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Transnational Perspectives on Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*

by

Elisha Schuett

Under the Direction of Christopher Kocela, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

ABSTRACT

Both comics studies and transnational literary studies have become increasingly popular in English departments over the past two decades. However, transnational studies and graphic narrative have only more recently crossed paths in academia. This transnational exploration of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* texts will closely examine two initial narrative arcs within the original 75 issues. After an initial inspection of the transnational properties inherent to graphic narrative and the idiosyncrasies of *Sandman*'s visual mode, this project will examine how the text's narrative and form reflect Stephen Clingman's grammatical construction of a transitive syntax of the self and Christian Moraru's cosmodernism, a Levinasian-based model for examining identity in a transnational context, while drawing similarities between the two transnational literary theories. Ultimately, this project aims to show how *Sandman*, a non-traditional text without explicit transnational themes, is fertile ground for many types of transnational treatments.

INDEX WORDS: Transnational, Graphic narrative, Ontology, Semiotics, Formalism, Globalism

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2022

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December 2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and my father, who have provided no end of emotional and practical support during my studies. Without them, I would be nothing.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. Kocela, Dr. Collins, and Dr. Thomas for their patience, advice, and support. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Schmidt for helping me believe I could complete this program and Dr. Snow for unveiling the fascinating world of grammar. Finally, I want to thank Todd Trulock for convincing me to pursue this project and Asia Meana for listening to all the early drafts of this thesis.

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PREFACE

I read few comics growing up. Of those I did read, my favorites were *X-Men* (mostly because of Wolverine) and *Calvin and Hobbes*, and while I collected every compilation of *Calvin and Hobbes* strips that Bill Watterson released, I never caught the comics collecting “bug” that so many other children both then and now seem to. I preferred fantasy novels to comics (and I preferred video games to reading). However, I often reread my *Calvin and Hobbes* collections, and I always felt a certain connection to them, and no matter what else I had been reading, be it Vonnegut, Dumas, or Conrad, the impact on me of the tales of a boy and his make-believe tiger never waned. In college, my English literature studies exposed me to more and more of the canon, but along the way, from the shelves of some of my friends, I read *Nausicaa* and *Akira*, and I was struck by how much more complex and fulfilling reading the manga was to watching the movies, even though *Nausicaa* and *Akira* were some of my favorite anime. I found Alan Moore’s *Watchmen*, Frank Miller’s *Dark Knight Returns*¹ and Grant Morrison’s *Arkham Asylum*¹, and their dark twists on the superhero genre impressed and fascinated me. Reading these narratives felt every bit as rewarding and complex as reading a word-based novel, but I still retained some sense that the “literature” I was reading in my undergraduate courses was somehow more valuable, more elevated. In school, I developed disparate interests, gravitating towards both Shakespeare and postmodern literature. I (eventually) graduated. Shortly after, sometime in 2013, a good friend mentioned that he had obtained the first five trade paperbacks of *Sandman*, a comics epic by Neil Gaiman, and asked if I’d like to read them. I had enjoyed Neil Gaiman’s work in the past. I had read *American Gods* and loved the movie adaptation of *Coraline*, so I took them and began reading. *Sandman* moved me. By the end, I felt as if I had

¹ *Arkham Asylum* was illustrated by Dave McKean, a long-time friend and collaborator of Neil Gaiman who created all 76 covers for *Sandman*.

read a fictionalized representation of what it is to be sentient and mortal, of “the dignity of a human being”² (Wertham 94). I experienced the sensation of having obtained a new and critical window through which I could look back into reality, a sensation I had typically only experienced with literature and other “serious” art. These perspectives were all somehow condensed into what for many years had been considered a debased form of literature or simplified version of word-based texts. Perhaps not so oddly, reading *Sandman* reminded me of reading *Calvin and Hobbes*, which I realized had also given me these perspectives, albeit with diegetic content more appropriate for children and young adults³. *Sandman* helped me see all the comics I had read in a new light, and this propelled me towards a graduate program in literature at Georgia State University, where I hoped to work with comics as complex literary texts.

Before Georgia State University accepted me as an MA candidate, I took two classes as a non-degree student. I had the faintest of hopes that, if accepted, I could do some kind of work on *Sandman*. This opportunity came sooner than I had thought, in my first course, Bibliography and Research Methods. I used *Sandman* as the subject of a bibliography of critical studies, and I was both surprised and encouraged to find over forty scholarly examinations of *Sandman*. Other academics seemed to have shared my experience with the story, and their examinations took

² I intentionally took this phrasing from Wertham’s *The Seduction of the Innocent*, a 1954 book which claimed that comics “led to illiteracy, juvenile delinquency, and sexual depravity” (Jacobs 26). Wertham wrote that “a natural scientist who had looked over comic books expressed this to me tersely, ‘In comic books life is worth nothing; there is no dignity of a human being’” (94). While these kinds of extreme views of comics have been long refuted and faded into the past, there is still a pervading notion, even among proponents of using comics as texts in English and Literature classes, that comics are “easier” to read than word-based texts, a notion that I will work to dispel using Dale Jacobs and Scott McCloud’s theories later in this work.

³ My view on *Calvin and Hobbes* as a critically rich text is not novel. For more scholarship on *Calvin and Hobbes*, see “‘A Gorgeous Waste’: Solitude in *Calvin and Hobbes* by Michelle Abate and “*Calvin and Hobbes*: Trinity, Authority, and Community” by Jonathan Edwards. Although it does not mention transnationality specifically, I would argue that Thomas Campbell’s “From Transmogrifier to Time Machine: Calvin’s Perspective on Murakami’s *IQ84*” is itself a transnational work. Within, Campbell transverses national boundaries by combining an examination of “Reality and Imagination” in *IQ84* with *Calvin and Hobbes*, arguing that “both Watterson and Murakami demand that we make room for the unexpected; that the ‘real’ world, where we rationalize and act, is at best an approximation; that Imagination and Reality intersect, combine, reflect, and renew one another” (119).

many avenues. The following Spring, I took a course on Transnational American fiction. The course readings included works by Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Don DeLillo, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Lan Cao, David Eggers, and Jamaica Kincaid. We read these narratives as artifacts and explorations of the transnational turn in American literature, using critical works by Paul Giles and Stephen Clingman as theoretical touchstones. As with most (probably all) graduate courses, I only came away with a rudimentary understanding of transnational theories of deterritorialization⁴ and a transitive grammar of identity, but the stories and theories captivated me. In a way both similar to and distinct from my experience of reading *Sandman*, I felt as if these theories had provided me a valuable window through which to look back at reality. After this class, I applied for and gained entry into the literary studies MA program, and in a class on the graphic novel⁵, I finally put these two “windows” together.

While in this graphic novel course, I chose to do my semester project, an annotated bibliography, on teaching transnational graphic narratives. While doing my research, I came upon a book entitled *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narrative*, a collection of essays edited by Denson, Meyer, and Stein. This became the critical cornerstone for my annotated bibliography, and my choices for texts in a transnational graphic narrative course included graphic narratives with explicit transnational content, such as GB Tran’s *Vietnamerica*, in which the transnational is “visualized in the proliferation of planes, bridges, and hybridized and

⁴ Paul Giles “[draws] on the idea of deterritorialization first broached in 1972 by the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their psychoanalytical work *Anti-Oedipus*, to describe the flows of desire that traverse the boundaries of distinct, separate territories” (Giles 46).

⁵ There is still a tension between the terms *comic* and *graphic novel*. In her book *Why Comics?*, Hilary Chute relays an interesting anecdote about Neil Gaiman in which a publisher told him “Oh, you don’t write *comics*, you write *graphic novels*.” Apparently, “Gaiman felt uncofrably, in his words, like a prostitute who had just been referred to as a ‘lady of the night’” (19). Chute has coined the term *graphic narrative*, because *graphic novel* “implies fiction, and much of today’s important book-length comics work is nonfiction...” (19). I will use these three terms interchangeably, although I believe it is important to acknowledge the nuances in their meanings. For more on the topic, see Hilary Chute and Marianne DeKoven’s introduction to the special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* on graphic narrative.

palimpsestic spaces throughout the text” (Hong 18); Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, a “wordless” migration story which “reduces words and letters to their pictorial basis... and highlights the semiotic problems that arise when entering alien spaces” (Groß 204); and Joe Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza*, which “becomes a kind of case study that stages the complexities of encounter across political and personal borders” and “[stages] the transnational encounter between the American and the Palestinian within Gaza” (Bartley 68-69). All of these graphic novels explicitly enact processes linked to transnationalism: decentering and complicating the boundaries of the nation, depicting the “endless process of comings and goings that create familial, cultural, linguistic and economic ties across national borders” (Fishkin 24) and attempting to “intervene against a culture of invisibility by taking the risk of representation” (Chute and DeKoven 772). I also included Giles’ “The Deterritorialization of American Literature,” the Introduction to Clingman’s *A Grammar of Identity*, and sections of Christian Moraru’s *Cosmodernism* (who was recommended to me by another professor) as additional theory readings for my “theoretical” class. During this process, many of the ideas that transnational critics developed and identified in literature reminded me of certain moments in *Sandman*. The more I read, the more I became certain that a thesis consisting of these transnational perspectives on select parts of *Sandman* was not only possible but would fulfill a gap in transnationally focused scholarship on graphic narratives which are not explicitly dealing in narratives about political and/or cultural movement, relations, and identity formation on a global scale (such as the aforementioned *Vietnamerica*, *The Arrival*, and *Footnotes in Gaza*). I am beyond pleased that my desire from years ago to do some work on *Sandman* has become a reality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sandman #1, “The Sleep of the Just,” was published in December 1988 and came out monthly until its end in March 1996 with *Sandman* #75, “The Tempest,” forming the main storyline of the Sandman universe in about two thousand pages of graphic narrative. The series won numerous comics, science fiction, and fantasy awards during its almost eight-year run; in 1991, *Sandman* #19, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” became the first and only monthly comic to win the World Fantasy Award for Best Short Fiction, and the first graphic narrative to win a literary prize of any kind. To date, the comic has sold over seven million copies, and besides the initial release of ten volumes of collected trade paperbacks, a five-volume *Absolute Sandman* was published from 2006-2011. Recolored editions of the paperbacks were released in 2010, and a thirtieth anniversary reprint of all ten paperbacks occurred in 2018. A four-volume annotated edition was released from 2012 to 2015, and a two-volume hardcover omnibus was released in 2019. In addition to the main run, Gaiman has returned to the series with *Overture*, *Endless Nights*, and *Dreamhunters*. In 2019, Gaiman hand-picked four teams of creators to expand the *Sandman Universe* with *The Dreaming*, *House of Whispers*, *Books of Magic*, and *Lucifer*. Netflix, with the help of Neil Gaiman, adapted the epic into a television series that released on 5 August 2022. In short, *Sandman* is one of the most popular and critically acclaimed graphic narratives of all time, and it has held readers’ imaginations for almost forty years.

Sandman and its subsequent narratives are, very broadly, about a being that is an anthropomorphic representation of dreams who rules over the places we all go when we sleep. In *The Sandman Companion*, Hy Bender concisely conveys the essence of the series:

The series tells about how this godlike being comes to question his past actions, and the consequences of that questioning; and the memorable characters he encounters along the

way. *Sandman* is also about peering beneath the surface of things, and recognizing the importance of dream, myth and the transcendent in our lives. And *Sandman* is about stories—where they come from and how they shape us. (2)

Sandman is truly a story about stories; it is dense, intertextual, and self-aware. As such, it has been the subject of many academic and popular articles and books. Scholars have analyzed how “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “The Tempest” construct the character of Shakespeare to show that “his image functions much as his plays do, at once apparently stable and yet completely malleable” (Castaldo 95); they have used *The Doll House* to “interrogate the role of the medium in narrative...and to unpack the relation between narrative media and the foundational narrative concept of the event” (Walsh 855); and they have shown how *Sandman* “becomes an important pedagogical artifact” by serving “as a paradigm of complex Butlerian theory, made accessible through the graphic novel medium” (Brisbin and Booth 21). Yet, no transnational scholarship on *Sandman* currently exists. My project will fill this gap in scholarship; I will show how texts from the *Sandman* series function as formal and material expressions of the transnational. Additionally, I will illustrate how Stephen Clingman and Christian Moraru’s transnational theories of identity formation can be applied to specific scenes and overarching themes in *Sandman* in order to contribute to the transnational project of reimagining the boundaries of national literature and personal identity.

This thesis will attempt to follow Denson *et al*’s call in *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narrative* to not only explore “the transnational dynamics that have come to shape contemporary forms of graphic storytelling at the crossroads of culture” (2) but to frame an exploration of *Sandman* on transnational “questions of identity and citizenship [as] both crucial and vexed, since these subjects [question] the legitimacy of the nation-state while also

reinforcing its ability to endow rights” (Grewal 11). The goal of a transnational perspective is not the ultimate ideological destruction of the nation-state, and in literature and comics studies, “a transnational approach does not aim to replace or render superfluous the study of comics in national and international frameworks” (Denson et al 2-3). In fact, all transnational studies are indebted to previous studies of narratives “according to their local variations, in relation to the nationally and regionally defined shapes and forms they assume around the world, and in terms of the particular cultural and political work they perform in specific national contexts” (3).

However, any transnational examination should problematize the nation as a discrete and unified entity, especially when it is considered as foundational to identity, and ascertain if the proximity brought about by globalization effaces or augments difference and diversity (because for the transnationalist, difference is necessary for a healthy world). In other words, the singular should be “rendered internally multiple” and externally contiguous as “traces of exchange are discovered *within*, and not merely *between*, national cultures, traditions, and identities.” Put simply, I will attempt to tease out transnational themes in *Sandman*, which to date has not been considered diegetically transnational. I will begin with an examination of the transnational affordances of the graphic narrative form and the way in which *Sandman* in particular harnesses the visual mode before moving on to the diegetic content of *Sandman*. I will predominately use two transnational theorists, Christian Moraru and Stephen Clingman, as touchstones for lifting the transnational from *Sandman*, and along the way, I will attempt to show how their theories, one based on Levinasian ontology and the other on Chomskyan linguistics, intersect.

Reading a comic involves “volatile core processes” which possess a transnational “propensity toward various acts of border-crossing, adaptation, and reimagination” due to their multimodal form (Denson 272). Although it might not always be realized or taken advantage of,

there are many similarities between the operations which a transnational perspective attempts to enact and the ways in which a reader turns discrete, multimodal panels into a continuous narrative. In this section, I will give an overview of the foundational comics theories of Scott McCloud and Dale Jacobs in order to enact my own explanation of the transnational affordances embedded within the comics form in general, finishing with a specific look at how *Sandman*'s use of the visual mode further aligns with Clingman's grammar of identity.

The last two chapters of this thesis will attempt to reframe *Sandman* in a transnational context by connecting two transnational theorists to each other and to the diegetic content of select narrative arcs from the main run. A fluidity across borders, or boundaries, and "intricate interdependencies" are critical pieces of Stephen Clingman's transnational approach, which seeks "a new way to understand the complexities of identity and location..." (6). Clingman believes that transnational fiction, a "grammar of identity," and the "nature of the boundary" are all linked together by navigation; according to Clingman, transnational fiction uses structures of time and space to convey "transitivities and boundaries, transitivities that exist only *because of* the boundaries" (10). In *Cosmodernism*, Christian Moraru uses a Levinasian ontological approach to establish "an *imaginary modality* of mapping out today's world as a cultural geography of relationality;... a *protocol of subjectivity formation*; an *ethical imperative*...; and a *critical algorithm*" for assessing post-1989 narratives and theories into a coherent model (5-6). Moraru sees transnational identity formation as an environment of continual acknowledgement of and being with an *other*, antithetical to the Heideggerian singularity which sees the *other* only as an object of self-definition and conversion. Ultimately, my goal will be to show how *Sandman*, as a piece of literature created during what many scholars have dubbed "the

transnational turn,” is fertile ground for the representation and testing of contemporary transnational theory.

2 TRANSNATIONAL FORM

The *Sandman* main run tells a web-like story which (often but not always) centers around Dream of the Endless. Many critical works on *Sandman* choose a single thematic thread to unravel from the larger narrative tapestry,⁶ while others zoom in even further, harnessing the density of the text to explore extremely abstract and esoteric concepts.⁷ Like all narratives, Gaiman’s *Sandman* represents what Arjun Appadurai calls an “imagined world,” which is “constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (296-297). Gaiman’s “imagined world,” however, explicitly encompasses many other literary, cultural, and historical “worlds,” most notably those that make up our fables, myths, and metaphysical spaces, many of which in turn help constitute and perpetuate the “imagined communities” that are nation-states. If exploring the relations “between the ‘imagined worlds’ of graphic narratives...and the ‘imagined communities’ that, in Benedict Anderson’s famous analysis, constitute the basis of nationhood as an iterable, and hence transnationally articulated mode of being” is one of the main functions of applying transnational perspectives to graphic narrative, then *Sandman*’s broad and largely unique setting makes it a simultaneously productive and puzzling one for this endeavor, since the “imagined world” of *Sandman* implicitly includes all of the “imagined communities” which Anderson refers to⁸ (Denson et al 5). For instance, the

⁶ Prime examples include Anna Castaldo’s essay “‘No More Yielding Than a Dream’: The Construction of Shakespeare in the *Sandman*” and Brisbin and Booth’s “‘The Sand/Wo/Man: The Unstable Worlds of Gender in Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* Series.”

⁷ Most notably Richard Walsh’s “The Narrative Imagination Across Media,” in which he uses a single page from issue no. 15, “Into the Night,” from *The Doll’s House* to examine “the role of the medium in narrative... in order to arrive at a view of narrative as a cognitive faculty” (855).

⁸ This is a common situation throughout Neil Gaiman’s fiction. Although categorized as a fantasy author, almost all of his work is grounded in the “real world” which we physically inhabit.

very first issue alone depicts moments in Canada, Jamaica, France, London, East Sussex, and the metaphysical realm of *The Dreaming*. The series in general includes settings and characters not only from all over the globe, but from across the “imagined worlds” (folktales, myths, and literature) that the “imagined communities” (nations and cultural groups) of the real-world use to differentiate themselves from one another. Before this all begins to seem like rabbit holes within rabbit holes, perhaps it would be prudent to focus on a narrower avenue of tackling a transnational perspective on the main run of the *Sandman* series: the graphic narrative form.

As I stated earlier, this examination of *Sandman* through various transnational lenses evolved from a hopeful desire into a plausible project when I found Denson, Myer, and Stein’s collection of essays, *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives*. Within its opening pages, they call on comics scholars and transnational scholars to (put it very simply) start paying attention to each other’s critical works and texts⁹. This petition proposes many different paths of exploration, but perhaps the most fundamental (and yet also complex and theoretical) of them all is the consideration of a distinctly transnational *affordance* within the graphic narrative form.¹⁰ According to Denson et al, the graphic narrative medium possesses a potential that “enables, facilitates, or perhaps even encourages the transcendence of limitations imposed by the nation, by culture, and by language” (5). Derek Parker Royal similarly claims that graphic narrative transcends “many of the national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries imposed by other media” (x). If, as these writers seem to suggest, a transnational affordance is built into the comics form,

⁹ Although, as Denson et al posit, “the increasingly transnational field of American literary and cultural studies” has shown an “overall neglect of graphic narratives” in contrast to the “relative dearth of transnational investigations of graphic narratives in the growing field of comics studies” (1).

¹⁰ I use the term *affordance* from Caroline Levine’s introduction to her book *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Within, she claims that “forms are at work everywhere” and that literary scholars should expand “our usual definition of form...to include patterns of sociopolitical experience,” which will cause “the traditionally troubling gap between the form of the literary text and its content and context [to dissolve].” She borrows the term *affordance* from design theory “to describe the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs.”

then comics come *formally* equipped with all the movement, hybridities, liminalities, and boundary crossings that transnational and cosmopolitan scholarship identifies in linguistic-only texts. This transnational affordance of graphic narrative is (like so much critical work on comics) based largely upon two foundational comics theory concepts: the process of closure developed in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, the seminal¹¹ formal exploration of the comics medium, and the consideration of comics as multimodal texts, most notably developed by Dale Jacobs in multiple essays and *Graphic Encounters*.¹²

In the groundbreaking and oft-cited comic about comics *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud examines “the art-form of comics, what its’s capable of, how it works” (Introduction). He begins by “setting the record straight” (Contents), creating a new definition of comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (9) before going on to establish a vocabulary with which to critically discuss comics. He addresses and defines icons, cartoons, abstraction, non-visual awareness, the picture plane, and many other concepts that all contribute to our understanding of how we make meaning when reading comics, demonstrating how they function together under the umbrella of “visual iconography.” McCloud establishes another word, *gutters*, for the spaces between panels. McCloud demonstrates how comics panels present readers with fractured units of time and space which readers must actively negotiate through a process called closure, which he defines as the “phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (63). Closure and iconography are essential to how McCloud believes we make meaning as we

¹¹ Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, while universally acclaimed, has come under (appropriate) criticism by other comics scholars. Most notably, Dylan Horrocks' "Inventing Comics: Scott McCloud's Definition of Comics" examines McCloud's work as "a powerful piece of polemic" rather than the "simple, disinterested scientific argument" which many comics scholars treat it as. Horrocks' essay is an important look at what McCloud's definition of comics says about what "the comics community value most, and least, about comics."

¹² For more on comics as multimodal texts, see Hilary Chute's "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative," Kathryn Comer's "Illustrating Praxis," and Janine Morris' "Multimodal Literacies and Graphic Memoir."

read comics, claiming that “if visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics, closure is its grammar” (67). Although implicit in this theoretical explanation of how comics make meaning, McCloud never mentions multiple modes of meaning by name. Before looking at the *Sandman* itself, one more short detour is necessary: the multimodal nature of the graphic narrative form.

In the introduction to his book *Graphic Encounters: Comics and the Sponsorship of Multimodal Literacy*, Dale Jacobs establishes how comics function as multimodal texts, requiring the reader to engage with patterns of interconnectedness between six modes of design: the linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, spatial, and multimodal. When examining graphic narrative, “the key... lies in going beyond the way we make meaning from the words alone and considering visual, gestural, and spatial elements” (14). For Jacobs (and for anyone attempting scholarly work with graphic narrative), this marks a shift from reading and viewing comics as “a debased form of print literacy” to a “complex environment for the negotiation of meaning” (7-9). In comics, the visual mode consists of “use of line and white space, shading, perspective, distance, depth of field, and composition” (which also includes the shading/style of the words/balloons); the gestural mode refers to the expressions and postures of the characters on the page; the spatial mode, for comics, encompasses “the layout of panels on the page and the relation between these panels through the use of gutter space” (14). The audio mode in comics manifests from a combination of the visual and linguistic modes. Finally, according to the New London Group, the multimodal is the “patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other,” or the connective network that describes how the other modes combine to create the “complex environment” of meaning making that are comics, and it is this understanding of comics that produces a link to the transnational (7).

Within the complex environment of multimodal texts, “structure and agency interact so that we are influenced by design conventions and grammars as we read, but we are not determined by them” and reading comics (and all multimodal texts) “contributes to the ongoing process of becoming a multimodally literate person” (Jacobs 17). This shift away from privileging linguistic monomodal texts over multimodal texts parallels the shift in literary studies from viewing America and American literature as an exceptional and “discrete entity [to] a porous network...continually modified by local input, local inflections” (Dimock 3). Furthermore, the process of reading comics that Jacobs and McCloud describe echoes certain transnational theories of national and personal identity formation. For instance, the formation of meaning in comics comes from constant navigation of several contiguous semiotic modes, many times *within* a single unit called the panel. The reader must process each mode within each panel in order to produce a single unit of meaning, which, depending on the panel, could convey a single moment or an indefinite amount of time. Then, the reader must connect that panel to the next panel on the page, stringing panels to form a sequential pattern which produces the narrative. In the words of Scott McCloud, “comics panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments. But closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality” (67). Meanwhile, the reader does not simply see each panel in sequence and then recursively “construct a continuous, unified reality,” but also has access to every other panel on the page *simultaneously*, “thus enabling connections between contiguous and distant images” (Denson 281). This process “depends crucially on interactions, exchanges, and movements” (Denson 271) across the boundary that is the gutter in between panels, much like the formation of the transitive self in Clingman’s *The Grammar of Identity* “is a function of, and permits, *navigation*,” due to its capacity for “many

phases and possibilities, connected elements, both within itself and in relation to others, in time as well as space” (16).

It is important here to understand the basics of Clingman’s transnational “grammar of identity,” which “proceeds from three concepts: the idea of transnational fiction; the grammar of identity; the nature of the boundary,” all connected by “the idea of navigation” (6). Although Clingman claims that “what makes fiction transnational are questions of *form*,” he does not necessarily mean the form in sense which I am exploring here with graphic narrative and its multiple modes. Instead, he argues that the grammar of identity which transnational fiction employs is concerned with a transitive “syntax of the self,” which must be combinatory rather than substitutive, and is therefore metonymic rather than metaphorical. In metonymy, meaning (or metonymic identity, in Clingman’s assertion) is “arrived at through a series of associations taking us along a metonymic chain of *difference* in, through and because of contiguity” (15). This version of identity is combinatory and transitive, guarding against both “definitions of identity which are *substitutive*, especially where such substitutions flatten out and congeal all difference into singularity” and “*representation*... where the definition of identity claims to represent the sole and absolute possibilities of the self.” Therefore, writers of transnational fiction follow not only “the *space* (direct or more distant) of encounter and combination within and between selves,” but also do so in time. Even within the span of a single sentence, the self is changed by the act of thinking, which takes *time*, so that “along the journey of a sentence something may have happened to the identity,” and “this happens not only in specific moments, but over the course of a lifetime” (16). Finally, Clingman sees these combinatory and transitive possibilities as a function of navigation, which “occurs not despite but because of the boundary,” and because navigation brings together both meaning and movement, “the self and the world

outside the self,” all of these ideas are linked. For the transnational, this implies that “what matters is not whether boundaries exist, either within the nation or around it, but what kind of boundaries they are” (24). Transnationalism, seen this way, can be either “good” or “bad,” depending on whether it “claims singularity in the realm of identity..., intransitive versions of time and space...,” or “absolute decrees on meaning and truth.” This lead Clingman to his most important argument about the boundary of the transnational, that it “does not mean crossing or having crossed” but “*being in the space of crossing*” (24-25).

So, Clingman’s metonymic, “transitive syntax” of the self would not be the “emergent seriality” on a single page in a comic, but more likely the seriality created by the “passage from one issue of a comic book series to next” which creates a “diegetic universe” out of, at their smallest units of meaning, multimodal panels. In the process of reading a graphic narrative, readers must navigate the text in a way that is distinct from a word-only text. They must navigate the boundaries between the different modes within a panel, navigate the gutters between the panels *while simultaneously* navigating their access to every panel on the page, and finally, as is the case with a seventy-five-issue comic like *Sandman*, they must navigate across each issue, combining all the multimodal narrative elements from each to create a “diegetic universe.”

This becomes even more complicated in the case of *Sandman*, in which the “diegetic universe” includes not only a plethora of spin-offs and a prequel, but also a drastically changing visual representation of not only Dream, but every single location and character based on the artist that is illustrating a particular issue. Over twenty-seven different penciller and inker teams worked on the *Sandman*’s main run, *The Dream Hunters*, and *Overture*. By Neil Gaiman’s intention, each of these artist teams approached the visual mode differently, creating drastically different art styles from one narrative arc to the next. While it is not unusual for many serialized

comic books to switch creative teams, this usually occurs after the completion of a narrative run. *Sandman* is one of a very few serialized comics that kept the same writer for every issue of its run (until the new *Sandman Universe* spinoffs). Furthermore, unlike many other long-running serialized comics, *Sandman*'s diegetic universe does not contain any "retcons" or narrative inconstancies, meaning that the ever-changing visual mode is an intentional aspect of the series' "diegetic identity." Unlike other series, in which the changes in the visual mode can be substituted for one another based on the existence of multiple diegetic universes, *Sandman* readers must combine multiple visual representations of a character or place without substituting one for the other. Instead, they must *combine* each visual representation, producing the kind of transitive syntax of identity for the entire series that Clingman describes as transnational. Readers of comics, especially serialized comics and *Sandman* in particular, must always be "in the space of crossing" the myriad transitive boundaries that make up the comics form. While this examination of the changing visual mode in *Sandman* might seem like a *crossing* of a boundary between form and diegetic content... perhaps it is. This, however, is an example of how the boundaries between form and content in graphic narratives are porous, another parallel to Clingman's theory of the transnational. Attempts at cleverness aside, the time has come to move on to examining the explicitly diegetic content of *Sandman*.

3 THE SLEEPERS

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the story of the original seventy-five issues of *Sandman* is like a complex web that winds and spirals around a central character. The larger pattern of the overarching narrative only fully reveals itself when the reader has completed the last issue, "The Tempest," in which Dream treats William Shakespeare to a cup of wine and conversation as a reward for completing *The Tempest*, written because Dream *desired* "a tale of

graceful ends... about a King who drowns his books, and breaks his staff, and leaves his kingdom” (*The Wake* 181). While there are many landing spots throughout the narrative of the main run salient to transnational themes, this examination will only focus on sections from the first few issues. I have briefly shown how the formal properties of graphic narrative promote a transnational affordance where “imagined geographies are constructed [and] challenged” by the “intersection of visual and verbal forms that define narration itself as a series of transgressions, moving from panel to panel, violating the borders of individual images, and crossing the expanse of the gutter” (Denson et al 6). Now it is high time to move beyond this kind of purely formal examination. Although necessary and integral to all examinations of graphic narrative texts, this formal avenue of inquiry does not, on its own, sufficiently address the “complex transactions” of the “transnational proliferations” found within *Sandman*’s pages. Form must be married with thematic relevance. *Sandman* offers us many moments when form and content come together to negotiate national and cultural identities and their (imaginary) boundaries. The first such instance of transnational content occurs within the pages of issue # 1.

In the opening issue of *Sandman*, “Sleep of the Just,” Royal Museum curator John Hathaway arrives in Wych Cross, England in 1916 and delivers a grimoire to the occultist Roderick Burgess, which contains the ritual necessary to summon and bind Death so that “no one need ever die again” (Gaiman 2.5). The ritual mistakenly captures Dream instead, and when he awakens, “Burgess demands immortality, power, and a pledge against revenge as a condition for the Sandman’s release; but dream refuses to even acknowledge Burgess’s existence” and spends the next seventy-two years in silence imprisoned in Burgess’s basement (Bender 28). Dream’s imprisonment causes a sleeping sickness that affects many people throughout the world. Roderick eventually grows old and dies, and his son Alex becomes Magus of the Order of

Ancient Mysteries and continues to maintain Dream's prison. In 1988, a now-aged Alex mistakenly erases a small part of the magic circle imprisoning Dream's incorporeal aspect with his wheelchair, and the Sandman escapes, ending the global sleepy sickness. The issue ends with Dream visiting Alex in his dreams and condemning him to "eternal waking," a nightmare from which Alex will perpetually believe he's woken up, only to find that he's still dreaming. While this first issue is packed with literary allusions and mythic connections,¹³ the most obvious site for a transnational reading is the global sleeping sickness caused by Dream's capture and long absence from his realm and its effect on four individuals scattered around the world.

Before Roderick Burgess and his occult order use the Magdalene Grimoire to (unintentionally) imprison Dream, Gaiman introduces four (seemingly) minor characters, each in a different location on the globe, across four panels on page three. Each panel visually depicts a character in similar positions (lying or reclined in some way) and introduces them linguistically through narrative captions¹⁴ made to look like tattered and yellowing parchment or paper.¹⁵ These similarities are, I believe, intentional and will be unpacked after a short description of each individual panel. In the first panel, a young girl lies in bed while a woman (presumably her

¹³ These include Lewis Carroll, Dennis Wheatley, C.S. Lewis, Aleister Crowley, and a diverse set of occult, Biblical, and other religious myths.

¹⁴ Forceville et al make a distinction between tailed balloons, parabolonic phenomena, and "other sources of verbal information": captions and diegetic, non-balloonic verbal inscription as part of pictures (65-66). Captions "convey the discourse of an agency at a different narrative level; that of a narrator that is not a character in the story world." Forceville et al do highlight an important nuance: that some captions suggest "a degree of emotional involvement on the non-diegetic narrator's part." I will also add another fold to this discussion. In *Sandman*, Gaiman occasionally reveals that the narrative captions are actually Destiny reading from his book. Furthermore, just a few pages later in "Sleep of the Just" when Burgess carries out the ritual, Dridenberg uses the same form of narrative captions to convey the voice of Burgess speaking *off panel*. He differentiates these diegetic captions from the (perhaps) non-diegetic captions by coloring them the same white as the rounded speech balloons. These examples blur the line between diegetic and non-diegetic narrators in a way that Denson et al would likely claim *illustrate* how "the internal functioning of the medium is not so different, formally, from its external imbrications in transnational exchanges" (6).

¹⁵ Forceville et al name this form "protruding edges," although this style encompasses a wide range of specific shapes in which "there are protrusions in one or more directions, possibly forming sub-balloons or connected balloons; the balloon is non-rounded; or there are more or less than four angular protrusions; and/or there is no tail; or more than one tail" (59-60). It often is used in horror and adventure comics to convey the sense of reading off of an old manuscript or scroll.

mother) reads to her from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* by the light of a single candle.¹⁶ The narrative captions name the girl Ellie Marsten and place the panel's scene in Toronto, Canada. They also tell us that although Ellie knows the story "is only meant to entertain her," it instead "terrifies her" (3.1)¹⁷. In the second panel, Daniel Bustamonte sleeps under a table unbothered by the "shouts and songs of drunken adults" in Kingston, Jamaica (3.2). The third panel depicts a frightened soldier in Verdun, France named Stefan Wasserman, his eyes wide and white under the shadow of his helmet as he waits to go "over the top again" (3.3). The last panel reveals a dark bedroom in London, England, where "Unity Kincaid tosses between linen sheets" (3.4). The four panels are stacked on top of one another in the center of the page, which is a full-page illustration of a section of wrought-iron fence with two brick pillars on either side. Behind the fence, the Burgess manor sits unlit beneath an inky and star filled night sky. On the following page, the reader sees that the house may be unlit, but it is not asleep, as the Order prepares to begin the ritual to capture Death.

In both form and content, Gaiman creates from these panels a "porous network" of "criss-crossing pathways" through layers of similarity and difference (Dimock 3). These function narratively to represent a global phenomenon, but they, again in form *and* content, also suggest the beginnings of Moraru's "ecology," a system of global representation which is "deeply correlative" and "acknowledges and thrives on others' presence and stories" (50). It is important to define Moraru's distinct usage of *ecology*, which he most broadly describes as "cultural

¹⁶ Gaiman makes use of this kind of "diegetic, non balloonic verbal inscription as part of pictures" often and they typically come in the form of literary references (Forceville et al 66). They are often integral cogs in the thematic workings of the many narratives at play in *Sandman*.

¹⁷ Comics scholars have not come to a consensus on how to cite pages and panels. For my work, when I need to differentiate between different panels on the same page, I will put the page first, followed by a period, followed by the panel in sequential order: (*page number.panel number*).

ecology” (49). Moraru’s cosmodernism flows from a Levinasian ontology¹⁸, which he sees as an ethical departure from Heidegger’s *Da-sein*. According to Moraru, “Heideggerian Being” is “self-centered and self-centering,” a “self-referencing presence” which, when applied to the world, creates/ed “linking setups and strategies that, under the guise of progress, predicate their sociocultural, economic, and geopolitical arrangements on serialization of ‘alien,’ ‘foreign,’ or ‘exotic’ singularities and thus damage cultural environments” (48-49). Moraru describes this ontological environment as an *egology*. Contrastingly, Moraru builds his concept of *ecology* as “an effort to found comprehension, representation, and behavior... on ‘conversational’ commerce with an other, on the face to face as a pre-face to understanding” where the “self turns to an other not to convert that other, or him- or herself for that matter, but *in order to be*” and ultimately does not “merge into a single subjectivity” (49)¹⁹.

Throughout “Sleep of the Just,” Gaiman uses these characters as exemplars of how Dream’s capture affects the waking world, and in doing so, creates what Dimock would call a “subset,” a unit of literary representation that is “able to stand provisionally and do analytic work, but not self-contained, not fully sovereign, resting continually and nontrivially on a platform more robust and more extensive” (4). In the introduction to *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, Wai Chee Dimock calls for a rethinking of “the adequacy of a nation-based paradigm” (2). She promotes the study of American literature as a

¹⁸ While I make an argument for a transnational reading of *Sandman* through Moraru’s Levinas-inspired *Cosmodernism*, Lacan serves as an obvious theoretical pairing for a narrative about dreams. While I was reading Moraru, I could not help but feel a connection between it and some of Lacan’s writings on psychoanalysis. Apparently, I am not alone in this connection. For a fascinating account of the “ethical terrain between Levinasian phenomenology and Lacanian psychoanalysis,” see *Between Levinas and Lacan: Self, Other, Ethics* by Mari Ruti (vii).

¹⁹ Importantly, while Moraru does not “ignore natural habitat... the environments [he] is scouting are by and large cultural.” A cosmodern critique of an egological global environment “is ecological not because it features nature, although it often does, but because it challenges the egotistic penchant of late globalization” (50). Although an environmental reading of *Sandman* would be interesting, this examination will mostly follow a cosmodern ecological critique.

subset to a “planetary” set, writing that “the nation has solid borders; the field, on the other hand, is fluid and amorphous, shaped and reshaped by emerging forces, by ‘intricate interdependencies’ between ‘the near and far’” (3). Dimock claims that “a language of set and subset, in short, allows us to ‘modularize’ the world into smaller entities: able to stand provisionally and do analytic work, but not self-contained, not fully sovereign, resting continually and nontrivially on a platform more robust and more extensive.” Dimock is addressing the place of American Literature and American Studies as a subset within the broader context of a global set, and she states that “what we nominate as ‘American literature’ is simply an effect of that nomination,” and its transposition will cause it to “change also... going up or down” on “scales of aggregation” (5). Furthermore, viewing American Literature in this way shows how “it can be folded back into a large continuum from which it has only been momentarily set apart” by using “recursive structures and processes” (4) She concludes that for the subset of American literature to work within this kind of “reversible hierarchy,” the larger set “would have to rest on a platform broader and more empirical than the relatively arbitrary and demonstrably ephemeral borders of the nation. They require alternate geographies, alternate histories” (5). This “platform” in *Sandman* is not always made up of the nation-state (although, at times, national and cultural identity looms large and becomes central to a character or storyline) and not only made up of human and economic movement (although the narrative does deal in these types of motions as well) but a shared imagined space and community represented by the Dreaming and other realms of the Endless, what Dimock might call “alternate geographies, alternate histories.”

I am appropriating Dimock’s language of set and subset here because I believe that these four characters and *Sandman* as a whole (and perhaps, as Denson *et al* imply in *Transnational*

Perspectives on Graphic Narratives and I attempted to show in the previous chapter, all comics as a form) serve as both set and subset to larger and smaller aggregates of transnational thought and examination. Furthermore, through multimodal interactions between spatial layout and visual similarities and differences and the effects these semiotic modes have on the reading process, both mechanically and diegetically, the characters and the readers actively participate in the kind of flexible, recursive structures and processes that Dimock finds so necessary to this kind of transnational project. As I will later explore in this section, Daniel's dreams of a castle in the clouds evoke the Maroon peoples and the Jamaican national hero Nanny, and the sections of *Through the Looking Glass* speak to the process of subjective identity formation of the self and its reliance on an *other*. "Provisionally" placing these characters and their diegetic and non-diegetic associations on the "platform" of the Dreaming allows for a literary examination of cultures (such as the Jamaican Maroons) and their historical intricacies and interactions alongside ontological theories of *being with*. Christian Moraru, who uses Levinas to arrive at a way of reading and thinking about texts which he dubs *cosmodernism*, and Stephen Clingmann, who attempts to define the transnational in literature in terms of a grammar of identity, will serve as theoretical touchstones for examining this opening salvo of narratives that make up the beginning of *Sandman*. Some close reading is necessary to show how these (seemingly) ancillary characters which appear in the first of seventy-five issues of *Sandman* reveal the extent to which the text not only deals in the nature of subjectivity but also begins to suggest an ethical sense of shared responsibility between and among individual subjects, cultures, and the world.

Returning to page three of "Sleep of the Just," the spatial placement of the four panels depicting each geographically disparate character creates a totem of connected moments. The reader must experience them spatially as separate and therefore disconnected in real time, but the

linguistic mode links them in narrative time. The (for now) non-diegetic narrative captions state that each panel occurs at some time on the night on June 10th, 1916²⁰. The linguistic mode further links the panels by telling the reader that each scene has to do with sleep or dreaming in some way. Ellie “listens to her bedtime story.” Daniel “sleeps” and the raucous noises of an inn’s common area “do not shake his slumber” as “he dreams of a castle in the air.” Stefan “never dreamed” that war would be so terrible. Unity also “dreams... lost in a world beyond her understanding.” The stark differences between some of the characters’ situations in the panels are enfolded into their connection. Ellie is in a bed next to her mother listening to a story, but she is terrified. In her panel, the reader is given this information through the linguistic mode, but we also see this terror conveyed through the visual mode on her face, her mouth open and her eyes popping. Stefan exists in a very different situation. He sits in a trench on the Western front, and although the captions do not notify the reader of his fear, his eyes are drawn like Ellie’s: haunted and wide. Stefan and Ellie sit upright in matching poses in almost the exact same location within their respective panels, a little to the left of center, heads facing toward the reader and ever so slightly to the right. Both characters are too scared to sleep. Unity and Daniel not only dream different dreams but do so in disparate conditions and sleep with contrasting quality. The linguistic mode paints Daniel’s surroundings as loud and bawdy, full of “shouts and songs of drunken adults.” The visual mode suggests that Unity sleeps in a quiet bedroom by herself, and yet, the captions tell us that Unity “tosses between linen sheets” and “mutters and whimpers” as a result of her dreams of “a tall, dark man” whose “eyes burn like twin stars.” This differs from Daniel, whose smile reinforces that not only do his boisterous surroundings “not shake his

²⁰ This means that they all do not necessarily occur at the *exact* same moment. The Kingston and Toronto panels could very well be happening at the exact same moment, as both locations are within the Eastern Standard Time zone. Similarly, the scenes in Verdun and London could be occurring at the exact same moment, as Verdun is in the Central European Standard Time zone, which is only one hour ahead of London’s Greenwich Mean Time zone.

slumber,” but his dreams of “a castle made of clouds” bring him happiness. Each of these pairs are also, obviously, of different genders. These connections and differences do not stay static but continue to evolve and change as the issue progresses, and when viewed together as a representational unit (which Gaiman invites through their constant spatial and narrative grouping), they suggest a construction of identity similar to Clingman’s grammar of identity, in that each character’s identity depends upon the navigation across multiple boundaries (the non-diegetic boundary of the gutter, the diegetic national lines and physical space separating them, and the time separating them from each other and from their iterative selves) and the combination of certain aspects of their situations.

These characters and their lives are all altered when Roderick Burgess captures Dream, but as we can see from the preceding analysis, Gaiman creates a (sub)set from them long before he ties them together through the sleeping sickness that results from Dream’s capture. While Gaiman continues to develop Ellie, Daniel, Stefan, and Unity’s interconnectivity through a range of multimodal signifiers, at this juncture of the narrative he has already made an important implication concerning the transnational. Like many transnational scholars, Gaiman acknowledges how national and cultural identities, and therefore literatures, especially western literatures, are “fluid and amorphous, shaped and reshaped by emerging forces, by ‘intricate interdependencies’ between ‘the near and far’” (Dimock 3). His acknowledgement occurs not only by narratively weaving the (seemingly secondary) stories of Ellie, Daniel, Stefan, and Unity into the prime plot but also through threading their stories together with both form and content. This representation of the transnational through the “the near and far” grows, simultaneously crystalizing and questioning itself, but also qualitatively changes as the story of the main run

progresses, increasingly suggesting how the nature of subjectivity and identity formation runs along transnational vectors.

As the main plot of “Sleep of the Just” develops, so too does the transnational (sub)set of Ellie, Daniel, Stefan, and Unity. On June 11th, Roderick Burgess commences his ritual to capture Death but instead, mistakenly captures a weakened Dream. Burgess imprisons Dream’s incorporeal form in a spell circle, while his material aspect is trapped by a crystal cell. Presumably at the same instant of Dream’s capture, Gaiman swings the narrative back to the four transnational characters, this time across two pages, allowing the reader to take in all of the character’s panels without a page break (which was also the case in the totem construction from their first appearance). This time, each character gets three equally sized panels which are set up in a standard left to right, top to bottom reading pattern. In the first of three panels at the top of page ten, Ellie has fallen asleep in a chair while reading *Through the Looking Glass*. In the next panel (which is conspicuously un-bordered) her father carries her to bed (which we know from the narrative caption). In the third panel, we see her back asleep in her bed, heavy shadows cast from a single candle. The caption states that “she never woke up.” Below Ellie’s panels, Daniel is depicted in “his best dream,” climbing, naked, toward the castle made of clouds. In the second panel, the castle turns into wisps and smudges, and Daniel falls toward the bottom of the panel (which, like panel four and two on this page, is also without a border). In his final panel, Daniel sits upright in a dark room, “too scared to sleep.” On page eleven, panel one, Stefan sits shell-shocked in a medical tent while exasperated doctors look on. In the next panel, the reader learns that Stefan has not been sleeping, and that morphine has not helped. His final panel on the page shows Stefan’s face filling the panel. He is sweating and terrified. He has gone “over the top” mentally now as well as physically. On the fourth panel, we see a similar “shot” of Unity’s face,

but she is peacefully sleeping. In each of the following two panels, the “shot” gets closer, zooming in on her lips. She sleeps “for almost twenty hours a day” without dreaming. Now, she “lies unmoving, breath shallow and silent, lost to the world.”

After Dream’s capture, new parallels and patterns emerge among the four. Stefan is no longer just scared to sleep; he is physically unable. This inability to sleep is now connected to Daniel, who, like Ellie before the ritual, is “too scared to sleep,” rather than Ellie, who enters a continuous rabbit hole of sleep. Ellie’s sleep state now reflects Unity’s, but Ellie’s transformation now mirrors Daniels; they have flipped. Ellie and Daniel are also formally connected, as some of their panels bleed into one another without borders. Unity and Stefan both keep their previous states (waking Stefan and sleeping Unity), and they are further linked by an augmentation of their persisting states. Stefan has gone too far “over the top,” and where Unity “used to dream, to shift in her sleep, muttering and sighing” and “lost in a word beyond her understanding,” she instead now “lies unmoving, breath shallow and silent, lost to the world.” In this way, Unity and Daniel are alike. They both lost their dreams.

During the next seventy-two years, the effects of Dream’s imprisonment have further effects on the world that we see through Daniel, Stefan, Ellie, and Unity. In *Sandman*, the Dreaming is both infinite and bounded on all sides, and it is both a metaphysical idea and a realm to which all sentient beings go when they sleep. The Dreaming both affects and is affected by humans and their dreams. Without the Dream Lord to maintain this realm, humans are subjected to the sleepy sickness, which manifests differently for every person, although the captions within an expositional panel on page fourteen of “Sleep of the Just” tells us that “people fell asleep, and did not wake up... they lived their lives like sleepwalkers; eating if fed, sometimes talking nonsense, dream stuff” (14.4) This expositional panel sits within and over a portion of a lower

panel, which depicts a toppled and ragged wooden cross with Stefan Wasserman's name engraved upon it, his death year 1918. The captions inform the reader that "unable to sleep, Stefan Wasserman killed himself a year after his discharge from the army. He was sixteen" (14.5). Stefan's formal separation mirrors his mortal separation from the other three in the (sub)set. Their next appearance comes four pages later in the year 1939. Each character only has one panel this time, and the captions tell more than just their current moment. Ellie lives in a charity ward and has only awakened twice in the last decade, each time believing she was still eight. We learn that, despite losing his dream of the castle in the sky, Daniel stayed awake for another ten years before he succumbed to the sickness, leaving behind a wife and child in the waking world. Unity has slept the whole time. She was raped in 1932 and gave birth to a baby girl, all without ever waking up²¹.

By this point in the story, Dream's separation from the Dreaming has had overtly disastrous consequences on Daniel, Ellie, Unity and Stefan, who function as a subset of the consequences being visited on the world by Dream's absence. However, the global nature of the sleeping sickness does not serve as the sole platform upon which this representational subset stands. Rather, it is paralleled by and bound up in the effects of two world wars and a global recession. Gaiman appropriates history to lend both pathos and ethos to his narrative; the world-shifting events of the early 20th century double as further symptoms of the Dream Lord's capture. When taken along with the formal and narrative intersections among this subset of characters,

²¹ As readers learn in *The Doll's House*, Unity Kincaid was destined to become a "dream vortex," an anomaly that "destroys the barriers between the dreaming minds" and leads to great destruction in both the waking world and the Dreaming, but instead, as a result of this rape, her granddaughter Rose Walker inherited the vortex ("Lost Hearts" 5). Gaiman develops this rape and birth into a full narrative arc in *The Doll's House*, which in turn becomes central to the climax of *Sandman*. Although I will explore the dream vortex as another representation of transnational identity formation in a later section of this chapter, it is interesting to note here how the recursive process of ascribing new meaning to earlier events in the narrative within a long-run, serialized format fits into the "recursive structures and processes" that Dimock describes in *Shades of the Planet* (5).

this connection to *actual* history implies a heightened transnational awareness *of* that history as dependent on difference and combination. The sleeping sickness acts as an effective, if blunt, connective tool. Stefan is a casualty of the global alliances between various nation-states, his death in the trenches of World War I's western front a symbol of the violence of the pre-neoliberal global system. From this perspective, the global structure during this period of history is easily containable and explicable. However, the sleeping sickness impels us to read past this view and to consider lives not *directly* impacted by this global structure as, instead, *intrinsically tied* to not only Stefan, but the nation-states involved in World War I and every other life affected by Dream's capture.

For the reader, these characters' stories and identities coalesce as a result of their formal and diegetic "dialogue with [one another]" (Moraru 57). However, it is important to note that while the reader's understanding of each character as a subject relies on a kind of other-other collocation, the *characters themselves* are not diegetically living with an "implied obligation toward [one a]nother" (Moraru 56) nor "becoming [themselves] under the gaze of the 'Other'" (Bertens 172) or "making the immense effort to *know* [themselves] in [their] own embeddedness, not as object of [their] own unique gaze" (Reiss 67). While they function as a representation of a transnational (and distinctly *cosmodern*, according to Moraru) structure, they do so unknowingly. They are operating as objects of the readers gaze, who may use this privileged perspective to consider their own subjective interdependency... or not²². This "or not" created by seeing these characters through Moraru's theories becomes an "and yet" when coupled with Clingman's more grammatical approach to transnational subjectivity. Even if readers (or the characters

²² And if not, then readers should perhaps heed Moraru, who writes that "... others generally open up the world to us. This world awaits us, yet we never take possession of it directly, without assistance, or mediation... we are ushered into it by others and their words, images, and books, and if we are not...we ought to be" (204).

themselves) do not consider their own subjective interdependency, they witness within this issue a metonymic formulation of identity that “allows for... combinations and transitions...” and “guards against definitions of identity which are *substitutive...*” and as well as *representational*. (Clingman 15). The *combination* of these characters, formally and narratively, does not result in a flattening or congealing of their individual identities, nor do they become representational of the “sole and absolute possibilities of [each respective] self” (15). Every interlude from the main plot with the remaining trio of international characters contains formal and narrative elements that both challenge and depend upon the geographical distances and (imaginary) national boundaries separating them, creating the “dialogue” among them that is so important to Moraru’s cosmodernism as well as the metonymic *combination* that is so central to Clingman’s grammatical approach to “a transitive version of identity.”

Returning to 1939 on page eighteen, Gaiman continues to utilize formal and narrative connections among the sleepers in order to add impact to the overarching story. Spatially, the three panels, one centering on each of the characters, form a triptych of sorts. Within each panel of this “triptych,” visual and gestural components heighten the interplay between the sleepers. Daniel sleeps slightly upright and facing the reader straight on, while on either side, Ellie and Unity lie with their faces in profile, facing toward each other and Daniel. The characters, though asleep, are gazing at each other, and although this gaze perhaps falls short of the above-mentioned *diegetic* process of “becoming” *with* an Other, it subtly suggests this process to the reader. Their sleeping expressions are all the same: peaceful, almost perfectly neutral. The panels depict each of their rooms slightly askew, as if tilted. The linguistic mode also ties the characters together. The narrative captions in each of the panels not only update the reader on the sleepers’ conditions but also convey some link to each characters’ family. Ellie cries out for her mother

whenever she wakes, Daniel's wife and children miss him, and Unity gives birth to daughter without ever waking up. These similarities generate important connections among the characters that heighten their individual stories as well as their group story. Taken together with their earlier scenes, a transitive version of identity for the sleepers begins to form, where the connections do not "override or negate difference within [each character] or in relation to [one another]" but instead contribute to the production of distinct subjects *and* narratives (Clingman 15). Each panel captures a form of tragedy and horror bound up in family but unique to each character. Ellie has woken twice but as an eight-year-old trapped in an adult body, crying out for a family she no longer has. Daniel resisted the sickness for years and started a family, only to lose them when he finally succumbs. Perhaps most horrendous, Unity unwittingly and unwillingly has a daughter from rape. The horror of these individual stories adds to the impact of the global sleeping sickness and therefore to Dream's circumference and centrality, but they also build each sleepers' identity as well.

In addition to the sleepers, this page includes a nod to the golden-era Sandman, Wesley Dodds. I do not believe that this inclusion is *only* fan service (although it most certainly is that) but also another way to further add to each of the sleeper's identities and stories. Dodds first appeared in April 1939 in "New York World's Fair Comics #1" and was created by Gardner Fox and Bert Christman, so the character actually predates Gaiman's Sandman. Gaiman keeps the basic premise of the character intact; Dodds begins having nightmares that impel him to fight evil, so he creates the Sandman identity and begins going out at night and "puts evil people to sleep with gas, then sprinkles sand on them, leaves them for the police to find in the morning" ("Sleep of the Just" 18.5). Gaiman changes the content of Dodds' dreams and the adds a new reason for their occurrence. According to Gaiman's version, "the universe knows someone is

missing, and slowly it attempts to replace him” (18.4), and instead of having nightmares of criminals enacting violent crimes, Dodds sees “the man in the strange helmet” with “burning eyes” (18.6). By using the same language to describe Dodds and Unity’s dreams of Morpheus, Gaiman invites a comparison between the two, and therefore, the sleeper subset of characters. While Dodds can act in order to dispel his bad dreams, the sleepers are helpless; while “Dodds sleeps the sleep of the just,” Unity is raped without ever waking (18.6). Dodds has agency over his situation; the sleepers do not. More importantly than this contrast, the inclusion of Dodds in this way adds another fold to the interdependence between Morpheus and all the characters in this issue. Gaiman introduces an important idea that continues throughout the series; “the universe” itself has agency. However, while the source of this agency and its composition are not made clear at this point, Gaiman slowly reveals and reinforces over the course of *Sandman* that this agency comes from the sentient beings of the universe... including each of the sleepers that have been presented as having been stripped of theirs. As Dream reminds Desire in “Lost Hearts,” (an issue from *The Dolls House* which I will return to later as another interesting site for applying Clingman and Moraru’s theories) the Endless “are the servants of the living—we are not their masters. We exist because they know, deep in their hearts, that we exist.... We do not manipulate them. If anything, they manipulate us” (21.2-3). Seen this way, the sleepers retain their subjectivity instead of existing as objects of the effects of Dream’s (in)actions. Additionally, this construction reflects and will continue to reflect as the first issue progresses Clingman’s “transitive syntax of the self,” which requires combination and navigation both within each self and among others “not only in specific moments, but over the course of a lifetime, involving subtle tremors of the self as much as it does conscious thought” (16).

In 1955, we see slight changes in each of the three's conditions. Page twenty begins with a panel showing Roderick Burgess' grave, his death occurring in 1947, the epitaph reads "not dead, only sleeping" ("Sleep of the Just" 20.1). This page inverts our first introduction to the four sleepers. Instead of Roderick's monumental estate in Wych Cross holding up and bounding the character's totem of panels, his gravestone instead sits on top of and is supported by the halted lives of Ellie, Daniel, and Unity, all now in their forties. By her surroundings, Ellie still sleeps away her life in a medical ward. The caption states that she has been "diagnosed as suffering from encephalitis lethargia" (20.2). We are told that she wakes up "four or five times a year" and that "she wants a story read to her." Daniel, on the other hand, "is awake much of the time," but never speaks, and is depicted in the third panel sitting with his back to a fence in an alley in Kingston, the sun about to rise. In the next panel, which is on the bottom left corner of the page and longer vertically than horizontally in order to allow the sun to rise, we read in the captions that "something died inside him a long time ago. A castle made of clouds" (20.4). Next to this, two panels depicting Unity resume the horizontal layout of the rest of the page, slightly condensed from the previous vertical panel. In the two panels, Unity is wheeled around a nursing home in a wheelchair. When her parents died, her estate executors decided to put her there. She wakes up occasionally, but never remembers where she is. Ellie and Daniel's spatial positioning cause them to be facing each other, and all three characters faces are tilted downward, as if they are looking to the next person in the following panel. In the fourth and fifth panels, Daniel and Unity seem to be leaning against each other's backs, separated only by the gutter between the panels. Again, the characters' spatial arrangements tie them together formally, and these ties bring their similarities and differences into relief. They are all still suffering from the sleeping sickness in some way, conveyed visually by their parallel positioning. And yet, they are still

developing along different paths. Ellie is more and more a child, still stuck in the moment when the sleeping sickness still took her, still needing a story to comfort her. Daniel has become “a zombie, a walking dead man” (23.4). What has died, however, is a dream, a dream that has transnational implications, as I will later address. Unity has taken on the characteristics of one far beyond her age. She has been moved to a nursing home, surrounded by the elderly who “wait for death, as they’d wait for an old friend” (20.6). Unity’s memory loss calls to mind the effects of dementia or Alzheimer’s. Even this far into being debilitated by effects of Dream’s capture, the sleeper’s continue to develop.

Gaiman gives another short glimpse into the three’s lives in 1968. This is the first time that the transnational trio’s story has spatially touched Dream’s. The page opens with two panes depicting the lessened way in which Alex Burgess, Roderick’s son, carries on The Order. Then, in three small panels, we see Ellie, Daniel, and Unity, respectively, and on the bottom right-hand corner of the page, sits a circular panel, depicting the first-person perspective of Dream as he sits in his spherical crystalline prison. Ellie has been transferred to a hospital specializing in treating encephalitis cases. She is surrounded by “people for whom the sands of time stopped flowing” (23.3) Daniel continues to sleepwalk through life, moving “slowly, like a man wading through quicksand” (23.4). While Daniel lives in a kind of false waking, “the nursing home staff pretend that Unity is awake” (23.5). Daniel and Unity are both trapped in a kind of false waking. Their conditions, however, change drastically the next time they appear.

In 1988, a now elderly Alex Burgess accidentally rubs away some of the magical circle containing Dream’s incorporeal form, allowing Dream to slip into one of Alex’s guard’s dreams and ultimately escape his confinement and end the sleepy sickness. Dream’s return to his own realm causes all those afflicted by the sickness to begin waking up. Ellie wakes up quoting from

Through the Looking Glass, the book that she fell asleep to 72 years before. In Daniel's three panels, one boy is showing Daniel off to another, telling him that Daniel "can't talk. 'E's crazy" (33.4). Daniel speaks for the first time in years: "No. Not anymore" (33.5). The caption in Unity's first panel informs us that "Unity Kincaid comes to herself again" (33.7). She immediately remembers the baby taken from her during her long sleep. As each character wakes up, a perspective zoom occurs across each of the characters' three panels. Ellie's first panel shows a close up of her face as she opens her eyes for the first time in seven decades, and in each of the two following panels, the perspective zooms out, showing her in a hall full of other patients waking up. Panel three (Ellie's last) and panel four (Daniel's first on this page) each have a similarly posed figure in the lower right corner of the panel. In the fourth panel, this figure is Daniel, and the next panel shifts the perspective to show his face straight on, followed by a zoom in in the fifth panel, ending in an almost identical pose as Ellie's in the first panel. Unity sits in her wheelchair in profile in each of the last three panels, and each panel brings the reader closer in until the third panel, where a single teardrop can be seen falling from her now open eye. For the first time since their splash page, Ellie, Daniel, and Unity's panels take up an entire page. Also, for the first time since their splash page, their panels are equal in size, and for the first time in the issue, they are set in the "standard" configuration: nine panels, all equal sized, read from left to right and top to bottom... all except the first panel, which covers a very small portion of the top part of panel four. The "totem" layout of page three allowed Gaiman to convey a sense of connection among four disparate moments, and while this page creates a similar temporal connection, the standard page layout allows each moment to take up more visual space rather than relying on the linguistic mode. This new *width* allows for further spatial, gestural, and visual metonymic combinations both *within* each individual character as well as

between them. Furthermore, the spatial placement of the “totem” of panels as above Roderick Burgess’ mansion and bounded by the mansion’s fencing creates a visual implication of the characters’ narrative dependency; they are only important in so far as they show the effects of Roderick’s actions. The panels on page thirty-three could still be viewed as a totem, especially because the characters appear in the same spatial configuration (from top to bottom: Elli, Daniel, and Unity), the reduced height of the totem representing Stefan’s death. This totem, however, fits the page, and this spatial arrangement, when compared to page three, implies that the remaining characters are not only finally free from their narrative connection to Roderick and Alex Burgess, but from their *position* as exemplars of the effects of Dream’s capture on the world as well²³. The formal mechanisms of these panels create connections between characters across boundaries made up of oceans, national borders, time, and the gutters of the page. The narrative aspects cap each characters’ story (at least for this issue), each arc augmented by one another’s. Gaiman and Dridenberg have harnessed the formal and narrative ability of comics to “[transcend] the limitations imposed by the nation, by culture, and by language” (Shane et al 5) in order to introduce the reader to the connective nature of the Dreaming. The Dreaming (and perhaps each realm of the Endless) acts as a connective network that binds all the characters of *Sandman* together, and I will argue in the following section that this network reflects important aspects of both Clingman and Moraru’s requirements for transnational literature.

²³ As I will explore in a later section, this is not strictly true for Unity, whose life (and the life of her granddaughter) are inextricably tied to Morpheus and the Dreaming.

4 THE DREAMING

The Dreaming, in this specific case dramatized through the sleeping sickness, acts as a global “network of interconnections and interdependences” that Ellie, Daniel, Stefan, and Unity are subject to, but the result is not a “planetary flattening” into “commonality” (Moraru 46-47). Instead, each of the character’s cultural and personal idiosyncrasies retain their importance and create a “communality,” a “flexible-we community” (22) in which the characters’ differences are as important to the narrative and to their identities as their similarities and in which their very “being with” each other (not only on the page and in the reader’s minds but also through the connective network of the Dreaming) becomes mutually defining. All of this, however, might seem like a reach. At a glance, none of the characters are nationally or culturally identified outside of their first appearance, when a caption conveys their locations. Furthermore, they are asleep for much of their lives, seemingly limiting their personal development. However, Gaiman embeds subtle hints into the narrative about each character’s identity which, by applying Clingman’s metonymic syntax of the self, produce a cosmodern (cultural) ecosystem which is represented in *Sandman* by the Dreaming.

Before moving on to readings of Daniel and Ellie, I want to make explicit the implied connection the previous sentence makes between Clingman’s syntax of the self and Moraru’s cosmodern ecology. The metonymic process of identity formation within each sleeper extends out, by virtue of the contiguities between the characters created by both the affordances of the graphic narrative form and the diegetic network that is the Dreaming through which the sleeping sickness spreads, and, at least in this case, connects the characters to each other and to Dream, engendering a global relational ecosystem “where we all must be with others in order to be” (Moraru 56). In each of the following readings, I will use a symbol or allusion as the genesis for

demonstrating the construction of this ecosystem. For Daniel, this relies on using a symbol to reveal an identity built upon a nationally specific yet “internally multiple” cultural past and examining the repercussions of losing access to this identity. This loss of access leads us to Ellie’s allusion, which I will explore as a negotiation of the fears and anxieties associated with living in an “either or” ecology rather than an “and with” ecology, *and* this is where I see a pairing of Moraru’s cosmoderism *with* Clignman’s grammar of identity.

Moraru explains that his conception of a cosmodern ecology can be viewed grammatically. Our current global culture is certainly conjunctive in that we “are now closer to one another, in each other’s face.... We surely are ‘and’ as others alongside us are too” (56). However, Moraru is suspicious that this “‘and’ talk papers over rifts and hypotactic relations of a new sort” in which the reductive tendencies of an “either/or” relationship between the self and the other become more powerful precisely because of their heightened proximity (57). Only by being truly “with” an Other can we “recognize their actual otherness and right to be part—*as such*, as other to us as we are to them—of the paratactic and-structure of the world” (56) and, perhaps most importantly for subjectivity formation, “I must be with him or her in order to be” (58). Cosmodernism advocates for adding the prepositional to the conjunctive in order to arrive an understanding of the “late-global universe” as a place “that more and more demands collaborative effort” with others as “[partners] of equal footing, of fairness, empathy, and care” rather than “as [assistants] or optional [additions] to what [the self] already [does] or [is]” (58). Importantly, and leading into Clignman, Moraru claims that this construction guards against “singularity” because it “actively and continuously” (53) “draws together separateness” to create a “difference-loaded proximity” (55). As is evident in the title of his book, Clignman’s conception of the transnational is *intrinsically* grammatical. Basing his construction of identity

on a metonymic syntax “requires division” and is “arrived at through a series of associations taking us along a metonymic chain of *difference* in, through and because of contiguity” (15).

While Moraru focuses more explicitly on the philosophical than the linguistic²⁴, they each set up theories that are descriptive (in how they view the post-Cold War world) and generative (in how they advocate for a specific “protocol of subjectivity formation” and “ethical imperative”). Both the descriptive and generative rely on continuous navigation across boundaries within the self and between selves which results in identities, collective and individual, which are combinatory and forever in the process of (navigating) formation. So, while I will use Clingman’s transitive syntax of the self in order to view the Dreaming as a connective network that reflects a cosmodern ecology, it should be clearly stated that the relationship between the two paradigms (if any, although I believe I have shown one up to this point) is not of one leading to the other. With that said, we can move on to Daniel’s symbol: a castle made of clouds above blue mountains.

Daniel’s dream of “a castle in the air above the blue mountains” is much more than a stereotypical fantasy for a child; it is an important part of Daniel’s identity, an artifact deeply embedded with personal and cultural meaning (“Sleep of the Just” 3). To most readers (and admittedly, to myself when I first read *Sandman*), the “blue mountains” in Daniel’s dream holds no special significance beyond colorful description. However, according to the *Annotated Sandman*, this description refers to a specific mountain range, the Blue Mountains of eastern Jamaica, and Gaiman constructed the image of a castle made of clouds above these mountains as a reference to Nanny Town and the Windward Maroons. While the *Annotated Sandman* does no

²⁴ Where Moraru bases *Cosmodernism* on a Levinasian ontology, Clingman bases *The Grammar of Identity* on Chomsky’s exploration of the faculty of language as both broad and narrow, where he concludes that “recursion— itself an adaptive capacity allowing an endless variety of thoughts—evolved for reasons other than communication,” specifically navigation (Clingman 19).

more than highlight this superficial allusion, a deeper dive into this seemingly innocuous and unimportant (at least to the main narrative arc) reference reveals much about the transnational threads that Gaiman weaves (perhaps unwittingly) within *Sandman*.

The Blue Mountains are an important geographical site to Jamaica's cultural and economic history. Ranging 30 miles through the eastern portion of the island, the Blue Mountains, along with the John Crow mountains, form the Blue and John Crow Mountains national park and were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015. UNESCO cited "their biodiversity and for their role in Jamaica's history as a place of shelter and settlement for escaping Taino slaves and Maroons" in their reasoning for this designation ("Blue Mountains"). In broad terms, the Jamaican Maroons²⁵ were Spanish slaves of African descent who escaped and formed their own society to preserve their freedom. However, this simple description belies a deep complexity within the Maroon culture. Maroons "were hybrid communities, made up of multiple African ethnicities" that "evolved under warlike conditions" (Choppra 3). The Maroons actually preceded the English arrival in Jamaica, as they were brought to the island by the Spanish during the early 17th century. When the British defeated the Spanish and took control of the island, the Maroons, already settled in their own mountainous communities, pushed back against the white settlers and "proved an elusive and expensive nuisance to Jamaica's expanding elite" (16). They enacted raids on white settlements and accepted runaway slaves, further growing their own communities while creating unrest within the slave population. These violent interactions between British colonizers and the Maroons culminated in the First Maroon War (1728-1740), in which the disparate Maroon communities waged largely isolated guerilla

²⁵ The name Maroon comes from the Spanish word "cimarron," which means "wild" or "untamed."

campaigns against British colonial troops. It was during this time that Nanny, one of the leaders of the Windward Maroons²⁶, came to prominence.

Nanny is a mythic figure in Jamaican history, shrouded in mystery and legend, known more through oral traditions than written histories. Although her birthplace and early life is unknown, the Jamaican Information Service claims that she was most likely born in Ghana in the late 17th century and forcibly brought to Jamaica by Spanish slavers²⁷. According to Joseph J. Williams, who wrote a history of the Maroons in 1938, Nanny was Ashanti, an Akan ethnic group from modern-day Ghana that formed the Ashanti empire in the 1670s (Tuelon 20-21)²⁸. Regardless of her origins, many historical accounts agree that by 1720, she had become the leader and “obeah woman” of Nanny Town, a Windward Maroon community located in the heart of the Blue Mountains. Almost all historical accounts of Nanny paint her as a shrewd tactician and inspirational leader who was committed to freedom from any colonizers. She led her people through victory and defeat and was one of the last leaders to sign a peace treaty with the British at the end of the First Maroon War. She is the only Maroon person to be honored by the Jamaican government as a National Hero. Jamaican legend says that she had many supernatural powers. According to Tuelon, Nanny “kept a huge cauldron ‘Nanny’s Pot, which boiled without the aid of fire” and “was also attributed with the ability to catch the bullets of the soldiers with

²⁶ The Jamaican Maroons are historically split into the Leeward and Windward Maroons. The Leeward Maroons settled on the western part of the island, while the Windward Maroons settled on the eastern side. I will make further distinctions about these designations shortly, but for a more comprehensive examination of Jamaican Maroon history and culture, see *True-Born Maroons* by Kenneth M. Bilby.

²⁷ This story is still largely contested by many academics. According to the National Library of Jamaica and Varena Shepherd, Professor at the University of the West Indies, Nanny was a free woman who came to Jamaica from Ghana to witness what had become of those that had been enslaved and sold to European slave traders. For more on Nanny, see the documentary film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* and the book *The Mother of Us All* by Karla Lewis Gottlieb.

²⁸ Although many of the Jamaican Maroons were Ashanti and the Akan language and culture had a large impact on the Maroons, their language and culture was a mixture of many African ethnic groups due to the constant influx of more runaway slaves from the plantations.

her posterior and hurl them back at her assailants” (21). Whatever the truth of Nanny’s historical existence, it is most likely these fantastical stories and the enduring legend of Nanny that impelled Gaiman to include her in his notes when writing Daniel’s dream. She is, however, but one small part of the Maroon history.

This history, especially the history of the Maroons, is distinctly transnational, a site of multiple nations and cultures clashing and producing new identities and nations as a result. The Ashanti people were brought across the Atlantic by the Spanish, whom they originally revolted against in the Clarendon parish of Jamaica and from whom they received their new moniker. These first Maroons built an identity against the Spanish population (themselves transplants), but they also incorporated the indigenous Taino²⁹ and other African cultures into a hybrid culture. When the British conquered Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, the Maroons served as a symbol of freedom to the slaves of the British. Eventually, after years of rebellion against and conflict with the British Jamaicans, the Maroons became identified as either the Leeward Maroons, the Maroons on the western and central parts of the island who had rebelled against the British, and the Windward Maroons, made up of the communities on the eastern end of the island that had originally rebelled against the Spanish. Even these two subdivisions of the Maroons are not wholly accurate, however. There were six separate Maroon communities in Jamaica by the end of the First Maroon War in 1793, and separate peace treaties had to be signed with each of the six Maroon communities, further highlighting the many internal cultural identities masked by the singular moniker Maroon. Each community held a different blend of African and Taino peoples,

²⁹ The Taino were the predominate indigenous peoples of Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. At the time of Columbus’ arrival, they numbered one or two million and possessed complex social, religious, political, and cultural systems. Although “colonial narratives attesting to the absolute decimation” of the Taino has “created stagnant understandings of indigeneity” and “entrenched misconceptions about the disappearance of Jamaica’s native Taino population,” a growing movement to reconstruct Taino histories and gain political acknowledgement by scholars and community leaders in recent years has led to new understandings and narratives of the Taino people (Haile).

and so each community represents a unique crucible of culture and language. Perhaps even more salient to a transnational perspective on Daniel's intricate tapestry of identity is the story of the Trelawny Town Maroons. After a failed uprising against the Jamaican planters in 1796, over 550 runaway slaves and their descendants were forcibly deported to the North Atlantic colony of Nova Scotia. Then in 1800, due to the "attention of abolitionist evangelicals" from London who "deemed the Trelawney Town Maroons to be 'helpless and injured' subjects in need of rescue," the Maroons were resettled as a "group of free black families" in Sierra Leone (Choppra 2-3). Over the course of one hundred and fifty years, these transplanted African and indigenous Taino slaves had forged a hybrid culture based on the desire for freedom against the British and Spanish planters and on their movement from coastal plantations into the mountainous interior of the island, only to be uprooted again at the whims of colonial Jamaicans back to Africa. The Maroons today are a truly global culture, every disparate community able to trace a line back to some Caribbean culture, and from there to any of many African origins. All of this is Daniel's heritage in the form of a castle made of clouds above a blue mountain.

The insertion of these histories into Daniel's dream through a single symbolic image has interesting transnational implications for both the character and the Dreaming. The castle in the clouds represents many layers of identity and character development for Daniel. The dream is an obvious source of comfort for Daniel, a refuge from the raucous world that surrounds him in his waking life, as is evidenced by his smile as he sleeps under a table on filled sacks next to a broken bottle of alcohol amidst "the shouts and songs of drunken adults" ("Sleep of the Just" 3). The castle is his safe place, and the placement of the Blue Mountains as the base which undergirds the clouds of the castle grounds Daniel's sense of safety firmly in Jamaican cultural history, specifically the history of the Maroons and both their violent rejection of Spanish and

British colonialism and slavery for self-determination. This history is contested³⁰, and in regard to Nanny, involves a hybrid, transnational historical/mythical figure who represents spiritual wisdom and strength, tactical brilliance, and self-agency. By applying Clingman's metonymic "syntax of the self," Daniel's identity can be viewed as bound up in all of these intricate historical and cultural interactions through a chain of combinatory contiguity, tethered to him by the simple but brimming symbol of a castle in the clouds above blue mountains. When Daniel's dream is ripped from him, so too are all the historical and cultural foundations that were so important to his very being, and this implies that the Dreaming is fundamental to Daniel's, and every sentient being's, identity. Although he does not know it, Daniel's connection with himself is dependent on the continued functioning of the Dreaming, which was disrupted when Burgess captured Dream. This represents a change from a transitive boundary to a prohibitive boundary and incorporating an allusion from Ellie's story will help me illustrate this point.

Ellie Marsten listens to *Through the Looking Glass* in her first appearance on page four, and while this is relevant to the theme of dreams, the section that is being read and which she continues seventy years later when she wakes up also expresses not only the anxieties of *being* but also the anxieties of being *with* in the cosmodern sense. The diegetic reading of the book

³⁰ My previous sentence should perhaps read "...their violent rejection of *and eventual complicity with...*" The image of the Maroons as the ultimate freedom fighters against European colonialism is one of the main aspects of Maroon contested historical identity. The Moore Town Maroons not only sided with the British colonial government in suppressing the rebellion but also captured its leader, Paul Bogle (who was later named as a Jamaican National Hero next to Windward Maroon Nanny). Although they "had fought the British to a standstill and won treaties recognizing their freedom and right to govern themselves" in 1739, they had since "collaborated (to varying degrees) with the colonial government, serving as a military force that helped to quell a number of slave insurrections on coastal plantations, and at times offering their services as trackers of runaway slaves" (Bilby 42). According to colonial records, Moore Town and Charles Town Maroons owned slaves, although according to Amy Johnson, "Freedom fighting...and bondage...are not mutually exclusive," and "the 'slaveholders' of Charles Town and Moore Town functioned as a middle ground between a 'society with slaves' and a 'slave society'" (275-276). Furthermore, according to Mimi Sheller, the Morant Bay uprising goes "beyond the typical Black-vs-White framing" and instead should be viewed with "a more multi-sided emphasis on cross-racial and cross-class alliances, the politics of social justice, the social construction of race, and the opposition within the imperial global economy" (202).

within the panel on page four is Tweedledum saying that “you’re only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you’re not real.” This “terrifies” Ellie, and her terror becomes manifest when she falls asleep *as a result of* another being’s capture. Dream’s capture and separation from the Dreaming (and the Dreaming’s subsequent and subsequently depicted decay) could easily be read as a kind of awakening, and in this reading, Ellie and Dream take on a similar relationship to Alice and the Red King. When Ellie awakens from the sleepy sickness seven decades later, her first words are the passage immediately preceding the one read to her by her mother: “... ‘why, you’re only a sort of thing in his dream! If that there King was to wake,’ added Tweedledum, ‘you’d go out... bang!... just like a candle!’” A simple Ellie to Alice and Dream to Red King analogy, seen *from* the lens (or looking glass, if you will) of Carrol’s novella and taken *with* a cosmodern perspective would imply that Ellie (and all the world and sentient beings in it) must exist *with* and at the mercy *of* Morpheus.

The moment of Dream’s capture reflects few signs of reciprocity in the waking world. In “Sleep of the Just,” the sleeping sickness begins the second that Roderic Burgess captures Dream. However, not all people fall asleep or, like Daniel, lose their dreams. Once Alex Burgess accidentally rubs away some of the magical circle imprisoning Morpheus, it is within one of the guards’ dreams (of a beach in Majorca) that he finds the means of his escape: sand from the beach. Morpheus grabs a handful, plays dead, and when the guards unlock the glass sphere to investigate, he puts them to sleep with the sand. This means that Morpheus can take things from people dreams and manifest them in the physical world. However, there is no evidence up to this point that any other being can do this. The sleeping sickness implies that we are dependent on a free and functioning Dream in order to continue to dream, and in some cases, as I demonstrated with Daniel, retain the metonymic chains of association from which we construct transitive and

(in Clingman's opinion, at least) healthy and ethical identities. Although Dream is weakened from his long capture, he does not wither away completely, and he retains enough strength to give Alex the "gift" of eternal waking. In "Sleep of the Just," the transitive syntax of self that Daniel embodies only goes one way, backwards within himself. Ellie's fears are justified; as soon as Morpheus is incapacitated, she and all those affected by the sleeping sickness "go out... just like a candle!" Morpheus does not seem to rely on the dreamers in order to *be him-self*. This lack of reciprocity sets up a one-way relationship, one that reflects an egology more than a ecology, to return to Moraru's cosmodern terms. In this way, the more obvious criticism that *Sandman* makes in terms of global systems and relationality is hardly novel; the powerful and wealthy (and predominantly white and male), here represented by Dream and, to a lesser extent, Burgess, use global systems of interconnectedness for their own gains at the expense of those who cannot harness such systems. However, as Gaiman reveals more about the nature of the Dreaming, the more an ecological construction of global relationality surfaces.

In issue #2, "Imperfect Hosts," Gaiman hints (and confirms in deeper detail throughout the main run) that the connection between Dream, the Dreaming, and all dreamers is, indeed, reciprocal. As Lucien, head librarian of the Dreaming, tells Morpheus on his return to his realm, Dream is "the incarnation of this dreamtime..." and with Dream gone, "the place began to decay, began to crumble..." (13.6). Later in the issue, Morpheus claims that "the Dreamworld, the Dreamtime, the Unconscious³¹—call it what you will—is as much part of me as I am part of it," before readers see him shape the dreamworld around him in order to summon "the one who

³¹ As I mentioned in an earlier footnote, a psychoanalytic reading of *Sandman* is an obvious route for critical work on the text. However, a less obvious but connected path would be a pairing of Walsh's ideas of narrative as a cognitive faculty with Calvin Thomas' *semiotic materialism*, which is the idea that "any human reality, and any individual subject thereof, must be made out of *language* as a specifically 'antinatural'—unreal or 'antireal'—form of productive labor (Thomas xiii). Reading *Sandman* as an argument for narrative/language as necessary to and generative of human reality would be productive work, as would acknowledging *Sandman*'s explicit inclusion of animals as capable of this kind of narration of the self (which runs contrary to Thomas' thesis).

is three, the we who are they, the Hecateae³²” (17-18). However, he does not simply create anything. Instead, he must find the symbols he needs to summon Atropos, Clotho, and Lachesis from the dreams of humans. In a set of borderless panels on page 18, all of the symbols necessary for the meeting are illustrated in a kind of collage. Narrative captions in Morpheus’ voice gives their origins:

The Crossroads comes from a Cambodian farmer, from his dreams of a new ox cart. The Gallows comes from a young Japanese movie buff, her head roiling from the surfeit of old Hammer horror films. The Honey, the Snakes, the Crescent Moon, all these are easy to find. A Black She-Lamb is more difficult, but one dances in the dreams of a child in Adelaide, Australia. (18)

Dream relies on the dreamers to create the symbols that he requires to summon the Three. Unlike in “Sleep of the Just,” Gaiman travels to the Eastern hemisphere for this issue’s dream(er)s.

Not only are the crossroads, the gallows, and the black lamb prophetic for Dream (he is, though he does not realize it at this time, at a crossroads, and the road he chooses will send him, ultimately, to his own death, which will serve as a sacrifice to save his realm), but they, together, represent a transnational interdependency. Dream’s work and well-being, as we know from the first issue and come to know more and more from each subsequent issue, is tied inextricably to the wellbeing of every dreaming entity on the globe (this includes cats and even cities in subsequent issues). Dream and the Dreaming are part of each other, and the Dreaming both

³² Throughout the series, Gaiman melds the Hecateae with many other mythical (and real) female trios. For instance, on page eighteen, he refers to the three as Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, otherwise known in the Greek Pantheon as The Fates, personified by the poet Hesiod as three old women who weaved and cut the threads of human lives. One of the three refers to themselves as Morrigan, who is an Irish goddess of death, specifically the foretelling of death (20). On the same panel, another tells Morpheus that he “might as well call us Tisiphone, Alecto, and Magaera,” who are the roman goddesses of vengeance (an aspect that the three return as in the Kindly Ones). Finally, the last of the three names themselves Diana, Mary, and Florence... The Supremes. The Hecateae are another site of the transnational, a subset that blends and, in blending, deconstructs the nationally-aligned identities of these myths.

affects and is affected by all dreamers. Although Dream is currently on a personal quest to regain his lost object of power, the quest's outcome has extraordinary implications for the waking world³³. In this instance, Morpheus must rely on the dreams of a trio of unnamed dreamers from Cambodia, Japan, and Australia.

The objects he appropriates from their dreams, particularly the gallows from the Japanese woman and the lamb from the child in Adelaide, are not only symbolic of Morpheus' future and of the "three in one," but also act as symbols of transnational movement. Over the course of the 20th century, the sheep has remained Australia's most exported good, and as of 2021, is the world's largest exporter of sheep wool. Australia exports 40% of its wool to China, which is the largest importer of wool in the world³⁴. The Australian-Chinese wool trade is at the heart of many of the Pacific free trade agreements signed between the two countries, making the seemingly simple black ewe from the Adelaidean girl's dream a symbol embedded with a diverse set of economic, political, and cultural meaning that is predicated upon its transnational movement. The gallows serves as a similarly packed symbol. The dreamer from which Morpheus pulls this image is "a young Japanese movie buff, her head roiling from a surfeit of old Hammer horror films..." ("Imperfect Hosts" 18). Hammer is a British film company founded in 1934 and famous for their horror classics *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *Dracula* (1958), and *The Mummy* (1959). According to Steven Gerrard, Hammer films is the name "most synonymous with British horror" and that "this small, independent production unit tapped into

³³ Indeed, the amulet that Dream seeks is in the possession of the DC Comics villain John Dee, aka Dr. Destiny. In "24 Hours," Dee uses Dream's amulet to drive the entire world mad.

³⁴ The sheep is not indigenous to the region, and the breed that makes up the bulk of Australia's sheep industry, the Merino, was once only found in Spain. Spain, in turn, likely imported the Merino from the Phoenician empire in the 12th century and created the Spanish Merino breed by breeding the Middle Eastern or North African animal with English sheep. Prior to 1765, the export of the Spanish Merino was prohibited by the Spanish monarchy under pain of death. After this date, the Merino were closely monitored and only given as royal gifts. The first Merino arrived in Australia in 1797, and were the offspring of a flock originally given to Prince William of Orange in the Netherlands by King Carlos III of Spain.

the zeitgeist of the time, when Britain was finding its power on the world's stage diminishing" (147-148). In fact, David Pirie believed that Hammer horror films were "the only staple cinematic myth which Britain can properly claim as its own, and which relates to it the same way as the western relates to America" (qtd in Gerrard 6). *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* enjoyed global box office success and, along with Hollywood and French cinema, planted the "cinematic myth" that "Hollywood film was entertainment, European film was art, and film produced by other Asian countries was for the serious study of history..." while "Japanese cinema was perceived as belonging to none of these categories" (Inuhiko 7). This nod to Hammer Studios does not just evoke the heritage of Gothic horror in British film (although *Sandman* and Gaiman are certainly influenced by and continuing on this Gothic heritage), but also subtly highlights the cultural colonization of Japan by Western nations. If Japanese films are "centrally concerned with what amounts to a crisis in the contemporary Japanese conception of identity, individuality, and the understanding of the self's role in society, tradition, and (westernizing) modernity," then the gallows are not only a symbol of cultural colonization and its effects on national identities, but the effects of modernity and globalization on individual identities.

From North Africa and the Middle East to Spain to Australia to China; and from Hollywood and London to Japan, the sheep and the gallows show the relationality between the singular world and the many nations and the singular nation and the many individual people through a metonymic chain of associations. Applying a transitive syntax of identity allows us to acknowledge all of these cultures and interdependencies embedded within and forming the identities of the Japanese woman and the Australian child. The symbols are singular, but they are "internally multiple." More important to my assertion about the Dreaming, Morpheus must bring them together (make them contiguous) in order to summon the Hecateae. Throughout the series,

we see different variations of this same idea³⁵. When Morpheus needs something, he cannot simply create it. He must summon it from the dreams of actual people. As I have shown with Daniel, many of these dreams are foundational to the dreamers' identities, both personal, national, and cultural. In *The Dolls House*, Dream tells Desire that they “are the servants of the living—we are not their masters. We exist because they know, deep in their hearts, that we exist.... We do not manipulate them. If anything, they manipulate us,” and while this is not entirely true (Desire certainly does manipulate mortals, and though these manipulations fail in *The Dolls House*, they ultimately succeed in *The Kindly Ones*, leading to Dream's death), taken together with the ways in which *Sandman* suggests that humans rely on the Dreaming in order to *be*, the Dreaming seems to function as a metaphysical space that functions as *both* the connective tissue binding all dreamers together *and* a boundary delineating and upholding the difference between the dreamers' identities (23.2-3). As such, the Dreaming “is infinite, although it is bounded on every side” (“Imperfect Hosts” 11). Just as Moraru defines a cosmodern ecology as an environment which “acknowledges and thrives on others' presence and stories” (50) and “creates and re-creates itself as it keeps blossoming out into a ‘multiplicity of worlds’” (52), so too does the Dreaming thrive on the presence and the stories of the dreamers, depending upon them to exist, and as *The Doll's House* shows, the dreamers rely on the Dreaming to remain a “multiplicity of worlds” (worlds which are, in the Dreaming, the internal worlds of distinct subjective beings) in order to exist.

The Dolls House is the name for the second trade paperback and the second major story arc of *Sandman*, made up of issues 9-13. By its start, Dream has escaped his long imprisonment

³⁵ In “Sleep of the Just,” after he has escaped from his prison, he opens a portal to return to the Dreaming. Once there, he must “clutch a passing dream” from which he takes his “first food in seventy years”: fried frog legs taken from a bucket which is held by Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken (31). He also takes the sand, which he uses to incapacitate the guards, from Frederick's dream of Majorca.

and gone on three quests to find his lost artifacts: his pouch of sand, his helmet, and his amulet. In the last issue of the *Preludes and Nocturnes* collection, “The Sound of Her Wings,” we are introduced to Dream’s sibling, Death. After reprimanding him for “feeling sorry for [himself] because [his] little game is over and [he hasn’t] got the balls to go find a new one,” Dream accompanies her as she goes about her “work”: greeting the newly dead and taking them to whatever psychic plane they believe they should go after death (9.5). By the end of the day, Dream realizes that his “sister has a function to perform, as I do. The Endless have their responsibilities. I have my responsibilities” (20.3). One of these responsibilities, we find out in *The Dolls House*, is to locate and neutralize any dream vortexes. In *Sandman*, a dream vortex occurs “once in every era” and in the *Dolls House*, we learn that the vortex is none other than Rose Walker, granddaughter to Unity Kincaid, one of the transnational sleepers. In “Lost Hearts,” Morpheus describes to Rose Walker exactly what she is:

a mortal, who, briefly, becomes... the center... of the dreaming. The vortex, by its nature, destroys the barriers between dreaming minds; destroys the ordered chaos of the Dreaming... Until the myriad dreamers are caught in one huge dream... Until all the dreams are one. Then the vortex collapses in upon itself. And then it is gone. It takes the minds of the dreamers with it; it damages the Dreaming beyond repair. It leaves nothing but darkness. (5.1-4)

Dream goes on to tell Rose that “it happened once... a world was lost... Aeons ago, and half a universe away. I... failed in my duty. A whole world perished. It will never happen again” (5.5-6). In order to stop this from happening, Dream must kill Rose Walker³⁶. This is the climax of

³⁶ Dream does not, ultimately, kill Rose. Instead, a naturally-dying Unity Kincaid enters the Dreaming and orders Rose to reach inside of herself and give the vortex back to Unity, as it was hers to begin with before Desire’s meddling. After receiving the vortex, Unity dies in the real world and is allowed to stay in the Dreaming permanently, and Rose wakes up.

The Dolls House, a narrative arc that establishes themes and characters that become fundamental to *Sandman*, but I will limit my examination of it to applying Clingman and Moraru's transnational theories to the concept of the dream vortex, showing how it solidifies my earlier readings of the Dreaming as a transnational construct.

The way in which Gaiman conveys the dangers and process of the dream vortex reinforce many of Moraru and Clingman's conceptions of identity and relationality. Clingman's thesis about the transnational is that it is "where the transitive and combinatory become possible...where varied realities are neither simply the same nor completely different but must invoke the combinatory and the transitive... where navigation is essential to the story we wish to become" (241). Furthermore, from a transnational perspective, "navigation is negated only by *indifference*; but difference is the very ground of its possibility and need" (242). We can find similar language in Moraru's *Cosmodernism*, where the late-global world is "a shrinking space more and more every day, this world nevertheless must accommodate infinitely ("absolutely") the infinity or infinities of those with whom we share this space" and "must be a world of many worlds: not an all-encompassing "globe" but a *mundus*³⁷" (51). Quoting Jean-Luc Nancy heavily, he goes on to explain how in the cosmodern, "only the 'with'.... There is 'proximity'..." and "cultural difference between entities existing at close quarters" in which subjects find that "the 'encounter with another's horizon'" are their "most 'appropriate horizon' of living, understanding, and self-understanding" (52). This *being with*, the very foundation of *being*, these "horizons" and "cultural differences," are all dependent on the existence of transitive boundaries,

³⁷ In this section, Moraru uses Derrida to differentiate between globalization, which he identifies with an egology, and *mundialization*, which he identifies with the cosmodern ecology and believes is "a process susceptible of rescuing the Earth's ontological and cultural wealth" (51).

boundaries upon which navigation depends, for there is no navigation without crossing, without difference.

In *Sandman*, the dream vortex represents not just an intransitive boundary, but a true singularity, an identity not only without any internal boundaries or combinations, but with the power to destroy the boundaries between herself and others. As Rose begins to fully embody the vortex, “her sense of identity has never been more certain” and she realizes that her physical body is “no part of her, the essential her, the true Rose” (“Into the Night” 14.4). In the quoted panel, Rose’s disembodied face hovers above her sleeping body, the rest of the panel completely black and *borderless*. On the next page, we see a cross-section of the house in which she sleeps, each room a different panel in which each of her housemates’ dreams are depicted. They are separated by thick, white borders, not only representing the walls of the house, but also representing the boundaries which keep their dreams distinct within the Dreaming. In this (literal) construction, their identities persist and continue to develop precisely because of these contiguous boundaries. Seeing their dreams, Rose “sees how simple it all is. Sees how thin and fragile the walls that divide them truly are. Sees how simple it would be to shatter them” (15³⁸).

On the next page, a splash page covering both pages (which I will refer to as a single page), “the walls come tumbling down” (17). Rose Walker floats, arms outstretched and eyes shut, in the middle of the page, the background a swirling spiral of something almost liquid. The dream versions of her housemates (visually stylized to represent the portions of their identity which they explore as they sleep) are spatially situated within three panels with thin borders in the top left, bottom left, and bottom right corners of the splash page. They are aware of and call out to one another, shocked and scared to find the boundaries of their dreams destroyed and

³⁸ I will cease to give panel numbers for the remainder of this section, as the panels become increasingly vague and, as I explore shortly, change form or disappear entirely.

themselves transported into this new space, although their orientation within their panels suggests that they have not yet been subsumed by the vortex. Dream looks on the scene, but unlike the housemates who are distinctly in panels, Dream seems to look *through* a panel, which has a broader and more rough border than the others, his hands grasping the border of the panel itself and his body stretching out past the boundary of the page's border. The panels and page edges become diegetic; the visual representation of the panels and their spatial placement and sudden insertion into the diegetic realm reflect the consequences of the destruction of the boundaries and difference which Clingman and Moraru both assert are fundamental to a transnational protocol of subjectivity formation. The graphic narrative form breaks down along with these barriers, as if the diegetic vortex is also affecting the non-diegetic existence of the very narrative we are reading. As the vortex continues to affect the diegetic dreams of humanity, it also prohibits the non-diegetic "navigation [of the reader] which is essential to the story [Gaiman wishes it] to become" (Moraru 241). Gaiman implies here that the Dreaming is not just diegetic, but a metaphysical concept that is critical to all stories, and by way of Clingman's narrative claim about navigation, critical to our ability to form *ourselves*.

After another page turn, another splash page reveals a further descent into singularity. This page has the same swirling liquid background, but the panels have faded, leaving behind vague suggestions of panels surrounding the different iterations of Rose and Dream. These suggestions are vague discolorations of the background, and they do not take definite shape. Since the panel is established as a grammatical unit of meaning for comics, especially one of time, this vanishing suggests that time, too, is being forced into a singularity (which, according to the ways in which humans perceive, means the end of meaning as we know it according to Thomas, Clingman, and Walsh). Spatially, multiple depictions of Rose swirl around the page,

and her sheer dress slowly falls away in each subsequent depiction. This is not only representative of her continued loss of individuality and boundaries, but also serves the practical purpose of giving the reader guidance for reading the images in the correct order. The (perhaps) non-diegetic (this might, again, be Destiny reading his own book) narrative word balloons begin in the upper right-hand corner, leading the reader's eyes from there towards the middle of the page, then suddenly skipping to the top right corner before travelling back towards the center. At various points, Dream's speech bubbles (visually distinct because of their white text, black background, and amoebic white borders) interject "ENOUGH" at three points throughout the page. Although he is obviously speaking to Rose, the fact that he is interrupting our reading of the narration implies that he is also trying to stop *us*, as if by our very reading, we are propelling the vortex towards its singular end. The narration balloons tell us that Rose can feel each mind in the city, and "each mind creates and inhabits its own world; and each world is but a tiny part that is the totality that is the Dreaming" ("Into the Night" 18).

Gaiman's description of the relationship between the dreamers and the Dreaming parallels Moraru's and Clingman's description of the relationship between individual and collective identities and the world. Without difference, without distinct and multiple identities, without boundaries, there can be no *meaning*. The Dreaming, functioning correctly, places subjects in proximity to one another, each subject "its own world," but keeps the boundaries between them intact, ensuring that "from one singular to another, there is contiguity but not continuity, a formulation that captures the sense of space in the boundary between beings" (Clingman 22). It represents a cosmodern ecology which "keeps blossoming out into a 'multiplicity of worlds'" (Moraru 52). The vortex's threat to this functioning Dreaming represents what happens when "we fall into singularity—assuming the 'substitutions of complete

and whole meanings—that both our navigations and utterances fall into negation” (Clingman 22). It becomes an egological “‘homo-homogenizing’ [network],” mirroring real world the networks which “come into place to standardize and subsume the world to historically privileged standards” (Moraru 46).

5 CONCLUSION

In an interview with Hy Bender, Neil Gaiman said that “Gene Wolfe once defined good literature as that which can be read with pleasure by an educated audience, and reread with increased pleasure. I wanted to produce good literature” (48). I began this project by considering comics as literature. One of my secondary goals for this project (which seems to be a secondary goal to many such projects on graphic narratives) was to show how fertile *Sandman* is for scholarly purposes. With over 40 scholarly examinations in existence, this goal might seem unnecessary. However, I wanted to see if I could make a square peg fit into a round hole, as it were. *Sandman* has never been described as transnational, and no one has ever attempted to apply a transnational lens to it before. At the beginning of this project, I had a faint feeling that a transnational study of *Sandman* could work, and as I read and reread it alongside Moraru, Clingman, and other transnational scholars, the pleasure that I obtained was from the slowly building realization that it could work. Besides my original intent to exhibit some of the transnational affordances of the graphic narrative form, especially the way in which *Sandman* in particular harnesses these affordances, and read the sleepers and the Dreaming through a transnational lens, I unearthed along the way a relatedness between the transnational theories of Moraru and Clingman.

Although *Cosmodernism* and *The Grammar of Identity* both explicitly deal with transnationalism, they take vastly different approaches³⁹. Clingman approaches the transnational through grammar, specifically a Chomskyan understanding of “syntax and the capacity for navigation” as “intrinsically connected, at some deep level within the human psyche” (19). His project is more focused, never departing far from the goal of defining transnational literature or the transnational *in* literature, although he does often take the time to develop the implications of a transnational grammar of identity on identity formation, subjectivity, and relationality. Moraru, on the other hand, very explicitly attempts to create a new and vast paradigm for not just literature, but for examining “today’s world as a cultural geography of rationality” which acts as “an ethical imperative pointing to the present as much as the future” (5). He seems to leave behind the term *transnational* in favor of *cosmodern*. Most importantly, he bases this move on Levinas’ ontological philosophies of “being with” an *Other*. He carries this out through an examination of both fictional and theoretical writers, but his project includes geography, politics, and culture as well. And yet, as I worked with them, I found that they shared fundamental similarities. While Moraru’s paradigm is intentionally more far reaching and ambitious than Clingman’s, literature is at the heart of both, and in terms of literature, they both propose similar ways of finding the transnational in fiction. They both see the multiple inside the singular. Difference is at the center of this multiplicity, and although Moraru does not make the idea of the boundary as central to his writing as Clingman, it is ever at the edges of his assertions about cosmodernism. Where Moraru claims that “the ‘common ground’ of learning is, as Levinas assures us, a theater of difference” (Moraru 75), Clingman similarly asserts that “navigation requires difference. Difference is not the barrier but the prompt, the very ground for transition

³⁹ For more approaches to transnational theory that I have not included here but that Moraru refers to in his own work, see *Main Street and Empire* by Ryan Poll and *Cosmopolitan Style* by Rebecca Walkowitz.

and meaning” (Clingman 241). Finally, they both see the project of transnationalism (or cosmopolitanism) as ongoing. Clingman believes that “the transnational has not been achieved, but is mapped out as a journey” (242). Moraru writes the following:

American and any literary history must be re-created—a ‘literary history in,’ and for, ‘the global age.’ ‘Global literature may be on its way, but its advent does not strike everybody as either imminent or desirable. What has arrived... is a new way of approaching late-global literature, in this case American, as a dramatization of world with-ness. (65-66)

While I have not in any way given an exhaustive account of these two writers’ theories, nor have I harnessed them to their full potential in this project, I hope that I have at least been able to capture the core of their ideas and chart some of their similarities and differences while I applied them to *Sandman*.

Similarly to Clingman and Moraru’s view on the transnational project, I do not see this transnational treatment of *Sandman* as complete. While I have read the sleepers affected by the global sleeping sickness and the Dreaming as sites of the transnational, there are so many more such locations in *Sandman*. A study of how *Sandman* represents location and time would be extremely productive. Multiple scenes in *Sandman* depict physical geography and history, or time, as unstable and prone to rupture. Giles’s definition of deterritorialization paired with “Soft Places,” “Exiles,” and a “Tale of Two Cities” could explore an understanding of national and personal identity construction as “socially constructed” and “historically variable” (58). At the core of *Sandman* (and much of Gaiman’s work) is the use of many mythologies in creating a new, transnational mythology.

The meeting of multiple mythological pantheons in *Seasons of Mist* and issues like “The Hunt,” “Ramadan,” and “Calliope” could be used to show how Gaiman takes myths and legends

from their “homeland” and moves them across national and cultural borders into new contexts. In “Calliope,” for example, one of the nine Greek Muses is captured in Greece by a British author named Erasmus Fry in 1927 and brought back to England. At the beginning of the story, Fry trades Calliope to Richard Murdoc, an author struggling with a severe case of writers’ block, for a trichobezoar. After raping Calliope, “something shifted inside his head,” and “he had been writing for three hours before he surfaced enough to realize that he had begun his second novel” (8.3-4). This forced and violent movement of an ancient Greek myth across national and personal borders could serve as another transnational exploration of Gaiman’s construction of myth and fable.

Another productive avenue for transnational critique of *Sandman* would read Dream’s subjective appearance and multiple incarnations “as a metaphor for transnational identity” (Refaie 33). Throughout the narrative, Dream’s appearance sometimes changes depending on who is perceiving him. Although not the same type of shape-shifting that occurs in *American Born Chinese*, this change in appearance often does signify the cultural or national identity of the gazer. This national/cultural identity also sometimes extends to the overall aesthetic of the comic. For instance, in “*Seasons of Mist: Chapter 5*,” Dream entertains pantheons and mythic figures from multiple cultures, holding private meetings with each. When speaking to Susano-O-No-Mikoto of the Nippon pantheon, the illustrations take on the visual look of 17th-18th century Japanese art. These and other intentional visual changes throughout the series could illustrate how identity construction and national representation in *The Sandman* fits or contradicts early transnational theories.

Besides the main run, the many spinoffs and prequel *Overture* would perhaps yield the most contemporary reflections of transnationalism and show how Gaiman and subsequent

authors built upon transnational themes in the more recent *Sandman* narratives. For instance, a treatment of Dream's "shapeshifting" from the main run could be developed further in *The Dream Hunters*, a graphic narrative illustrated by P. Craig Russell adapted from a novella of the same name written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by Yoshitaka Amano. While Gaiman initially stated that the story was based on a Japanese folk tale by Y.T. Ozaki's *Old Japanese Fairy Tales*, he later admitted that it was completely of his own devising. I believe that analyzing Gaiman's claims about the origin of the story, his transnational collaboration with Amano, an iconic Japanese artist, the decision to have American artist Russell illustrate the graphic adaptation, and (perhaps most importantly) the resulting hybridized aesthetic of that graphic adaptation would highlight not only the transnational aspects of *Sandman*, but also how the "imagined worlds" of graphic narrative relate to the "imagined communities" that make up national identity (Denson et al. 7). Furthermore, the outbreak of a global "meme" and inclusion of the Vodou pantheon and other hybridized mythologies and identities in the *House of Whispers*, one of the spinoff narratives in the *The Sandman Universe*, make it a perfect narrative for transnational examination.

As I have shown and Moraru and Clingman have claimed, the work is not done. In my future projects on both *Sandman* and transnationalism (whether paired with each other or not), I will further refine my critical faculties in order to produce more nuanced, interesting, and useful examinations of literature, both graphic and word-based. My goal is to bring together comics, word-based fiction, and theoretical texts into further conversation with one another. For now, however, I hope that this is a stable starting point.

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