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Fantasy as a Popular Genre in the Works of Neil Gaiman

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Zásady pro vypracování

Práce se bude zabývat především definováním pojmů Fantasy, Popular literature a Urban fantasy v kontextu díla Neila Gaimana. Strukturalistická analýza bude provedena na dílech American Gods, Stardust a Neverwhere. Práce představí různé typy světů objevujících se v těchto dílech. V další části práce budou tyto světy podrobeny etické analýze. Součástí práce bude také popsání takzvaných Binary oppositions, které se v těchto dílech a fantasy žánru objevují.

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ANOTATION

This thesis deals with Neil Gaiman's fantasy novels American Gods, Stardust and Neverwhere. First, the paper discusses definition of the fantasy genre and various types of fantasy worlds and applies this theory to previously mentioned titles. Secondly, a structuralist analysis is carried out based on binary oppositions and Frye's Anatomy of Criticism. The penultimate chapter focuses on mythology and its presence in Gaiman's literature. The last chapter presents introduction to first concepts of morality, followed by an historical overview of morals and then applies this theory on the protagonists of the novels.

KEYWORDS

Gaiman, fantasy, structuralism, mythology, morals

NÁZEV

Fantasy jako populární žánr v díle Neila Gaimana

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá díly Neila Gaimana spadajícími do žánru fantasy, konkrétně se jedná o romány American Gods, Stardust a Neverwhere. Úvodní kapitola se věnuje definici fantasy žánru a typům světů, které se v něm objeví. Tato teorie je následně aplikována na zmíněná díla. Další kapitola věnuje strukturalistické analýze a to především binárním opozicím a teorii popsané ve Fryově studii Anatomy of Criticism. Předposlední kapitola je zaměřená na mytologii a její přítomnost v Gaimanově dílech. Poslední kapitola popisuje počátky morálky a historický průřez jejího vývoje. Tato teorie je pak aplikována na hlavní postavy zmíněných románů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Gaiman, fantasy, strukturalismus, mytologie, morálka

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to take a closer look at Fantasy literature of the British author Neil Gaiman. Gaiman is an author of a wide variety of genres including children's literature, science fiction, horrors, and fantasy, but the literature that will be the subject of this analysis consists of the novels *American Gods*, *Stardust* and *Neverwhere*. These titles have been chosen based on their differences in a variety of key features as well as their popularity in mainstream media. Although all three novels also have their cinematic counterparts, the ambition of this diploma thesis is to address only its written originals.

The opening chapter of the thesis will introduce the term fantasy literature. The goal is to highlight the importance of the genre and to discuss how it affects its reader. At the same time, the chapter will establish the four types of worlds which appear in fantasy literature: Portal-Quest Fantasy, Immersive Fantasy, Intrusion Fantasy and Liminal Fantasy.[1] These types of worlds will be then described in more detail based on Tereza Dedinova's study *Through a Strange Landscape: Characteristics and Inner Structuring of Fantastic Literature*, which is based on Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy*.[2] The categories will be used in the rest of the paper for classification of the selected novels.

Following that, the focus will shift on a structuralist analysis. At first, a short introduction to the history of structuralism will be presented. This will include some of the crucial concepts which were developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and that later influenced Northrop Frye, including the definition of a binary opposition which will be subsequently applied to Gaiman's novels.

The chapter concerning Structuralism will also consider the ideas presented in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, i.e. his four essays: *Theory of Myth*, *Theory of Mode*, *Theory of Symbol*, and *Theory of Genre*.[3] These essays include crucial ideas such as fictional and thematic types of modes in literature, symbolic phases, an analogy

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[1] Tereza Dedinova, *Through a Strange Landscape: Characteristics and Inner Structuring of Fantastic Literature* (Brno: Filozofická Fakulta Masarykovy Univerzity, 2015), 101.
[2] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape,* 102.
[3] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Foreword.

of seasons to genres of literature, or types of worlds and their imagery. The concepts will be consequently utilized in Gaiman's literature.

Finally, the chapter concerning morals will include a brief introduction to its history. It will debate and highlight the origin of morals coming from hunter/gatherer tribes and, at the same time, it will also introduce the different concepts of morals in human history. The focus here is mainly on sophism, Kant's ethics, and utilitarianism. With the human race constantly evolving, the perception of what is considered moral changes and thus making an introduction to the history of ethics is essential to further analysis. The concepts will be subsequently applied to selected works of Neil Gaiman to examine the moral values of the characters and protagonists of these novels.

1 Fantasy Literature

1.1 Introduction to Fantasy

Books on fantasy tend to begin with a collection of definitions, as suggested by Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz in their work called *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*.[4] It is a result of the poor understanding of the genre with the books being, according to them, mostly a defensive exercise.[5] The situation was that in the past, the fantasy genre did not receive a serious critical attention and therefore the scholars who took interest in the topic had to justify their interests. Fantasy had been for too long associated with Children's literature that created the illusion of fantasy literature being intended only for children.

Most people would certainly be able to name some titles from the category of Fantasy literature as well as some features of the genre, but defining the term explicitly is a more complicated task. The negative misconceptions mentioned above make it necessary to define the term as clearly as possible in order to show that these are indeed misconceptions.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* was suggested as a key text in the history of children's literature. The story is creative, imaginative and includes a didacticism of morals. It moreover includes some features of fantasy texts, but C. N. Manlove in his work *Modern Fantasy* stresses the fact that he would not include this book in the canon of fantasy writing. His main argument is that the fantasy elements in this book are happenings only in Alice's dreams and thus are symbolic extensions of a human mind.[6]

Hunt and Lenz further mention that the misconception of fantasy being a part of children's literature comes from the fact that the genre is seen as formulaic, childish, and escapist.[7] Some of these ideas are attempted to be dismissed in the introduction to *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*. Hunt and Lenz explain that the suggestion of Fantasy being formulaic is false since modern fantasy consists of different arrays of styles, narrative techniques and characters, that make the original fantasy easy to

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[4] Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London: Continuum, 2005), 9.

[5] Hunt, *Alternative Worlds,* 10.

[6] Prickett, Stephen. "Review Notices : Modern Fantasy : Five Studies. By C. N. Manlove. London : Cambridge University Press, 1975. Vii + 308 Pp. £6.50." *Journal of European Studies* 6, no. 21 (March 1976): 67–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/004724417600602106.

[7] Hunt, *Alternative Worlds,* 2.

recognize.[8] It is also mentioned that there are certainly features that the texts from the Fantasy canon share, but it is argued that humans cannot imagine far beyond of what we know and therefore trying to write a completely original text, even if it was possible, would be an alienating experience for the reader.[9]

The second misconception mentioned above is that the Fantasy genre is childish. One of the main reasons for this generalisation is that Fantasy and children's literature have a strong and well-established connection. On the one hand, this relationship has been beneficial for the development of children's fantasy literature since it is a thriving industry. On the other hand, however, the inability of Fantasy to break away from the association with children's literature might have been harmful. J. R. R. Tolkien in his essay *On Fairy Stories* puts forward the idea that children neither like, nor understand fantasy more than adults.[10]

Fantasy is fundamentally the exploration of the fantastic and hence it requires the use of one´s imagination. This means that the interplay between a writer and reader is absolutely crucial for this type of literature. In order to read and, more importantly, to enjoy fantasy, the readers are required to believe in the unbelievable and, at the same time, to use their imagination to project these images. This is reinforced by Richard Matthew in his text *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* in which it is stated that "maps and contours of fantasy are circumscribed only by imagination itself."[11]

Lucie Armitt in her essay called *Theorising the Fantastic* pays attention to the marginalization of fantastic literature. It is stated that once a text contains something fantastic or is placed into a fantastic environment, it suddenly becomes dubious or even embarrassing and people have to justify their interests in the texts.[12] This may be why it is easier for many to put children's literature and fantasy in one category. It could be suggested that if escaping reality and using your imagination is not intellectual, it must be childish and categorized into children's literature.

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[8] Hunt, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* 3.
[9] Hunt, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* 8.
[10] J. R. R. Tolkien, Verlyn Flieger, and Douglas A. Anderson, *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories* (London: HarperCollins, 2008), 34.
[11] Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: the Liberation of Imagination Richard Mathews* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.
[12] Lucy Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (S.l.: s.n., 1996), London: Arnold, 1.

The last-mentioned misconception is that Fantasy literature is escapist. This is not the case for the majority of Fantasy writing since the genre can be (and often is used) to evaluate contemporary issues. This aspect of Fantasy literature will be highlighted in further detail later in the text.

1.2 Defining Fantasy

There are several definitions attempting to describe modern Fantasy writing. Ann Swinfen describes modern fantasy as a literary piece that consists of "structures, motifs and marvelous elements derived from its predecessors in myth, legend, fable, folk-tale and romance."[13] She believes that the combination of these elements creates a genre of its own. Sheila Egoff calls it "a literature of paradox." She defines it with regard to what it achieves in terms of the reader's insight and perspective. Richard Matthews alleges that "fantasy as a distinct literary genre...may best be thought of as a fiction that elicits wonder through elements of the supernatural or impossible."[14] Rosemary Jackson then believes "its association with imagination and with desire has made it an area difficult to articulate or to define," and she continues claiming that "the value of fantasy resides in its determination to resist a proper definition."[15]

One of the features of fantasy that are often being pointed out is that it is set in a fantastic or imagined place. But while there really are fantasies which take place in another world – Lewis' Narnia or Tolkien's Middle Earth, there are also other stories which share this world – Rowling's Britain and Gaiman's world of *American Gods*. It would be equally misleading to claim that all fantasies have sword fights and dragons, even though many of them do. And the same logic applies for a fight between good and evil as well as the presence of magical creatures.

C.N. Manlove's definition seems to cover all of the previously mentioned aspects. In his study about Modern Fantasy, he describes fantasy as evoking wonder and, at the same time, containing an irreducible element of supernatural and containing a mortal character with whom can the readers become familiar.[16]

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[13] Ann Swinfen, *In Defense of Fantasy: a Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 2.
[14] Mathews, *Liberation of Imagination*, 2.
[15] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 2015), 2.
[16] Prickett Stephen, "Review Notices : Modern Fantasy : Five Studies. By C. N. Manlove. London : Cambridge University Press, 1975.," *Journal of European Studies* 6, no. 21 (1976): pp. 67-67, https://doi.org/10.1177/004724417600602106.

Modern fantasy is closely related to many other literary forms such as gothic novels, fairy tales, Science fiction or Utopian literature. However, it is only an element of fantasy literature that there is a significant departure from reality. It creates other worlds that entirely depart from the foundations of realism. It is true Science fiction might also sometimes create another world for its setting, but these worlds are based on logic, instead of magic of fantastic which results in creating a distinctive diversion between fantasy and Science fiction.

As mentioned above, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was a groundbreaking piece for children's literature, but the roots of fantasy are not in the canon of children's literature. The fantasy critics mentioned above agree that it was not until the work of William Morris which gave birth to the fantasy genre. Even though the late 19th century was an era of essays, scientific reports and newspapers, Morris was able to break away from these trends and to create an alternative world in *The Wood Beyond the World*.[17] Carroll's story about Alice definitely shares certain similarities with modern fantasy, but it was Morris who truly departed from reality for the first time.

Still, it is important to look at children's fantasy in order to see the origins of both children's literature and fantasy literature. The development of children's fantasy and literature, in general, is much indebted to Kingsley's and Carroll's imaginings as they both moved away from didactic and moral realism for children. Apart from them, children's fantasy literature also owes to the authors like the previously mentioned Morris. Fantasy itself then does not have a straightforward development and evolves from (or branches into) science-fiction, fairy-tales, adventures and even the previously mentioned Utopian literature. Mathews describes that fantasy is an investigative genre which, at the same time, shows a longing for past ways of life. An element that may be seen in the works of authors like Tolkien and Le Guin.[18]

1.3 Types of Worlds in Fantasy

As previously mentioned some people might argue that fantasy is escapist literature. The reason is that the author creates another world which the reader uses to leave and escape into. However, as previously suggested, this is a misconception. Gaiman only creates an alternative world in order to get rid of the complicated settings of a real

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[17] Peter Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London etc.: Routledge, 2004), 52.
[18] Mathews, *the Liberation of Imagination*, 44.

world. He uses the world that is stripped down of elements like the economy to comment on and comfort contemporary issues. As was mentioned by Tolkien in his essay *On Fairy Stories*, fantasy is not an escape from the current world but rather a tool for a complete understanding of it.[19]

Modern fantasy writing tries to approach the issues its readers are facing. This was not always the truth, because historically, the approach of fantasy writers such as Carroll and Barrie was to use fantasy as an escape into another world in order not to deal with issues of growing-up in the real world. One of the best-known examples of that approach is Barrie's *Peter Pan* who is stuck in childhood while refusing to grow-up. Forcing the protagonist into an environment where this attitude is valued is one of the ways in which writers deal with this issue. Egoff argues that the author of fantasy fiction wrestles with complexities of existence such as life and death, time and space or good and evil.[20] And it is true that most protagonists in Gaiman's fantasy are faced with such challenges.

The previous paragraph mentioned that originally fantasy tried to avoid real-life struggles and this was reflected in its setting. For example, the story of *Alice in Wonderland* in which the protagonist escapes the real world through a rabbit hole. Even though this method is still present in contemporary fantasy fiction, there are other methods and types of worlds used to achieve different results. Tereza Dedinova from the faculty of arts at Masaryk University focused on characteristics and division of Fantasy literature and notes that every human perceives the real world in a different way.[21] She describes that our view of the world is based on our origins since we learn about the world from our surroundings.[22] The idea expressed is closely connected with the structuralists´ viewpoint, which will be discussed in more detail later in the analysis of Frye's *Theory of Symbols*. Dedinova later describes that readers tend to fill out the blanks in fantasy worlds based on either the real world or on their previous experiences from other texts unless the author specifies that some of the properties of our world do not apply.[23]

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[19] Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories,* 12,
[20] Sheila Egoff, *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1995), 80.
[21] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape*, 22.
[22] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape*, 23.
[23] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape*. 35.

When describing the different properties of fantastic worlds, Dedinova presents four different ways in which the fantasy worlds can be presented to the reader. The first one has already been described earlier. It is referred to as Portal-Quest fantasy. It is generally based on having a portal which the protagonist uses to enter the fantastic world.[24] Mendlesohn in his study *Rhetorics of Fantasy* writes "the fantastic is on the other side and does not 'leak.' Although individuals may cross both ways, the magic does not."[25] Among the most notable examples of this type of world is then L. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

The second type of world described in Dedinova's study is Immersive fantasy. In this type of fantasy, the protagonist does not consider the fantastic element as something extraordinary. Contrary to the previously described Portal-Quest fantasy, Immersive fantasy presents a protagonist that is already familiar with the fantasy element of the world.[26] Most of the so-called high fantasy belongs to this category with the most notable examples being J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings* trilogy or G. R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

Second to last type of fantasy that is presented in Dedinova's study is Intrusive Fantasy. This type of fantasy introduces the fantastic element to a natural world. Dedinova describes that the protagonist and reader are in a similar situation, as they both try to understand the fantastic element that has been presented to them. She also describes that in general, there should be a clear distinction between abnormal parts of the world and normal one's.[27] Although Intrusive fantasy can be set on contemporary earth, it is not necessarily the case every time. Among the most notable examples of Intrusive Fantasy is Terry Pratchett's series of books set on Discworld.

The last type of fantasy world introduced in Dedinova's study is Liminal Fantasy. This type of fantasy is probably the most complex one. Dedinova describes it as a fantasy of the possible where the fantastic is somewhat lurking on the edge of perception for both the reader and the protagonist.[28] Sàndor Klapcsik describes that narrative in Liminal fantasy is "marked by the lack of narrator's and/or protagonist's surprise. The fantastic element becomes an essential but apparently ordinary element

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[24] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape*, 102.
[25] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 19.
[26] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape,* 102.
[27] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape*, 103.
[28] Dedinova, *Strange Landscape,* 104.

in these stories."[29] Farah Mendlesohn in her study Rhetorics of Fantasy discusses some of the examples of Liminal fantasy. One such example is Louis Sachar's *Holes*, which introduces a protagonist that balances on the edge of fantastic. The character digs holes in a children's penitentiary in order to carry out a treasure hunting fraud and fulfilling his prophecy to restore his family's fortune.

1.4 Gaiman's Worlds
1.4.1 American Gods

In the introductory part of *American Gods* titled "Caveat, and Warning for Travelers", Neil Gaiman writes: "This is a work of fiction, not a guidebook. While the geography of the United States of America in this tale is not entirely imaginary —many of the landmarks in this book can be visited, paths can be followed, ways can be mapped—I have taken liberties."[30] Later in the same introduction, Gaiman also discusses that for some places he decided to obstruct their locations even though he admits that they can be found if someone looks for them. Finally, he concludes the introduction by stating that all characters, living, dead, and otherwise are purely fictional, adding that only the Gods are real.[31]

It is clear that the setting of *American Gods* is, for the most part, contemporary earth, more specifically the United States. Throughout the book, Gaiman inserts chapters called "Coming to America". The goal of these chapters is to introduce the way in which Gods traveled to the American continent. At the same time, these chapters also help to introduce the fantastic element to the world. While the chapters concerned with Gods entering the continent are still placed in the same physical location, their temporal location differs depending on when they were introduced to the continent.

Shadow Moon, the protagonist of *American Gods*, is introduced to the fantastic element for the first time inside his cell when he meets his jail mate who is referring to himself as Low Key Leysmith, which is clearly a reference to the character from Norse mythology, Loki. Even though they had conversations in which Low Key implied his immortality, Shadow did not fully acknowledge the fantastic elements and who he met. Later on, Shadow meets Wednesday who is the leader of Old Gods. Even

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[29] Sándor Klapcsik, "Neil Gaiman's Irony, Liminal Fantasies, and Fairy Tale Adaptations," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 14, no. 2 (2008): 317-34..
[30] Neil Gaiman, *American Gods* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), Introduction.
[31] Gaiman, *American Gods*, Introduction.

though Wednesday does not reveal his true identity to Shadow, it brings him closer to the fantastic. Throughout the novel, it becomes more and more obvious for Shadow that he is dealing with some sort of supernatural beings. This ultimately results in Wednesday revealing that he is Odin, all-father and most prominent of the old gods.

The fantastic element in *American Gods* is hidden for the ordinary citizens of Earth as it is only Shadow and a few people who get to interact with the fantastic element, which is, in this case, the presence of Gods. The novel contains some elements of Portal-Quest fantasy. Shadow on multiple occasions gets to enter, in the company of Wednesday, the so-called backstage. When asked what exactly is the backstage, Wednesday responds: "Think of it as being behind the scenes. Like in a theater or something. I just pulled us out of the audience and now we're walking about backstage. It's a shortcut."[32] Yet, this aspect cannot result in *American Gods* being classified as a straightforward Portal-Quest fantasy. There are also features of Liminal fantasy. Sean Dixon in his study of Folklore and Mythology describes that the liminality in *American Gods* comes from Shadow's inability to comprehend the fantastic. It works as a clear distinction, if compared to what is expected from a protagonist in a Portal-Quest fantasy who should come to understand the fantastic rather quickly.[33] In most cases, Shadow seems to be unaffected by the fantastic events that he encounters. In a way, he accepts them as something that is part of his life and lurks behind every corner.

1.4.2 Stardust

Contrary to this, Gaiman's *Stardust* has almost exclusively features of Portal-Quest fantasy. It presents two worlds, the world of Wall, a city in rural England, and the Faire world with the protagonist traveling between them through a portal. In this case, the form of the portal is a hole in the wall, which surrounds the city where the protagonist lives. This wall represents a physical border between the city, on one side, and Faerie land, on the other. Dunstan Thorn, father of the protagonists, in the introduction to the setting, describes his desires of "leaving the village of Wall and all its unpredictable charm, and going to London, or Edinburgh, or Dublin, or some great town where nothing was dependent on which way the wind was blowing."[34] Ironically,

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[32] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 253.
[33] Dixon, Sean. "Folklore and Mythology in Neil Gaiman's American Gods," 2017, 53.
[34] Neil Gaiman, *Stardust: Being a Romance within the Realms of Faerie* (New York: HarperTeen, 1999), 5.

unlike his son, he can only live in the real world since the Faerie world is forbidden to him and the rest of the citizens of the city of Wall.

As described in the previous paragraph, crossing the border between the real world and the faerie world is forbidden at all times except every nine years when there is the portal instead of the border. Tristran, the protagonist of the book, gets conceived during the phase in which the real can interact with the faerie, so when he is of age and gets to interact with the portal, his experience is different than others. This ultimately sets him off on a quest after he sees a star fall from the sky. After finding Yvaine at the place where he saw the star land, Tristran tries to bring her to the real world, but on their journey there, they meet a woman who explains that Yvaine cannot leave the faerie land by saying:

> "I should warn you," said the woman, "that if you leave these lands for ... over there ..." and she gestured toward the village of Wall with one slim arm, from the wrist of which a silver chain glittered, "... then you will be, as I understand it, transformed into what you would be in that world: a cold, dead thing, sky-fallen."[35]

Since Yvaine is a star, to leave the faerie world and losing the magic within her would mean becoming her literal form, an inanimate object.

1.4.3 Neverwhere

Similarly to *Stardust*, *Neverwhere* also presents two worlds. Yet, in this case, these are not necessarily two different worlds, but they are rather different versions of the same world. Furthermore, as in *Stardust*, *Neverwhere* presents a character of an outsider. In *Stardust*, the character was the protagonist's father who dreamed of leaving the city without knowing about the fantastic of the faerie world. In the case of *Neverwhere*, it is the protagonist's fiancée. When Richard, the protagonist, and Jessica meet a stranger in the need of help, Richard is drawn towards the stranger, while Jessica sees it as a waste of time saying that "Richard had no priorities."[36] Just as Tristran's father in *Stardust*, Jessica is also unable to comprehend Richard's choices which are connected to the world below Jessica's.

Meeting a stranger, later introduced as Door, the last member of a family with the ability to open doors between the two worlds, is just the start of Richard's journey

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[35] Gaiman, *Stardust,* 89.
[36] Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere. The Author's Preferred Text* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2013), 24.

into the fantastic. It is later when Richard gets to enter the fantastic world by dropping in the sewers. Contrary to the traditional Portal/Quest Fantasy, with the realities being parallel, *Neverwhere* presents a fantastic world that is below the real one. After his entrance to London Below, Richard is consumed by the experience and describes the place as "loud, and brash, and insane, and it was, in many ways, quite wonderful."[37]

     Neverwhere is in a way a prototypical piece of Portal/Quest fantasy. Richard´s journeys into the fantasy world known as London Below make him consumed by the quest of finding Door. Throughout the book, the position of Richard and the reader is rather similar, they both depend on Richard's ability to decode the fantastic world and his explanation of the world itself.

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[37] Gaiman, *Neverwhere*, 109.

2 Structuralism and Fiction

2.1 Introduction to Structuralism

Jonathan Culler in his book *Structuralist Poetics: structuralism, linguistics, and the study of Literature* describes that novel, perhaps more than any literary form, serves as a model in which society conceives itself.[38] In the case of fantasy fiction, this does not simply lead to a creation of signs, but rather a production of a world charged with meaning. Culler goes into more detail by claiming that through reading, we create models of worlds, personalities and relations between individuals and society.[39] He later continues by stating that structuralists are interested in novel due to its ability to make deviations from the troubling norms, which makes them potentially more powerful.[40] Hatice Çelebi in her study of structural and fictional analysis describes how experience in reading affects us. She explains that the range of novels that are available make a critical reader confront the different models mentioned in the paragraph. She further states that: "Even when the novels themselves do not serve at an aim of questioning the models they rely on, a critical reader would be confronted with the necessity of comparison and reflection."[41]

In order to carry out a structuralist analysis, Culler claims, there firstly needs to be a way in which to distinguish several descriptive layers and then placing them in the perspective of a hierarchy of integration.[42] He continues that reading is implicitly recognizing elements of a particular level and interpreting them accordingly.[43] In other words, to describe the two main levels, which are a level of trivial detail and a level of narrative speech act. These are based on Roland Bathes' study *Structural Analysis of Narratives*. In a structuralist analysis, both an exploration of the narrative elements as well as descriptive levels should be embraced, so that their semantic structure can be exposed.

2.2 Development and Binary Oppositions

The emergence of structuralism challenged existencionalism and its notion of human freedom as it is focused on human behavior and how it is determined by cultural, social

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[38] Jonathan D. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2008), 189.
[39] Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 190.
[40] Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 190.
[41] Çelebi, Hatice. "Structural and Functional Analysis of Henry James' Novel the Portrait of a Lady," 2003, 8.
[42] Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 192.
[43] Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 192.

and psychological structures. Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida were among the first who explored applying structuralist principles to literature. Barthes' study led to describing structuralism as a way in which the world can be perceived as a structure. In another way, this means that things cannot be understood in isolation and context needs to be provided to properly understand even the larger structures. He also went on to describe that these structures do not exist by themselves, but are formed by the way in which we perceive the world.[44]

Levi Strauss and Barthes were trailblazers in the field of structuralism. They were later joined by other authors such as Propp, Greimas and Chomsky in defining the fundamental belief of Structuralism – all human activities are constructed and not natural or essential. This belief then led to the creation of the so-called units and rules. Roy Harris in his work *Landmarks and linguistics* describes that units are the surface phenomena and the rules are the ways in which units can be put together.[45]

The beginning of structuralism might be traced as far as 1916 and Ferdinand de Saussure´s C*ourse in General Linguistics*, in which he moved from the traditional philological study of language to the study of structures. Saussure introduced the idea of linguistic sign which strongly influenced nearly all structuralist and poststructuralist studies. He believed that in order to make a linguistic sign, we are creating a union of *signifier*, which is for example a physical sound, word or image, and *signified*, which is a mental concept.[46] This concept was the cornerstone for his theory that language is not a naming process in which we associate things with words or names.

In Saussure´s *Course in General linguistics*, there is also a theory regarding the paradigmatic chain and binary oppositions. He described the so-called paradigmatic chains to be a set of words, which are dependent upon each other and which contribute to the final meaning by their position in the chain.[47] Yet, at the same time, individual elements in the sentence structure might be changed and the sentence will still make sense. For example, the verb "ran" in the sentence "John ran across the street" could be replaced by other verbs such as "crawled" or "walked". Saussure also introduced a

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[44] Barthes, Roland, Richard Miller, and Richard Howard. *S/Z An Essay*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, 12.
[45] Roy Harris and Talbot J. Taylor, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought: the Western Tradition from Socrates to Saussure* (London: Routledge, 1997), 78.
[46] Ferdinand de Saussure et al., *Course in General Linguistics* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2008), 124.
[47] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 70.

definition for pairs of words such as male-female, good-bad or day-night. These pair of words in which the units can only be defined in relation to their opposites. The pairing of words is called binary oppositions.[48] This paper will later carry out an analysis of binary oppositions presented in Neil Gaiman's fantasy fiction.

Lastly, Saussure came with the term Langue (language as a system) and Parole (an utterance in that language).[49] This introduced structuralists to a way of thinking which showcased that larger structures were relevant to literature. Saussure and other structuralist critics believe that the meaning of a story comes from its overall structure (langue), rather than from its isolated themes (parole).[50] Structuralist critics analyze text based on semiotic theory. This means that the meanings of words derive from its difference from other words in the sign system. And as previously mentioned, signs are culturally constructed through repetitive and collective use.

Structuralism was also partly introduced in *Myth Criticism* by Northrop Frye. This study, which was apart from myths also concentrated on folk tales and rituals, saw literature as a system of reoccurring patterns.

2.3 Binarity in Gaiman's Literature
2.3.1 American Gods
The binary opposition of old and new is present throughout the whole narrative of *American Gods*. First of all, the idea of old and new symbolizes Shadow's journey in life. The old one which he leaves behind after he gets released from prison and the new one which begins once he is introduced to Wednesday. Another instance of old and new is in the division between the Gods themselves. The Old Gods who are the Gods of culture and religion were brought to America together with people who immigrated there. New Gods, contrary to this, symbolize a new way of religion. They are formed through modern forms of belief and worship that is often practiced in an unconscious way. New Gods symbolize a new way of thinking, fast paced life, in which anything can change. This is also reflected in their appearance which often changes or evolves as it is described in the following part:

> They came in all sizes and shapes, all ages and styles. All they had in common was a look, a very specific look. It said, you know me; or perhaps, you ought to know me. An instant familiarity that was also a distance, a look, or an

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[48] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 121.
[49] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 28.
[50] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 28.

attitude-the confidence that the world existed for them, and that it welcomed them, and that they were adored.[51]

The visage and presence of New Gods highlight the main differences between them and the old ones. The New Gods want to be seen and want their presence to be felt. They are full of power and therefore they present themselves in such a way. The Old Gods, in opposition to this, are on the decline, so they hide in the shadows, they do not present themselves to the general public, but rather to a few selected believers.

Some of binary the oppositions in *American Gods* are not as straightforward as it may seem. For instance, the states of being alive and dead are traditionally mutually exclusive. In *American Gods*, this binary pair is not definite. Mr. Ibis explains the idea of life and dead to Shadow as such "You people talk about the living and the dead as if they were two mutually exclusive categories. As if you cannot have a river that is also a road, or a song that is also a color"[52] This is best shown on the character of Laura, Shadow's wife. At the beginning of the story, Laura dies in a car crash but when Shadow attends her funeral, he is able to make her partially come back to life. While Laura is able to move and talk, her body functions do not work properly which forces her to a state in which he is neither alive nor dead.

Gaiman also explores the binarity of believing. For secular people, the world of *American Gods* might feel just as the world we live in right now. Religious people, on the other hand, get to interact with their Gods. On several occasions, their belief is rewarded and they get to meet the physical manifestations of their Gods. One of the examples is the story of Salim whose faith enabled him to meet Ifrit, a character from Islamic mythology. After this encounter, Salim is rewarded by getting a new job which he struggled to get after moving to New York.

And there are many more examples of binarity that Gaiman uses to highlight some of the struggles in the world of *American Gods*. Other such ideas are of real and fake, good and evil or light and dark. Most of them though, similarly to the idea of life and death, are not straightforward but rather liminal.

2.3.2 Stardust

In *Stardust*, the worlds of the city of Wall and the Faerie land function as a binary opposition. Wall represents the life in feudal society in which most things are ordinary.

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[51] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 376.
[52] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 120.

The Faerie world, in opposition to this, represents a life full of magic, mythical being and talking animals. Gaiman uses this contrast between the worlds to enhance the magic of the Faerie world. Most of Tristran's encounters are out of the ordinary. He is introduced to a character called who is referred to as "a little hairy man" who guides him through this new experience.

The distinction between Wall and Faerie adds on to the idea of an insider and outsider. Tristran's biological mother comes from the Faerie land while his father lives in the city of Wall. Tristran's origin is reflected in his looks, that, alongside being shy and awkward, leads to Tristran feeling alienated in his community. He is interested in a girl named Victoria who is, contrary to him, representing someone who is beloved by the community. Tristran enters Faerie land when he takes on a quest to bring a star to Victoria. Even though Tristran is in a new environment, he still feels like an outsider. After he finds Yvaine, the fallen star, things start to change and by the time they finally get back to the city of Wall, Tristran realizes that he feels more at home in the Faerie land. Yvaine plays a significant role in his realization since she is an outsider to both the Faerie world and world of Wall. She is in a similar situation as Tristran because she feels like she does not belong to either of the worlds.

Gaiman also explores the idea of life and death. The lords of Stormhold are, as well as Tristran, on a search for the fallen star since their dying father promised the crown to whoever finds it first, which implies that even in the Faerie world, death is inevitable. This is also reflected in the epilogue of the book, in which Gaiman mentions Tristran's death stating that "death came in the night, and whispered her secret into the ear of the eighty-second Lord of Stormhold, and he nodded his grey head and he said nothing more, and his people took his remains to the Hall of Ancestors where they lie to this day."[53] Tristran is referred to as the eighty-second Lord of Stormhold, but his death does not only complete the cycle of his life. At the same time, it completes the cycle of Lords of Stormhold. The cycle ends since Yvaine, who became the Lady of Stormhold after Tristran's death, "did not age as her husband had aged, and her eyes remained as blue, her hair as golden-white." In the closing of the book, it is moreover suggested that Yvaine rule the Faerie world to this day.

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[53] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 101.

2.3.3 Neverwhere

The most prominent binary opposition in this text is based on the two parallel spaces of London Above and London Below as there are huge differences between the inhabitants of the cities. While London Above is the home of the rich, London Below is inhabited by the poor. Similarly to that, London Above is full of homeowners and London Below functions as a home of the homeless population. Another difference between the two cities is that London Above reminds the reader of the real city of London because it is full of life which creates anonymity among the people. London Below, on the other hand, is rather tranquil and dark.

The way cities are represented also shows a distinction between old and new. As mentioned above, London Above is a representation of contemporary London. On the contrary, London Below is a mirrored image of London Above which was able to soak all of London's history. The rich history of London cannot always be seen in London Above due to human evolution or events such as the London fire. London Below, however, was able to preserve the rich history starting with Celts and ending in the contemporary time. Things and people do not get replaced or pushed aside in London Below; they rather learn to coexist. For example, the reader learns that Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar "set up their home in the cellar of a Victorian hospital"[54] while the Roman soldiers camp out by a river nearby.

The strong division between up and down is then already reflected in the name by which the two parallel cities are referred to. London Above presents the so-called upper class and London Below presents the lower class. The cities are divided by the Tube, that means Richard has to go down to the Tube in order to enter the world of London Below and vice versa. The connection between the cities does not exist organically, which leads to certain elements being either visible or invisible to the people of London Above. Door was nearly invisible to Richard's fiancée who embodies the people of London Above. When Richard becomes part of London Below, he too cannot be seen by his fiancée and the people who used to be his co-workers. The idea of visibility to the outside world of London Above is used to determine whether someone belongs to the society of London Below or not.

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[54] Gaiman, *Neverwhere*, 37.

2.4 Frye's Anatomy of Criticism

2.4.1 Theory of Myths

In his 1958 study *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye introduced an approach called *Myth Criticism*. Frye combined the emphasis of formalists on criticism being an objective, scientific and systematic discipline with a topological interpretation of the texts such as writings of William Blake and the Bible. In his text, Frye further points out the repetitiveness of literature.

Frye's *Myth Criticism* may be perceived as a way to restore spiritual content from which humans were alienated thanks to technology. He associated the creation of myth with dreams, magic and imagination and established it as an integral human thought. He further described myth as an attempt to understand the core of human existence.[55] Frye´s study views literature as something that emerged from myths and just as myth followed the system that worked based on reoccurring patterns. It is also argued that literature draws from transcendental genres.[56] In the same study, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye described four main genres which he consequently connected to seasons. According to him, summer is the culmination of the other seasons just as romance and marriage culminate life, therefore he believed that summer represented romance. Comedy, Frye argues, is mainly a product of fantasy and wish-fulfillment, thus he chose spring to represent it. Satire's mockery lines up with the coldness of winter and since fall symbolizes the decay of life, it represents tragedy.[57]

As a part of *Theory of Myths*, Frye also introduces the dianoia of archetypal imagery. This theory presents an analysis of archetypal meaning along two axes. The first axis is generally referred to as types of imagery. While Frye presents three basic types of imagery (apocalyptic, demonic, and analogical), he also later explains that the analogical type can be further devised into three other categories. Along the other axis, Frye presents so-called categories or levels of reality. There are seven of those levels and they form, in combination with types of imagery, the Great Chain of Being. Frye believes that we conceive reality as something that exists on various levels, such as the divine world, human world, animal world, etc.[58] This combination of types of reality and levels of reality helps to locate different kinds of archetypal imagery. For example,

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[55] Frye, *Anatomy*, 344.
[56] Frye, *Anatomy*, 151.
[57] Frye, *Anatomy*, 158.
[58] Frye, *Anatomy*, 141.

the combination of apocalyptic type of imagery in the divine world produces a society of Gods or in the Christian tradition one God. Even though they might appear as something different, they represent the same unlimited human desire and therefore can be said to be identical. As a result of this, Frye presents a pattern in which the divine world equals both the society of gods and one god.[59] This relationship inside the type of imagery forms half of Frye's arguments. He also believes that the same relationship exists among the different categories of reality. He states that "the body and blood of the Lamb who is also Man and God, and in whose body we exist as in a city or temple."[60] In other words, the form of human in human world or the form of lamb in animal world is identical to the form of god in divine world.

After establishing the forms in apocalyptic type of imagery, Frye moves on to defining the various types of images in demonic and analogical imagery. So far in this essay, the imagery was presented as two axes but in the second part, Frye presents a cyclical pattern to his theory. He believes that this cyclical pattern, also referred to as dianoia, is the most apparent in pair of opposite categories.[61] The examples of opposite categories are apocalyptic versus demonic and romantic versus realistic. Frye also highlights that apocalyptic imagery or the divine world is connected to myth while demonic imagery often correlates to parody and is represented by irony and satire. This connection of apocalyptic and demonic is closely connected to the first and last category in his theory of modes.

After highlighting the connection between apocalyptic and demonic imagery, Frye introduces a discussion by stating that "most imagery in poetry has of course to deal with much less extreme worlds than the two which are usually projected as the eternal unchanging worlds of heaven and hell."[62] He also reinforces his previous statement about connection to the *Theory of Modes* by saying that "apocalyptic imagery is appropriate to the mythical mode, and demonic imagery to the ironic mode in the late phase in which it returns to myth."[63] This, according to him, pulls the reader toward the metaphorical and mythic core of literature. Frye moreover introduces an analogy of an undisplaced world. This analogical imagery roughly corresponds to the

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[59] Frye, *Anatomy*, 141.
[60] Frye, *Anatomy*, 143.
[61] Frye, *Anatomy*, 166.
[62] Frye, *Anatomy*, 151.
[63] Frye, *Anatomy*, 151.

other three modes in the *Theory of Modes* which are romantic, high mimetic and low mimetic modes. Just as Frye connected heaven to apocalyptic mode and hell to demonic, he associates innocence with romance, puts nature and reason to high mimetic mode and experience to low mimetic mode.[64] His analysis is done by isolating certain types of works, for example, in order to find analogy for romance, Frye selects a series of works written between medieval age and nineteenth century. In the given texts, Frye looks for certain clusters of significant constellations of romantic imagery. He believes that

> the imagery presents a human counterpart of the apocalyptic world which we may call the analogy of innocence. The idea of innocence is best known to us, not from the age of romance itself, but from later romanticizings: Comus, The Tempest, and the third book of The Faerie Queene in the Renaissance; Blake's songs of innocence and "Beulah" imagery, Keats's Endymion and Shelley's Epipsychidion.[65]

A similar analysis is carried out for high and low mimetic modes which results, as previously mentioned, in connecting them to reason and experience respectively.

2.4.2 Theory of Modes

The previously mentioned seasons and their analogies to genres are only one part of Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* titled *Theory of Myths*. Alongside the *Theory of Myths*, Frye presents *Theory of Modes*, *Theory of Symbols* and *Theory of Genres*.

In the *Theory of Modes*, Frye puts forward a classification system which categorizes texts according to the power of the protagonist's actions. He describes five modes which are mythic, romantic, high, and low mimetic and finally ironic mode.[66] In the so-called mythic mode, the protagonist is a divine being that is superior to both people and his environment. In romantic mode, the hero is no longer a divine being, but keeps his superiority over other characters inside his world as well as the environment. Moving on to the high and low mimetic modes, in the high mimetic mode, sometimes also called epic and tragic mode, the hero keeps his superiority to men but loses the superiority over the environment. The hero is also usually described as a mortal leader. In the low mimetic modes, which are also known as Epic and Tragic

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[64] Frye, *Anatomy*, 140.
[65] Frye, *Anatomy*, 151.
[66] Frye, *Anatomy*, 33.

modes, the hero is in most cases equal to the reader. Lastly, in the ironic mode, the hero is inferior either in power or intelligence to the reader.[67]

Frye also notes that civilization has been progressing through the development of these modes starting with mythic mode.[68] Literature began with myths of gods and godlike kings. It was followed by romance, which was represented in western literature up to renaissance in a highly mimetic mode. Lastly, the ironic mode is represented by authors like Kafka, Hawthorne, and T.S. Elliot. Frye also speculates that fiction may return to myth and therefore complete a full circle through the modes.[69] Since Frye's study was published in the middle of the 20th century, an analysis on Gaiman, who is representing contemporary writing, can provide an insight into the trend and it might be found out if the speculation was in any way correct and whether these modes still hold up in the 21st century.

In *Theory of Modes*, Frye also connected the previously described fictional modes to tragic, comic, and thematic modes.[70] These modes are used in order to further categorize pieces of literature. For instance, in what is titled "mythic comic mode," that is also known as the apollonian mode, the hero is accepted into a society of Gods. The prototypical example of this mode would be the story of Hercules, in which the protagonist tries to become a part of the society of Gods through series of trials. The "romance comic mode" presents a pastoral or idyllic setting, which is why this mode is sometimes also known as idyllic.[71] In such story, the protagonist integrates with an idealized and simplified form of nature. In general, the "high mimetic comedy", known as aristophanic, involves a protagonist who starts by creating his own society, then fends of his opposition and ends up with honor and riches.[72] The name "aristophanic" comes from the plays of Aristophanes who is perceived as the prototypical author of this mode. The low mimetic comedy, known as the "nomadic mode", portrays a hero that is relatable to the reader or even a hero to which the reader can feel superior.[73] Since the protagonist, as mentioned before, is supposed to feel relatable to the reader, he often has similar goals as the reader, which includes marriage or promotion. Lastly,

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[67] Frye, *Anatomy*, 33.
[68] Frye, *Anatomy*, 33.
[69] Frye, *Anatomy*, 41.
[70] Frye, *Anatomy*, 35.
[71] Frye, *Anatomy*, 43.
[72] Frye, *Anatomy*, 43.
[73] Frye, *Anatomy*, 57.

the ironic comedy, which is also known as "sadism", is the most complex mode if compared to the others described in this paragraph. Frye describes several different options in which the ironic comic mode can be described. One of the options is to have a protagonist that is rejected by his society while, at the same time, appearing wiser than the society that rejected him. Another option described by Frye is a more extreme one, it seeks sentiment while ridiculing the audience.[74] Examples of this mode could be stories of human sacrifice or murder mysteries.

Alongside the previously mentioned comic modes, Frye discusses their tragic counterparts as well. Tragedy, in general, refers to fiction in which the protagonist becomes isolated from society as opposed to comedy in which he is usually part of it. The mythic tragic modes might also be referred to as the "dionysiac literature,"[75] which is a type of literature dealing with the death of Gods. Romantic tragic mode, known as "elegiac mode", refers to the tragedy of semi-divine beings. A prototypical example of such literature is the story of Beowulf. High mimetic tragedy introduces a hero that is exposed in his leadership position. One of the best known examples of this high mimetic tragedy, often described as a classic tragedy, is Shakespeare's play Othello.[76] The second to last tragic mode that Frye described is the low mimetic tragedy. Just like low mimetic comedy, even a low mimetic tragedy is much more relatable to the reader than for example mythic tragedy. Frye labels this type of literature "pathos", since it tries to evoke feelings that already reside in the reader. One of the prototypical pieces of literature that belongs under this label is then Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Lastly, the ironic tragedy mode deals with a hero that is recognized as weak or pitiful by other humans. The protagonist is referred to as a "scapegoat" on the basis that he is usually neither guilty nor innocent. Sometimes, this hero is not weaker compared to the rest of the humanity, but suffers harsher consequences for his actions.[77]

The last modes that Frye introduced in *Theory of Modes* are thematic modes. Frye believed that in thematic modes, the intellectual content is more important than the plot itself.[78] He argues that the question "What is the point of this story?" is more

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[74] Frye, *Anatomy*, 49.
[75] Frye, *Anatomy*, 36.
[76] Frye, *Anatomy*, 38.
[77] Frye, *Anatomy*, 41.
[78] Frye, *Anatomy*, 52.

prevalent in thematic mode than the question "How is this story going to turn out?" At the same time, Frye is aware of the fact that there is no piece of literature that does not have both of these elements at play. Mythic thematic mode, also known as "scripture", usually claims divine inspiration. Romantic thematic literature, sometimes referred to as "chronicles", presents an environment where gods are no longer part of human society and it is up to the chroniclers to remember the society as it was. High mimetic thematic mode deals with national stories. It presents a story, usually based around a capital city, which deals with national epics. An example of this might be the poem *The Faerie Queen* by Edmund Spencer. Low mimetic thematic mode presents a story of individualism. Rather than having a protagonist representing some nation, the low mimetic thematic mode presents a hero that represents his own thoughts and who is the center of authority. Lastly, the Ironic thematic mode, referred to as "discontinuity" presents a hero that is mostly an observer. He is often avoiding direct statements and juxtaposing images without explanation. One of the examples of the "discontinuity" is Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.[79]

2.4.3 Theory of Symbols

Frye describes a symbol as "any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention."[80] In this essay, he proposes there are five levels of symbolism. A few centuries earlier, Dante introduced the term Polysemous, which means that any work of literature may be assigned several meanings.[81] Whenever an author presents his work to the public, he gives up having the final word on the meaning since the public can assign several meanings to the piece. This can even get to the point in which the readers come up with meanings that the author never intended to present. The five levels introduced at the beginning of this subchapter are also referred to by Frye as "phases". He uses them to highlight the thought that there is a sequence of contexts in which the work can be interpreted.

Frye begins by describing the so-called "Literal and Descriptive phases". He presents a theory of motifs and signs. In his theory, the descriptive phase presents the outward properties of a symbol. According to Frye, readers tend to assign words to his or her own experience and therefore they create their own definitions of the properties

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[79] Frye, *Anatomy*, 61.
[80] Frye, *Anatomy*, 71.
[81] Frye, *Anatomy*, 72.

of given words.[82] For example, when reading the word "chair", different readers with different experiences and backgrounds will imagine a chair with different properties such as size, shape or color. Frye labels these types of symbols as "signs". Contrary to this, the literal phase describes the inward properties of a symbol. Frye describes this type of symbol as a "motif".[83] The literal meaning is usually connected to a definition outside the text, but the use of the word may be almost opposite to the term that is used in common speech. When describing the literal, Frye refers to the meaning of a symbol in specific texts.

The "formal phase" which is described in *Theory of Symbols* is embodied by the so-called "image". It is a result of the interplay between signs and symbols. Frye used Hamlet as an example for this part of his essays as he suggests that literature holds a mirror to nature. He argues that ideas in literature are not real propositions, but rather propositions that imitate the ones of the real world. Frye believes that examining imagery brings out distinctive patterns and that frequent repetition of image brings out so call "tonality".[84] The form of a text stays the same whether it is studied from the viewpoint of its narrative or meaning. Formal criticism focuses on the central form of imagery and commentates on what is implicit in it. According to Frye, good commentary does not focus on writer's primary intention of the meaning, but rather on attaching ideas to the structure of the imagery of the text. Later on, in the essay Frye uses the term "heraldic symbol" that can be found in texts like Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. This "heraldic symbol" then represents the central image which has no continuous relation between art and nature.[85] This type of symbol also has a strong relationship between the meaning and narrative and, in a way, belongs between both literal and descriptive aspects of symbols. Frye further points out that a wide range of possible commentary should be kept in mind in order to not fall into a perspective of Renaissance and Medieval criticism. This creates a range of possible relationships of literature. Frye describes as a "body of hypothetical creations which is not necessarily involved in the worlds of truth and fact, nor necessarily withdrawn from them, but which may enter into any kind of relationship to them, ranging from the most to the least explicit."[86] The concept of art having neither direct nor negative, but rather a

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[82] Frye, *Anatomy*, 74.
[83] Frye, *Anatomy*, 76.
[84] Frye, *Anatomy*, 85.
[85] Frye, *Anatomy*, 92.
[86] Frye, *Anatomy*, 92-93.

potential relation to reality is what creates, according to Frye, the dichotomy between style and message, and delight and instruction. Frye also argues that the traditional theory of catharsis as an emotional response to art is not an actual emotion. Instead, he rather puts forward that the emotion is created by something else by saying that "the vision of something liberated from experience, the response kindled in the reader by the transmutation of experience into mimesis, of life into art, of routine into play."[87]

The second to last phase is the "Mythical Phase" and it presents a symbol as an archetype. Frye explains that this concept is closely related to intertextuality since it considers symbols as something that is interconnected throughout the body of literature as a whole. He makes his point by explaining that literature "have life, reality, experience, nature, imaginative truth, social conditions, or what you will for its content; but literature itself is not made out of these things."[88] He goes on to explain that literature in a way shapes itself. Frye also presents T.S. Eliot's viewpoints that an author is more likely to steal than to imitate. He later goes on to explain that archetypal criticism is concerned with literature as a mode of communication for the reason that symbols connect different pieces of literature and unify readers' literary experience. Frye notes that "In each phase of symbolism there is a point at which the critic is compelled to break away from the range of the poet's own knowledge."[89] Frye understands this knowledge as something that the author uses to allude to or to imitate other authors through the usage of conventions. At the same time, he points out that conventionalized literature must be distinguished from the literature that tries to ignore any conventional links. Frye also believes that copyright is harmful in the process of creating literature.[90] He uses several examples to show how the usage of convention does not mean that there is no creativity in the given piece of literature. He also calls attention to romantic authors who were believed to be unconventional and original in nature, but who still follow the convention to a certain degree. In conclusion, the mythical phase does not view the symbol as something unique to the author, but rather places it in the society of literature as a product of its conventions.

The last phase presented by Frye is the "Anagogic phase". This phase threats the symbol as monad and Frye describes how literature imitates the dream of humanity.

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[87] Frye, *Anatomy*, 93.
[88] Frye, *Anatomy*, 97.
[89] Frye, *Anatomy*, 100.
[90] Frye, *Anatomy*, 98.

He explains that in the formal phase, nature is container and the literature is contained in nature. Archetypal phase literature is then still within the limits of plausible. On the other hand, in anagogic phase, he believes nature becomes contained rather than the container.[91] To prove his point, Frye states that "literature imitates human action as total ritual, and so imitates the action of an omnipotent human society that contains all the powers of nature within itself."[92] He explains that the type of literature that is most affected by this phase are scriptures, which have been introduced as a part of thematic mode. This type of literature has God with unlimited power in the form of a protagonist in human form.[93] Frye later describes the main point of anagogic phase is to showcase that anything may be a subject of literature. He states that "the symbol is a monad, all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is, as dianoia, the Logos, and, as mythos, total creative act."[94] This means that in terms of anagogic view, literature is no longer seen as a commentary of life or reality, but something that contains its universe instead.

In the conclusion to his theory of symbols, Frye states that until this point, he described symbols as isolated units. In order to highlight the relationship between symbols, he mentions metaphors. While on the literal level, metaphors appear as a simple juxtaposition, at the formal level, it is an analogy of proportion. At the archetypal level, metaphor unites images into classes and lastly, at the anagogic level, metaphor is a statement of hypothetical identity. [95]

2.4.4 Theory of Genres
In the first three essays of *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye explored mainly the elements of Aristotle's poetry which includes historical, ethical, and symbolic aspects of literature. In the last one, named *Theory of Genres*, he deals with the elements of "melos", "lexis" and "opsis". Melos, in general, stands for the melodic aspect of literature: its tonal and musical aspect. Lexis then deals with a written word which lies on a scale somewhere between melos and opsis. At the same time, lexis is referred to as a diction or imagery,

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[91] Frye, *Anatomy*, 119.
[92] Frye, *Anatomy*, 120.
[93] Frye, *Anatomy*, 120.
[94] Frye, *Anatomy*, 121.
[95] Frye, *Anatomy*, 123.

depending on the critical focus. Lastly, opsis explores the visual aspects of literature.[96] Frye combines these three elements in *Theory of Genres* into one called "rhetoric".

According to Frye "literature may be described as the rhetorical organization of grammar and logic."[97] Greeks introduced three generic terms for types of literature genres: drama, epic and lyric, but it is argued that those three basic genres are often poorly understood and misused. He presents even simpler distinction by stating that "the basis of generic distinctions in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. Words may be acted in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader."[98] This theory may be simple in nature but does not address the possibility of a text belonging to several of these categories. Frye then goes into more detail, as he describes epos as an attempt to preserve the convention of a recitation and a listening audience and fiction as the genre of printed texts.[99] While some believe that there is liminality between epos and fiction, Frye insists that it is easy to make a distinction in the way that "epos is episodic and fiction continuous"[100] Alongside with epos and fiction, Frye describes drama as a form that is most likely to flourish in a society with a strong sense of itself. [101] Lastly, Frye moves onto lyric. He insists that "the most admired and advanced poets of the twentieth century are chiefly those who have most fully mastered the elusive, meditative, resonant, centripetal word-magic of the emancipated lyrical rhythm."[102] These four genres can also be described on the basis of a relation between the writer and his reader. As described before, epos represents a spoken word and therefore there is a direct connection between an author and audience. In fiction, however, the author and his audience are hidden from each other. In drama, the author is also hidden from the audience, but the audience experiences the content directly. And lastly, in lyric, the speaker is overheard by the hearers while the author is hidden.

Frye did not forget to discuss each of the genres mentioned above, but since this thesis deals with prose fiction, it is not necessary to discuss them. Concerning Epos and fiction, it is claimed that they "make up the central area of literature, and are

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[96] Frye, *Anatomy*, 244.
[97] Frye, *Anatomy*, 245.
[98] Frye, *Anatomy*, 246-7.
[99] Frye, *Anatomy*, 248.
[100] Frye, *Anatomy*, 249.
[101] Frye, *Anatomy*, 249.
[102] Frye, *Anatomy*, 273.

flanked by the drama on one side and by the lyric on the other."[103] In the text, it is explained Epos and fiction have evolved through the time, from the form of scripture through myth, traditional tales, poetry and oral prose to other written forms.[104] The same pattern that was introduced in his *Theory of Modes*. Frye additionally states that:

> Fiction increasingly overshadows epos, and as it does, the mimesis of direct address changes to a mimesis of assertive writing. This in its turn, with the extremes of documentary or didactic prose, becomes actual assertion, and so passes out of literature.[105]

Further, a scale in the center of which lies fiction and epos is introduced. On one side, there lies drama with its representation of imagery and sound as well as being enacted in front of an audience. On the other side, there is lyric with an indirect address and the author talking to himself. Concerning poetry, Frye, in a way believes that the author "turns his back on his listeners."[106]

2.5 Anatomy of Criticism Applied

2.5.1 American Gods

Frye suggests, in the *Theory of Modes* that each piece of literature can be assigned into one of the presented categories. In order to analyze which of the categories apply to a certain piece of literature, it is important to look at the role of the protagonist. In the opening chapter of *American Gods*, Shadow, the protagonist is released from a prison. While this might suggest that *American Gods* that he was disconnected from society, Shadow is never completely separated. Even when he was in prison, he was still a part of microorganism and interacted with characters such as Low Key Leysmith. Rather than separation, the book deals with Shadow's subsequent integration in the new world he discovers after being freed. Shadow lost his wife, Laura, while still in prison and as a consequence of that, he feels the need to abandon his old life of petty crimes. He meets Wednesday, Odin in disguise, learns about the world of Gods and starts a new chapter.

Frye suggests that mythic mode narrates a story about a protagonist who tries to become a member of a society of Gods. He also specifies that this is often done through series of trials. When Shadow interacts with Wednesday for the first time, he declines his offer to work for him. Yet later, he is persuaded to come along on a journey

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[103] Frye, *Anatomy*, 250.
[104] Frye, *Anatomy*, 251.
[105] Frye, *Anatomy*, 250.
[106] Frye, *Anatomy*, 250.

with him. It is the journey when Shadow's series of trials begins. Most challenges that Shadow faces while working for Wednesday stem from him being his bodyguard, therefore he has to physically defend him. The first time he gets into a fight after being released from prison is when he faces Mad Sweeny. Gaiman writes "Shadow fought defensively, carefully, blocking Sweeney's blows or avoiding them."[107] His goal was to prove himself in front of Wednesday with one of his other bodyguards.

Another trial that Shadow faces is when he assists Wednesday in a bank robbery scam. This trial is particularly hard for Shadow as he is aware that a failure would lead to him being imprisoned again. What sways Shadow's opinion about robbing the bank is when he learns that he is able to manifest things in existence. Wednesday tells him "Concentrate on making those clouds—the ones over there, in the west—making them bigger and darker. Think gray skies and driving winds coming down from the arctic. Think snow."[108] This new found power gives Shadow enough confidence to successfully carry out the task.

The reasons mentioned above, Shadow's ambitions to become part of the society of Gods, as well as being able to complete several of the tasks given to him, are believed to be enough of a reason to consider *American Gods* a part of mythical mode.

In the theoretical framework, different categories of symbols according to Frye were introduced. As mentioned earlier, the first phase of a symbol is the so-called literal phase. This phase introduces symbols in the context of their literal meaning, or to be more precise – in the case of Frye literal means inside the piece of literature, rather than what the common understanding is. Coins, in *American Gods*, are one of the most prevalent symbols from literal phase. In most real life situations, coins are used as a currency, but Gaiman gives them magical properties. Shadow uses coins which he received from Loki for magic tricks, forms of deceit, which are closely connected to the Norse God. Shadow also receives a gold coin from Mad Sweeny, a leprechaun, after giving up the coin which Shadow learns had the power of protecting him. Luckily enough for Shadow, Zorya Polunochnaya, a Goddess from Slavic mythology, gives him another talisman of protection in form of Silver Liberty-Head Dollar. These coins

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[107] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 36.
[108] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 85.

are used as symbols of Shadow´s protection, as well as means to distract him from Wednesday's real intentions.

The most reoccurring symbol from formal phase is the image of winter. It was earlier mentioned that Shadow was thanks to his powers able to bring out a snowstorm and the idea of winter appears on multiple more occasions. Most of *American Gods* takes place in winter which may be symbolizing the decline of Old Gods. It is also mentioned, on multiple occasions, that "it's going to be a bad winter."[109] For several Gods, their symbolic winter has also lasted longer than the usual three month period and when it is, at the end of the book, time for changes, Gaiman writes "Things are changing. This is springtime. The true spring."[110]

Mythical phase which deals with symbols as intertextual archetypes is also present in *American Gods*. Most of the archetypes in this novel are characters from different mythologies. Shadow, the protagonist of the book, shares several features with Baldur who is a son of Odin. Later, he even learns that he is Odin´s son too. Another example of an archetype is Wednesday who is a representation of Odin. It is no coincidence that Shadow and Wednesday meet on Wednesday which is Odin's day in Norse mythology. Wednesday describes himself as Odin, the All-Father, one eyed, Grim, etc. He also mentions "My ravens are Thought and Memory; my wolves are Freki and Geri; my horse is the gallows."[111] which adds to the intertextuality.

To conclude, the nomadic symbols in *American Gods* are closely tied to Mythical ones as most of the intertextual references are at the same time connected to spiritual beings from various mythologies.

Different types of Archetypal Imagery are also described in Frye´s *Theory of Myths*. In *American Gods*, Shadow's story is introduced as taking place in the human world, but the reader later discovers that the story rather belongs to the category of the divine world. Shadow accompanies Wednesday on his journey of rallying Old Gods who are all members of a larger society of Gods. Traditionally, these Gods would not coexist together as most mythologies are exclusive to one another. However, Gaiman created a world in which various Gods from various mythologies interact with each other

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[109] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 215.
[110] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 442.
[111] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 104.

which is creating a rather unconventional society. This, as well as Shadow being part of this society thanks to his heritage, allows the novel to be placed in the category of apocalyptical imagery.

Frye also introduces categorization to seasons and their analogies to genres. As described earlier, the symbol of winter alludes to fall and decay. According to Frye, this would mean that the story should be classified as autumn season. This is not necessarily true when it comes to *American Gods* as it does not only deal with the stories of Old Gods, but also with the life of Shadow who, on the other hand, grows through the story and ultimately triumphs over the antagonist of the story. Shadow being the protagonist ultimately sways the story towards being classified as a summer season rather than autumn.

Even though *American Gods* also exists in a cinematic version, this analysis focused only on the written original and therefore, according to Frye's *Theory of Genres,* the text should be classified as fiction since the author, Neil Gaiman, is hidden from the audience, the readers.

2.5.2 Stardust

The protagonist of *Stardust*, Tristran Thorn, feels like an outcast in the city of Wall. This is caused by the behavior of his peers towards him, especially his sister and Victoria, a girl in which he is interested in. Similarly to Shadow in *American Gods*, Tristran tries to become a part of the society. He believes that in order to achieve this goal he has to prove himself to the individuals, notably to Victoria. Tristran offset to bring a fallen star to Victoria not only to prove his love toward her, but also to prove his value to the society. For these reasons the narrative would be classified as a comic mode, according to Frye, as it deals with integration into society.

In addition to the thematic mode examined in the previous paragraph, Frye also describes five fictional modes ranging from Mythic to Ironic mode. These modes are also characterized based on the position and abilities of the protagonist. In the closing pages of the book, it is revealed to the reader that Tristran became the lord Stormhold which might allude to *Stardust* being considered a high mimetic piece of literature. However, Frye describes the high mimetic protagonist as someone who constructs his society by using brute force, which is not the case of Tristran. The protagonist of Stardust should rather be considered a low mimetic one as he represents a social

elevation. Tristran, who was raised as an ordinary boy, manages to become the lord of Stormhold even though it was not his initial goal. Frye also mentions that one of the characteristics of low mimetic protagonists is that their narrations often end in a marriage. While is it not explicitly mentioned that Tristran married Yvaine, the fallen star, the epilogue alludes to them spending Tristran's entire life together. It is for these reasons that Stardust should be characterized as a low mimetic fictional mode according to Frye.

Concerning symbols, Gaiman used a high variety of them. The wall is probably the most notable literal symbol that appears in *Stardust*. It represents the physical and metaphorical separation between the city of Wall and the Faerie world. The wall is also a meeting point of the two worlds. Another important symbol that would be considered literal is a glass snowdrop given to Tristran by his father. Tristran's father originally bought the flower, for the price of one kiss, from an unknown girl who the reader learns became Tristran's mother. The flower thus first symbolized the beginning of Tristran's life and later, when Tristran receives the flower as a gift, it symbolizes the beginning of his journey. Unbeknownst to Tristran, it has magical powers which he is able to use to his advantage in the latter parts of the story.

The author also uses Tristran's clothing as a form of a symbol. In this case, the clothing would be classified as a formal symbol since it is a reoccurring symbol that is used to express Tristran's journey to maturity. Gaiman writes:

> Tristran Thorn in crimson and canary was not the same man that Tristran Thorn in his overcoat and Sunday suit had been. There was a swagger to his steps, a jauntiness to his movements that had not been there before. His chin went up instead of down, and there was a glint in his eye that he had not possessed when he had worn a bowler hat.[112]

Nursery rhymes play a significant role in Stardust since they can be used as magical formulas. They are also an example of a symbol from what Frye calls the Mythical phase. The nursery rhymes used in *Stardust* are intertextual and well-known. One of them is the rhyme about Lion and Unicorn. Gaiman writes: "The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown, thought Tristran to himself, remembering the old

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[112] Gaiman, *Stardust,* 43.

nursery rhyme."[113] This nursery rhyme originated at the beginning of the 17th century when England and Scotland got unified under James I. of England.[114]

Frye introduces several types of worlds in *Theory of Myths*. One of these worlds is the so-called human world. It is, as was earlier in the thesis described, represented by a hero with human like properties. Contrary to Shadow from *American Gods*, Tristran is a simple human being. While there are fantastic and magical elements in the narrative, none of them come inherently from Tristran. Fry also described types of imagery, since Tristran is the hero of the story and has no negative intentions, his story would be considered as apocalyptic.

Lastly, Frye creates analogies between seasons, life cycles and their associated myths. *Stardust* is in many ways considered a bildungsroman. It is essentially a story of Tristan's coming of age. According to Frye's theory, this would mean that the story would be symbolized by summer, as it describes youth and growth of the protagonist. The associated myth is then the myth of triumph. In the story, Tristran is able to overcome all of the obstacles on his journey and ultimately completing it even though the outcome is different than what was the initial intention. This deviation from his initial goal comes from the process of him becoming more mature.

Similarly to *American Gods, Stardust* has a movie adaptation based on the book. However, for the purpose of this thesis, only the written original was taken into consideration thus making the novel fall into the category of fiction according to Frye's *Theory of Genres*.

2.5.3 Neverwhere
Similarly to Tristran in *Stardust*, Richard feels alienated from his society. In the case of Richard, the feeling stems from having different values rather than having a different appearance or origin. When Richard enters London Below for the first time, he is not interested in being integrated there, but as he spends more time in the environment, he realizes that Below feels more like a home than Above. As a result of that Richard sets off on a journey of protecting Door, the character who introduced him to London Below, accompanied by Hunter and Marquis. Since Richard is mainly

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[113] Gaiman, *Stardust,* 49.
[114] Peter Opie, *The Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 442.

concerned with helping Door and the citizens of London Below, the novel can be considered comedy, according to Frye's *Theory of Modes*.

Categorizing *Neverwhere* based on fictional modes is not as straightforward as it may seem. Richard shares some of the properties of a low mimetic protagonist since he starts off as a part of human society. On the other hand, however, there are also several arguments for him being considered an ironic hero. First of them being the rejection of his own society. Frye mentions that the protagonist of ironic mode might appear to be wiser than the society that rejects him. Even though Richard is initially a part of London Above, he is looked down on by his fiancée when he tries to help Door. This example shows that Richard is able to look through the borders of social classes, something most citizens of London Above are not able to do. *Neverwhere* might be perceived as a form of social criticism because physical possession is more important for citizens of London Above than interpersonal relationships. This type of biting satire is also one of the aspects of ironic mode and in general, it could be concluded that *Neverwhere* fits the categorization of ironic comic mode the most.

Among the literal symbols which can be found in *Neverwhere* is Anaesthesia's quartz bead. Its literal meaning, which is described as meaning within the text by Frye, stems from its ability to give courage to Richard. When Richard enters London Below, he is rather an ordinary man, but the possession of this bead symbolizes a turning point for him. The item inspires him and gives him the courage to continue on his journey.

Islington's tokens are representing formal phase. The phase is characterized by reoccurring imagery and the tokens appear on several occasions with their importance not revealed until later in the story. Islington, the villain of the story, gives the tokens to lure Door and her family members into the lair of the Beast of London. It is later revealed that these tokens are used as a symbol of a safe passage through the labyrinth that leads to the beast. Another reoccurring symbol in *Neverwhere* is a key that is supped to open the door to heaven. In order to retrieve the key, Richard accompanied by Door and Hunter must complete the test given to them by the Black Friars. Each one of them is able to complete one of the tests, in the case of Richard it is the test of character. Thanks to his skills and the bead mentioned earlier, he is able to complete this task. After acquiring the key, Richard loses most of his self-doubts and becomes more confident. When the group brings the key to Islington, they realize that his true

intentions are to seek revenge in heaven. For his banishment, Door uses a copy of the key that was forged earlier, but instead to heaven, it opens a portal to hell and Islington and his companions are sucked into the portal. Here, the key is a symbol of the several successful tasks in Richard's goal of saving Door.

Gaiman also includes several symbols from Mythical phase. One of such symbols are the crocodiles that occupy the sewers of London Below. Interestingly, even the characters in *Neverwhere* are aware of this intertextual reference. In one of the conversations, Marquis mentions "I thought it was just a legend," he said. "Like the alligators in the sewers of New York City."[115] Additionally, there are several intertextual symbols referencing texts of mythologies. One of them is the city of Atlantis which is mentioned in connection to Islington who was supposedly the one who flooded the city. Another symbol which belongs to the mythical phase is then the labyrinth that leads to the Beast of London.

Based on Frye's analysis presented in *Theory of Myths*, Richard´s situation is rather similar to Tristran's in *Stardust*. The narration is set in two parallel versions of London. Gaiman even mentions several locations that can be found in London to make the city appear more real. While there are fantastic elements in the story, including a banished angel, the world would still be considered a human one. Additionally, Richard is a human being and therefore it corresponds with the comic vision, as described earlier, and further establishes the idea of the story taking place in the human world. Richard's goals are selfless. Although he is trying to find himself in a way, he, at the same time, does his best to help Door and the citizens of London Below and therefore creating what Frye labels as apocalyptic imagery.

Frye's analogy connects seasons to different types of myths with one of them being the myth of triumph. Triumph can be interpreted in different ways as it is not only a physical overcoming of someone else. In the case of Richard, the triumph is over his self-doubt and insecurity. The corresponding season to the myth of triumph is then summer as it was mentioned by Frye that the life cycle connected to summer is growth. Throughout the novel, the reader can see Richard's grown which is also represented by physical items which were described in the analysis of symbols.

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[115] Gaiman, *Neverwhere,* 82.

Finally, the application of Frye's *Theory of Genre* is rather similar to the other two novels studied in this thesis. The author, Neil Gaiman, is hidden from the audience, the readers. As a result of that, this novel would be classified as fiction.

3 Myth and Mythology

3.1 Introduction to Mythology

Gods and characters in myths are usually given characteristics that are close to people, which might be one of the reasons why they stay part of our culture. Some may argue that thanks to modern science, there is no more need for myths since they are easily disproven. Yet people still use myths as an explanation of the unknown such as the Bermuda triangle. This leads to the creation of new mythologies, which are either based on the old ones or that are completely new.

Joseph Campbell in his study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* notes that mythology is an underlying form of every civilization as well as part of each individual's consciousness.[116] He discusses the similarities in theme, characters and purpose of myths coming from different cultures, places, and times throughout history. He also asks questions such as "What is the secret of the timeless vision?", "From what profundity of the mind does it derive?", "Why is mythology everywhere the same, beneath its varieties of costume?", "And what does it teach?" In the study, he comes to the conclusion that myths teach meaning. He also believes that mythology is used to explain and elevate life from simple existence to a life charged with eternal meaning.[117] Campbell also describes how can past events be elevated and sometimes even given supernatural significance and thus created an epic out of the ordinary. At the same time, he notes that "story is a conveyance, a vehicle, to use in order to think, to move forward through life."[118] This results in the creation of stories that can lead one's journey through life.

Campbell explains that there are several different types of myths but ultimately each myth belongs in one of the three groups: Etiological, Historical and Psychological Myth. The name Etiological myth comes from Greek "aetion" which means "reason". Campbell explains this type of myth explains why certain things are the way they are or how they came to be. One of the most famous stories that belongs to this category is the Greek myth about Pandora's Box which explains the origin of how evil and suffering got release to the world. Another example could be the myth about Arachne

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[116] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 4.
[117] Campbell, *Thousand Faces*, 55.
[118] Campbell, *Thousand Faces*, 55.

which explains the reason behind the beauty of spiders' webs. It says that she was a skilled weaver that got turned to a spider as a punishment by Athena.

Historical myths are used to tell a story about an event in history and elevate it to give it a greater meaning. This, as previously mentioned, helps to create epics out of ordinary stories. One of the most widespread and well-known historical myths is the story of *Siege of Troy* that is described in Homer's *Iliad*. This is followed by another historical myth called *Odyssey* that follows Odysseus' journey home from the Trojan War described in *Iliad*.

Lastly, a psychological myth presents a journey from known to the unknown. Robert A. Segal presented a theory that explains the need of such category. According to him, it is a way of balancing the external world with one's internal conciseness of it.[119] The story traditionally involves a hero on a journey that leads to discovering their true identity or fate. This leads to resolving their underlying issues and presents the audience with important cultural values.[120] One of the best known psychological myths is the story of Oedipus whose fate was to kill his own father. In order to protect him, Oedipus leaves to a distant land but in doing so he kills a man who later turns out to be his real father who left him at birth trying to avoid the same fate. As previously mentioned, the goal of a psychological myth is often to transmit important cultural values. In ancient Greek, the purpose of this story was most likely to showcase that avoiding one's fate would lead to a punishment by gods. In the case of Oedipus, the punishment was taken one step further since he ended up marrying his own mother rather than just killing his own father.

So far, most of the myths introduced in this chapter were of Greek origin. In other words, the stories from Greek mythology, if using the umbrella term for all of the myths that originated in one area at a particular time.[121] Although it is the Greek mythology that may perhaps be the most established one, there are other ones that were arguably as important for the development of myth as the Greek one. One of them is the Egyptian mythology with the stories of Ra, Anubis or Ma'at, which are among the most notable ones. Earlier in this thesis, the key concepts of morality were explained

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[119]Robert Alan Segal, *Theorizing about Myth* (Amherst (Mass.): University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 68.
[120] Segal, *Theorizing Myth*, 70.
[121] G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge England: University Press, 1998), 74.

and it is Ma'at who was in the Egyptian mythology the goddess of truth, justice and morality. Ma'at supposedly decided whether a human is worthy of an afterlife based on the weight of deceased heart which was placed on a scale with one of her feathers. Since people in ancient Egypt believed in an afterlife, it similarly to the Greek story of Oedipus, belongs to the category of Psychological myth and its goal was mainly to strike fear in people doubting the gods.

Alongside Greek, Egyptian and others, there also stands the Norse mythology. The Norse mythology consists of Gods such as Thor who uses his hammer Mjölnir to defeat evil and misbehaving giants, Odin who (similarity to Osiris in the Egyptian mythology) provides a passage to the afterlife and Loki, a trickster causing mischief.

3.2 Mythical in Gaiman's Fiction

3.2.1 American gods

In *American Gods*, Gaiman uses myths in a way that would appeal to a contemporary audience. This chapter will discuss how Gaiman integrates mythical components to our society and how it affects the protagonist of the story, Shadow Moon, who was unaware of any mythic history of his world. At the beginning of the story, Shadow lacks any personal identity. He is easily influenced by others and takes Wednesday's orders without questioning them. At first, Shadow may seem as simple man who only serves as a center of the narrative. However, this changes as the narrative progresses and Shadow begins to develop some of the characteristics of Baldur, an Old Norse God. After meeting Wednesday, a physical manifestation of Odin, Shadow becomes embroiled in the mythic and fantastic side of the world in which he lives. He accepts Wednesday's job offer and is set of on a fantastical journey across American in order to rally the Old Gods. While on this journey, Shadow is introduced to a wide variety of Old Gods from different religions and mythologies. Shadow's origins are connected to it, but it is not until the end of the narrative when he realizes his true identity.

American Gods presents a world in which Gods from various mythologies have been relocated to America. The process of them getting to the continent is described in chapters of the book titled "Coming to America". Ultimately, the reader learns that the spirits of Gods travel in the hearts of their believers and their power is directly correlated to the number of believers they have. Their power then changes with new generations being born and their beliefs changing. This change leads not only to the loss of power and longevity of Old Gods, but also to creation of the so-called New

Gods. The New Gods, in Gaiman's book, are represented by technological inventions such as Television, Internet, etc.

Gaiman draws from different mythologies but especially the Norse one. He uses the characters of Odin, also known as Wednesday, Loki, who appears as Low Key Leysmith, and Mr. World to manipulate Shadow in order to create chaos among both the New and Old Gods. Loki shares some of the broader character traits with his counterpart from Norse mythology especially being tricky, manipulative as well as his ability to shapeshift. At the same time, Gaiman tries to create a different point of view on the characters from mythologies that is not solely base on the traditional mythology, but rather uses its parts to best suit the novel.

Gaiman in Reflection of Myth writes that:

Myths are compost. They begin as religions, the most deeply held of beliefs, or as the stories that accrete to religions as they grow. And then, as the religions fall into disuse, or the stories cease to be seen as the literal truth, they become myths. And the myths compost down to dirt, and become fertile ground for other stories and tales which blossom like wildflowers. Cupid and psyche is retold and half-forgotten and remembered again and becomes Beauty and the Beast. Anansi the African Spider God becomes bre'r Rabbit, whaling away at the tar baby. New flowers grow from the compost: bright blossoms, and alive. [122]

While myths and folklore play a role in Gaiman's narratives, it is apparent that he also embraces the viewpoint that writing can be the way to create new myths for contemporary society. The plot of *American Gods* can serve as an example. Instead of completely fading away, the Old Gods try to survive in the new world and evolve.

The use of roadside attractions highlights one of the ways in which the new Gods adapt. The character of Wednesday describes how places of power were created in the past:

In other countries, over the years, people recognized the places of power. Sometimes it would be a natural formation, sometimes it would just be a place that was, somehow, special. They knew that something important was happening there, that there was some focusing point, some channel, some window to the Immanent. And so they would build temples or cathedrals, or erect stone circles, or...well, you get the idea. [123]

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[122] Neil Gaiman, "Reflections on Myth." *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, no. 31 (1999): 75-84.
[123] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 93.

Shadow opposes that there are churches in America as well, but Wednesday explains to him, that there is nothing significant about them even though there is at least one in every city. He compares them to dentist' offices. Roadside attractions, on the other hand, Wednesday explains, are magical. He says that "people feel themselves pulled to places where, in other parts of the world, they would recognize that part of themselves that is truly transcendent." It seems that there is no reason for them to be built in the middle of nowhere and yet people still do it while others come to visit, eat some food, walk around and feel satisfied. For that reason, the Old Gods use roadside attractions as places of power, notably the House on Rock which is used to enter so called backstage.

3.2.2 Stardust

The Faerie land in Gaiman's Stardust is full of mythical creatures such as witches, unicorns and talking trees. In the Faerie land, nursery rhymes have a special meaning although Tristran only sees them as nursery rhymes. It is when Tristran travels with the little hairy man that he finds out that for the citizens of Faerie land, they work as magic formulas. After finding Yvaine, the fallen star he was looking for, Tristran encounters a lion and unicorn fighting with each other for a crown. Yvaine asks him to stop them, otherwise, they might kill each other. While hesitant about his own safety, Tristran recalls what the little hairy man taught him. He remembers an old nursery rhyme: "The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown, thought Tristran to himself."[124] With that, Tristran picks up the crown and gives it to the lion. The world of Faerie is full of fantastic elements such as this one.

In Greek mythology, the character of Horkos is a personification of curses that would be inflicted on some who would swear a false oath.[125] Similarly to Greek mythology, oaths are valued above all else. It is Tristran's oath to Victoria that sets him off to the Faerie land and motivates him on his journey. This importance of fulfilling his promise is mentioned several times throughout the text. And he is not the only one who needs to fulfill his oath. Another example involves the lords of Stormhold. Their families honor an oath according to which the living relatives of the

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[124] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 48.
[125] . Robin Hard and H. J. Rose, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H.J. Rose's Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 31.

slain lord must sough revenge. Septimus is told that "You must take revenge upon your brother's killer before anything else."[126]

Similarly to mythology, the idea of enchantments is prevalent in the world of Faerie. People get transformed to animals and are placed under seemingly unbreakable charms. One of the examples is a mouse which "bites into the hard shells of nuts with its sharp, ever-growing front teeth, not because it was hungry, but because it was a prince under an enchantment who could not regain his outer form until he chewed the Nut of Wisdom."[127] While it may seem impossible for a mouse to find the Nut of Wisdom, there is always an opportunity to break the charm stemming either from an inaccuracy in the enchantment of finding another solution.

3.2.3 Neverwhere

Gaiman implements mythological references to nearly every literary piece he writes. While on the quest of slaying the Beast of London, Richard is led to subterranean parts of London where he discovers that the beast resides in sewers and abandoned parts of tube stations. These parts of London form a familiar and yet utterly bizarre labyrinth. Richard's journey through the labyrinth is modelled after a famous Greek myth that takes place on Crete. Just as Theseus, the protagonist of the original myth, Robert is met with a series of challenges. The role of the Minotaur from the myth is in this case filled by the Beast of London.

Gaiman also includes references to other mythical events. In an encounter between Mister Croup, one of two notable assassins from the underground world of London Below, and Islington, a genderless angel who hired him to kill Door, Croup mentions what he, and his accomplice Mister Vandemar, did. Apart from referring to another Greek myth, as it is said they burned down the City of Troy, the list of events continues: "We brought the Black Plague to Flanders. We have assassinated a dozen kings, five popes, half a hundred heroes and two accredited gods."[128]

Another instance in which Gaiman draws from mythology are the numerous references to Atlantis. The founders of the city were supposedly half God and half

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[126] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 71.
[127] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 31.
[128] Gaiman, *Neverwhere*, 108.

human, who managed to create a utopian society with great naval power. In the narrative, it is mentioned that Atlantis is no more, which evokes a reaction in Richard:

> Somewhere inside Richard a small, reasonable voice pointed out that there never was an Atlantis, and, thus emboldened, went on to state that there were no such things as angels, and that furthermore, most of his experiences of the last few days had been impossible.[129]

In this specific case, the fabled city of Atlantis is used to progress Richard's view on what is possible and impossible. The fact that he is an interaction with an angel shows that anything could be real in this new world of London Below.

Lastly, it is important to mention that Gaiman not only uses characters and location from mythology, but also from fairy tales. One of the examples is the character of Marquis de Carabas. In the well-known fairy tale *Puss in Boots*, Marquis de Carabas is the owner of the cat. While there is little or no connection between the character in *Neverwhere* and the one from *Puss in Boots*, it is clear that Gaiman uses him to pay homage to the genre of fairy tales.

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[129] Gaiman, *Neverwhere*, 148.

4 History of Morals

4.1 First concepts

The first concepts of morals came from the period of Pleistocene with the communities of humans being based on the roles of hunters and gatherers. Even though we cannot travel back in time, Frank Marlowe argues, in his book *Hunter-Gatherers and Human Evolution*, that in a way we have the possibility to observe such phenomenon in the remaining hunter-gatherer communities around the world.[130] Christopher Boehm then, in his book *Moral Origins*, describes how the communities work. It is suggested that even though some individuals can be more influential than others, most decisions are made in a collective effort. So, if an individual tries to become a leader of such a tribe, the tribe will try to prevent it.[131]

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the era of hunters and gatherers is generally regarded as the beginning of morality. Isler and Van Schaik described this in their research as a straightforward adaptation. It is further described that sometimes it took until the mid-twenties for women and even longer for men to become efficient hunters-gatherers.[132] This factored into the need of rationing food among the community since some of the members of families were unable to contribute due to their young age, injuries, or sicknesses. Wood and Marlowe describe that while some of the food was shared inside the family, other types of food, for example honey, and meat from large animals, were shared within the whole camp.[133] It is moreover stated that while the food was generally shared with people in need, it was also essential to contribute in order to build a good reputation, which was vital since sooner or later, everyone would be in need of support. For men, it was mostly being generous with their catches as well as participating in coordinated hunts that built them a reputation.[134]

J. M. Burkart, R.K Brügger and C.P van Schaik from the University of Zürich in their research about the Evolution of Morality came to a conclusion that the best way to understand morality is to connect it to the previously mentioned hunter-

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[130] Frank W. Marlowe, "Hunter-Gatherers and Human Evolution," *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 14, no. 2 (2005): pp. 54-67, https://doi.org/10.1002/evan.20046, 54.

[131] Christopher Boehm, *Moral Origins: Social Selection and the Evolution of Virtue and Shame* (Philadelphia, PA: Perseus Books Group, 2011), 32.

[132] Karin Isler and Carel P. van Schaik, "How Our Ancestors Broke through the Gray Ceiling," *Current Anthropology* 53, no. S6 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1086/667623, 453.

[133] Brian M. Wood and Frank W. Marlowe, "Household and Kin Provisioning by Hadza Men," *Human Nature* 24, no. 3 (2013): pp. 280-317, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-013-9173-0, 280.

[134] Wood, "Household and kin," 280.

gatherers and their adaptation.[135] They also discuss the two key components of morality which are concern and conformity. While these elements are regarded as an arbitrary part of morality, they agree that it is not all that is needed. Additional elements highlighted in their research are language, parochialism, and perhaps coalitional psychology.[136]

This paragraph will pay more attention to the crucial elements, mentioned in the previous paragraph, which helped to form "a full blown morality", as the authors of *Evolution of Morality* call it. The importance of language is connected to reputation, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter as something that was a part of humans' lives already in the age of hunter-gatherers. The reason is that language gives humans the ability to gossip and discuss other misbehaviors in the entire group.[137] Language also brings the possibility to set and discuss explicit rules. According to Baumgartner, language further gives us the option to find a truly independent third party, since it helps us to reflect upon our moral judgements and emotions.[138] Apart from language, Burkart et al. in the research also mentions parochialism. The element in parochialism is closely connected to morals since, throughout the history, it has been proven that different cultures have different sets of morals. Barret et al. in their research from 2016 moreover discuss that although some elements of morality may seem universal there are others that can indeed be quite variable even in the current age of globalization.[139] Parochialism leads to different outlooks on what people perceive as moral and immoral. Although there are situations in which cultures agree, there still might be a slight indiscrepancy in how, for example, various immoral acts are punished. Lastly, coalitional psychology was mentioned among language and parochialism. Pascal Boyer mentions that coalitional psychology is crucial to morality since it is connected to the ability for collective action. He expands on this topic by describing how

[135] Burkart, Judith M., Rahel K. Brügger, and Carel P. van Schaik. "Evolutionary Origins of Morality: Insights From Non-Human Primates." *Frontiers in Sociology* 3 (2018). https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00017.

[136] Schaik, "Evolutionary Origins."

[137] Daniel Nettle et al., "The Watching Eyes Effect in the Dictator Game: It's Not How Much You Give, It's Being Seen to Give Something," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 34, no. 1 (2013): pp. 35-40, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2012.08.004.

[138] Thomas Baumgartner et al., "The Mentalizing Network Orchestrates the Impact of Parochial Altruism on Social Norm Enforcement," *Human Brain Mapping* 33, no. 6 (2011): pp. 1452-1469, https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.21298, 1452.

[139] Barrett, H. Clark, Alexander Bolyanatz, Alyssa N. Crittenden, Daniel M. Fessler, Simon Fitzpatrick, Michael Gurven, Joseph Henrich, et al. "Small-Scale Societies Exhibit Fundamental Variation in the Role of Intentions in Moral Judgment." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 17 (2016): 4688–93. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1522070113.

coalitional psychology help humans achieve goal that could not be achieved by individuals.[140] The inability to collectively contribute might lead to lowering one's reputation which, as previously mentioned, is a vital part of whether humans are perceived as moral or immoral.

4.2 Different outlooks

As the previous chapter suggests, morality has been part of humans' lives ever since they started living in communities, but it was the sophists who started studying morals and ethics in detail. The origin of the words sophist come from Greek Sophia which stands for wisdom or learning but it is also understood in a broader sense as "one who exercises learning."[141] While sophists studied a broad range of fields such as theoretic, music and mathematics, for the purpose of this thesis, the analysis will be focused on their view of morality and ethics.

Protagoras was one of the most, if not the most, prominent figures in sophism. He claimed that "the proper management of one's own affairs, how best to run one's household, and the management of public affairs, how to make the most effective contribution to the affairs of the city by word and action."[142] Protagoras follows, in this matter, the thinking of Socrates. Both of them believed that humans are more affected by belief and emotions rather than facts. In his dialog, the *Great Speech*, Protagoras presents that a good citizenship consists of justice and self-restraint. He believes that both justice and self-restraint are key to perseveration of the social order and ultimately the survival of human race. Sophists were the first ones who observe that morality is relative. They realized that the question 'what is justice?' is flawed in its nature since the answer to 'what is justice in Athens?' and 'what is justice in Rome?' is not necessarily the same.

The observation that morals are relevant was one of the most important contributions of sophists. At the same time, Socrates believes that if we knew what justice was, we would be just. The essence of this idea is contained in one of his most

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[140] Pascal Boyer, "Morality, Valuation and Coalitional Psychology," *AJOB Neuroscience* 11, no. 4 (January 2020): pp. 287-289, https://doi.org/10.1080/21507740.2020.1830886.

[141] "Sophia," ONLINE ETYMOLOGY DICTIONARY, accessed January 25, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/Sophia#etymonline_v_24295.

[142] Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: a Historical Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

famous quotes "No one errs willingly."[143] The main idea behind the quote is that humans do what is unconditionally good for them and, at the same time, getting what they want. Yet, this is not always true if we think, for example, of the case of addicts. Although in these cases, Socrates argues, the wrongdoing is not a moral error but rather an intellectual issue. In conclusion, the Greek morality was unclear and inconsistent. It heavily relayed on the idea of morals being independent of society, but rather based individual's choices and decisions as long as the individual perceived them as just.

Thomas Hobbes is considered the founder of modern Ethics. His view of ethics is that humans are heavily dependent on the situation they find themselves in. He believed that in situation in which the political authority is lacking, our fundamental right is to save ourselves any means we find fit. In his study *Leviathan*, Hobbles describes that political authority is artificial. This means that the natural condition for humans is to lack government. In the same book he writes "infant is first in the power of the mother, so as she may either nourish or expose it; if she nourish it, it oweth its life to the mother."[144] This means that the only natural authority in our lives is the authority of mother over child since the child is much weaker than its mother. This, according to him, no longer applies for adult beings. Hobbles believed that our morals are formed based on deductive science, which means that we are mostly affected by observation and reason. He believes that in order to explore logic, we need to seek the cause-to-effect pathways.[145]

Hobbes's believes were laid on the foundation of Exclusive Egoism, ego being the soul. He believed that all men are equal by nature. This means that all men possess equal powers of self-defense and similar tastes. But there is also one exception, which is highlighted. This exception is present whenever men are at war with other men. He describes this state of mind based on a Latin proverb "Homo homini lupus", which means that a man is a wolf to another man. Hobbes states that in such a state of mind, nothing is wrong or right. At the same time, he believes that humans are capable of becoming rational when peace comes.[146] Achieving happiness without social harmony

[143] Heda Segvic, "No One Errs Willingly: The Meaning of Socratic Intellectualism," *A Companion to Socrates*, n.d., pp. 171-185, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996218.ch10.
[144] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Volume One* (United States: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2011), 124.
[145] Hobbes, *Leviathan,* 97.
[146] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 97.

is therefore impossible. It is believed by Hobbes that humans should seek peace at all costs, but, at the same time, allow similar liberty for other human beings.

Immanuel Kant falls into the group of the most influential moral philosophers. Allen Wood in his study *Groundwork* for the *Metaphysics of Morals* from 2002 credits him as one of the most important authors in the history of ethics.[147] It was Kant who introduced the so-called theory of universalization. Kant´s logic was to "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[148] In different terms, he believed that one should take an action only if he or she believes that the action could be presented as universal law and therefore something by which everyone acts. This theory of moral actions has since became consistent in modern moral philosophy and is widely referred to even in the general public. For example, if a parent tries to reinforce an argument for why their child should stop acting a certain way they ask them 'What if everyone acted like that?'

Kant defines free will based on the consciousness of moral obligations. His ethic formula is based on a claim that "we ought, therefore we can".[149] This means that a human has a moral obligation to perform an action if they are able to perform it. In other words, if someone is unable to perform an action he is not morally obligated to do so. Keith Simmons believes Kant's most important teaching is that "morality of an action depends only on the motive, and is independent of the effects on the person doing it or on the others."[150] This line of thought highlights the importance of intent over the result of actions. This logic is, for example, implemented in the United States Criminal Law and helps to determine the liability of persons who commit harm.[151]

The era of romanticism which took place in the 1st half of 19th century was an era that can be characterized by emphasis on emotion and individualism. Romantics looked less for the ultimate or the so-called absolute truth compared to Enlightenment thinkers. This type of thinking also projected itself in the way in which morals were thought of at that age. For example, Romantics questioned whether there was such a

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[147] Immanuel Kant, Mary Gregor, and Jens Timmermann, *Immanuel Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals a German-English Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 23.
[148] Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals,* 23.
[149] Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals,* Introduction.
[150] Keith Simmons, "Kant on Moral Worth," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1989): 85-100.
[151] Richard Ekins, *The Nature of Legislative Intent* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016), Introduction.

thing as the ultimate good or evil. Such thinking in combination with growing secularity led to a creation of different standards of morality in different societies.[152]

The morals of Romantics have been later labeled as a passionate morality. This so-called passionate morality was described in Dr. C. George Boeree's study of Romanticism. According to him, Romantics tended to admire the heroic while taking a stand against the mediocre, nothingness and meaninglessness.[153] Beoree continues by expanding on this thought by adding that for Romantics, the meaning was expressed by virtue, purpose, and courage and not by pleasure or happiness.[154]

Utilitarianism is an ethical standard that strives to achieve great happiness for the greatest number of people. Initially founded by Jeremy Bentham in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals* who was later followed by John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick. Bentham introduces the principles of utility by stating: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do."[155] This means that actions should be approved whenever they promote happiness or pleasure and disapproved when they lead to unhappiness. Bentham directly confronts Hobbles' theory of egoism. Bentham promotes overall wellbeing when it is not compatible with personal wellbeing. However, the psychological egoism of Hobbles, in general, rules out the possibility of promoting the wellbeing of the general public if an individual follows the rule 'ought implies can' that was discussed earlier in this chapter.

The greatest struggle with the principle of utility in Bentham's work is the way in which pleasure of pain is measured. Personal pleasure be can quantified by its intensity, duration, certainty and purity. Here purity means whether the action causes any pain or to what extent of the pain inflicted upon the community. The most important value in the case of community pleasure is the number of people that are affected by it. In Kant's view, the intent, which idea was introduced earlier, of action decides its rightness or wrongness. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, differs from

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[152] J. L. Mackie, *Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 22.
[153] İlham Dilamn, "Reason, Passion and the Will," *Philosophy* 59, no. 228 (1984): 185-204.
[154] Dilman, "Reason, Passion and the Will," 190.
[155] Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007), Preface.

Kant's viewpoint since according to the utilitarian, it is possible to do the right thing although the intent was bad.

The goal of this chapter was to introduce some of the key moral concepts that evolved through our history. There are many more concepts what could have been introduced here, but those described in this chapter have been chosen as the most influential. Some of the concepts, as was also described in this chapter, clash with each other. Later in this thesis, an analysis of Gaiman's works will be carried out to see how the characters in his books either follow or do not follow any of these concepts.

4.3 Ethics of fictional worlds

There are several reasons that make studying ethics and morality in the works of Neil Gaiman and fantasy fiction in general worthwhile. Sheila A. Egoff described authors of modern fantasy fiction as the moral arbiters of our time.[156] Readers tend to make a strong relationships with the books they read and this is elevated even one step further when it comes to children's literature. Even though Gaiman is not strictly an author of children's literature, some of his books such as *The Graveyard Book*, *Coraline* and even *Stardust* are considered parts of this category.

Most people are able to intuitively decide whether something is moral or immoral but defining the terms is a complex issue. First of all, morality is a concept that is both shared and individual. Shared morality develops from concepts that are common in a culture or a community of people. These morals can be different not only in particular places around the world but can also evolve throughout the time. These so-called moral systems are imposed on individuals through education, family, religion and of course the law.

L. C. Green, in his study named *Law and Morality in a Changing Society*, talks about how morality can affect dictate and change the law. The author goes through examples such as rape and murder in order to showcase how morality affected the law in the course of history.[157] The examples given highlight that morality is mostly concerned with actions. This also applies to literature. The main concern with morality in literature is not the text itself but the actions of characters in the given texts.

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[156] Egoff, *Thursday's Child,* 12.
[157] L. C. Green, "Law and Morality in a Changing Society," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 20, no. 4 (1970): p. 422, https://doi.org/10.2307/824884..

As mentioned before, morality relates to principles of right and wrong behaviors. The fantasy fiction of Neil Gagman focuses in large on the battle of good and evil. This can be understood as a moral struggle. Characters can choose to do good deeds over evil ones. But later on, when taking a closer look into Gaiman's work we will be able to see that the characters and their actions are not so simple to be categorized just as good or evil.

This thesis will take a look at the concepts of good and evil in *American Gods*, *Stardust* and *Neverwhere* and what moral implications they have on the worlds they take place in. As mentioned above, morality is concerned with actions and therefore this chapter will focus on actions taken by characters and they will followingly help to translate the morals of given texts.

As it was mentioned earlier, writers have an important role in society. They change people's reception of the world and therefore they may change the world itself.

When talking about morality, it is important to introduce the results of either following or not following a set of moral rules. Generally speaking, if a person follows these rules, he or she is called "good", but a person not following the standard set of morals is called "evil". For example in Gaiman's world, the protagonist of *American Gods*, Shadow Moon, is presented with a set of decisions. While he tries to stay moral, he is ultimately misled by the character of Wednesday who did not present him with all the information that was available.

4.4   Morals in Gaiman's Literature
4.4.1 American Gods
Morality and Ethics are often overlooked aspects of fiction but, as mentioned in the last chapter, literature often helps establish people's look on certain moral aspects of life and especially when it comes to children. Every author offers their own explanation of how they perceive morality. In the case of Gaiman's *American Gods*, the issue is even more complex to an extent. It is mainly due to the fact Gaiman is a British author who lives in America and writes literature across a wide array of genres. This allows the reader to explore how Gaiman understands America as someone who is not American. *American Gods* could be considered most morally complex of his works. This assumption is based on the length of the novel and on the fact that it has

characters whose origins are from various cultures even though they inhabit the same place, the contemporary United States.

Shadow Moon, the protagonist of the book, showcases how morals can be applied on both large and small scales. Ultimately, the story expresses how one's moral choices may change the course of Gods. For a reader, Shadow's story starts when he is in prison in which he ended up having followed his personal moral choices. While in the prison, Shadow meets his inmate Low Key Leysmith, the Norse god of mischief in disguise. They have a conversation about their plans for their lives after prison. Low Key is mainly interested in what makes Shadow happy. In the past, most of his life was about pleasure, but while in prison, Shadow finds a different perspective. When directly asked, Shadow only gives a short list of three things: get a bath, put on a robe, and spend some time with Laura, his wife.[158] He also quotes Herodotus: "Call no man happy," said Shadow, "until he is dead."[159] At this point, a reader can see a slight shift in Shadow's world. Instead of focusing on material things, he concentrates on the intangibles such as his relationship with Laura and he also accepts that he cannot be truly happy.

When Shadow gets out of prison, he is set off on a quest to find his own beliefs. After encountering the New Gods, he is forced to live in exile for a while. It is in the city of Lakeside, Wisconsin where he meets an Old God by the name of Hinzelmann, who is later revealed by Shadow to be a child murderer. The Chief of Police in Lakeside, Chad Mulligan is present at this encounter between Shadow and Hinzelmann without them knowing. The whole situation escalates and Mulligan ends up shooting Hinzelmann. At this point, the reader sees full shift from Hobbes' moral concept of following the laws in nature that led to him being imprisoned to more of a utilitarian perspective. Even though Shadow is new to the community where these events take place, he decides to help Mulligan cover up the shooting by setting Hinzelmann's house on fire. Shadow tries to calm Mulligan down by saying "It wasn't murder. It was self-defense."[160] And in its core he was right, his and Mulligan's actions were not only enacted in their own self-defence, but at the same time, in the self-defence of their community.

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[158] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 8.
[159] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 10.
[160] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 433.

Shadow's shift of believes toward more a utilitarian and community-driven perspective is displayed on more occasion in the novel. After the climax of the book which led to Wednesday's death, Shadow realizes that he cannot find happiness in his world. But, as shown earlier, Shadow now knows that he can make his community or even the whole world a better place, so he decides to take a vigil on Wednesday's tree. In a conversation with Laura, his recently deceased wife, she says: "You're crazy... You're dying up there. Or you'll be crippled, if you aren't already."[161] However, this still does not persuade Shadow to give up on this selfless act since he came to an understanding that he can at least make the world a better place for others.

Shadow's transition from someone who acts in self-interest disregarding the community in which he lives into someone who ultimately chooses to sacrifice himself in order to protect others is an example of literature's ability to provide valuable lessons for the reader. It is true that a reader will never experience events affecting the world with such a power as Shadow, but he or she can still apply some of Shadow's decisions and thinking on a smaller scale.

4.4.2 Stardust

Tristran's journey starts when he falls in love with a beautiful girl in his home town Wall. In an attempt to display his affection he offers to bring her a star they saw fall from the sky one evening. This event marks the beginning of his quest. Thanks to his mixed origin, Tristran is able to enter the Faerie world which is something the ordinary people of Wall cannot do. Unbeknown to Tristran, he is not the only one seeking the star.

Since Tristran was raised in the city of Wall, he has close to no experience when it comes to the land of Faerie. He believes he is looking for a fallen star, an inanimate object, while he competes with three princes from Stormhold, who are looking for the star in order to fulfill their dying father's wish, and Lilith, a witch-queen of the Faerie land, who knows the true potential of the star. Thanks to the help of a character called "the little hairy man", Tristran is the first to discover the location of the star and learns that in fact, she is a magical being in form of a human. Even though it comes as a surprise to Tristran, he decides to complete his quest and bring Yvaine to Victoria. Further, Tristran realizes that he is actually in love with the star

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[161] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 356.

and he does not belong to the city of Wall. At the end of the story, Tristran realizes that he was able to enter the Faerie world because his mother was Lady Una and therefore, just as the lords of Stormhold, he has the right to rule the land.

Most of the moral dilemmas in *Stardust* which the members of the society deal with is not belonging to the majority and what stance the general public takes towards them. Even though Tristran was raised in the city of Wall, his mother came from the Faerie land and left him when he was an infant to be raised by his father. Even at a young age, it is apparent that Tristran does not belong. Still being a child, he is described as "red, bawling face, with screwed-up little eyes, a mouth, open, vocal, and hungry."[162] Later in his childhood, his sister and other children make fun of his appearance and when they tease him, they point out his facial features and how he perceives the world. Luisa, his sister, says:

> the shape of his ears, for example (the right ear was flat against his head, and almost pointed; the left one was not), and about the foolish things he said: once he told her that the tiny clouds, fluffy and white, that clustered across the horizon at sunset as they walked home from school, were sheep.[163]

The attitude of Tristran's sister and the rest of their peers definitely shaped Tristran's values. When entering the Faerie land for the first time he is described as ignorant.[164] In his life, he learned that it was morally acceptable to treat someone who is different than him without respect. When he meets Yvaine, Tristran has no issues being inconsiderate towards her and chaining her wrists. There is no second thought, Tristran was thought to always act in self-interest. He pictures Yvaine as a star, an inanimate object, and he treats her as such. When his journey back home comes to an end, Tristran realizes that it changed him. In fact, the guards at the gap between Wall and the Faerie land do not even recognize him. Even though Victoria accepts his proposal, he denies her because he does not feel at home. It is at that moment when he realizes how the star must have felt the whole time and the reader can see a true change in him.

4.4.3 Neverwhere

Richard's life in London Below is completely different from his life in London Above. Even though he is an adult, he does not associate most of his actions in London Above

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[162] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 16.
[163] Gaiman, *Stardust*, 17.
[164] Gaiman, *Stardust,* 25.

with consequences. Contrary to this, while in London Below, he soon realizes that his abilities can be used for a good cause.

Richard's ultimate task is to defeat the creature, referred to as the Beast of London that threatens London Below. Even though he is relatively new to the environment, when he realizes that he can save the city from the beast, he takes on the quest. Similarly to Shadow in *American Gods*, this is not a selfless act. Richard does not seek power or fame, but rather believes in the cause of fighting for the sake of those who cannot defend themselves and their happiness. His thinking aligns with the utilitarian point of view of what is ethically right. Richard is aware that he is risking his own life, but at the same time, he knows that he can help the entire community of London Below.

Gaiman uses the parallel worlds of London Below and London Above to reflect contemporary society. Life in London Above is not as flawless as it may seem. Its inhabitants are mostly concerned with themselves, that is expressed by their obsession with material possessions. Their definitions of "good" and "evil" are based on what currently fits them and their needs which is also reflected in their morals. The inhabitants of London Above base their relations solely on the social structure. Their society is basically divided between those who own a home and those who do not.

The homeless people do not live in a constant rush of London Above and therefore their general image deviates from the norm. The general public is so different that the homeless become nearly invisible. They come and go and no attention is paid towards them and the way in which they are treated. When Richard meets Door for the first time, he is accompanied by his fiancée, Jessica. It takes Jessica notably longer to even notice Door and when she does, she instead of trying to help only has derogatory remarks towards her. She mentions that Richard is above her and should not pay any attention to Door. It is at this time that Richard for the first time shows that his moral values do not align with the ones of citizens of London Above.

London Below, on the other hand, accepts everything that is rejected in its counterpart. It is full of individuals and buildings that lost their value to the people of London Above. London Below is portrayed as a dark place that has been neglected for ages, but for its citizens, it presents everyday reality. Gaiman uses the environment of London Below to juxtapose the ethical problems of not only London Above but also

the contemporary society. Money, material possessions and social distribution are valued above everything else in this fictional society and Gaiman uses the character of Richard as a catalyst for potential change.

5 CONCLUSION

The analysis of fictional worlds in the initial chapter shown that there are some shared aspects of all three novels. The research of *Stardust* and *Neverwhere* was rather simple as they share exclusively properties of Portal/Quest Fantasy. However, *American Gods* also includes elements of Liminal Fantasy. The portal between the real and fantastic worlds is represented by a hall in a wall around the city of Wall and by the tube in the sewers in London in *Stardust* and *Neverwhere* respectively. While *American Gods* uses the idea of portal as well, it does not serve as a border between fantastic and real. Another similarity between *Stardust* and *Neverwhere* is the fact that both protagonists have a goal they strive to achieve on their quest while simultaneously trying to understand the fantastic world in which they found themselves. Shadow, the protagonists of *American Gods*, on the other hand, does not have a clear goal and struggles with understanding the fantastic thus shifting the category to liminal fantasy.

The analysis of binary oppositions focused on the ideas that are most prominent in each of the novels. In the case of *American Gods,* it was the idea of new and old. New and old do not only symbolize the phases of Shadow's life, which changed after he got released from prison and got introduced to the fantastic element, but also the difference between the New and Old Gods. The analysis showed that some of the traditional oppositions such as life and death are not as straightforward thanks to the liminality of the novel. In the case of *Stardust*, the opposition of an insider and outsider is present throughout the entirety of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Tristran feels like an outsider to both Wall and Faerie world. It is through his journey that Tristran realizes he can make the faerie world his home. The idea of life and death is simple in *Stardust* compared to *American Gods* because it only represents the cycle of life. The most prominent binary opposition in *Neverwhere* is between up and down which is not only represented in the names of London Above and Below, but at the same time by the division of social classes of the citizens.

The following subchapters studied the novels in relation to Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. Applying the *Theory of Modes* showed that while all three novels fall into the comic mode, the fictional modes differ. *Stardust* and *Neverwhere* take place in a human world while *American Gods* belong to the category of mythical mode as it takes place in a society of Gods. The *Theory of Symbols* was used in order to highlight the most notable symbols in each of the novels. The most distinctive ones were symbols

from the formal phase. Winter in *American Gods*, Tristran's clothing in *Stardust* and keys in *Neverwhere*. The weight of these symbols comes from the fact that they are reoccurring and therefore they can play a more important role throughout the entirety of the novel. The *Theory of Myth* was then used to highlight that all three novels are associated with the so-called myth of triumph.

The penultimate chapter took a closer look at mythical and folklore intertextual references in Gaiman's novels. In *American Gods*, most mythical references originate from the characters themselves as they are physical manifestations of Gods from various mythologies. Even the protagonist, Shadow Moon, shares characteristics with Baldur from Norse mythology. In the case of *Stardust*, most references originated from parts of folklore. They are represented as nursery rhymes which also function as magical formulas. Lastly, *Neverwhere* includes mythical references such as the city of Troy, the sunken city of Atlantis and a labyrinth which alludes to Greek myth of Minotaur.

The last chapter examined the moral values of the protagonists. While there was a shift in morals of each protagonist, their journey was slightly different. Shadow in *American Gods* started off as a selfish individual, but his journey took him to a more utilitarian viewpoint ultimately leading to him self-sacrifice. Richard's morals were then used to juxtapose the materialistically oriented morals of London Above. Lastly, Tristran's morals were strongly influenced by his environment as he is still a young man at the beginning of the novel. Throughout his journey, Tristran matures and his moral views adjust more towards being considerate to others. This change is illustrated in his position towards Yvaine who he initially threats as an object rather than another human being.

6 RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je provést analýzu děl Neila Gaimana spadajících do fantastiky. Úvodní kapitola představí pojem fantasy a jeho začlenění do žánru populární literatury spolu s definicí typů fantastických světů a jejich následnou aplikací na díla *American Gods, Stardust a Neverwhere*. Následující kapitola se věnuje strukturalistické analýze zmíněných děl a to konkrétně binárním opozicím a kritice představné v díle Northopa Frye *Anatomy of Criticism*. Předposlední kapitola se věnuje historii, vývoji mýtu a tomu jak se mýtus projevuje v díle Neila Gaimana. Poslední kapitola představí historii etiky a morálky. Koncepty představené v této kapitole pak budou aplikovány na již zmíněné díla.

Kapitola věnovaná fantasy jako žánru nejdříve představuje několik mylných představ, které jsou s tímto žánrem spojné. Jelikož je fantasty z pohledu historie literatury poměrně novým žánrem, tak byl prozatím předmětem relativně malého množství literární kritiky v porovnáním s jinými žánry. Jedním z důvodů spojených s nedostatkem kritických textů je konotace fantasy literatury s dětskou literaturou, která byla historicky vnímána jako literatura nevhodná pro akademické texty. Autoři Hunt a Lenz v díle *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* vyvracují tyto tvrzení a představují argument pro hodnotu, kterou fantasy do literatury přináší.

V další části první kapitoly se text věnuje typům světů ve fantasy literatuře. Tereza Dědinová prezentuje ve studii *Po divné krajině. Charakteristika a vnitřní členění fantastické literatury,* která vychází z díla Farah Menlesohnové *Rhetorics of Fantasy,* čtyři typy světů objevujících se ve fantasy literatuře. Toto dělení je založené na vztahu fantastického prvku a fikčního světa. Konkrétně se jedná o kategorie: Fantasy s motivem portálu/úkolu, Vnořená Fantasy, Narušující Fantasy a Prahová Fantasy. Následná analýza dokázala, že dílo *American Gods* spadá do kategorie prahové fantasy, především z důvodu Shadowovi neschopnosti porozumět fantastickému elementu. *Stardust* a *Neverwhere* pak patří do kategorie fantasy s motivem portálu/úkolu z důvodu oddělení fanatických světů pomocí portálu.

Další kapitola se věnuje strukturalistické teorii a analýze. Rozbor binárních opozic v díle *American Gods* se věnuje především myšlence starého/nového a života/smrti. Mezi přední opozice v díle *Stardust* pak patří rozdělení členů/nečlenů jednotlivých světů. Román *Neverwhere* je reprezentován opozicemi symbolizující

paralelní existenci dvou světů objevujících se nad sebou a rozdělením vyšší a nižší třídy obyvatelstva daného světa.

Druhá část strukturalistické analýzy se věnuje díle *Anatomy of Criticism* autora Northropa Frye. Frye prezentuje čtyři eseje na téma mýtu, módů, symbolů a žánrů v literatuře. Jeho koncepty jsou pak aplikovány na romány Neila Gaimana. Aplikace eseje s názvem *Theory of Modes* ukázala, že dílo *American Gods* spadá do kategorie „comic mythic mode", *Stardust* do kategorie „comic low mimetic mode" a román *Neverwhere* do kategorie „comic ironic mode." Využití teorie prezentované v eseji *Theory of Symbols* vedlo k závěru, že mezi přední symboly v díle *American Gods* patří symbol zimy, reprezentující ústup starých bohů. V textu *Stardust* patří mezi prominentní symboly oblečení Tristrana, které reprezentuje průběh jeho dospívání. V případě díla *Neverwhere* jsou jedním z hlavních symbolů klíče, které symbolizují Richardův růst charakteru a sebevědomí. Díky aplikaci teorie z třetí eseje, která nese název *Theory of Myths,* bylo možné kategorizovat díla do kategorie „apocalyptical imagery." *Theory of Myths* také prezentuje rozdělení podle typů světů. *American Gods* se odehrávají v božském světě, zatímco *Stardust* a *Neverwhere* se odehrávají ve světě lidském. Poslední teoretický koncept prezentovaný v *Theory of Myths* je rozdělení děl podle analogického rozdělení ročních období. Podle tohoto rozdělení patří všechny tři díla do kategorie léta, jelikož reprezentují ať už fyzický nebo mentální růst protagonisty. Poslední esej *Theory of Genres* prezentuje rozdělení podle pozice autora a čtenáře/diváka. Jelikož se rozbor věnoval románům v tištěné podobě, tak všechny tři díla spadají do kategorie fikce.

Předposlední kapitola se věnuje mýtům a jejich reprezentaci v dílech Neila Gaimana. *American Gods* využívá mytologie k představení některých postav a jejich původu v kapitolách pojmenovaných „Coming to America." Velká část postav má charakteristiky bohů například Shadow, který má vlastnosti Baldura z norské mytologie nebo Low Key Leysmith, který reprezentuje postavu Lokiho. *Stardust* využívá mytologie především k prezentaci stvoření, jako jsou jednorožci, dalším příkladem výskytu mytologických prvků jsou říkanky, které mají magické účinky. *Neverwhere* využívá mytické reference jako například Atlantis nebo labyrint z řecké mytologie.

Poslední kapitola se věnuje etice a morálce. Úvod teoretické části se věnuje prvnímu konceptu etiky, který byl objeven mezi lovci a sběrači. Již v tomto typu společnosti hrála morálka velkou roli, jelikož se společnost musela postarat o členy, kteří nebyli chlopni se dočasně postarat o sebe. Šlo především o těhotné ženy, děti a starší členy, v těchto situacích byl kritický respekt, který tito členové získali předtím, než se dostali do situace, která jim zabránila být aktivními členy lovu a sběru. Dále tato kapitola představila vybrané typy morálky z průběhu historie, jmenovitě se jedná o sofisty, Hobbesovu teorii moderní morálky, morálku podle Kanta a utilitarismus.

Teorie představená v této kapitole je pak aplikována hlavní postavy z děl *American Gods, Stardust a Neverwhere*. V případě Shadow Moona byl zaznamenán posun morálních hodnot, které byly původně zaměřeny především na osobní cíle. V průběhu textu však Shadow změní svůj pohled na svět a uvědomí si, že nemůže být nikdy skutečně šťastný, pokud nepomůže společnosti samotné. Tato změna nakonec vede k Shadowově sebeobětování, když drží stráž nad Odinovým hrobem. V případě Tristrana v díle *Stardust* je změna v morálce nejvíc zjevná z jeho chování vůči Yvaine, spadlé hvězdě, kterou se Tristran vydá hledat do fantastického světa. Z počátku se k ní Tristran chová jako k předmětu, který mu má pomoci dosáhnout jeho cíle. V průběhu díla si ale Tristran uvědomí, že je Yvaine v podobné situaci jako on, cizinec v cizí zemi. Toho uvědomění vede Tristrana ke změně pohledu, co se jeho etiky týče. *Neverwhere* podobně jako *Stardust* prezentuje hrdinu, který se cítí jako někdo, kdo nepatří do jeho společnosti. Díky shledání s dívkou v nesnázích se jménem Door Richard objeví nový svět, který se vyskytuje pod povrchem Londýna. V tomto novém světě se Richard cítí více doma než ve světě, který obýval celý svůj život a to především kvůli mezilidským vztahům, které zde nejsou tak anonymní jako v jeho původním domově. Richard podstoupí podobnou cestu jako Shadow a jednání se přesune k utilitaristické vizi. Richard v několika případech riskuje svůj vlastní život jen, aby pomohl Door a dalším obyvatelům fantastického světa vyskytujícím se pod Londýnem.

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