounters Czernobog who resembles Svarog or Perun, the gods of thunder, lightning, and smiting. The three Zoryas are impersonations of a Slavonic goddess of dawn, and as their last names indicate – Utrenyaya – of morning, Vechernyaya – of evening, Polyunochnyaya – of midnight – each of them attend to and guard their particular part of the day.

Moving on, some of the characters come from the Egyptian mythology, such as Horus, Mr Ibis and Mr Jackal – Thoth and Anubis. Horus is depicted as a half-insane god who prefers spending time in his animal form (a falcon), whereas Thoth and Jackal run their own funeral parlour.

Next, we encounter Mad Sweeney who is a leprechaun, brought to America by Essie McGowan and other people like her from Britain in their minds in the stories of the faerie folk. He used to be a powerful creature in his old land, but his power is gradually diminished and eventually he dies a miserable death, mostly unmourned and forgotten.

To give an example of a supernatural being from Arabic tales, there is a jinn who makes his living by driving a cab in New York. Although he tells Salim, his passenger, that he does not grant wishes, he frees him from his misery of unsuccessful looking for business partners for his cousin. They swap their roles and Salim becomes someone else, someone with a different life, different mindset, who works as a taxi driver.

Last, but not least, I want to mention a character from African tales named Anansi. Anansi is a trickster – smart, deceitful, and often very creative when it comes to outsmarting stronger and bigger opponents than he is himself. He frequently takes the

⁸⁶ BOVAIRD-ABBO, Kristin. In the Shadow of Balder: Breaking the Cycle of Ragnarok in *American Gods*. In: SOMMERS, Joseph Michael. *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*. Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2016, s. 31.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

form of a spider and in *American Gods* he stands on Mr Wednesday's side until he realizes the truth about Odin and Loki's grand scheme. There are a few stories about Anansi woven into the novel.

Since there are loads of other bigger or lesser deities from different pantheons and supernatural creatures in the novel, I chose to discuss only some of them – the ones I considered most vital for the whole story of the book, hence only this brief chapter's summary.

4.3 Performance and Participation

As I already foreshadowed in the previous chapters, there is a lot going on in the novel itself that is not explicitly expressed or known to the audience beforehand and one often has to conduct a research to at least partially understand the author's motives for including a particular god, creature, movie, book or a song in the novel.

First, there are pop-culture references which not everybody is familiar with. For instance, in a scene where Shadow is contacted by a new god via television, there are scenes on TV from *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *I love Lucy*. The reader can find some of the information about these TV from the context – for example, that they are comedy series, maybe sitcoms, that they are American, but that is just about it. If they want to know more, they have to search for the additional information on the internet, or watch the TV series, or see excerpts of the series on YouTube etc.

To mention a book reference, in the first chapter Shadow and Low Key talk about Herodotus' *Histories*. Again, if the reader wants to know who Herodotus was and what he wrote about in *Histories*, they need to look that information up. They need to perform and simultaneously participate on the meaning-making in order to get a clearer picture of what the author presents them with.

Furthermore, sometimes the reader has to perform and participate in that way also in relation to the various characters present in the book since a lot of them are based on gods from the mythologies mentioned previously because it often happens that a particular god appears in a scene of the book and it is frequently explicitly named only later in the story, or not at all. There are usually hints towards the identity of the characters, but yet again, not everybody is familiar, for instance, with the symbolics and

animal forms of the Egyptian mythology and gods such as falcon for Horus, Ibis for Thoth, and Jackal for Anubis, that appear in one form or the other throughout the story.

In my opinion, Neil Gaiman's writings mostly possess such qualities that require performance and participation from the reader generally, or at least some level of previous knowledge in order to gain the most from the stories being read, *American Gods* included.

5 Good Omens

Good Omens began as a story that Neil Gaiman started writing but then did not know how to finish. So, he sent it to his friends, including Terry Pratchett, whom he first met when interviewing him for a small magazine that Gaiman worked for at the time. After some time, Pratchett called him and said that he knows how the story continues, so he offered Gaiman collaboration, or buying the part that Gaiman already wrote off of him. Gaiman chose the first option. *Good Omens* was Gaiman's very first novel and at the same time he has been working on *The Sandman*.

Good Omens has a lot of parody and good humour inside, and at the same time it is a very human and usually very dear book to Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's fans. The book is a story of the series of events leading to the end of the world, which the agents of Heaven and Hell (an angel and a demon) try desperately to avert. It is the story of those two supposed adversaries who are friends from the garden of Eden. Even though they are on opposite sides, they are quite fond of each other. They are both given the task to counteract each other's efforts to gain supremacy in the never-ending battle and to keep an eye on the upbringing of the Antichrist, Lucifer's son. Unfortunately for them, the children born at the same time in the hospital of the Chattering Order of Saint Beryl had been swapped at birth, so in the end, Crowley and Aziraphale look after Warlock, an ordinary child, instead of Adam Young, who is the true Antichrist. There are more plotlines in the book leading all the important characters to the climax of the story, the moment when the Apocalypse is about to take place.

There are two witchfinders, Mr Shadwell and Newton Pulsifer, and Mr Shadwell's neighbour Madame Tracy. The wanna-be witchfinders, without actually knowing it, work for Crowley and Aziraphale. They are paid to look for odd and possibly-supernatural phenomena – things that witches could be responsible for. Madame Tracy is a nice but a bit too extravagant neighbour of Mr Shadwell's who specializes in seances and massages. Shadwell considers her to be a witch, although she is very kind to him and obviously fancies him. In the end, he starts to like her, in his own way. Madame Tracy helps Mr Shadwell and Aziraphale to get to the venue of the Armageddon – the Tadfield Airbase.

Newt Pulsifer meets Anathema Device, the only descendant of Agnes Nutter, witch, due to an accident with his ancient Japanese car which he calls Dick Turpin and falls in love with her as she does with him. Agnes Nutter was Anathema's ancestor, and she wrote

a book of prophecies: *The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch*. This book contains prophecies mainly about Anathema's family, Anathema herself (for instance the encounter with Newt) and, among others, the Armageddon. Anathema's ancestors have been trying to decode and understand the meaning of the prophecies for centuries and Anathema carries on with it as well. Together with Newt they get involved in the prelude to the Apocalypse.

Furthermore, there are Them, Adam Young and his group of friends, Pepper, Wensleydale, and Brian, who have been growing up together playing games such as *witches* and *Spanish Inquisition*. Adam has got a dog as well. His name is Dog and originally it was a hellhound sent from Hell to serve the Antichrist. It changed its looks according to Adam's idea of a dog, so it is small and quite cute.

Lastly, there are the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: War, Famine, Death, and the fourth would have been Pestilence but in *Good Omens* the fourth Horseman is Pollution. All of them are represented as real personas who drive their motorbikes to the end of the world, as well as by the contemporary problems of the world depicted in the book.

The plotlines of the above-described characters clash at the end of the book where the Armageddon should take place. Even though Heaven and Hell wanted to fight the final battle and thought that their agents, Aziraphale and Crowley, worked to that end, the real Antichrist, Adam Young, is actually very much human - neither good, nor bad. When they talk about Adam's father, Lucifer, at the airbase where the Horsemen are about to bring the Apocalypse to motion, Adam is instead thinking of his human father and he is the one who eventually comes to collect Adam who gets grounded for causing trouble, but nothing really bad happens - he still lives with his parents, he has his dog and his friends. Mr Shadwell and Madame Tracy, and Newt and Anathema become couples. All ends well and the angel and the demon are happy, and they celebrate their successful mission - that is sabotaging Armageddon, with Adam's contribution.

5.1 Intertextuality

Good Omens are drawn very much from extracts from the Bible. The main theme is the Apocalypse taken from the New Testament, The Book of Revelation. And the Apocalypse itself does not even take place in the end, even though there is the Antichrist,

Heaven and Hell preparing for the final battle, and the Four Horsemen wreaking havoc at the Tadfield Airbase.

Apart from the references to the Bible and Bible-related stories and beings, there are lots of references to various songs, composers, writers, books, movies, and others, either real ones, or made up, hence several examples follow to prove my point:

1 Aziraphale collected books. If he were totally honest with himself he would have to have admitted that his bookshop was simply somewhere to store them. He was not unusual in this. In order to maintain his cover as a typical second-hand bookseller, he used every means short of actual physical violence to prevent customers from making a purchase. Unpleasant damp smells, glowering looks, erratic opening hours – he was incredibly good at it.

He had been collecting for a long time, and, like all collectors, he specialized.

He had more than sixty books of predictions concerning developments in the last handful of centuries of the second millennium. He had a penchant for Wilde first editions. And he had a complete set of the Infamous Bibles, individually named from errors in typesetting. These Bibles included the *Unrighteous Bible*, so called from a printer's error which caused it to proclaim, in I Corinthians, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the Kingdom of God?'; and the *Wicked Bible*, printed by Barker and Lucas in 1632, in which the word *not* was omitted from the seventh commandment, making it 'Thou shalt commit Adultery'. There were the *Discharge Bible*, the *Treacle Bible*, the *Standing Fishes Bible*, the *Charring Cross Bible* and the rest. Aziraphale had them all. Even the very rarest, a Bible published in 1651 by the London publishing firm of Bilton and Scaggs.⁸⁸

2 By a stroke of rare good fortune they had obtained one of the famed "Lost Quartos" – the three Shakespeare plays never reissued in Folio edition, and now totally lost to the scholars and playgoers. Only their names have come down to us. This one was Shakespeare's earliest play, *The Comedie of Robin Hoode, or, Forrest of Sherwoode*.*

Master Bilton had paid almost six guineas for the quarto, and believed he could make nearly twice that much back on the hardcover folio alone.

Then he lost it.

Bilton and Scaggs' third great publishing disaster was never entirely comprehensible to either of them. Everywhere you looked, books of prophecy were selling like crazy. The English edition of Nostradamus' *Centuries* has just gone into its third printing, and five Nostradamuses, all claiming to be the only genuine one, were on triumphant signing tours. And Mother Shipton's *Collection of Prophecies* was sprinting out of the shops.⁸⁹

There are numerous references to various famous authors and their works, either real ones, or those made up. And as it is obvious from these extracts, Gaiman and Pratchett

⁸⁸ GAIMAN, Neil. *Good Omens*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2014, p. 58.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

were able to come up with a believable back story for a lot of them (not only books and authors) and make fun of it.

Next, there are references to songs by the British band Queen. Usually, the references are related to Crowley's car radio in his Bentley – whatever cassette is left in the car for a longer period of time, it just changes into a version of a song by Queen:

1 'What's a Velvet Underground?' he said.
'You wouldn't like it,' said Crowley.
'Oh,' said the angel dismissively. 'Be-bop.'
'Do you know, Aziraphale, that probably if a million human beings were asked to describe modern music, they wouldn't use the term "be-bop"?' said Crowley.
'Ah, this is more like it. Tchaikovsky,' said Aziraphale, opening a case and slotting its cassette into the Blaupunkt.
'You won't enjoy it,' sighed Crowley. 'it's been in the car for more than a fortnight.'
A heavy bass beat began to thump through the Bentley as they sped past Heathrow. Aziraphale's brow furrowed.
'I don't recognize this,' he said. 'What is it?'
'It's Tchaikovsky's "Another One Bites the Dust",' said Crowley, closing his eyes as they went through Slough.
To while away the time, as they crossed the sleeping Chilterns, they also listened to William Byrd's "We are the Champions" and Beethoven's "I Want to Break Free". Neither were as good as Vaughan Williams' "Fat-Bottomed Girls".⁹⁰

2 He rummaged in the glove compartment, fumbled a tape at random, and slotted it into the player. A little music would...
... *Bee-elzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me...*
'For me,' murmured Crowley. His expression went blank for a moment. Then he gave a strangled scream and wrenched at the on-off knob.⁹¹

3 They drove back through the dawn, while the cassette player played J. S. Bach's Mass in B Minor, vocals by F. Mercury.⁹²

The second example here is an extract from Bohemian Rhapsody, which is not mentioned there at all, and the third example being a reference to the lead singer of Queen, Freddie Mercury.

Lastly, there are also a few examples of films or film references that the reader can encounter in the book:

⁹⁰ GAIMAN, Neil. *Good Omens*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2014, p. 95.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 121.

1 It was a game. It was tremendous fun. Nigel Tomkins, Assistant Head (Purchasing), squirmed through the undergrowth, his mind aflame with some of the more memorable scenes of some of the better Clint Eastwood movies.⁹³

2 But the other Them had long ago learned that Pepper did not consider herself bound by the informal conventions of brotherly scuffles. She could kick and bite with astonishing physiological accuracy for a girl of eleven. Besides, at eleven years old were beginning to be bothered by the dim conception that laying hand on good ole Pep moved things into blood-thumping categories they weren't entirely at home with yet, besides earning you a snake-fast blow that would have floored the Karate Kid.⁹⁴

3 He was prepared to believe, though, that the job of wages clerk at United Holdings [Holdings] PLC, was possibly the most boring in the world. This is how Newton Pulsifer looked as a man: if he went into a phone booth and changed, he might managed to come out looking like Clark Kent.⁹⁵

In the first extract, there is a reference to an American actor and director, often recognized for his western films. In the next one, it is a reference to a movie with the very same name, and in the last one, Newt Pulsifer is compared to the main character of comics and movies about Superman.

Many of these overlap to performance and participation, because not all of the references are clear and understandable to all readers. Again, if the reader does not know the particular author, song or movie, and they want to get to know more, research is needed.

5.2 Parody

Gaiman and Pratchett's *Good Omens* were written as a parody on the biblical end of the world. The authors created a story with clever humour based on the Book of Revelation, sometimes even a little bit incorrect humour, sometimes very kind, almost naïve, but still very smart and sophisticated. To be honest, it is hard to find the right words to describe it to its full extent.

We are presented with a story of an angel and a demon being friends, even though they should be mortal enemies. It goes against all common sense when Heaven and Hell

⁹³ GAIMAN, Neil. *Good Omens*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2014, p. 108.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

are supposed to fight each other. Yet, Gaiman and Pratchett make it so effortless and casual that the reader does not question it.

Besides, both Aziraphale and Crowley are obsessed with things that they love as much as any human being. They are quite fond of the humanity. Aziraphale enjoys books and he collects them. He also owns a bookshop which is really just a cover for his collections – he is very careful not to sell any of his books to anybody. Crowley, on the other hand, loves his car – a Bentley, and he does not give up on the idea that it still holds together, and continues driving it while it is in flames, and it hardly resembles a car anymore. These two adore good food and drink, although they do not really need it as a sustenance.

Moreover, we are given Antichrist who seems to be a harmless little boy and does not really look like a spawn of Hell. When a hellhound is sent to serve him, it instantly changes its nature according to its master and becomes basically a perfectly normal dog. Even though there is a moment in the story when Adam seems to be able to tip to the devilish side of himself, it does not happen. And that is most likely thanks to his parents Mr and Mrs Young – real and what we could call normal people – and the upbringing they provided him with. Not perfect, not just black, or white, neither purely good, nor bad, but something in the middle – human.

Moving on, the Apocalypse is supposed to be put in motion by the arrival of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. But first they need to get their tools to do that – and they are delivered to them by the International Express delivery man. He is tasked to deliver the Horsemen what they need before they are summoned to the end of times. The reader is not explained who sent those packages, but it is fairly evident that it was a part of the greater ineffable plan.

Furthermore, the Four Horsemen do not ride horses as one might think. In *Good Omens* they adjust to the era, and they ride motorbikes which by itself is a peculiar mental picture. They are not the only ones who arrived to the airbase in such manner. Madame Tracy, Aziraphale possessing her body, and Mr Shadwell too arrive to the spot motorized – on a moped. But because it was too slow and burdened by two riders, Aziraphale used his angelic powers to help the moped out, making it an unusual ride.

When the reader thinks about all that and other peculiar and ridiculous things and events that take place in the story, it is hard not to find it funny and amusing, while it is very believable to a certain extent.

5.3 Performance and Participation

As I preceded, in terms of *Good Omens*, the performance and participation is connected majorly to pop-culture, literature, history, and music. Either the reader is familiar with the works referred to, or not, and they have to seek for explanation and additional information.

To some extent, the reader should be familiar with the Bible, or at least the Book of Revelation, in order to grasp the efforts of the authors. On the other hand, there are explanations included in the book in some cases. Either in the text itself, or at the bottom of the page as a footnote. There are plenty of footnotes in *Good Omens* offering additional information and stories on the side of the main plot, e. g. the footnote to *The Buggre Alle This Bible* (made up by the authors) on page 59:

**The Buggre All This Bible* was also noteworthy for having twenty-seven verses in the third chapter of Genesis, instead of the more usual twenty-four.

They followed verse 24, which in the King James version reads:

'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life', and read:

25 And the Lord spake unto the Angel that guarded the eastern gate, *saying* Where is the flaming sword which was given unto thee?

26 And the Angel said, I had it here only a moment ago, I must have put *it* down somewhere, forget my own head next.

27 And the Lord did not ask him again.

It appears that these verses were inserted during the proof stage. In those days it was common practice for printers to hang proof sheets to the wooden beams outside their shops, for the edification of the populace and some free proofreading, and since the whole print run was subsequently burned away, no one bothered to take up this matter with the nice Mr A. Ziraphale, who ran the bookshop two doors along and was always so helpful with the translations, and whose handwriting was instantly recognizable.

Such footnotes are present in the book and are typical also of other books written by Terry Pratchett. This one in particular refers to the first few pages of *Good Omens* where Crowley (originally Crawly, the snake that tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden) and Aziraphale (the Cherubim at the eastern gate of Eden) talk about the original sin and Adam and Eve having been banished from Eden. Crawly also

asks Aziraphale where he has put his flaming sword, to which Aziraphale eventually replies that he gave it to the man and the woman, because he felt pity for them.⁹⁶

In comparison to the other works analysed in this thesis, *Good Omens* does not require performance and participation in the manner other Gaiman's books do, apart from those mentioned above, of course.

⁹⁶ GAIMAN, Neil. *Good Omens*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2014, p. 15-17.

6 The Sandman

The Sandman is a comic book series created by Neil Gaiman and other renowned artists. It tells stories about other worlds, dimensions, our world and reality and the eternal entities that are the alpha and omega of the world and life that we experience as humans. The Sandman, or Morpheus, or Oneiros, is the Dream Lord, one of the Eternals – his siblings, whose father is God/Time. His siblings are Destiny, Desire, Despair, Delirium and Death. They appear in the stories about Sandman from time to time.

The Sandman is far too complex and extensive to simply summarize the plot of the series here, but I can generalize and say that the stories included in the series are sometimes directly connected to Sandman, or his family, and sometimes are further from them. We can see a great deal of fragmentation in *The Sandman*. In some cases, the reader wonders whether the story presented to them in the comic had anything to do with Sandman as such. But one thing is clear, the comics is funny, dark, scary, inexplicable, surreal, magical, and so much more at once. Sometimes it handles gods, sometimes mythical creatures, other times historical figures, or completely fictional characters, nevertheless, at the same time, it is still somehow coherent, and it makes sense, even though the reader jumps together with the characters from one realm to another, among different realities, dimensions, and events.

I analyse *The Sandman* on the basis of having read five volumes of collected issues of the comics (including *Overture*, *Preludes & Nocturnes*, *The Doll's House*, *Dream Country* and *Season of Mists*). Particular volumes correlate with one another often in a subtle manner, leaving the reader wondering what just happened in the story and is it going to have impact on what is coming next or not. It keeps the audience hooked on by the mysteriousness and the fact that there is essentially anything one can think of to be found in the comics. The topics are plenty and a pinch of numerous genres spice it up.

6.1 Intertextuality and Hybridization

As I stated in the previous part, *The Sandman* dips into several different genres without making the reader pause and think of it for too long. Mostly it is fantasy in *The Doll's House*, sci-fi in *Overture*, romance in *The Doll's House* and *Season of Mists*, horror in *Preludes and Nocturnes* and *Dream Country* and comedy in *Preludes and Nocturnes*, for instance.

From its nature, the comics is a hybrid of text and illustrations, both of which tell the story proportionately. It is different, though, in comparison to *The Sleeper and the Spindle* that has been discussed before, where a part of the story is included in the illustration, but the text without it would still make sense, more or less, and it could stand by itself. That would not be possible in the comic book, where the text and the illustrations are inseparable. Were they separated, the final effect of the work would be far from what the author and the team of artists intended. Besides, most of it would not make sense to the reader or the audience exposed to the art.

Moving on, one of the most important points of intertextuality is, in my point of view, the relation to the Bible. In the series we encounter God/Time as a character – Sandman and his siblings' father. What goes beyond what we can read in Bible is Goddess – Sandman's mother. Sometimes Morpheus visits Hell and interacts with Lucifer and his demons who live there. In *Season of Mists*, Lucifer decides to leave Hell, gives the key to Morpheus and retires in a way on Earth. This particular part of the comics most likely inspired the TV series *Lucifer* whose characters are based on (not only) Neil Gaiman's writings. In this volume there are also angels present within the story – Remiel and Duma.

The reader also encounters Cain and Abel as Sandman's servants who help him take care of the Dreaming. They are represented as more of a comical duo where Cain usually tries to kill Abel over and over again in so many different and creative ways.

Next, there is a character from another comic book series who occurs in the stories about Sandman. His name is John Constantine. Apart from appearing in *The Sandman (Preludes and Nocturnes)*, we could find this character in *The Books of Magic* and in his own comic book series that is still quite popular nowadays.

Supernatural characters and gods appearing in *The Sandman* come from various mythologies, such as Greek (muse Calioppe), Egyptian (jackal god Anubis), Norse (Loki, Odin, Thor) and so on. Gaiman borrows and recreates the characters to his own image, and puts them into new environment, situations, realities, and worlds but still manages to put all of that together so that it somehow has the air of a coherent whole, though a lot of the tales are deeply surreal, and it is often nonsense.

Lastly, there is one significant example of intertextuality that needs to be mentioned. In *The Doll's House*, Sandman meets Shakespeare and Marlowe, and he strikes

a deal with Shakespeare in exchange for help with becoming a great writer of the era. Later on, in *Dream Country*, we learn that he asked for a specific play to be written for him in return, and it is to be performed for the audience from the Faerie. The play is about the creatures who come to see the play. William Shakespeare together with his company perform their play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in front of Oberon and Titania from the Faerie. In the comics, the reader witnesses the production of one of the Shakespeare's classics.

6.2 Parody and Pastiche

The Sandman is more of a pastiche than a parody, in my opinion, but bits and pieces of parody could be spotted in the comic books as well (Cain and Abel, living as Morpheus' servants while Cain is always trying to kill Abel), though overall, it is not really meant to be a parody. References to the Bible and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are probably the most prominent here and they have already been mentioned in the previous chapters. The truth is that mostly the plot of the comic books is original, although it borrows lots of characters and elements from somewhere else. Neil Gaiman twists and turns the characters to his liking, and despite the fact that they are mainly gods and supernatural entities, they are, in many aspects, also very human (as the characters in *American Gods* often are) and they behave accordingly.

6.3 Performance and Participation

In terms of performance and participation in *The Sandman*, it is vital to point out once again that it is a comic book and as such it does not give the reader much space for imagination as other Gaiman's works do. The reader is given the story in the form of firmly fixed illustrations and the text (direct speech, description), sometimes even whole passages such as the characterization of the Endless (Morpheus and his siblings) in *The Season of Mists*.

The Sandman is a complex piece of literature, and the reader often needs to list through different issues or volumes of the comic book to remind themselves of an important piece of information, event or a series of events that are relevant or have a causal quality in relation to what is happening next in the story. That is also intertwined with the fragmentation of the stories – they resemble an intricate mosaic made of bits and pieces that the audience is putting together to create the whole picture. In other words,

the audience has to perform and participate actively in putting the pieces together and making sense of them.

An interesting feature also concerning performance and participation is the physical appearance of Morpheus and the other Endless. They seem to take the form most suitable for the mythological, cultural or biological environment they currently find themselves in (for instance, Sandman changes into a cat, a flower, an African). Moreover, Sandman also seems to change his looks, outfits and hairstyle according to his current mood or mindset he finds himself in, so we meet various manifestations of him on the pages of the comic books.

Therefore, the reader supposedly needs to draw on their knowledge of the particular background to understand what has just happened, where the characters find themselves and why they look like what they look like, or they need to search for the information unknown to them.

Last, but not least, the composition of the text and illustrations itself invites reader's performance and participation because of its structure and position on the pages – sometimes it is quite tricky to follow it as it changes unexpectedly, and the reader has to come back in the story and re-read the part again to follow the story as it was intended. But in many cases the direction of reading is clear, and the reader does not have to put too much effort in simply following the plot.

Conclusion

Neil Gaiman is a British writer who began his career in the late 1980s. His first projects included *Good Omens*, a novel which he cooperated on with Terry Pratchett, and *The Sandman*, a comic book series that was developed by him and other artists coordinated together.

Throughout the years as he wrote more books and participated in TV production of some of his own works, and Doctor Who among others, he became more and more popular. Several of his titles were brought to the silver screen either as movies or TV series. There is the fantasy movie *Stardust*, the horror-like animated movie *Coraline*, *Neverwhere* TV show, *Lucifer* TV series, or *American Gods* TV series. The production of *The Sandman* TV series has also been announced recently.

Gaiman writes and creates for all kinds of audiences, ranging from little children to senior readers. Besides, his creativity is not limited to just one or two literary genres. He writes almost everything – fairy tales (*Hansel and Gretel*, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*), fantasy and horror-like novels (*Coraline*, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, *American Gods*, *The Graveyard Book*), comic books (*The Sandman*, *The Books of Magic*), mythology and comedy (*Norse Mythology*, *Good Omens*), or sci-fi (*Interworld* book series), short stories (*Fragile Things*), and more. Moreover, in many of Gaiman's writings postmodern elements can be recognized.

The aim of the thesis is to introduce the reader to the works of Neil Gaiman and through analysis of some of them prove that there are postmodern elements present there. The first two parts of the thesis briefly presents Neil Gaiman as an author and the extensive term that is postmodernism to the reader. They are built upon thorough study of literature dealing with Neil Gaiman and his literary career, and writings on postmodernism, postmodern art, and literature. With use of the ideas of literary theorists such as Linda Hutcheon, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard and Ihab Hassan, a base for the analytical part of the thesis is laid down and the postmodern features focused on and dealt with in the thesis are determined.

Next, four chapters follow. Each of them handles one of the books, or book series, chosen for the analysis. One by one, they deal with *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, *American Gods*, *Good Omens*, and *The Sandman*. These particular titles were selected from the pleiad

of Gaiman's texts to represent the widest possible range of genres. *The Sleeper and the Spindle* stands for fairy-tale retellings. *American Gods* is an extensive road-trip novel with the story of the ancient gods and beings trying to find their place in contemporary world. *Good Omens* is also a novel, but instead of multiple mythologies like *American Gods* it is centred on the Apocalypse and Christian mythology. *The Sandman* is probably the most complex of all of these. It is a comic book series with tens of volumes. There is a lot going on in the stories about Sandman – mixing of mythologies, fantasy, sci-fi, history and so on.

Each chapter consists of a short introduction to the plot of the title followed by three subchapters – the analysis of the of the writing in terms of 1) Intertextuality and Hybridization, 2) Parody and Pastiche, and 3) Performance and Participation. All the postmodern features named there are described and discussed in the first part of the thesis. Depending on the title there are relevant examples and proofs of elements of postmodernism brought forward. However, not all the works contain all three categories of the postmodern aspects. In some cases, their parts are missing completely.

From the four analysed texts, only *The Sandman* fulfills all the three categories of postmodern elements selected as focus of the thesis. There is no parody in *The Sleeper and the Spindle* and there is hardly any to be found in *American Gods*. The *American Gods* novel also lacks hybridization other than the melting pot of numerous mythologies in the storyline. There is no hybridization to be seen in *Good Omens* either, missing pastiche altogether.

Intertextuality is a part of all four analysed works, even though to a different extent. Hybridization can be found only in *The Sleeper and the Spindle* and *The Sandman*. Parody is a postmodern element included in *Good Omens* and *The Sandman*. Pastiche, on the other hand, is a feature of *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, *American Gods* and *The Sandman*. Performance and participation, as well as intertextuality, are both prominent in all of the analysed texts.

The thesis proves that multiple postmodern elements are featured in Gaiman's writings, therefore (on the basis of the analyses of selected works) Neil Gaiman should be considered a postmodern writer of the late 20th and the early 21st century. Or at the very least, his works examined in this thesis should be included in postmodern literature.

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