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TRANSCENDING GENRE BOUNDARIES WITH NEIL GAIMAN

Abstract

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CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Argument	7

PART ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter I: Genre Theory	13
1.1 Genre Theory	13
1.2 Classical Genre Theory: A Diachronic Approach	15
1.3 Modern Genre Theory: A Synchronic Approach	20
1.4 Genre in the Context of Postmodernism	26
Chapter II: Theorizing Genres	30
2.1 Gothic Genre Overview: A Diachronic and Thematic approach	30
2.2 Fantasy: Mode, Genre, Formula	38
2.3 Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction	46
2.4 Children's Literature and Popular Culture	57
Chapter III: Constructing Genre. An Introduction to Theory and Method	68
3.1. Architectural Scaffolding	68
3.1.1 Monomyth	68
3.1.2 Sequences of Functions.	70
3.1.3 Mythical Structures	71
3.2. Spatio-temporal Relationships	73
3.2.1 Time and Space in Postmodernist Fiction	74
3.2.2 Chronotope, or Spatio-temporal Relationships	75
3.2.3 Fantasy Specific Chronotopes	78
3.2.4 Storyworld Creation Strategies	79
3.2.5 Heterotopology in Literature	80
3.3. Intertextual Relationships	82
3.3.1 Intertextuality	82
3.3.2 Textual Codes	85
3.3.3 Intertextual Analysis: Transtextuality	87

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

PART TWO: FANTASY. GENRE IN CONTEXT	90
Chapter IV: Case Study: Neil Gaiman	91
4.1. <i>Neverwhere</i>	93
4.1.1 Monomyth – Structural Analysis	93
4.1.2 Sequences of Functions – Structural Analysis	97
4.1.3 Chronotopic Analysis	100
4.1.4 Intertextual Analysis	104
4.1.5 Conclusions	113
4.2. <i>Stardust</i>	115
4.2.1 Monomyth – Structural Analysis	115
4.2.2 Sequences of Functions – Structural Analysis	116
4.2.3 Chronotopic Analysis	120
4.2.4 Intertextual Analysis	123
4.2.5 Conclusions	131
4.3. <i>American Gods</i>	133
4.3.1 Monomyth – Structural Analysis	133
4.3.2 Sequences of Functions – Structural Analysis	137
4.3.3 Chronotopic Analysis	140
4.3.4 Intertextual Analysis	143
4.3.5 Conclusions	151
4.4. <i>The Graveyard Book</i>	153
4.4.1 Monomyth – Structural Analysis	153
4.4.2 Sequences of Functions – Structural Analysis	158
4.4.3 Chronotopic Analysis	165
4.4.4 Intertextual Analysis	168
4.4.5 Conclusions	180
4.5. <i>The Ocean at the End of the Lane</i>	183

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

4.5.1 Monomyth – Structural Analysis	183
4.5.2 Sequences of Functions – Structural Analysis	186
4.5.3 Chronotopic Analysis	190
4.5.4 Intertextual Analysis	196
4.5.5 Conclusions	206
V. Concluding Remarks	208
Afterthoughts	211
References	213
Additional Bibliography	222
Annexes	224
List of Publications	242

Keywords: *genre theory, postmodernist genre, Fantasy genre, structural approach, monomyth, functions, chronotope, heterotopology, intertextuality, Neil Gaiman.*

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

INTRODUCTION

Today, probably more than ever the discussion about genre is relevant, as genres are under focus with readers, publishers, librarians, and teachers alike. Never before has the publishing industry had such a growth and impact. Although the reading public is claimed to be diminishing in numbers, this is not visible in the development of the publishing industry or of the virtual publishing platforms that only increased in numbers at the beginning of the new millennium. The rise of the publishing industry in all its publication forms is directly proportional to the rise of the popular or formulaic fiction, making it even harder for certain genres to claim the attention they deserve, due to the academia's conservative and dismissive attitude, reflected in either completely rejecting a genre or diluting it to non-existence (Rayment 2015: 12).

Postmodernism is renowned for making the notion of genre seem irrelevant, outdated, a "blank parody" (Jameson 1991: 16-17). However, not everyone agrees with such a position toward genre, as Rayment explains, "To dismiss the notion of genre or to make it so general as to be almost entirely worthless [...] is essentially a repudiation of literature. [...]. It is [...] impossible to talk about texts without a concept of the conventions that bind and divide them [...]. It might also be added that it would be impossible to have discourse within texts without notions of genre" (Rayment 2015: 12-13). Moreover, as Earnshaw states, "With Postmodernism the concept genre undergoes an epistemological revolution which renders its reconceptualisation necessary" (1997: 223).

In this context, the present study is an attempt at highlighting what really happens with genres during the postmodernist period, as informed opinions related to the issue vary tremendously in angle and strength. Some critics talk about genre dissolution during Postmodernism, others talk about genres becoming modes, while others talk about genre bending, and about blending genres, styles, and tones. Meanwhile, other voices posit, "that genres today operate as open models; they are interactive 'modes' within variegated, plurivocal texts" (Ganeri 1997: 223). It would be incredibly hard to talk about genres in general, without trying to analyse an instance of individual genre, in order to uncover how it manifests at the level of text. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, Fantasy fiction was chosen to be analysed synchronically, in the context of postmodernist influence and its claim of genre dissolution. Since, it would be impossible to analyse every instance of genre, a corpus of works pertaining to Neil Gaiman was selected, in order to perform such an analysis. After a short overview of genre criticism, and of some individual genres, some analysis tools are introduced, relevant to the identification of genre cues. The corpus shall be analysed through the lens of structural narratology, poststructuralist, and postmodernist criticisms, in order to identify the genre traits in the selected corpus.

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

In the last fifty years, genres have been defined “socially, historically, functionally, authorially, politically, stylistically, arbitrarily, idiosyncratically, or by a combination of any of these” (Stockwell 2002: 28), including an “understanding of genre that connects kinds of texts to kinds of social actions” (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 3). As a result, genre today is a term extensively used in different fields – the literary, artistic, linguistic and rhetorical – and disciplines – applied linguistics, English for Specific Purposes, rhetoric, composition studies, technical communication, folklore studies, linguistic anthropology, the ethnography of communication, conversational analysis, the sociology of language, critical discourse analysis, education and literary theory (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 18). In many ways, although essentially different, the approaches to the definition of genre described in these particular areas tend to overlap. This is mostly due to the different goals of these approaches to analysis, and to their differing theoretical positions, and concerns. The place of the structure of a text in the description and definition of genres, the relationship between genre and context, the relationship between genre and culture, and the relationship between genre and cognition are areas where the views regarding genre are at times quite similar (Paltridge 1997: 5).

It is generally accepted that, Postmodernism is characterized by genre dissolution; yet, in spite of that argument, genres still can be recognized as such, in postmodernist literature. It is true that postmodernist literary works frequently contain multiple genre tropes (motives or symbols – Kelen 2007: 35); nonetheless, in most cases a single, predominant genre can be identified. These multiple genre tropes are rather a characteristic of Postmodernism, as a movement, than a proof of genre dissolution. As Derrida states, “a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without [...] a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text” (1980: 65). Literary genres evolve according to the historical context and the specific period they are a part of. This particular historical and literary context translates into fiction by movement and period specific traits. Fantasy fiction is notoriously difficult to define, because as stated by Nikolajeva, “Fantasy is an eclectic genre, since it borrows traits not just from fairy tales, but from myth, romance, the novel of chivalry, the picaresque, the Gothic novel, mysteries, science fiction, and other genres, blending seemingly incompatible elements within one and the same narrative, for instance pagan and Christian images, magic wands and laser guns” (2003: 139). It is similar in many ways to the period of postmodernity, which is “a universal filling-in” (Westphal 2011: 47).

Correspondingly, as Klages suggests, “Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study [...] It’s hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it’s not clear exactly when Postmodernism begins” (2011: 164). From among the main characteristics of postmodernist fiction, one should firstly mention its narrative complexity, characterized by fragmentariness, indeterminacy, non-rationality, open-endedness. Postmodernist works mix fiction with reality and ambiguity in a temporal disorder; they challenge history, conventions and authority, through non-linear and non-hierarchical thinking; and they are characterized by a mixture of genres and styles. Other specific traits of the narrative, such as irony, intertextuality, pastiche, temporal distortion, metafiction, black humour, hyperreality, etc., leave their mark on postmodernist fiction, as well.

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

In order to track the characteristics specific to Postmodernism and those specific to fantastic fiction, a narratological analysis of selected texts is required. In classic, structuralist narratology, the main investigative techniques were derived from the analysis of folk tales and myths, where the goal was to reduce the texts to a number of recurrent structures or patterns. This approach towards narrative was criticized, however, for its superficial preoccupation with showing the elements of the text, without explaining how or why they function as they do. The postmodernist narratological approach attempts to “apply the categorical and permutative techniques of structural analysis in such a way as to leave the act of reading open and infinite” (Connor 2004: 64). Seeing that, postmodernist narratology combines classic elements of narratological analysis with new insights, but without trying to obtain a synthesis, since this would form a metanarrative, which “has become an object of ridicule in postmodern thought” (Herman, Vervaeck 2001: 108). It applies a ““post-deconstructive” integration of text and context” (2001: 109), in combining narratology with other areas such like: sociology, ideology, biography, etc. In the interest of this research certain elements of classic narratology shall be used, along with a postmodernist approach to the selected texts, in order to identify the genre specific traits.

The difficulties in analysing genre have arisen from the lack of an analysis model, because most of the genre criticism emphasises the idea that genre is determined empirically, without specifying a suitable method in approaching its analysis. Therefore, the following analysis tools have been selected: textual architecture, chronotope and intertext, based on the generic properties of Fantasy fiction, which represents the focus of the current study.

Considering the fact that Fantasy originated in myths, legends, fairytales (Sinclair 2008: 23), it shares some of their formal, structural, thematic traits. As stated by Hunt, “the domain of modern Fantasy is related to a long history of myth, legend, folk-tale and wonder tale, not to mention religion and the occult – forms of narrative which many have seen as expressions of, or as being closely related to, deep and universal human drives” (Hunt 2001: 8). Consequently, the structural and formalist analyses of Fantasy works appear to be particularly useful as a tool in establishing their genre. Two seminal works – *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, by Joseph Campbell and *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp – have been chosen in order to detect these structures in Fantasy novels. Both of these works have looked for common, unifying structures in myths, legends, folk tales and stories (Campbell) and in fairy tales (Propp).

Another important characteristic of postmodernist literature is its “shift in sensibilities from a predominantly temporal and historiographic imagination to one much more concerned with the spatial and the geographic” (Smethurst 2000: 15). This change in perception is similar to what Kuhn called a “paradigm shift” (1996: 10-11). At the narrative level, this paradigm shift is represented by a rebellion against logical and chronological time, and absolute and homogenous space. Reflecting upon this shift Dolezel states that the “basic concept of narratology is not “story” but “narrative world” defined within a typology of possible worlds” (1998: 31 qtd. in Gomel 2014: 28). The spatial and temporal indicators that constitute the “narrative world” in literature are expressed by chronotope. It is “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 2008: 84), and it is “the basis for distinguishing generic types” (2008:

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

250-251). The analysis of chronotopes was selected so as to make an additional point in the assessment of genre as constituted from “features that compose a code that, in turn, allows a generic contract to form” (Joliffe 2001: 153).

Even though intertextuality is a relatively new concept associated with Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, as a device, it is as old as language itself. Not only are word, discourse and language intertextual, but literary genres are also intertextual. They constitute a schema, where “the organising logic of genre, its patterns of meaning, of form, and of enunciation, is represented and enacted by pieces of text” (Frow 2006: 45). As a result, referencing a text invokes the “full set of potential meanings stored in the codes of the genre” (Frow 2006: 49). In this sense, there is no unique text, as every text is a repetition and transformation of other texts. It is shaped according to some other texts and recognised based on other texts (Frow 2006: 48). In the postmodernist context, the discussion about genre and intertextuality becomes necessary, as genres are affected by extensive intertextuality, which may be seen as a cause of the transgression of genre boundaries. In other words, this transgression is the form of one genre interacting with others, and it may be explained in numerous ways. For instance, the genres that evolved out of other genres carry in their structure elements of the previous genres within new situations. As in the case of the novel, whose roots, according to Bakhtin, “must ultimately be sought in folklore” (2008: 38). In other situations genres “respond to ideas or language in other genres, using that language or those ideas as support or as the basis for argument” (Dean 2008: 12). Consequently, the intertextual analysis of the texts appears to be a useful tool in analysing its genre.

1. Purpose of the Study

Without pretending to have found definite solutions, but envisaging a new approach, the present dissertation aims to:

1. overview the evolution of the genre theory;
2. survey the birth and evolution of speculative genres;
3. evaluate the status of modern genres in the context of Postmodernism and its claims of genre dissolution, by looking at the Fantasy genre in context, through the lens of the structuralist and poststructuralist readings;
4. refute the claim that genres cease to exist as individual categories in Postmodernism¹
5. identify the shared and shareable traits of the Gothic, Fantasy, Children’s Literature and Science fiction;
6. identify the generic traits of Fantasy, by looking at the Fantasy genre synchronically, rather than diachronically;
7. identify the generic traits of Fantasy in Neil Gaiman’s works;
8. provide an insight into the richness and complexity of postmodernist Fantasy literature;

¹ Rosmarin claims that the dissolution of genres began with the Romantics and has been ongoing ever since (1985: 7)

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

Consequently, it starts from the following premises:

1. genres are heterogeneous entities, lacking exact form and definition, but containing core traits² and traits shared with other genres³;
2. speculative genres share common traits due to their collective roots and evolution;
3. Fantasy is a relatively new, still evolving genre, lacking a precise definition;
4. a synchronic approach to Fantasy seems more appropriate in this context, rather than a diachronic approach to an ever developing genre;
5. Fantasy genre specific traits are deduced based on assumptions derived from the works of a number of literary theorists;
6. Postmodernism plays an important role in genre evolution, by contaminating genres with its own specific traits;
7. Postmodernism in itself is hard to define exactly, and is quite inconsistent with its own definitions (Hutcheon 2004: 49).

2. Central Concepts

- Genre theory
 - Diachronic approach, showing the birth and evolution of the modern genre theory
 - Synchronic approach, showing the current state of the art in the genre theory
 - Postmodern influence on genre theory
- Specific Genres
 - Diachronic and synchronic approaches
 - Common roots and shared traits
 - Specific genres in the postmodern context
- Constructing Fantasy
 - Architectural scaffolding
 - Spatio-temporal relationships
 - Intertextual relationships

Largely, as already suggested, the dissertation consists of two types of texts:

- theoretical – building on the evolution of genre theory, and the impossibility to pinpoint the individual genre definitions, which, combined with the heterogeneity of postmodern context, results in an ongoing debate on what genres and their specific traits are, and on narratology, in analysing the narrative architecture of Fantasy
- literary – based on the novels of Neil Gaiman, which may be regarded as a rich ground for analysis in the context of the current research

² the “fuzzy set” theory (Attebery 2014: 33)

³ the family resemblance theory (Fowler 1982: 41)

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

The goal of this study is to analyse the selected corpus as a part of the Fantasy genre, and to identify the genre specific traits by applying the previously discussed reading grids. The corpus of texts selected for analysis consists of the following novels: *Neverwhere*, *American Gods*, *Stardust*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. The above enumerated novels, written by Neil Gaiman, are only fitting in the context of the discussion on genre in Postmodernism, as they cross genre frontiers and combine modes. Actually, Gaiman is not singular in this respect, as Postmodernism is universally acknowledged as characterized by contradictions, by blurring the boundaries between high and low culture, between genres, between history and fiction (Hutcheon 2004: 20-21). Still, Gaiman's work seems to be more appropriate for the scope of this research because, as Ruddick states, "Neil Gaiman operates in every conceivable fantastic medium and genre" (2011: 335), thus providing a relevant corpus of texts to be examined here.

In as far as the structure of the dissertation is concerned, it comprises two parts: *Theoretical Framework*, which includes three chapters: *Genre Theory* is where an introduction to classical genre theory and to the modern genre theory is made, in diachronic and synchronic approaches; *Theorising Genres*, where the survey of the Gothic, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Children's Literature genres is carried out; and *Constructing Genres. An Introduction to Theory and Method*, which contains three subchapters: Architectural Scaffolding, Spatio-temporal Relationships, and Intertextual Relationships, discussing the genre constituents, and genre analysis tools. The second part *Fantasy Genre in Context* consists of a short introduction *Case Study: Neil Gaiman* and five individual subchapters: *Neverwhere*, *American Gods*, *Stardust*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. In each of the aforementioned chapters in the second part of the study, an individual novel, is analysed and examined through different genre analysis tools. The examination of the novels ends with concluding remarks and afterthoughts on the subject of genre. The thesis is rounded off with *Concluding Remarks* and *Afterthoughts*, as well as a list of *References* subdivided into the primary sources, representing the corpus of literary works; the secondary sources used in the construction of the argumentation throughout the study; and the online sources, representing the sources available on the Internet. The last pages are dedicated to the *Annexes*, which outline Campbell and Propp's structural analysis models, that were applied to the literary corpus selected.

CHAPTER I

GENRE THEORY

The first chapter of this study is dedicated to the introduction to genre theory in two distinct approaches. The diachronic approach to the genre theory starts with the roots of genology⁴ in Plato's and Aristotle's works. After presenting the Aristotelian doctrine's influence during the Middle Ages, and its flourishing during the Renaissance, the overview presents the "Neo-Classicism" period, with its return to the notion of literary genres as being of particular types, with appropriate rules and norms. Next considerable influence on genre theory belongs to the

⁴ a term coined by P. Van Tieghem in "La question des genres littéraires", *Hélicon*, 1 (1938), 95-101 (99), used in English for the first time in *Literary Theory* by Wellek and Warren 1956: 244

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

European Romanticism. It is responsible for the reinterpretation of modes as genres. Romantics no longer believed in a prescriptive and regulative genre theory. During the Victorian period, genre criticism saw a return to Aristotelian concerns (in Arnold's *On the Classical Tradition*), although perhaps with more of a degree of flexibility than earlier adoptions of his position (Dubrow 1982). Then the overview moves to Modernism's influence and its rejecting the practice and theory of preceding writers, and refusal to accept set models. When it comes to modern genre theory, Russian Formalism and Structuralism were mainly responsible for its emergence in the twentieth century. Russian Formalists tried to link literary modes to linguistic structures. Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) laid some of the groundwork for genre studies, used later by Structuralists in both film and literary criticism. Another highly influential attempt to renew genre theory belongs to Wellek and Warren. In their *Theory of Literature* (1956) they recommended a historicist approach to studying genres.

The second subchapter focuses on the synchronic approach to literary theory. It presents the numerous ways to approach genre classification in modern literary theory. One of them is summarised by Fishelov in four main sets of analogies through which the literary genres were conceived by the twentieth-century critics: the biological species, the family resemblance, the social institution, made up of conventions, forms, contracts and the speech act (1993: 1-2). Another important approach belongs to Frow, who envisages genre, as a complex tridimensional structure consisting of the formal, rhetorical and thematic dimensions. Similarly, Williams in *Culture* (1981) sees genre as a "cultural form". He identified three distinct levels of cultural form, which he terms respectively "modes", "genres" and "types" (1995: 194-197). In his view, genre would be "subject to variation between different epochs and different social orders" (195). Another proposed attempt at genre classification belongs to Hernadi (1972), who tried to elaborate a modern division of genre theories in an attempt to transcend essentialism and move "beyond genre". After a short presentation of the reader based theories and of the dialectical criticism, the status of the genre during postmodernism is discussed in a short subchapter: *Genre in the Context of Postmodernism*.

CHAPTER II

THEORISING GENRES

The chapter focuses on summarising the origins, evolution and main characteristics of Gothic, Fantasy fiction, Science fiction and Children's literature, in parallel with popular literature. The surveys outline the popular fiction genres, relevant in the context of the current research, chosen from among the genres associated with the analysed corpus. The theoretical overviews of genres (used by Gaiman in his writing) were chosen to help establish the main tropes of each genre, in order to identify them in Gaiman's literary texts. Gothic is presented in more detail than the subsequent genres - Fantasy fiction and Science Fiction. It can be explained by Gothic's relevance to the origins and evolution of the Fantasy fiction and Science Fiction, discussed in this study. Gothic fiction may seem to be an obsolete literary genre today; however, it is a very persistent and productive one. Its works are scattered along

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

250 years, despite being highly unstable, because its elements came to contaminate almost every other literary genre. Furthermore, Gothic generated new genres. Therefore, Gothic fiction was discussed in more detail than the subsequent genres, in order to observe the formal, structural and thematic evolution of its tropes, and their transformation in the genres of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Children's Literature is treated as a separate category, and as a result, it was discussed last, in parallel with popular literature. The origins, evolution, and the main traits and characteristics of each genre are presented in these detailed analyses, so that they could be located in the literary analyses of the novels, in order to uncover and establish their generic traits.

CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTING GENRE. AN INTRODUCTION TO THEORY AND METHOD

In order to track the characteristics specific to Postmodernism and those specific to Fantasy fiction, a narratological analysis of selected texts was required. In classic, structuralist narratology, the main investigative techniques were derived from the analysis of folk tales and myths, where the goal was to reduce the texts to a number of recurrent structures or patterns. In the interest of this research certain elements of classic narratology shall be used, along with a postmodernist approach to the selected texts, in order to identify the genre specific traits. Looking for the specific traits, this research tries to identify analysis models that could be applied in the texts with the purpose of identifying the genre.

Considering that Fantasy originated in myths, legends, fairytales (Sinclair 2008: 23), it shares some of their formal, structural, thematic traits. Consequently, the structural and formalist analyses of Fantasy works appear to be particularly useful as a tool in establishing their genre. For the purpose of this research two seminal works have been chosen, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, by Joseph Campbell and *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp, in order to detect these structures in Fantasy novels. A short overview of the two structures is presented in the first subchapter titled *Architectural Scaffolding*. This subchapter is followed by *Spatio-temporal Relationships*, where such notions as chronotope (Bakhtin), fantasy specific chronotopes (Nikolajeva), storyworld creation strategies (Gomel), and heterotopology in literature (Foucault) are discussed. The chapter ends with *Intertextual Relationships* subchapter, where the concept of intertextuality is explored. Such notions as transtextuality (Genette), textual codes (Barthes), linear and perspectival intertextuality (Sauerbaum), levels of intertextuality (Bazerman), and features of intertextuality (Chandler) are introduced in this subchapter, thus concluding the chapter on genre specific analysis methods.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: NEIL GAIMAN

The chapter begins with an introduction into the chosen literary corpus titled *Case Study: Neil Gaiman*, in which the author is introduced along with the qualities that made him a perfect subject for the current study. It is followed by the discrete analyses of the selected novels:

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

Neverwhere, *American Gods*, *Stardust*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. Each of the novels above is analysed through the above introduced analysis methods. Each novel is dedicated a discrete subchapter devoted to its analysis. First, each of them is analysed through the lens of Campbell's monomyth structure introduced in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and subsequently through the Propp's sequences of functions, presented in the *Morphology of the Folktale*. Then, each discrete novel is examined in search of its distinct chronotopic structures, by using Bakhtin's chronotope, Gomel's narrative strategies, Nikolajeva's fantastic chronotopes, and Foucault's heterotopia. Last analysis is performed through Genette's schema of intertextuality classification, by using Suerbaum's notions of linear and perspectival intertextuality. It examines the role of intertextuality in the generic determination, as well as generic dissolution that plagues postmodern period. A detailed analysis, applying each of the aforementioned analysis methods is performed for each of the novels, belonging to the selected corpus. Each novel's analysis is rounded off with conclusions based on the analyses performed, where the results of the aforementioned analyses are discussed in the light of the presented above genre theory.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main purpose of this paper was to discuss the status of genre in Postmodernism, by focusing on the identification of the generic characteristics of Fantasy fiction in Neil Gaiman's work. During the postmodern period it has been claimed that genres have dissolved, that they have crossed borders, have "evaporated", have ceased to exist, have become a "blank parody", or have become obsolete. Nevertheless, one can find them everywhere, in written and oral discourses, in audio-visual media, even in everyday conversation. In this context, tracing genre in order to observe its performance was the only option to see whether any of these statements are true.

For the present paper to attain its goal, the material was organized into two parts, a theoretical part and an applied one. In the theoretical part, the first chapter dealt with genre theory and the various synchronic and diachronic approaches to genre, necessary to pinpoint the cause of the lack of consensus in the generic critical theory. These considerations were followed by a short overview of the genre status during Postmodernism, showing the numerous positions toward genre and the eclectic nature of Postmodernism itself.

In the second chapter, discrete genres such as Gothic, Fantasy, Science Fiction and Children's Literature were examined. These overviews were necessary for defining and identifying the unique, shared and shareable generic characteristics of the aforementioned popular fiction genres, in order to be able to locate them in the applied part of the dissertation. The third chapter covered the theoretical notions to be applied in the analysis of the selected corpus, and detailed the methods of analysis, in three subchapters: Architectural Scaffolding, Spatio-temporal Relationships, and Intertextual Relationships. The second part of the current dissertation applied the methods selected, on the basis of the theories outlined in the first part of the study.

The determination of the current state of the genre is a far too ambitious goal, so it needed reconsideration and reconfiguration. As a result, outlining the state of an individual genre seemed a better idea, despite being just as challenging. Rethinking the analysis on a

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

smaller scale came naturally, as a third option. The smaller scale meant that selecting a genre and a representative corpus of works was necessary as a medium for analysis. Selecting a specific genre meant addressing genre fiction, in order to pick a subject for this study. Fantasy, as a relatively new, still evolving genre, was deemed a worthy example of genre fiction. Its features and traits were examined and analysed diachronically, as well as synchronically, so as to determine its current form. It was observed that postmodern Fantasy is as eclectic as Postmodernism itself, featuring such themes as the other, the ontological questioning of the notion of truth and reality, the treatment of history as a metafiction, or the subversion of metanarratives that emphasize the intricate relation between Postmodernism and the Fantastic (Horstkotte 2004). And subversion is a characteristic of both Postmodernism and Fantasy, undermining absolutes like time, space, character, or history. Postmodern Fantasy, characterised by parallel worlds and plural truths, by the violation of conventions, plurality of sign and meaning, recycling and transfiguration of themes and motifs from oral and written tradition in an intertextual game (Stableford 2005: 325), is a complex and fertile ground for generic “cross-contamination”.

Surveys of the genres that share traits with Fantasy fiction were then placed under lens in view of detecting the contaminating characteristics, and evaluating whether these change the generic status of the analysed work or have no effect whatsoever on its generic configuration. A major setback was the lack of genre analysis models, so a general model was assembled, based on the recurrent traits of postmodernist Fantasy fiction. The traits taken into account are: the formulaic structure of Fantasy, the complex spatio-temporal settings of Fantasy fiction, and the intertextual character of both chronotope and genre. As a result, Propp’s and Campbell’s structures, Bakhtin’s chronotope, and Genette’s transtextuality analysis model, were selected as genre analysis tools.

The only missing aspect was the appropriate corpus, which had to be both fantastic and postmodernist. Seeing that Neil Gaiman is considered to be “one of the core, canonical authors in several fields of literary study, including, but certainly not limited to: Science Fiction and Fantasy, comic studies, and Children’s Literature” (Eveleth, Wigard 2016: 3), his works have been deemed appropriate to the purpose of the current study. Gaiman is an author *bricoleur*, experimenting with every genre’s conventions and playing with reader’s expectations. His work is renowned for its rich intertextuality, hyperreality, its usage of pastiche, parody, irony, fluctuant subjectivity and even metafiction. Gaiman embraces and explores the myth/literature relationship, imagining a contemporary mythology of his own, as he reshapes and recycles classical myths, legends, and folktales, cultural and intertextual references in a postmodern blend.

The texts with novelistic form were selected out of the large body of Gaiman’s works. For the purpose of this study on genre, works marketed as belonging to discrete genres have been chosen. The analysis of the corpus revealed the following:

- Fantasy is a complex, heterogeneous, evolving genre that cannot be limited to the restrictive label of speculative or genre fiction. It comprises diverse works that should not be dismissed based on their generic label, but rather should be analysed based on their literary merit.

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

- Fantastic traits were easily identified in the text, with the help of the selected analysis tools, although some of them appear in adapted, appropriated, or subverted form.
- Fantasy is the predominant genre in the works analysed despite the presence of a number of generic cues belonging to other genres.
- The contaminating elements are minor generic traits in the analysed corpus, with no effect on generic determination, anchoring the narration in the period and cultural context.
- These elements enrich the genre, rather than diluting it. They reflect the postmodernist “melting pot” of generic elements that has brought the claim of genre dissolution. Yet, the genre is easily identified in the corpus, the main generic traits being prevalent and obvious.
- The analysed corpus is a fertile soil for such an analysis as it incorporates the influences of Postmodernism on genres, exhibiting instances of irony, playfulness and pastiche in the mixture of genres and styles, historiographic metafiction, rich literary and cultural intertextuality, spatio-temporal distortion, metafiction, parody, black humour, subversion of generic cues and reader’s expectations, usage of different language registers in the same narrative, duplication or multiplication of the narrative perspective, etc.
- The analysed works engage the intellect, display beautiful language, complex themes and motives, and contain expansive social criticism. They exhibit complex postmodernist concepts like hyperreality, simulacra and simulation, multiculturalism, globalisation and Americanisation of the world, the influence and control exercised by media and big corporations, etc.

Therefore, based on these findings, and extrapolating them out of this thesis context, it could be claimed that, throughout the postmodernist period, Fantasy continues to exist as a distinct genre, in spite of the “contaminating” elements of other genres that have been revealed here. Moreover, it may be stated that, in spite of the contaminating elements abounding on the postmodernist stage, genres continue to exist as discrete categories, by incorporating the minor generic elements belonging to other genres, thus enriching the generic text with allusions.

Irina Bârliba (Rață)
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Irina Bârliba (Rață)
Transcending Genre Boundaries with Neil Gaiman

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