Sonya Nevin, "Entry on: When Are You Going to Get a Proper Job? Parenting and the Creative Muse by Richy K. Chandler", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/834. Entry version as of November 03, 2026.

Richy K. Chandler

When Are You Going to Get a Proper Job? Parenting and the Creative Muse

United Kingdom, United States of America (2018)

TAGS: Muses





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

General information	
Title of the work	When Are You Going to Get a Proper Job? Parenting and the Creative Muse
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom, United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2018
First Edition Details	Richy K. Chandler, *When Are You Going to Get a Proper Job? Parenting and the Creative Muse*. London and Philadelphia: Singing Dragon (an imprint of Jessica Kingsley Publishers), 2018, 112 pp.
ISBN	9781848193246
Genre	Graphic novels, Instructional and educational works, Instructional comics
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



Richy K. Chandler (Author, Illustrator)

Richy K. Chandler is a British illustrator and designer based in London. He gained a diploma from Wimbledon School of Art and earned a degree in Ceramics from the Camberwell College of Arts before going on to establish a comic publishing house, Tempo Lush, in 2007. Chandler creates illustrations, cartoons, designs, and comic strips.

Source:

Official website (accessed: September 9, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

The work, created in an informal cartoon style, follows Tariq, a young man who is trying to balance his parenting responsibilities with attempts to establish himself as a professional comic book artist. He lives with his wife, Susan, who has unspecified regular work involving spreadsheets and meetings, and Natasha, their young daughter. Initially we encounter the problems that Tariq is having and over the course of the graphic novel we move towards him finding solutions as he listens to others and adopts their advice. The most important voice in this process remains that of Malcolm, Tariq's muse, but Malcolm is as willing as Tariq to try new arrangements and make things work.

Malcolm is irritated by Tariq house-keeping when he could be illustrating, he gets angry when Tariq must unexpectedly pick-up Natasha from school early, and he is irritated when Natasha interrupts him when he is working. The muse is also resentful when Tariq sits down to draw after a long day of doing other things and he accuses Tariq's wife of not pulling her weight. On the other hand, Malcolm also provides a wealth of inspiring ideas. He morphs into space-ships of many shapes that Tariq can use in his comic, he shares ideas for alien creatures, he gives Tariq career suggestions and he provides important moral support by reminding Tariq that his work is good and that he can make a career of it. When an artist friend's mother speaks disparagingly of artists and their approach to work and family, Malcolm tells Tariq to ignore her, that she is crazy. Once Tariq tries to put new ideas in place, such as attending an artists' meet-up and doing art-based activities with Natasha, Malcolm flourishes, suggesting further ideas and arriving at work full of energy instead of resentful and deflated. As the book draws to its conclusion, Tariq is getting more work, managing his time better, communicating well with Susan, and leading fun creative activities with Natasha, whose own muse has started appearing to her.

The book contains the main story of Tariq and Malcolm's journey, augmented by shorter narratives voicing other artists' experiences. Some of the insights that Tariq gains are expressed via info-graphics which help to reinforce the key learning points. Extracts from Tariq's comic book are interspersed throughout the work.

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Analysis

When are You Going to Get a Proper Job? aims to help young adults to achieve balance in their lives that will enable them to parent effectively whilst continuing to create. The book's title voices implied accusations from parents or other authority figures while the book itself provides the answer that art can be a proper job if properly managed. The internal drive to create art, whether images, writing, or performance art, is externalised as one's "creative muse". The muse is presented as a semi-anthropomorphised amorphous shape-shifting flame-like creature that the individual artist can see and interact with although it is invisible to others.

In *When are you going to get a Proper Job?* the classical concept of Muses inspiring artists is put to practical use to help young adults identify, articulate, and manage the conflict between their creative lives and their other responsibilities. As in antiquity, the externalisation of creative inspiration helps to give it a distinctness – to make it more real. Anyone doubting the validity of their creative impulse may be reassured by the depiction of that creativity as a fully-fledged named being. Also akin to the ancient notion of the Muses, these muses do not appear for everyone. Ancient poets and other artists might hope to be visited by a Muse for inspiration, but there was no sense that the Muses were there for everyone (for ancient Muses see esp. Homer, *Iliad*, 2.594-600; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 1-45; 75-104). Similarly here, Tariq, his daughter, and his creative friends and acquaintances have Muses (whether or not they are able to work professionally as creatives), but his wife does not appear to have one, nor does his friend's mother or the people who commission him to do pedestrian info-graphic work. The use of the muse concept enables the characterisation of creativity as a special phenomenon that needs to be nurtured and managed.

There are also ways in which Chandler's vision of a muse reflects Plato's depiction of Socrates' daimon (Plato, *Apology of Socrates*). The daimon is more personal than the ancient Muse, closer to an expression of sub-consciousness or conscience. Chandler's muses are entirely personal to the individual artist – more akin to the daimon and less to the idea of goddesses who appear variously to different people. Malcolm the Muse can also help Tariq the artist to think and do the right thing, as Socrates' daimon did, for example advising Tariq to ignore unhelpful criticism, reminding him that his work has value, and suggesting constructive solutions. On the other hand, Socrates' daimon only encouraged right behaviour, while Malcolm can also act negatively in ways that make him far more akin to a manifestation of

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supressed emotion – expressing resentment and hostility, particularly when Tariq's opportunities for creativity are threatened.

In another difference from the ancient conception of the Muses, Tariq's muse is not humanoid or female, while the Muses of antiquity were all female. Malcolm's name suggests that he is regarded as male, although his form does not provide confirmation. Malcolm is flame-coloured, while Natasha's muse has the same basic form but comes in pale purple. Its name, Imani, suggests that she is female. A meeting of artists reveals a whole host of muses wrapped around their human partners, in a range of colours and with distinct personalities. This visual emphasis on individuality reinforces the idea of the muse as an expression of an internal property rather than a deity who must be called on, yet the meeting is held to help the artists support and use the muses in a way that is not so dissimilar to the goddess-worshipper dynamic.

When are you going to get a Proper Job? does not draw heavily on classical material and does not seek to educate the reader regarding ancient ideas about inspiration and creativity. Nonetheless, the whole concept of the book draws on a classical idea and does so in a constructive way that helps young adults to navigate their world.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Muses
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Emotions Family Freedom Learning Parents (and children)

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