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## **Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the Critical Insights Series: *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman***

Edited by Joseph Michael Sommers of Central Michigan University, this volume contains essays that constitute an interesting mélange of thoughts, ruminations, perspectives, and approaches that are as diverse a look at the life and work of Neil Gaiman as any in print today. The chapters do not radiate from any central thesis, chronology (though one is presented in the Resources section), or even thematic progression nearly as much as they make a vain attempt to explore as many facets of the author and the first thirty years of his career from as many different avenues as one could fit between two covers. The authors start as near as possible to the beginning of his career in short stories, comics, and journalism and examine works as recent as 2016's *The View from the Cheap Seats*.

Within these fourteen essays, introduction, biographical sketch, chronology, author's bibliography, and academic bibliography, the reader will find a great many discussions and questions—many, many questions, since Gaiman is an author unbridled by the shackles of boundaries. The four-year-old who once sat in a West Sussex library surrounded by the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien let those writers suffuse his burgeoning art in a manner of worldbuilding that could only happen at this point in history right now. This volume will discuss those libraries. It will discuss manifold mythologies. It will interrogate that great American mythology of the comic book (written by a man who was born British and moved to America). It will somehow find its way into social media as, even in an unfinalizable universe, the Internet still remains that great swirling vortex into which everyone eventually is sucked. It will compel the reader to learn how to do close literary analysis from a variety of perspectives. And, with any luck, it will inspire the reader to pick up a book—possibly a comic, maybe an audio book, or just make a visit to Gaiman's blog, Twitter page, or whatever new Internet portal he will have opened up to communicate with his reading base.

In the **introductory essay**, Joseph Michael Sommers considers Gaiman from many of the myriad possibilities he could be considered, going to great lengths not to place Gaiman so much as to try and catalogue him, not unlike a zoologist, in his many forms and evolutions. In the **Critical Contexts** section of the book, Justin Wigard starts off with a short **biographical sketch** of Gaiman that reads quite well with the Chronology of the Author's Life and the Bibliography of the Author that the reader can also find in the Resources section of the book. Likewise, pairing well with the biography is the "Critical Reception: The Major Works of Neil Gaiman," co-authored by Wigard and Kyle Eveleth. Here, the two attempt as best as possible to contextualize the academic and popular perceptions of his work in its many and multitudinous forms. Sommers' next essay, "Embodied in Name Alone: Nobody Owens and the Metonymic Estrangement from the Living and the Dead in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*," approaches *The Graveyard Book*, itself an analogue of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, from the psychoanalytic perspective of Jacques Lacan. That psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic readings factor into the reception of work by a man who spent a great deal of his career writing about dreams and dreaming

should likely come as little surprise to anyone. Kristin Bovaird-Abbo continues that investigation in a chapter devoted to Cultural Context: that of the Norse (and United States for that matter) in her chapter, “In the Shadow of Balder: Breaking the Cycle of Ragnarok in *American Gods*.” In it, she investigates Gaiman’s curious appropriation of the Norse god Balder, as opposed to, say, Thor, in *American Gods* and pins that particular appropriation on a very opportunistic moment of good old-fashioned American luck (by way of a leprechaun). Finally, Julie Perino supplies “Opening the Door, Crossing the Wall: (Re) Mediation and Women’s Roles in Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere and Stardust*” as a Comparative Analysis chapter; here, looking at the unusual circumstances of novelization and remediation in the adaptive process of turning Gaiman’s books into films and, in the case of *Neverwhere*, vice versa. In it, she focuses on women’s roles in these works as they figure so prominently in Gaiman’s corpus of work across all media, yet changing that media can bring about different manners of portrayal regardless.

Next comes the **Critical Readings** section of this book, which contains the following essays:

- “Guilty Pleasures: Neil Gaiman’s Books for Children for Adults” by Annette Wannamaker
- “Reimagining the Cautionary Tale: Collage in Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean’s *The Wolves in the Walls*” by Krystal Howard
- “‘What is She?’: Neil Gaiman’s Intertextual Conversation on Female Artistry in *Coraline* and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*” by Marlyn Thomas
- “‘Of viewpoints, of images, of memories and puns and lost hopes’: Polyphony and Narrative Braiding in *The Sandman: Worlds’ End*” by Kyle Eveleth
- Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman’s Feminist Fairy Tales by Jill Coste
- “‘Everybody’s Here’: Radical Reflexivity in the Metafiction of *The Sandman* by Orion Ussner Kidder
- “The Apocalypse and Other Silly Bits: *Good Omens*, Collaboration, and Authorial One-Upmanship” by Laura Nicosia
- “Spoilers, Sweetie—a Madman and His Monsters: Neil Gaiman’s ‘The Doctor’s Wife’” by Kelly J. Murphy
- “Crafting Advocacy through Intimacy and Empathy: A Rhetorical Analysis of The Reading Agency Lecture” by Kristin McIlhagga

In the final section, **Resources**, easy-to-follow lists are given in order to help guide the reader through important dates and keep track of and sort through Gaiman’s most important publications. A selection of further reading is then provided. Each essay in *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman* includes a list of Works Cited and detailed endnotes. Also included in this volume is a **Bibliography**, biographies of the **Editor** and **Contributors**, as well as an alphabetical **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world’s most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia’s most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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