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Wróblewska, V. (2022) [Review] KOSTECKA, Weronika, Anna MIK and Maciej SKOWERA, eds. *The Dream Catcher. Studies on the Neil Gaiman's Works*. Warsaw: The Society of Polish Librarians Publishing House, 2018, vol. 13, 308 pp. (*Study of Adolescent and Children's Literature Series*). *Slavic World*, 21, 170–174.

*The Dream Catcher. Studies on the Neil Gaiman's Works* is the first Polish multi-author monograph dedicated to Neil Gaiman's heritage. The editors – Weronika KostECKa, Anna Mik, and Maciej Skowera of the University of Warsaw – have cooperated with scholars representing several universities, which made it possible to achieve a high level of thematic diversity among the final eighteen studies included in the monograph. Some of them focus on the analysis and interpretation, some are concern reception of Gaiman's works in Poland, and some show new tools

and possibilities for further research of his writing. The book opens with a text written by Grzegorz Leszczyński titled *Neil Gaiman – From Heidegger’s Light to the Medieval Dance of Death* (pp. 23–38). It is a very important article that contextualizes Gaiman’s works within Heidegger’s philosophy describing their timeless values. The second article in the monograph – *Unappetising Tales from the Seductive Storyteller: Polish Literary Reviews of Neil Gaiman’s Children’s Works* (pp. 39–52) – analyses the reception of Gaiman’s writing in Poland. The subsequent text – *Memory – Childhood – Children’s Literature: On ‘The Ocean at the End of the Lane’ by Neil Gaiman* (pp. 53–72) – focuses on the chosen titular work which the author, Maciej Skowera, uses as the context for analyzing the concept of memory and the construct of childhood.

Katarzyna Slany’s article – *Neil Gaiman’s Coraline from a Horror Fiction Perspective* (pp. 73–87). It is a well-written study, full of worthwhile insights concerning the reception of selected works of Neil Gaiman, analyzed in the context of horror conventions. The next text in the monograph by Michał Zajac ‘*The Wolves in the Walls’ – towards the Picturebook: the Graphic Designer and His Writer* (pp. 89–102) – is another interesting study, focused on a project combining graphic and literary elements – the titular *Wolves in the Walls*. On the other hand, in her article, *Playing with Posthumanism: A Picturebook ‘Chu’s Day’ by Neil Gaiman and Adam Rex* (pp. 103–114), Ewelina Rąbkowska has decided to interpret the work mentioned in the title of her paper in the context of post-humanism. The next article in the monograph is Magdalena Szczepocka’s work titled *Neil Gaiman’s ‘Sandman’: A Postmodern Game of Transgressing Borders of Literature, Comics, and the Fantastic* (pp. 115–137). It analyses the *Sandman* series, its influence on the existing genre norms, especially in reference to comic books, as well as its reception.

Kamila Kowalczyk’s article, *Different Dimensions of Imagination: Usage of Fairy Tale Narrative Patterns in the Works of Neil Gaiman*

(pp. 139–157), is the next chapter of the monograph. It is a very good, substantive article that constitutes an interesting study of Gaiman's use of conventions of one of the oldest genres – fairy tales. Another scholar, Weronika Kostecka, the author of *Weird, Uncanny, Monstrous: The Protagonists of Postmodern Fairy Tales by Neil Gaiman* (pp. 159–179), focuses on female characters populating Gaiman's stories. Referencing the category of a monster, she describes convincingly the monstrous character of selected heroines of Gaiman's anti-fairy tales, analyzing the issue through the lenses of postmodernism. The next article of the book, '*Stardust*' by Neil Gaiman as a (Neo)Victorian Fantasy Novel (pp. 181–192), finds its author, Dariusz Piechota, focusing on an interesting genealogical problem of trying to define the genre of the work mentioned in the article's title.

Tomasz Królak, the author of the article titled *The 'Recovery' of the View of Mythical Beings in Neil Gaiman's 'American Gods'* (pp. 193–207), sheds some light on the change in the way gods are presented in fantasy prose, noting that they tend to be turned «magic-less», that is, deprived of their supernatural properties, for the sake of bringing characters closer to ordinary people. Szymon Gruda's article titled *Inspirations of Nordic Mythology in Neil Gaiman's Prose* (pp. 209–219) offers an analysis and interpretation of another Gaiman's works, *Odd and the Frost Giants*, focusing on the elements and plots borrowed and transformed from the Nordic folk tales.

The focal point of the subsequent article, *The Great Goddess and the 'Condensed Essence of Grandmotherliness', or Neil Gaiman's Contemporary Femininity in the Novel 'The Ocean at the End of the Lane'* (pp. 221–236), is the concept of womanhood. Katarzyna Kaczor's article, *Turmoil in Heaven: Neil Gaiman's Angels* (pp. 237–242), presents an overview of angelic characters appearing in the writer's selected works. The next scholar, Agnieszka Polachowska, in her article *The Reflection of Narcissus in the Web of Dreams – Modern Narcissism through the Eyes of Neil Gaiman* (pp. 243–

256), is interested foremost in the issue of the narcissism of both individuals and societies, using well-known works on the subject as her points of reference. In his article titled *Strange Sounds: Reception of the Mythical Sirens in 'How to Talk to Girls at Parties' by Neil Gaiman* (pp. 257–271), Krzysztof Rybak has conducted an analysis and interpretation of the titular work in the context of Mediterranean mythology. The next chapter in the book is written by Izabela Poniatowska. *Neil Gaiman's The Performer, or An Evening with Amanda Palmer* (pp. 273–284) concerns the relations between the writer's life and work, and the media, as well as his readers and viewers.

The monograph ends with an article written by Natalia Kuc titled *'Lost in a Place Called America': Shared Commonplaces of Neil Gaiman and Tori Amos* (pp. 285–295). The work is related indirectly to the previous article on the performatives of Gaiman's activities because it shows the relationship between the writer and his literary output, and the activities and lyrics of an American singer, Tori Amos. The articles collected in the monograph *The Dream Catcher. Studies on the Neil Gaiman's Works* ought to be considered a compelling, sometimes even innovative, work, rich in cultural references and well-contextualized within the literature of the subject, including foreign language publications. Polish scholars have interpreted the prose of the British writer in the context of the broadly-understood European tradition. All the studies included in the monograph demonstrate that the author of *Coraline* has enormous knowledge and literary talent, which allows him to create works that are original, surprising, represent various conventions, including ones typical of image-based mediums. Gaiman is looking constantly for new themes and forms of expression, often going beyond the narrowly defined literature, understood as text-based art. He combines words with images and also with performative actions in his works. He is also keen to use tools developed within the sphere of pop culture, which increases his readership, including people of all ages. According to Polish

scholars, Neil Gaiman talks about important topics, and he does it in an extremely accessible way, without resorting to infantilization. *The Dream Catcher. Studies on the Neil Gaiman's Works* is the monograph that not only draws attention to the above-mentioned literary values of the author's writing but also constitutes a well-thought-out and very readable book that will certainly find a significant audience.

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