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Intertextuality and Adaptation as a Narrative Framework

Creating the New from the Inexplicable in Neil Gaiman’s “The Sandman”

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1. Introduction

“I do not. I MAY not. I am Prince of stories, Will; but I have no story of my own. Nor shall I ever.” – Dream of the Endless

If someone would ever ask me how to define the world we live in, I would almost certainly try to explain with a story. Stories are the building blocks of our reality. We are confronted with them on a daily basis. We use them to tell someone how our day has been or to explain a child why they should never stray from the road in a forest as they might turn up being confronted with a big bad wolf. If there were no stories, then there would be nothing to tell. Without stories we would have nothing to dream about. Stories are perhaps the most important thing in the world. Everything is a story and everything can be defined by a story. History is a story, culture is a story, religion is a story… I could go on. Suffice it to say that stories are a vital part in our lives. The Sandman series by Neil Gaiman focuses on the importance and meaning of these stories. Gaiman has drawn from all kinds of cultures to develop a narrative arc made up of several smaller stories. These stories, in turn, are part of a larger narrative framework surrounding the character of Morpheus or Dream of the Endless. He is the quite literal personification of stories and goes by numerous other aliases through all kinds of other cultures. The central theme of my research, therefore, focuses on how the persona of Dream is defined by the different cultures, both fictional and non-fictional, presented in the comics. It is my opinion that Dream's character is almost completely defined by intertextual elements. As the opening quote of this thesis stated, Dream himself explains that he has no story of his own even though he is the Prince of stories. This paradox is, however, not entirely true. It is a fact that the Sandman series comprises a narrative arc which is formed by several small stories that intertwine. For instance: the story of Orpheus and his Eurydice which was altered subtly by Gaiman to give the reader more insight in how Dream's character works or Dream's encounters with Shakespeare or Hob Gadling. Dream himself is never really the protagonist of the stories but he plays a vital part in most of them. Therefore, it would be worth investigating Dream's characterization through the perspective of all the intertextual and even intercultural elements which are present in the series. To this end, I will first render a theoretical framework of how intertextuality works and how Gaiman implemented all the cross-cultural references within the series. Secondly, I will thoroughly analyse five case studies of characters that are present in The Sandman. By the examples of the encephalitis lethargica disease, Shakespeare, Wesley Dodds, Orpheus and Lucifer I will endeavour to explain how these adapted intertextual elements define The Sandman series as a whole. As a conclusion, I will explain which techniques Gaiman has
used to construct his bestselling comic series. Before we go ahead with the analysis, however, we will take a look at the history of the *Sandman* series.
2. History and Context

In this chapter, I will firstly clarify the research question of this thesis. As a second part, I will then briefly go over Gaiman’s repertoire, discussing his greatest accomplishments as a writer. Moreover *The Sandman’s* conception will be illustrated and I will comment on how Gaiman arrived at the idea of creating a new pantheon of gods in cooperation with Karen Berger from DC Comics. Lastly, I will then go over the reception of *The Sandman* when it was first published and won several prizes.

2.1. Research Question

When reading Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman*, one must ascertain that the writer has drawn on a vast amount of cross-cultural references in order to build the story of the main character. In this research paper I will therefore point out and prove by hand of Genette’s *Palimpsests* and Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* that Gaiman has used these two processes in order to create an entirely new plot line. The main research question of this paper can therefore be formulated as follows: Can Morpheus’ plotline in The Sandman series be defragmented into a process of filling up hiatuses within existing stories, such as the myth of Orpheus or the Sleeping Sickness during the 1920's and can we therefore argue that Gaiman has used the inexplicable as a means of creating something new?

2.2. The Sandman

In this chapter I will briefly discuss Gaiman as an author. His career and other works will be discussed in light of how they might have influenced the hit series *Sandman*. Moreover, we will take a look at how Gaiman got to the idea of creating the Sandman and what drove him to write his characters the way he wrote them. Lastly, I’ll give a concise overview of how the *Sandman* was received by critics and the general populace.

2.2.1. Gaiman’s Repertoire

Among Gaiman’s extensive repertoire, the *Sandman* series is of course his most well-known and most acclaimed work. Winning several prizes, including the Bram Stoker prize for science fiction and also making it to the New York Times bestseller list, it stands to reason that the story of the Prince of Dreams is probably the most important work that Gaiman has written. However, Gaiman has not contained himself to only writing comics. His repertoire includes other strong works of literature such as his novels *American Gods*, *Stardust*, *Anansi Boys*, *Coraline* and his latest work *The View from the Cheap Seats* to name just a few. Not only does he excel in writing novels, he excels in the field of comics as well. Aside from the *Sandman* series, Gaiman also wrote a few comics surrounding the character Death and a series called *Mr.*
**Punch. The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy.** His list of published works stands as proof that Gaiman has become an accomplished author over the years. It should not surprise that his success in two vastly different types of art – that of comic writing and that of novel writing– make him to one of the greatest contemporary writers of science fiction, even being endorsed by the great Stephen King himself, who wrote the introduction to *The Sandman: World’s End*, calling Gaiman “a pretty awesome head […]” (Gaiman, World’s End) Gaiman raised the bar for comics and epitomises the fact that comics do not necessarily belong to low culture.

### 2.2.2. *The Sandman* Conceived

Neil Gaiman started writing professionally in 1980 when he was 20 years old. He wrote some short stories and a draft of a children’s book, but did not attain any form fame from it. Therefore, Gaiman decided to become a journalist instead and learn more about writing in the meanwhile. Up until 1983, he wrote for several magazines such as “Time out, City Limits, The Observer, The Sunday Times of London Magazine” – in other words, U.K. publications I [Gaiman] respected.” (Bender 14) Gaiman spent his time writing articles for these magazines and was able to land two contracts for books at the same time. Eventually, he reacquired an interests in comics, which he was very fond of as a young adolescent, through Alan Moore’s *The Swamp Thing*:

> “HB: Were you mostly buying Alan’s work? Or did Alan’s artistry simply give you an excuse to fall in love with comics again? NG: The latter; I fell in love with comics again. It was like returning to an old flame and discovering that she was still beautiful. But Alan’s stuff was impressive. He showed what one can really do with comics, that they can be as powerful a vehicle of art as any other medium.” (Bender 17)

After realising this, Gaiman got in touch with Alan Moore and started learning how to write comic scripts from him. A while later, while practicing his scriptwriting, Gaiman met his later collaborator and drawer, Dave McKean. They became close friends and in 1986 got in contact with the liaison for DC Comics at the annual U.K. Comic Art Convention. McKean and Gaiman pitched the idea of doing a revival of the *Black Orchid* and they were contracted to do so. However, DC was concerned that no-one would buy the comics because “[…] it’s being done by two guys [Gaiman and McKean] who no one’s ever heard of, and it’s about a character who nobody remembers. On top of that, Black Orchid is a female, and female characters don’t sell.” (Bender 23) In other words, they had to set aside that project to do some individual work that would gain them some fame. After that, they would be allowed to go on publishing *Black*
Orchid. As a consequence, Gaiman was allowed to do a revival of The Sandman, based on the 1970’s character from DC, by creating an entirely new character with the same name. Therefore, The Sandman could be considered as a side-project that attained, in a way that nobody was able to foresee, great fame among DC’s comic readers.

Instead of staying true to the human Sandman that was part of the justice league, Gaiman set his sights higher in that he created a pantheon of the most powerful entities in existence and made the Sandman part of it. He adapted the Sandman to be the personification of Dreams, hence also calling him Dream of the Endless. The original comics, when they were first published, comprised 75 issues. During these 75 issues, Gaiman tells the story of how Morpheus was imprisoned by the wizard Roderick Burgess in 1916. By robbing the Lord of Dreams from his freedom, Burgess unleashed a sickness onto the world that would cause people to fall asleep and never wake up again. In the meantime, the three artefacts of power that served as Morpheus – as I will call the Sandman from here onwards - badges of office were stolen. During the events of Preludes and Nocturnes, Morpheus frees himself from his prison and succeeds in reclaiming his artefacts. His kingdom, however, has fallen to ruin and much is to be done in order to repair it. The actions of the wizard Burgess had set in motion a series of events that unfolds in the next volumes of The Sandman. In short, a series of things happen: Dream’s brother Desire impregnates Unity Kinkaid and in doing so unleashes a dream Vortex called Rose Walker. By finding Rose, Dream also finds Lyta Hall – who is also known as DC’s Wonderwoman – and therefore finds her son, Daniel, who becomes the new Lord of Dreams in The Wake. In the meanwhile, Dream is confronted with several other issues such as Lucifer leaving his position as keeper of Hell and Loki, the Norse god of Lies, scheming to steal Daniel away from his mother so that she ultimately becomes a Fury. In the end, Morpheus dies by the hand of the Kindly Ones. Fortunately, he has a backup plan and thus, he is reborn in the body of Daniel Hall.

If this overview of events seems confusing, then that is due to the sheer complexity of 2000 pages’ worth of comics. Indeed, Gaiman has outdone himself in writing an epic that comprises so many stories and intertextual references that it seems almost impossible to point them all out. Because of that, this thesis will not analyse the entire story and all the other stories that go with it. Instead, I will do five case studies, each focussing on a different aspect of intertextuality.

2.2.3. Reception

By the time that DC had published the first few issues of The Sandman, the crowds had already fallen in love with it. Gaiman had broken away from the traditional comic book genre and had made it into something more. Critics all over the United States acknowledged this and
nominated the series for all kinds of literary awards. Especially the issue *Sandman 19*, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” since it “is the only monthly comic in history to win a literary award: the 1991 World Fantasy award for Best Short Story.” (Bender 74) Several other issues got nominated for other prizes as well, some even won, but the adaptation of Shakespeare’s famous play found huge appreciation among literary critics. This made sure that the *Sandman* series had earned its place in the literary canon of comics.

In an interview with Hy Bender, Gaiman made it clear that he was, at first, hesitant to read comics again. When noticing a comic by Alan Moore, called *The Swamp Thing*, while waiting for a train, Gaiman is prejudiced that comics cannot be a medium of quality, saying: “I was dead set against buying it, but I read it just standing there and flipping. As I did so, I started thinking, ‘This is really good. But it can’t be, because comics are no good.’” (Bender 15) Gaiman problematizes the fact that comics cannot be good literature, even though they can be written extremely well. Eventually, Gaiman came around and wrote his bestseller comic *The Sandman*. The fact that he was able to win prizes and satisfy the critics proves that Gaiman made comics into more than pulp literature. Consequently, it is only right to assume that *The Sandman* changed the way we look at comics. Even *The New York Times* acknowledged this in 2013, when it contained an article by Dana Jennings who claimed

> “Neil Gaiman is one of our best and most lyrical writers of fantasy, and two of his children’s novels, *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008), are 21st-century classics. But Mr. Gaiman didn’t just arrive a full-blown master of fantasy. He honed his craft in comic books, where his eight-year run on Sandman, starting in 1988, is a genre touchstone.” (Jennings, *The New York Times*)

In other words, Gaiman is seen as an accomplished author, both in terms of novels and in terms of comics. His *Sandman* series stands as proof that he is.
3. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how Gaiman created Morpheus’ plotline, it is of great importance that the reader has some understanding of what intertextuality, as a literary phenomenon, is. Correspondingly, this paper is based on an intertextual analysis of the *Sandman* narrative. To this end, I will take a look at the definitions of intertextuality in Genette’s *Palimpsests* and Hutcheon’s *Theory of Adaptations*, which will also serve as a basis for the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.1. Intertextuality

In order to analyse Gaiman’s work we will first take a look at the history of Intertextuality. According to María Jesús Martínez Alfaro: “intertextuality as a term was first used in Julia Kristeva’s *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1966) and then in *The Bounded Text* (1966-67), essays she wrote shortly after arriving in Paris [...]” (Alfaro 268). The term in itself might not be that old, but it goes without saying that the phenomenon has been around for as long as texts have been written and passed on. According to Plato’s poetics, one of the key components of good literature was mimesis, which meant that a text should resemble not only real life, but also other good literature: “In the case of Plato, the ‘poet’ always copies an earlier act of creation, which is itself already a copy.” (Alfaro 269). Or even Aristotle who claims that “dramatic creation is the reduction, and hence intensification, of a mass of texts known to the poet and probably to the audience as well.” (Alfaro 269) In other words, for literature to be successful it has to draw from earlier successful literature. As Alfaro explains in her article on the origins of intertextuality:

“There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures.” (Alfaro 268)

This is very much the case for Gaiman’s *The Sandman* as the entire story arc is made up of countless side-stories that define the main character, Dream’s, storyline. The reader simply cannot understand the entire story if he is not aware of the other meaningful stories that Gaiman has included in the series.

The Sandman series revolves around a pantheon of gods that was created by Gaiman himself. This pantheon comprises the seven personifications of universal givens and everyday feelings or states of mind: Death, Destiny, Destruction, Dream, Delight (or Delirium), Despair and
Desire. These seven aspects of life, referred to as the ‘Endless’ are constructed as almost omnipotent beings that are above all known life. Only their fictional creators are above them and during the events of the main series (from the imprisonment of Dream in Preludes and Nocturnes until his death and rebirth in The Kindly Ones and The Wake) they are never mentioned. Therefore, it can be argued that Gaiman is responsible for the entire characterization of the Endless.

The premise that Gaiman has invented an entirely new pantheon inevitably leads to the question how one characterizes an entirely new collection of gods or entities? The answer to this question is, at first glance, rather simple: Gaiman draws from several cultural heritages to create a story around his seven deities -which, ironically, are older than all the other entities in creation according to the story. Of course the answer is far more complex. It is true that Gaiman drew from all sorts of cultures, mythologies and even religions, but when looking closely at how the various cross-cultural references are implemented in the series, it becomes clearer that Gaiman has adapted most of them in a very subtle yet effective way. One example of this is the story of Orpheus, who is the son of Dream and the muse Calliope. Gaiman exploits the fact that there is no consensus on who Orpheus’ father is in traditional mythology and fills the gap by making Dream the father. By doing this, he creates an emotional bond between the two and can therefore intentionally introduce specific emotions and actions into Dream’s character. This case will be further explored in the fourth chapter of this thesis. What we should keep in mind about this is that Gaiman tends to alter existing stories by filling up empty spaces or inconsistencies within stories. In order to do so, he ‘inserts’, for lack of a better word, the character he has created into these slots, effectively filling up the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing stories and, in doing so, creating an enriched storyline for his characters. So not only does Gaiman use intertextuality as a means of storybuilding, he also adapts the same intertextual elements by integrating the Sandman’s main storyline into other existing stories.

One of the greatest experts in terms of transtextuality, “or the textual transcendence of the text” (Genette 1) as he calls it himself is Gérard Genette. Therefore, we will now look at how he defines intertextuality and how his definition of the phenomenon may contribute towards a research method that is appropriate for understanding the Sandman series. Genette identifies five types of transtextuality: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality. The most important form of transtextuality for this research paper is intertextuality. The other four categories are not as important for this thesis, since they do not really take account of cross-cultural references. Paratextuality refers to titles, subtitles and other technical structures within a text. Metatextuality is the “relationship most often labelled
‘commentary’. (Genette 4) which is, as the word implies, a metacritical view on an existing text. Architextuality relates to the text as a whole and how it fits in with all the other texts that exist. One aspect of this could be the genre to which a particular text belongs. Finally, hypertextuality, according to Genette, is “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the Hypotext), upon which it is grafted in that manner that is not that of a commentary.” (Genette 5)

Genette defines intertextuality as follows: “For my part I define it, no doubt in a more restrictive sense, as a relationship of copresence between two texts or several texts: that is to say eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another.” (Genette 2) As Genette indicates, intertextuality as a concept refers to the relationship between a given text and the texts that have been, in one way or the other, incorporated within the content of the text. As pointed out by Alfaro, intertextuality is not a new phenomenon. However, Gaiman does expand the boundaries of traditional intertextuality. The way Genette defines it, intertextuality only takes place between texts. In other words, intertextuality cannot occur outside of a text. With Gaiman, the reader is confronted with the fact that the comic genre obviously does not contain only written material. The visual aspect of comics is at least as important, if not more. Even though Gaiman includes several references to literary texts in the written lines of his comics, he also employs a vast array of other references that we cannot necessarily subdivide and classify according the traditional types of transtextuality that Genette has proposed. For instance, the visual representations of various characters include references to other cultures that are not made through verbal means. A good example of such a visual reference is the character Death. As her name implies, she is the personification of death and thus it should not come as a total surprise to the reader that she actually visualises what death is. However, instead of going for the stereotypical depiction of death – a hooded, grim and obscure looking entity wearing a scythe – Death is not your typical reaper of souls, in fact she looks rather normal at first glance. In an interview with Hy Bender, Gaiman explained why he characterised Death as a pleasant and sensible young lady:

“If you look at the numerous anthropomorphic representations of Death over the years, you’ll find that most of them are scary, humourless, implacable people who you really wouldn’t want to spend time with. However, I already had a lead character, the Sandman, who was pale, tall, brooding, dark, relatively humourless, and Byronic in a late adolescent kind of way – in other words, who had all the characteristics typically ascribed to Death. I knew that readers expected Death to be just like the Sandman, only more so – larger, darker,
very male. So I thought it would be fun to turn expectations upside down, and to provide some contrast as well, by making Death small, funny, cool and nice.” (Bender 238-239)

Gaiman did not want to seem redundant by creating a character that was much alike the main character he had just created. Therefore, he adapted her persona and made her very likeable in that she has a nice personality, she is compassionate and does not sound like a stereotypical representation of Death. Hence, in order to convince the reader that she is still the ultimate fate of every living being, Gaiman gives her a few visual characteristics that subtly point what she stands for. For instance, Death wears an Ankh around her neck, her black hair and pale white skin guarantee that she does not look too cheerful or happy and her gothic clothes confirm that there is no misunderstanding about who she is. For our intertextual analysis, the Ankh symbol is especially important. At no point in the story does anyone ever comment on the Egyptian symbol for life and death. The relevance of this visual element therefore depends on the reader’s knowledge of cultural references. If one is unfamiliar with the culture of Ancient Egypt and its contemporary appropriation, then this is a part of the total story that is lost to the aforementioned reader.

The aforementioned example concerning Death indicates that intertextuality within comics can encompass more than sheer textual references alone. Moreover, the Ankh example demonstrates that these references do not necessarily have to be directly concerned with literature. A religious symbol, the personification of Kain and Abel, the depiction of a myth … All these visual references are part of the intertextual web woven by the Sandman series. Therefore, these references should be considered at least as important as textual references.

Another very significant aspect in terms of intertextuality was explored by Linda Hutcheon in her Theory of Adaptation in which she examines the various consequences and qualities of an adapted story. Given that Gaiman has certainly adapted several stories in his comics, it is relevant to also take a critical look at how Hutcheon explains the functionality of adaptations. Hutcheon defines adaptations in three phases:

“First, seen as a *formal entity or product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. This ‘transcoding’ can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create manifestly different interpretation.” (Hutcheon 7-8)
The first phase that Hutcheon suggests is thus seen in terms of its formal characteristics. She argues that an adapted work can undergo several changes in terms of style, genre and context. Especially the last two aspects are present in the *Sandman* series, as will be demonstrated in the case studies in chapter four. A shift in genre can be understood as the transposition of, say, a myth as it was recorded in books into the comic that is the subject of this thesis. One example of this is the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, to which we will return in a later chapter. The other element that is of importance to this thesis is the shift in context. By adapting existing stories and adding new actions or scenes to it, Gaiman facilitates new interpretations of the unedited stories. Hutcheon then goes on explaining the second phase: “Second, as a *process of creation*, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective.” (Hutcheon 8) Here, she argues that an adaptation is generally always a process of disassembling a story and getting rid of the building blocks that do not work anymore and readjusting or replacing them with new ones. In particular, that means Gaiman searches out elements in a story that would not work with today’s context anymore and adapts or replaces them so that they fit in with the reader’s expectations again. A third phase is also distinguished by Hutcheon:

“Third, seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.” (Hutcheon 8)

In the final phase, Hutcheon explains that an adaptation is experienced differently by each reader as it is also a form of intertextuality. The way we experience an adaptation depends on how we understand the intertextual relationship it has with the original or other adaptations. For instance, someone who knows about encephalitis lethargica – or von Economo’s disease- will read the first chapter of *The Sandman* very differently from someone who has never heard about the condition. In her essay called *Nous Deux, or a History of Intertextuality* Julia Kristeva argues that there has to be something in the text which rings a bell with the reader and that gives them the desire to read more into the referenced element. She explains that:

“This desire makes the reader feel that there must be something missing in the text, a central ‘naught’, like a purloined letter, from where the intertextual process takes off (those naughts are called ‘interpretants’, ‘connectors.’) Even if the reader does not yet have the competence to point it out, he knows that there must be something outside the text to make it into a
meaningful whole and he goes to find it by a certain method, or later on finds it by accident when reading the key, or ‘missing’ text.” (Kristeva 12)

According to Kristeva, a text that has intertextual relations with a different text or texts should always contain a detail of the referenced text in order for the reader to be triggered into understanding that he is dealing with an instance of intertextuality. She calls this a connector and it is, in correspondence with what Hutcheon explains in terms of reception, an important factor in the process of intertextual engagement as it can make the difference between a reader that understands what he is reading and a reader that has no clue about the intertextual processes taking place right before his eyes.

Therefore, Hutcheon’s chapter on “Knowing and Unknowing Audiences” (Hutcheon 120) is of particular interest for this thesis. In it, she differentiates between an audience that understands where a certain adaptation came from and an audience that does not know they are reading an adaptation of a story. She explains:

“If we do not know that what we are experiencing actually is an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work. To experience it as an adaptation, however, as we have seen, we need to recognize it as such and to know its adapted text, thus allowing the latter to oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing. In the process we inevitably fill in any gaps in the adaptation with information from the adapted text. […] For an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences.” (Hutcheon 120-121)

In the above excerpt Hutcheon argues that adapted texts should be comprehensible for both an audience that knows where the adaptation comes from, as well as for an audience that is unfamiliar with the original text. Moreover, she states that, in order to see the text for the adaptation that it really is, we need to have a good knowledge of the original text. This would allow us to go back and forth from the original to the adaptation in order to better understand the nuances and the pertinence of the adaptation. She also argues that in the process, we fill in any gaps in the adaptation by drawing from the original. In other words, a knowing audience should be aware of what the author of the adaptation changed in order to better understand what the adapted text is about. In the case of the Sandman the reader will not only be able to better understand the story of Morpheus if they know where the other stories surrounding his narrative arc come from, but he or she will also be offered a greater – albeit a fictional – understanding.
of the existing stories, myths or fables as they will all be tied together by one central story, namely the story of the Sandman. This, however, will be illustrated in the chapters to come.

In terms of adaptations, Gaiman does his best to not stray too far from the original stories. The Orpheus and Eurydice story that he adapted only differs from the original in that he extends the story. The actual trip to the underworld and the permanent loss of Eurydice remain unaltered, whereas the events that precede and are subsequent to the story are invented by Gaiman. These adaptations have several different purposes for Gaiman. Firstly, as will be illustrated thoroughly in the case studies in chapter four of this thesis, they create a foothold in reality for Morpheus and the other Endless. By weaving existing stories such as myths, religions and historical facts together with his own story of Morpheus, Gaiman successfully roots the Sandman series in the canon of existing literature. Moreover, the inexplicable elements from the existing stories are explained by Morpheus’ storyline. This can be seen as a bilateral process: each story affirms the other and gives it more credibility. Secondly, the references can be seen as an added value to the series. Gaiman has always struggled with the fact that comics are popularly seen as negligible literature that is not worthy of being called high culture. By including characters such as Shakespeare or myths such as that of Orpheus, Gaiman draws the high culture into the comic genre. Moreover, he even adapts the stories which could be interpreted as a strategical move by Gaiman to profile himself as an equal to Shakespeare or other famous authors. As a third and more important purpose, the several intertextual elements serve as a foundation upon which Gaiman builds the story of the Endless. Any inexplicable element in existing stories has the potential to be a touchstone for Morpheus’ story. In fact, some intertextual elements in the series are so vital to the main story that if you pull them away, the entire story arc collapses. If there was no Orpheus, then there would be no Kindly Ones and Morpheus would never die. Take away Lyta Hall and there would be no Daniel Hall to become the new Morpheus in The Wake. In other words, there would be no Sandman if there weren’t any other stories to build it on. Gaiman plays with this idea in the last chapter of The Sandman where Morpheus has a conversation with Shakespeare in which he says: “I do not. I MAY not. I am Prince of stories, Will; but I have no story of my own. Nor shall I ever.” (Gaiman, The Wake) Lastly, another function of adaptations in The Sandman is that it allows Gaiman to introduce new perspectives for the adapted stories. For instance, by introducing Morpheus as the father of Orpheus, Gaiman has the opportunity to slightly move away from the relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice – which was the main theme in the original myth – and to develop and dramatize the relationship between a father and a son instead.
In conclusion, the reader should keep in mind that Gaiman not only employs intertextuality as a means of referencing various other stories, cultures, religions and myths, but also as a means of creating an entirely new plotline. However, the references made in the *Sandman* series are not only textual references; they are also visual references due to the fact that we are dealing with a comic and not a novel. Moreover, intertextuality can also be seen in terms of adaptations, which ultimately leads to a more complex reading that works both ways. Not only does the actual story of the *Sandman* take shape through intertextuality, it also offers a certain feeling of unity between the referenced texts as they are all conglomerated within one overlapping narrative arc that explains the voids within the referenced texts.

What I mean to achieve by analysing the *Sandman* series on an intertextual level is to illustrate how Gaiman uses various types of intertextuality in order to build his own story. Moreover, I want to indicate how by adapting existing stories, he changed their function. The concept that I want to explore in general is how he created a new narrative with new elements and new perspectives by taking bits and pieces from what was already there. I want to investigate how Gaiman broke down all these existing stories into building blocks and then reshaped them and gave them a new purpose so that he could use them to build a foundation on which he could build his own story.

3.1.1. The Functions of Intertextuality in *The Sandman*

As has been argued in the previous chapter, it is no secret that Gaiman has attempted to build his story in symbiosis with all kinds of existing and fictitious mythologies, religions and cultures. Not only does he refer to them, he also adapts them. Moreover, the stories are quintessential for the construction of the Morpheus’ narrative arc. It is therefore necessary that we have a good understanding and overview of the several references he makes throughout the series. Of course, not all references are equally important to the story and therefore not all references will be discussed in this thesis. I will distinguish between five different types of intertextual references. These will be: mythological, historical, religious and literary references and also references concerning the involvement of other DC characters. Moreover, I will elaborate on the functions of these different categories in regards to the complete story.

3.1.1.1. Mythological Intertextuality

In terms of mythology, Gaiman has drawn on a lot of different Canons. One of the most prominently featuring mythologies is of course the Greek mythology. The very first instance of Greek mythology that is introduced in the series, can be found in the very first chapter *Nocturnes and Preludes* in which Morpheus summons the Hecateae in order to find out who has stolen his three artefacts of power (Appendix 1). In later issues, he and other characters will...
be confronted with them time and time again. In the end, it turns out that the Hecateae – who also go by other names, such as the Fates, the Weird Sisters, the Erinyes, the Furies and even the Kindly Ones – are the main antagonists of Morpheus. During the events of *The Kindly Ones*, they are responsible for his death. Another character from Greek mythology that is linked with the Hecateae is Orpheus. Gaiman includes the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in *Fables and Reflections* in which it turns out that Morpheus fathered Orpheus with the muse Calliope. Gaiman illustrates the entire story of how Orpheus descends into the underworld in order to retrieve his bride from the hands of Hades. This particular story is dense with mythological references as the Greek God Hades, his wife Persephone, the Furies, the river Styx and many other figures and places from the Greek culture are included.

Another very important mythology that is referenced in the *Sandman* series, is the Norse mythology. In the issue *Season of Mists* the Norse god Odin, his brother Loki and their sibling Thor are introduced. A first reference to this can be found in the scene where Loki is tied upon a rock with the entrails of his own son, while a giant snake is dripping venom in his eyes from the ceiling as can be seen in the excerpt below. (Appendix 2) The Norse mythology is, at first glance, not as important as its Greek counterpart. Odin, Loki and Thor feature a lot less than, for instance, the Furies or Orpheus. However, the freeing of Loki during *Season of Mists* is of vital importance for the furthering of the main story as it is Loki who kidnaps Daniel Hall together with Puck in *The Kindly Ones*. It is because of them that Lyta Hall later turns into a Fury, due to the inability to cope with the loss of her only family. Therefore, the Norse mythology is also indirectly responsible for the death of Morpheus at the end of the issue.

Aside from the traditional mythologies that were mentioned before, Gaiman also introduces his own fictitious mythologies such as the one surrounding the character Nada, with whom Morpheus had a relationship long before the events of the series, in the first chapter of *The Doll’s House* (Appendix 3). This particular story is a bit less important for the storyline than, for instance, the story about Orpheus. However, it does serve a clear purpose as it allows Gaiman, in a very short and independent story, to characterise Morpheus. Aside from being parts in the story where Gaiman’s creativity gains the upper hand, these fictitious side stories allow the reader to have a look inside of Morpheus’ mind. With the example of the short story *Tales in the Sand* in the issue called *The Doll’s House*, Gaiman portrays Morpheus as he was a long time ago (Appendix 4). At the time, he and the human Nada were in love. Nada did not know of Morpheus’ nature as one of the Endless. Hence, when she finally realised that Morpheus was not human, she tried to deny his love for fear that it would serve as both their downfall. (Appendix 5) Eventually, she gave in to her emotions and they made love. The
following morning, however, the universe noticed that something was wrong and the sun destroyed the city of which she was queen. Struck down with sorrow, Nada threw herself from a cliff. Morpheus, relentless in his pursuit of her love, offered her to return to the land of the living, but Nada declined three times. She then passed on to the land of the dead never to return. Eventually, in *Season of Mists*, it turns out that Morpheus was so angry at her decision that he sentenced her to hell for the rest of eternity. However, in the same issue Morpheus is convinced by his sister Death that he had overreacted and he goes on a quest to release Nada from her torment. (Appendix 6) By including this short story in the series, Gaiman facilitates character development for Morpheus. At first, he shows Morpheus as a man of pride who does not take no for an answer and, in his self-centeredness, believes that his opinion is the only right one. In *Season of Mists* Gaiman then alters this image of Morpheus by making him experience regret and by having him persuaded by his sister. It shows that he is not the same Morpheus that existed a few issues ago and that his character is malleable.

Another example of how Gaiman characterises Morpheus through a fictional mythology can be found in *Dream Country* in the short story *A Dream of a Thousand Cats* (Appendix 7) where he creates a story concerning cats and how they came to be subordinate to humans. Morpheus explains that before that time, cats used to be the dominant species on earth and that it was through the power of dreams that humans were able to reverse the roles. The story shows only the perspective of the cats and not that of Morpheus, though, making the story revolve more around the function of cats. However, the story, again, gives an introspective view of Morpheus’ personality and how he functions as a character in the series.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the greater existing mythologies function primarily as a means to build the narrative of the series, whereas their fictional counterparts act as a means of characterising Morpheus.

### 3.1.1.2. Historical Intertextuality

The amount of historical references in the series is rather high. It is probably impossible to list all of them as it is sometimes hard to tell if something is a reference due to a lack of knowledge in terms of historical facts. The most important references, however, are not that hard to discover. A first, major example is the sleepy sickness which is introduced in *Preludes and Nocturnes*. It is a major unexplained event in history, as will be discussed in more detail in the case study on the disease, that is explained through Morpheus’ imprisonment by the sorcerer Roderick Burgess. Because of Burgess’ accidental capture of Dream, the latter cannot perform his duties anymore. This results in disastrous effects all over the world: people fall asleep and never wake up. The timespan in which this takes place is situated by Gaiman to be from 1916
until 1926 which coincides exactly with the encephalitis lethargica pandemic during the same time period.

There are, however, also various minor references that serve primarily to contextualize the setting. For instance, during *The Doll’s House*, Morpheus meets Hob Gadling, who refuses to die, and has a talk with him each century. Every time they meet, the reader is presented with some textual or visual hints to indicate the period that is displayed at the moment. One example of such a reference is the clothing of the various characters. At their first meeting, Gadling is just a peasant in medieval clothing. (Appendix 8) They are talking about how they had lived through the black death, which means that the current setting would be during the middle ages around the year 1400. The second time they meet the reader can see in the background how two persons are discussing the play *Faustus* (Appendix 9). Eventually, it turns out that one of them is the writer Thomas Marlowe and the other one is the young William Shakespeare. This indicates, that the second meeting of Gadling and Morpheus takes place around the year 1600. Another meeting between the two takes place during the late 18th century. Gadling mentions the actress Mrs. Sarah Siddons who “was born in 1755 and died in 1831”. (Encyclopaedia Britannica) Moreover, Morpheus meets Johanna Constantine, who he will later contract to retrieve the head of his son Orpheus from Robespierre (Appendix 10). The latter ruled France for a short period after the French revolution. All these details give away the setting of their meeting. In another meeting, Jack The Ripper is mentioned, which situates the conversation somewhere near the end of the 19th century (Appendix 11). The last meeting between Gadling and Morpheus in *The Doll’s House* takes place in 1989 when Margaret Thatcher tries to push through her controversial Poll Tax as can be overheard by the people chatting in the background (Appendix 12). Moreover, the miner’s strike is mentioned, as well as the AIDS epidemic of the late 20th century. As demonstrated, these details do not really serve any purpose to the actual storyline, they merely give the reader a rough indication of what year it is. Even though this does not really contribute to the narrative, they are references that give the *Sandman* series a ground in reality. All the aforementioned references are actual historical facts and even though not all of them are explained by Morpheus, they still convey a sense of reality to the reader as most of these references are well-known to adults.

As with the mythological references in the series, Gaiman also included some fictional historical references. For instance, in the issue *Fables and Reflections: August* Gaiman tells the story of emperor Caius Julius Caesar Octavius who would later be known as August. In this short story, August apparently disguises himself as a beggar with the help of a dwarf actor (Appendix 13). During the story he explains how he had been suffering from nightmares every
night. One day, August was visited by Morpheus who suggested that he should take one day each year to disguise himself as a beggar so that he could think and plot without the gods of Rome knowing about it. (Appendix 14) Eventually it turns out that August was raped by his uncle, Julius Caesar, when he was still young. In return for his rape, Caesar promised August that he would be the next ruler of the Roman empire and laid out a course of actions for August so that the empire would be prosperous under his rule. August, traumatised by Caesar’s behaviour, wanted revenge and Morpheus showed him the way towards that goal by allowing August to go about his business unnoticed by the Roman gods once a year. In the end, Gaiman suggests that August wilfully put the Roman empire on a course towards destruction by appointing an evil emperor, Tiberius and ensuring that the next emperors would only be worse. (Appendix 15) This side story shows the emperor August in a very different way as the reader would experience him through the history books. Instead of showing August’s achievements as emperor, Gaiman attaches an emotive factor to the story. He humanizes August and portrays him, not as an emperor, but as a victim of child abuse. Anise K. Strong confirms this when she argues that: “Gaiman turns the policy decisions of a paternalistic princeps into a desperate rape survivor’s resistance against an abusive father figure.” (Strong 182) If, however, Augustus ever was raped by his uncle, then Gaiman is still founding the story on pure speculation as no written account of this exists. Moreover, the fact that August dressed up as a beggar to hide from the gods once every year is made up as well.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the bigger historical references such as von Economo’s disease again serve as support for The Sandman’s main narrative, whereas the smaller stories such as August, where he depicts August as a human rather than as an emperor, are another instance of Gaiman appropriating old stories to fit a new audience.

3.1.1.3. Religious Intertextuality

In terms of religious references, The Sandman primarily focuses on the opposition between heaven and hell. More specifically, Gaiman devotes most of the religion-affiliated intertextual elements to Lucifer’s fall from paradise. During Preludes and Nocturnes, it turns out that a demon has come into possession of Morpheus’ helmet. (Appendix 16) The latter then has to undertake a journey towards the centre of hell in order to negotiate a deal with Lucifer himself. This first illustration of hell functions mostly as an introduction to Lucifer and the demons of hell. The actual importance of the inclusion of Lucifer and his domain becomes clearer during Season of Mists in which Lucifer locks down hell and permanently abandons his position as its ruler. There, Gaiman alludes on Milton’s Paradise Lost and plays with the concept of freedom:
“The story of Season of Mists, however, is laced with Miltonic allusion and reference (cf. Porter 5; Souza e Paula). Here Gaiman not only uses Paradise Lost as an intertext to the story arc at hand, but weaves it intricately into the very foundations of his metamyth and the overarching narrative it supports. In some sense, Milton’s Satan becomes the yardstick against which Gaiman measures not only his Lucifer but also Dream.” (Jahlmar 270)

As Jahlmar explains, the story of Lucifer is not only an allusion on the religious concept of the devil, but also a reference to John Milton’s Paradise Lost. Again, Gaiman has not only adapted the story in order to support Morpheus’ narrative, but also to introduce a method of characterization for both Lucifer and Morpheus alike. I will expand further on this in the case study of Lucifer however. Aside from Lucifer, Gaiman also includes angels, such as the angel Duma and Remiel (Appendix 17), and demons, such as Azazel and Beelzebub (Appendix 18), in The Sandman. Moreover, in terms of religion, he tends to prefer referencing religious concepts and places such as penance and purgatory or even good and evil. Other instances of references to religion include, but are not limited to Adam and Eve, Kain and Abel and even God himself.

Another small reference to religion is the short story Fables and Reflections: Ramadan (Appendix 19) in which Gaiman explains how the city of Baghdad used to be “the jewel of Arabia” (Gaiman, Fables and Reflections) and how its king, Haroun Al Raschid, was concerned about how the city would survive through the ages. Afraid that his precious city might one day vanish from existence, Al Raschid makes a bargain with Morpheus, the Lord of Stories and Dreams. Al Raschid would hand over his kingdom to Morpheus if he could ensure that it will live forever (Appendix 20). Morpheus accepts and places the beautiful city of Baghdad in a bottle. In doing so the actual city crumbles and deteriorates and the reader is confronted with king Al Raschid, down on his luck in the slums of Baghdad. As a conclusion to the story, it turns out that the story is being told by a beggar in a contemporary Baghdad where the city is littered with bomb sites and rubble. (Appendix 21). Even though in reality, the marvel that once was Baghdad appears to be gone, Gaiman cleverly keeps his promise by keeping the old splendorous Baghdad alive within the world of stories and dreams. Even though the actual city is bombed to the ground, the old beggar telling the story keeps the city alive just by telling it. On the final page of the story, he also comments on the fact that even though the young boy, who was listening to the story, is having a hard time this Ramadan, he remains faithful that there is still a Baghdad somewhere that is prosperous and full of wonders (Appendix 21). In just one page, Gaiman succeeds in showing how faith in a higher power can result in hope as
he shows the young boy smiling with bright eyes even though he is limping with a crutch through the rubble of his city. In other words, the religious reference here shows how the people of Baghdad remain positive by believing that somewhere, Allah has made it possible that their city still exists as it was before the war came. Aside from being a powerful statement towards religion, this reference can also be seen as an instance of historical intertextuality as the bombings of Baghdad are also a historic fact.

It can be argued that in conclusion, the religious references, aside from being part of the foundation for Morpheus’ storyline, are just like the mythological and historical references, instruments to make the reader look at old stories in a new way. In the case of religion, he shows us how it can be a source of hope and inspiration in the form of stories. Again, Gaiman adapts the traditional stories of religion in order to shine a new light on them.

3.1.1.4. Literary Intertextuality

In this category, I will illustrate the various literary references that are included in the *Sandman* series. Literary references should be understood as the intertextual elements that refer to actual books, authors, plays, etc… that can be found in the *Sandman* series. The first major example of literary intertextuality is William Shakespeare who features in only a few issues of the series, but plays an important role nonetheless. For his character, the intertextuality comes down to the fact that Gaiman explains Shakespeare’s unbelievable talent as a playwright stems from a bargain he made with Morpheus. As he is the Prince of Stories, it is within Morpheus’ power to bestow the gift of extraordinary imagination on Shakespeare. The latter is not granted this gift in return for nothing of course. Morpheus demands that Shakespeare writes two plays for him. A first one is *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which features in *Dream Country* and the second one being *The Tempest* which partially features in *The Wake*. His function, however, will be looked at more thoroughly in the respective cases study in chapter four of this thesis.

Another literary reference in *The Sandman* is made in *The Doll’s House*, where Fiddler’s Green – who is at that point still known as Gilbert – tells the original version of Red Riding Hood to Rose Walker. He explains how Charles Perrault tidied up the original folk tale for “popular consumption” (Appendix 22 & 23) In doing so, Gaiman is playing with the element of adaptations on a metalevel. Instead of adapting the story himself he is actually telling us the real story as it was originally written. By doing so, he shows the reader how an adaptation of a story can convey different morals and is open for different interpretations due to the transposition of context that Hutcheon mentioned in her description of adaptations.

A last literary reference that is particularly striking is the issue *A Game of You* in which Barbie goes on a quest in her own dreams to defeat The Cuckoo and retrieve an artefact called
the Porpentine to complete the Hierogram. These objects, for lack of a better description, are of course imaginary. Bender rightfully points out that this story is strongly reminiscent of *The Wizard of Oz*:

> “Another game played is that of life imitating art, and particularly the art of classic fantasy tales such as *The Wizard of Oz*. Princess Barbie can be seen as Dorothy, and her friends Prinado, Wilkinson and Luz as seeking a brain, a heart and courage – with Martin Tenbones, of course, as Toto. There are also analogues in Barbie’s waking world: Thessaly is a witch; Wanda is from Kansas; the hurricane that blows down Barbie’s building is like the tornado in *The Wizard of Oz* gone horribly wrong [...]” (Bender 116)

The similarities with the original story are omnipresent. However, the content of the story differs vastly. Again, this is an instance of adaptation by Gaiman who alters the story so much that it is pretty hard to recognize the original version. Whereas the original is concerned with identity in terms of finding out that you are capable of more than you think because greatness is already inside you, Barbie’s version plays with identity on a different level. Bender claims that “To properly play *A Game of You* is to use your fantasies, not let them use you. And to recognize that if you look closely enough at any person, you’ll find secret worlds that are surprising, frightening, and wondrous.” (Bender 117) In other words, Gaiman has reversed the story in such a way that it does not encourages the reader to look inside him- or herself, but not to be superficial or prejudiced towards other people. To underline this idea, Gaiman did not shy away from naming his characters after stereotypes. This is represented in Barbie’s name, which is obviously a reference to the Barbie dolls. Her boyfriend Ken being an unmistakable representation of the accompanying Ken doll. (Appendix 24) Moreover, Gaiman introduces some controversial characters such as the lesbian couple Foxglove and Hazel or the transwoman Wanda. (Appendix 25 & 26) These minorities are then given an important role in the rescue of Barbie. In doing so, Gaiman emphasizes the notion that we should not be shallow or prejudiced and that we should actually try to understand a person before judging them.

Finally, it can be said that literary intertextuality, much like the previous categories, also serves as a support for altering older stories and breathing new life into them. The example of Barbie’s version of *The Wizard of Oz* shows us exactly that and stimulates the reader not to be superficial. Moreover, this is the case for most instances of literary Intertextuality. This will be further illustrated in the case study on Shakespeare.
3.1.1.5. Involvement of Other DC Characters

As a last category of intertextuality, I would like to touch upon the involvement of other DC characters in the Sandman series. In almost all issues of the series, the reader can encounter characters that exist in other comics from the DC universe. In Preludes and Nocturnes, Morpheus works together with John Constantine who is known from the Hellblazer comics (appendix 27). Kain and Abel (appendix 28), aside from being an instance of religious intertextuality, can also be included in this category as they have featured in some other DC comics as well, namely: House of Mysteries and House of Secrets. Doctor D, who appears near the end of Preludes and Nocturnes used to be known as Doctor Destiny (appendix 29), another DC character. J’onn the Martian (appendix 30), whom Morpheus encounters in his pursuit of the insane Doctor D is a member of the Justice League. He too is an existing DC character who sees Morpheus as his lord.

Contrary to the previous categories, there is not much to be said in terms of adaptations here, as most of these characters make too short of an appearance in the series to be seen as one. Most of them only feature in a few tiles and are barely mentioned otherwise. The case of Wesley Dodds, however, will serve as a basis for my analysis in chapter four of this thesis, as Morpheus’ character is partially inspired on him.

In the case of Lyta Hall, Gaiman has actually not adapted her story, but expanded on it during the events of The Doll’s House. As she is pregnant of Daniel Hall, who will later become the reincarnation of Morpheus, she does have a key role in the series. In fact, Lyta Hall will eventually ensure Morpheus’ demise in The Kindly Ones. Aside from the fact that she enables a big part of the main narrative, it is my opinion that she is merely a means to an end for Gaiman. As C.W. Marshall states:

“Gaiman’s story presents Dream and his siblings operating on a cosmic scale. Nevertheless, it is the repercussions of these events from The Sandman 11 and 12 that lead to the story arc of The Kindly Ones. Lyta, the Fury, invokes the Furies because of what Dream, the Sandman, has done to her son […]” (Marshall 92)

Moreover, she argues “In writing the series, Gaiman was under no obligation to draw upon the earlier DC Comics Legacy: The Sandman could have operated independently of the larger continuity […]” (Marshall 92) This means that Gaiman could have established the series without including Lyta Hall as she appeared in the Wonder Woman comics. However, not including her would have problematized the inclusion of the Furies as she is often associated as being part of them in the DC universe. Hence, in her case, she was included in the series out
of sheer necessity. The function of the other characters, though, can be reduced to the function of attempting to root Morpheus’ character into the DC universe, so that the readers who were already familiar with its other characters could relate more easily with the Morpheus’ narrative.

To wrap up this category, it suffices to say that the reference of other DC heroes is often just an attempt to grant Morpheus a holdfast in the vast DC universe. By having him be known by other DC heroes, Gaiman evokes the impression that Morpheus has been there all along and that he had just not been written about yet. In other cases, such as that of Lyta Hall, the function of these references can again be seen in terms of sustaining the main narrative.

3.1.2. Intertextuality as a Narrative Framework

As has been illustrated in the previous five chapters, the Sandman series is heavy with all kinds of intertextual references. A somewhat critical reader might justly experience the plethora of references in the series to be very confusing. However, Justin Mellette already pointed out that though this may seem to be the case, the truth is that there is definitely an underlying structure to it:

“While the numerous one-offs, multiple story lines, and monthly serialization seemingly make a thorough thematic and structural examination of The Sandman impossible, a close reading of the text reveals that a meticulous structure was in place from the series’ early issues, dispelling claims that, unlike one-volume graphic novels, monthly comics are marred by an unfocused, “made up as you go” mentality.” (Mellette 320)

This shows that Gaiman has not just amalgamated a bunch of stories to fill up his comics, but that he has in fact grafted his own story on the stories of various cultures, religions, mythologies and even history itself. In doing so, Gaiman succeeds in effectively establishing a narrative framework that both establishes and confirms Morpheus’ plotline. By including characters such as Shakespeare or mentioning and explaining inexplicable events in history such as the encephalitis lethargica disease in the early twentieth century, he gives the Morpheus storyline a basis in reality. The references to mythologies, religions and even other DC characters almost fool the reader into believing that Morpheus has been there all along. It assures that the reader believes that Morpheus is the creator of all narratives and reinforces his status as the Prince of Stories and Lord of Dreams. Moreover, he links all these different stories together with one all-encompassing narrative. Morpheus seems to serve as a melting pot for every culture, dream or story that has ever been.
Another general function of these references can be formulated as an attempt to renew older stories. As it turned out from the above examples, Gaiman has adapted several smaller stories that are not important for the sustainability of the main narrative, but function as instruments to characterize Morpheus. What’s more is that they often present the reader with a new perspective in regards to older stories in that they deal with thematises that are relevant for contemporary readers. How he does this will be studied further in the next chapter by means of several case studies.
4. Case Studies

In this final chapter of my research paper, I will analyse the narratological structures of the *Sandman* according to the theoretical framework that was laid out in the previous chapter. Firstly, I will discuss how a sickness in the early 1920’s served as the initial touchstone for the conception of the *Sandman*. I will explain how Gaiman has filled up ‘empty slots’ in history and culture with an entirely new storyline, successfully enabling the creation of a narrative arc which encompasses numerous cultures, religions, and fictitious realms. Secondly, I will discuss the case of Orpheus by looking at how Gaiman has adapted the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Gaiman’s attempt to look at the story from a different perspective will be examined and the bilateral relationship between adaptation and adapted text will be investigated. Thirdly, we will look at the character of Wesley Dodds. Even though he is a minor character that only appears briefly in the series, his presence is very important as it is evidence of how Gaiman has established the story of Morpheus on the foundations of different existing stories. As a fourth case study, I will explain the function of Lucifer Morningstar in the series and look at how Gaiman has adapted the original Miltonian version of the fall from heaven. Finally, the character of William Shakespeare will be discussed. In his case, I will demonstrate how Gaiman uses him partly as cultural elevation for the comic and partly as a means of meta-reflexivity.

4.1. Encephalitis Lethargica as an Example of Historical Intertextuality

In this chapter, we will be looking at an example of historical intertextuality. In the issue *Preludes and Nocturnes*, Gaiman indicates how Morpheus’ imprisonment by the wizard Burgess causes an outbreak of an inexplicable disease. Encephalitis lethargica – roughly translated as the “brain infection which makes you sleepy” – affected millions of people during the early 20th century. This sickness, discovered in 1917 by the scientist Constantin von Economo, actually exists and Gaiman uses its mysterious qualities as building blocks for the *Sandman* storyline.

4.1.1. How the Inexplicable Can Be a Start

A first case of the sometimes deadly encephalitis lethargica surfaces in Austria. Soon thereafter, more cases start to show up in countries all over the world. Great Britain and the U.S.A. being hit the hardest. The disease puts people to sleep, sometimes never to wake up again. Scientists and health ministers all over the world are clueless as to what may be the cause of this mysterious sleeping disease. In 1920, the concern about the disease was so dramatic that there was an emergency meeting of the “Comité Permanent de l’Office International d’Hygiène Public in Paris.” (Association of Schools of Public Health 602) Even then, scientist were already
at a loss for what treatment they should apply in order to cure the disease. Some of the severest cases that were reported resulted in death or even worse: an infinite coma. The symptoms of the disease are described as follows:

“The somnolent-opthalmoplegic form of EL [encephalitis lethargica] […] was characterized by a brief, nonspecific prodrome consisting of malaise, headache, and mild fever. […] The patient became increasingly somnolent until he fell into a deep sleep from which he could easily be roused, but into which he immediately relapsed when stimulation ceased. Somnolence usually lasted 1 or 2 weeks, after which it worsened, resulting in coma leading to death […].” (Reid et al. 663)

Some patients in their early 20’s fell asleep and never really woke up anymore. It is one of the greatest medical mysteries of the early 20th century. Without a clear cut explanation to what may have caused this outbreak of a deadly and gruesome disease, the populace started speculating and numerous theories about how the disease may be linked to other diseases such as the Spanish flu arose. Even today, there is no consensus about the cause of the sleeping sickness that swept the world after the first World War. Today, scientists claim that “Assuming a population of approximately 300,000,000 in Western Europe in 1920, a total of 80,000-120,000 cases of EL during the epidemic period is a reasonable estimate.” (Reid et al. 666) In other words, the extent of the disease was widespread and even today, the origins of the disease are obscure to say the least.

When Gaiman was contracted by Vertigo to develop an entirely new comic, he was met with the problem of innovation. How do you create an entirely new superhero in a universe where so many heroes already existed? Gaiman himself explains where he got his inspiration:

“A major defining factor was my wanting him to be part of the DC Universe. Because if someone as powerful as the Sandman was running all the dreams in the world, a natural question would be ‘Why haven’t we heard about him by now?’ The answer I came up with was ‘He’s been locked away.’ And that solution formed an image in my head of a naked man in a glass cell. My next question was ‘How long had he been trapped there?’ […] I’d read Oliver Sack’s book a few months earlier, so I knew about the encephalitis lethargica, or ‘sleepy sickness,’ that had swept Europe in 1916. Scientists had no idea what caused it, and I loved the idea of blaming it on the Sandman’s imprisonment, so I determined the length of his stay to be seventy-two years – ending in late 1988, when the series debuted.” (Bender 235)
In this excerpt, Gaiman explains how he got to creating the Sandman as a character. He took advantage of the fact that nobody knew where the encephalitis lethargica came from and invented a backstory to its origins by creating an entirely new one that served as an explanation. Morpheus’ accidental capture by Roderick Burgess (Appendix 31) functions as a starting point for the series and at the same time as an explanation for the sleeping sickness. Morpheus was imprisoned and hence he could not execute his job. The realm of dreams was in disarray and with no lord to keep all the dreams in check, the dreamworld soon fell apart. This then led to the sleepy sickness pandemic (Appendix 32). People started falling asleep and remained asleep, or in a “somnolent state” as Reid calls it. Gaiman illustrates this by depicting several different humans who are suffering from the disease. (Appendix 33) One of them is Unity Kinkaid who gets raped without knowing it.

If we look at the entire series as a chronotope of regeneration – all is well but then Morpheus is imprisoned and he has to start repairing the damage that was done while he was absent – then we could define Gaiman’s use of encephalitis lethargica as the start of a cycle of degeneration. Morpheus is imprisoned and suddenly everything starts going downhill. Hence, the disease does not only function as a starting point, it serves as a setup for the entire story. The importance of this intertextual element should therefore not be underestimated. For instance, it is due to the inclusion of the sickness that Unity Kinkaid is impregnated by a stranger. The same goes for characters such as Wesley Dodds, whose alter ego as the human Sandman is explained through the disease. (Appendix 34) But as I said before, the disease is not only explained by Morpheus, it also, in a way, explains him too.

4.1.2. Narratological Implications

If we look at the relationship between the disease and Morpheus, then we can generally define it as a cause and effect relationship. Such a relationship implies that when one element is taken away, the other becomes destabilised as well. If we take away Morpheus, in the context of the Sandman series, then the disease would never happen and Gaiman would have to find another explanation. Take away the disease and there is no reason to assume that anything is wrong in the realm of Dreams and hence the narrative of the Sandman would be destabilized. Moreover, the disease is real. Actual people, maybe even readers, have lived through or experienced the disease with a relative. The disease can thus apply to the audience as it is a relatable situation. This is of course a matter of knowing and unknowing audiences. A knowing audience will probably experience the story differently as for them the context of the disease is clear and it is easy for them to see how Gaiman has altered it. For them the intertextuality of
the disease will probably reaffirm Morpheus’ position in history as they will understand how he fits into the history of the disease. But even if the reader has never heard about it, they can still read up on it in order to better understand what Gaiman has written about. An unknowing audience can still make the same connections as a knowing audience as they are in the possession of enough context to understand that Morpheus is a fictional character who is being made responsible for causing a disease.

In terms of adaptations, we can say that Gaiman has not really adapted the intertextual reference of the encephalitis lethargica outbreak that much. The timespan in which the epidemic happened is still largely the same in *The Sandman*. The symptoms are realistic and its extent is similar to that of the actual disease. What he has adapted, however, is the explanation. Whereas the original disease could not directly be linked to any cause, Gaiman uses this lack of information as a means of creation. Much like a missing link, he introduces Morpheus as the cause for the disease. In doing so, he reinforces the story surrounding Morpheus by giving his imprisonment certain repercussions that actually happened in the 20th century and he also complements the history of the disease by filling up the gap in its history. This ensures that the reader experiences the story as if it was actually part of reality. In other words, the only transposition that is happening in this case, is the transposition of context as the cause of the disease is now explained. The other aspects of adaptation are not present however. Gaiman had no need to appropriate the setting of the disease to the expectations of his audience as the scene still takes place in the early 20th century. In terms of salvaging, we can conclude that he has salvaged the entire story and just expanded on it by introducing entirely new elements as additions to the story. The intertextual engagement of encephalitis lethargica is therefore reduced to the audience’s general knowledge of the disease and the fact that there is no explanation for it.

In other words: Gaiman uses a hiatus in the world’s history, namely the inexplicable cause of the encephalitis lethargica outbreak, and uses it as an opening in the DC Universe to introduce an entirely new character. Mind that the Sandman was not created at that moment in the sense that he came into existence due to the sleepy sickness. Gaiman used, what I like to call, an empty slot in history as a touchstone for an entirely new storyline. Morpheus was already there, he was just introduced to the audience’s attention because of his capture which directly affected the world. Gaiman uses the disease as a way of having the reader indirectly relate with Morpheus through a sickness that actually exists in the reader’s own world. Even though the Encephalitis Lethargica may just serve as the starting point for the series, Gaiman uses plenty more of these ‘empty slots’ in his work as I will demonstrate in the next case studies as well.
As a general conclusion for this case study, however, it can be noted that the implementation of the encephalitis lethargica disease is an instance of how Gaiman creates something new from something which already existed and was inexplicable. Moreover, the disease functions as a foundation for the rest of the *Sandman* narrative.

4.2. Orpheus and Eurydice as an Example of Mythological Intertextuality

One of the most important stories within the *Sandman* series has to be that of Orpheus and Eurydice as it functions as it is a key event in Morpheus’ story line. In this case study, we will be looking closer at how Gaiman included the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in the series and how he adapted it to enable Morpheus’ further storyline. Moreover, we will again analyse the narratological and creative implications that the story offers for the rest of the *Sandman* story.

4.2.1. Adaptation of Orpheus and Eurydice

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is one about love and death. I will start off with giving a brief synopsis of the story in order to make the rest of the analysis clearer. Orpheus is in love with Eurydice, but the latter gets bitten by a snake and dies. Struck with grief, Orpheus applies to the compassion of the God of the underworld, Hades, to get his beloved Eurydice back. He does this by using his extraordinary abilities as a musician to play a tear-jerking melody on his harp. Eventually he succeeds in swaying Hades, who agrees to letting Eurydice return to the land of the living under one condition: Orpheus cannot look back at her while he guides her out of the underworld. If he does so, she will remain there forever. Of course, no tragedy ever has a happy ending and Orpheus succumbs to his own doubts, thinking that Hades’ promise was a fluke, and looks back only to realize his own mistake as he sees Eurydice behind him. The tragic hero has to return to the living world alone to never live happily ever after.

In *The Sandman: "Fables and Reflections"*, Gaiman adapts the story slightly. The course of the myth remains largely the same. While Orpheus is playing his song to Hades and his wife, Persephone, all of the underworld is listening along. This includes other mythical figures such as Ixion, Sisyphus and even the Furies – who are the most interesting and will be of dire importance for the rest of the story. What Gaiman did adapt, however, is the fact that Morpheus, or Oneiros as he calls himself in the realm of Orpheus, is Orpheus’ father. Apparently, Orpheus and Calliope were responsible for Orpheus’ conception. This added detail is very important for Morpheus’ own storyline. As has been said before, the Furies were present at Orpheus’ performance, so they share an indirect connection with his father. Even though Orpheus made the Furies cry, they do not act out any form of revenge onto him. However, Persephone makes an ominous remark about how Orpheus made the Furies cry and that they will never forgive
him for that in *Fables and Reflections* (Appendix 35). In any case, the story itself does not differ too much from the original myth. What does make it different, is that Gaiman created an extra storyline for Orpheus.

When Orpheus escapes the underworld without his beloved Eurydice, he is downtrodden with sorrow and has lost all his will to live. Instead of returning to the human world, Orpheus chooses to spend his days in the wilderness playing sad songs. When Calliope comes to warn him that the Bacchante are coming his way, Orpheus refuses to leave (Appendix 36). The Bacchante arrive and tear Orpheus apart, all the while gorging themselves on his flesh. For some reason, however, Orpheus does not die, even though his head gets severed from his body. After being thrown in a river and then washing up on the shore of some ocean, Morpheus comes along, commenting that Orpheus will be taken care of by a group of Greek priests and that he will never see his son again as the latter has explicitly told Morpheus that he does not acknowledge him as his father anymore. (Appendix 37) Orpheus’ head then journeys around against his will, falling in the hands of Robespierre during the French revolution and then being recaptured by lady Constantine. (Appendix 38) Eventually, Orpheus winds up on a Greek island where he is tended by a cult of Greek priests. Finally, Morpheus comes around and makes peace with his son. He grants Orpheus his last wish: to finally die. In the end, it is Morpheus who lays his own son to rest. (Appendix 39)

In classical literature, the story of Orpheus, thus, stops after he returns from the underworld without Euridyce. The adaptation therefore consists of Gaiman’s interpretation of how Orpheus was destroyed by the Bacchante and how his head remained alive and found its way around the world through other characters. Moreover, a major adaptation is that Morpheus is portrayed as Orpheus’ father. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, however, “[…] Orpheus was the son of a Muse (probably Calliope, the patron of epic poetry) and Oeagrus, a king of Thrace (other versions give Apollo)” (Encyclopaedia Britannica) There seems to be some confusion on who his father really is in traditional mythology. This can be seen as another instance of the inexplicable serving as a slot in history, in which Gaiman can insert his own solution. The confusion on Orpheus’ lineage enables Gaiman to write his own conclusion to the question of who the real father was. Moreover, Gaiman alludes on this confusion in *Fables and Reflections* when Morpheus appears in one of Caius Octavius’ dreams. The latter thinks Morpheus is Apollo, to which Morpheus cleverly replies: “I am not Apollo. I am no sun god. But poets and dreamers are my people and it is not unheard-of for us to be confused.” Gaiman makes Morpheus himself acknowledge the confusion about his persona. In doing so, he creates the opportunity to align Apollo with Morpheus and therefore adds another dimension to the
confusion. This can be seen as another instance of creating a new storyline out of the inexplicable.

4.2.2. Narratological Implications

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, Gaiman does not really fill a gap in the myth of Orpheus. Instead, he singles out a certain aspect of the myth, namely the discussion about who Orpheus’ father is, and seemingly solves the problem by introducing an entirely new character into the story. Even though Morpheus himself might not be either of the two possible fathers suggested through traditional mythology, Gaiman cleverly solves that by subtly suggesting that Morpheus is often confused with the god Apollo (Appendix 40). Therefore, he introduces a new instance of confusion which makes it entirely possible that Morpheus is in fact father to Orpheus. As with the previous case study about encephalitis lethargica, Gaiman uses this method to root the narrative of the series into reality.

Due to Gaiman’s adaptation of Orpheus’ story, however, the reader is also offered the opportunity of looking at the entire myth of Orpheus from a new perspective. Instead of solely focusing on the theme of lost love during the *Orpheus and Eurydice* chapters, Gaiman includes another relationship into the myth, namely the relationship between Orpheus and Morpheus. In fact, Gaiman gives the father-son relationship a lot more attention. In doing so, Gaiman effectively shifts thematises from the traditional love story towards a very different instance of love: the love of one’s child or the love for one’s father. The scene where Orpheus visits the dreaming to have an audience with his father is very telling of how their relationship works. For instance, when Orpheus first talks to his father, the latter tries to comfort him. Morpheus being an entity of a much greater intelligence than his human son, sees things differently. Morpheus is obsessed with rules and responsibilities and gives his down-to-earth vision on the matter: Eurydice is dead and that is how fate has decided it to be. His advice to Orpheus is that he should say his farewells and go on with his life. (Appendix 41) However, Orpheus is still a child of the Greek mythology. Gaiman opposes the traditional rebellious nature of Orpheus to the pragmatic character of Morpheus, who according to Bender “Thousands of years before his imprisonment in Roderick Burgess’s basement, this is a Sandman who takes adherence to rules much more seriously than the feelings of other… including his own son.” (Bender 137) Even though they are father and son, there is a generation gap. Orpheus is still young and inexperienced, whereas Morpheus is older than time itself and believes that everything happens for a reason and that interfering with the natural order of things would be a mistake. Because of their disagreement, Orpheus decides to leave his father against his better judgement. From this perspective, Orpheus’ move to gain access to the underworld in order to bring Eurydice
back from the dead could not only be seen as a desperate last move to regain lost love, but also as a move of rebellion against his father. It puts the entire story in a different light as it shows Orpheus defiance, not towards a god, but towards his father. Instead of the traditional Greek myth in which he has to face a god in order to get his wife back, this time, he is faced with his own father. It could be argued that Morpheus is a god as well, however, Morpheus does not have the power to stop his son from doing what he wants. In fact, he never even attempts to stop his son from breaking the rules. This could be seen as a way of giving Orpheus independence in his actions, but it is my conviction, that Morpheus simply stops caring about his son from the moment that Orpheus proclaims that he has no father anymore. (Appendix 42)

This brings us back to the function of the adaptation in itself. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, adaptations have several functions in the Sandman. In the case of Orpheus, the main function, however, is that it breathes life into an older story. Gaiman does not just reiterate a myth as a way of adding some extra value to the series; he supplements the same story with a new context. By adapting the father character in the myth of Orpheus, he explicitly moves away from the powerlessness of humans towards gods and makes it about the powerlessness of both a son and a father. Not only is Orpheus powerless in terms of persuading his father to do something about the situation, but Morpheus himself is powerless as well, as he does not even attempt to stop his son from what will turn out to be his demise. Because of that, the story changes its tone completely and becomes more relatable for the contemporary reader. Whereas the traditional myth is somewhat strange to a 21st century reader as it involves Gods and the underworld, Gaiman’s adaptation seems accessible as it involves family issues which every reader can at some point relate to. According to Hutcheon, Gaiman is not alone in utilising this technique:

“Priscilla Galloway, an adapter of mythic and historical narratives for children and young adults, has said that she is motivated by a desire to preserve stories that are worth knowing but will not necessarily speak to a new audience without creative ‘reanimation’, and that is her task.” (Hutcheon 8)

As Gaiman himself reanimates myths, his motivation might be aligned with that of Priscilla Galloway. He deems the moral of Orpheus’ myth worth of public knowledge and tries to make it more accessible by ‘reanimating’ it so that a new audience can enjoy it again. Hence, Gaiman does not only use the Orpheus myth as a touchstone for Morpheus’ own storyline, but he also introduces another theme that is important to the story but also stands on itself.
As a conclusion to this case study, we can deduce that Gaiman, in a similar fashion as with the sleepy sickness, has introduced Morpheus in a story where there was an instance of confusion. Even though the discussion about the father of Orpheus is not as debated as the origin of the encephalitis lethargica outbreak, it still qualifies as a slot in which Gaiman could insert Morpheus as the possible solution and therefore enable the rest of the adapted story. In terms of adaptation, there is again a radical transposition of context as the focus of the story deviates from the theme of the original text. The father-son relationship overshadows the traditional theme of lost love between Orpheus and Eurydice. The subject of Orpheus’ rebellion against his father can also be linked to the transposition of medium. The original tragedy has been converted into a comic, which signifies how the original qualities of the epic – heroic deeds such as getting one’s wife back from the land of the dead out of undying love – are transformed into more relatable feelings of rebellion against an oppressor. In that regard, we can also see Gaiman’s version of the story as an appropriated version of the original with which he wants to apply to his contemporary audience by renewing an older story and adding accessible emotions to the story. In terms of intertextual engagement, an unknowing audience will still be able to draw enough information from the context of the comic to understand the story. A knowing audience, however, will be able to see where the differences are and will probably understand Gaiman’s intentions better when reading his adaptation. As a general remark, we should note that the most relevant intention of the adaptation is to blow new life into an existing story and to characterize Morpheus through the relationship between him and his son.

4.3. Wesley Dodds as an Example of Involvement of Other DC Characters

In this third case study, we will be looking closer at the character of Wesley Dodds. To the less observant reader, this character might be easily missed as he only appears on one page in the entire series. Gaiman introduces him in the issue Preludes and Nocturnes, where it is explained that Dodds takes on the alias of the Sandman as an indirect consequence of Morpheus’ imprisonment (Appendix 43). Even though his appearance in the series is almost negligible considering that he features in only one page of the estimated 2000 pages of the entire series, his function is still rather important to the more attentive reader. His case study will serve as a representation of how smaller stories can also contribute a lot to the all-encompassing narrative of the Sandman series.
4.3.1. Reinventing an Existing Character

When Gaiman was hired by DC Comics in 1987, Karen Berger, who was the Liaison for DC, asked Gaiman what he wanted to write after finishing his current project named *Black Orchid*. Gaiman replied that he maybe wanted to “do something with DC’s version of the Sandman from the 1970’s.” (Bender 22) Initially, DC was not very impressed with this proposal. It was only a few months later when Gaiman got a call from Berger saying that they were going to postpone the publishing of *Black Orchid* that DC gave him the green light to start writing on the *Sandman* series. Reinventing, of course, means sticking to the general concept of the character, but adapting it so that the character eventually receives an entirely new persona. Gaiman could have just taken over the name and fame of the old character and created something entirely new without referring to the original version. However, he did not get rid of the original entirely. Instead, he used its existence and its legacy as a way to promote the new Sandman among the veteran readers of DC comics. Allow me to elaborate on that.

According to Keith Murphy, who wrote an article on the origins of *The Sandman* the original Sandman was:

“[…] in the late thirties and forties, […] a kind of Batman Lite. Millionaire Wesley Dodds, at night, would put on gas mask, fedora, and cape, hunt down bad guys, and zap them with his gas gun, leaving them to sleep until the cops picked them up the next morning -- hardly the stuff of legend.” (Murphy 16)

The character already existed in the DC universe and was thought out by Jack Kirby. Murphy then quotes Gaiman himself, who explains where the idea of reviving this Sandman originated from and why he was so inspired by the character:

“When Karen asked what I wanted to do next, I had suggested a *Sandman* graphic novel, featuring the old Simon and Kirby 1970s incarnation because there were a few things that I thought were really interesting. I liked the idea of a character who lived in dreams, who had no objective existence.” (Murphy 15)

Gaiman was inspired by the concept of the character and what it stood for, rather than by the character itself. Hence, as Wesley Dodds was an abandoned character who was apparently a slimmed down version of Batman, Gaiman decided to redefine the character completely and salvaged only the components that he thought were most interesting. Julia Round rightfully
pointed out that: ”[…] in the hands of writer Neil Gaiman The Sandman became a mythological epic, sharing little more than a name with Jack Kirby’s golden-age series.” (Round 2)

4.3.2. Narratological Implications

Instead of cutting all ties with the original character, Gaiman nevertheless decided to include Wesley Dodds in the series as well. In my opinion, he did not just do this to honour Kirby’s character by having him make a cameo in the series. The reader should keep in mind that the issue in which Dodds appears is the very first issue of The Sandman. Gaiman, as a writer of comics, was practically unknown at the time. Even though Kirby’s Sandman had been out of production for a few years already, Gaiman used his character as a means of applying to the more dedicated reader base of DC. By introducing a veteran of the DC universe in the opening issue of The Sandman, Gaiman ensured that the more experienced readers of the DC comics would already have a point of recognition. Morpheus was an entirely different character than Wesley Dodds, so the readers would be rather confused when The Sandman suddenly concerned the Lord of Dreams instead of the billionaire vigilante that roamed the streets at night. The inclusion of a familiar character would apply to the reader’s knowledge of the previous comics. Of course, the reader would have to be part of a knowing audience, as an unknowing audience would not be able to identify Wesley Dodds as an intertextual reference as there is absolutely no context to explain where Dodds originates from. The reference of Wesley Dodds, firstly, places Morpheus in the same DC universe. At first glance, this seems like an obvious move by Gaiman to easily associate Morpheus with DC, however, there is a lot more going on under the surface. The case of Wesley Dodds is not just a case of intertextuality, it is also a case of adaptation on several levels.

A first level of adaptation is the transformation of Dodds into Morpheus. In Hutcheon’s terms, there is a clear indication of contextual transposition as the character is placed in an entirely new environment. He is no longer human, but the personification of stories and dreams. He is also not a typical comic book hero as Dodds was, but rather a side-actor, whose story is defined by other stories. Gaiman has effectively salvaged those components of the Wesley Dodds character that he found interesting and workable. A second level of adaptation is concerned with how Gaiman has adapted the story of Dodds himself. In only three tiles, Gaiman successfully characterizes Dodds and adapts his story. In the first tile, he illustrates him as a stereotypical wealthy man, sitting in his library smoking a pipe and wearing his bathrobe. The next two tiles he is depicted while he is fighting crime in his Sandman costume. What is so masterful about these three tiles, is how Gaiman, in only one description in the first tile, adapts his entire story by commenting “The universe knows someone is missing and slowly it attempts
to replace him.” (Appendix 43) This particular line completely changes the way the reader experiences Dodds, as he now has a reason to exist. He is not just some bored billionaire trying to kill time; no, he is the universe’s answer to Morpheus’ imprisonment. This sheds an entirely new light on the Sandman series by Jack Kirby as Gaiman now provided Wesley Dodds with a motive for his nightly actions. In just one single sentence, he creates an entirely new perspective for the old Sandman. In the meanwhile, he ties both Dodds and Morpheus so tightly together, that we can see their relationship, again, as a cause and effect relationship such as with the case study on encephalitis lethargica. Take away the cause, Morpheus, and the effect, Wesley Dodds, is destabilized. Hence, Gaiman not only reinforces Morpheus’ place in the DC universe, he also redefines and strengthens Dodds’ place. On a third level, Gaiman also places his Sandman above Kirby’s Sandman. By making Morpheus a sort of god, after a fashion, and not just a human, he already creates a hierarchical distance between the two. This notion is further emphasized by the fact that Wesley Dodds talents are explained to be a result of something that happened to Morpheus. Dodds, is the aftereffect of an event, whereas Morpheus is the cause. This makes Dodds existence dependent of Morpheus. This is of course ironic, as Morpheus probably never would have been created by Gaiman, had Kirby’s Sandman never been written. Hence, on a metalevel, Morpheus is the aftereffect of Dodds. Gaiman cleverly reverses those roles and, in doing so, creates a character that seems to be superior to the one it is based on.

As a conclusion to this case study, we can therefore ascertain that, even though Wesley Dodds is a very small intertextual reference and can hardly be called a side story in the series, his appearance in the first issue of The Sandman by Gaiman has an important role in the series. Even though only a knowing audience is capable of determining what is meant with Dodds’ cameo, it should be clear now that Gaiman probably intended on rooting his own adaptation into the DC universe by tying Dodds’ fate together with that of Morpheus. Moreover, he also puts Dodds’ existence in perspective by expanding on his story as Gaiman already did with the encephalitis lethargica pandemic. This shows us that even the smallest reference or adaptation in the series can serve a clear cut purpose as it can establish a character in an existing universe of older stories.

4.4. Lucifer Morningstar as an Example of Religious Intertextuality

In this case study the character of Lucifer Morningstar will be discussed. I will be looking at how Gaiman has endeavoured to create a counterweight to Morpheus’ perception of responsibilities by playing out his Lucifer against the Miltonian version. Moreover, this case
study will illustrate how Gaiman uses adaptations to convey his own interpretation of an original text.

4.4.1. The Adaptation of the Miltonian Lucifer

In the issue *The Sandman: Season of Mists*, Gaiman dedicates an entire story to Lucifer. The plot of the story revolves around Morpheus who returns to hell to free Nada, whom he imprisoned there. When he arrives there, he suspects that Lucifer will not let him have her without a fight. However, Lucifer, in an unprecedented plot twist, decides to shut down hell, forsakes his position as its regent and leaves the realm in the hands of Morpheus. (Appendix 44) The latter one is of course befuddled by this decision. Morpheus, as has been mentioned before, places high value in responsibilities and is appalled that Lucifer just gives up on his own. Lucifer then asks Morpheus to cut off his wings, so that he may go and live among mortals. Afterwards, he hands over the key to hell and leaves. Morpheus then has to decide what to do with the empty hell. Soon thereafter all kinds of gods and other entities turn up in his realm claiming that they are the rightful successors to Lucifer. (Appendix 45) In the end, Morpheus decides that the realm of hell should be handed over to the angels Remiel and Duma. Remiel is then told by God that he and Duma should be the new regents of hell. However, if they become the rulers of hell, they are hitherto banished from the silver city. God’s reasoning for this decision is that hell is a direct reflection of heaven. They both define one another, so there must be a hell in order for there to be a heaven and hell cannot be entrusted to anyone other than someone who serves God directly. Duma and Remiel, who are of course not so happy with this since they now have to spend eternity in a place where they seemingly do not belong, claim that they will rebel against God. Because of this, Duma and Remiel are involuntarily banished to hell, much like Lucifer once was, as both angels have now made the same mistake. (Appendix 46) In the end, Duma and Remiel come to terms with their position and hell is restored. (Appendix 47)

Whereas Milton’s Paradise Lost is about Lucifer’s fall from heaven and attempt to rebel against God, this adaptation actually replaces him by different angels and opens up a new perspective on the story. According to Joakim Jahlmar:

“Gaiman draws upon the ambivalent theological dimensions of Paradise Lost not to present his own concept of good and evil but rather to discuss the freedom to change and the damnation inherent in the inability to change as part of the human condition, while re-reading Milton’s epic and the character of Satan.” (Jahlmar 269)
He argues that Gaiman has not used Milton’s epic to introduce a dichotomy of good and evil in
the series, but rather to illustrate how change is a trait of the free and the inability to change is
characteristic for the damned. When comparing that with what Scott Elledge claims to be the
topic in *Paradise Lost*, it turns out that the difference is not that great:

“This [Paradise Lost] is a poem in which Satan leads a revolution against an absolute
monarch and in which questions of tyranny, servitude, and liberty are debated in a parliament
in Hell. Milton’s readers are hereby challenged to rethink these topics and […] to make
crucial distinctions between God as a monarch and earthly kings.” (Elledge 1944)

Elledge also claims that the “the great themes of *Paradise Lost* are intimately linked to the
political questions at stake in the English Revolution and the Restoration […]” (Elledge 1944)
That is to say, Milton wrote the epic while living through a revolution and the restoration of the
English monarchy. The topics he touches on are relevant to his own time. Having experienced
the tyranny of kings and having witnessed the failure of a republic, the question of a good state
model is very relevant to Milton’s audience. Furthermore, he alludes on how religion plays a
role in all of this.

In *The sandman*, however, this story is adapted entirely. Of course, Gaiman’s audience is
not Milton’s audience, hence has to cater to the needs of people in the late 20th century. Instead
of making Lucifer a character of religion, he turns him into an example of rebellion and change.
Instead of having him plot against God in the depths of hell, while consulting his peers, Lucifer
decides to just leave hell behind. He is tired of the role he was put in and wants to be free to do
what he wants. Instead of overthrowing God, he just plainly quits his job. He closes down hell
and simply leaves. There is no epic battle plan or underlying motif. Lucifer is just tired of his
position as regent of Hell. In terms of adaptation, Gaiman has completely transposed Lucifer’s
context. In the Miltonian tradition, the context of rebellion against a royal oppressor seems a
lot more relevant. For Gaiman, that is not the case. Therefore, he has appropriated the story by
changing the course of things. Rather than depicting the opposition of Heaven and Hell as an
eternal stasis, he does make it changeable. The new context is that of a static character, Lucifer,
rebelling against his own immobility. Gaiman’s audience will probably be able to relate better
to such a situation as freedom and independence have gained an entirely new meaning in the
20th century. In other words, it is due to Gaiman’s transposing of the context that the Milton’s
epic becomes relevant again but with a very different take on the situation. Much like with the
case of Orpheus, the medium is transposed as well. Whereas the original was an epic poem,
Gaiman has rewritten it in the comic genre, which allows him to add a visual rendering of hell as well (Appendix 48). Moreover, the intertextual engagement is very strong, as Lucifer himself even refers to Milton, which points out to the reader that there is a clear intertextual relationship between Gaiman’s and Milton’s texts. Jahlmar says:

“The Miltonic intertext is fully activated in chapter 1 of *Season of Mists*. Cain has been sent by Dream to Lucifer as an envoy to inform the Lord of Hell of Dream’s imminent arrival. Lucifer toys cruelly with Cain, and in conclusion to a longer speech suddenly says, ‘Still. *Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.* Eh, little brother-killer?’ Cain merely stutters, ‘Suh-certainly, lord Lucifer. Whatever you say, lord Lucifer.’ Lucifer looks coldly at Cain and states, ‘We didn’t say it. Milton said it. And he was blind.’” (Jahlmar 271)

Jahlmar argues that, by having Lucifer quote Milton (Appendix 49), Gaiman makes it clear to the reader that Milton will be present throughout the entire story. Lucifer will be going in dialogue with Milton on a metalevel.

4.4.2. Narratological Implications

For Gaiman, adapting the story to cater to the needs of his own audience, also opens up the opportunity to comment on the concepts of responsibilities and freedom. It has already been pointed out that Morpheus is very attached to rules and boundaries. When Gaiman, thus, releases Lucifer from his responsibilities by having him leave Hell voluntarily, he opposes Morpheus’ vision on the concept with that of Lucifer (Appendix 50). He plays with the idea that responsibilities are also a kind of damnation as it incurs certain boundaries onto an individual’s freedom. Morpheus is confronted with his own decisions in terms of responsibilities as, in the meanwhile, he is also remorseful of how he treated Nada thousands of years ago due to his responsibilities. Gaiman uses Lucifer as an instrument to make Morpheus reflect upon his own character. Jahlmar argues that “The text [Season of Mists] posits a duality between damnation and freedom symbolized by the inability or ability to change.” (Jahlmar 269) Lucifer’s ability to change therefore symbolizes his freedom. By pointing this out, Gaiman shows the reader that changing is equal to being free as it implies standing up to the predestination of life.

By including the same thematises as were present in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Gaiman successfully repurposes the story of the fallen angel Lucifer to not only present the reader with an introspective look at how responsibilities can shackle you to a certain fate, but also to further enable Morpheus’ narrative. It is through his confrontation with Lucifer and through witnessing
his defiance towards all rules and responsibilities, that Morpheus finally realizes how his composure in regards to Nada was perhaps out of line. In terms of narratology, we can hence see the function of the adaptation as a means to allow more character development for Morpheus. He is the personification of Dreams and is supposed to be consistent in his actions, yet his encounter with Lucifer portrays him as having a human side as well.

In conclusion to this case study, it has been demonstrated that Gaiman, through the character of Lucifer has adapted Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. By means of a complete transposition of context, he achieves relatability among his readers. Moreover, he also introduces an entirely new perspective on the story which results in the furthering of Morpheus’ narrative with Nada. Subjects such as freedom and responsibility are prevalent in this story arc and Gaiman plays both these concepts out against each other. In doing so, Gaiman effectively uses this instance of intertextuality in order to support the *Sandman* narrative.

4.5. William Shakespeare as an Example of Literary Intertextuality

As a last case study, I would like to discuss the function and characterization of Shakespeare in the *Sandman* series. As with Wesley Dodds, Shakespeare seemingly does not play that big of a role for the main storyline of *The Sandman*. However, on looking closer to why and how Gaiman has included him into the series, it will become clear that he is another great example of how Gaiman uses intertextuality to support his own story and to found it in reality.

4.5.1. Explaining the Genius

Shakespeare is known to be one of the most elusive playwrights in history. His unmatched talent and creativity are almost an anomaly in the history of literature. Nick Katsiadas describes the mystery around Shakespeare’s person as follows:

“The mysteries surrounding William Shakespeare’s imaginative power as a playwright have perplexed scholars for centuries. The importance of thinking about Shakespeare and imaginative creativity endures because of the ways his influence spans literary genres. Such an extensive body of work – 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and three narrative poems – with such a great influence on succeeding generations of creative writers begs explanation, historicization – in a word, contextualization.” (Katsiadas 62)

It is a well-known fact that, even today, Shakespeare is still an almost unavoidable subject in any English class. The plethora of plays he has written have been studied so extensively because of the masterful way in which they were written. It is therefore not a surprise that scholars all
over the world are baffled by Shakespeare’s seemingly everlasting success. Adaptations of his plays are not uncommon and for Gaiman this is no different as he adapts *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*. In *The Sandman*, however, he does not just adapt Shakespeare’s plays, but also his person. As Katsiadas points out, his genius is a bit of a mystery to most scholars. Gaiman, who is keen on manipulating inexplicable facts in cultures, stories and history, must have seen his chances when writing about Shakespeare, as he cleverly employs Morpheus as the cause for Shakespeare’s unbelievable talent.

In an almost Faustian way, Morpheus makes a deal with Shakespeare in *The Doll’s House*. (Appendix 51) When meeting with Hob Gadling, Morpheus overhears Shakespeare discussing with Thomas Marlowe about a play he wrote. Marlowe, at the time of his depiction being very successful due to his play *Faustus*, tells Shakespeare that his play is not very good. Shakespeare then proclaims he “would give anything to have your [Marlowe’s] gifts. Or more than anything to give men dreams that would live on long after I [Shakespeare] am dead.” (Appendix 52) Morpheus, who is of course the Lord of Dreams and Prince of Stories, is capable of giving Shakespeare exactly what he wishes for. He then makes a deal with Shakespeare, giving him the talent he requested in return for writing two plays for Morpheus. Hence, Gaiman explains Shakespeare’s talent through a deal with the Prince of Stories. This has several implications for *The Sandman*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, I would like to focus on how Gaiman adapted his character even more.

An interesting fact about Shakespeare’s life is revealed by Kurt Lancaster, who states that:

“In history, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway when he was eighteen, after she became pregnant, and, according to biographer Park Honan, Shakespeare’s ‘mother, no doubt, wished him to acquit himself well,’ and Shakespeare ‘had no choice but to take on abrupt responsibility—to be a husband, a father’ (Honan 82). Gaiman seems to tease out the fact that Shakespeare sacrificed his entire family for the dream of attaining immortality through his plays: ‘I’d bargain like your Faustus for that boon,’ is the desire Shakespeare expresses to Marlowe in Gaiman’s “Men of Good Fortune” (12).” (Lancaster 72)

Moreover, Lancaster argues that Gaiman is teasing out the toll that Shakespeare’s talent had on his family. Of course the real Shakespeare was an ambitious man, otherwise he would never have been this successful. We can therefore assume that Shakespeare did not have a lot of time for his wife and children. This is already demonstrated in *Dream Country* where Shakespeare is travelling with his group of actors. Among them is his son Hamnet, who almost desperately
tries to get his father’s attention. The latter, however, does not seem to care too much about the boy and neglects him as he has better things to do. Hamnet himself points this out to his travelling companion Tommy, saying that he is “less real to him than any of the characters in his plays.” (Appendix 53) At this point, it becomes clear that Shakespeare is more occupied with his plays and career than with the wellbeing of his own son.

At the end of the story, Hamnet is reported to have died in 1596. Why or how he died is not explained and the chapter ends. This shows how Hamnet’s story is considered unimportant in comparison with the stories that were produced by his father. Hamnet had even joked about his own death and that his father would probably just write a story about it when he dies. (Appendix 53) However, Joe Sanders points out that “this insight into Shakespeare’s obsessed creative thinking is shocking but also somehow satisfying; we feel we have learned something important enough to outweigh our sympathy with the turmoil Hamnet feels and his father avoids.” (Sanders 242) Gaiman shows the reader that Shakespeare’s talent has come at a price:

“Throughout his tale, Gaiman blends the imaginary universe of his mythology with that of the Shakespearean imaginary universe of A Midsummer Night’s Dream and a historical mythology of Shakespeare’s life. By means of this, Gaiman is able to posit the same themes as Shakespeare does, who essentially asks, “What desires do we dream?” However, Gaiman carries the question one step further: “What is the cost of attaining that desire?’ And Gaiman’s answer - presented in the prophecy of the Dream Lord speaking to Titania - contains as sharp a truth as that of any written by Shakespeare: “The price of getting what you want, is getting what you once wanted” (Gaiman, “Midsummer” 19).” (Lancaster 74)

Lancaster rightfully points out that Shakespeare made a deal that he would later come to regret. He got what he wanted at the time and not what he wanted after that. He had neglected his family, his son had died and his daughter blames him for not being home when she was younger. Moreover, after finishing his last play, Shakespeare seems to show a lot of regret for making the bargain with Morpheus as he wonders if his son would have lived had he not agreed to the deal he made. He asks himself what he has gained and missed by becoming so talented. (Appendix 54)

4.5.2. Narratological Implications

In order to determine the extent of Shakespeare’s added value to the Sandman series, we can firstly take another look at Hutcheon’s Theory of Adaptations:
“There are still other motives for adaptation, however. Given the perceived hierarchy of the arts and therefore media [...], one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile.” (Hutcheon 91)

She argues that the adaptation of canonical works of literature or art serve as a way of ‘upgrading’ the author’s work in terms of quality. If we apply this theory to Gaiman’s work, it could be said that all his references to the so-called high culture (think Greek mythology, references to Milton’s Paradise Lost and even Shakespeare’s The Tempest and A Midsummer Night’s Dream) could be seen in light of Gaiman’s personal motives to add high value to his work. This is confirmed by Gaiman himself, who apparently admitted that he set his aims higher than other traditional American comic books in terms of writing about characters that have a certain value to their story. He wanted to express the various influences that he had undergone as a young reader:

“One of the reasons that Gaiman’s sights are higher than those of his contemporaries is that he was a voracious reader as a young man. [...] Gaiman claims that his early reading habits were critical to his development as an author ‘because books encountered in childhood serve as the richest compost for what an author creates as an adult.’ (Sutton)” (Murphy 13)

This excerpt shows Gaiman’s own view on the influential literature that served as a melting pot for his own inspiration. He claims that the knowledge he gained from reading as a child became the foundation for his later writings. Adding Shakespeare into the story should therefore not be a surprise. When Gaiman, thus included Shakespeare’s writing process of The Tempest, he attempts to position himself next to Shakespeare in terms of authorship. Katsiadas explains:

“‘The Tempest’, then, establishes a genetic link between the autobiographical dimensions in Sandman and The Tempest in literary history. Though, it is not simply a means of showing gratitude for his influence; it is a move by Gaiman to stand alongside Shakespeare as a participant in heroic ideals of authorship; a return to an origin of the character; and a move to follow Shakespeare’s example of moving on.” (Katsiadas 70)

In other words, by drawing parallels between Shakespeare and The Tempest and Morpheus and himself, Gaiman effectively establishes himself as an author with equal talent to that of Shakespeare. This idea is also supported by the fact that he makes Morpheus responsible for Shakespeare’s talent. Hence, in an unchronological way, Gaiman places himself above the greatest playwright of the Anglo-Saxon world because it is Morpheus who created him. It could
be argued that Gaiman does this because he is an egomaniac. However, I think a better explanation for this self-establishment is given by Lancaster, who states:

“However, as Shakespeare is looked up to by the cultural elite as a genius and highbrow author, many look down on the comic book form as “low art” popular culture. But, by doing so, we are giving in to the logo-centric belief that the written word and only the written word is the best way to convey ideals of humanity through art.” (Lancaster 70)

What Lancaster is trying to say here, is that the comic genre is not regarded as what he calls “low art”. This means that it is often regarded as an inferior genre, much like how the novel was looked down upon during the early 18th and 19th century. Gaiman therefore included Shakespeare as a way of adding cultural capital to the genre. His endeavour to do so was well rewarded when he eventually won the 1991 World Fantasy award for Best Short Story for his story The Sandman: A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Moreover, the inclusion of Shakespeare in the series also functions as another attempt of Gaiman to root the Sandman series in reality. Lancaster elaborates: “In Gaiman’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” he not only weaves his mythology through the historical figure of Shakespeare, but also through his play, A Midsummer Night’s Dream (c. 1590s).” (Lancaster 71) Again, as with Wesley Dodds and encephalitis lethargica, Gaiman establishes a cause and effect relationship between Shakespeare and Morpheus. Shakespeare, as with the other cases, being the effect of Morpheus. Hence, he creates the illusion that Morpheus can affect each and every one of us as he is seemingly responsible for a plethora of things that have happened in the history of the world. He was the cause of a pandemic, he was the cause of a superhero and he was the cause of one of the greatest playwrights of all time.

A last effect of the adaptation of Shakespeare is that Gaiman introduces an entirely new way to look at his characters. Firstly, Shakespeare is not just presented as the successful writer that he was, but also as a human who has the desire to be great and in the process neglects his family so that he eventually comes to regret his life choices. Aside from the obvious case of his son Hamnet, his daughter Judith also points out to her father that she had missed him in her life when she was still a child. (Appendix 55) As Annalise Castaldo explains: “Sandman, written by Neil Gaiman, uses Shakespeare to explore the idea that genius is itself a responsibility which leads to burdens almost too great to bear, an idea which reflects both the modern view of genius and the life of Gaiman as he created the comic.” (Castaldo 98) Secondly, Morpheus’ own character is explained on a metalevel. Gaiman points out that even though he is the Prince of
Stories and Lord of Dreams, he does not have a story of his own. That way, Gaiman alludes on the fact that the entire series could not have existed without the help of the enormous amount of other stories that he used as a pillar stone upon which he could build the narrative concerning Morpheus himself.

In terms of adaptation, we can therefore conclude for this final case study that Gaiman has transposed Shakespeare into a different context in order to shed a new light on his person. He does not portray him as a successful playwright, but as a man who craves a successful career, who loses his son and comes to regret his life decisions later on. Moreover, in doing so, Gaiman enables the final characterization of Morpheus and roots him into reality, making him feel all the more real to the reader.
5. Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, a number of things should be said. The research that was the subject of this paper came forth from my wondering how Gaiman had written a 2000 page series on a character that basically existed due to the existence of other stories. When I first started reading the series, I was not very enthusiastic as I found it very hard to understand the story due to the numerous microstories that were presented to me. However, the more I progressed through the series, the more I grew fonder of it. Instead of telling me one story, Gaiman told me hundreds of them. I remember that at the very beginning of my research I was actually quite unsure of what I should be looking for. By the time I had finished the last issue, I knew for certain that what I wanted to investigate was how Gaiman had done it. How did he build a story out of tons of different ones? Of course, the answer seemed rather simple as combining a few stories to create a new one is not the hardest task to accomplish. In the previous chapters of this thesis, however, it should have become more or less clear that what Gaiman did was far more than just stringing together story after story. He did not just reference stories, he adapted them.

As I have established in the theoretical framework which I provided near the beginning of this thesis, there are several phases and techniques that Gaiman employed to write The Sandman. In terms of intertextuality, we discovered that there were no less than five different types of intertextuality present in the series. There is mythological intertextuality, which was illustrated by the examples of the Greek and Norse mythology and to a lesser extent even some fictional mythologies as well. There is also historical intertextuality that encompassed historical events as well as historical figures. There was reference of figures such as Shakespeare and Robespierre and even the mysterious encephalitis lethargica pandemic of the early 20th century. In terms of Religious intertextuality, I pointed out the presence of such figures as Adam and Eve, Lucifer, Kain and Abel and Allah. Another form of intertextuality was the literary kind, which made reference of literary figures such as Shakespeare or even stories like Red Riding Hood. Of paramount importance to this category were of course Gaiman’s own stories such as the completely reworked Wizard of Oz, which Gaiman called The Doll’s House. As a last category of intertextuality, I talked about the involvement of other characters from the DC universe who served smaller but still meaningful purposes in the series as they enabled Morpheus’ own story and served as a base of inspiration for his character as well.

In regards to intertextuality in general, I pointed out that Gaiman expanded on Gerard Genette’s views on intertextuality. As I demonstrated with Genette’s extensive work on intertextuality, called Palimpsests, intertextuality should, in the context of comics, not be
defined as the referencing of one text in another as comics have the valuable characteristic of being a visual genre as well. I demonstrated this by illustrating how Gaiman had characterized Death as a young girl and gave her function away with visual marks rather than with words. This then brought me to the subject of adaptations as the characterization of Death can also be seen as an adapted form of its stereotypical representation. As a guide for explaining how the process of adaptation works, I made a concise overview of how Linda Hutcheon defines it in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*. She describes three different phases in the process of adaptation. The first one was the transposition of medium, genre and context or frame. The second one was the appropriation or salvaging of existing material and thirdly she proposed the phase of intertextual engagement in regards to the audience. In terms of that last category, I also briefly went into the subject of knowing and unknowing audiences as it requires a knowing audience to completely understand all the references that are present in *The Sandman*.

The next step was to look at how Gaiman used the various kinds of intertextuality in conjunction with the process of adaptation to reach certain goals in the story. By means of five case studies, I can now conclude that Gaiman used intertextuality and adaptation with the goal of achieving four different things. Firstly, the intertextual references and their adaptations ensured that *The Sandman*’s main protagonist, Morpheus, was given a foothold in reality. As David Goldweber mentions:

“In his afterword to the superior *Brief Lives* compilation (1994), Peter Straub notes that Gaiman’s stories have a way of ‘anchoring the miraculous in dailiness.’ Certainly, Gaiman’s painting human beings as essentially woven through dreams and stories is a way of accomplishing this, of giving us a sense of wonder in our own mortal lives.” (Goldweber 83)

In other words, by weaving Morpheus’ story through the story of existing characters and events, Gaiman establishes *The Sandman*’s narrative in our everyday world. This function was proven in the case study on encephalitis lethargica where we concluded that the inexplicable nature of the disease was explained through Morpheus’ existence. Another case that proves this function, was the case of Wesley Dodds who, even though he is a fictional character, was explained through Morpheus’ existence as well. This goes to show that Gaiman accomplishes a feeling of reality and credibility in *The Sandman* that does not only permeate the real world in which we live, but also the other fictional worlds that the reader might know. The same explanation is applicable to the case of Orpheus and Eurydice as it is a story which is part of our global cultural
heritage. Therefore, it too contributes to the feeling of inclusiveness that the reader perceives when reading the adapted version of the original Greek myth.

Secondly, Gaiman uses several cultural and literary references as a means of making *The Sandman* upwardly mobile. By including characters such as Shakespeare or referring to John Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost*, Gaiman shows that comics too can be a medium for high culture. Moreover, he even attempts to adapt these stories, to make them more suitable for his audience and succeeds in this as he wrote literary history by winning a prestigious prize for his adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This immediately made Gaiman one of the most renowned writers of comics ever and proves that this function of his usage of intertextuality and adaptations is an excellent technique for promoting the comic genre.

Thirdly, the several intertextual elements and adaptations in the series serve as a foundation for Morpheus’ own story. In the cases of encephalitis lethargica, Wesley Dodds, Orpheus and Shakespeare, we illustrated how an inexplicable element in an existing story could be explained by inserting Morpheus as its cause. By making his protagonist responsible for certain aspects of existing stories that had never before been explained, Gaiman effectively opens up the storyline for Morpheus by leading him into existing stories and giving them a role there. In doing so, he adapts the stories which allows for a rewriting of the originals. For instance, by making Morpheus father to Orpheus, he introduces a father-son relationship which then serves to characterize him. By making him the cause of the encephalitis lethargica outbreak in the early 20th century, Gaiman has the perfect setup for creating the story of Morpheus’ imprisonment in the basement of Roderick Burgess. By explaining Shakespeare’s talent as a bargain between Morpheus and him, Gaiman can indicate that Morpheus has no story of his own and was hence obliged to contract Shakespeare as the writer of his story. All these examples showed us that Morpheus’ own narrative exists at the behest of all the other stories that Gaiman included in the series. The Sandman is defined by the stories that exist around him, not by his own story as he has none.

A fourth and final function of the adaptation of intertextual elements – and in my opinion the most important one – is the fact that through his adaptations, Gaiman is able to repurpose older stories. He salvages them and makes them more appropriate for his contemporary audience. For instance, by breathing new life in the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, Gaiman allowed the focus of the story to deviate from the traditional and outdated thematises and was able to introduce a theme that was more relevant for our time. In the case of Lucifer, he goes applies the same technique. By transposing the context of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, he breathes new life into the story. Whereas the old version was aimed at an audience that was primarily
concerned with the governance of their country, Gaiman wanted to cater to the needs of an audience who does not relate to that issue anymore. He therefore shifts the perspective of the story and focusses on the concepts of responsibility and freedom. Even though these concepts are also present in *Paradise Lost*, Gaiman shows them in a different way, which allows him to deviate from the traditional narrative concerning Lucifer and gives him the freedom to measure Morpheus’ viewpoint on responsibility against that of Lucifer. In the final case study, the reader was presented with a different take on the literary genius of William Shakespeare. Here, Gaiman moved away from the grandeur of an accomplished playwright and, instead, showed us the downsides of having a great career. He speaks through Shakespeare to demonstrate to the reader that being successful can weigh down on all the other aspects of your life, such as family. Moreover, he illustrates that “the price of getting what you want, is getting what you once wanted.” (Gaiman, *Dream Country*)

These four functions are what define the *Sandman* series and make it into such a successful story. However, this is still not a complete answer to the research question that was propagated at the very beginning of this thesis: Can Morpheus’ plotline in The Sandman series be defragmented into a process of filling up hiatuses within existing stories, such as the myth of Orpheus or the Sleeping Sickness during the 1920’s and can we therefore argue that Gaiman has used the inexplicable as a means of creating something new? I believe that the answer to this question is yes. *The Sandman* can indeed be seen as the result of filling up gaps in existing stories. The reason for this is already hinted at by Lukach:

“Campbell (1972) asks “what is, or what is to be, the new mythology?” (p. 250). One thing that Campbell made very clear was that society needs new mythmakers to establish a relevant mythology for its changing needs. Neil Gaiman exhibited many of the characteristics that Campbell described and the ideas in Gaiman’s work corresponded with many of Campbell’s ideas.” (Lukach 5)

By tying together classical myths, historical facts, religious and cultural references, Gaiman has created the new mythology which Campbell mentions here. By adapting all these age-old stories and by putting them in a much larger context, he renders an entirely new perspective from which the reader can look at these myths, facts and cultures. The *Sandman* series was not just an attempt to create a successful comic that had to draw its value from existing matter, it is far more than that. *The Sandman* gives new meaning to old stories; it retells them from a new viewpoint and gives them meaning that is relevant for our contemporary age. Gaiman has
masterfully shifted the thematises of all the references he includes in the series and moulded them so that they are more compatible to the times we live in now. The product of this has become the cult series that is known as *The Sandman*. A collections of dozens of stories that were intertwined and linked to one another. One of my favorite analogies that I like to refer to when discussing this technique is that of building a house. The original stories are like old houses, that Gaiman knocks down and disassembles. He takes the bricks and windows that are not worn yet and polishes them to make them look brand new again. These refurbished and repurposed bricks and windows he then uses to build a shiny new house. Morpheus, then, is the mortar that glues the stories together and ensures that the new house is steadfast. The bricks and windows are now connected to each other and the mortar keeps them in place and prevents the house from collapsing on itself. One cannot go without the other anymore, the individual pieces have become one entity that stands on itself.

*The Sandman* can thus indeed be defragmented into a process of filling up hiatuses in existing stories and, in doing so, stringing them together so that they may serve as a foundation upon which Gaiman could build the story of Morpheus. Hence, it can be concluded that Gaiman has indeed created the new from the inexplicable through the adaptation of intertextual references. Quod erat demonstrandum.
6. Bibliography

Primary Literature


Secondary Literature

(Appendix 1: The Hecateae. Also known as the weird sisters, the Kindly Ones, the Furies, …)
(Appendix 2: The depiction of Loki tied to a rock with the entrails of his dead son, while his wife catches venom from the giant snake)
(Appendix 3: The introduction to the story of Nada)
(Appendix 4: Morpheus does not take no for an answer and is depicted as a harsh, senseless man)
(Appendix 5: Nada denies Morpheus’ love for fear that it would lead to their destruction)
(Appendix 6: Death convinces Morpheus that he was wrong in condemning Nada to an eternity of Hell)
(Appendix 7: the introductory page to the short story *A Dream of a Thousand Cats*)
(Appendix 8: Hob Gadling making his first appearance and talking about the black death)
(Appendix 9: Shakespeare is seen arguing with Thomas Marlowe about his latest play)
(Appendix 10: Johanna Constantine rescues Orpheus’ head from the clutches of Robespierre)
(Appendix 11: Jack the Ripper is mentioned, giving away the time in which this scene takes place)
(Appendix 12: Another meeting between Morpheus and Hob Gadling. This time during the late 20th Century when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister)
(Appendix 13: August disguises himself as a beggar with the help of Lycius the dwarf)
(Appendix 14: Morpheus visits August in his dreams)
(Appendix 15: Gaiman suggests that August wilfully planned out the demise of the Roman Empire)
(Appendix 16: Morpheus confronts the demon that stole his helmet)
(Appendix 17: the angels Duma and Remiel make an appearance)
(Appendix 18: Lucifer along with the two other regents of Hell, Azazel and Beelzebub)
In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful.
I tell my tale for there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.
Appendix 20: Al Raschid makes a deal with Morpheus to make Baghdad live forever
(Appendix 21: A young boy takes solace in the story of the old beggar about the lost splendour of Baghdad amongst its rubble)
Appendix 22: Gilbert or Fiddler’s Green tells the original story of Red Hood
For cash: gawd's rotting before and deadness. The girl asked the same question, and the man replied, "To burn it on the fire. You won't need it any more."

When the girl got into bed, she said, "Grandmother, how hairy you are! It keeps me warm, my dear.

Oh, grandmother, what long hair you have."

"They are for eating you, my dear."

"They are for eating you, my dear."

I'm afraid she has sharper versions that are even worse.

Listen to the wolf.

(Appendix 23: Part two of the original story)
(Appendix 24: Barbie and Ken introduce themselves and allude on their doll counterparts)
(Appendix 25: Hazel and Foxglove, a lesbian couple, as they are portrayed in *A Game of You*)
(Appendix 26: Hazel point out that Wanda appears to be a man.)
(Appendix 27: Morpheus encounters John Constantine)
(Appendix 28: Kain and Abel make an appearance)
(Appendix 29: Doctor D explains how he was once Doctor Destiny)
(Appendix 30: Morpheus meets with J’onn the Martian in his quest for a lost artefact)
(Appendix 31: Morpheus is bound and imprisoned by Roderick Burgess by accident)
(Appendix 32: The encephalitis lethargica pandemic spreads)
(Appendix 33: Gaiman illustrates the effects of encephalitis lethargica by picturing some of its patients)
(Appendix 34: Wesley Dodds, or the human Sandman from the Justice League)
(Appendix 35: Orpheus tries to convince Hades to get his beloved Eurydice back)
(Appendix 36: Orpheus refuses to leave the wilderness out of sorrow for Eurydice)
(Appendix 37: Morpheus finds the head of his son and coldly says goodbye)
(Appendix 38: the opening scene of *Thermidor* where Morpheus contracts Lady Constantine to rescue the head of his son)
(Appendix 39: Morpheus lays his son to rest)
(Appendix 40: Morpheus meets Octavius in his dreams and explains how he is often confused with the god Apollo)
(Appendix 41: Orpheus and Morpheus talk about Eurydice's death)
(Appendix 42: Orpheus renounces Morpheus as his father)
(Appendix 43: The character of Wesley Dodds is introduced and his reason of existence is explained)
(Appendix 44: Lucifer hands over the key to Hell, making Morpheus its owner)
(Appendix 45: Gods and representatives from all over existence come to Dream’s halls to claim the key to heaven)
(Appendix 46: Remiel is outraged due to God’s plan to send him and Duma to Hell)
(Appendix 47: Remiel finds a new purpose for Hell and is quite content with it)
(Appendix 48: Gaiman’s Hell is filled with demons and other monstrosities as far as the eye can see)
(Appendix 49: Lucifer quotes Milton)
(Appendix 50: Lucifer explains his decision to leave Hell)
(Appendix 51: Morpheus meets William Shakespeare and makes him an offer)
(Appendix 52: Shakespear, in a Faustian way, begs for Marlowe’s talent)
(Appendix 53: Hamnet complains to Tommy about how he feels neglected by his father.)
(Appendix 54: Shakespeare contemplates his life and seems to regret his bargain with Morpheus)
(Appendix 55: Judith blames her father for not being home enough)