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This study attempts to address the lack of research in the area of comic books and graphic novels, popular materials, and psychological approaches to literature. Literature on the topic is generally lacking, and is characterized by the need to provide evidence in favor of the scholarly merit of popular materials and previously neglected methodologies. The author used the works of Joseph Campbell to inform a content analysis of a sample of the works of British author Neil Gaiman in order to determine how characters are transformed by encounters. The method was qualitative in nature, and drew from research in the fields of education, psychology, literature studies, and librarianship. The study found that the transformations in Gaiman's works supported the concept that there is a lack of distinction between humans and mythical beings, and Gaiman fits Campbell's criteria for a modern mythmaker.

Headings:

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Comic books, strips, etc.

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TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTERS IN THE WORKS OF NEIL GAIMAN

by
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Contents

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Introduction

Cognitive development is an area of research that occupies the studies of academics in numerous fields. Educators develop theories about how students learn and process information and attempt to apply these theories to the classroom; psychologists study human behavior and thought processes in order to explain how the brain works and why we act in certain ways. There have been many methods for developing these theories, and to take them all into consideration would be impractical and beyond the scope of this paper. However, by focusing on specific theories, researchers can begin to form questions that may provide fruitful results. In particular, this study was interested in the works of Joseph Campbell, and how his theories could be applied to literary characters. Some of his work was inspired by Carl Jung. Jung developed the concept of the "collective unconscious" and the various archetypes that are shared among different human cultures. These archetypes can be found in literary traditions across cultures, and these ideas are imbedded in the most primal and subconscious areas of human minds (Jung, 1953, p. 42). Campbell built on Jung's work, identifying specific archetypes and themes in literature. One of his more well known constructions is the concept of the hero's journey, which describes the series of events of the mythic cycle undertaken by the literary hero (Campbell, 1968, p. 36-37). The protagonist undergoes a transformation in the course of his or her journey, and it is this element of transformation which was the focus of this study.

Human experiences can lead to transformation, and often in literature such transformative experiences are represented metaphorically through the use of mythic archetypes. Literature expresses something about human nature; through analysis of these literary representations of self-reflection in the form of mythic encounters, researchers can contribute to the understanding of cognitive development.

Research Question

For the purpose of this study, material of recent interest in popular literature was included. Graphic novels and comic books are currently a hot topic in the field of library science, so an author was chosen who has produced a considerable body of work in this format. An author whose work contains many examples of characters undergoing transformation was also needed. To this end Neil Gaiman, a British author who has produced works in the form of graphic novels, children's books, and traditional novels, as well as other formats was selected. A content analysis of Gaiman's work was conducted in order to answer the following question: how are human and mythical characters transformed by encounters with one another in Neil Gaiman's work?

Transformation in the context of this study was influenced by the ideas of Brian and William Sturm and Joseph Campbell. It still carries the basic meaning of change, both in a physical, external sense and in a mental, internal sense. As mentioned above, transformation can be described in terms of the stages of the hero's journey as described by Campbell. These more specific examples were based on Jung's work on archetypes. All of these concepts were considered when analyzing Gaiman's characters.

The mythical and divine elements in Gaiman's works can be defined as characterizations of abstract concepts, such as Death, Destiny, and the human subconscious to name a few. These encounters with the mythical or divine are metaphors for cognitive processes, and often appear in the form of beings that represent literary archetypes.

Purpose of Research

There has been a lack of research in the area of comics, mostly due to the fact that the medium tends to be dismissed by academics who consider comics to be lacking in scholarly merit. Demonstrating the scholarly merit of Neil Gaiman's work will lend credence to the idea that the comics medium is worthy of academic interest.

Neil Gaiman is a contemporary author whose popularity continues to increase. As of yet there is only a small body of research pertaining to his work, and more should be done to analyze his writing. Gaiman has produced a rich body of work and much can be gained from an analysis of his writing.

Joseph Campbell's mythological research can greatly benefit society. Continuing and building upon his research is required if we are to fully understand the implications of his work and incorporate it into our academic and personal pursuits.

Campbell (1972) asks "what is, or what is to be, the new mythology?" (p. 250). One thing that Campbell made very clear was that society needs new mythmakers to establish a relevant mythology for its changing needs. Neil Gaiman exhibited many of the characteristics that Campbell described and the ideas in Gaiman's work corresponded with many of Campbell's ideas. In order to determine if Gaiman is a mythmaker of the

type Campbell described Gaiman's work was analyzed within the context of Campbell's work.

<div align="center">**Importance of Research**</div>

There are multiple disciplines that could benefit from this type of research: education, psychology, literature, and librarianship. In recent years, graphic novels and comic books have grown in popularity, and this has implications for teachers. At the same time, educators have been trying to find better ways to promote literacy in the classroom. Some authors have pointed out the possibility of using popular materials such as comic books in the classroom (Dorrell, Curtis, & Rampal, 1995; Galley, 2004; Lyga, 2006; Shea, 2006). This study is an important contribution to such efforts because it takes a scholarly approach to popular materials. Closely related to the educational importance of this study are the psychological aspects of the study. Many of Neil Gaiman's works have psychological overtones, and in the case of *Sandman*, which is owned by DC Comics, "its popularity actually led to the establishment of the Vertigo imprint, a group of titles which are more psychological and literary than average mainstream comics, and which manage to attract a non-comic audience" (Castaldo, 2004, p. 98). This paper expands the research on the psychological aspects of popular literature because there has been a recent departure from this, even though there is a substantial body of work to support it (Campbell, 1968; Campbell, 1972; Campbell, 1988a; Campbell, 1988b; Jung, 1953). It is important to study this area in order to provide material for consideration by people who are typically dismissive of such theories as psychoanalysis.

Neil Gaiman is a popular author, and his work is recent enough that minimal research has been done in the field of literature on his work. The quality of his work and the nature of his style lend themselves to literary study, and this paper contributes to such research. Most relevant professionally was the importance of this study to the field of librarianship. Public and school librarians can do a better job of promoting literacy and reading for pleasure if they have a deeper understanding of the materials in their collections. In the case of popular and prolific authors, it is not always feasible to read every novel as it is published, so it is important that research is made available to help librarians in their choices and give them enough information to make informed decisions in a time efficient manner.

People often learn through transformation; in literature the transformative experiences undergone by characters tend to follow mythic archetypes, and the "characters' transformations can influence our own." (Sturm & Sturm, 2003, p. 45) By demonstrating the presence of these literary themes in the work of Neil Gaiman, this study supports the validity of his works as objects deserving of scholarly consideration. This research provided insight into Gaiman's works, and led to a better understanding of how he presented his characters. More analysis of popular reading material for the benefit of educators, librarians, and students is needed.

Students need to be provided with an education that will address all of their needs, including academic, emotional, and social. Education should be applicable to the everyday lives of students in order to be most effective. Using graphic novels and other popular materials in the classroom is feasible in multiple subject areas. Joseph Campbell (1988b) points out the importance of relevance: "on this immediate level of life and

structure, myths offer life models. But the models have to be appropriate to the time in which you are living, and our time has changed so fast that what was proper fifty years ago is not proper today" (p. 13). This is why the academic toolkit needs to be expanded when teaching students today. New literature needs to be considered for teaching kids; they can get the same messages more effectively from a medium that holds relevance for them.   In order to convince educators that this is possible, more research must be done with solid methodologies and in multiple disciplines. This research provides the background information needed to facilitate the acquisition of learning strategies by teachers. Because a content analysis was used in this methodology valid results were provided that can be applied to different fields of study. More importantly, by focusing on popular materials, this study is adding to a topic that lacks research and can potentially lead to an increased interest in literacy in our schools.

Literature Review

The majority of the literature available on Neil Gaiman consists of book reviews, which is to be expected of an author. Gaiman is best known for his *Sandman* comics, and it is this series that has drawn the most attention from academics. All of the books and articles concern *Sandman*, and this does not come as a surprise, considering that in 1991 an issue of *Sandman* titled "A Midsummer Night's Dream" won the World Fantasy Award for best short story, "making it the first (and only) comic book ever to be awarded a literary award" (Lancaster, 2000, p. 71). These books and articles mention the recent rise in the popularity of comic books and graphic novels, and a major theme throughout is the literary value of comic books. The authors argue that comic books have great literary

merit and can be used for educational purposes. This concept was a motivating factor for this study and also served as evidence of the importance of such research. Much of the analysis of Gaiman's work has focused on the presence of Shakespeare in *Sandman*. In fact, three of the articles took this approach (Castaldo, 2004; Lancaster, 2001; Sanders, 2004). This indicated that while the character of Shakespeare is considered important, there is a general lack of research on most of the other characters in Gaiman's work.

The first article gave a quick overview of *Sandman* without going into too much detailed analysis (McConnell, 1995). It was an obviously biased article that strongly favors comic books, but it served as an example of the impact that Gaiman's work has had in recent years. The author felt strongly about the literary merit of comic books, and tended to take a negative view of "the tenured zombies of the academic establishment" (McConnell, 1995, p. 21) who put little stock in the value of comics. The main draw of this article was the discussion of the major themes of the series, especially the assertion that it is "a parable of the epochal transformation of the human imagination" (p. 22). This theme of transformation is abundant in the *Sandman* comics, and was the main focus of this study.

The treatment of Shakespeare by previous authors guided the approach to the characters in Gaiman's work. One focus of these articles was the appeal of Shakespeare to popular culture. For quite some time, there has been a lack of interest in Shakespeare due to a prevailing attitude that his plays are "essentially meant to be worshipped in a special place, cut off from the practice of everyday life" (Lancaster, 2000, p. 70). This attitude is evident in every high school English classroom across the United States. However, with the resurgence of Shakespeare in popular media, such as movies and

comics, his work can be brought back into everyday use, rather than be seen as something that students dread reading in school.

Lancaster (2001) discussed how Shakespeare has made a comeback in recent years, focusing mainly on the portrayal of Shakespeare in *Sandman*. He went on at length about the issues titled "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in which Dream brings the actual fairies to come see the first performance of the title play. The article is an analysis of the story, as well as an analysis of the character of Shakespeare. The author also discussed how the comic medium lends itself to telling the story. This tied in nicely with another article which focused on the layout of the pages in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and how it shapes the presentation of the story (Sanders. 2004).

The Sanders (2004) article focused on the comics medium as an art form and as a vehicle for presenting a story. Sanders stated that "comics have potential for real accomplishment" (p. 237), which is an idea that has been repeated throughout the literature on comic books in recent years. The author provided a page by page analysis of the comic, placing emphasis on the layout of the panels and their significance to the story. This article contained an important statement about transformation; the characters on stage were gradually transformed to have a more realistic look and feel once the actual fairy Puck joined the cast: "It is hard to imagine any artistic medium better than comics for demonstrating this transformation" (p. 241). The author made this point about the medium and it was taken into consideration when conducting this study.

One of the most useful articles was an in depth analysis of the character of Shakespeare in the *Sandman* comics (Castaldo, 2004). The subject of the article was the characterization of Shakespeare as a person, with the main focus on Gaiman's

presentation of him. The author discussed the cultural value of Shakespeare, putting

forth explanations for his continuing appeal. She compared accounts of Shakespeare's

life to popular portrayals of the playwright. She transitioned into a discussion of

Sandman by introducing the comic book as a popular medium "which deals regularly

with this issue of the individual who suffers because of special powers or gifts" (p. 97).

In keeping with the previously mentioned trend, Castaldo commented on the literary

nature of certain comics, presenting *Sandman* as being more psychological than most

comics. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this article was the juxtaposition of

Shakespeare, Dream (the main character of *Sandman*), and Gaiman himself. The author

drew parallels between these three men and commented on the changes they underwent

through the course of the series. There were constant references to the theme of

transformation throughout the article, which served the study well.

Most importantly, the literature review showed where the literature is lacking, and

helped fill in the gaps in the research. Previous literature supports the validity of a content

analysis when approaching popular materials. Other researchers have recently been

contending with the problems inherent in empirical research applied to literary works.

The methodologies of previous researchers informed this study, which was essential

when embarking on a relatively under-represented area of study. With further study,

gaps in the research can slowly be filled by researchers in multiple disciplines.

Methodology

For this study a content analysis was conducted. Earl Babbie (2004) describes

content analysis as an unobtrusive method of research in which "researchers examine a

class of social artifacts that usually are written documents such as newspaper editorials" (p. 313). This method was especially appropriate because this study used books as the unit of analysis. The research question required looking at the characters in Neil Gaiman's work, so the units of observation were the characters in his books and graphic novels. As this is a very specific topic, the sampling technique was purposive, which means books and characters that were the most useful for answering the question were selected. An explanation of this method can be found in the tenth edition of Babbie's (2004) book on social research (p. 183).

The study began with looking at a list of Gaiman's works which were determined by comparing listings on Amazon.com, the Library of Congress catalog, and Neil Gaiman's website; they were compiled in order to avoid excluding any possible units of analysis. For the sake of practicality, the scope was limited to graphic novels and books, even though Gaiman has produced works in other formats. Once the list of books and graphic novels was compiled, plot summaries of each one were gathered to see if there was the likelihood of divine/mythic encounters in the stories. Selecting the books took no more than a week. The final choices were the novels *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys*, the short stories "Murder Mysteries" and "The Monarch of the Glen," and the *Sandman* series of graphic novels. The books were read and characters were chosen that were prominently featured in the stories and who also experienced encounters with divine/mythic constructs, and it was then determined how they were transformed by these encounters based on pre-formulated criteria. Observations were recorded about each character before and after their encounters.

This methodology was inspired by previous research (Epstein, 1998; Gottschall et al., 2003; Kember et al., 1999). Roughly the same steps were used as those followed in a study conducted at St. Lawrence University (Gottschall et al., 2003) which involved a content analysis of folktales. The researchers chose the stories, scanned the stories, coded the stories, analyzed their data, and assessed their inter-coder reliability. There was only one coder in this case, so the last step was not a part of the method for this study. However, assessment of inter-coder reliability could easily have been added if the study was conducted by multiple people. Not only was the material of this study similar to that used by the researchers in the St. Lawrence University study, the goals of this study were also similar. One goal of their study was "to demonstrate to researchers that literary works can serve as valuable sources of quantitative data for testing hypotheses about human nature" (Gottschall et al., 2003, p. 367). Analyzing literary works can give us valuable insight into human nature. The successful applications of content analysis in the studies examined, as well as similarities between their content and the content in this study justified the use of content analysis for the research questions in this study.

After the data was coded, the data was addressed in a qualitative fashion. Sturm's article was useful in establishing a working definition of transformation. The types of transformation in the article, as well as the effects of transformation, served as guidelines for analyzing Gaiman's stories. The works of Joseph Campbell were consulted to aid in the analysis. Campbell also describes transformation in his works. The content of Campbell's work served multiple functions: it established the need for new mythologies created by new mythmakers in order to fill in the void brought about by the paradigm shift that has led to a demythologized society; it described the various functions of

mythology, which were used as guidelines for analyzing Gaiman's work; it gave

examples of mythological archetypes that are found in stories from every society; and it

provided the standards with which to judge the merit of Gaiman's stories as modern

myths. Neil Gaiman made use of mythology quite often in his works, and both Jung and

Campbell addressed mythological themes extensively in their writings. Indicators and

themes in the data were compared to the ideas of Campbell. Due to the qualitative nature

of this analysis, a month was spent on this task in order to ensure a thorough and valid

evaluation. The remaining time was spent reporting the findings in the form of a

discussion of the material.

There are advantages and disadvantages to content analysis as a research method.

When conducting a study involving a content analysis, the researcher does not have to

spend money to pay participants or to acquire materials (Babbie, 2004, p. 323). In most

cases, the data can be collected at the leisure of the researcher, thus providing fewer time

constraints (p. 323). There is also less risk involved for the researcher and there are no

participants who could possibly be harmed (p. 323). Researchers can recode data without

incurring high costs in time or resources (p. 323). Content analysis is unobtrusive, so the

subjects being studied will not be affected (p. 324). The ethical considerations are also

simpler, as they are mainly limited to honesty in reporting. Babbie discusses the

importance of the truthful presentation of research findings in his chapter on ethics in *The*

Practice of Social Research (p. 68).

The main disadvantage of content analysis is that "it's limited to the examination

of recorded communications" (Babbie, 2004, p. 324). Validity can also be a problem,

especially when using a quantitative analysis of manifest content. Babbie defines

manifest content as "the concrete terms contained in a communication" (p. 319). To

counteract this problem, a researcher can focus on the latent content, which is "the

underlying meaning of communication" (p. 319). While this increases validity, it has the

disadvantage of decreased reliability. The advantage of a quantitative content analysis is

better reliability due to the concrete nature of materials and the ability to recode data in

order to ascertain consistency (Babbie, 2004, p. 324).

In this particular study, a high validity was achieved through the analysis of latent

content and the qualitative nature of the data. The sampling method also contributed to

the validity of the findings. The reliability of the method suffered from a lack of

additional coders to establish inter-coder reliability, and the consistency of the data was

weaker than it would have been in a quantitative analysis. A weakness of this study was

its tendency to stray from empiricism, and the subject matter might be seen as lacking

relevance to certain scholars. The findings could not be generalized to other works or

authors. Subjectivity and human error were the main limitations of this study. There are

reproducibility problems; other researchers might select different works and draw

different conclusions regarding which characters to study.

Discussion

In order to establish the definition of transformation and the mythic concepts used

during the analysis of Gaiman's work, one must first look at the Sturm and Sturm (2003)

article and Joseph Campbell's body of work. A straightforward way of defining

transformation can be derived from the etymology of the word: "The word derives from

the Latin word *trans* meaning 'across, over, beyond, through, the other side' and *form*

meaning 'shape, structure, or appearance'" (Sturm & Sturm, 2003, p. 43). There are also

different types of transformation to consider in stories, and Sturm and Sturm (2003)

provide some examples: "change of physical shape…transformation of relationships…

[and] transformations of moral character" (p. 44). An important point to note when

approaching transformation in stories and myths is that while there are many literal

transformations, these are metaphors for transformation of consciousness. Everyone

must make the hero's journey in order to be transformed:

> The first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects
> to those causal zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there
> to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case (i.e., give battle to the
> nursery demons of his local culture) and break through to the undistorted, direct
> experience and assimilation of what C. G. Jung has called 'the archetypal image.'
> (Campbell 1968, p. 17-18)

There is a strong relationship between the fictional character in a story and the

reader or listener that centers on transformation. When a transformation occurs in a story

or myth, the "character grows in knowledge, understanding, or awareness," while the

person listening to the story or reading the story will "emerge profoundly changed…in

character" (Sturm & Sturm, 2003, p. 43). This transformation of consciousness occurs

because mythology and mythological beings stem from the human psyche: "The

character must move 'beyond' his familiar shape or appearance to reach 'the other side'

of his personality before returning, deeply changed, to himself" (p. 43). Hence the

journey and transformation occur within the mind, not in some physical foreign

landscape. Joseph Campbell (1972) expressed the sentiment **"**that mythologies and their

deities are productions and projections of the psyche" (p. 253). Jung had also expressed

this idea in his work, and Campbell (1968) built on Jung's ideas: "Particularly after the

work of the psychoanalysts, there can be little doubt, either that myths are of the nature of dream, or that dreams are symptomatic of the dynamics of the psyche" (p. 255). The idea that mythic images are produced by the psyche supports the concept that there are common mythic themes, or Archetypes, that are shared across cultural boundaries. The individual myths are simply the specific interpretations of universal themes that are relevant to a particular cultural group; myths are our way of understanding those universal Archetypes.

People need myths because they teach about life: "Myth helps you to put your mind in touch with this experience of being alive. It tells you what the experience is" (Campbell, 1988b, p. 6). Stories and myths can be very powerful; Sturm and Sturm (2003) state that it is "the power of story…to induce in its tellers and hearers…transformations of personality" (p. 44). Their power stems from the fact that they are produced from the psyche, and are therefore able to resonate with people on a deep level: "Ultimately, if the story is the right one at the right time in the right context, it can guide us toward self-understanding" (p. 46).

Society also needs myths because they can aid mankind in transformation, which can be a difficult process. For transformation to occur, one must take an active role in the process, and sometimes this process can leave a person feeling unsettled. Campbell (1988b) tells us that "it is a terrifying experience to have your consciousness transformed" (p. 14). This is why people need to read about transformations in literature, to prepare them and help them with their own transformations, and to better understand the inner workings of their minds. Myths help to guide people through the process of

transformation by allowing them to "feel safe enough to explore the potential similarities between the characters and ourselves" (Sturm & Sturm, 2003, p. 43).

Myths have always played the role of guiding people through transformation. In his work, Campbell (1968) discusses primitive tribal practices, and upon reflection, "it becomes apparent that the purposes and actual effect of these was to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life" (p.10). Joseph Campbell points out the roles of mythology in his works. The first function is the mystical function, which is the realization of **"**what a wonder the universe is, and what a wonder you are, and experiencing awe before this mystery" (Campbell, 1988b, p. 31). The second function is the cosmological function, which serves to show "the shape of the universe…in such a way that the mystery again comes through" (p. 31). The sociological function of "supporting and validating a certain social order" (p. 31) is connected to the relevance of metaphors to a specific culture. Finally, of particular interest to educators and psychologists, is the pedagogical function; this is, as Campbell explains, "how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances" (p. 31). These are all functions that can benefit society and are applicable to different fields of study and professions.

Campbell (1988b) points out that there has been a paradigm shift in society, and this shift is problematic: "We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about" (p. 6). Part of this paradigm shift is due to mankind's current outlook as a global society. The old tribal paradigm has been abandoned, and the old myths held more relevance in a tribal society: "it was in those times beneficial to the order of the

group that its young should be trained to respond positively to their own system of tribal signals and negatively to all others, to reserve their love for at home and to project their hatreds outward" (Campbell, 1972, p. 254). Old religions are based on smaller units that allow for outsiders, the supposed "they" or enemy. Today, there is a more global society, a society that includes everyone and leaves no one in the dark. This paradigm shift creates a problem. With this new paradigm, Campbell (1988a) rightly asks, "what can such tribal literalism possibly contribute but agony to such a world of intercultural, global prospects as that of our present century?" (p. 58). The myths did not shift with society, and this leads to the problem of literal interpretation of metaphors. Campbell points out that the problem of religion is that it is based on misunderstanding of mythology, "the misunderstanding consisting in the interpretation of mythic metaphors as references to hard fact" (p. 55). Instead, humans need to understand that "symbols are only the *vehicles* of communication; they must not be mistaken for the final term, the *tenor*, of their reference" (Campbell, 1968, p. 236). A problem arises when one holds on to the literal meanings of metaphors from obsolete tribal mythologies. Just like any symbol, "the actual characters are less important than the functions they play and the connections one makes with them" (Sturm & Sturm, 2003, p. 46). The reason literal interpretation does not work is that it leads to a disconnect from the deeper meaning of mythology, or Archetypes, which serve a different function than the metaphors. Archetypes, or spiritual principles, are universal; they "have remained as constant throughout the course of human history as the form and nervous structure of the human physique itself" (Campbell, 1968, p. 257). On the other hand, metaphors are locally relevant; when the metaphors are taken at face value, their meaning is lost, and they are discarded because

they are irrelevant. The paradigm shift and disenchantment with the literal interpretation

of metaphors results in a demythologized society: "One of our problems today is that we

are not well acquainted with the literature of the spirit" (Campbell, 1988b, p. 3). The

ability to think metaphorically has been lost. There is no longer a sense of mythology in

daily life; Campbell sees this as a serious problem of the modern era: "when the story is

in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life. It

gives you perspective on what's happening to you. With the loss of that, we've really

lost something because we don't have a comparable literature to take its place" (p. 4);

this leads to a central argument of Campbell's, one of the strongest he makes: "We need

myths that will identify the individual not with his local group but with the planet" (p.

24).

To solve the problem of a demythologized society, people need a new mythology

with relevant metaphors that resonate with their personal and modern sensibilities; or, in

the words of Joseph Campbell (1988b), "when the world changes, then the religion has to

be transformed" (p. 21). Myths need to have metaphors that are culturally and personally

relevant. As Sturm and Sturm (2003) point out, "tales lend themselves to many levels of

interpretation, each valid for some hearers some of the time" (p. 44). The new mythology

is and will be "addressed…to the waking of individuals in the knowledge of themselves"

(Campbell, 1972, p. 266). It will be the task of the new mythology to render "the modern

world spiritually significant" (Campbell, 1968, p. 388) so that "the vitalizing image of the

universal god-man who is actually immanent and effective in all of us may be somehow

made known to consciousness" (p. 389). Part of this new mythology will be a reclaiming

of the old myths and shaping them to ring true in our modern era:

> Add the general bearing of the knowledges of modern science on the archaic beliefs incorporated in all traditional systems, and I think we shall agree that there is a considerable sifting task to be resolved here, if anything of the wisdom-lore that has sustained our species to the present is to be retained and intelligently handed on to whatever times are to come. (Campbell, 1972, p. 255)

This new mythology should focus on the power of humanity and human success, because these ideas are what you will find at the core of any mythology: "if the mono-myth is to fulfill its promise, not human failure or superhuman success but human success is what we shall have to be shown" (Campbell, 1968, p. 207). In modern society, "man himself is now the crucial mystery" (p. 391).

More than ever will be seen in mythology the blurred lines between human and divine, and from that ambiguity will emerge the message that there truly is no distinction between the two. Campbell (1968) tears down the walls between the human and the divine: "The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other…Nevertheless – and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol – the two kingdoms are actually one" (p. 217). In order to reclaim the old myths and develop a new mythology, Campbell (1988b) proposed the need for modern mythmakers: "Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and the world" (p. 85). Rauch (2003) said this about Campbell: "It may require a leap of faith to accept, but what is being argued for [is] the magic of storytelling, and the transformative power of mythic narratives" (p. 120-121). Storytellers and artists, such as Neil Gaiman, can be seen as modern mythmakers according to Campbell's (1988b) criteria: "Novels – great novels – can be wonderfully instructive" (p. 4); they can fill that role.

Types of Transformation in Gaiman

Physical: Death

In myths, a major characteristic that separates human from divine is death. Humans can die, but gods can't. People want to be like gods, and don't want to die. But if humans can see past their limited perception, they will realize that they are gods and gods are them, they are infinite and do not die, only their perception is transformed, because reality itself can be seen as a relevant metaphor, a representation of the nature of the universe that humans can comprehend. One of the angels expressed his opinion on death: "How we could know whether or not it was right to make this thing, to set the rules, if we were not going to experience it ourselves. He kept talking about it" (Gaiman, 2005, p. 312). The fact that divine beings don't experience death is a major point of jealousy for humans. This same distinction was seen with the character of Shadow: "'But you aren't mortal,' said Wednesday. 'You died on the tree, Shadow. You died and you came back'" (Gaiman, 2006b, p. 337). This is what is learned from a transformation of consciousness after a journey through the unconscious. Shadow was transformed by death: "He could no longer remember his real name. He felt empty and cleansed, in that place that was not a place. He was without form, and void. He was nothing" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 510). Joseph Campbell (1968) described death in terms of transformation: "This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation" (p. 91). This is what happened to Shadow.

Physical: Separation

In the case of Fat Charlie, he was literally separated into two people, and this led

to the creation of his brother Spider. Mrs. Dunwiddy was the human who caused this

transformation for Fat Charlie. Her intention was to eradicate his mischievousness: "She

was a tiny old lady who could outglare a thunderstorm, and Fat Charlie, who had, over

two decades ago, followed a lost tennis ball into her yard, and then broken one of her

lawn ornaments, was still quite terrified of her" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 32). However, her

actions had unintended consequences:

> "She made me go away," said Spider. "I didn't want to go. But I broke this ball
> in her garden. Big glass thing, like a giant Christmas tree ornament." "I did that,
> too. She was pissed." "I know." The voice from the dark was small and worried
> and confused. "It was the same time. That was when it all started." (Gaiman,
> 2006a, p. 248)

At this time, Spider came into being, and what was once one child now became two.

Physical: Plane Shifting

It is unsettling to journey into the unconscious, but this must be done in order for

transformation to occur. Shadow went with Wednesday to the world behind the real

world, something that could be considered the mythic realm, or the realm of the

unconscious. It was unsettling: "It's not good for the audience to find themselves

walking about backstage. That's why you're feeling sick. We need to hurry to get you

out of here" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 349). Reality is a metaphor that humans can grasp; it is

how they perceive the universe. Shadow understood this the second time he went

"Backstage":

> With one step he had moved from the tourist path on the mountain to…To somewhere real. He was Backstage. He was still on top of a mountain, that much remained the same. But it was so much more than that. This mountaintop was the quintessence of place, the heart of things as they were. (p. 535)

Shadow had gotten past the metaphors to the true meaning.

Fat Charlie decided to do something in order to get his brother Spider to leave. In order to do this, he had to journey to another plane. He felt good because, although he had to ask for help, he took the journey and made the effort. This gave him a sense of agency and a feeling of accomplishment, but there is also the discomfort that comes with transformation. The trip into another plane did not fit with Fat Charlie's prior view of reality:

> Fat Charlie felt uncomfortable. He had practically convinced himself by now that what had happened, what he *thought* had happened, in Mrs. Dunwiddy's front room had been some form of hallucination, a high-octane dream, true on some level but not a real thing. Not something that had happened; rather, it was symbolic of a great truth. He could not have gone to a real place, nor struck a real bargain, could he? It was only a metaphor, after all. (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 208)

It is almost as if Gaiman was talking to Campbell when he wrote this section.

Physical: Appearance

Physical appearance is a common form of symbolism in literature. Change in physical appearance tends to signify other changes. The angel Raguel has changed appearance: "You wouldn't think it of me, seeing me now, but I was beautiful. I've come down in the world a way since then. I was taller then, and I had wings" (Gaiman, 2005, p. 305). This change in appearance coincided with his coming to earth.

Spider's power came from his ability to change reality with his voice. The Bird Woman symbolically took his power by removing the source: "She reached into his mouth with her sharp talons, and with one wrenching movement she tore out his tongue" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 294).

Czernobog's change in appearance is symbolic of the shift from a tribal paradigm to a global paradigm. Whereas before it was relevant to have two distinct brothers who were dark and light, there is no longer a need for this distinction in a global society. Czernobog describes the physical change that he and his brother Bielebog undergo: "And now time passes, and my hair is gray. His hair, too, I think, is gray. And you look at us, you would not know who was light, who was dark" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 79). This can also be seen as a metaphor for human and divine being the same thing. Over time mythology is shifting to bring humanity and divinity closer together until all that is left is a combination of both.

Relationship: Romantic

There are two romantic relationships in Gaiman's works that serve to illustrate transformation. The first is the relationship between Shadow and his wife Laura. The second is the love triangle between Fat Charlie, his fiancée Rosie, and Spider. At the beginning of *American Gods*, Shadow and Laura are married, and Laura is waiting for Shadow to get out of jail. Laura had an affair with Shadow's best friend Robbie, and both Laura and Robbie died in a car crash a few days before Shadow's sentence was done. Laura's corpse was reanimated by a golden coin that Shadow tossed into her grave, and they continued to interact with one another throughout the course of the novel

until Shadow finally allowed Laura her final rest by taking the coin away. Most of the changes in their relationship occurred after Laura was a corpse. Because Shadow's mind had been altered by his interaction with the divine at this point in the novel, it allowed him to perceive things differently: "He wondered why he wasn't scared of her: why a dream of a museum could leave him terrified, while he seemed to be coping with a walking corpse without fear" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 61). The museum represents the unconscious, and at this point Shadow had not yet come to terms with his unconscious. He was able to cope with his dead wife because they had a strong relationship before her death. In turn, Laura and Shadow helped each other to cope with their respective transformations; Shadow learned how to live and Laura learned how to die.

At the beginning of *Anansi Boys*, Fat Charlie is engaged to Rosie, and neither of them has met Fat Charlie's brother Spider, nor do they know he exists. After Fat Charlie's father died, he met Spider for the first time. In an effort to help Fat Charlie at work, Spider impersonated his brother. However, when Spider met Rosie, he continued to impersonate his brother in order to pursue a relationship with her. This was a major point of contention between the brothers, and it led to a majority of the conflict in the novel. Rosie eventually discovered the deception, but in the end she chose Spider, and Fat Charlie found love with a detective named Daisy. When considering this love triangle most of the changes centered on Rosie's decisions. Rosie was transformed by her encounter with Spider: "It would be fair to say that Rosie had, that evening, just had the most wonderful night of her life: magical, perfect, utterly fine. She could not have stopped smiling, not even if she had wanted to" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 129). In turn, Spider noticed a change within himself as his relationship with Rosie progressed: "The bit of

being Fat Charlie that Spider liked best was Rosie…Partly it was how he felt when he was with her: as if, seeing himself in her eyes, he became a wholly better person" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 185-186).

Relationship: Employer to father

The relationship between Shadow and Wednesday in *American Gods* is one of the central focuses of the book. Shortly after Shadow was released from prison, he met Wednesday during a plane flight. Wednesday offered Shadow a job as a body guard and personal assistant. Throughout the story Shadow completed various tasks for Wednesday, and the two men grew to like one another. Eventually Wednesday was killed, and Shadow felt sad due to their closeness: "He missed Wednesday, then, sudden and deep. He missed the man's confidence, his attitude. His conviction" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 409). At this point Shadow felt a bond with Wednesday that went deeper than the bond between employer and employee. Later in the story, Shadow saw his mother's past through a vision he had: "Shadow found that he was completely unsurprised when he recognized the man who dances with her. He had not changed that much in thirty-three years" (p. 475). The man Shadow saw is Wednesday, and the vision revealed that Wednesday was his father. Shadow was unsurprised by this because of the nature of his relationship with Wednesday.

Character: Acceptance/Understanding

Shadow is the main character of *American Gods* and *Monarch of the Glen*, and so most of the action of these stories focused on him. His transformation of character is the

central plot. Shadow began as a skeptic of sorts: "Shadow was not superstitious. He did not believe in anything he could not see" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 6). On page 180 of *American Gods* another divine encounter happened, and Shadow continued to be less and less flustered, unsettled, or surprised. He was being transformed by these encounters and was seeing that the divine was not so different from himself. The divine gains the same familiarity that humans have for themselves, because they are one and the same.

Humans believe that gods are better than humans; they want to be more like gods. Shadow started out thinking this way:

> Shadow said softly, "You're a god." Wednesday looked at him sharply. He seemed to be about to say something, and then he slumped back in his seat, and looked down at the menu, and said, "So?" "It's a good thing to be a god," said Shadow. "Is it?" asked Wednesday, and this time it was Shadow who looked away." (Gaiman, 2003, p. 360-361)

Shadow was coming to see the divine nature of humans, so he sensed the false ring to his own initial statement. In turn, the gods wish they could be like humans, because humans have the ability to survive without being worshipped. Humans want godlike power, but they don't understand that humans possess great power. This is a central message of the story. Eventually, Shadow came to understand the true strength of humanity: "You know…I think I would rather be a man than a god. We don't need anyone to believe in us. We just keep going anyhow. It's what we do" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 539). This is the power of humanity, this was the realization that Shadow came to after his journey of transformation.

Fat Charlie also came to understand some things and accepted the divine in his life. First he had to come to terms with the fact that his father was a god: "But you can't judge him like you would judge a man. You got to remember, Fat Charlie, that your

father was a god" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 37). Fat Charlie expressed a typical preconceived notion about gods and the divine: "'He wasn't a god. Gods are special. Mythical. They do miracles and things…He was not a god. He was my dad.' 'You can be both,' she said" (p. 37-38). Mrs. Higgler's statement supports the mythical idea of duality; Gaiman is telling us that human and divine are one and the same.

Near the beginning of the story, Fat Charlie was still not ready to take the plunge into the unconscious, so his mind was putting up resistance: "He wondered how he could have forgotten Spider, how he could have dismissed him so easily as a dream" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 71). This is the same way humans dismiss irrelevant metaphors. Later, Fat Charlie met a threshold guardian, in this case a dragon: "Charlie blinked. *What would my father do?* he wondered. *What would Spider have done?* He had absolutely no idea. *Come on. After all, Spider's sort of a part of me. I can do whatever he can do*" (p. 348). He now understood his own divine nature; he had accepted the part of him that is divine and had integrated it into his whole. When he first entered the plane of the gods, Fat Charlie saw the gods as people and animals at the same time. When he saw them again at the end of the story, "he realized that he had seen them as people last time because he had expected to meet people" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 366). He saw them through the lens of the metaphor that worked for him.

Character: Disillusionment

Some characters become disillusioned by their interaction with the divine. In the story of Murder Mysteries, one of the main characters is the angel Lucifer. Lucifer took walks outside the shining city of Heaven where he heard voices. Lucifer explained what

he did outside the city, walking in the dark: "It helps me to gain a perspective on the City – being outside it" (Gaiman, 2005, p. 321). He went on to explain why he was secretive about his activity. He did not want other angels to follow his example: "Others are not so strong. Others might stumble, or fall" (p. 321). There is a bit of irony in his comments. Here is a way in which Gaiman presents these old mythological ideas in a new and more relevant context to a modern audience. The Fall is not about Lucifer and the legions of evil denying and turning away from God and the legions of good. It is a metaphor for our mental separation that has thrown up a barrier between our consciousness and our divine nature. It is about refusing the call to adventure and avoiding the difficult transformation of consciousness that will result from a journey into our unconscious. People reject ideas that are difficult to swallow or comprehend. In this case Lucifer was disillusioned by a divine encounter. This was a transformation of Lucifer's relationship with God. God is supposed to be infallible, all wise, all knowing, and just. But if human and divine are one, then they are equally fallible. Also, one might say that justice is simply a social construct, and Lucifer's reaction was very human:

> "That was not right," he said. "That was not just." He was crying; wet tears ran down his face. Perhaps Saraquael was the first to love, but Lucifer was the first to shed tears. I will never forget that. I stared at him impassively. "It was justice. He killed another. He was killed in his turn. You called me to my function, and I performed it." "But…he *loved*. He should have been forgiven. He should have been helped. He should not have been destroyed like that. That was *wrong*." "It was His will." Lucifer stood. "Then perhaps his will is unjust. Perhaps the voices in the Darkness speak truly, after all. How *can* this be right?" (Gaiman, 2005 p. 325)

Lucifer can be seen in this case as man trying to comprehend the universe, and it illustrates the difficult nature of this task. It must remembered that the vengeful God of the Old Testament was a tribal god, and so he fit the template of a religion or mythology

in which negativity is directed outward, toward the "other." Lucifer was not the only one

to have second thoughts after this divine encounter. Raguel also became disillusioned:

"I feel dirty. I feel tarnished. I feel befouled. Perhaps it is true that all that happens is in

accordance with Your will, and thus it is good. But sometimes You leave blood on Your

instruments" (p. 327). This was also a transformation of relationship. The transformation

humans undergo when they come to perceive the nature of the divine can be unsettling.

At the end of the story it was revealed that Raguel took Lucifer's words to heart, and he

gifted the narrator with forgiveness, because his crime involved love, just like

Saraquael's crime. The human narrator was transformed by his encounter with the angel:

"I felt like he had taken something from me, although I could no longer remember what.

And I felt like something had been left in its place – absolution, perhaps, or innocence,

although of what, or from what, I could no longer say" (Gaiman, 2005, p. 329).

Character: Divine to human

While much of mythology has dealt with the transformation of humanity into

something more powerful, the story in *Sandman* is quite different. Gaiman has taken this

mythological concept in a new direction:

> And the most important change of all, indeed the central plot-line of *Sandman*, is
> Dream's process of becoming human, following his seventy years of captivity.
> Rather than a human hero becoming godlike and performing various exploits,
> Dream starts as more than any god, and over the course of the series, becomes a
> man. And this process of humanization turns the hero myth on its head. (Rauch,
> 2003, p. 40)

Dream's transformation is a tangible example of what Campbell (1968) suggested about

becoming human: "The way to become human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of

God in all of the wonderful modulations of the face of man" (p. 390). Just as Dream

became human throughout his story, in *Murder Mysteries* Saraquael was transformed by

a human emotion. He was transformed by love, and he took on human characteristics:

"His welfare mattered more to me than my own. I existed for him…I thought…I hoped

…that if he was gone, then I would no longer care for him – that the pain would

stop…But the pain has *not* stopped" (Gaiman, 2005, p. 323-324).

Spider was transformed by humanity. Here is an instance of Gaiman showing

gods to have very human features. This is a testament to the fact that gods and humans

are interchangeable, that everything is made of the same substance: "Until now Spider

had believed that gods were different: they had no consciences, nor did they need

them…But something had changed – inside him or outside, he was not sure – and it

bothered him" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 147). Spider became more human throughout the

novel, and through this process settled down and found love. Gaiman presented each of

these transformations of divine creatures into more human beings in a positive light. By

presenting human characteristics as being desirable, Gaiman gave the world a mythology

that speaks to the need for affirmation as human beings.

Character: Becoming whole

A major part of Shadow's transformation was his journey to become whole.

There was an encounter with Laura where the reader sees what Gaiman (2003) was trying

to say about Shadow, the obstacle that Shadow had to overcome: "'You're not dead,' she

said. 'But I'm not sure that you're alive, either…It's like there isn't anyone there. You

know? You're like this big, solid, man-shaped hole in the world'" (p. 370). Later in the

novel, Shadow held vigil over Wednesday's corpse. To do this he had to hang from a
tree, with the most likely outcome being his own death. While hanging on the tree,
Shadow underwent an important transformation:

> A strange joy rose within Shadow then, and he started laughing as the rain washed
> his naked skin and the lightning flashed and thunder rumbled so loudly that he
> could barely hear himself laugh. He exulted. He was alive. He had never felt
> like this. Ever. If he did die, he thought, if he died right now, here on the tree, it
> would be worth it to have had this one, perfect, mad moment. (Gaiman, 2003, p.
> 460)

Laura affirmed Shadow's transformation: "'You're dying up there. Or you'll be
crippled, if you aren't already.' 'Maybe,' he said. 'But I'm alive.' 'Yes,' she said, after
a moment. 'I guess you are'" (p. 467). Becoming alive is a metaphor for understanding
the divine nature of humanity and the universe. He had come to terms with the meaning
behind metaphors, so he was able to cope with death. He understood death to be a part of
reuniting with his divine nature. Shadow was empowered by his transformation: "He was
not afraid. Not anymore. Fear had died on the tree, as Shadow had died. There was no
fear left, no hatred, no pain. Nothing left but essence" (p. 478). This is the mental
transformation that people must undergo, and myths help them through this process: not
literal death, but the symbolic death of self.

There are two examples of brothers who are separate and at the same time whole.
Fat Charlie and Spider started as one person and throughout the course of their lives
became two whole individuals. Fat Charlie realized this:

> "You're not the magical bit of me, you know…Mrs. Dunwiddy thought you were,
> I think. She split us apart, but she never really understood what she was doing.
> We're more like two halves of a starfish. You grew up into a whole person. And
> so," he said, realizing it was true as he said it, "did I." (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 357)

Czernobog and Bielebog are also brothers, but unlike Fat Charlie and Spider, they returned to their original state of being one whole individual. Czernobog explained this concept to Shadow: "I dreamed that I am truly Bielebog. That forever the world imagines that there are two of us, the light god and the dark, but that now we are both old, I find it was only me all the time, giving them gifts, taking my gifts away" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 424). This is true; they are two halves of a whole. Their duality is a metaphor for the duality of human and divine embodied in ourselves. Gaiman uses this theme of duality a lot, and Campbell's works supports the idea of duality in myth.

Conclusion

The literal transformations that the characters underwent in Gaiman's works are metaphors for the transformation of the psyche. The physical transformations Gaiman presented have well established roots in mythological tradition. Death is frequently used in myths to represent discarding old ideas in order to become open to enlightenment. Gaiman used death to represent acceptance of the divine within oneself. He also used it to demonstrate the concept of humans taking on divine characteristics. While death in Gaiman's work sends the message that one must be open to transformation by letting go of preconceptions, separation represents the creative potential of the psyche. In letting go, or allowing oneself to be separated from previous constructs, a person can use the full creative potential of the psyche. Gaiman demonstrated that the human psyche is very powerful; from one entity came two entities, both more powerful than the original entity. This is made possible due to the extent of humanity's creative power.

Gaiman further emphasized the idea of human ability through the use of plane shifting as a metaphor for human potential. Just as the characters were able to accomplish the task of their own volition, people can achieve transformation through their own willingness to face the unconscious. Furthermore, people have not just the will but also the power within themselves to begin the process of transformation. Gaiman also used changes in physical appearance to represent internal transformation. This is a metaphor that resonates with people, because it allows the reader to visualize the internal change in a very immediate and tangible way. By appealing to the physical senses, Gaiman was able to communicate ideas about internal change through obvious physical representations.

The feelings that people have for one another can be incredibly powerful forces, and Gaiman used two of the strongest interpersonal bonds that exist: romantic love and parental affection. In mythology romantic love is often portrayed as divinely influenced. By using romantic relationships as vehicles of transformation, Gaiman demonstrated that humans have the same affect on one another that has often been ascribed to divine influence. The reason for this is that humans are more powerful than they think; they have the same power within them that they attribute to divine or mythical beings. The parent child relationship is also commonly found in myths, and carries a similar divine association. The divine is often portrayed as a parental construct or life-giving force. The relationship between Shadow and Wednesday that Gaiman portrayed sends the message that, regardless of how one might label the relationship, the same connection exists between the two men. In other words, whether creative power is attributed to

divine intervention or human cooperation, the power still originates from the same place, the human psyche.

The character transformations in Gaiman's works speak to the idea that humanity and divinity are one and the same. The human characters, like Shadow and Fat Charlie, came to understand and accept their divine nature, while divine characters, like Dream and Spider, took on more human characteristics. These transformations led to the human and divine becoming more alike until they eventually became indistinguishable from one another. The similarity between Fat Charlie and Spider by the end of the novel was the most prominent example of this concept. Gaiman also depicted both human and mythical characters as becoming whole after their respective transformations. This indicates that humanity achieves fulfillment through the recognition of the divine nature that resides in everyone and the power of the human psyche. The final result of all of these transformations is a mythology based on the lack of distinction between human and divine and the infinite nature of man.

Gaiman made a statement about religion that resonates with what Campbell said in his work. He directly stated that religions are metaphors, just as Campbell claimed:

> None of this can actually be happening. If it makes you more comfortable, you could simply think of it as a metaphor. Religions are, by definition, metaphors, after all…Religions are places to stand and look and act, vantage points from which to view the world. So none of this is happening. Such things could not occur. Never a word of it is literally true. (Gaiman, 2003, p. 508)

This is exactly what Campbell said. Different metaphors resonate with different people, and they are all a means to the same end. Other scholars besides Campbell have recognized this concept. This applies to most of Gaiman's work, especially *Sandman*, *American Gods*, and *Anansi Boys*: "In featuring members of so many

mythologies…Gaiman is telling us that they are all equally valid. Each one is a product

of human consciousness, and thus each one shares in the importance that holds" (Rauch,

2003, p. 113). The underlying spiritual principles that produce myths are embedded in

our psyche: "As time passes, believers empower new gods, and the old ones disappear.

Members of the Endless, the Sandman's family…do not fade away, as gods do, because

they come from a more basic level of humanity than belief…because they are re-

imagined every time someone thinks reflectively" (Sanders, 2004, p. 158), or as Gaiman

(2003) says, "mostly you are what they think you are" (p. 195). Myths and gods come

from the psyche, it is all about perception.

There is a consequence of abandoning old metaphors and myths and no longer

having relevant metaphors and myths. Death is a tangible example of an element in

society that requires myths:

> Death had vanished from the streets of America, thought Shadow; now it
> happened in hospital rooms and in ambulances. We must not startle the living,
> thought Shadow. Mr. Ibis had told him that they move the dead about in some
> hospitals on the lower level of apparently empty covered gurneys, the deceased
> traveling their own paths in their own covered ways. (Gaiman, 2003, p. 223)

Society has abandoned the old myths and metaphors with nothing to replace them, so

there is no way to cope with death. Instead people avoid and ignore death. People need

myths to cope with transformation, especially the transformation of death. Society needs

to take ownership of this aspect of humanity on a psychological level. Instead people try

to take literal control of death via the medical field. Stories are interpretations of the

divine:

> People respond to the stories. They tell them themselves. The stories spread, and
> as people tell them, the stories change the tellers. Because now the folk who
> never had any thought in their head but how to run from lions and keep far

enough away from rivers that the crocodiles don't get an easy meal, now they're starting to dream about a whole new place to live. The world may be the same, but the wallpaper's changed. Yes? People still have the same story, the one where they get born and they do stuff and they die, but now the story means something different to what it meant before. (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 291)

As Campbell has said, myths teach people how to live their lives.

Here is a case where Wednesday points out to Shadow that a human may have more influence than a god: "Good job last night with Czernobog, by the way. I would have closed him on coming eventually, but you enlisted him more wholeheartedly than I could have ever" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 105). Humans ultimately have the most agency in their transformations.

Humans can do the same sort of convincing people and bending reality that gods can, because we are of the same substance. Rosie's mom was like this. Spider found that he had difficulty bending reality around her: "he had never met anyone who inhabited her own reality quite so firmly as Rosie's mother" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 186). Rosie's mom noticed that something was not quite right: "She did not know what was going on, but whatever it was, she did not like it. Until now, she felt that she had got the measure of Fat Charlie" (p. 187). She had a level of confidence in herself that allowed her to exercise her power to control her reality more firmly than other people around her.

The creative power of the psyche is a theme in *Anansi Boys*. The power of naming is a part of the creative power of the psyche; to name is to create and define: "It was, he knew, irrationally, because his father had given him the nickname, and when his father gave things names, they stuck" (Gaiman, 2006a, p. 3). The reason the names stuck was not directly a result of Anansi's power. It was a result of people's belief that he had inspired that the names stuck. Anansi's power was the power of words: "It's not

something you think about, when my dad starts to work you over. He's the finest liar you'll ever meet. He's convincing" (p. 6). Humans can use their words too, so is this a divine power? Fat Charlie assumed it was his dad specifically that made things happen, but as the reader discovers throughout the book, anyone can make things happen, they just need to believe in their ability to use words, stories, and songs. Spider made things happen: "he'd say it in his god-voice, which would make whatever he said practically true" (p. 90). People can do this too; they have their god aspect within them.

There is an important message in *American Gods*: "People believe…It's what people do. They believe…People imagine, and people believe: and it is that belief, that rock-solid belief, that makes things happen" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 536). Human belief has power: "You got to understand the god thing. It's not magic. It's about being you, but the *you* that people believe in. It's about being the concentrated, magnified, essence of you" (p. 443). If humans and gods are the same, then this indicates that humans also thrive on the belief of others. When people believe in each other, they can succeed and do better than they could have on their own. This is why people need myths. However, the central message of the book is this: "'Gods are great,' said Atsula, slowly, as if she were imparting a great secret. 'But the heart is greater. For it is from our hearts they come, and to our hearts they shall return'" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 417). This is exactly what Campbell was trying to say.

Transformation is difficult, but necessary, and this is why people need stories and myths to help them: "Leaving an established role isn't easy; there is no certainty that one's new condition will be happier, and the new condition itself may as yet be impossible to visualize" (Sanders, 2004, p. 165). One might even view transformation as

a challenging undertaking: "facing the unknown within you may be the most heroic act of all. Hence, Campbell's classic formula of 'separation-initiation-return' can take place inside a hero (Hero with a Thousand Faces 30), and effect his or her personal transformation" (Rauch, 2003, p. 54). In *The Monarch of the Glen*, the guests at the party represent the old tribal paradigm. Mr. Alice, who was the host of the party, was firmly rooted in a paradigm that shares its format with other tribal mythologies: "We were the men and they were the monsters. And *we won*. They know their place now. And tonight is all about not letting them forget it. It's humanity you'll be fighting for, tonight. We can't let them get the upper hand. Not even a little. Us versus them" (Gaiman, 2006b, p. 342). Transformation is so difficult that Mr. Alice was not even aware of the journey he would have needed to take to understand the nature of the relationship between human and divine. He was convinced that this process had already happened, but with a very different outcome. Shadow, on the other hand, was painfully aware of the difficult journey of transformation:

> All we have to believe with is our senses, the tools we use to perceive the world: our sight, our touch, our memory. If they lie to us, then nothing can be trusted. And even if we do not believe, then still we cannot travel in any other way than the road our senses show us; and we must walk that road to the end. (Gaiman, 2003, p. 139)

Shadow was attempting to process what he saw. Shadow was coming to realize that he could not go back to the way he was, his transformation was irreversible:

> He wanted to understand what was going on – and to find out how it was all going to end. And finally, producing a half-rueful grin, he realized most of all he wanted everything to be normal. He wanted never to have gone to prison, for Laura still to be alive, for none of this ever to have happened. (p. 157)

Ignorance is bliss. It is easier for humans to accept or reject the literal rather than look

beyond it.

Gaiman's portrayal of America speaks directly to the problem of our society

being demythologized. The novel *American Gods* painted a picture of America that

resonates with this problem: "This is the only country in the world…that worries about

what it is…The rest of them know what they are. No one ever needs to go searching for

the heart of Norway. Or look for the soul of Mozambique. They know what they are"

(Gaiman, 2003, p. 116). America needs to know what it is; myths are the way to do this.

Gaiman also made sure to point out that America had not always been this way, just as

society had not always been demythologized. Gaiman (2003) gave a Native American

perspective:

> This is not a good country for gods. My people figured that out early on…my
> people figured that maybe there's something at the back of it all, a creator, a great
> spirit, and so we say thank you to it, because it's always good to say thank you.
> But we never built churches. We didn't need to. The land was the church. The
> land was the religion. (p. 512-513)

They didn't need to cling to literal interpretations of metaphors because they understood

the deeper meaning. They found what was relevant for them, and their myths resonated

with their way of life and met their needs.

Old mythologies used to hold relevance but not anymore in a global society.

Myths must fit into the new paradigm; otherwise other less effective things, like

technology, will take the place of myths. Divine and mythical beings can be transformed

by modern society. It is not just the nature of humanity that transforms them, but the

specific context of the society and the time. Gaiman's presentation of the divine can be

said to have been transformed by modern society; just as Campbell (1988a) claimed

archetypes and mythical elements are altered by the group using them for their religious

purposes:

> Since the archetypes, or elementary idea, are not limited in their distributions by
> cultural or even linguistic boundaries, they cannot be defined as culturally
> determined. However, the local metaphors by which they have been everywhere
> connoted, the local ways of experiencing and applying their force, are indeed
> socially conditioned and defined. (p. 100)

The new gods were technology, and they wanted to eradicate the old gods: "You

tell Wednesday this, man. You tell him he's history. He's forgotten. He's old. Tell him

that we are the future…Tell him that language is a virus and that religion is an operating

system" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 53-54). Shadow had an encounter with the gods of

technology and modern culture: "The TV's the altar. I'm what people are sacrificing to"

(p. 175). She mentioned that time was what people sacrificed or also other people

(metaphorically speaking). This is a problem for society. Shadow did not buy into the

deification of technology:

> It occurred to him that the reason he liked Wednesday and Mr. Nancy and the rest
> of them better than their opposition was pretty straightforward: they might be
> dirty, and cheap, and their food might taste like shit, but at least they didn't speak
> in clichés. And he guessed he would take a roadside attraction, no matter how
> cheap, how crooked, or how sad, over a shopping mall, any day. (p. 176-177)

Shadow realized that his metaphors needed depth and meaning. He saw that, in order to

serve their purpose, metaphors need to be relevant and resonate with people.

Humans need relevant metaphors that work: "They were afraid that unless they

kept pace with a changing world, unless they remade and redrew and rebuilt the world in

their image, their time would already be over" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 537). These gods were

trying to take power, but humans have power over them. Campbell said that the world is

changing and that the old metaphors are no longer relevant. The rapid change makes it difficult to establish new metaphors that can endure. This is a message that resonates with modern sensibilities: "It doesn't matter that you didn't believe in us…We believed in you" (p. 481). People like to be relieved of that responsibility because they find belief to be difficult to swallow because of all the literalism that abounds today; it is a comforting message. This is a symptom of the problem of literal interpretation of myths: "There's only so much belief to go around. They're reaching the end of what they can give us. The credibility gap" (Gaiman, 2003, p. 377). People need a paradigm shift in myths to match the societal shift.

Different scholars have recognized Gaiman as a modern mythmaker. Rauch (2003) pointed out that Campbell would consider Gaiman to be one of the new mythmakers: "It should be apparent by now that Gaiman has a firm grasp of the world's mythological traditions…if the artist is the one who creates the new mythology, then he or she hold a vital importance to the mind and soul of a society" (p. 119). Hanes and Sanders (2004) also touched on the subject of modern mythmakers:

> Vital as an awareness of historical myth is in understanding how we got to where we are, we need new interpretations of those myths. That is what Pratchett and Gaiman offer readers today…Both writers agree that the myth expresses the way human concerns are structured, and they have found new ways to bring it to contemporary readers' attention. (p. 168)

The fact that Gaiman's stories exhibited the types of transformations found in myths lends validity to the argument that he is a modern mythmaker in the sense that Campbell described. The stories also fulfilled the task of creating a new relevant mythology in order to solve the problem of a demythologized world stemming from a paradigm shift.

The Monarch of the Glen is on some level a retelling of an old myth: Beowulf. On page 311, Shadow had a divine encounter with constructs from the Norse pantheon. He was being called upon once again to serve the gods, and in doing so, serve humanity, bring enlightenment, which is, after all, the job of the hero. Shadow was playing Gaiman's role. Shadow brought the Norse gods back, while Gaiman put the old stories in a new context; both of these actions helped humanity.

During a dream in the story, Shadow had an encounter with Wednesday, his father who was a manifestation of the Norse god Odin. Wednesday died in *American Gods*, but since he is a symbol of a divine concept, he can't really die. Their discussion alluded to the mythology surrounding the hero's journey: "'It's patterns,' he said. 'If they think you're a hero, they're wrong. After you die, you don't get to be Beowulf or Perseus or Rama any more. Whole different set of rules'" (Gaiman, 2006b, p. 338). Once you recognize the divine in yourself, you recognize it in all, and you can no longer fight against it. The reason that Shadow could not be the hero anymore is that he had already been on the journey and had undergone a transformation. He did not need to enact that journey again. Fighting the monster would require that the monster was perceived as a monster, but once you are transformed, the monster no longer exists. All that is left is the infinite, and you realize that the monster is a part of yourself you had to come to accept. That acceptance comes when you realize that it only appears to be a monster because it is unknown. The fight with the monster is symbolic of the unsettling nature of transformation. The monster had no place in Shadow's life now, only the divine.

Campbell asked what would be the new mythology, what would it look like? Gaiman fits the role of a modern mythmaker; in order to see what the new mythology will be, one must look at the fresh ideas Gaiman brings with his writing. Two important themes in Gaiman's work are the humanization of gods and the focus on the children of gods. Both of these themes speak to modern sensibilities.

Gaiman tends to depict gods as being quite human and humans as godlike. His mythology brings humans and gods closer together. Gaiman (2003) made a statement about the humanity of gods by including a quote from a work by another author at the beginning of one of his chapters: "they experience most of the great human dilemmas and often seem to differ from mortals in a few trivial details" (p. 155). People are more like gods than they think: "They are actors playing parts that are real only for us; they are the masks behind which we see our own faces" (p. 155). The gods are from the human psyche. The gods themselves acknowledged their own humanity: "Even for my kind pain still hurts. If you move and act in the material world, then the material world acts on you. Pain hurts, just as greed intoxicates and lust burns" (p. 385-386). The material world in this case could be seen as the human world, and it affected the divine, it had power.

There is a perfect metaphor for the difference, or lack thereof, between humanity and the divine when Shadow was contemplating the moon as he saw it in the underworld after his death:

> Shadow could not decide whether he was looking at a moon the size of a dollar, a foot above his head, or whether he was looking at a moon the size of the Pacific Ocean, many thousands of miles away. Nor whether there was any difference between the two ideas. Perhaps it was all a matter of the way you looked at it. (Gaiman, 2003, p. 471)

This metaphor is continued when Mr. Ibis explained the nature of existence: "You people talk about the living and the dead as if they were two mutually exclusive categories…life and death are different sides of the same coin" (p. 480).

Shadow, Fat Charlie, Spider, and Daniel are all children of the gods. They are the focus of Gaiman's stories. In much of Gaiman's work there is a focus on the children of gods, and the strength that these children possessed. These children of the gods represent humanity, and their powers are humanity's powers. The new metaphors are the offspring of the old myths. Spider was a god, but he was also a human, and the same can be said for all of mankind. Spider is one of the new gods for the new mythology of the modern age. He and Fat Charlie are the new gods, who are human and divine because that is what all people are, and this idea resonates with the modern age.

Finally, in *Sandman*, Dream's process of becoming human ended in his own death, and he was replaced by his son Daniel. Just as Daniel replaced his father to take on the responsibility of maintaining the Dreaming, the new stories fulfill the role of the old myths. As a storyteller, Gaiman fills the role of mythmaker for modern society, and in doing so he contributes to the task of revitalizing a demythologized world with the stories people need to teach them about life.

Any further research that arises from this study should focus on the pursuit of other mythmakers; one example might be Terry Pratchett, who was mentioned in an article along with Gaiman as a modern mythmaker (Hanes & Sanders, 2006). The outcome of such research will hopefully benefit educators in their efforts to find materials that will hold relevance for modern students and impart the same wisdom that has come from mythology throughout human history.

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Appendix A: Coding Instrument

Book Title:

Character:

Type of transformation	Physical	Relationship	Character
Description of Encounter, Quotes, and Commentary			