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Luis Ponte

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Constructions of Space in the

Fiction of Neil Gaiman

by

Luis Ponte

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Abstract

Constructions of Space in the Fiction of Neil Gaiman

Luis Ponte

This thesis conducts a spatial reading of a selection of novels written by Neil Gaiman to demonstrate how constructions of space in contemporary fiction can be analysed to reveal the underlying politics and cultural commentary of the work. Each of the titles selected juxtaposes an ostensibly 'real-world' setting with fantastical elements, such as magic, myths, or 'other' worlds. The study draws from a framework of critical theory that has flourished in the past half-century, following several groundbreaking works in the field of spatial theory which confirmed the validity of focused, spatial analysis to an academic landscape that had yet to fully realise the importance of space. Each of the novels is read with the intent of exposing the underlying societal or cultural critique which Gaiman's use of space confers. The first chapter engages with a reading of *American Gods* (2001) to demonstrate how, through a reconstructed mythology of gods, folklore, and migration, Gaiman interrogates ever-changing concepts of home in an era of global travel and mass-displacement. The second chapter observes how the literalised concept of a divided city is utilised in *Neverwhere* (2005) to critique the spatial dominance of capitalist forces in the contemporary city. The final chapter reveals how Gaiman's child protagonists in *Coraline* (2002) and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2014) construct real-and-imagined thirdspaces which subvert the traditional model of the bildungsroman narrative. Each chapter is intended to convey how spatial readings of contemporary fiction can reveal nuanced insights into the politics of the work, and how space can be used in such writings to engage with cultural issues and political debate in powerful yet subtle ways.

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Introduction

'People don't appreciate the substance of things. Objects in space. People miss out on what's solid.'
~ Joss Whedon, 'Objects in Space', (*Firefly,* 2002)

Space is the 'setting in which life transpires … [the] base upon which all activity must occur'; it is also 'more than that' and has far greater importance for understanding human behaviours, society, and modes of cultural thought than a mere container or background (Molotch, p.888). New technologies in transport, communications, and infrastructure in the twentieth-century altered the ways in which humans experienced and considered the world. This change included the emergence, in the latter part of the century, of new scholarship which focused on spatial considerations and analyses '[with an attention] hitherto practiced only within the realm of social history' (Guldi, par.3). Critics at the forefront of this movement include Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Gaston Bachelard, each of whom made significant contributions to the understanding of spatiality and how space affected/was affected by such aspects of human life and society as 'capitalism, surveillance, and power' (*ibid*). Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) introduced new modes of spatial thought, stemming from his 'conceptual triad' of spatiality (p.33)[1], and identified different modes of spatial production from natural to social. Lefebvre argued that '(social) space', being both a '(social) product' and a 'means of production', is 'also a means of control … [and] of power' (p.26). For him, space was both produced by and in turn produced the society and the ideologies which operated within it; his critique was predominantly concerned with a somewhat Marxist reading of how capital produces urban space and how urban space is in turn produced by those who experience those same spaces. This early foray into demonstrating that space was 'more' than mere 'milieu' helped give impetus

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[1] Lefebvre's triad consists of: '*spatial practice*', the 'perceived space' which is produced via negotiations 'between daily reality and urban reality' (p.38); '*representations of space*', the space of city planners, cartographers, and other producers of 'conceptualised space' (*ibid*) - Lefebvre suggested that this was the 'dominant space' in society (p.39); and '*representational space*' or '*lived*' space, the 'dominated ... space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate' which is governed by the signs and symbols experienced by its 'inhabitants' (*ibid*).

to the changing modes of spatial thought that followed. Foucault claimed the current period of thought was 'the epoch of space' (p.22). He introduced the concept of the 'heterotopia' to his theories on power and social relations, 'counter-sites' to utopias in that they were real spaces but were 'outside of all places' (p.24). These sites fell into two categories which Foucault delineated as 'heterotopias of crisis' and 'of deviation' (p.25). Crisis heterotopias are 'reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society ... in a state of crisis' (p.24); such spaces allowed individuals to experience such moments as sexual awakening and puberty in a space that was 'removed' from the rest of society. In more recent years he suggests that these sites are being replaced by the latter, the deviation heterotopia where which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed' (p.24); spaces such as prisons or psychiatric hospitals, where those whose behaviour upsets the homogeneity of societal acceptance may be kept. For Foucault, the spatial constructions of a society were integral to an understanding of power structures and how power is expressed. In his defence of the 'Spatial Form in Literature', William J.T. Mitchell asserts that space 'has unquestionably been central to modern criticism not only of literature but of the fine arts and of language and culture in general'[2] (p.539).

Cultural geographer Edward Soja attributes this paradigmatic shift to humans 'becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings' (1996, p.1). The result of this so called 'spatial turn' has been 'a growing community of scholars and citizens [who have] begun to think about the *spatiality* of human life in much the same way that we have persistently approached life's … historical and social qualities' (*ibid,* p.2; emphasis original). This project seeks to use the growing corpus of work on spatiality in literature as a critical framework, as a means to observe and interrogate how representations and constructions of spaces –

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[2] Mitchell also suggests that 'the consistent goal of the natural and human sciences in the twentieth century has been the discovery and/or construction of synchronic structural models to account for concrete phenomena', of which the emergent focus on spatial analysis has been a signifcant part (p.539).

specifically, the home, the city, and the 'thirdspace' -- are utilised in the contemporary fantasy fictions of Neil Gaiman, a British writer of comics, film, television, children's books, short stories, and novels. A writer noted for metatextuality and deconstruction of pervasive tropes, particularly in genre fiction, Gaiman's work is ideal for this project as much of his fiction occurs within a 'real-world' setting, albeit with fantastical elements introduced such as magic, fairies, gods, and even other adjacent worlds. The thesis will engage with current cultural and social issues including the concept of homespaces in a climate of globalisation and movement, the spatial order of the modern city in a capitalist, consumer-driven society, and the significance of what Soja refers to as the 'thirdspace' to traditional conceptions of the child's coming-of-age narrative.

In some ways, fantasy fiction, particularly the 'other worlds' fiction commonly associated with the generic description, has always been a spatial literary practice. The fundamental concept of a world which exists outside or beyond 'consensus reality' posits by its very nature an experiment in the spatial (Hume, p.21). This is acknowledged by Rosemary Jackson in her study of fantasy fiction, wherein she posits that the fantastic occupies a 'paraxial' space[3], 'neither entirely "real" (object), nor entirely "unreal" (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two' (p.19). However, she stops short of following this suggestion through into actual spatial analysis of the genre or any of the texts she explores elsewhere in the work.[4] Nonetheless, other literary critics since have taken note of the unique opportunities which fantasy narratives have to offer with regards to spatial representations and analyses.[5] The 'impossible' worlds and realities which are presented in fantastic fiction

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[3] It may be of some interest to note that, when illustrating this concept, Jackson uses similar imagery of the mirror as Foucault uses in his analogy for the heterotopia.

[4] Whilst this work will continue to use the familiar terminology of fantasy as genre, it would be remiss not to note that Jackson's book argues that fantasy should rather be considered a literary mode than a genre.

[5] This accolade may also be extended to include science-fiction and similar such works, many of which overlap, that extend beyond the aforementioned 'consensus reality' into realms where unfamiliar/impossible spacetimes are present. Notable critics performing research in this area include: Elana Gomel, *Narrative Space and Time: Representing Impossible Topologies in Literature* (2014); Paul Smethurst, *The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in*

allow for the realisation of spatialities which are, by the physical laws of consensus reality, equally impossible; when one is not bound to the limitations of observable, consensus reality then, as Elana Gomel demonstrates at length, impossible spaces 'are not simply spaces that cannot be narratively represented. They are spaces that cannot be represented and yet are' (p.335). This allows authors of fantastic fiction to explore spatial relations and representations which would not otherwise be possible within more realistic depictions and texts.

Whilst academic discourse on Gaiman's work is steadily increasing, there is still a significant amount of territory which has yet to be explored.[6] Two recently published books, *The Neil Gaiman Reader* (Schweitzer, 2007) and *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy: Gods Gone Wild* (Yuen and Bealer, 2012), collect a number of essays and articles from various authors and academic fields. Drawing from more than a decade of scholarship on Gaiman's work, the articles contained are still predominantly focused on certain aspects of his work. Yuen and Bealer's collection engages with both broad, existential quandaries, such as the nature of causation ('Mr Wednesday's Game of Chance', Swanstrom) and experiential reality ('American Monads', Rosenbaum), and more focused, grounded issues of social class and interpersonal experiences ('Apologizing to a Rat', Beaudry). Whilst Schweitzer's *Reader* does draw from a broader range of academic disciplines and critical fields, the selection serves to highlight the predominant focus of academic interest on the metafictionality of Gaiman's writing, particularly the re-invented mythologies and re-conceptualised narratives. A significant number of Gaiman critics view his work with regard to the 'influence of postmodernism in popular genres' (Klapcsik, p.193), or position their reading of the texts within the postmodern field. The author's own website declares that Gaiman 'is listed in the

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Contemporary Fiction (2000); Pete Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (2001).

[6] As this project is interested solely in analysis of the author's novels, it will forego a more in-depth exploration of the body of scholarship devoted to his graphic novels, comics, or playscripts. Should this area be of interest, many of the observations made regarding the analysis of Gaiman's novels can also be extended to his other published works, in particular his *Sandman* graphic novels are often noted for their metafictionality and intertextuality.

Dictionary of Literary Biography as one of the top ten living post-modern [sic] writers.'[7]

This is unsurprising, given that much of Gaiman's writing is noted for its intertextuality, the (post)modernisation of myths, fairy, and folk tales, and interpolation of real-world settings with fantastical events.[8] There is also a notable amount of critical attention regarding Gaiman's use of sex and gender, particularly with regard to his female characters; Elizabeth Parsons et al, for example, read two of his children's novels, *Coraline* (2002) and *Mirror Mask* (2006), from the perspective of 'postfeminism', questioning whether, despite the presence of strong, female protagonists, the narratives may actually also 'present a journey toward normative and consolidated feminine and heterosexual identities that rely on demonizing women' (p.371).

Gaiman scholar Irina Rață has demonstrated the importance of space in Gaiman's novels.[9] However, Rață's analysis is as temporal as it is spatial and the essay proceeds with a chronotopic, rather than spatial, reading of the texts. Rață's essay asserts that 'time and space are of an utmost importance [in Gaiman's novels] due to the fact that the alternate world or realm functions as a character, rather than just a setting' (p.116), providing a key understanding of Gaiman's fiction that confirms the need for a more thorough spatial reading. But many of the conclusions and observations to which Rață arrives lack the nuances of spatiality in Gaiman's work which a more focused reading may provide. Siobhan Carroll's essay on identity in *American Gods* draws on themes of place,[10] remarking on the 'fetishization of place' that she suggests Tolkien was influential in instilling in much of the fantasy fiction that followed him (p.308). Her reading is primarily interested in how conceptions of identity

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[7] See: http://www.neilgaiman.com/About_Neil/Biography

[8] Several of his early novels in particular, including those presented here, are key examples in the urban fantasy genre, which saw a significant rise in popularity during the start of the twenty-first century (see the article on 'Urban Fantasy' in John Clute's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (ed.2012).

[9] 'The Importance of Space and Time in Neil Gaiman's Novels', (2016)

[10] She uses the definition of place provided by Tim Cresswell, namely: '"space invested with [anthropological] meaning in the context of power" (*Place: A Short Introduction*. 2004, p.12). Although, it should be noted that Cresswell himself notes that the distinction between space and place is 'contested'. To avoid weighing in on and dissecting an extensive semantic debate, this work will endeavour to adhere to using a neutral term, space, throughout.

relating to nation and place and those of personal identity are metaphorized through each other and simultaneously questioned by Gaiman's narrative. Carroll's analysis of the novel was integral to formulating the analysis of *American Gods* which appears in this thesis; however, her conclusions are primarily concerned with ideas of identity and how Gaiman's use of the nation is reflected in the personal inner-conflict of the novel's protagonist. Whilst the concept of the nation-place is referred to throughout her essay, Carroll's reading does not interrogate the spatial construction of a nation or country and rather engages with how Gaiman represents the abstract concepts of 'nation' and identity which are attributed to place. Some of the more spatially focused scholarship on Gaiman's fiction analyses his books for much younger readers, such as Danielle O'Connor's essay on 'Liminal Space and Time in Neil Gaiman's *Odd and the Frost Giants* and A. A. Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner*' (2018). However, like Rață's analysis, O'Connor is unwilling to split the chronotopic pairing of space and time. These works show that there is a strong, recurrent theme of spatiality in Gaiman's writing and that space is important to the narratives presented through his work. However, it also reveals that there is a dearth of scholarship concerned with a focused, spatial analysis of Gaiman's work. Focusing the analysis on the use of space in the texts reveals the nuances of spatiality which are too often overlooked by chronotopic readings. Given the increasing developments of spatial theory shown above, demonstrating the importance of space to cultural critique and debates, it is important to understand exactly how spatial commentary can be read in contemporary texts. Spatio-temporal readings, whilst illuminating, also risk the privileging of historicity and temporality, particularly in genre fiction such as fantasy, which spatial theorists such as Soja seek deliberately to undermine.

This thesis will conduct a spatial reading of a selection of Gaiman's novels to explore how each of the works uses (re)presentations of space and spatiality to engage with

contemporary social or cultural issues.[11] A focused, spatial reading of the novels allows

for careful consideration of how constructions of space in the texts reveals the inherent

politics of the narrative and permits a nuanced commentary on cultural issues, such as

the dominance of capitalist cultures over urban spaces. Drawing from a number of

different spatial and cultural theorists to provide appropriate contextual background,

this thesis considers *American Gods* (2001), *Neverwhere* (2005), *Coraline* (2002), and

The Ocean at the End of the Lane (2013).[12] The first chapter considers how *American*

Gods queries the concept of a home space in a modern world where globalisation is

working to erode traditional cultural and spatial boundaries. The writings of migrants

such as Rabab Abdulhadi and Myriam Ben-Yoseph, displaced by conflict and relocated

in the United States, help to develop a discourse regarding changing conceptions of

home as a geographic space. Critical theory from the likes of Amy Kaplan and Madan

Sarup challenges the mythologised concept of a homeland and rhetorics of the 'nation',

which provide a critical lens through which to read the novel. Following this framework,

closer reading articulates how Gaiman interrogates the concept of a homespace in a

globalised society and traditional conceptions of the stability of home. This study then

explores one of the most predominant and recognisable aspects of contemporary

constructed space: the city. The second chapter draws from the work of postmodern

theorists Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard to establish an understanding of the

culture of late capitalism, and engages cultural critics such as Alan Bairner and John

Hannigan to construct an image of the contemporary city through which to consider the

novel. Analysis of the novel reveals that *Neverwhere* uses a dualistic cityspace to

interrogate the effects that capitalist economic conditions and a culture of consumerism

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[11] The works represented here were chosen both for their implicit spatiality with regards to the narrative or setting presented in the text, and also to ensure a broad selection was taken from varying periods of Gaiman's career and of works intended for a variety of audiences. His short stories, comics/graphic novels, and film or television scripts were not included due, in part, for brevity and as this project was principally concerned with spatial representation within the novel; comics and screenplays, being partially visually represented forms of media in a more explicit manner than a purely textual format, would, for example, require much greater lengths to ensure that a proper context and critical background was established prior to analysis in order to differentiate between the purely prose texts considered here.
[12] Due to their similar subject matter and significantly shorter length, the latter two texts will form a singular chapter within this work.

has on the spatial order of a contemporary city such as London, and posits that Gaiman's use of space demonstrates the politics underlying the narrative. The final chapter reveals how two of Gaiman's shorter novels, *Coraline* and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, use space within the narrative to comment on the conceptual space of childhood and more traditional coming-of-age narratives (bildungsroman). Establishing a literary context from such critics of children's literature as Sandra Dinter and Naomi Hamer, the chapter utilises Edward Soja's theory of thirdspace to view the real-and-imagined spaces which the child protagonists of the texts engage with, as demonstrated by Antony Pavlik's own analysis of canonical children's literature. The chapter will iterate how Gaiman's use of thirdspace subverts the traditional abandonment of childhood which concludes the bildungsroman, instead empowering the child-aspect through appropriation and transmutation of space.

Is There A Place Like Home: Locating Myths of the Homeplace in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*

'Wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular.'
~Zygmunt Bauman (*Globalization: The Human Consequence,* 1998)

Ever increasing globalisation has created what Maruska Svasek describes as a problem of 'perceptions of home and homeland in a dynamic world that is characterized by migration, expulsion, travel, transnationalism, and multiculturalism' (p.495). Following the Second World War, large-scale displacement and exile of communities, widespread diaspora, the re-drawing of national boundaries, and technological advances, all contributed to problematizing ideas of 'home', 'homeland', and even 'nation.'[13] Traditional conceptions of what it means 'to be home' are challenged by questions such as that posed by Miriam Ben-Yoseph, a Hungarian-born Jew sent to Israel after the war and now living in the United States: 'Is home the place from where you were dislocated or the place where you live now?' (p.118) Even for those who occupy an arguably 'rooted' domesticity, those who are born and raised in economically and politically stable climates, without geographic migration or social trauma, the 'processes of globalization... have made traditional conceptions of individuals as members of fixed and separate societies and cultures redundant.' (Rapport, p.3) This chapter examines how Gaiman's novel, *American Gods*, interrogates the idea of home as a locatable space and how Gaiman seeks to undermine grand narratives of home that rely on 'its intimate opposition to the notion of the foreign' (Kaplan 2003, p.86) or which appeal to fetishised fantasies of origin and inheritance.

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[13] Esteban Ortiz-Ospina et al measure globalisation as 'the sum of exports and imports across nations', which currently amounts to 'more than 50% of the total global output'.

Gaiman's fantastical exploration of the American landscape 'attacks the idea that people have natural or divine rights to certain territories' (Svasek, p.498). The novel is very aware of its multinational heritage and the migrant narrative is a key theme in the text. Even the title, *American Gods*, is ironic as few of the actual mythological figures encountered, certainly none of the 'main cast' of old gods, are of American origin. As Mr Wednesday says: 'Nobody's American. Not originally' (p.117). All of this contributes to challenge and interrogate ideas of home as a space, such as a town, a country, or land, and explore how myths of origin and insidious national rhetorics of the 'homeland' propagate a harmful narrative of home. Gaiman explores multiplicitous narratives of home and origin, observing the problems and flaws in fixed or binary conceptions that have traditionally been accepted but which struggle to find a place in the contemporary world of movement. Through the gods, fairytale, and folkloric beings in the text, he engages directly with the fantasies which surround such potentially damaging or dangerous ideals. Whilst for many the word 'home evokes a place, a physical place', Gaiman's work contends that it is rather, as Dobel argues, a 'deeper psychological' sense (p. 13). This conceptualisation argues that home is a personal narrative which avoids spatial fixity or mythologised origins, instead encouraging adaptation and fluidity; an individual construction, rather than a collective one, that allows multiple or conflicting ideas of home to exist and overlap within spatially defined communities.

The idea of home has a long academic and literary history; home is a central part of the human experience and a topic of ongoing discourse. In Bridget Bennett's analysis of the racially charged, nationalistic film glorifying (a homogenous, conservative, and white) the United States of America, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), she observes that:

> home has powerful potential to articulate issues of belonging and exclusion, citizenship and non-citizenship, desire and longing, security and stability. Home is, as Johannes von Moltke has noted, "ontologically unstable," however the symbolic meaning of home is simplified within binaries of the kinds that melodrama comprises. (p.173)

Her analysis reveals one of the inherent flaws in many dominant narratives of home and the homeland: the binary. Contrary to such 'simplified' ideas of the home, 'the current growth of critical work on home emphasizes its multiplicity and shows how problematic it is' to assume simple equations of 'home and house' which lead to definitions centered in oppositions of 'domestic/national, foreign/imperial' (p.172). The insider/outsider binary serves to bolster nationalist rhetorics of a fixed homespace that must be defended at all cost, lest the sanctity of domesticity itself be threatened - a sanctity that is often preserved or represented through social, racial, or cultural homogeneity. Marilynne Robinson's wry mockery observes 'the power of metaphor' in such propaganda as: 'Heterogenous stone is not as solid as homogenous stone' (p.25), warning against such divisive imagery. The concept of a homeland or a home is particularly problematic when talking about the experiences of migrants, exiles, and the many diasporas which now exist across the globe. Rabab Abdulhadi, who writes from the perspective of a Palestinian immigrant who 'fled' to the United States in order to avoid a culture of political violence in a war-charged area of the Middle East, finds, living in post-9/11 New York, that '[s]afety in this anonymous city is a precious commodity achieved only by those who can pass for something other than the multiplicities and complexities in which we are embedded' (p.100). The heterogeneity of the city must, for Rabab Abdulhadi, be hidden beneath a pretence of homogeneity, the 'otherness' of the immigrant buried beneath a veneer of conformity which provides the safety of acceptance. Her experiences demonstrate how concepts of homeland are fostered and propagated at such times of national crisis and difficulty, conceptions which emphasise the outsiderness of the foreigner and depict the outsider as enemy. As geographer Tim Cresswell puts it, these ideas are 'essentialist and exclusionary, based on notions of rooted authenticity that are increasingly unsustainable in the (post)modern world' (p.26).

As Miriam Ben-Yoseph has shown, there is a dilemma of definition when approaching ideas of home from the migrant's experience. This disconnectedness from any

immediately expressible (geographic) concept of home can lead immigrants to 'feel that [they] don't know where [they are]' in the world (Sarup, p.94). Such dislocation often leads to the creation of migrant communities, a collective effort to construct a space that can be identified as home through common referents and markers: 'kinship ties, ethnicity, locality, and shared culture' (Svasek, p.498). New problems are exposed however in the creation of such spaces when considering that such formulations are once more supported through the inherent suggestion of a binary: native/foreign, insider/outsider. A homeplace constructed in such a manner gains identity as much from its opposition to the other as it does from the shared identity of those within the community, they are places of exclusion. Such singular conceptualisations of the homespace encourage the perception that 'distress and disruption can only come from outside the community' (Svasek, p.500) - a critique which is by no means restricted to migrant communities. This belief can only strengthen the conviction of the need to keep the outsider at bay. When a narrative of home that is rooted in binary oppositions of this nature is established and 'takes hold, the definition of community hardens and contracts and becomes violently exclusive and defensive' (Robinson, pp.25-6). Similarly, a minority group, such as a migrant community or diaspora, that is faced with 'hostile acts […] draws in on itself, it tightens its cultural bonds to present a united front against its oppressor [and emphasise] its collective identity' (Sarup, p.95). It is clear that in the fluid world of global travel and migration such concepts as the 'homeland' and enduring ideologies which support a separation between the 'foreign' and the 'native' lead to a state of perpetuating conflict and uncertainty. Immigrants and natives are both left insecure and threatened behind cultural, if not physical, borders and bound to a rooted identity.

However, most critics agree that 'world views based on the fixed category identity-place, such as the ideology of the nation-state, wrongly assume that identities are inescapable destinies' (Svasek, p.498). Madan Sarup makes a related argument in his own writing on migrant identity and experience. Firstly asserting that '[h]ome is (in) a

place', he then establishes that 'place is a social construct', created 'through capital investment' in a 'historical and economic context', one that is 'often associated with tradition'. The true relevance of his argument here is the reminder that, bearing all of the above in mind, '[t]radition is fluid, it is always being reconstituted'; therefore, it follows that conceptions of place and space are also fluid (pp.95-7). This logic confirms that the location or identity of home is similarly fluid, rather than fixed; if this is 'a world where home and place are negotiated rather than fixed or given' (Varvogli, p.106), then it must be open to the possibility of renegotiation. If the process of emigration or exile, particularly one that is forced such as those recounted by Abdulhadi, Svasek, and other writers, can be considered a 'deadening condition', then it can also be a 'cruelly creative one' as it forces those affected to enter into such renegotiations (Nixon, p.115). This draws upon the core ideas that inform the conceptions of the home that are the focal point for this analysis of Gaiman's novel. As the individual must renegotiate their home following the 'deadening' event, be it exile, immigration, or any other trauma, it can be understood that 'home is not necessarily tied to one particular place' (Trew, p.543) any more than it is 'intimately linked to concepts of identity and memory' (ibid, p.544). Rapport and Dawson conclude that, in a globalised world of movement, migration, and fluidity, it is most common to 'find individuals at home in the story of their lives' (p.10). Rather than home being a construction formed from concepts of national relation or geographic origin, it instead becomes a personalised formulation located by the individual in 'a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one's head' (ibid, p.7). This conceptualisation of home avoids the singular, binary narrative that is propagated by nationalist rhetorics; instead it results in a fluid, multiplicitous formulation of the personal narratives that are carried by an individual and which allow for, if not encourage, renegotiation rather than conflict, reinvention as opposed to rigidity that engenders exclusion and the alienating concept of the 'outsider'. Gaiman's work engages with both the grand narrative of a prestiged, national identity and also the smaller, personal narratives of the individual, assessing the

perceived strengths or flaws of each. In doing so, the novel provides examples of various spaces which are categorised as 'home' by the characters, allowing Gaiman to demonstrate the validity of each conceptualisation through the narrative of the text.

The choice of *American Gods* as the primary text for this chapter is important partially for the very fact that it is set in America. As both the dominant and one of the most recently established global powers - 'the French call [it] a "hyperpower"' (Kaplan 2003, p.89) - America is the subject of significant critical observation and comment: in the words of Djelal Kadir, 'America is now more than ever too terribly important to be left to itself.' (quoted in Kaplan 2004, p.154) The question continues to emerge, however, of what 'itself' is. It's a question of increasing relevance, according to Bennett, since the early twentieth century, which for the 'United States [...] was a period in which mass immigration, increasing urbanization, and expansion involving forced migrations were all contributing to shifting formations of the nation' (p.173). In her critique of the incipient concept of 'Homeland America', Amy Kaplan recalls America's conceptual history as a 'nation of immigrants, a melting pot, the western frontier, manifest destiny, a classless society'; this is a notable list as each evokes 'metaphors of spatial mobility rather than the spatial fixedness and rootedness that homeland implies' (2003, p.86). As shown however, critics writing from an 'inside-outsider' perspective (Bhabha, 1992)[14] argue that in the contemporary American landscape, 'the melting-pot theory fails as "America" refuses to grind the coarse kernels of [their] foods' (Abdulhadi, p.100). Some American critics have expressed a warning against 'recuperating a vision of [America] as a monolithic, cohesive, and unitary whole' (Kaplan 2004, p.155) - the reasoning behind such warnings is clear when considering earlier observations regarding communities which are formulated through hegemonic narratives whereby a 'foreigner'/outsider is deemed inherently as an enemy. As a country inhabited primarily

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[14] Bhabha uses the term 'insider-outsideness' as an evocation of the experiences felt by those who are dislocated, not as result of a physical movement, but as a result of political, specifically racialised, action. For Abdulhadi and other such writer's experiences of being a migrant, the two are often related.

by descendants of European settlers, slaves, exiles, refugees, and other non-native peoples, there is an inherent sense of dislocation to the American narrative. Aliki Varvogli states that American life and literature 'has always relied on this sense of dislocation', as the American people have either come from elsewhere or are Native Americans who themselves have been displaced by the immigrants who now lay claim to the title (p.95). Nonetheless, narratives of the 'divine destiny' of the American 'sanctified nation' continue to be espoused alongside such myths as the 'virgin land', which conveniently enabled people to 'replace the fact that the land was already settled by a vast native population' (Nagano, p.55). In his novel, Gaiman works to undermine any such conceptualisations of the American homeland as a homogeneous 'spatial whole'. When crafting his America, Gaiman embraces the 'eccentricities' and 'regional variations' of the states, small towns, and people that appear (Kosiba, pp.106-7), portraying a complex, multiplicitous state of 'overlapping communities' and a country far more defined by movement and by change than by any fixed, immutable narrative of a destined nation.

The novel primarily follows the protagonist Shadow Moon, an ethnically ambiguous ex-convict. The narrative begins with his early release from prison after the news that his wife, Laura, has been killed in a car crash, alongside his best friend and intended future employer, Robbie. During a disrupted journey back to the town of Eagle Point, Indiana, for his wife's funeral, he encounters the enigmatic Mr Wednesday who offers Shadow a job as, amongst other things, his driver. Although reluctant, Shadow agrees to work for Wednesday and accompanies him on the latter's quest. The quest is revealed to be one of recruitment; Wednesday, the American incarnation of the Norse god Odin, is recruiting gods and folkloric figures from various mythologies who are being forgotten and no longer worshipped as technological and scientific advancement replace them. Wednesday argues that those like him, the 'old gods', are on the brink of imminent warfare against the new American gods 'of credit-card and freeway, of internet and telephone, of radio and hospital and television' (pp.150-1) who have supplanted the

more traditional deities as objects of worship. Wednesday seeks to recruit the old gods to his cause, pressing upon them that 'their land' is at risk of being taken by the new threat and that they must fight to protect their home. Most of the narrative is presented from Shadow's viewpoint and, as such, this brewing conflict is rarely the centre of focus; the deaths of his wife and best friend leave him disconnected from the world and struggling to locate himself.[15] Through Shadow and Wednesday's travels, Gaiman reveals the intimate heartland of American 'fly-over country', evoking the classic American road trip in the process. Whilst hunted by agents of the new gods, Shadow's new employment sees him wintering at a funeral home owned by Misters Ibis and Jacquel, the Egyptian gods Thoth and Anubis, in Cairo (Cay-row), Illinois, travelling 'behind the scenes' of reality via a magical carousel into a world 'in [Wednesday's] mind' (p.146), and hiding-out under the pseudonym 'Mike Ainsel' in the bucolic town of Lakeside, Michigan. The America Gaiman writes is one of contradiction and heterogeneity; it is not for nothing that the buffalo-headed man who visits Shadow in dreams tells him that he 'must believe' in '[e]verything' (p.19). The 'best [con artist and liar] you will ever meet' (p.35), Wednesday convinces a number of the old gods to muster to his cause, and his assassination sways many of the remainder to gather for a decisive battle. Ultimately, it is revealed that Wednesday, aided by Shadow's old cellmate from prison, Low-key Lyesmith (Loki, the Norse god of deceit and trickery), has manipulated events from both sides to orchestrate the conflict, with the intention of dedicating the battle between the gods to Odin and reaping the ensuing surge of power that would result. After learning of their scheme, Shadow stands before the gods on both sides of the brimming conflict and exposes Wednesday's grand rhetoric of survival and reclaiming their rightful home as a deception designed to allow his own rise at the cost of the competition on both sides. The anti-climax of the ending subverts any expectations which the epic fantasy form elicits and Shadow, the wandering hero, is left to continue his restless journey.

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[15] Shadow's search for identity and whether his quest is ultimately successful is covered in much greater detail by Siobhan Carroll's essay, cited in full below.

The novel acknowledges the importance that space can have to individual and collective narratives of identity and culture but, even as it is acknowledged, Gaiman makes his criticisms and the dangers of relying on such rigid ideas clear. Wednesday explains to Shadow that many American landmarks and attractions were built because 'people recognised [the spaces as] places of power' but needed an 'excuse' to visit (p.129). This gives rise to 'roadside attractions', such as the House on the Rock, where Wednesday reveals his identity as Odin to Shadow and their quest begins in earnest. These places leave visitors 'profoundly dissatisfied' beneath any external satisfaction or 'spiritual' gratification that may be obtained. Whilst such sites are not places of home, they do demonstrate how Gaiman is widely critical of the mythologising of space and the hollowness of any personal satisfaction or connection that may be sought as a result of such beliefs. An explicit example is provided by the story of the 'exact centre of the United States of America', which Mr Nancy (the African spider-god of tricks, Anansi) tells to Shadow: the 'geographical centre' was located, but the monument was built 'two miles north' as the owner of the land didn't want it to be built in the middle of his farm (p.461). Nancy tells Shadow that this is why 'the exact centre of America is a tiny run-down park, an empty church, a pile of stones and a derelict motel' (p.462). This can also be read as a commentary from Gaiman on the cultural state of America as a nation: an abandoned space of public community alongside hollow religious signs and the derelict remains of the transitory, mobile culture which Kaplan observed has since been lost in American political rhetoric. When questioned on the discrepancy in the stories, as the exact centre was not where the park was built, Nancy remarks: 'It isn't about what is […] It's about what people think it is. It's all imaginary anyway' (p.462). Almost on the same page, Gaiman establishes, subverts, and then dismisses entirely the importance of a narrative tied to a fixed location. The decrepit imagery of America's 'centre' serves as a caution of the steady decay that mythologies of place are heir to. As this tale illustrates, stories can be overwritten and narratives forgotten or manipulated, much as Wednesday attempts with the gods. Adherence to such 'grand'

narratives when formulating such places as a home is therefore also subject to similar erasure or external alteration. The confirmation that it is indeed about 'what people think' is an important observation - one that will be considered in greater depth when analysing the gods themselves later in this chapter. For *American Gods*, the mythologising of space itself, bordering on fetishisation, is a damaging practice that propagates fantasies of origin, of locatability and a physical marker of more conceptual constructs such as identity and the home.

In Shadow, the reader's primary viewpoint in the novel, Gaiman has been careful to create a protagonist who continually rejects or subverts concepts of an inherent homeland or identifiable origins. Raised as a 'lifelong expatriate' (Carroll, p.319) by a mother who worked 'in the Foreign Service', Shadow spent much of his childhood moving 'from embassy to embassy' and then, when his mother was too sick to work internationally, 'from city to city restlessly' (Gaiman 2001, p.225). Gaiman has stated that this decision was made as he wanted Shadow 'to be American', but for America itself to be 'alien enough to him that he'd notice things that people who were born and bred in America tend to take for granted' (Gaiman 2004, sec.7, par.5). Whilst this is apparent in Shadow's distaste for the prolific markers of American capitalism that he encounters and his unfamiliarity with the idiosyncrasies of the small-town urbanity, it has a far more important impact on the character as it results in his innate inability 'to feel at home' in any of the places he stays. Even the town of Eagle Point, where he lived with his wife Laura, is easily abandoned the day after her funeral as for Shadow the 'town is Laura's', he 'didn't really ever have a life [there]' (p.81). Shadow's status as un-rooted and lacking a fixed origin is also reflected in his ethnically ambiguous appearance; the only clues provided for a possible ethnic background are that his skin is 'coffee-coloured' and his hair black (p.218), or 'deep brown' after a summer spent swimming in his youth. This opacity of origin is commented on by several other characters in the novel, most notably perhaps during a somewhat frank interrogation on the matter by a prison officer before his release:

> "And what are you? A spic? A gypsy?"
> "Not that I know of, sir. Maybe."
> "Maybe you got nigger blood in you. You got nigger blood in you, Shadow?"
> "Could be, sir." (p. 12)

The use of ethnic and racial slurs evokes Marilynne Robinson's observation that hardened definitions of 'community' can lead to 'assumptions that people who differ from oneself are therefore enemies' (pp.25-6). It should not be ignored that, as an officer of the prison, an entity of the law, the officer can be read as a stand in for the unity of nation, interrogating an entity that has both violated the law and the dominant narrative of the land. It is telling that Gaiman names his protagonist Shadow Moon, a name that conjures multiple alterities. A shadow may be a dark and indeterminate shape, the undefined and threatening 'otherness' that the prison officer sees. But it may also be a double or a reflection, a blank space which the perceiver can illustrate with their own interpretation; Sam Black-Crow, a hitchhiking college student whom Shadow meets and befriends on his way to Cairo, asks several times if he's sure he isn't 'part Indian [Native American]' (p.183), later revealing that she herself is half-Cherokee (p.186).[16] He embodies the melting pot narrative as a figure with no clear origin, in whom anyone may see an aspect of themselves and something they relate to. It is interesting that Gaiman sets Shadow up alongside the old gods, as he suits far more the image of an ambassador for the globalisation of race and the erasure of identifiable markers of origin which beget the fear of the other which the prison guard displays.

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[16] Shadow's ethnicity is never confirmed, it is later revealed that his father is in fact Wednesday himself, making Shadow, at least in part, a god. Although not an essential part of the novel, the short story sequel, 'Monarch of the Glenn' (2007), confirms that Shadow is, at least in part, an incarnation of the Norse god, Baldr, a god of light and purity who was blessed with invulnerability to all things, save mistletoe. Baldr was killed by Loki's trickery with a spear made from a sharpened mistletoe stake. This is suggested in the main novel, Loki tells Laura that he will 'ram [a mistletoe spear] through [Shadow's] eye' (p.570), but Gaiman does not confirm this fact and, besides this acknowledgement, there is little else in the narrative that coincides with established lore of Baldr. This itself may be read as Gaiman further reinforcing the unreliability of mythical origins, as even those used in the construction of the work itself are repurposed and malleable.

As Siobhan Carroll details in her essay, Shadow's actions subvert the tropes of the epic fantasy novel. The expectations of the 'genre reader', the climactic war of the gods, are subverted as Shadow 'dismantle[s] the expected ending of an epic fantasy novel by defusing the conflict' (p.320), exposing Wednesday's manipulation. Shadow points out that the impending battle 'isn't something any of [them] can win or lose'; the only beneficiary of the conflict would have been Odin himself as he 'feeds' on the battlefield of 'dead gods.' (Gaiman 2001, p.583) He tells them that there never was a Mr World', the pseudonym adopted by Loki in his guise as the figurehead and leader of the new gods - a name that makes explicit the 'threat' of globalisation, and the loss of their home in the process, which the old gods fear. Gaiman's message here is that their fear, of progress, of personal and national identity being erased by an invading outsider, the fear that ultimately comes down to a loss of home, 'has been blown out of all proportion by nationalist rhetoric' (Carroll, p.320). This final and clear rejection of the homeland narrative and the suggested weight of responsibility and exceptionalism that it endows is driven home by the 'Postscript' of the novel which sees Shadow 'wandering' as a tourist in Reykjavik, having left America altogether following the novel's conclusion. Once more subverting the expected trope of 'triumphantly returning home like a good questing hero', Gaiman instead has his hero travelling aimless and 'unsettled' through another continent entirely (*ibid*, p.319). Whilst there, Shadow idly muses that:

> one day he would have to go home. And one day he would have to make a home to go back to. He wondered whether home was a thing that happened to a place after a while, or if it was something you found in the end, if you simply walked and waited and willed it long enough. (p.633)

His uncertainty regarding the achievability or locatability of a home serves as a final reminder from Gaiman of the multiplicity of home and the futility of the fixed space narrative. Unlike Wednesday, who was motivated by and manipulated others with the narrative of a sacred homeland that could be seized and won through conflict, Shadow contemplates a more subtle and gradual idealisation of the home place that is

conceptualised through movement and internalised consideration. Gaiman closes the novel with the following final line: 'He walked away and he kept on walking.' (p.635) Rapport and Dawson suggest that it is 'only by way of transience and displacement that one achieves an ultimate sense of belonging' (p.9) in the contemporary world. Gaiman's choice to have his protagonist finish the novel content with being 'in flight, not at rest' (Varvogli, p.94) reinforces their suggestion. Carroll's reading suggests that Shadow's consideration of how a coin tossed in the air for a watching Odin (the Icelandic incarnation) will land as he leaves, or the possibility that it 'never would', 'highlights a tolerance for instability that the narrative seems to share, and suggests, moreover, that identity will always appear to be, like the spinning coin, in flux' (p.323). Her conclusions support the above as Shadow, freed from a need for certainty or stability which traditional ideas of home invoke, finds that he is able to ignore the result of the coin toss and simply walk away. Although still a wanderer, dislocated from any fixed location or perception of a homeplace, Shadow finds a contentment in this state that is lacking during any of the periods of fixity shown in the text.

The closest Shadow gets to being 'at rest' is arguably his time spent in the bucolic mid-west American small-town utopia of Lakeside, Michigan, where Shadow spends some of his 'most stable moments in the novel' (Kosiba, p.86). Lakeside is introduced to both Shadow and the reader as 'a *good* town' (p.267, emphasis original) and there is little initial reason to doubt this declaration. Shadow is given a warm welcome by the residents, being first driven to his new apartment by Hinzelmann, a kindly, yarn-spinning 'old coot' who comes down to 'meet the bus' and ensure no one is stranded 'on Christmas Day' (p.269), and later, when nearly dying of exposure in the sub-zero Michigan winter, being driven to buy thermal clothing and introduced to the town by the local police Chief, Chad Mulligan (pp.284-5). Despite being an outsider, an uncommon sight in the town, Shadow is welcomed and begins to settle into his new persona as Mike Ainsel. However, the mantra that Lakeside is 'a good town' (p.298) is repeated a number of times during the novel, in a manner evocative of a religious recitation. Such

repetition suggests an appeal, rather than a declaration; by repeating it, the residents of Lakeside are seeking confirmation of the fantasy which so much of their town's identity (seemingly all) depends upon. Jake La Jeunesse draws attention to a likely allusion from Gaiman, Jerome Bixby's short story, 'It's a Good Life' (1953):

> in which residents of Peakesville, another idyllic American town isolated from the rest of the world (which may not exist), must force themselves to think good thoughts to avoid incurring the wrath of Anthony, an omniscient and omnipotent toddler holding the residents in a stasis of fear (p.55)

The comparison is warranted as, despite the wholesome appearance of a flourishing bastion of small-town America, holding out against economic collapse, capitalist industrialisation, and the perils of modern urbanism (crime, drugs, etc), the town is maintained in this perpetual state by magical influence. Unbeknownst to the townsfolk, Hinzelmann is an ancient 'kobold', once worshipped in the Black Forest, who drowns a child in the lake every year in a ritual sacrifice disguised as a local tradition.[17] It is this annual event that ensures Lakeside is kept 'prosperous' whilst other towns in the area succumb to an 'insidious … poverty' as tourism and industries die in the region. (p.298) Whilst Lakeside may resist the homogenising forces of encroaching capitalism and industry, it is nonetheless a space of temporal homogenisation where change is forcibly prevented. This can be illustrated by the town library, which Hinzelmann takes pride in showing to Shadow on his arrival to the town: built in 1870 and still containing the 'original pine shelving', he impresses upon Shadow that it will remain in its current fixed state from 'now until the end of time'. (p.271) This boastful claim to immortal exceptionalism draws a pointed comparison to the derelict monuments which mark the 'centre of America' observed earlier - a foreshadowed warning for the inevitable fate of all such vaunted places. The narrative of a pure and 'virginal' place is a fantasy that the residents wilfully cling to in an attempt to actualise their nostalgic idealism for a utopian

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[17] The child is placed in the boot of an old car, a 'clunker', which is placed upon the winter ice that covers the lake and bets are taken on when the car will fall through into the water as spring melts the ice. It is Hinzelmann himself who organises the event and sells raffle tickets for the occasion, ensuring the practice continues.

small-town America. At the end of the novel, after his rejection of Wednesday's war and the dissolution of the gods' battle, Shadow returns to Lakeside and discovers the grisly secret behind its enduring prosperity. Hinzelmann's ritual represents the extremity of a figure unable to abandon or adapt the mythified homespace which it has claimed. The sacrifice of a child is a motif that appears in a number of religious texts and iconography, the Bible and classical mythology has several such instances, and is often performed either to prove devotion to a deity or to appeal for blessings. Killing a child can also be read as symbolic killing of the future, the growth and potential which a child represents. In this manner, Hinzelmann is providing himself with sacrificial offerings in order to keep 'his' town ascribed to his own mythified vision and also preventing any 'natural' renegotiation of the spatial identity of the town from internal or external forces. By exposing Hinzelmann's crimes, Shadow breaks the illusion and warns the town of impending 'trouble' as Lakeside becomes like 'the rest of this part of the world'. (p.618) By revealing the true cause of the town's prosperity, and the price which it attracts, Gaiman confirms the illusory nature of such idealistic myths of the utopian space, unspoiled by the advances of culture and technology. Hinzelmann is a personification of the townsfolk's lust for an unattainable, or at least unpreservable, idealisation of the home narrative and his victims a grim reminder that such stability may be temporarily purchased or negotiated, but it comes at a price. The cost is often violent and opposed to the fundamental ideals from which formulations of home are constructed: the 'experience of existing in peace and security in the world'. (Dobel, p.6) Violence and conflict is, as identified at the start of this chapter, often a consequence of enshrining persistent narratives of an insider/outsider spatial divide. Lakeside is a 'good town' in that it stands apart from similar settlements in the region; therefore, those who are not residents of the town are the other, and it is through symbolic conflict, signified by the death of the child, that the other is kept at bay.

Shadow's warning of the imminent 'bad shit' about to befall the town with the removal of Hinzelmann supports his earlier assertion in the novel that 'he would take a roadside

attraction, no matter how cheap, how crooked, or how sad, over a shopping mall, any day' (p.190).[18] It seems at odds with this distaste for the increasing homogeneity of the American landscape that Gaiman would elect to have Lakeside ultimately poised to fall to those very forces. He does provide further insight into his views of 'small-town America' in the novel, however. During Shadow's drive through the rural heartlands, early in the narrative, he notices signs by the road, displayed alongside the town notices, proudly boasting their status as 'the home of the Illinois Girl's Under 16s Wrestling semifinalist' or 'the third runner-up in the interstate Hundred-Yard Sprint'. (p.176) Unlike Lakeside, whose only given identity is that of 'a good town' (p.289), these places present a near desperate search for identity and individualism, finding any marker of 'success' or triumph over their neighbours with which they can construct a narrative of the town that emphasises the story of the individual (cf. Rapport, p.10). Although not as dramatic, these towns also demonstrate the futility of attempts to construct a spatial narrative of home in the contemporary world. Each strives for its own legend to give further, unique meaning and identity to the geographically-defined space of the town. Whilst Gaiman allows Shadow to appreciate them above the homogeneity of the American cultural landscape, he nonetheless seems to express an element of pity, even mockery, in the desperation which the notices reveal. Hinzelmann's influence on Lakeside prohibits any such search for individuality and instead asserts his autocratic idealisation of a mythified homeplace which the residents of the community must, like Bixby's terrified townspeople, accept and adhere to or else find themselves 'fixed' by the totalitarian controller of the town's identity (p.611). Whilst Lakeside's fate is left unclear, despite Shadow's bleak prediction of the future, Gaiman's decision to break Hinzelmann's control suggests that even a seemingly futile struggle to construct an individualised identity for the geographical homespace is preferable to having that fluidity of choice removed by an overarching power.

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[18] Siobhan Carroll makes an interesting argument that Shadow's declaration is a result of such attractions constructing anthropological 'place' rather than the Augéan 'non-place' of homogenous commercial spaces.

The preference for individualised spatial conceptions, rather than a homogeneous spatial identity, can also be seen in the way Gaiman presents America itself in the novel, rejecting any suggestion or image of the country as a singular constructed place. Midway through the novel, as they are leaving Lakeside to visit Eostre, Wednesday illustrates this point clearly with the declaration that 'San Francisco isn't in the same country as Lakeside any more than New Orleans is in the same country as New York', although they are 'the same *land*' it is only an 'illusion of being the same country' (p.328, emphasis original). Gaiman's use of fantasy in the novel allows such 'illusions' to be presented in a much more literal manner. The invocation of religious and mythological figures, directly tied to history, culture, and, more importantly, place, who find themselves in a struggle to find a secure and stable homeplace adds weight to the argument that narratives of home which emphasise a fixity or a rootedness of place are untenable in 'a changing world' (p.581).

The novel is interspersed with several vignettes as asides to the main narrative, each telling a different story of migration to America. Each is placed during a different period in time, from a prehistoric tribe who worship the skull of a mammoth to a contemporary Arab salesman from Oman. Whilst the stories are not part of the main plot in the novel, they offer an insight into the consequences and processes of migration and exile and are an integral part of the novel's thematic landscape and homespace. Each of the sections, titled 'Coming to America'[19] within the novel, serves as an interruption to the main narrative. On a structural level the relevance of this is clear: the reader, like the migrant, is suddenly displaced and must submit to being both 'here and there' within the narrative (Sarup, p.98). The segments cause disruption to the coherence of the

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[19] The story of Salim takes place contemporaneously with the main narrative and, like the introductory segment of Bilquis, is labelled as 'Somewhere in America' in contrast to the others discussed here. Despite this distinction, the content of the segment is similar enough to warrant its inclusion here as an important representation of the renegotiation of identity that occurs during migration or exile.

narrative and the reader is forced to renegotiate their expectations, finding they are now in unfamiliar territory. This act reflects the disruption felt by the migrant who finds him or herself in a new city or a new country, a place that may have few or none of the familiar referents and markers they know from where they were before.[20] Each segment interrupts the main narrative flow as a reminder for the reader that any conception of place is a construct, one that is constantly under revision and change. The tales are presented diegetically as being the work of Mr Ibis, the Egyptian god Thoth who recorded the account of a person's deeds and the outcome of their judgement when they entered the afterlife.[21] He tells Shadow that the stories he writes are true 'up to a point' (p.212). His admission of creative licence in writing the tales, a warning that they are not to be read as pure fact, is a caution against all such stories of the homeland and exceptionalist origins. Gaiman shows the futility of trying to return to any such mythologised origin, particularly from a position of such remoteness; as an (Egyptian) immigrant himself, Thoth's stories are by admission not merely objective recounting of geographic movement. This point is further driven home when Thoth reminds Shadow that there is 'nothing special about coming to America', as the ancient Egyptians, Vikings, Polynesians, and other historical peoples did so and found it 'not worth the journey' (pp.212-3). This ebb and flow of migration and habitation helps disabuse any ideas of America as a stable and singular nation, community, or homeland that can be accurately represented in the binary simplifications of national/foreign Bennett warns against. In peeling back the history of American settlement and visitation, Gaiman further reveals the falsity of any national or cultural myths of a homeland or place of origin. Ibis' historic tales are a narrative of movement,

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[20] Marc Augé has an interesting observation that one of the effects of globalisation, in particular global commerce and marketing, is the emergence of markers which transgress previously established boundaries of language and culture. For the traveller or migrant to an unfamiliar country, 'an oil company logo is a reassuring land-mark; among the supermarket shelves he falls with relief on sanitary, household or food products vali-dated by multinational brand names' (p.100). Such markers serve to further erode barriers of language and communication that once served to identify and border communities or homespaces. See the full work: *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1992).

[21] Their deeds were then weighed by Anubis against a feather to determine what judgement would then be made upon their soul. See: Mark, J. Joshua. 2016. 'Thoth'. *Ancient History Encyclopedia.* [Online]: https://www.ancient.eu/Thoth/

of displacement, and of the continued renegotiation of such ideas as home or foreign. At the start of Essie Tragowan's story, a Cornish woman twice-exiled to America for crimes in England, Ibis tells the reader that 'American history … is fictional', warning against acceptance of the national narrative - a critique already noted several times in this chapter. Much like the mythologised America, the religious myths and folklore of the migrants all draw on the fantastic. It is in the 'Coming to America' segments that such elements, although plentiful in the primary narrative amongst the gods, prophetic dream-visions, and weather magic, are most conspicuous, against the stark reality of the migrants' lives as slaves, exiles, or the displaced.

The stories themselves offer an insight into the migrant experience and the necessity of a fluid, renegotiable home. The first section is that of a band of 'forgotten' Norse sailors who land on the shores of America in 813AD (pp.75-8). Their stay is brief and bloody. Encountering a 'screaling' (Native American) several days after arriving, they sacrifice him to Odin. Shortly thereafter, a harsh winter falls and the Norsemen 'closed the gates of their encampment [and] retreated behind their wooden walls' (p.78). In the night, a screaling war party kills every one of the sailors and destroys all physical trace of their being there. The fact that Gaiman's Norse sailors immediately attempt to enforce a hegemony of their own practice by sacrificing the first native they encounter to Odin, the Allfather of their gods, shows an unwillingness and inability to consider the screaling as anything other than an 'outsider'. There is no negotiating or attempt to assimilate or 'overlap' their communities. The 'wooden walls' that the sailors retreat behind are a physical manifestation of the 'hardening' that Marilynne Robinson warns of when definitions which are based on exclusion take hold. As a result, they and all knowledge of their journey is wiped out. Gaiman shows the dangers of rigid adherence to principles of a binary homeplace and the reliance on tactics of exclusion in maintaining a place of community. The hardened division between inside/outside, literal and physical, does not preserve the sailors or their story. Instead, they are eradicated and the frailty of their claim exposed by the natives - the tragic irony of the tale being

that future generations would not fare so well against invaders, nor would the aggressive re-writing of the American narrative be prevented. This section also serves to further reveal the falsity of the 'virgin land' myths which are used in conceptions of American nationalism and exceptionalism, as well as establishing from the outset that Odin/Wednesday's time on the continent has always been one of betrayal and bloodshed rather than cohabitation. This undermines the rhetoric which Wednesday employs in the main narrative when trying to recruit the other gods; far from being 'their land' which is being stolen by the new gods, Gaiman shows that Wednesday himself is an 'outsider'. The multiplicitous layers which are revealed when dissecting the concept of the American homeland make it clear how problematic contemporary conceptions of home(land) can become.

The next segment is Essie Tragowan's tale, the Cornish woman who is exiled to the American colonies. A brief account of her life in England sees her turn, through various misfortunes, to a life of thievery and duplicity. She is caught and sentenced to 'transportation' but, on her way there, strikes a deal with the ship's captain to return her to England. Sometime later she is again caught and sentenced to death but pleads down to exile, as she is with child. In America she eventually comes to marry a landowner, inheriting his farm when he dies, and raises children and grandchildren. Unlike the sailors, Essie's is a tale of a successful integration and migration: she raises a family, lives a long life, finds financial stability and independence, and is accepted by the community in which she resides. Both in London and America she is careful to pay homage to the myths of her homeland; even in her old age Essie ensures to teach her children and grandchildren of 'the mysteries of the piskies' and sends them to school with 'a little salt in one pocket, a little bread in the other' as a warding against their mischief (p.109). Whilst tending the farm, she pours 'cider on the roots of the apple trees on New Year's Eve, and place[s] a loaf of fresh-baked bread in the fields at harvest-time, and she always left a saucer of milk at the back door' (p.110). Throughout Essie's story, the singular constant is the homage she pays to the 'piskies' and other

such tales from her childhood that she brings to London and then to America. The personal nature of these stories enables Essie to adapt and maintain them despite the geographic upheaval which she encounters; cultivating the stories and fairytales of her youth themselves, rather than the connection to a privileged conception of a homeland which they offer, allows her to locate the 'deep roots' (Sarup, p.95) that enable her to assimilate and grow in the new world. Rather than build walls as the Norse sailors did, she opens the gates of her cultural story and allows an 'overlapping' within the greater community. Even as an outsider by most definitions, rising socially from an indentured servant through marriage and operating as a female landowner competing with other farmers and merchants, she gains a strong reputation and is accepted (p.110) - a fact that Gaiman offers immediately after the confirmation of her continued observance of the folkloric rituals she carried from Cornwall. Unlike the faded and tattered fantastical construction of a virginal American land, mythologising the space itself, the myths in which Essie finds the security of personal expression that may be considered as 'home' are an internal component of her identity, the 'story of her life'. Such a narrative codified on a national level and prescribed to a community becomes another wooden palisade, with Norse sailors crouching behind the illusion of a barrier against a created enemy, where for a migrant in Essie's position it provides a tether of identity through which the displaced can construct the fantasy of a new homespace.

The story of Salim, the only contemporary 'Coming to America' tale, follows an Arab salesman from Muscat, Oman in New York trying to sell 'copper trinkets' that are made in his brother-in-law, Fuad's factories (p.195). He makes no sales, is treated rudely, and is 'scared' of the city and its people, but fears Fuad's disappointment and the shame of returning to Oman empty-handed more. After waiting all day for an appointment that never arrives, he converses with a taxi driver in Arabic, who speaks reminiscently about Ubar, 'the Lost City of Towers' that perished 'a thousand years ago' or more in Oman (p.200). During the drive, Salim sees the driver's eyes, hidden behind sunglasses, 'burn with scarlet flame' and recognises him as an ifrit, one of the

jinn from Islamic and Arabian folklore. The nostalgia for the lost city is another reminder from Gaiman of the trap that a mythical origin can create; the ifrit is in a permanent state of displacement, longing for a (literal) mythological homespace to which he can never return. The novel uses the explicitly fantastic city of Ubar as a referent for all fetishisations of the unattainable, lost place of origin; as Myriam Ben-Yoseph discovered, the migrant can never truly return to the space of home that they have left. The two return to Salim's hotel together for a passionate sexual encounter and in the morning, when Salim awakens, he finds that the ifrit has taken 'his suitcase, his wallet, his passport, and his air tickets back to Oman', leaving the ifrit's clothes, keys, and taxi licence in their place (p.205). Despite the apparent bleakness of the ending, Salim abandoned in New York with no way to get back to Muscat, it is presented in a far more optimistic light. Salim has a moment of euphoric realisation that '[h]ow hard can it be' to adapt to this new life which he has been given, to the renegotiation of his home. For Salim, the thought of returning to Oman as a failure is as fearful as finding himself in a place to which he has seemingly no cultural or ethnic connection. His worry of 'being seen as a cheap Arab' (p.196) and his fear of the 'black people' and 'the Jews' (p.195) are reminiscent of the ethnic and racial tensions that Gaiman evokes through Shadow earlier in the novel, and which are encountered by migrants such as Abdulhadi. Both the heterogeneity of the place and, almost contradictorily, his own status as a foreigner is seen as a threat, a cause of destabilisation and conflict. For Salim, there is a limiting binary of the 'home' in Muscat where he is a failure and the city of New York where he is a foreigner. It is only after encountering the ifrit that integration into the city becomes 'very simple', the renegotiation of his conceptions of home are catalysed in their encounter. His geographic homeplace, Muscat, provides no comfort for Salim, nor the Lost City for the ifrit, and is a reminder of his perceived 'outsiderness' within the city. It is a reminder of his cultural past and the memory of his grandmother's stories which allows Salim to accept and embrace his dislocation, adapting to his new circumstances rather than clinging to his initial narrative of an excluded figure solely reliant on the eventual return to a familiar homeland.

The most obvious stories of immigration and reconceptualising of home in the novel are the titular gods themselves. As the (old) gods are brought to the American continent from Europe, Africa, and Asia their 'homes and homelands are left behind [and] the [gods] in the novel must fashion new homes within a new country' (Jones, p.3). In Robert William Jones' somasthetic reading of the text, he suggests that the gods, and the homes or 'places of power'[22] they occupy, in the novel 'are representative of change within immigrant communities and the tension between loyalties to the old country and the need to adapt and assimilate' (p.6). The gods as they appear in the novel, along with their 'places of power', are grounded, physical constructions of flesh and bone and brick, rather than conceptual or metaphysical entities as they are more traditionally presented. Mr Ibis and Jacquel, the Egyptian gods of the underworld Thoth and Anubis respectively, live as 'funeral directors' in Cairo, Illinois - pronounced 'Kayro'(p.174), in an area known as 'Little Egypt' (p.194), alongside Bastet, who spends most of her time as a cat. Czernobog, the Slavic 'black god' associated with death and blood, is found in an inner-city tenement in Chicago, 'a city infamous for its slaughterhouses and stockyards of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century' (Kosiba, p.111). As physical beings they are explicitly subject to the same societal and cultural forces which affect the lives of the humans about them - arguably more so. It should also be noted that both examples are tied to death, a theme running throughout the novel that begins with Shadow's early release from prison. Whilst gods, particularly the old gods, have often been linked to death and sacrifice, Gaiman interweaves this theme throughout the narrative building to the acceptance of the larger death being remarked upon: the death of the grand narrative, as noted in Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979). Both the Egyptian gods and the Slavic face an increasing struggle to survive as 'no one wants to remember' the gods anymore (p.86). Czernobog bemoans that after leaving New York,

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[22] Not to be confused with the places of power which Wednesday explains to Shadow: see page 22 of this work.

where 'all [their] countrymen go', he was forced by necessity to take a job as a 'knocker' at an abattoir, until technological improvements made him obsolete. When introduced, they live in a relative slum and the only money is brought in by Zorya Vechernyaya, the only one of her three sisters whose fortune telling is successful. She claims this is because she 'can lie to [the customers], tell them what they want to hear'; her sisters can only tell the truth and so are unsuccessful (p.83). That people find the fantasies of Zorya Vechernyaya preferable to any truthful predictions takes on a layer of ironic commentary when considered in light of the relationship between the gods and the concept of home in the novel. As summarised earlier, the gods, including Czernobog, are taken in by Wednesday's rhetoric and, until Shadow's intervention, are poised for war. Much like the sisters' customers, the gods would rather believe in the fantasy Wednesday provides of a homeland that they can fight for and claim against the perceived intrusion of the new gods than they would accept that America is 'not a land for gods.' (Gaiman, p.263) The Egyptian gods, Jaquel and Ibis,[23] similarly find themselves under pressure as larger corporate entities move in on the funerary trade, although Mr Ibis opines to Shadow that when it comes to the funeral business people 'want personal attention' and to 'know what they're getting' (p.208). This may be illustrative of why grand narratives of the homeplace and mythologised notions of origin are so attractive: the lie is more appealing than the truth. The lies provide a reassuring certainty of (misplaced) knowledge, as Wednesday offers to the old gods who are frightened of fading away all together and losing their homes, their places of power, to the newer gods. Whereas the truth which Gaiman provides is that there is no 'grand narrative' and any illusions of essentialism are exactly that- illusory; both the old and new gods are at the mercy of their worshippers, the people on whose faith and belief they rely on in order to survive. Even were the war to be fought, the victor would not have found themselves rewarded with some 'promised land' where they would be safe.

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[23] The gods Horus and Bastet are also featured, but they are shown to have mostly abandoned any claims to their identity and spend their time living as a hawk and a household cat, respectively. Although certainly an interesting point of analysis, this analysis will focus primarily on Mr Ibis and Jacquel.

The tensions that Jones' observes of the gods in the novel stem, in a large part, from the fact that as gods, their identities, the 'story of their lives', are predetermined and fixed by the belief of their worshippers. As Loki explains to Shadow:

> It's about being you, but the you that people believe in. It's about being the concentrated, magnified, essence of you. It's about becoming thunder, or the power of a running horse, or wisdom. You take all the belief, all the prayers, and they become a kind of certainty. (p.479)

For the gods, myths and narratives are an integral part (arguably all) of their being. It is somewhat unsurprising therefore that Wednesday's rhetoric proves persuasive and that his plan is nearly successful. Their identities and their existence is dependent on their stories and the belief which those stories engender in people; so too is the concept of a nation or a 'home' constructed through narratives and supported via belief. However, grand, totalising narratives of home and nation fail when they encounter those whose narrative is not compliant, the 'outsider'. Loki's advice may be helpful for a god, but it is that very same 'certainty' which he lauds that leads to nationalist rhetorics which Kaplan warned of at the start of this chapter. There is a nuance missing from Loki's speech regarding fluidity and adaptability. It is a lack of these qualities which drives much of the simmering conflict between the new and old gods in the novel; as their homes are reflections of their identities, so too are their conceptions of home similarly rigid and fixed trying to hold back a tide of social change, rather than bend in its wake.

The new gods, whom Wednesday vilifies in his call to war as usurpers of the territory once occupied by the more traditional pantheons, are not exempt from this enforced fixity. The technical boy, a god of wires, computer chips, and the information 'superhighway' (p.59), has his home in the world of the internet and circuitry. When he is forced 'out of wireless range' (p.472) during the handover of Wednesday's body to the old gods, he starts to break down and lose cohesion; he is heard 'throwing [himself]

against the walls of his room' (p.477) and appears so unstable the next day that Shadow goes from wanting 'to hit the kid' (p.471) to 'feeling sorry for him' (p.482). It should be no great revelation that the new American gods of technology and convenience face the same challenges of being as their immigrant counterparts. This predeterminism and essentialism prohibits the gods from any creative renegotiation of their identities or of their homes; they are trapped within the identities ascribed to them and within homes that reflect their nature. Shadow notes the hollowness of any mythological exceptionalism that the new gods may feel when he pointedly observes to them that 'today's future is tomorrow's yesterday' (Gaiman, p.472). It is also evident during the final confrontation, in the massed assembly of gods old and new; Shadow sees that there is a 'fear' to the 'new ones', that 'unless they remade and redrew and rebuilt the [changing] world in their image, their time would already be over' (p.581). The gods, as physical manifestations of cultural narratives, follow Wednesday and believe in the grand narratives of nation, of constructing a totalizing and unified definition of 'home' which will provide protection against the changing social forces which they are ultimately beholden to. This somewhat literal rootedness of the gods in the novel, tied to the physical world, serves to highlight the undermining weakness inherent in such fixity of origin and identity. Whilst it allows for a certain simplicity and surety, it does not permit the adaptation or fluidity which would seem to be necessary for any conceptualisation of home in the contemporary world. Even Wednesday, a self-professed con artist and masterful liar, finds himself struggling to survive in the modern world, lamenting to Shadow that he is a 'has-been' (p.386), as it changes around him. Unlike the smaller, personal folklore that allows the migrants, Salim and Essie Tragowan, to find an anchor of identity to navigate through displacement, dislocation, and eventual assimilation, the gods are indicative of much larger, macro-narratives of culture and community. Their predetermined identities result in a rigidity of conception and as such attempts to assimilate and adapt, to find a home, are seemingly doomed to futility.

Despite the grand narrative which Wednesday and Loki (as Mr World) sell to the gods, old and new, the novel's end sees them 'headed home' from the site of the almost-battle to where they started. In the end, they settle back into their roles and return to the spaces they previously occupied (p.592), such as the Chicago tenement flat where Czernobog and the three sisters live. Gaiman does allow a glimmer of hope, as Shadow finds Czernobog changing to his long-absent other half, Bielebog, a god of light, on his return visit. Despite the problematic implications that Gaiman suggests result from adherence to myths of the fixity of origins, there is also the acceptance that renegotiation is still possible. By exposing Wednesday's machinations to the gathered gods, Shadow seems to have revealed also the futility of their lamenting what has been lost. Bielebog's return after 'a long time' (p.628) would suggest that, at least in part, the gods have learned that aspiring to locate a 'promised land', rather than focusing on developing their individual narratives of belonging, is a damaging exercise that leads only to near-mutual destruction.

The manifestations of the gods in the novel represent the struggle to assimilate that may result from hardened conceptions of a homeplace or origin. It is the stories, fables, and myths which provide the individual with a referent of a contextual personal identity which are important when negotiating the 'change within immigrant communities', not the gods themselves. The gods, as entities governed by an inescapable essentialism, are trapped within the mythopoeic narrative of belonging that creates an environment of conflict and ultimately destruction. Like the roadside attractions Wednesday lectures Shadow on, built to draw people to places of indeterminate significance or ephemeral power, the homes that the gods have found for themselves in America are unfulfilling and provide only superficial satisfaction. Siobhan Carroll suggests that the conflict which Wednesday engineers is 'between the ostensible representatives of place [the old gods] and globalization [the new gods]' (p.320). However, this distinction, Carroll reminds us, is illusory as such definitions are the 'product of social construction' and, as such, are subject to the changes wrought by social processes. The predeterministic

nature of the gods, as outlined above, ensures that any perceived 'victory' by either side is, at best, a fleeting moment of satisfaction; both old gods and new are subservient to societal changes and shifts in cultural philosophy, thought, and capital.

Carroll's essay on national identity concludes that the novel ultimately fails to 'locate a stable, "real America"' (p.308), suggesting instead that it points 'the reader toward an understanding of national identity as communal fiction' (p.323). Whilst national identity and home are not synonymous, Carroll's reading of the novel shows national identity to be a communal fiction. This supports an interpretation that, for Gaiman, the idea of home is an individualised fiction. Although Shadow and the gods fail to find a stable home, the novel ends on a positive note that belies the apparent nihilism of such a rejection. Whilst the narratives of home that the novel constructs for its characters may not be stable or protected, Gaiman shows that it is the flexibility and fluidity of a more individualised conception of home, one that is not rooted in place or myths of geographic destiny which allows his characters to find some level of what can perhaps be considered peace. The tales of successful immigration and assimilation reveal that, although grand narratives may fail and decay, proving myths of exceptionalism false, the smaller, personal narratives can become flexible enough to survive 'the storm' of globalisation and the erosion of the borders and boundaries which once identified communities and which more rigid conceptions of home may rely on.

Space, for Sale: Capitalist Conditions and the Spatial Order of the Contemporary City

'There is no human reason to be here.'
~Baudrillard, on New York (*America,* 1989)

As the proportion of the human population dwelling within cities increases[24], so too, says Simon Parker (2004), do efforts to examine and analyse 'urbanity' and the city. According to Robin Alter, the importance of the novel in addressing this ontological question of the city came to the fore during the 'age of High Modernism', in three 'strikingly innovative novels', specifically: *Ulysses* (1922)*,* by James Joyce, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), by Virginia Woolf, and *Petersburg* (1913), by Andrei Bely (Alter, p.84). These texts were, characteristically of the era, concerned with 'the reality of [the] city' (ibid.) as much as they were with the actual characters. During the last century the nature of the city has become increasingly 'unreal [and] unmappable', with some critics viewing the city as something of a 'postmodern abstraction' (Beville, p.603). The city has grown to become a commodity, a brand to be sold, as opposed to a place of dwelling and of community. Susan Buck-Morss draws attention to the connection between Walter Benjamin's use of 'phantasmagoria'[25] when describing 'the spectacle of Paris' and Karl Marx' use of the same term 'to refer to the deceptive appearances of commodities as "fetishes" in the marketplace' (p.81). Societal forces exert power over the spatial order of the city, producing and appropriating spaces to serve their agenda. In particular, the influence of capitalism over urban spatiality has been a notable theme in spatial theory since Lefebvre's seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1974). In the

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[24]According to the 2018 World Urbanization report by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 74% of the European, 82% of the North American, and 55% of the global population live in urban areas. See the 2018 report at: https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/
[25]A magic lantern show of shifting light and shadows, creating illusory images and shapes, that was popular in the nineteenth century throughout Europe.

contemporary city, this spatial dominance sees spaces of historical and cultural value appropriated or obscured in the pursuit of constructing a 'spectacle city'.

Neverwhere engages with the spatiality of contemporary London, and the ways in which the spaces of the city are inflected by consumer culture of the late twentieth century. The influence of capitalism over space works to construct two locatable 'versions' of the city: one comprising the spaces of consumption which are compliant with capitalist ideologies and one which constitutes those spaces and aspects of urbanity which are non-compliant. The fantastic elements of the novel allow Gaiman to literalise this metaphor of a 'divided city' into a 'real' London of commerce and a second 'other' London comprising both explicitly fantastical elements and those which have no place in the first, transforming the cultural observation into a spatial reality. In doing so, Gaiman directly explores these conceptual spaces and observes how the spatial order of the city is warped by economic forces and the culture of consumption. Through the creation of this dualistic cityspace(s), Gaiman presents his own critique of the perceived hollowness to be found in much of the commercial and capitalist spaces of the contemporary city. The novel suggests a preference for the spaces which all too often are either ignored, obscured, or re-branded and monetised by the market forces of the postmodern city: spaces of historicity, non-commercialised cultural significance, and a spatial order that privileges emotional connection or experience above the production or expenditure of capital.

The contemporary city is a multiplicitous space of complex socioeconomic, cultural, and political relations,[26] which each in turn contribute to the 'rhizomatic' nature of the space itself (Beville, p.609). The work of urban sociologists Monique Pinçon-Charlot and Michel Pinçon studies how old-wealth bourgeois families and '*nouveau riche*'

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[26] For further analysis of the city and urbanity, see: Simon Parker's *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City* (2004) and Richard Lehan's *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (1998).

corporate and industrial interests have, through a political and socio-economic cold-war for the city's more prestigious areas, shaped and constructed the spatial districts ('*arrondissements*') of Paris. Their research confirms that 'economic and social power ... is also a *power over space*' (p.119; emphasis original). This is an important point to establish at the outset, as it confirms that market forces, such as those of consumerism and capitalism, have a direct and observable impact on the spatial order of the city.[27] Cultural critic Alan Bairner agrees with this conclusion and refers to the work of sociologist Manuel Castells in asserting that:

> industrial capitalism continually restructures space, and for that reason, urbanism itself has been an important product – arguably the most visible product – of industrialisation. For Castells, the spatial form of the city is bound up with the overall mechanism of its development. That is to say, Castells does not regard the city solely as a distinct location but also as an integral part of the entire process of collective consumption. It is in such ways that the sociological debate has moved from seeing cities as natural, spatial processes to socially and physically constructed features of the social and economic systems of power (p.5)

Following this logic, further consideration of what this spatial subjugation to the economic forces of the capitalist market means for the cityspace as a whole - inasmuch as the city can be considered a 'whole' – helps to clarify how urban spaces can provide invaluable insight into sociological and cultural debates, and how artistic representations of urban space can equally be read as a commentary on such issues. Bairner's own research, which draws on the 'ways of the *flâneur*' (p.3) to experience the spaces of the contemporary city directly, observes that contemporary cities 'are consistently unequal and clearly demarcated social spaces' (p.5). He simplifies the contradictions and incongruities evident in the city by identifying, within the space of the city-whole, two separate, distinguishable spaces, each considered a city in its own right:

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[27] The social implications of their research also bear interesting relation to Gaiman's novel and the quasi-neofeudalism of London Below, with Door and her family holding very literal 'power over space' and a privileged standing in the undercity's hierarchy.

> The first of these concentrates on the widely recognised material surface of the modern city, described here as the 'city of exclusion' for reasons that will become readily apparent. This is followed by the construction of a second city which exhibits very different features of contemporary urban life and is given the name 'the city of the excluded' (p.3)

The city of exclusion can be considered the postcard image of the modern city: it is bright, clean, safe, and, for sale. It is a construction of the city which calls to mind the 'glittering store windows [and] displays of delicacies' which Jean Baudrillard critiques in his essay on consumer culture, meant to 'stimulate a magical salivation' of desire for the observer (p.33). Whilst Baudrillard's critique posits that the 'drugstore can become a whole city' (p.36), Bairner's conception of the city of exclusion suggests that, at least in part, the city in turn adopts the image of a shop display: a curated tableau meant to tempt and entice, a fantastical construction of advertisement. John Hannigans's construction of the eponymous 'Fantasy City', a pastiche of Las Vegas that exemplifies what he sees as the zenith of the 'postmodern city', takes this concept a step further and conceptualises a full model for the city of exclusion: a place of entertainment, advertising, vice, and profit. The title again evokes similar imagery to that of Benjamin's 'phantasmagorical' Paris: a city of fantasy and illusion constructed as a site to tempt and seduce the consumer populace. One of the six features Hannigan identifies as defining Fantasy City is that the city is 'solipsistic', or 'isolated'. The city 'ignores the reality of homelessness, unemployment, social injustice, and crime' and transforms places of 'public expressions into "promotional spaces"' (p.4); this process of transfiguration 'embodies an extreme commodity fetishism' (Lindell, p.1) as the city space is stripped of its social and cultural identity to further profitability. This wilful ignorance and lampshading of the city's arguably less desirable or attractive elements results in the construction of Bairner's second city: the city of the excluded. What is notable, and may perhaps be contrary to expectations given the language used in conceptualising this space, is that many of the urban critics who address this socio-spatial division within the contemporary city, in one form or another, suggest that 'it would be more enjoyable to spend an extended period of time in the [city of the

excluded] than in the city of exclusion' (Bairner, p.16). Whilst the consumer spaces of the fantasy city may be 'clean and safe', they are also 'strangely sterile, soulless and lacking in atmosphere, as the drive to create new places pays little attention to real historic and cultural identity.' (Minton, p.52) If 'the city is a novel' (Wilson, p.215), then the fantasy city is perhaps a glossy shopping catalogue or a travel magazine.

Neverwhere, set largely in contemporary London, offers a spatial critique of capitalist conditions which dominate the contemporary city, relegating the cultural, historical, and social markers of the city into relative obscurity or re-branding them into commercial objects. This purpose is clear from the outset with Gaiman's choice of protagonist, Richard Mayhew, introduced as he prepares to leave a 'small Scottish town' for a new job in London as an investment analyst for a large firm. The suggestion that contemporary capitalist practices are a source of spatial disruption is established from the novel's beginning. As other critics have noted, the name Mayhew is likely a reference to 'the Victorian urban sociologist Henry Mayhew, who explored the 'underbelly' of the great city' (Gomel, 356). Initially 'feeling like hell' and concerned to find himself leaving 'somewhere small and sensible that made sense for somewhere huge and old that didn't (p.4), an encounter with an elderly woman in the rain, to whom he gives his new umbrella, emblazoned with the familiar symbol of the map of the London Underground, helps to bolster Richard's resolve. He settles in to the city, meets his fiancée, Jessica, and spends his time travelling around or between art galleries, museums, high-end shopping districts, and his office. He is noted as taking 'pride' in 'having visited none of the sights of London' (p.11), many of which are synecdochal with the city itself, revealing a wilful rejection of the city's identity and heritage in favour of the commercialised spaces of high consumerism. Richard's experience neatly encapsulates the clean image of the consumer city; history and culture parsed into museums and galleries to offer a brief respite from working or shopping. This ends when he meets the Lady Door, an injured and apparently homeless woman who appears, as if from nowhere, on the street, as he accompanies Jessica to an important

meeting with her employer, an eccentric billionaire, Mr Stockton.[28] Choosing to help

Door, at the cost of his engagement and future career prospects, Richard finds himself

becoming a part of Door's world, the 'London Below'. Existing alongside, underneath,

and unseen by the 'real' London, or London Above, the London Below is a place of

'magic, darkness, and sewers'; it is comprised of the lost and the forgotten, the people

and places of the city that exist 'in the cracks' (p.96). In contrast to the Above, London

Below is a predominantly subterranean world populated by sewer people, clans of rat-

worshipping homeless, and mythological creatures like the 'velvets', ectothermic

vampires who drain their victims' body heat. It is also a place where 'history diversifies

and comes alive, vibrantly contrasting with the ossified exhibitions above it' (Elber-

Aviram, p.5). All that which London Above will not accommodate within its carefully

curated and homogenous image ends up in the London Below. The topology of Below

is where Beville's description of the contemporary city from the opening of this chapter

is fully realised; both time and space operate under different, somewhat chaotic, rules

to the linear spacetime which London Above is familiar with. Patches of historical

London, which Door describes as 'bubbles of old time … where things and places stay

the same' (p.229), give the undercity a patchwork heterogeneity of disordered spatial

relations and anachronies: streets lit by 'a sputtering gas-jet' (p.45) lead to paths atop

skyscrapers, the London Underground holds host to a medieval courtroom. In other

terms, Gaiman has, within the two diametric 'identities' of his London, neatly

encapsulated the conceptual cities of exclusion and the excluded which Bairner

outlines. In Gaiman's city(s), those who are part of London Below 'don't exist' in

London Above (p.126); whilst in the so-called real world of London Above, Richard

becomes little more than a phantom or a spectre, unseen and unheard save for the

briefest moments of acknowledgement which quickly fade (p.59). The narrative

literalises the transfiguration which sees the city's 'social relations … placed in the

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[28] According to Richard Lehan, traditionally the city 'has been thought mainly the by-product of male rather than female activity' (p.289). Whilst not the focus of this particular work, it is interesting to note that the two primary ambassadors of Gaiman's Londons are, Above and Below respectively, Jessica and Door, both female characters.

shadows' (Lindell, p.1) and the metaphor of the homeless as 'invisible people'. In Door's quest to uncover the mystery of her family's murder and see the forces arrayed against her brought to justice, Richard finds himself taken on a tour of London Below that covers ancient sewers, forgotten tube stations, the mystical prison of a disgraced angel, and a patchwork Labyrinth at the city's depths which houses a huge Beast from London's distant past. Seeking help from various allies, including the enigmatic Marquis de Carabas, a legendary warrior called Hunter, and the Black Friar monks, Richard and Door eventually discover that the angel, Islington, is behind the murders and wishes to see London destroyed so that it may return to Heaven. The novel's conclusion has Richard returning, following the defeat of Islington, to his former life in London Above, with a promotion, a penthouse apartment, and the promise of 'a nice normal life' (p.371). Ultimately, he chooses to reject this prospect, finding it empty and unfulfilling, and, after once more speaking to an elderly homeless woman, finds his way back 'into the darkness' of London Below (p.372). Several critics have observed how this conclusion to the narrative subverts the traditional ending of the hero's journey, and of most such portal-quest fantasies.[29] Be that as it may, the subversions in the narrative also provide further insight into the spatial critique which Gaiman's dualistic London makes of the contemporary city.

One of the central features of London Below, both to the narrative and its inhabitants, is the 'floating market'. Appearing every few days in a different location, the identity of which is spread via word of mouth seemingly without source (pp.265-66), the market is held as a somewhat sacred site to the peoples of Below and a 'Market Truce' exists forbidding anyone from causing harm to another - taken seriously enough that even the reprehensible assassins, Croup and Vandemar, presented as being entirely immoral and 'evil' in the dramatic sense, refuse to break it. The market appears twice during the novel: first, when Richard is reunited with Door shortly after his arrival in Below;

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[29] See: Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008)

second, after Richard and Door acquire the mystical key for the Angel Islington and are seeking again to reunite with their allies. In the market's first appearance, which will be the focus of analysis here for reasons which will be made apparent, it can only be reached by crossing the 'Night's Bridge' (Knightsbridge). This literalisation of names, a recurrent motif within the novel, transforms the trendy retail district into 'a huge stone bridge spanning out over a vast black chasm' (p.99). Whilst a black abyss may be somewhat of a symbolic cliché, Gaiman's metamorphosis of its namesake into a stygian nightmare is certainly an effective metaphor for the endless consumption and need of such commercial hubs. Given the relationship between Above and Below, the abyss below Night's Bridge may well be a repository for the 'evils' of the capitalist forces which are pushed into the shadows of London Below, along with those people and places which fall victim to those forces. The bridge allows those who wish to trade to pass over and through this space, emerging, if they are lucky, on the other side and able to enter the market proper; the bridge embodies Below's rejection of the assumed spatial dominance of capitalism that is evident in Above, providing a means for inhabitants of Below to cross the abyss to the floating market.

Richard's guide, an orphaned girl wearing an 11th birthday badge who ended up on the streets after suffering abuse and neglect, expresses that she's 'scared of the bridge' (p.100). Seeing her discomfort, Richard asks if they can 'get to the market some other way' and avoid the bridge, but she answers that whilst they 'can get to the place it's in… the market wouldn't be there' (p.99). This spatial impermanence is antithetical to the spectacle city as it is unable to present the glittering shop windows and neon lights of sale that are hallmarks of the contemporary sites of commerce, commodifying the space in order to draw and attract anyone with capital to spend. The floating market however requires that customers and stallholders must make a pilgrimage of sorts through a pre-assigned path and to a space seemingly of its own choosing, as though trade was a right which must be earned. For Richard, this is shown when he arrives at the opposing side of the bridge to find his guide, Anaesthesia, has gone; 'The bridge

takes its toll' (p.104), is the vague confirmation given by their third companion, Hunter, who joins them for the crossing and becomes an important figure later in the narrative. Anaesthesia's demise also serves as Gaiman's reminder of the life-cost that capitalist ideologies and the resulting socio-spatial demarcations and disruptions can cause. Given Gaiman's penchant for intertextual references, her name likely recalls Marx's oft paraphrased mantra regarding the 'opium of the people' which prevents the working or lower classes from noticing the imbalances and oppression inherent in the systems.[30] By crossing the Night's Bridge and entering the market, his first real steps into the world Below, Richard opens himself to better see the inhumanity present Above, foreshadowing the novel's end. Monuments to the 'the city's history of conservative fiscal policies' (Elber-Aviram, p.5) can be seen elsewhere in the novel, such as the 'Victorian hospital, closed ten years earlier because of National Health Service budget cutbacks' (Gaiman 2005, p.71). It was further abandoned when the property developers decided against turning it into 'unique luxury-living accommodations' and now sits 'rotten' and forgotten, providing Croup and Vandemar a base of operations from which to pursue Richard and the Lady Door. When the social function of space is subservient to the financial needs of the market, then such sites serve as a grim reminder of the consequences. The market is still a privileged space in Gaiman's Below, possibly an acknowledgement from the author that 'no society can function without the market' (Jameson 1991, p.263). Following Gaiman's logic, in whatever form the market takes it will remain an integral part of society,[31] but its status as a mobile rather than fixed site, which must be passed via word of mouth, cultivates a space of inclusion, rather than the spaces of exclusion which characterise the fantasy city of

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[30] The full quotation reads, in *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843): 'Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.' Marx considered organised religion to be but a temporary restorative from the pains of society that worked to prevent revolution against the oppressive elements, such a capitalism, that much of his writing worked to identify.
[31] It should be noted, in fairness, that Jameson finds himself unable to fully agree with the statement, even as he finds that 'everyone is now willing to' accept it. Baudrillard's essay on 'Consumer Culture' cited elsewhere also explores the nature of human desire and need, and the possible implications this has on the enduring consumer ideologies.

Above. Without a reliable, locatable space of commerce and trade, the market becomes an occasion which draws together the disparate elements of London Below; those of status such as Lady Door or Hunter are equally bound by the 'market truce', and must take the same, perilous route across Night's Bridge to get there, as the ratspeakers and the homeless population. As such, the spaces of Below are not manipulated by the need to capitalise on marketing potential or consumer appeal. Rather, the market is a temporary appropriation of space, precluding the necessity for any such social or historic cleansing as defines the fantasy city.

It is the market's initial appearance in the novel which is of the most interest here, both for its introduction into the narrative and also as Gaiman chooses to situate the market within Harrods, a monument to consumer market force that encapsulates the markers of space fetishized to commodity form:

> The building was large, and covered with many thousands of burning lights. Conspicuous coats of arms on the wall facing them proclaimed that it proudly sold all sorts of things by appointment to various members of the British Royal Family. Richard, who had spent many a footsore weekend hour trailing behind Jessica through every prominent shop in London, recognised it immediately, even without the huge sign. (p.109)

Unlike the Floating Market, which 'could be anywhere' (p.109), this is a fixed site within the city shaped by capitalism, immediately recognisable and associated with consumption. The space is dominated by the facade of the building, itself an advertisement of the Harrods brand and an enticement for the goods to be found within. Whilst the floating market appears at night and leaves no trace, Harrods is festooned with 'thousands of lights' commodifying the space into a glittering attraction. Even the acknowledgement of the Royal Family, a centrepiece of British cultural heritage, is in the context of transaction, fetishizing the institution of the monarchy to that of a by-line in a sales pitch. Yet, to Richard, proud in his avoidance of London's famous sights (sites) of cultural heritage, 'it seemed almost sacrilegious to be sneaking into [Harrods] at night' (p.109). The capitalist site of London Above privileges spaces of

consumption and commerce; the department store is elevated to the status of a cathedral or similar sacred ground that Richard fears to trespass. Unlike the explicitly consumerist world of London Above which Richard, an investment analyst, is familiar with, the Floating Market operates on a barter system of trade and exchange, sometimes for 'favours' or information rather than tangible goods. One notable scene has Richard swap 'a ballpoint pen and a book of matches' for a sandwich, a drink, and some biscuits the seller 'threw in', thinking herself at the 'better end of the deal' (p.113). This provides an interesting contrast to an earlier moment in the novel where Richard and Jessica are on a date at the Tate Modern; he buys her 'a slice of cake and a cup of tea' at a café inside the gallery, commenting that it 'would have cost less to buy one of those Tintorettos' (p.11). Gaiman's critique of the capitalist model, whilst wry, seems clear in these two comparable scenes. That both relate to purchasing food, an essential of life, shows the cynicism toward the capitalist spaces of Above as an art gallery, a space ostensibly for the appreciation of artistic endeavour which stands apart from the consumerist society which its offerings critique, charges exorbitant prices, privileging the enjoyment of the space to the wealthy and the elite; whereas in Below Richard, a newcomer and arguably one of the lowest 'ranked' - holding no real allegiances or even knowing properly where he is - finds himself being given more than was originally asked for, as the stallholder feels obliged to ensure an even trade.

Such moments contribute to establishing Gaiman's construction of Below as a place where the 'human' element so missing in Above can be allowed expression, unrestricted by the lust for capital gain that clouds Above. Further evidence is given in Gaiman's placement of the Floating Market in the first place. Whilst the setting allows Gaiman to set up the commentary on commercialisation of space discussed above, the Floating Market's archaic barter system appropriating the space for the use of the protagonists in the novel seems an obvious message. By placing a market of bartering and trade, populated by the 'invisible people' of society (pp.112-3), in Harrods, an icon of consumption, Gaiman subverts the spatio-economic hierarchy. The 'pseudo-

Victorian' nature of the space serves as a reminder of the historical and cultural value which finds itself subsumed by the shadows by the city of exclusion and its need to cultivate consumptive desire. The floating market rejects the quotidian spatio-political order and, in so doing, arguably elevates the nature of commerce in the undercity to something beyond a mere exchange of goods or commodities; the marketplace becomes a thriving social hub, protected by a sacred peace that guards, not the space itself or capital gain, but the security and wellbeing of those who come to partake.

It should be made clear that, whilst Gaiman certainly seems to favour the archaic pre-currency space of the market, this is not an appeal to a nostalgic construction of a utopian past. He does not shy from the unpleasant aspects that Richard encounters from the citizens of Below that visit the market, many of whom 'looked like they probably lived in sewers and smelled like hell' (p.113). The unsanitised tour of London's underways and pre-industrial streets confirms for all that 'a history lesson is the best cure for nostalgic pathos.' (Jameson 1991, p.156) London Below does not conceal or whitewash the distasteful or the shameful aspects of the undercity and its populace in the way that Above does. However, Gaiman's condemnation of the capitalist London Above would suggest at the least a preference for the more honest space of the Floating Market, which bears the heterogeneities of its populace openly and does not construct an illusory mirage of enticement. Whilst the exterior of the Harrods building is dazzled by the myriad lights and commanding sign, an artificial edifice that reduces the huge, late-Victorian building to the functionality of a brand or logo, entering the floating market reveals 'pure madness' (p.109). But it is the chaos and the filth of Below that displays an honest, 'lived' quality that Bairner and such critics identify as being absent from the consumer spaces in London Above's fantasy city. Gaiman constructs this impression from numerous moments throughout the novel: Anaesthesia's display of bravery defending Richard from an armed thug prior to their crossing the bridge (p.100), the seller who does not wish to cheat Richard discussed above, and de Carabas, who despite his rakish manner always honours his deals and

continues to help Lady Door despite his misgivings and, at one point, even his temporary death.[32]

Whilst much of the narrative occurs in the sewers, tunnels, and other such spaces of London Below, a pivotal plot sequence unfolds within the British Museum, a historical and cultural institution in London Above. Richard and Door visit the museum partway through the novel in order to locate 'The Angelus', a portal to an otherwise inaccessible prison where the Angel, Islington, resides. Concurrent with their visit is an exhibition being hosted on behalf of Jessica's employer, Mr Stockton, and organised by Richard's ex-fiancée herself. The exhibit is a display of Stockton's personal angel collection, 'Angels Over England'. Even in a space dedicated to the consideration and preservation of artefacts of cultural and historical significance and value, the elite of London Above - Richard observes the attendees are not 'just people.. [these] were People' (p.185) - appropriate and repurpose the space in order to flaunt the 'eclectic' extravagance of wealth given to fervent consumption that is 'indiscriminate to the point of trashiness' (p.188). The self-indulgence of Mr Stockton and the appropriation of the space has the impact of complicating Richard and Door's quest. As Richard remarks, trying to find the Angelus, which they know only by the description that it is 'something with an angel on it', in a room 'completely filled with … [h]undreds upon hundreds of angels of every size and shape' would be like 'trying to find a needle in a [haystack]' (p.188). It seems a clear comment from Gaiman that the appropriation of cultural and historical spaces by consumerist forces is a problematic practice in the contemporary city that seems to place a higher prestige on capitalist values and indulgences. Whilst Above usurps the space only to make tawdry displays such as Mr Stockton's, through Richard and Door the London Below enchants the space with the mystical properties of the portal-quest narrative.

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[32] He is revived due to having 'stored' his life elsewhere with an acquaintance who owed him a 'favour', de Carabas' preferred token of exchange.

The Angelus is revealed simultaneously with Richard being noticed by Jessica, although she remains unable to recognise him due his status as one of the excluded residents of Below, and a resultant scuffle with the event security. The confusion and chaos that arise when the 'very clean' elites and 'celebrities' who people the city of exclusion in Above are confronted with the appearance of the 'shabby, unwashed' excluded inhabitants of Below (p.195) are the catalyst that enables Richard and Door to reach the Angelus and open the portal which it contains. The simultaneity of these events, the disruption of the gala and the awakening of the Angelus, demonstrates that in the capitalist conditions of the fantasy city which London Above represents the spatiality of the city is suppressed and subordinated. The disruption of the city elite's celebration of Mr Stockton's gratuitous wealth and self-indulgent consumption (hoarding) allows the museum and (at least one of) the artefacts to reclaim their power and become charged with the mystic spatial energy of Richard and Door's quest narrative, rejecting the hollow 'fantasy' of fetishized objects which the 'People' of Above have constructed via Stockton's gala. Much like Night's Bridge and the market, the Angelus takes the protagonists to an extra-dimensional space, the prison of Islington, a Luciferean angel who was cast from heaven for the destruction of Atlantis and the source of Door's misfortune - although this is not revealed until much later in the text. It is these spaces which allow Below to reclaim or withhold its spatial agency from the dominant forces of London Above.

As denizens of London Below, the protagonists are unable to enter the museum via conventional means. Instead, their journey takes them through a locked door in an old, abandoned Underground Station that used to service the museum, but was 'closed down in about 1933', despite Richard's insistence that 'there never *was* a British Museum station' (p.169; emphasis original). It is spaces such as this, a 'forgotten place', which are claimed by the London Below and that make up the materiality of Gaiman's city of the excluded. In her essay on the urban archaeological importance of the novel, Hadas Elber-Aviram observes that the 'narrative dynamic between the

museum and its station inverts established spatio-political hierarchies, as it gives nearly equal regard to the station [...] as it does to the museum, the major cultural institution to which the station is ostensibly subordinated.' (p.6) Episodes such as this in the text work to restore the city's spatial agency and undermine the prestiging of sites which exist to flaunt or increase capital gain; the station is no longer operational, it collects no fares or tolls, yet in Below it continues to permit travel and access to the museum, which has in turn been appropriated and transfigured into a 'citadel of upper-class pretentiousness' (Elber-Aviram, p.6). Gaiman's further subversion of spatio-political hierarchies during their journey to the museum re-asserts the importance which even derelict and discontinuous spaces have to the spatial unity of the city. Indeed, it is London Above's disregard for the spaces of the excluded city which permit Richard and Door such easy access into what should otherwise have been a highly secure venue. As the capitalist order of Above rejects the station, as it no longer provides profit or commercial viability, it exiles the space to London Below. However, Gaiman shows that such spaces can be reclaimed and their purpose restored, working to undermine the spatial power of the capitalist order.

Returning to his life in London Above, having slain the mighty Beast of London and helped Door in seeing her parent's murder avenged, Richard is given a promotion at work, he is given the penthouse apartment in his building, and accepts that he has been granted 'not a bad life' (p.265). Nonetheless, his excitement quickly fades and he is left to wonder if that is 'all there is' to life (p.371). This is a recurrent critique of the sterilised spaces of London Above, the fantasy city, the city of exclusion and of consumption. When the space of the city is treated as a commodity, and any elements which are seen to lessen its economic value and spoil the cultivated fantasy are segregated to the shadows, to their own excluded spaces, then what remains, whilst pretty and attractive, is 'culturally hollow' and unsatisfying. Bairner's own conclusions from walking the cities of exclusion and of the excluded are that '[the excluded city] may well have lessons to give on how to enjoy life better' (p.17). Whilst the tube

stations of London Below may be home to the sinister 'Gap', which preys on anyone (from London Below) who stands too close to the edge (p.141), they also bear witness to the Earl's Court mentioned at the start of this chapter. Here Gaiman once more employs literalisation of the station's name to reclaim a site which has been reduced to 'a handy fiction to make life easier' (p.10); the symbol of the Tube Map is synecdochal with London itself, but it is conceived as a space for 'commuters' and 'advertisements' (pp.137-8), another vehicle for capitalism in the economic space of London Above. In his Earl's Court however Gaiman presents a rustic, homely space which serves to partially reclaim the space and endow it with qualities beyond a transitory space for workers and underground canvas for further commercial advertising:

> There was straw scattered on the floor, over a layer of rushes. There was an open log fire, sputtering and blazing in a large fireplace. There were a few chickens, strutting and pecking on the floor. There were seats with hand-embroidered cushions on them, and there were tapestries covering the windows and the doors (p.149)

These 'impossible spaces' in Below offer fragments of the embodied, lived-in space which Above seems to have in short supply before the city's economic needs. The handcrafted furnishings and signifiers of an agricultural order recalls a more personal mode of production that is lost in the mass-market commercial world of London Above. Even Richard's apartment is not a sanctuary; the day after he first meets Door and enters London Below he is disturbed by a letting agent showing new prospective renters around. They of course are unable to see him in his 'invisible' status and his protestations of 'I'm here' are ignored as the agent completes his sale (pp.64-5). Although London Below is dangerous and dirty, it also allows Richard to feel and to actualise the city's full spatial potential.

Much as the novel does not hold the neglected and forgotten spaces of London Below to some utopian ideal, neither does it fully condemn the London Above. There is no suggestion or attribution of particular malice, ill will, or what might be considered, in dramatic moralist terms, 'evil' in Gaiman's London Above. Although not a dangerous or

sinister place, London Above is, throughout the novel, characterised very much in the

terms that Anna Minton used at the opening of the chapter: it is sterile, soulless, and

lacking. In the Above, Gaiman evokes the hollow, emotionless anomie of a late capital

society. Whilst the London Below houses a genocidal angel, the preternatural

assassins of Misters Croup and Vandemar, and several other frightful creatures or

persons that Richard encounters on his journey, it nonetheless causes Richard to feel

and experience in a way that is missing in London Above. Even at the moment he

realises that his life Above has gone, and Jessica no longer recognises him, the

emotional acknowledgement of this calamitous upturning in the text is simply that he is

'upset and confused and angry' (p.63). In Below, although the stakes are higher, there

is emotional expression which is prohibited in the bleak world of Above. Compare the

moment of Richard's alienation above with Door encountering an old friend,

Hammersmith, during their second visit to the floating market:

> [Door] squealed, 'Hammersmith!'
> The bearded mountain-man looked up, stopped hitting the molten metal, and roared,
> 'By the Temple and the Arch. Lady Door!' Then he picked her up, as it she weighed no
> more than a mouse.
> 'Hullo, Hammersmith,' said Door. 'I hoped you'd be here.'
> 'Never miss a market, lady,' he thundered, cheerfully. (p.274)

This scene shows not only unbridled emotional expression at the reunion of friends -

the character Hammersmith is not mentioned elsewhere within the novel, neither is his

relation with Door, showing a significant difference in the narrative weight of the two

events - but also that even in the floating market, a space dedicated for trade, the

emotional connection is permitted to interrupt the labour of production. This distinction

demonstrates why Richard, at the novel's end, chooses to return 'back into the

darkness' (p.372) and, this time wilfully, abandon his life, complete with the benefits

which were bestowed when he returned from his hero's journey. When Richard first

meets Jessica, the ostensible ambassador in the novel of Gaiman's London Above,

they are in the Louvre. Despite the wealth of artistic and cultural merit contained within

the space, Gaiman introduces her as fixating on an 'extremely large and historically

important diamond' (p.11). An object commonly associated with wealth and extravagance, the diamond is an apt choice of symbol for the London Above: a 'glittery exterior refract[ing] an empty soullessness', being considered the 'epitome of metropolitan history' (Elber-Aviram, p.4). The reflective facets of the diamond evoke the image of many iconic examples of postmodern architecture which define the skyline of the contemporary city. The reflective 'glass skin' allows such structures to achieve 'a peculiar and placeless dissociation ... from [their] neighbourhood', presenting only 'distorted images' to the viewer to construct the illusion that there is no exterior (Jameson 1984, p.82). The illusion creates the fantasy that the spaces are, rather than a construction subservient to the spatial order of the city-whole, 'a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city' (*ibid*, p.81). In so doing, these spaces preserve the city of exclusion by furthering the fantasy that there are no slums, no poverty, no undesirable spaces. At the start of the narrative, Richard spends his time working in London's financial district during the week and his weekends going 'to art galleries or to museums' or '[trailing] behind Jessica as she went shopping' (p.12). His experience of the city is blinkered and filtered through a lens of consumption and commercialisation which reduces art to 'treasures' and his value in a relationship to a 'matrimonial accessory' (pp.11-2). The problem with such spaces, and that of the city of exclusion, is that 'discourse on consumption' concludes that 'man is really never satisfied' (Baudrillard, p.39). This lack of satisfaction is reflected in *Neverwhere*'s conclusion and Richard's ultimate rejection of the life which the capitalist space of London Above has to offer him.

The subterranean paths of London Below restore the city's spatial history by reviving the abandoned Underground stations, the disused sewers, and abandoned, sunken buildings. These spaces are reclaimed from the capitalist order which sees only value in the potential for increasing capital gain or encouraging consumptive behaviour in the inhabitants and observers of the city, casting aside and obscuring those spaces which it is unable to appropriate and reconfigure to meet this aim. In this way, the city can be

read as being a form of museum to itself; the cultural and historic value of the city's space is revitalised in the city of the excluded, London Below, which permits a simpler, unmonetised utilisation of these spaces. Gaiman is by no means advocating for the overhaul of civilization or a socioeconomic regression to a romanticised past within the novel. Rather, he is showing what can be lost and forgotten when capitalist ideologies and consumptive practice is the dominant spatial force in the contemporary city. Much of the cultural and historic value which may be found in a city such as London is lost or obscured in the spectacle which it presents to prospective consumers; galleries and museums offer curated packages of those same qualities which are banished from the tableau of capitalist space as an artificial salve that serves to sustain, but not satisfy, the human need for such spiritual or emotional fulfilment. It is London Below, the city of inclusion and 'magic, darkness, and sewers' (p.36) which ensures that such unmarketable qualities of lived space are preserved. Whilst space is enchanted and fantastical in Below, it is not the 'Fantasy City' where the enchantment serves to tempt and deceive prospective spenders; spaces are rather magically or emotionally charged, as Richard's quest allows him to realise, with purpose and with a humanity that leads him to return, seeking that same satisfaction of life that is so missing in the anomie of the London Above's spectacle city.

Breaking the Bildungsroman: How Gaiman's use of Thirdspace Subverts the Coming-of-age Narrative

"There should be a place where only the things you want to happen, happen."
— Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963)

There is an inherent spatiality to the language used regarding childhood and the transition into adulthood. Terminology such as 'rite of passage' evokes the spatial metaphor over, arguably more accurate, temporal imagery. The importance of spatiality to childhood is acknowledged rather poignantly by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*, when he observes that, for most of us, the house is 'our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word' (p.4). The protection afforded by the house 'allows one to dream in peace' (p.6) and it is the engagement of imagination, or 'daydreaming' as Bachelard terms it, which permits the physical spatial limitations of the 'intimate space' of the house to be surpassed or subverted. He qualifies this revelation however with the observation that 'adult life is ... dispossessed of the essential benefits' which such dreaming bestows; this leads to the conclusion that the full realisation of imagined spaces falls within the remit of childhood. In his *Narratology*, Mieke Bal comments that 'a small child sees things in a totally different way from an adult' (p.142). Noting this phenomenological difference is far from ground-breaking and has been a recurrent theme in innumerable works of fiction, art, and philosophy, but it is this distinction in the spatial phenomenology of children and adults which leads to the key observations of this chapter. Following the logic that children and adults experience space in different ways, and that children retain the potentiality for imaginative spatial actualisation which may be lost in adulthood, then in order to accurately and effectively examine characters and texts which deal with the intersection of these spaces requires new models of spatial consideration. The geographer Edward Soja developed a theory of 'thirdspace', a mode of spatial thought developed with regards to considerations of real-and-imagined spaces. This chapter will focus on Gaiman's child protagonists in two of his

shorter novels, *Coraline* (2002) and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013),[33] revealing how thirdspace enables his child protagonists to interact and appropriate spaces of adulthood to subvert traditional coming of age narratives.

Soja's 'real-and-imagined' thirdspace provides a deeper consideration of Bachelard's observations of the child's ability to both conceptualise an imaginative spatial order as well as engage with the physical spaces of 'reality'. This concept is detailed in the eponymous work, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), as a theory which he intended as a 'deconstruction of a prevailing binary logic' (Borch, p.113) in the fields of spatial thought. Thirdspace is defined as being a 'mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and the mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning. Simultaneously real and imagined and more' (Soja, p.11). To properly situate thirdspace, the positions of first- and secondspace should be established. Soja defines firstspace, or 'real space', as being 'fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped' (p.10): the rooms in a house, the placement of buildings in a city centre, or the precise positioning of a child's building blocks can all be considered within the remit of firstspace. Secondspace, or 'imagined space', is 'conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms' (p.10); this is the space of urban planners, artists, and poets (p.67). These represent the traditional dualism of spatial thought which Soja, and his predecessors in the field, sought to deconstruct and move beyond. Thirdspace owes much of its origins to Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault's ideas regarding the 'trialectics of spatiality' and 'heterotopology' respectively.[34]

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[33] It is worth nothing that whilst *Coraline* is intended as a children's novel - although, several reviewers and critics of the book have questioned its suitability for younger readers, given the horror elements so prevalent in the narrative - *The Ocean* merely features a child protagonist and is intended for a more mature or adult readership.

[34] The debt to these prior theoretical mappings is explored in depth in chapters 2 and 5 respectively of Soja's *Thirdspace*, cited in full at the end of this work. The key elements which Soja notes as being instrumental to his theory are Lefebvre's 'trialectics of space', which first suggested the spatial trifecta detailed above, described by Lefebvre in turn as 'perceived,

Lefebvre's trialectical 'lived space' could arguably be claimed as the foundation of thirdspace; thirdspace is space wherein both real and imagined spatial orders are actualised and realised, allowing for a much more 'open and inclusive' (p.162) theory of spatiality. Soja lists some of the defining qualities of thirdspace as:

> a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centres and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power' (p.31)

Although not all of these features will be relevant to the current applications of his theory, it suits to have an understanding of the broader theoretical scope of Soja's thirdspace and the inherent hybridity of the spatiality it describes.[35] Thirdspace is summed up at several points by Soja, including in the title of the work, as consisting of 'real-and-imagined' space, conceptualising and actualising both sides of the traditional dualistic model simultaneously, which allows for theoretical and phenomenological workings which would otherwise be inhibited by the either/or approach which Soja and his contemporaries sought to disrupt. It is this particular aspect of thirdspace which helps navigate the ways in which Gaiman's child protagonists appropriate and influence the spaces in which they operate, constructing their own thirdspaces represented through the fantastical elements of the novels.

Many classic children's texts or narratives featuring a child protagonist also demonstrate the relation of children to space, a fact which scholars of children's literature such as Susan Honeyman and Sandra Dinter have explored in greater depth. Much of this scholarship also engages with discussions of adulthood in relation to their

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conceived, and lived' space (p.86), and Foucault's theories of heterotopology, which expanded theories of spatiality and allowed for a much more inclusive concept (p.162).

[35] Soja also acknowledge the debt his theory owes to postcolonial critics such as Bhabha and bell hooks, whose work on sociopolitical spaces and hybridity helped influence Soja's spatial critiques.

observations. This is unsurprising given that adults write (and read) in retrospect, childhood being temporally and physically inaccessible save through observation and memory - which some critics argue is the justification for what they perceive as the nostalgic longing expressed by many (romantic) artistic representations of childhood (Philo, pp.8-9). The form of the bildungsroman, the coming of age narrative, has remained one of literatures more recognisable tropes since its introduction during the eighteenth century. Jerome Buckley best defines the bildungsroman with the following summary:

> A child of some responsibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy... He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence) to make his way independently… By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. His initiation is complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success of the wisdom of his choice. (p.17)

Whilst the form has encountered many variants since its inception at the end of the eighteenth-century, its 'template and telos' remains much unchanged (Lee, p.554). This preoccupation with childhood and its inevitable end has also influenced how such works engage with the spatiality of children. Much of children's literature, particularly from the Victorian and post-enlightenment era, is focused on sites of pastorality, in particular the garden. Sandra Dinter offers a brief but in-depth historical review of this particular aspect of childhood spatiality through examples of children's literature from the last two centuries. She observes that in each text studied, despite changing social attitudes and portrayals of the gardens themselves, 'the gardens facilitate rites of passage' (p.217). In each, the child protagonist's relationship and engagement with the garden, be it as pastoral space or as a more sinister labyrinthian creation, ends with their emergence as approaching 'the "normal" state of adulthood', ready to abandon what Dinter sees portrayed as being the 'inherently deviant identity' of childhood

(p.219). Beyond the garden, the increasing predominance of urban space[36] also influenced children's literature as authors explored the opportunities that such predominantly industrial and economic sites provided for 'child protagonists to observe, explore, engage and comment on the adult world' (Hamer, par.14). Unlike the pastoral spaces which serve to shepherd the child protagonist toward the triumph of adulthood and, ultimately, the abandonment of the necessity of space for imagination and fantasy, the urban sites presented in the texts Naomi Hamer analyses allow the child to engage with spaces of adulthood 'while still maintaining some of the playful aspects of the fantasy worlds of childhood' (Hamer, par.14). Writers found that the city provided opportunities for children to step into adulthood without undergoing the transformative journey of maturation; they could, albeit for a moment, occupy both childhood space of enchantment and play and adult space of labour and industry simultaneously. In Gaiman's fiction however the distinctions become further obscured as his protagonists actualise imaginary and fantastical spaces in order to usurp spatial dominance from antagonistic or apathetic adult forces. In other words, they transform spatial imagination (knowledge) into spatial action (praxis) which results in a shift in spatial power from the adult forces to that of the child - and it is here that Soja's Thirdspace is articulated. The value of thirdspace in analysing children's fantasy fiction has been approached before by literary critics such as Anthony Pavlik, who have realised the relationship between the 'real-and-imagined places' of Soja's thirdspace and the spatial actualisation of childhood's imagination whilst at play. Pavlik analyses several key works from the canon of children's literature in his exploration of thirdspace as a critical lens for observing the use of spatiality in regard to children in fantasy fiction. He concludes that the fantasy worlds and places encountered and presented in children's fiction, traditionally considered as 'other' spaces, can rather be considered 'as actualised thirdspaces of performance and agency, generated by protagonists, negotiated and utilised, manipulated and transgressed' (p.249). Pavlik's interpretation

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[36] See the previous chapter on Gaiman's *Neverwhere* for more.

of childhood fantasy worlds as thirdspaces provides an ideal tool for analysing how Gaiman's child protagonists subvert the traditional ideas of childhood spatiality (namely a conduit for leading the child towards adulthood, the 'rite of passage'). It is important to note when discussing these childhood spaces of imagination or enchantment that this is not 'a case of fanciful imagining or daydreams ... for that would be a misuse of the term imagination as something less than solid and powerful'; such an interpretation could be read as to 'gesture too much towards re-establishing the child as the repository of the imaginative (fanciful) in some Romantic sense. [Rather] the individual's worlds are both available and exist as a part of the protagonist's realm of actual experience' (Pavlik, p.244). It is this aspect of thirdspace that is of significance, as it posits that the spatial actualisations and (re)imaginings performed by the child protagonists have an import beyond what may be otherwise dismissed as mere play; in a phenomenological sense, the spaces in question have been fundamentally transmuted by the child.

In each of the novels, a child protagonist confronts a supernatural threat to their home life whilst 'negotiating the borders of the adult world, along with all the economic and cultural institutions encoded within it' (Lee, p.553). *Coraline* follows an eponymous girl who, whilst playing alone in the flat she and her parents, often preoccupied by work, recently moved into, discovers an uncanny mirror version of her world, complete with her 'other mother' (p.34). The other mother attempts to lure Coraline to stay, with 'wonderful toys' (p.37), home-cooked food that 'taste[s] wonderful' (p.35), and other such entreaties, but the price of staying is having black buttons sewn into her eyes, as all of the 'other' residents she meets have already. After her parents are trapped by the other mother, Coraline manages to free their souls, along with those of several other children which the other mother, whom they refer to as the 'beldam', had claimed previously. The novel concludes with Coraline enjoying time with her parents and the other adults, who finally engage with her presence in a responsive manner. *The Ocean* features a nameless protagonist who after a funeral, as an adult, returns to his

childhood home and the locus of a traumatic, supernatural occurrence. The novel takes the form of a frame narrative, or 'memorate' (Rață, p.190), wherein the protagonist as an adult recalls the events tied to the titular ocean, or pond as it appears to his adult self. As a child, his parent's economic troubles cause them to rent the protagonist's room out to lodgers, one of whom commits suicide in the family car due to his own financial shortcomings and deviances. This begets a sequence of supernatural events involving a demonic figure who takes the form of Ursula Monkton, a woman who is employed by, and then seduces, the protagonist's father as a nanny for himself and his younger sister. He is aided in his quest to free his home and defeat this evil by the Hempstock women, a daughter, mother, and grandmother, who live in the farmhouse where the pond is located. The women possess their own magic which transfigure the space of the farmhouse in which they live into a site of sanctity and protection. In both novels the child protagonists find themselves confronted with challenges and conflicts which exist outside of their childhood contextual frame. The use of fantastical elements in the novels provide a means for them to overcome these situations without fulfilling the traditional narrative arc of abandoning their childish play or attaining a privileged place in adulthood. Lee Derek makes the claim that these novels show how 'Gaiman clearly idealizes childhood' (p.556) and refers to them as works of 'anti-bildungsroman'. He argues that Gaiman:

> writes *against* accepting one's proper role in adult society, which is to say that his bildungsroman is actually an anti-bildungsroman. One of the core principles in these novels of (de)formation is that adulthood, while inevitable, is a disenchanted space overrun by logic, science, and capitalism. Not only is maturity dispiriting, but, if accepted passively, it imprisons and even annihilates the soul. Gaiman turns to the enchantment of childhood as an elixir to the ills of adulthood (p.553; emphasis original).

Whilst his argument is focused on Marxist and sociopolitical theory, it also applies to Gaiman's use of spatiality within the novels. In both texts, the child protagonists appropriate the spaces in which they operate and interact (firstspace) with the enchantment and fantasy of childhood play (secondspace) to create a thirdspace wherein they are able to gain power and control, whilst retaining the essential

enchantment of childhood which such tales traditionally see replaced with the responsibility or sensibleness of adulthood and maturity.

Both narratives begin with their protagonists spatially destabilized: Coraline when 'they moved into the house' (p.3) and *Ocean*'s protagonist when he is evicted from his 'bedroom, the little room at the top of the stairs' with a washbasin 'just his size' (p.17).[37] As children, they are limited in their agency and at the novels' beginning are moved by adult forces which they are either unable to comprehend or unable to affect. For the parents of Gaiman's protagonists, the adult world is 'a constricted arena where childhood fantasies give way to social fields of productivity, capital, and mass culture' (Lee, p.555). This imbalance, both of power and of awareness, between the protagonists and the disenchanted adults is a central theme of both novels. The narrator of *Ocean* is unable to fully comprehend that his parents face financial strain which requires them to rent his room out to lodgers as an additional source of income; he only knows that he has been made to leave a space that was once his and so feels helpless against the economic forces which disrupt the spatial and familial order he understands. When Coraline's parents are taken by the other mother, her attempts to engage with the problem on an 'adult' level are met with a dismissive lack of engagement from her neighbours who seem not even to notice the words she is saying, but continue with their own, self-absorbed conversations (pp. 60-1). Even speaking to the police and trying 'extra hard to sound like an adult might sound' is met only with good-natured humouring and the suggestion that she is having 'nightmares' (p.65). Gaiman makes it clear that the disenchanted adults are not figures of power which the protagonists can rely on; shortly after his near-fatal choking on a silver coin that appears magically in his throat one morning, *Ocean*'s protagonist tells the reader:

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[37] The frame narrative in *The Ocean* also begins with the protagonist destabilised due to a family funeral which he is leaving when the novel begins.

> I knew enough about adults to know that if I did tell them what happened, I would not be believed. Adults rarely seemed to believe me when I told the truth anyway. Why would they believe me about something so unlikely? (p.28)

Gaiman works to establish a level of mistrust, a distance between his child protagonists and their adult guardians who are unable or unwilling to comprehend the supernatural dangers which threaten. The adults in the novels are, as stated at the start of this chapter, dispossessed of the essential qualities which permit them to interact with the enchanted world and spaces which the children encounter.

Gaiman makes the importance of the titular *Ocean* clear within the framing narrative, before the narrator begins recalling the events from his childhood. It is introduced to the reader as simply a duck pond, 'smaller than [he] remembered' (p.9), located behind the Hempstock family's farmhouse. On seeing the pond, the narrator feels as though confirmation of its existence 'had blown some of the cobwebs away' from his recollection of the place and his memories of childhood (p.9). It is only when he recalls that his childhood friend, Lettie Hempstock, the eleven year old 'daughter' of the Hempstock triumvirate, referred to it as her ocean that he remembers 'everything' that he had forgotten as an adult (p.10). This narrative device cements the thematic link of space and childhood from the outset of the novel; it is only upon returning to this space which he once invested with a child's imaginative power that the narrator recalls the details of this fantastical occurrence from his childhood. Gaiman seems to adhere to Bachelard's assessment of the 'dispossession' which afflicts adulthood; the life which the (adult) narrator describes at the opening of the novel is one without joy or much excitement: he has just left a funeral, his marriage has 'failed', his children have 'left' (p.7). It is only upon his encountering the pond/ocean that the narrator is able to once more engage with the space of his childhood through the returning memories. The distinction between child and adult spatiality is reaffirmed by the protagonist's father who explains to him (as a child, in the central narrative), somewhat condescendingly, that 'ponds are pond-sized, lakes are lake-sized. Seas are seas and oceans are

oceans' (p.32). Much as his father is taken in and seduced by Miss Monkton, firstly hiring her as a nanny for the children and not long after engaging in a sexual affair, despite the protagonist's protestations, he is also unable to consider any deviation from established spatial conventions. In fact, it is the virtue (or vice) of his disenchantment which enables the creature masquerading as Miss Monkton, a vivacious nanny for a reasonable price, to entrap him as he is unable to comprehend the misgivings which the narrator voices. Gaiman uses the pond as a device to establish the respective spatial relations between adult and childhoods at the novel's opening, preparing for the rest of the narrative. The pond is revisited at the climax of the novel, bookending the narrative and further contorting the spatial order of the text. Prior to this reappearance, there are several key spaces to first move through in the intervening narrative before returning to the pond.

The garden is a key pastoral space in literature, traditionally representing the playfulness of childhood and the inevitability of maturation, domesticity, and the other trappings of adulthood which must come to supercede it. Scholars have also commented on how it is often a space of magic or enchantment for the child, a thirdspace that can, through the actualisation of imagination, become the 'whole universe'. Sandra Dinter makes the argument that, with regards to fantasy elements in literature, it is the 'prominence' of these elements which dictate whether 'the garden appears either as a stable and locatable entity ... or as a space that increasingly escapes and undermines such markers of realism' (p.234). Whilst her argument is supported within her choice of texts, Gaiman's *Ocean* seems to disagree. The problem with Dinter's theory here is that it adheres to the dualist structure which Soja and his predecessors sought to move beyond. The garden, and arguably the thirdspace of enchanted childhood spatiality in general, is used by Gaiman in a manner more akin to that described by Honeyman, who channels Bachelard when she claims that such 'spaces are used to subvert the absolutism ... of 'here' and 'there', they allow 'the reader to accept both possibilities by not forcing a single definition of reality based on

the either/or rule' (Honeyman, par.30)[38]. The narrator initially views the garden as a sanctuary, a refuge from the sinister threat of Miss Monkton, a demonic creature masquerading as the nanny. He observes to himself, whilst first attempting to shirk her guardianship of him, that:

> Adults follow paths. Children explore. Adults are content to walk the same way, hundreds of times, or thousands; perhaps it never occurs to adults to step off the paths, to creep beneath rhododendrons, to find the spaces between fences. (p.74)

Gaiman reinforces the idea of adult spatiality as being rigid in comparison to the 'explorer' mentality of the child - a theme that also appears in *Coraline*. When first introduced, the garden is depicted as a functional space similar to those found in many traditional children's novels. There is a 'rope ladder to the lowest branch of the big beech tree' (p.69) which the protagonist utilises as a space for reading, and a 'green-painted shed' where he keeps his 'chemistry set' (p.73). The real (firstspace) of the garden is unremarkable and rather notably pastoral: the practices of reading and chemistry, even in play, are an early introduction to the rigours of adult learning and manufacturing. It is shortly after this introduction, in the passage above, when the narrator finds that Miss Monkton does not follow the 'rules' of adults and, despite there being 'no way she could have got there' (p.75), she catches him in his escape attempt. This is the catalyst for the spatial re-imagining and thirding of the garden that occurs in the latter part of the novel. The narrator is being hunted by 'hunger birds', reality-devouring predators that 'clean up' supernatural incursions. Having eaten Miss Monkton, they seek to consume the protagonist who contains a trace of her essence in his heart. Lettie Hempstock tells him to wait inside a fairy ring, 'a green circle of grass' on the lawn; despite his protestations that it 'is not a real fairy ring', she assures him that it 'is what it is' and 'nothing that wants to hurt [him] can cross it' (p.173). Whilst inside the ring, he recites poetry from *Alice in Wonderland* to distract him from tempting

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[38] This also calls to mind the 'paraxial' space, introduced at the start of this work, which Jackson suggests fantasy fiction occupy.

phantoms that appear to lure him over the barrier. As an author noted for metatextuality, Gaiman's choice of reference appears rather self-evident when considering the symmetry of a child entering a fantastical world in order to resist the imposition of adult practice. During this reverie and his incantations, the hunger-birds and their visitations 'did not cross' the grass circle (p.176). The space becomes one of sanctuary and protection, invested with enchantment by Lettie's confidence and the protagonist's belief. Rather than a space of pastorality, the garden becomes (temporarily) an enchanted thirdspace which both provides an anchor to the 'real' from the supernatural threat of the hunger birds and also a magical barrier which shields him from harm. The protagonist's recitation of poetry, and later verses from Gilbert and Sullivan, recalls his earlier visit to the garden in realspace, where he climbs the tree with a book as he 'was not scared of anything when [he] read [his] book: [he] was far away, in ancient Egypt' (p.69). Within the fairy ring, he engages the same actualisation of childhood imagination to transmute the space within the grass circle; as the book enables him to travel to Egypt, needing fear nothing in the 'real' world, within the circle the protagonist creates thirdspace, supplanting the established spatial order with his own, real-and-imagined that lets him resist the supernatural threat of the 'all consuming' force around him.

This construction of a protective thirdspace is also witnessed earlier, during the protagonist's late night flight from his house. Having snuck out of his bedroom window, whilst pursued by Miss Monkton, revealed in her demonic form as 'Skarthach of the Keep', he runs through meadowland left to farrow and an 'electric fence', towards the final destination of 'the Hempstock's farm' (pp.106-7). Unlike the garden, the fields are distinctly agricultural spaces, shaped and bordered by adult forces of production which corral his attempts to escape with fences and hedgerows. It is fitting that the penultimate confrontation between the protagonist and Miss Monkton occurs in such a setting as Miss Monkton is a distinctly economic creature. First summoned by the suicide of the opal miner, after he gambled away a large sum of money which was

entrusted to him (p.28), the creature called Skarthach insists to the protagonist and Lettie during their initial attempts to banish it that 'all any of them [people] want is money.' (p.54)[39] The spatial order is usurped however when, just as Miss Monkton catches up to the narrator and is primed to claim her victory, Lettie appears and drives the creature away with her own, Hempstock magics. This scene is a pivotal moment for the narrative and demonstrates how Gaiman uses space in the novel to explore his attitudes toward childhood and the anti-bildungsroman. Lettie's magic does not appear as shooting from her fingertips or in a burst of stars, but 'when the field [they] were standing in began to glow' (p.117). Gaiman provides a rather literal depiction of thirdspace as the land itself, spaces demarcated by adult forces for agricultural production, become simultaneously a place of fairy and enchantment which serves to drive back the presence of the controlling adult force which seeks to impose its own order upon the protagonist, restricting him spatially to the room which he resents having been moved to. The protagonist's childlike trust that Lettie will 'take care of him' (p.48) enables them to recreate the dark, windswept field into the thirdspace of a glowing sanctuary which drives away the consuming, controlling aspect of adult dominance. Irina Raţă suggests that the Hempstocks represent 'the feminine archetype: the crone, the mother and the maiden', the 'triple-goddess', a figure characterised by a 'changing aspect' (p.194). This would indicate that the three women are in fact a singular entity with three different aspects (bodies). It is telling, therefore, that it is Lettie Hempstock, the child aspect, who is with the protagonist during his confrontations with Miss Monkton and who invokes the magical protection which drives the creature away, appropriating an adult space designated for economic production (farmland) from the forces which seek the child protagonist. Through Lettie Hempstock, Gaiman's idealisation of childhood's potential to create Soja's impassioned spaces is given its own child form which allows the protagonist to conquer the consuming

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[39]This compounds with his parent's own financial difficulties which observed earlier in the text to create an economic threat against the protagonist he is ill-equipped to either comprehend or contest.

disenchantment of adulthood which he is not yet equipped to face. Beyond this, it is the titular ocean, or 'Lettie's ocean', that is the lynchpin for both the narrative and for the construction of Gaiman's 'anti-bildungsroman' in the novel.

It is Lettie who frees the protagonist from the grass circle in which he seeks shelter from the hunger-birds. Arriving with 'a bucket of water' which she tells the protagonist is 'the ocean' (p.189), as she 'couldn't get [him] to the ocean' but there was 'nothing stopping [her] bringing the ocean to [him]' (p.190). She instructs him to step into the bucket, a request that the protagonist does not even consider to be 'a strange request'. The alteration of space has now become familiar and normalised to the protagonist, having witnessed the power such spatial transformations can bestow to the child confronted with a problem outside of their context for understanding and overcoming. Upon stepping into the bucket, he finds himself falling into 'Lettie Hempstock's ocean' where he finds that, not only can he breathe, but he 'knew everything' (p.191). It is also into the pond that Granny Hempstock, the eldest of the three, deposits Lettie's body when she is badly injured saving the protagonist from an attack by the hunger-birds; here the protagonist observes that 'he had seen [the other side] a few moments before', it is in the next obscured by 'crashing waves' that grow to be 'taller than trees' (pp.216-8). The space is both a pond (firstspace) and yet also a vast ocean (secondspace), that magical beings 'came across' long ago (p.29). It is a space that the protagonist can perceive as it is needed: whether a peaceful duck-pond or a vast ocean from which magical salvation can arrive, or hurtful memories can be safely carried away. For Gaiman, the Hempstock's pond is a locus for the thirding of space which also serves to undermine traditional conceptions regarding the separation of adult and childhoods. In the epilogue of the novel, the adult protagonist learns that this is not his first return to this site. The Hempstock woman whom he at first takes to be the mother, Ginnie, is suggested instead to be Granny, unchanged since his childhood, much like the pond, and who tells him that he 'comes back sometimes' but it's 'easier' that he does not remember (p.229). Each visit follows an occasion where he is 'scared'

or otherwise destabilised. Returning to the pond allows the protagonist to once more access the empowered childhood that he felt as an eight year old boy with Lettie, when he 'was not scared' and could act with confidence. The pond exists as an anchor that asserts a spatial superiority over the temporal locking of childhood; as a fully realised thirdspace it exists as both a child's ocean across which fairies travel and also as a duck pond that seemed much larger to a child's eyes than to an adult's, but it does so simultaneously and in so doing allows the adult to access the spatial order of the child. Lee claims that the pond 'serves as a hope function that constantly rejuvenates and gives back' (p.559), consolidating Gaiman's message of the anti-bildungsroman into a single, identifiable image which demonstrates the power of maintaining a link to spaces, real and imagined, of one's childhood despite the 'inevitability' of adulthood. It also goes some way to solving Honeyman's observation regarding the inaccessibility of childhood for adults; she claims that when constructing the fantastical spaces of childhood, an 'author must establish closure at the narrative's end to maintain the fantasy' (par.20) and preserve their isolation from the world of adulthood. Gaiman's protagonist demonstrates the importance and possibility of preserving access, unlockable in this instance through memory (secondspace) which is bound within a location (firstspace) allowing for the (re)creation of the thirdspace of childhood, a reversal, albeit it temporary, of the loss which Bachelard bemoans.

Unlike *The Ocean*, where the fantastical spaces are overlaid and intersecting with those of the real, in what is arguably a more explicit example of thirdspace, in *Coraline* Gaiman constructs a mirrored version of the real world, accessible through a door which 'doesn't go anywhere' (p.10) and viewable in the literal mirror which hangs in Coraline's hallway. Coraline's parents are shown to be, whilst not un-caring, somewhat absent in Coraline's life. Shortly after arriving in their new home and finding herself stuck inside due to bad weather, Coraline seeks fulfilment from her mother who rebuffs her: 'I don't really mind what you do … as long as you don't make a mess' (p.7). Going instead to her father, she is told to 'leave [him] alone to work' (p.8). Left with no

alternative but to 'explore the flat' (p.8), Coraline soon exhausts all possibility of entertainment from the banality of the space; her parents' preoccupation with work is privileged in the space, limiting her capacity for play. It is here where Coraline is first drawn to the door to nowhere and, later that night, when the door opens into the 'other' space. Coraline, when first entering the other mother's realm, at first believes she is still 'in her own home [and] hadn't left' before realising that 'it wasn't exactly the same' (p.33). Much like Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), the manifestation of the thirdspace portal through the door and the other flat is 'not escape [but] a spatial imagining that does not take the child protagonist out of a place, but rather allows the child protagonist to envision and (re)create a space' (Pavlik, p.243). In this new, (re)created space, Coraline sees her parents as the attentive and caring figures she wishes for, but with a sinister undertone and 'big black buttons' for eyes - an allusion to their inattentiveness towards Coraline previously. As an imagined space, the other world provides Coraline with a supernatural threat which must be overcome and defeated, one which only she possesses the tools required to overcome as previously established.

Pavlik argues that reading such fantasy spaces through the lens of thirdspace 'also requires an alternative perspective on the nature of borders and the liminal, on the ways in to fantasy worlds' (p.240). Rather than being a separation which restricts and separates the real from the fantasy, or, as Susan Honeyman argues, ensures that spaces of childhood enchantment 'are clearly bound and inaccessible to adults' (par.2), the portal instead becomes 'one consistent, contiguous, and dynamic space for protagonists' (Pavlik, p.241). In the novel, this is represented quite literally by the corridor that enables Coraline to move between her flat in the real and the world of the other mother; at the novel's end, the door is closed and the key is dropped into a well as Coraline has succeeded in the transfiguration of the space of their flat, once the evil of the other mother has been bested. It is this freedom of movement through the space which provides her with the tools to defeat the other mother and return her parents. As

a child she is free to act and move between the spaces of the real and of the 'other', or to put it in other terms: between spaces of adulthood and productivity and spaces of play. For whilst the other realm is sinister and imposing, Coraline is advised by a cat, her companion in the quest, to 'challenge' the other mother, as she 'loves games and challenges' (p.76). The game is to find the souls of three trapped children and those of Coraline's parents. Through trickery and 'exploration' she locates the souls and crosses back across the corridor into the real world, her quest (near) complete. In so doing, Coraline symbolically releases the children and her parents from the grasp of the controlling adult figure, a metaphorical construction of her parents' unwillingness to engage their daughter in play. This again supports Gaiman's subversion of the bildungsroman model; his child protagonists are not inhibited or restricted by their childhood but, rather, their childhood allows them to fully actualise and realise the possibilities of the spaces around them; they are empowered by it. In contrast, when her parents are taken by the other mother Coraline sees them 'reflected in the mirror' but not in the real world (p.63). They lack the spatial agency within the enchanted world of the other mother to escape or to engage with the 'unreal' space of the mirrored world; their adherence to the disenchanted spaces of adulthood and its economical demands preclude them from affecting the imagined site. This is reflected in the 'snow-globe' (p.141) within which her parents are imprisoned in the other space: they are frozen figures, encased in a space over which they have no agency or control.

The 'other mother's' flat creates a thirdspace where Coraline is able to appropriate the space from the economic and productive site which her parents establish. Following her return from the other mother's realm and freeing her parents, it is immediately notable that a new spatial order has been privileged when her father 'put the computer to sleep, stood up, and then, for no reason at all, he picked Coraline up, which he had not done for such a long time' (p.169). Returning to the idea of these novels as examples of the anti-bildungsroman, Gaiman does not utilise Coraline's quest in order to conduct her into a state of adulthood or maturity. Rather, he demonstrates how it is

through spaces of play that her parents come to be rescued from the other mother, a figure of blind authority and control and, for all of her fantastical nature, an adult force which seeks to trap Coraline much as her parents are initially trapped by the economic obligations of work. Contrary to Honeyman's claims to the inaccessibility of childhood spaces of play and enchantment, Gaiman seems to suggest that such spaces are accessible, or at least that it is possible for adults to regain the enchantment that Bachelard observes them losing, through the thirding of space which childhood imagination and actualisation permits.

A much more active protagonist than that of *Ocean*, Coraline goes 'exploring' the day after moving into their new house. When Coraline is told by her elderly neighbours, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, 'how dangerous the well [is]' then her natural response is to 'set off to explore for it' (p.5). This moment establishes from the beginning that Coraline, as could arguably be said of many children, dismisses the implicit superiority of the adult spatial order. To her, the well is something to be located and conquered. Rather than acknowledge the danger of the well or respecting the wooden boards covering the entrance as clear precaution, she spends 'an afternoon dropping pebbles and acorns through [a] hole [in the boards], and waiting, and counting, until … they hit the water, far below' (p.6). What was a space of danger, order, and originally agriculture, one would presume, is appropriated by the child into a space of play. This scene foreshadows the finale of the novel and Coraline's final victory over the other mother. The well returns at the very end of the novel, as the pitfall in a trap set to catch the animated hand of the other mother, which is severed during Coraline's earlier escape but continues to hunt her. Laying a tablecloth over the well, having first removed the boards, she constructs a panoramic scene of a 'doll's tea party' (p.184). This use of a constructed playspace is even more notable due to Coraline's self-aware confirmation that she no longer plays with her dolls, but intends their use as 'protective coloration' (p.183). Unlike the more explicit example running through the novel of the other mother's mirror-world, Gaiman provides here a more subtle demonstration of how

thirdspace is manifested and utilised within the text. To the hand of the other mother, symbolic of adult authority and the dismissive lack of regard which Coraline finds herself subjected to at the novel's start, the scene is exactly as it appears. It is Coraline's appropriation of the space, recasting a site of danger, and of agricultural production to consider an even further historical view of a well's function, into a site of play, that allows her trap to work. The thirdspace allows both sites to exist contemporaneously in the same location, with the end result being the hand, and the key to the other mother's world, is symbolically dropped into the wellshaft. Her fascination with pushing the spatial boundaries of her site and what it contains is again a common theme for child protagonists, inevitably it is their explorations which lead to the conflict or peril of the novel: Lucy climbing into a wardrobe to another land, or Edward wandering through the forest into the path of the White Witch, in C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950); Lyra Belaqua in Philip Pullman's *The Northern Lights* (1995) who begins her journey due to a need to know what happens in a private room of Oxford University. Where Gaiman differs is that for many of these childhood explorers the destination and inevitable conclusion of their spatial questing is the acceptance of maturation. Pullman's trilogy concludes with both of his protagonists, Will and Lyra, accepting that they must be adults and, metaphorically and literally, abandon 'other worlds'. Gaiman's use of enchanted space allows his childhood protagonists to construct a thirdspace which allows for the actualisation of imaginative space and the appropriation or subversion of the inherent (adult) spatial order.

Unlike the enlightened childhood of the Victorian novels which Dinter analyses, Gaiman's protagonists are not seeking to leave behind their childhood and the free agency which it permits. As shown by Derek Lee's argument for the novels to be read as examples of the 'anti-bildungsroman', it is only through the enchanted qualities of childhood that the protagonists can overcome the forces arrayed against them. More specifically, it is this enchantment, the actualisation of imagination, which permits the children to 'reorganise the place[s they have] been restricted to and construct ... a new

space, a thirdspace' (Pavlik, p.242)[40]. Rather than the spatiality of the children working to 'facilitate rites of passage,' as is traditional for child protagonists, particularly spaces which evoke enchantment and fantasy (Dinter, p.217), Gaiman allows the thirdspace of his characters to subvert this narrative expectation, to nurture and preserve the 'place of wonder' that the world can be to a young mind (Lee, p.555). Although Gaiman accepts that adulthood is inevitable, the spatial constructions of the novels argue that maturation should not be at the cost of the enchanted phenomenology of space which children possess. His child protagonists, when confronted by antagonistic forces of adult economics, sexuality, and productivity, endeavour to construct a thirdspace wherein that enchantment can be engaged to actualise change and triumph in the real or material world. By appropriating the space from the dominant, adult forces, the protagonists are able to empower these spaces with the imagination and play, those 'essential benefits' of childhood, that the bildungsroman traditionally sees cast aside so that the child can enter adulthood at the narrative's climax. Gaiman shows that space can be repurposed and reclaimed from the apparent dominant social forces, and that it is through such acts of reclamation, and through a wilful retention of the enchanted phenomenology of childhood, that individuals can attain 'rejuvenation' against the deadening effects of capitalism, labour, and production which are the markers of the 'adult' world.

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[40] The text Pavlik uses to illustrate his arguments for children's fantasy worlds as examples of thirdspace is *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, Maurice. 1963). His reasons for making this choice are outlined in the body of the article (cited at the end of this work), but a notable difference between his choices and those analysed here is that, in Pavlik's examples, the children, such as Max, are from the outset the masters of their thirded spaces and there is no equivalent sense of threat or danger as posed by those of Gaiman's characters.

Conclusion

'Sometimes we can choose the paths we follow. Sometimes our choices are made for us. And sometimes we have no choice at all.'
~Neil Gaiman, 'Season of Mists' (*Sandman*, 1990)

As critics behind the 'spatial turn' in the twentieth century demonstrated, dominant power structures in society are directly expressed and produced through physical space; likewise, it is the practice and engagement of individuals within these spaces that, in turn, works to produce spatiality. Michel de Certeau's chapter on 'Walking in the City' from his *Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) compares the walker's engagement with urban space to that of a poet's construction of a sentence: the spatial order is actualised and constructed through the practice of walking and the choices which are made, or not made. In this manner, the quotidian order which is dictated by social power structures can be undermined and subverted by the engagement of the individual.

In each of the novels considered in this thesis, Gaiman's use of space offers valuable insight into the politics and cultural commentary of the text. As Rata observed, Gaiman often treats space as another character within the narrative, whether it be the city of London, a child's imaginary space, or a small town in Michigan. The spatiality of the novels plays an integral part of the narrative and the cultural commentary which the texts provide. Often, the spaces in the narrative undergo similar transformations or developmental arcs that the protagonists undertake, or the journey of the protagonists is reflected and recreated in the spaces of the narrative and how the character interacts with or observes space. Each of the narratives (de)constructs a particular spatial order in order to demonstrate how traditional or dominant views of spatiality may be problematic. Confirming Jackson's classification of fantasy as 'subversive', throughout the works studied here, Gaiman uses space to critique the quotidian order or conservative attitudes.

His interrogation of the 'nation ideology' in *American Gods* and the pushback against globalisation, whilst critical of the dominance of capitalism which may fuel globalisation and consistently erodes local identity, highlights how the perverse fetishisation of spaces and spatial identities inevitably results in conflict and destruction. The critique of capitalism and the homogenisation of space which it propagates, obscuring what it is unable to commercialise or commodify, is brought more harshly to bear in *Neverwhere*. Arguably a symptom of globalisation, the contemporary city is a sprawling 'mass' that 'incorporates into itself any sense of being' (Certeau, p.102). Yet it is also a site rife with heterogeneity and a 'rhizomatic' spatial order which allows for subtle transgressions against the capitalist ideology that is the dominant producer of urban space (cf: Lefebvre). The revived underground stations and tunnels of London Below, and the floating market, encourage a state of mobility and fluidity which glittering constructions of commerce work to suppress, dictating traffic according to patterns of consumer behaviour and the movement of capital, rather than people. Similarly the spaces which his child protagonists construct reveal that whilst adulthood and the demands of capitalism - production, labour, income - may be (currently) inescapable, it is by retaining the imaginative power of childhood (and of fantasy fiction's 'impossible spaces') that space can be reclaimed and appropriated. Together these novels, and the spaces which Gaiman constructs through them, confirm that humans are indeed spatial beings and it is through the production and engagement with space that cultural ideologies and power structures can be expressed and explored, yet also subverted, undermined, or reclaimed.

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