Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: Sandman (Series, S01E11): Calliope by Neil Gaiman , Louise Hooper", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Katarzyna Marciniak. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2023). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1565. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Neil Gaiman , Louise Hooper

Sandman (Series, S01E11): Calliope

UK, USA, worldwide (2022)

TAGS: Calliope Fates Moirai Morpheus Orpheus Zeus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Sandman (Series, S01E11): Calliope
Studio/Production Company	DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Phantom Four Films, Netflix, Warner Bros. Television
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom, United States of America, Worldwide
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2022
First Edition Details	*Sandman* (Series, S01E11): *Dream of a Thousand Cats/Calliope*. Dir. Hisko Hulsing (*Dream of a Thousand Cats*), Louise Hooper (*Calliope*). Written by Neil Gaiman and Catherine Smyth-McMullen. Music by David Buckley. DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Netflix, Phantom Four, Warner Bros. Television, August 19, 2022.
Running time	64 min (two-part story collection)
Format	TV
Available Onllne	Available at www.netflix.com The trailer is available on the Netflix official YT channel (accessed: February 20, 2023). The scene "Calliope Calls to the Fates" is available on the Netflix YT channel (accessed: February 20, 2023).
Genre	Fantasy films, Film adaptations, Television series
Target Audience	Crossover (teenagers / young adults (15 years or older))

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Creators



Neil Gaiman, used under Creative Commons License, labelled for re-use (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Neil Gaiman , b. 1960
(Author)

Neil Gaiman was born in Hampshire, England, the son of leading members of the Church of Scientology and now lives near Minneapolis in the United States. His parents were of Polish-Jewish and East-European Jewish origin. He was raised in Sussex, and educated in Church of England schools. He loved books from an early age, enjoying in particular the works of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Edgar Allan Poe, Ursula K. Le Guin and G. K. Chesterton. He has described himself as a "feral child who was raised in libraries," (see here, accessed: July 3, 2018) and credits this experience for his life-long love of reading. Raised in both the Jewish tradition and the Church of Scientology, Gaiman's religious upbringing attuned him to intersections in culture and belief and while he was heavily influenced by these belief systems, he ascribes to none as an adult. He began a career as a journalist and interviewer, and wrote for the British Fantasy Society.

His writing career began in journalism and his first published book was a biography of the musical group *Duran Duran* (1984). He wrote *Don't Panic: The Official Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Companion* (1988), and collaborated with Terry Pratchett on *Good Omens* (1990). Notable in his career is his friendship with other major writers of fantasy such as Pratchett, and Alan Moore. He began writing comic books, and developed *The Sandman*, a series of highly popular graphic novels (1989–1996) about Morpheus, the personification of sleep/dream, in collaboration with artist Mike Dringenberg. Gaiman's literary output is voluminous, including works for adult readers, young adults, and children, including *Neverwhere* (1996), *American Gods* (2001), *Coraline* (2002), *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), *Anansi Boys* (2005), *The Graveyard Book* (2008), *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). A hallmark of his approach is a cross-cultural interest in mythology, fairytale and folk tale, which he interweaves in his storytelling. In 2017, he published *Norse Mythology*, a retelling of the Norse myths.

Gaiman is credited with reviving and re-creating comics as well as

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succeeding in the cross-genre writing for multiple audiences and ages with his works of prose, comics, song lyrics, drama, screenwriting and journalism. Gaiman was one of the first writers to establish a blog and a Twitter account and has over one million followers on each. Gaiman's work has received numerous awards internationally, including the Carnegie Medal and the Newbery Medal and his work has been on the bestseller lists across the world numerous times. *The Graveyard Book* is his most awarded book with sixteen awards. To date he has published forty books, thirty-nine graphic works, and had six television episodes, five screenplays and two theatre works produced.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Profile at the literature.britishcouncil.org (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Profile at the www.fantasybookreview.co.uk (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Lynnette Lounsbury, Avondale College of Higher Education, lynnette.lounsbury@avondale.edu.au and Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au



Louise Hooper (Director)

Louise Hooper is a director and a producer best known for TV series for Netflix. She started her directing career at BBC Arts documentaries. Later, she directed a 4-part thriller, *Cheat* (2019), another 4-part thriller, *Flesh & Blood* (2020), two episodes of *The Witcher* (2021), two episodes of *Inside Number 9* (2022), and the two final episodes of the 1st season of *The Sandman* (2022). In addition, she is the Lead director for the TV miniseries *Treason* and is currently working on the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*

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season 2 (forthcoming).

Sources:

Official website (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Profile at IMDb.com (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Casting	Calliope – Melissanthi Mahut, Morpheus / Oneiros / Dream of the Endless / Dream King – Tom Sturridge, Richard Madoc – Arthur Darvill, Erasmus Fry – Derek Jacobi, Fate Mother – Nina Wadia, Fate Crone – Souad Faress, Fate Maiden – Dinita Gohil, Nora – Amita Suman.
Adaptations	"Calliope" is an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's comic book within the DC Comics series. It was originally published in 1990 as *The Sandman*, issue #17 (1990). The comic book is available here (accessed: February 20, 2023).
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	*Sandman* TV series (2022), episodes 1–10.
Summary	*Calliope* is a self-contained story within the series, broadcast as episode 11.2, preceded by the animated *Dream of a Thousand Cats* (11.1). Richard Madoc (Arthur Darvill), a promising one-novel author, needs help finding the inspiration to write a new book. He visits Erasmus Fry (Derek Jacobi), an older writer. Erasmus tells a story from his past, when he visited Mt Helicon for inspiration for a book based on Greek mythology. Instead, he found an ancient text about the Muses and how

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to control them. He brings Richard to his basement, or rather a dungeon, where a young lady is held barefoot and in a thin skimpy nightgown. Fry presents his prisoner as the youngest of the nine sisters, Calliope (Melissanthi Mahut), captured by him and transported to England. Though Erasmus promised to free her before his death, she is given to Richard like an object. Since then, she is bound to him as she was to Erasmus and cannot escape.

Richard locks the Muse away in a modest room. Although Calliope asks to be liberated as she is "a goddess, a daughter of Zeus (…), not a possession to be kept and used and traded", the writer wants her to inspire his new book and tries to buy her service by giving her presents. The Muse insists that an author should pray to the Muses, show respect and care in exchange for divine inspiration given willingly, and not abuse the goddess against her will, as it was in the case of Erasmus, who took it from her by force. The story of her capture on Mt Helicon, told from her perspective, does not move Richard, who refuses to free her as he desperately needs inspiration that could result in his fame and glory. Eventually, when his deadline passes, he uses violence to get what he wants.

Calliope summons the Fates to hear her voice. The Fates appear but they cannot help her as she was captured according to an ancient rite and bound by law. One of the Endless* could help, but the Dream King (Morpheus/Oneiros), Calliope's once-husband and the father of her late son, Orpheus, is imprisoned by mortals as she is herself. Besides, she believes he would never help her, and she would not accept his help because of their difficult past.

One day Calliope has another unpleasant discussion with the writer, now a successful man, and realizes that Morpheus/Oneiros (Tom Sturridge) is free. She calls her former husband to help her. The god of dreams appears and promises to punish Richard for hurting the goddess and inspire him to free her. The writer is given an abundance of ideas and, unable to write them all down, goes mad and finally frees the Muse after over 60 years of imprisonment.

Calliope and Oneiros agree to meet one day to talk about their late son and, at last, mourn him properly together. The Muse then goes away to improve the world and its laws.

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* According to Gaiman, the Endless are children of Night and Time, embodiments of natural forces.

Analysis

Although Morpheus is the central character of the entire series, in this particular episode, Calliope, the Muse of Homer, is the true protagonist and not just one of the side characters.

The episode about the captured Muse is an opportunity to discuss the difficult theme of abuse. Erasmus Fry acts as a male lord, self-confident of his superiority over the Muse, whom he does not consider a goddess, woman, or even a human being worthy of respect. He keeps Calliope locked in a dungeon despite the fact that she cannot break her bond. He cannot bear to see the grieving face of a profoundly hurt person. Erasmus is a harsh master; he considers violence the best way of treating the Muse as he confesses to Richard: “I found force to be most effective”. He encourages Richard not to pity Calliope or be kind to her to receive inspiration, as she is not a human and is “made for this”. Prima facie, the new owner, plans to treat the captured Muse better. In fact, he only replicates Fry’s abuse. When the Muse refuses to inspire the writer willingly, he violates her. The rape is not shown on the screen but the viewer has no doubts that a sexual assault takes place. The scene opens with Richard sitting at his desk, staring at an empty screen, and having no idea what to write. Then, he decides to use the Muse and knocks on her door. Finally, we see him writing in a “manic fit”, his face marked with fingernail scratches and this image is a more powerful message than an outright rape directly affecting the viewer’s mind. It brings to mind cases of domestic violence when a helpless woman sequestrated at home against her will is abused secretly and the perpetrator is considered by society to be a “decent guy”. The fact that it can be done to a mighty and wise goddess renders the situation even more terrifying for the viewer. For the proud daughter of Zeus to be treated as property is unbearable as she cannot use her divine power against an ancient superior law. What remains is her strength of character – in spite of being a degraded, demeaned, defiled, and abused prisoner, she retains her dignity, the viewer feels her moral force, as justice (and not the law) is on her side. Her divine clemency is shown at the end when despite Dream’s willingness to avenge her, she is able to forgive.

References to Greek Antiquity are well thought out and the connection

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between mythological characters in the TV series and their original ancient models is strong. It is not limited to the use of names of Greek deities. Their traits and attributes are rooted in ancient sources, and the comic book's images acquire more expression when adapted into a television series. An example of such an enhancement can be seen in the development of Calliope's character. In the comic book, she is drawn as a very tall and thin figure with curly blonde hair. In the adaptation, Calliope's character is created by Melisanthi Mahut, known from her voice role of Kassandra, the canonical hero *misthios* [Greek – mercenary, a player who performs tasks for a payment] in the video game *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, and from the voice role of Athena in the video game *Immortals Fenyx Rising*. The Greek Canadian actress is a perfect choice. Her Greek accent is emphasised to show that the mythical world of gods is undeniably Greek. Since the moment Calliope is freed, she transforms into a Greek goddess – her look changes as instead of a skimpy nightgown that sexualized her, she wears ancient garments and a golden girdle. Her hair is meticulously styled to fit the image of Homer's Muse.

As Calliope belongs to the Greek pantheon she is entangled in the web of connections known from Greek mythology. She mentions Zeus as her father; she only calls on other Greek deities to help her. She summons the Fates (the scene is available here, accessed February 20, 2023), and later calls Oneiros, Dream, one of the Endless. He is presented here as her former husband and the father of their late son, Orpheus. Their relationship failed, but the tension between the characters is still perceptible. Orpheus in the film is said to be a son of Oneiros and not Oiagros or Apollo, who are mentioned in ancient sources. The oldest of the Fates describes him in a few words: "that boy-child who went to Hades for his lady-love and died in Thrace torn apart for his sacrilege; he had a beautiful voice too". The viewer might expect the reveal of some details about Calliope, Oneiros and Orpheus' story in the forthcoming second season.

Calliope Fates Moirai Morpheus Orpheus Zeus

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Desires Emotions Expectations Freedom Hope* Isolation/loneliness Oppression Past Punishment Sexual abuse Students Violence

Further Reading

Camus, Cyril, "Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* as a gateway from comic books to graphic novels", *Studies in the Novel* 47.3 (2015): 308–18 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Gaiman, Neil, "Reflections on Myth", *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* 31 (1999): 75–84 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Klapcsik, Sándor, "Neil Gaiman's Irony, Liminal Fantasies, and Fairy Tale Adaptations", *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (HJEAS) 14.2 (2008): 317–34 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Klapcsik, Sándor, "The Double-Edged Nature of Neil Gaiman's Ironical Perspectives and Liminal Fantasies", *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 20.2 (2009): 193–209 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Mellette, Justin, "Serialization and Empire in Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*", *Studies In The Novel* 47.3 (2015): 319–34 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Pendergast, John, "Six Characters in Search of Shakespeare: Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Shakespearian Mythos", *Mythlore* 26.3/4 (2008): 185–97 (accessed: February 20, 2023).

Addenda

The interview with Louise Hooper about *The Sandman. Calliope* available on YouTube GooglerMY channel (accessed: February 20, 2023).

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