

**“ONLY THE GODS ARE REAL”:
THE MYTHOPOEIC DIMENSION OF NEIL GAIMAN’S
AMERICAN GODS**

IRINA RAȚĂ

University “Dunărea de Jos” of Galați

Abstract: *This paper aims to address the mythopoeic aspect of Neil Gaiman’s American Gods, so as to disclose the elements of American cultural identity embedded in the novel. It is an attempt to analyse its legends, myths, folklore, popular culture figures, intertwined with Old World mythology, assessing their viability as modern myths, through the lens of formalist and structuralist reading.*

Keywords: *American cultural identity, cultural representations of America, mythology, mythopoeia.*

1. Introduction

Myth has been a part of human life from the dawn of time. Originally, myth was a classical fable that was told about the exploits of gods and heroes, but later it came to refer to a story that, despite being believed by many people, is not true. Today, it has also been associated with fantastic story (Itu 2008:1) or ideology (Barthes 1991:127-128). However, myth, at present, represents more than the above definitions. According to Campbell:

Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth. (Campbell 2004:1)

In this context, one may claim that myth constitutes the base of the human culture: it “bestows a culture with its central values and beliefs, and thus, has a major impact on identity-creating and self-assurance” (Gehmann 2003:105). Myths are expressed in great abundance in the popular culture of postmodernity. They are present in television programs, animation, cinema, videogames, comics, and literature. With such a wide presence of myths in the popular culture, the interest for myth analysis was increased, especially by the usage of Campbell’s monomyth and Propp’s functions as blueprints in the filmmaking industry (Lesinskis 2009:2-4). The aim of this article is to analyse the myths emerging from the novel, to assess their viability as modern myths, and in addition to establish whether a structuralist and formalist analysis could be applied with satisfying results to the analysis of a modern myth.

2. Modern Myths in *American Gods*

American Gods (Gaiman 2001) is a representation of modern America and its identity, from the point of view of a British expat living in America. Gaiman “uses myths to define what makes America” (Rimmels 2001). The novel’s vast mythology is re-shaped and re-

invented, combined with legends, folktales, and numerous intertextual references, to create a modern mythic representation of the United States. Since the beginning of the novel, in the preface titled “Caveat and Warning for Travellers”, we are warned that: “Only the Gods are real” (Gaiman 2001:3), thus being invited to step into the alternative reality of Gaiman’s America, where, in the words of Mr. World, “the symbol is the thing” (Gaiman 2001:424). The novel’s title – *American Gods* – offers two major premises for its analysis: *America* and *its mythology*. In discussing a state, one looks at the aspects that make it unique, thus particularly at its cultural identity. According to *Dictionary of Media and Communication*, cultural identity is: “The definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender)” (Chandler and Munday 2011:84). In the case of the United States of America, a country characterised by multiculturalism, globalization, and consumerism, the concept of cultural identity becomes a complicated structure. When addressing American cultural identity, one has to consider the multiple races, religions, ethnicities, and their respective histories, along with their common denominators: goals, values, dreams, and interests. Another important aspect of cultural identity is the fact that culture is ever-changing along with the society that uses it. As Lyotard (qtd. in Allen 2000:183) observes: “in the culture of late capitalism, traditional notions of national identity and culture are superseded by global forms deriving from transnational corporations in control of the media, of scientific research and other technological and commercial areas of life” (Allen 2000:183). This statement becomes even more relevant in the case of the United States of America.

In *American Gods* Gaiman uses mythology and mythopoeia in order to convey the complexity of American identity. His America is a combination of old and new, historic and mythical, legend and reality, in a melting pot which creates a unique portrayal of American identity. Lévi-Strauss (1974:21) considers “mythical thought” as a type of *bricolage*: “it builds ideological castles out of the debris of what was once a social discourse”. In this sense, Gaiman is an *author-bricoleur*, who “works with signs, constructing new structures by adopting existing signifieds as signifiers” (Chandler 2007:205). The re-worked myths and modern myths resulting from his work are used to convey ideology, in the sense defined by Barthes. In *Mythologies*, when discussing the orders of signification, he talks about denotation and connotation combining to form the order of myth. Myth, according to Barthes (1991:127-130), is the dominant ideology of our time, serving the ideological function of naturalisation (Barthes 1977:45-46), “making dominant cultural and historical values seem self-evident, timeless, obvious”, and “common-sense” (Chandler 2007:145). As a result, the mythological order of signification can be perceived as reflecting culturally variable concepts which support certain worldviews. Myths can also be seen as extended metaphors, since they facilitate understanding our experiences within a culture, just like metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:185-186). Aside from metaphors, myth is deeply linked with symbol and allegory, as well, and it is used to increase the meaning depth and to give the text multiple layers of meaning.

3. Mythic America

Two main types of myth emerge from the novel: the “American myth”, defined as “the sum of views, visions, images, values, beliefs and opinions presenting the United States as a positive country, and Americans, as a people, in a good light” (Bogdanowicz 2014:15); and the myth of “new American folk hero” (Boggs 2009:22-28). The “American myth” in the novel presents a “mythic” America (Chernus 2012), characterized by duality, alienation,

hyperreality (Baudrillard 1988:171), disconnectedness in geography and culture. The duality is implied by the symbolism of coins, which are permanently featured in the novel, along with references to Herodotus, who is simultaneously the “father of history”, and the “father of lies” (Gaiman 2001:132). Every character is not what it seems at first. The novel features “real” reality, and “behind the scenes” (Gaiman 2001:271). Characters, morals, ideas, Old World and New World, all are in opposition. Such myths like the land of “hope and change”, where “all is possible”, the land of “American dream”, are undermined by the struggles of old gods to fit in, to adapt to the evolving reality, which makes them claim that this is a “bad land for gods” (Gaiman 2001:420). Furthermore, the idea is supported by narrative episodes called *Somewhere in America*, where the narrator presents the struggles of various characters, and numerous *Coming to America* interludes, unrelated to the main plot, but explaining the arrival of old gods. These interludes subvert another myth as well, that of “pioneers taming the wilderness”, which is explained by Mr. Ibis in the following quote:

the important thing to understand about American history...is that it is fictional, a charcoal-sketched simplicity for the children, or the easily bored. For the most part it is uninspected, unimagined, unthought, a representation of the thing, and not the thing itself. (Gaiman 2001:73)

This can serve also as an allusion to the concept of simulacra (Baudrillard 1988:167). In *Simulacra and Simulations* Baudrillard (1988:171) states: “there is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity”. All of which are implied by the above quote from Gaiman.

The myth of “homeland insecurity” (Chernus 2012) is referred to in numerous allusions to “men in black”, “spooks”, and federal agencies. The myth of “racial equality” is undermined by such references, as: “And what are you? A spic? A gypsy?”... “Maybe you got nigger blood in you.” (Gaiman 2001:10) In *American Gods*, the old gods pertaining to different pantheons, with their idiosyncrasies, represent different ethnicities and cultures, as well as the Old World they come from. The stereotypical representations of these nations or ethnicities are present in the way characters look, behave, and talk. As an example of their looks pointing to their origin, one can observe: Mama-ji (the representation of goddess Kali) is in a red sari, wearing a small dark blue jewel on her forehead; another example is that of Mad Sweeney (his name is an allusion to the Irish clan with the same name), presented as a modern day leprechaun, wearing a denim jacket covered with bright sew-on patches, with a bristle, short ginger beard (Gaiman 2001:42). These characters are depicted as alienated by their displacement, doing odd jobs, and having peculiar lifestyles; they are caricatures, parodies of their original selves. One can see the Norse god Odin, as Mr. Wednesday – Shadow’s employer, a grifter, permanently on the move. Czernobog, a Slavic god, can be seen as a retired knocker, living in a small, dirty apartment, smelling of cabbage and cats. Queen of Sheba – Bilquis – is depicted as a prostitute. Egyptian gods Thoth and Anubis, appearing in the novel as Mr. Ibis and Mr. Jacquel, are morticians. They are challenged by their adoptive land, which tries to assimilate their specificity, and is therefore a “bad land for gods” (Gaiman 2001:478). They struggle to survive and adapt, but nevertheless they are confronted by the new gods, competing for worshippers. As a result, they have to deal with a “paradigm shift” (Gaiman 2001:219), in which the old values (represented by the old gods) are facing destruction, confronted by the new, modern gods of computers, telephones, highways, television, and credit cards. Modern gods have suggestive names, like: Media, Mr. World (allusion to globalization), Mr. Town (allusion to urbanization), and Technical Boy. They are described as: “proud gods, fat and foolish creatures, puffed up with their own newness and importance” (Gaiman 2001:107). The conflict between old gods and modern gods points to

the clash between cultures, races, and generations in Gaiman's multicultural modern America. Numerous intertextual allusions and cultural allusions, along with numerous American personalities, trademarks, and landmarks are used to anchor the plot to modern America.

The myth of the 'new American folk hero' is represented in the novel by Shadow and his journey in search of identity. The main character is a symbol of every American. He is an 'average Joe' or average American. He is a middle-class man, married with no children, unaware of his ethnical origins, a misfit, unattached to any place. In the beginning of the novel, Shadow is in prison, on the point of being released, being convicted for aggravated assault and battery. He never knew his father ("I don't know much about my father" (Gaiman 2001:148)). He has "cream-and-coffee" coloured skin (Gaiman 2001:10), and comes from a small town. Anxious to get home to his loving wife, his life shatters when he is released early, due to his wife's death. In shock, he tries to reach home, in hope that a mistake was made, and his wife might be alive. However, his hopes are destroyed when his potential employer shows him a newspaper article about the car crash that killed his wife and his best friend. The news makes him accept the employment offer, mostly due to the fact that, with his wife's death, all his dreams and hopes were gone. As a result, he ends up following his employer, Mr. Wednesday, on a trip across America, and promises to hold vigil for him, in case of his death. When his employer is shot, and Shadow holds his vigil on the World Tree, he comes to discover more about himself than he ever expected. So, he ends up discovering that Mr. Wednesday was his father, and the whole war plan was a scheme of his and Shadow's ex-prison mate, which leads to Shadow stopping the impending war by exposing the truth about the scheme. Shadow's journey through the novel is both literal and metaphorical. He goes on a journey of self-discovery, to find his "family and tribe" (Gaiman 2001:399). His choice to end the war without fighting, through words, by advocating multiculturalism and tolerance, makes him the "new American folk hero".

4. Myth in Postmodern Context

Myths are abundant in postmodern culture, despite the fact that postmodernism rejects "grand narratives" (Lyotard 1984:15), and despite Derrida's (2002:351) deconstruction attack on Levi-Strauss' work. This article tries to establish whether a structuralist and formalist analysis could be applied with satisfying results to the analysis of a modern myth. This endeavour may seem contradictory, because *American Gods* is a postmodernist novel, and displays a complex postmodern metamythology (Meletinsky 2000:340). However, the myth of the 'new American folk hero' or Shadow's journey resembles a traditional tale of adventure; and according to Campbell (2004:35), "popular tales represent the heroic action as physical; the higher religions show the deed to be moral; nevertheless, there will be found astonishingly little variation in the morphology of the adventure, the character roles involved, the victories gained". With this in mind, this article attempts to analyse the structure of the "new American folk hero" myth by using Campbell's monomyth and Propp's analysis of wondertales. Both of these structures were applied to novels, films, television shows. The other question this article attempts to answer is whether modern myth is as viable as the ancient myth, and whether it has the potential to survive under one form or another in the culture that created it. According to Kushner,

the permanence of myths as they manifest themselves in modern literature lies not in fixity of narrative detail, nor in an ontological unity of the human mind as enshrined in the world of myths, nor again in the preservation of a classical flavour, but in the very dynamics of myth itself. If myths indeed are structures, they are not dependent upon one culture, one epoch, one specific narrative version, but have

the ability to recombine elements of form and meaning through the very process of transformation, whereas it used to be thought that they survived in some esoteric way, immutably, despite transformation. (Kushner 2001:303)

In the context of permanent cultural evolution, it would be difficult to judge whether the modern myths have the ability to survive the passage of time. However, one can analyse the structure of the modern myth emerging from the novel in order to assess its compliance with ancient structures, as a means of survival.

5. Mythic Structures in *American Gods*

5.1. Campbell's monomyth

Campbell was inspired in developing his monomyth theory by the earlier works of Jung and Freud. His monomyth theory was based on Jung's theory of archetypes, and on the idea of mythology, as a projection of collective unconscious, found in all cultures. The term monomyth was borrowed from Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (Campbell 2004:28). In studying myths, Campbell developed a basic structure and set common elements to all myths. He reduced the standard path of mythological adventure hero to a development of "the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return", which he named the "nuclear unit of the monomyth" (Campbell 2004:28). Campbell's nuclear unit of the monomyth can be explained as follows: "the hero ventures into a region of supernatural wonder, where fabulous forces are encountered and a victory is won, as a result the hero returns from the supernatural world with a power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell 2004:28). According to Campbell, this basic structure underlies every adventure hero myth. Campbell (2004:18) saw the myth as a "depersonalized dream", and as an allegory of individual personal experience.

In *American Gods*, the monomyth theory finds its applicability whilst being adapted to the needs of modern storytelling. The monomyth begins with an initial state, which in our case is that of Shadow imprisoned. Then comes the change announced by a "herald". The herald is represented by Sam Fetisher, who tells him that "the storm is coming", which Shadow dismisses. The role of herald is assumed by the prison warden as well, announcing Laura's death. This is the point where the hero feels lost, with no family, no friends, no birth place, and no ethnicity, unattached; as a result, he needs to find his identity, although he is not aware of it yet. An important part of the journey is departure, which begins with the "call to adventure": "a preliminary manifestation of the powers that are breaking into play" (Campbell 2004:34). This is the point where a stranger on a plane makes a strange job offer to Shadow. The natural reaction to this offer is to reject it, thus comes the next stage of hero's journey the "refusal of the call". After being imprisoned for three years, all Shadow wants is to leave the prison behind, this is the point when he is offered the job, by someone who knows his name, and acts suspiciously. This stage of the journey is explained by Campbell (2004:55) as follows: "the future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting series of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure". The next stage is represented by the supernatural aid, often masculine in form, who may supply amulets and advice. In our case, the first helper is Mad Sweeney, who gives Shadow his golden coin that later brings Laura back from death. Consequently, Laura saved Shadow more than once. An example of advice given by Mad Sweeney is: "You have to learn to think outside the box" (Gaiman 2001:29), which becomes useful later in the novel, when Shadow finally starts to see "the hidden Indians". There are more helpers in the novel; one should mention Zorya Polunochnaya, Bast, Mr. Nancy, as was Laura (as already stated), and

even Mr. Wednesday. Shadow begins his journey by drinking the mead, which represents a binding contract with his employer, and the “crossing of the first threshold” (Campbell 2004:71). Mr. Wednesday represents the “threshold guardian”, and ensures Shadow’s fittingness for the task, by making him fight Mad Sweeney. The “belly of the whale” represents “a transit into a sphere of rebirth” (Campbell 2004:83), which is Shadow’s stay in Eagle Point, as the transition between his past and present life. With this last step the part of departure is over, and begins the second part of hero’s myth “initiation” (Campbell 2004:89).

The initiation begins with “the road of trials”, full of tests, adventures and ordeals. In the case of Shadow, the road of trials takes most of the book. He is tested both physically and spiritually. He plays chess with Czernobog; gets into the carousel; is abducted by spooks; travels to Cairo, where he must work for the morticians; all of them leading to the ultimate trials: the vigil, and the trial in the Hall of the Dead. The “meeting with the goddess” could take numerous forms. Among these, Campbell offers the following possible explanation:

woman... represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations...she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. (Campbell 2004:106)

There are three goddesses whom Shadow meets during his journey and who help him along. These are: Zorya Polunochnaya, who gives him the Liberty dollar, and helps him in the Hall of the Dead, Bast, who helps him heal and assists him in the Hall of the Dead, and Easter, who resurrects him after dying on the world tree. In the “woman as temptress” phase, Shadow is tempted by Media with “power over what people believe and say and wear and dream” (Gaiman 2001:344). The “atonement with the father” makes Shadow finally find the truth about his father during his vigil on the Yggdrasil. In the “apotheosis” stage, Shadow hallucinates and dies on the tree; his soul gets weighted and measured in the Hall of the Dead (Gaiman 2001:378). The “ultimate boon” makes Shadow see the “hidden Indians” in his father’s scheme, and retain the knowledge.

In the “return”, which is the last part of hero’s journey, the first phase is the “refusal of the return”, when offered choices, Shadow chooses “nothing”. He even hesitates to return when called back by Easter, who resurrects him. In the “magic flight” stage, Shadow is taken to Whiskey Jack’s place. In the “rescue from without”, unwilling Shadow is resurrected by Easter, and flies a Thunderbird to the Lookout Mountain, and “behind the scenes”. In the “crossing of the return threshold” he restores the balance between the two worlds, and comes back into the “real” world. As a result he is a “master of the two worlds”; Shadow gets the wisdom of seeing, recognizing and understanding the coexistence of the two planes of existence, the “real” world and “behind the scenes”. In this phase, the hero obtains:

freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back – not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master. (Campbell 2004:212)

And the last stage of the hero’s journey is the “freedom to live”, where Shadow gets the permission to live with his knowledge, which he does in travelling the world, and meeting the original Odin in Iceland. As it can be seen, every main plot point is covered by the monomyth structure. However, certain plot points and subplots, some of them arguably important for the plot development, could not be covered by the monomyth structure.

5.2. Propp's functions

Unlike Campbell who researched common mythical structures, Propp dedicated his life to researching common structures in wondertales. However, according to Lévi-Strauss (qtd. in Propp 1984:79): “myth and the wondertale exploit a common substance”. Propp (1984:84) distinguished between a tale and a wondertale, as follows: “the tale is born out of life; however, the wondertale is a weak transcript of reality...To determine the origins of the wondertale, we must draw upon the broad cultural material of the past”. He associated certain types of myth with wondertale, identifying common structures of the two, along with common themes and motifs. He distinguished between story (*fabula*) and plot (*sjuzhet*), based his analysis of wondertales on plot structures, and considered plot as “all actions and incidents developed in the course of the narrative” (Propp 1984:76). He called functions “the action of the character from the point of view of its significance for the progress of the narrative” (Propp 1984:74). The functions, according to Propp (2003:21), are the “constant, stable elements, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled”. Their number in a wondertale is limited. Their sequence is uniform, and always identical. The functions of the characters can be isolated. Wondertales exhibit thirty-one functions, not all of which are found in any one tale. According to Propp (1984:170), “all wondertales are of one type, in regard to their structure”. They have a few functions, which take multiple forms (Propp 1984:69-83). In Propp's (1984:173) analysis there are eight “*dramatis personae*”: “villain”, “dispatcher”, “(magical) helper”, “princess or prize (and her father)”, “donor”, “hero”, and “false hero”. These *dramatis personae* fulfil thirty-one functions, but as mentioned before, “the number of functions in a wondertale is limited”, and the “absence of certain functions does not interfere with the order of appearance of the others” (Propp 1984:83).

Propp's (1984:70) formalist analysis of wondertales can be applied to almost any type of narrative. A method of story creation by rearranging the plot functions was developed based on Propp's model (Lesinskis 2009). It has been used to create other tales and video games. His analysis method is used today to analyse other types of narrative, from television shows (Latourette 1990), to video games (Dickey 2006). According to Propp's model, in *American Gods*, the *dramatis personae* fulfilling the functions are: the villain – Mr. Wednesday, Loki Liesmith; the dispatcher – Mr. Wednesday; the (magical) helper – Zorya Polunohnaya, Bast, and Mr. Nancy; the princess or prize – Laura; the donor – Mad Sweeney, Zorya Polunohnaya; the hero – Shadow; and the false hero – Mr. Wednesday. For the purpose of this analysis, certain functions will be eliminated, those irrelevant to the novel's plot. According to Propp, there can be encountered substitutions, inversions, transformations, extensions of certain elements of the tale. The substitution of one *dramatis persona* for another does not change the order of functions. The model has multiple choices of functions per stage, consequently, only one appropriate function will be chosen. Propp designates Greek alphabet letters to every function. The plot starts with an “initial situation”: α (Propp 2003:26), and is followed by “absentation” (Propp 2003:26): β^1 (“one of the members of a family absents himself from home”)/ “The person absenting himself can be a member of the older generation”. In the case of *American Gods*, Shadow's initial situation is his being imprisoned. The death of Shadow's wife can also be filed under absentation. The following stage is “trickery” (Propp 2003:29): η^1 (“the villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings”)/ “The villain uses persuasion”. Mr Wednesday tricks Shadow to drink his mead before Shadow agrees to work for him. The next stage is “complicity” (Propp 2003:30): θ^1 (“the victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy”)/ “The hero agrees to all of the villain's persuasions”. Shadow drinks the

mead, which functions as a binding contract, and becomes Mr. Wednesday's employee. The stage of "villainy" (Propp 2003:31): A¹ ("the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family"), with its variant: "the villain abducts a person" (A¹) comes next. Shadow is abducted by the Technical Boy, who works for Loki Liesmith. In the stage of "lack", "one member of the family either lacks something or desires to have something": α (Propp 2003:35). Laura communicates her desire to become alive again. In the stage of "mediation" (Propp 2003:36): B⁴ ("misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched")/ "Misfortune is announced" (B⁴). Mr. Wednesday tells Shadow about the impending war and the search for allies. The "departure" (Propp 2003:39): ↑ is about the hero leaving home. Shadow leaves Eagle Point with Mr. Wednesday. The departure is followed by "the first function of the donor" (Propp 2003:39): D², where "the hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper"/ "The donor greets and interrogates the hero". Shadow meets Zorya Polunochnaya. This function is followed by the "hero's reaction" (Propp 2003:42): E¹, where the "hero reacts to the actions of the future donor/ the hero withstands (or does not withstand) a test" (E¹). It is represented in the novel by their nocturnal discussion. This function is followed by "provision or receipt of a magical agent" (Propp 2003:43): F¹ ("the hero acquires the use of a magical agent")/ "The agent is directly transferred". At this stage Shadow receives the Liberty dollar. The next stage is "spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance" (Propp 2003:50): G¹, where the "hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search". "The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated: K¹/ "The object of a search is seized by the use of force or cleverness" (K¹). In the novel this is featured by the multiple allies made along the way. The stage of "return" (Propp 2003:55): ↓ ("the hero returns"), applies in the case of Shadow for his period of residence in Lakeside without Mr. Wednesday. This stage is followed by the "unfounded claims" (Propp 2003:60): L, where "a false hero, presents unfounded claims". An offer to end the war without bloodshed results in the killing of Mr. Wednesday. The next stage is the "difficult task" (Propp 2003:60): M ("a difficult task is proposed to the hero"). The difficult task for Shadow is the vigil, which he promised to hold. After a task comes "the solution" (Propp 2003:62): N ("the task is resolved"). Shadow holds vigil, and dies on the tree. During his time on the tree, he discovers the truth about his parentage and Mr. Wednesday's scheme. Resurrected Shadow goes to the Lookout Mountain to stop the bloodbath, which leads to the "recognition" (Propp 2003:62): Q ("the hero is recognized"), as Odin's son. Shadow's speech leads to Mr. Wednesday plan's "exposure" (Propp 2003:62): Ex ("the false hero or villain is exposed"). This subsequently leads to his "punishment" (Propp 2003:63): U ("the villain is punished"). No death is dedicated to him in this stage, therefore he cannot resurrect. The overall structure appears as follows: α – β¹ – η¹ – θ¹ – A¹ – α – B⁴ – ↑ – D² – E¹ – F¹ – G¹ – K¹ – ↓ – L – M – N – Q – Ex – U, even though the scheme covers only the main plot points without covering multiple subplots. Not even all plot points are covered. Nevertheless, Propp's and Campbell's structures are flexible and adjustable to the purpose of their use. Neither of the authors pretends a definite answer for each stage, offering variants to choose from. As a result, one may claim that this analysis shows that Propp's method of analysis can be used for other types of narrative, in addition to wondertales.

6. Conclusions

According to Meletinsky (2000:303), "mythification...expresses the unlimited freedom of the contemporary artist vis-à-vis the traditional symbol system, which is no longer

a constricting force in modern thought”. Gaiman embraces and explores this myth/literature relationship, imagining a contemporary mythology of his own. Although he re-shapes and re-invents classical myths and combines them with legends, folktales and intertextual references in a postmodern blend, his mythology follows the classic structures of ancient myth and wondertale.

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Note on the author

Irina RAȚĂ currently is a PhD student in English literature at the University “Dunărea de Jos” of Galați. Her research interests are: poststructuralism, postmodernism, and genre theory.