

[Reading] ➔ Smoke and Mirrors: Short Fiction and Illusions Author Neil Gaiman – Soccerjerseys-wholesale.co

Posted on 16 July 2018 By Neil Gaiman

A guilty pleasure, sure, but with Ray Bradbury's death, I'd suggest that Neil Gaiman is the best storyteller we have today. Consider the words of Harry Bailly he of the Tabard Inn, not George's brother And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle That is to seyn that telleth in this caas Tales of best sentence and moost solaas Shal have a soper at oure aller cost And I'd buy Gaiman a meal or three for this sundry collection of tales pulled together from over the years and published in Smoke and Mirrors. You might think I'm just showing off with the Middle English, but I don't think it's too much of a stretch to draw parallels between Gaiman and Chaucer Chaucer's Tales cover a wide range of genres, from the romance to the fabliau to the beast fable to the exemplum and everything in between, and Gaiman uses just as wide a contemporary pallet as Chaucer employed from the Middle Ages Gaiman moves from the hard boiled to the horror story he blends prose and poetry with sci fi, the sacred and the secular he has an erotic offering here that transcends mommy porn heck, he even writes a sestina with vampires in it that works and that alone has to testify to the genius of the man Elsewhere Gaiman does everything from the full blown novel to YA to children's lit he's written screenplays and comic books, and just about everything he does is golden Sure he's had some missteps, and not everything in Smoke and Mirrors succeeds at the same level, but hey, the Friar's Tale is a bit dull and the Priest's lengthy sermon is practically unreadable. And like Chaucer working from Boccaccio and

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Petrarch and the Thousand and One Nights among other sources, Gaiman is often at his best when he is reworking earlier stories and authors, especially fairy tales and folk tales. His version of Snow White here is a fascinating retelling that's going to stick with me for a long time, and one of my favorites in the book. Shoggoth's Old Peculiar grows out of Lovecraft. And even though it's goofy as hell, I even like his pastiche of Beowulf and Baywatch with Larry Talbot thrown in as an added plus. Finally, and thanks for sticking with me this long, Gaiman addresses many of the same concerns Chaucer had: greed and hypocrisy, dreams and where they come from, what makes a good marriage, the role of women in a male-dominated society, and on and on the intertwining roles of magic and technology in Cold Colors try the Franklin's Tale, but through them all, both authors are really interested in the whole idea of stories and story telling and what makes a good story. And what that is, if you go back to Harry Bailly, is that right blend of best sentence and most solas, and Neil Gaiman just about always gets it right. Apparently I am not a fan of his short stories, they are bad. I gave his other short story collection book three stars and that was being kind. This one is getting two because I am all out of kindness. A better review to come. Here is my attempt at a better review. Normally I would delete the prereview BS but I like it this time so it stays. This is the second short story collection I have read from this author and they have both been thumbs down experiences. I definitely have a love-hate relationship with his work. The gray area in between is not a friend of mine. WHAT I LIKED: Maybe two stories. WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE: Everything else. I can't decide which description matches my feelings towards it. OPTION A: The publisher said give me anything you have and the author decided to present him with the crumpled paper balls of failed ideas. OR OPTION B: The author feels that all of his ideas are share-worthy and has not a care in the world regarding what readers might think of them. OR OPTION C: I am all out of sugarcoating today as well as shits to give so here is my true feelings about a read that without a doubt disappointed me. OR A little of option A, a little of option B and all of option C. DING, DING, DING WE HAVE A WINNER. In The Deft Hands Of Neil Gaiman, Magic Is No Mere Illusion And Anything Is Possible. In This, Gaiman's First Book Of Short Stories, His Imagination And Supreme Artistry

Delta of Venus

Metamorphoses

Lady Chatterley's Lover

Kushiel's Dart

Sappho's Leap

Claudius the God and
His Wife Messalina

A Princess of Mars

The English Patient

Robert Mapplethorpe
and the Classical
Tradition

Tropic of Cancer

The Piano Teacher

I, Claudius

Sex and the City

The Nude: A Study in
Ideal Form

Thy Neighbor's Wife

Transform A Mundane World Into A Place Of Terrible Wonders
A Place Where An Old Woman Can Purchase The Holy Grail
At A Thrift Store, Where Assassins Advertise Their Services In
The Yellow Pages Under Pest Control, And Where A
Frightened Young Boy Must Barter For His Life With A Mean
Spirited Troll Living Beneath A Bridge By The Railroad Tracks
Explore A New Reality Obscured By Smoke And Darkness, Yet
Brilliantly Tangible In This Extraordinary Collection Of Short
Works By A Master Prestidigitator It Will Dazzle Your Senses,
Touch Your Heart, And Haunt Your Dreams Initially read in
1999 or thereabouts Not reviewed at the time. Upon re reading
The Goldfish Pond and Other Stories by Neil Gaiman I'm
usually not that interested in the whole glamour of Hollywood
theme, but this is probably the best commentary on it I've ever
read Clearly partially autobiographical, this tells the story of a
British writer who's flown out to L.A to talk about converting his
bestselling novel into a movie A shifting cast of film execs
gradually morph his story past recognition Meanwhile, he gets
to know the elderly groundskeeper at his decaying hotel, who
tells him stories of the glory days of silent films Multi layered,
ironically humorous, but ultimately poignant Beautifully
done. Other included pieces from the wiki The included stories
and poems are different between some of the editions The US,
UK, and eBook editions have some differences in the stories
they contain see table to right Not in US print version Not in
eBook version Appears in eBook version as AppleReading the
Entrails The Wedding Present Chivalry written for an anthology
by Marty Greenberg Nicholas Was The Price Troll Bridge
retelling of The Three Billy Goats Gruff written for the anthology
Snow White, Blood Red by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling Don't
Ask Jack Eaten Scenes from a Moving picture The White
Road A narrative poem Queen of Knives A narrative poem The
Facts in the Case of the Departure of Miss Finch Changes The
Daughter of Owls Shoggoth's Old Peculiar Virus Written for the
anthology Digital Dreams by David Barrett Looking for the Girl
Commissioned by Penthouse for their 20th anniversary
issue Only the End of the World Again Bay Wolf A story poem
retelling Beowulf Fifteen Painted Cards from a Vampire Tarot
We Can Get Them For You Wholesale One Life, Furnished in
Early Moorcock Written for an anthology of Elric stories by
Michael Moorcock Cold Colors The Sweeper of Dreams Foreign

Atomised

Les Liaisons
dangereuses

The Naked Woman: A
Study of the Female
Body

Atlas Shrugged

Justine, Philosophy in
the Bedroom, and Other
Writings

PartsVampire Sestina A poem originally published in Fantasy Tales and later reprinted in the Mammoth Book of Vampires by Stephen JonesMouse written for Touch Wood, edited by Pete CrowtherThe Sea ChangeHow Do You Think It Feels When We Went to See the End of the World by Dawnie Morningside, age 11 Desert Wind Tastings Included in Sirens by Ellen Datlow and Terri WindlingIn the End Babycakes Murder Mysteries written for the anthology Midnight Graffiti by Jessie HorstingSnow, Glass, Apples Bearing in mind I read this on my kindle, so some stories weren't included in the version I read Also this is hella long. All ratings including notes indicates favouriteThe Wedding Present Yes, I religiously read introductions 4 In which a picturesque couple are given a quaint wedding present that seems to be a retelling of their coupling it spins a story of how their marriage could have went wrong Though this premise may seem outlandish and bizarre, it's terribly relevant and poses significant questions about the lives we choose to live It's sad to think that some Gaiman fans miss this story it's precious Chivalry 3.5Quite lovely The relationship was sweet and Mrs Whitaker was charming to read Nicholas Was 4.5An excellent and precisely one hundred word twist on St Nicholas, aka Santa Claus Ho ho ho.The Price 4Ooh symbolism, symbolism I adore this story, possibly because I'm so fond of cats The idea of a knightly cat guardian is wonderful Troll Bridge 3.5I enjoyed this tale, but something lead me to believe that it would be than it was when it finished, so I wasn't as impressed with the ending Nevertheless it was immensely thought provoking and preoccupying Don't Ask Jack 5 Horrifying, afflicting, and downright disturbing Yep, one of my favourite stories out of the entire book The Goldfish Pool and Other Stories 3I really liked the vintage Hollywood theme but it didn't pull me in I think I maintained interest simply because it's a quasi account of personal experience for Gaiman as he admitted at the start of the book Riddled with idioms and scathing remarks on Hollywood, it's very entertaining and humorous, but not gripping enough for me.Eaten Scenes from a Moving Picture 3ARGH I have written on my notepad SEXSEXSEXSEXSEX GROSSED OUT NEED SHOWER That pretty much summarizes how I feel about this story Bloomin heteros The White Road 3.5Cool, kind of story you can read over and over again and interpret in many

different ways. Queen Of Knives 4.5 Very alluring I analysed this to death I fathomed all sorts of underlying messages and things I could take away Personally I took this idea of being trapped in a loveless marriage to result in the disappearance In addition, it's also delectably written I devoured this story in one bite Changes 4 Exceedingly powerful, especially the end The mere fact that Rajit a Scientist was referring to the people as Angels was of pivotal importance to me I took away my own meanings for this, some of which I'm certain Gaiman wasn't even attempting to convey I thought the significance of Angels meant that a conceivably genderless society or a society in which gender holds no meaning could be perceived as being that of an angelic, peaceful community That's just a fraction of what I took away from this, though. The Daughter of Owls 2 I didn't find this story interesting The title was inviting but the tale disappointed I followed everything that happened with little interest as to what would eventually happen. Shoggoth's Old Peculiar 2 Looking back, I don't even remember this story Needless to say I wasn't that impressed Beautifully written as always, oh Gaiman, you wonderful thing but with little quality for me to recall I'll duplicate the comment for above I didn't find this story interesting The title was inviting but the tale disappointed I followed everything that happened with little interest as to what would eventually happen. Virus 3 Interesting, cryptic, scary It reminded me of that short film titled Virus too Looking for the Girl 4 4.5 This reminded me a lot of Death in Venice and whilst I didn't have the opportunity to picture a beautiful prepubescent boy walking among the streets of Italy, I still engaged with the divine narrative that retained this sense of beauty never being able to be obtained I'm also reminded of McConaughey's Bay Wolf 3 I'm always captivated by mythical creatures, so I relished this little anecdote though I don't remember much about it probably because I was nodding off Fifteen Painted Cards from a Vampire Tarot 5 A collection within a collection an array of segmented texts that evoke mystery and awe I loved the relativity toward Tarot cards in particular, especially The Fool We Can Get Them for You Wholesale 4.5 Hilarious and ambiguously intriguing They'd been ready for a long time, but they had to be asked It reminded me of Vampires having to be granted permission to cross the threshold into our world One Life, Furnished in Early

Moorcock 3 All I have written down is Something missing, liked the beginning though Very informative, April Cold Colors 2.5 All I remember is confusion The Sweeper of Dreams 3.5 A magical ideal, one that need not be questioned in the unknown and mystical land of dreams Foreign Parts 3.5 Excusing the awkward descriptions of symptoms deriving from venereal disease, the alienation of the lower regions of the protagonist's body is open to interpretation The real interest I had was determining whether this was a tale of possession or dispossession Vampire Sestina 5 Sensual and delightful, it certainly appealed to my extreme love of Vampiresque material Kudos to Gaiman also for succeeding in writing quite possibly the toughest form of verse out there. Mouse 2 Curious but a tale that scurried away pretty easily from my train of thought The Sea Change 4 I love the sea and aquatic life in general, therefore I was pretty gripped with this story I'm also a sucker for mermaids When We Went To See The End of The World by Dawnie Morningside, age 11 1 4 4 This really disturbed me I don't know why, it just seemed like the complete representation of evil It maintained the sense of inventive, fictitious evil whilst holding the innocence and relativity of real life The most blatant representation of this is the mere use of the narration of an 11 year old Desert Wind 3 Nicely told anecdote it really brings forth the sensation of regret and longing to be somewhere else which is the reason I read Gaiman's books in the first place I would like to go with the people too Tastings 4.5 Oh, sexy times I actually loved the idea of something so frequently deemed emotionless or meaningless in the promiscuity of modern society becoming a personal necessity to someone's character To be frank, I pried open this story like some sort of literary autopsy and picked apart meanings and interpretations for hours Babycakes 4 We'll figure something out An almost dystopian feel to this, which I always admire Very haunting and inhuman yet possible Foreshadowing the horror of human existence Superb Murder Mysteries 4 I'm not Christian, so forgive me for not fully immersing myself in the retelling of creation or rather Gaiman's take on it I relished the wholehearted symbolism throughout though Snow, Glass and Apples 3 I expected this to be one of my favourites, but sadly it's something that I feel suffered from my high expectations I originally heard of this in Gaiman's

extra in Stardust and thought it was going to be magnificent It was pretty good, and will forever leave a stain on the Snow White tale for me personally, but truthfully I was expecting I originally intended to read one story per night, as it seemed pretty easy to do so all of the stories are fairly unique and eclectic However, I was far too engaged to pass up the opportunity to finish the book all at once I even made notes on each tale after finishing them Looking back, it s quite hard to give an overall summary It s a wonderful, disturbing, downright peculiar collection of stories that spins you from one adventure to the next weaved in with Gaiman s imaginary genius Some were decent, others spectacular, few just okay I frequently sensed some stories were ones that either needed to be developed , or ones that didn t have enough promise and shouldn t have made it onto the page.Overall rating 3.5. 2.5 stars, a few gems but way too many narrative poems and meh stories. As much as I adore Gaiman s writing style, it seemed like none of these short stories were chosen thoughtfully I enjoyed this book a though, so it gets a 3.5 from me RTC A little disappointing, though with some flourishes of fabulousness.I m a huge Neil Gaiman fan So much so, I cite him as one of the authors that made me want to write Most of his books are fantastically imaginative, exciting and wonderfully plotted, and a couple of them rank among my all time favourite books As a result, I launched into his collection of short stories with high expectations I should say, for the record, I like short stories I appreciate the whole bite sized concept, that you can devour a whole tale in a single setting it s a bit like having a snack before you settle for a big main meal However, with this particular collection, a few of the snacks left me a bit unsatisfied The book gets off to a cracking start with Chivalry, a hilarious story of an old dear who finds the Holy Grail in a charity shop I was chuckling away throughout the tale, and rubbing my hands with glee, taking it as a sign of things to come Likewise, I adored Troll Bridge, which cleverly spun the original fairy tale, taking it in a fresh and surprising direction However, the book soon became bogged down with a couple of stories that didn t really contribute much in my opinion This was particularly the case with the poems which for me, mostly fell flat I m no poem connoisseur, but I do know a good poem when I read one, and I didn t feel that any of these fell into that

category That being said, there were several stories that stuck out as being great We Can Get Them For You Wholesale, a story about haggling with assassins via the Yellow Pages, is utter brilliance, as is Looking For the Girl an eerie tale of a man spotting the same woman in countless copies of men s magazines over the years, who never seems to age Many of the excellent stories could have been filled out and extended into full length novels, in my opinion Perhaps if the multiple poems had been stripped out of the book, I would have rated this book a lot higher Would I give Neil Gaiman s future short stories a try Yes, definitely But I think I d give his poetry a miss Smoke and Mirrors is the first of two short story collections written by Neil Gaiman This title was first published in 1998, while Fragile Things came out in 2006 Having read Fragile Things mere months ago I was doing quite a bit of comparison between the two as I worked my way through Smoke and Mirrors While there are a lot of similarities between the two, there are also many differences.Both collections involve Gaiman doing what he does best, that is taking our own myths, fables, and folklore, tweaking them to better resonate with our modern culture, and handing them back to us complete with the grit and gristle that were absent from the versions that we received as children While this seems to be an over arching theme to most of the stories in Fragile Things , it still shows up occasionally in Smoke and Mirrors along with so much else Gaiman takes the reader to so many places throughout these stories These include a couple of nods to writers that surely influenced him along the way Lovecraft and Moorcock, specifically , a writer struggling through a screenplay that has been watered down by the movie studio discovering the legendary Hollywood of old, and political intrigue amongst the angels in heaven Lawrence Talbot also makes an appearance in a tale involving the Wolf Man Gaiman s books are usually shelved in the Sci Fi Fantasy section at the average bookstore, which I think is a bit of a disservice as these stories are so much diverse than the typical view of the Fantasy genre that involves touchy feely knights riding around on horses and tends to prejudice the typical reader to that genre negatively.A tip to any readers who are in the habit of skipping book introductions Gaiman actually hides a story within the introduction of this book as a payoff to those who religiously

read the introduction That sort of cleverness suckers me in every time. It may be unwise to compare the stories in *Smoke and Mirrors* to each other and to *Fragile Things* as both books represent a compilation of Gaiman stories that appeared in other publications over a particular period of his writing career versus something that was put together as an intentional, unified collection. However, as it is great fun to wildly speculate, I believe that the stories in *Smoke and Mirrors* are bolder than the ones in the later collection. As most of these stories were written around the time that *Sandman* was finishing its run, I'm wondering if the reason for this was to prove to any naysayers that Gaiman was a serious writer and not just that comic book guy. These stories may not be something that would be discussed in a college-level literature class with the austere professor that lives and dies by the canon, but I don't think that is Gaiman's intention as a writer. He comes from the storyteller tradition, and I feel that such a thing is just as important in feeding one's imagination and intellect as the heavy literature now and again. This collection of short works, some not quite complete, is maybe a must-read for real Gaiman fans who read everything he does. 4 stars for them, but not really for anyone else. Only 1 star for the general audience. And I say that as one of those fans I really like what Gaiman does, both in traditional and graphic novel form, but *Smoke and Mirrors* is not representative of his best work. Basically, it is a collection of things he never bothered to give a final polish to. Much of *SM* is things that were just workbook exercises, not intended for publication. Some fun ideas, and entertaining for the fan or for those who want to study how he develops ideas, but others should try *American Gods*, *Anansi Boys*, *Neverwhere*, *Good Omens* with T. Pratchett, or even *Coraline* or his *Sandman* graphic novels. It does, however, contain a few real gems for fans. Warning: different editions of the *SM* varied the collection slightly, so referring to specific stories may be confusing when discussing the book.

Includes a sneak peek at Neil Gaiman's new novel, *AMANSI BOYS*

NEIL GAIMAN

New York Times bestselling author of *American Gods* and *Stardust*



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Neil Gaiman finds magic in the damndest places."

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SMOKE AND MIRRORS

SHORT FICTIONS AND ILLUSIONS