There are remarkably numerous textual cross-pollinations and direct references that writer Neil Gaiman and musician Tori Amos make to one another's creative efforts and friendship in their own works. One ought not take this connection as chiefly intertextual in the Kristevan sense of the word, however, for when not writing expressly for each other, the artists' references to one another are generally explicit and are scattered among other promiscuously frequent allusions to and quotations from fairy tales, pop music, novels and inside jokes from the artists' individual personal lives. Instead, directly aware of but not in responsive literary dialogue with one another, the authors Gaiman and Amos and their texts communicate through an ideal audience, familiar with both, through whom reflections of authorial and audiencial identity are mediated.

Through pervasive mutual allusion over many years and across many texts (see Appendix 1 for a detailed if possibly incomplete list), Gaiman and Amos serve to advertise each other; each presents the other's work such that to an audience the references are a game of self-reward upon their recognition, their regularity calling the consumer of one author's work to consume the other's. The first part of this reward in recognition is the move from the outside of a social network, real or imagined, to its inside, where familiarity with (and presumably the purchase of) one of the mutually-referenced texts (Gaiman's, for example) is admission, while a fuller, more multireferential understanding of the other text (Amos's in this case) is receipt. Important to this particular pairing of mutual artistic allusion is that, mythic and biblical citation aside, across Amos's works, no other author appears so frequently as Gaiman, and across Gaiman's works, the same holds true of Amos (though he certainly demonstrates an affinity for Elvis Costello). This allows one to make the case that Gaiman and Amos, via one another, each have a multireferential thread connecting his or her own works together with regard to the other, meaning that fans of these corpora are also fans of the authors as the texts construe him or her to be – a subtle but important point, as the aforementioned network is a social one and as the actual Gaiman/Amos connection is (presumably) as much social as it is textual.

The importance of this is that by understanding Amos's texts (for example) more fully by way of Gaiman (and by presumably liking "Neil," just as "Tori" does), an audience gains insider knowledge, fictive society with one author and a personal identification with the other. Equal knowledge and fandom of each author produces kinship and identification with the other in turn. This is the identity of the ideal reader – one who is on the inside of the bi-authorial network that identifies socially on the basis of its purchased and studied knowledge. The second reward then of understanding the mutual reference is that these textual moments of reference are interpellations to this ideal reader, who is unexpectedly called not by her or his own name but by membership in this knowledge-network – often thus by Amos's or Gaiman's
name or image – and is thereby ushered into a self-congratulatory subjectivity. The reader recognizes her- or himself by “catching” the reference in an “aha” moment.

This is an enactment through literary reference of Jacques Lacan's mirror stage: the mediatization of one's subjethood through a “body,” and the understanding that the body as perceived through a mirror's reflection in a whole and ideal form is separate from (and thus fragments one's perception of) the self, heretofore unreflected; the reflection is a representation of self just as all other bodies one perceives are merely representations of others’ selves, connected to but semiotically distinct from the “I.” Lacan recognizes that this central act of identification manifests both in the real actions of individual development and metaphorically in the “ontological structure of the human world” (2), thus through breadth providing for the critical value and longevity of his theory.

Although Gaiman and Amos are not unique in the capacity for their mutually referential relationship to congratulate a reader upon recognition – indeed the possession of any knowledge necessarily can define a network to which some belong and others do not – the evenness and consistency of such reward to this (very real) ideal audience throughout comics, short stories, concerts, and albums connects an audience's identity-as-subject more feudally to the looking glass of the Gaiman/Amos oeuvre, while also effectively equating the works of the two authors as interchangeably able to reflect a Lacanian Ideal-I in the form of one another. The intricacy worth exploring here, then, is how each of these authorial figures differently reflects identity back through the other. Consider first Amos's incantation of Gaiman. To illustrate Gaiman's role in Amos's songs, some melodic and harmonic analysis is necessary.

"Space Dog" is an unsteady song whose surreality is woven as much from the dual narrative of the lyrics as from the ambiguity of its verses' c-minor tonality against interludes that sway between harmonic groundings of A-major and c#-minor. Amos interleaves a quirky lemon pie-filled ode to the mysterious title character with wistful nostalgia for female companionship and hypotheses on Virginia Woolf's death, all bound by meandering half-step descents. In the verse melody, the path is from G to F# to F:

![Figure 1. “Space Dog” verse.](image)

The resolution to F as the goal of the section is solidified in verse two on its final lyric, the musical double entendre “Lines secure, Space Dog,” which firmly intones F over the first and only F-major plagal cadence of the song.

The song's recurring B section, notated in A-major, melodically concerns the half-step motion from A to G# (which is directly adjacent in pitch to the verses' notes):

![Figure 2. “Space Dog” B section.](image)

Despite the contrast in mood and key between these sections, their reduced vocal lines insist upon their consistency from one to the next by way of their common half-step descent. Although an eight-measure bridge diverts “Space Dog”'s second verse, the only time at which these main sections allow their melodic outline to grow beyond half-step increments is in the push toward the song's final coda, chordally framed in the B section's vocabulary. Beginning on the lyric “Deck the halls,” Amos's descent is no longer A to G#, but now begins on B,
moving thus by whole step to A and then with familiarity to G#. It is in this structurally significant section that Gaiman enters the song:

![Figure 3. "Space Dog" pre-coda.](image)

and the words continue, “Somewhere someone must know the ending.”

Amos places Gaiman at the moment of musical expansion, where the melody's skeletal range peaks. This is important because it illustrates that Gaiman either catalyzes or necessitates the crossing of preset boundaries, depending on what one takes the song's goals to be. Certainly one of Amos's own goals lyrically is to “untwist” the story that weaves "centuries and secret societies," with the sacrifice of Andromeda.

Amos's mention of Gaiman in her song "Horses" is remarkably similar. Again, a brief musical analysis illuminates this claim. The song's five verses stem from the following sung melody. The line diagram shows the consistent return to middle C amid the rising interspersed notes.

![Figure 4. "Horses" first verse.](image)

The insistent melody is identical in four of the five total verses, but immediately following the song's bridge, the fourth verse offers a subtle change both in melody and in underlying chords, softening the song with the calmer and brighter relative major of E.

![Figure 5. "Horses" fourth verse.](image)

Shown above, the ascending outline where a static C had once been is another breaking free of a constrictive musical pattern. The appearance of "Neil" in this verse again aligns Gaiman with the possibility of greater mobility and freedom within the song. The E chord underlying his name illustrates that the ascending outline a moment earlier was no musically unrelated fluke, as it differs from the inverted c-minor chord that one might expect based on the three previous verses. In this case, Gaiman empowers the musical shift as he acts out his agency by "making me a tree." In this song and in "Space Dog" (as well as in "Hotel"), he is consistently a freer and a marker of or impetus toward change and growth.
This particular allusion in "Horses" concerns the character of the tree in Gaiman's *Stardust*, acknowledged by the author, in his own contribution to Amos's 1998 tour program, to be based on her (4). It is a convenient doorway to the converse reading of Amos's appearances in Gaiman's work.

Midway through the serialized graphic novel, the "copper beech tree" – redheaded, just like Amos – strikes up a conversation with the protagonist Tristran. The tree's speech is filled with playful and oddball Amosesque turns of phrase, but its chief role is one of twisting and locally distorting time's linearity.

"Somebody – maybe it was a squirrel, they talk so much, or a magpie, or maybe a fishie – told me that Pan owned all this forest. Well, not owned owned. Not like he would sell the forest to someone else, or put a wall around it – "

"Or cut down the trees," said Tristran helpfully.

There was a silence. He wondered where the girl had gone.

"Hello?" he said. "Hello?"

"You shouldn't say things like that," she said.

"Sorry," said Tristran, not entirely sure what he was apologising for. "But you were telling me that Pan owned the forest..."

"Of course he does," said the voice. "And in my dream he came over to me. You were in my dream, too, leading a sad girl by a chain. She was a very sad girl. Pan told me to help you... So I woke up, and there you were, fast asleep with your head by my trunk, snoring like a pigwiggin..."

"You are a tree," said Tristran, putting his thoughts into words.

"I didn't always used to be a tree," said the voice in the rustling of the copper beech leaves. "A magician made me a tree."

"What were you before?" asked Tristran.

"Do you think he likes me?"

"Who?"

"Pan. If you were the Lord of the Forest, you wouldn't give a job to someone, tell them to give all possible aid and succour, unless you liked them, would you?"

"Well..." said Tristran, but before he had decided on the politic answer, the tree had already said, "A nymph. I was a wood-nymph. But I got pursued by a prince, not a nice prince, the other kind, and, well, you'd think a prince, even the wrong kind, would understand about boundaries, wouldn't you?"

"You would?"

"Exactly what I think."...

"What kind of aid and succour, exactly," asked Tristran.

(Gaiman and Vess, 129-131)

The leapfrogging of the tree's conversation with Tristran is dizzying to him, knotting the linear flow of conversational time into more of a crocheted chain than a yarn. New lines of
At the end of their encounter, the tree gives Tristran a copper leaf, instructing him to "listen to it, when you need it most" (132). When he finally does listen to leaf, in the stable at an inn after a unicorn bursts in, "clattering" (144), Gaiman's narrative immediately rewinds a moment and picks up in the inn's main room, where after a moment of conversation between Primus, the innkeepers, and their guests, "there was a loud clattering from the stables next door." (145) A moment later Tristran dashes into the room, presumably having either retroactively heard all the dialogue of the scene through the leaf or having otherwise through the leaf's words – hidden from the audience – learned that he must go immediately into the tavern. In either event, the last vestige of Amos as the tree once again locally disrupts the story's linearity, perhaps as perceived by its characters, depending on one's reading of it, but certainly as told through Gaiman's chronology. In Stardust, Amos is an agent of disrupting the expectations and temporal grounds upon which the tale occurs.

Amos's role in Gaiman's short story "December 7, 1995" is less concerned with time, but still disruptive of the scene's basic properties. The piece opens with a bare setting, described only as "dark" three times:

It began in darkness; the little girl hesitantly touching the piano-key. She made up a song to sing to the darkness. She sang about the big girls, the pretty ones. She sang all her fear of growing up, all her fear of what she knew she would never be. When the song was done she lay down, beneath the piano, in the dark. (10)

With the grounds quickly and bleakly established, Gaiman uses Amos once again to disrupt the reality of darkness with an enchanted cavalcade of bright light pouring onto uncanny celebrants, spawned from nowhere. She incites the piano's keys to grow, and twine, and blossom...

And by then the party was underway... Each of the people had a shadow, and the little sleeping girl found herself staring not at the people but at their flickering shadow party on the floor and on the walls and ceiling, as they caressed and fought and fucked and died in their silent shadow carnival....

The floor juddered and trembled. The moon shone through the window, past the volcano, through every mirror in the world. (10-11)

In Gaiman's works, Amos sends ripples through the reality that surrounds her. This is not unlike Gaiman's coinciding with a breaking free of patterns in Amos's songs, but the difference is that, while in Gaiman's writing Amos is scarcely in control of her own power to distort her surroundings, when Tori Amos mentions Neil Gaiman in her music, it is frequently an affirmation of his control and his power to grant freedom – usually to Amos herself. Lyrically, she needs him to finish her stories, asks where he is, where his characters are, and allows him to transform her into a tree or to offer comfort by reading to her.

The comparative imbalance of power between the authors' mutual reference has its seeds in the contrasting media in which they operate. First-person poetics are the lingua franca of popular music, in which a cohesive narrative is not expected (and which in Amos's case, is almost never given). One of the primary currencies of the pop/rock/folk musical territory that Amos navigates is authenticity, which manifests in perceived sincerity of composition and performance. Amos is particularly often cited – for example by Whiteley (197) and Burns and Woods – for her musical authenticity and the autobiographical transparency of her performative voice. This authenticity borne of a conversational and confessional lyric style and a perceived lack of emotional mediation found in more coherent and traditional pop songcraft casts Tori Amos the individual as a necessary part of her songs' and performances' identities. On the other hand, Neil Gaiman the person, who claims in his blog that "Stories may well be
"lies" is at least superficially unconcerned with authenticity, mediating what may or may not have begun as autobiographical emotional outpourings through what are nearly always structured third-person narratives rooted in a fascination with storytelling over catharsis. In his own stories, Gaiman's presence is typically deeply submerged, if textually extant at all. The power imbalance then may reflect less on Amos and Gaiman's friendship than on the comparative vulnerability of each artist's public discourse, but because of these numerous possible factors in differing how Gaiman and Amos treat one another artistically – to say nothing yet of gender's role in their mutual portrayal – it is both easier and more practical to speak of the effects of these differing reflections than of their causes.

Returning to Lacan, the space between the perceiver and her or his reflection – the difference between the real I and the Ideal-I – is the imaginary. In this case, it refers to the unbridgeable gap between a reader/listener and her or his perception of Tori Amos and/or Neil Gaiman. Lacan, in his 1949 essay on the mirror stage, writes of "the lure of spatial identification" (4), which Slavoj Žižek further specifies as a trigonometry of the I and the reflection, writing that

imaginary identification is always identification on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other. So, apropos of every imitation of a model-image, apropos of every "playing a role," the question to ask is: for whom is the subject enacting this role? Which gaze is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image? (106)

The mirror stage into which a song or comic book propels a subject is a temporary and repeatable experience: a moment of "losing oneself" – or more to the point, finding oneself – in the textual encounter. In being interpellated through one of these authors in the others' work, a reader is plugging into a role for the gaze of the author of the text in question, as by definition Gaiman appears in Amos's songs as she perceives him, and vice-versa. This means that, for example, an ideal listener to Amos's music identifies Gaiman as her or his own reflection, and the temporary act of aspiration to this Ideal-I (Gaiman as seen and indeed presented by Amos) is a performative one for Amos's gaze. It is part of bringing oneself fully in synch with the text and its author. Žižek says of identification,

Our predominant, spontaneous idea of identification is that of imitating models, ideals, image-makers: it is noted (usually from the condescending "mature" perspective) how young people identify with popular heroes, pop singers, film stars, sportsmen.... This spontaneous notion is doubly misleading. First, the feature, the trait on the basis of which we identify with someone, is usually hidden – it is by no means necessarily a glamorous feature. (105)

From this point we may better understand Amos's instability and flightiness revealed by a deep reading of Gaiman's oeuvre to be the features by which a reader might be interpellated to identify with her, despite the questionability of one's conscious desire to be ideally disruptive. Within Gaiman's gaze, the identification with Amos through his work is the desire to disrupt the order of a detached, calculated, male-driven narrative (and very probably similar metanarratives). A mirror-stage identification with Amos via Gaiman's mention of her is thus a highly subversive one. Despite Gaiman's insistence that his character of Delirium in the Sandman series was not based on Amos (Rogers 51), Delirium's refusal to accept an ordered consensus reality bound by laws taps into the same subversion, making her a fan favorite as she namelessly interpellates Amos's audience, and often uncannily, her appearance:
That fact that Delirium is at other times drawn without Amos-esque features and that Gaiman himself insists that the character is not, in fact, based on Amos (Rogers 51) serve to underscore interpellation as audiencial; we still turn around when a name only similar to ours is shouted.

In contrast to this rewarding of humanist, feminist, and mischievous features, when a listener is called into identification with Gaiman in the music and to the gaze of Amos, it is through his ability to provide climactic change, to move along the narrative (as shown musically) and to resolve it (as shown lyrically) that she or he identifies. The Ideal-I here is one who brings structure and narrative as a performative act for the "authentic" and female Other. This identification is with an embodiment that filters raw and unresolved source material, allowing it to grow beyond its own stasis, or even amorphism.

The role that listeners assume here is one whose power grows by further empowering the Other in whose gaze it performs, while the role that readers assume upon "catching" Amos in Gaiman is one whose power comes from disrupting the Other's power. Therein is the essential difference between the mutual reference that Gaiman and Amos make gamelike.

The economic qualification of this entire system of interpellation and reflection has been noted earlier; it is through familiarity with (and very probably ownership of) these texts that consumers are drawn into personal connection with the artists and into social connection with one another – a self-perceived elite to whom the texts "speak." This ideal audience is then the hub of Gaiman and Amos's remarkable dialogue of personality, exploding the role of
alternating identification into a collective imaginary in which real economic multitudes – Gaiman's last novel was a New York Times #1 bestseller and Amos has sold 15 million albums – buy into a shared navigation between the disrupting and granting of social and structural power.

Between Neil Gaiman's flirtations with the mythic and Tori Amos's impressionistic self-portraiture, their friendship as presented in their public works is an encoded one that inspires curiosity and devotion in audiences, drawing them in with sincere advertisement. Within the social and economic operations of textual mediation through such individuals, the variable that allows the authors' commentary on one another to have difference and thereby to take meaning is revealed to us in the ways that readers and listeners take on the name, image, and idealized reflection of each author, searching to bridge the imaginary in the give and take of words and song.

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Appendix 1: Partial list of mutual Gaiman/Amos references

1991: Amos sings, "If you need me, me and Neil will be hanging out with the Dream King. Neil says hi, by the way," on "Tear In Your Hand," from Little Earthquakes.

1992: In her sheet music book of Little Earthquakes, Amos positions the writing of "Precious Things" in the context of her having been "Heavily into the sandman comics by now" (40).

1992: In Sandman issue #41, Gaiman quotes "Tear In Your Hand" as playing in a bondage club in which Delirium is lost (9).

1994: Amos sings, "Seems I keep getting this story twisted, so where's Neil when you need him?" on "Space Dog," from Under the Pink.

1994: Gaiman writes a piece called "Hi, by the way" in Amos’s concert program for her tour in support of Under the Pink.

1994: In Sandman issue #60, Gaiman shows a Tori Amos poster in Rose Walker's room (12).

1994: In Sandman issue #67, Gaiman has Rose identify herself as "more of a cornflakes girl," referencing Amos's 1994 single "Cornflake Girl" (22).


1996: Amos sings, "I will find you, but will you find me if Neil makes me a tree?" on "Horses," from Boys for Pele.

1996: Gaiman writes a piece called "December 7, 1995" in Amos's concert program for the Dew Drop Inn tour in support of Boys for Pele. The piece is about a piano-playing girl and contains numerous references to the album.


1998: Amos sings, "Where are the Velvets?" on "Hotel," from *From the Choirgirl Hotel*, a reference to characters from *Neverwhere*.

2001: Gaiman writes companion pieces (published on Amos's web site) for each of Amos's cover songs on *Strange Little Girls*. These were later republished in his 2006 anthology *Fragile Things*.

2002: Amos sings "Get me Neil on the line... have him read Snow, Glass, Apples," on "Carbon," from *Scarlet's Walk*, referencing by name Gaiman's short story.

2002: Gaiman writes "Pages Found in a Shoebox Left in a Greyhound Bus Somewhere Between Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Louisville, Kentucky" for Amos's *Scarlet's Walk* tour program. It is republished in *Fragile Things*.

References


---. "Politics, Portugal, and no gumbo-limbo trees." <http://www.neil...no-gumbo-limbo.asp>.

