

Orpheus in Hell [Orphée aux Enfers]

TAGS: [Apollo](#) [Argo](#) [Argonauts](#) [Calliope](#) [Cerberus](#) [Charon](#) [Colchis](#) [Eurydice](#)
[Golden Fleece](#) [Hades](#) [Jason](#) [Maenads](#) [Orpheus](#) [Persephone](#)



Courtesy of the publisher.

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Orpheus in Hell [Orphée aux Enfers]
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	France
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	France and French-speaking countries
<i>Original Language</i>	French
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2013
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Hélène Montardre, ill. Nicolas Duffaut, <i>Orphée aux Enfers</i> [Orpheus in Hell], Little Stories from Mythology [Petites histoires de la mythologie] 13. Paris: Nathan, 2013, 61 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9782092544358
<i>Genre</i>	Retelling of myths*
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (9 years +)
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Creators



Nicolas Duffaut , b. 1977 (Illustrator)

Born in 1977 in Aubenas, in the Ardèche region, he studied illustration at the Émile Cohl School in Lyons where he received his diploma in 2002. Since, he has been working as illustrator for a number of publishers, namely Bayard, Magnard, Flammarion, Milan jeunesse, Nathan, Sarbacane et Tourbillon. He also works for YA press. Among his illustrations connected to Antiquity are Homer's *Illiad and Odyssey*:

Courtesy of Univers
Jeunesse – Nathan –
Syros – Pocket Jeunesse.

L'Odyssée d'Homer, illustré par Nicolas Duffaut. Paris: Nathan, 2009

L'Illiade d'Homer illustré par Nicolas Duffaut, *Folio Junior*. Paris: Galimard Jeunesse, 2014.

Sources:

[Profile](#) at the editions-sarbacane.com (accessed: June 3, 2018);

[Profile](#) at the babelio.com (accessed: June 3, 2018);

[Blog](#) (accessed: June 3, 2018).

[Interview](#) on YouTube. Uploaded by Librairie Grangier, Illustrateur talentueux, Nicolas Duffaut nous parle de lui et de son travail (accessed: June 3, 2018).

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Hélène Montardre , b. 1954

Toulouse: Milan, 2004.

- Hélène Montardre. *La mythologie grecque, Les Encyclopes*. Toulouse: Milan, 2008.

Series *Petites histoires de la mythologie*

- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Dans le ventre du cheval de Troie*. Paris: Nathan, 2010.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Orphée aux Enfers*, Paris: Nathan, 2013.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Les douze travaux d'Hercule*. Paris: Nathan, 2011.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Zeus le roi des dieux*. Paris: Nathan, 2013.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Héphaïstos et l'amour d'Aphrodite*. Paris: Nathan, 2013.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Thésée contre le Minotaure*. Paris :Nathan, 2013.

Series *Contes et légendes jeunesse*

- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Persée et la Gorgone*. Paris: Nathan, 2010.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Jason et la Toison d'or*. Paris: Nathan, 2011.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Le labyrinthe de Dédale*. Paris: Nathan, 2011.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Ulysse et le Cyclope*. Paris: Nathan, 2011.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *L'enlèvement de Perséphone*. Paris: Nathan, 2012.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Achille le guerrier*. Paris: Nathan, 2012.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Pégase, l'indomptable*. Paris: Nathan, 2012.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Prométhée, le voleur de feu*. Paris: Nathan, 2012.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Apollon, le dieu dauphin*. Paris: Nathan, 2015.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Les monstres de l'Odyssée*. Paris: Nathan, 2016.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Hermès Le dieu aux mille dons*. Paris: Nathan, 2017.



Source:

[Website](#) of the Maison des écrivains et de la littérature (accessed: June 26, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

Calliope, one of the nine Muses, sings to her baby boy Orpheus who seems to delight in her voice. He grows up to be a child interested in music and indifferent to usual boyish pursuits causing his father to worry. Apollo offers the boy a magic lyre that is supposed to grow with him. Young Orpheus becomes an exceptional musician who plays the lyre, mesmerizing his audiences. When Jason announces his plans to travel to Colchis looking for the Golden Fleece, Orpheus volunteers, to his father astonishment.

Before he reaches Jason, the fame of his music grows. Jason invites him to join his Argonauts, and when Orpheus plays his lyre, the sea becomes gentle, winds guide Argo where it should go, and the crew works in harmony. When the Argonauts take the Golden Fleece, Orpheus travels to his native Thrace. One evening, he observes beautiful girls who dance in a clearing. He starts playing the lyre, and the girls dance the whole night. In the morning, with one exception, they leave; the most beautiful girl, Eurydice, stays to talk to him. She tells him that they are nymphs of the oak tree. Orpheus plays for them during many evenings, and whenever they leave, Eurydice stays a little longer. Finally, they get married on the river's shore and the oaks of the forest dance at the wedding. The couple settles in the regions of Thrace inhabited by the Ciconians. Eurydice's beauty attracts unwelcome attention. She is forced to flee an aggressive man, Aristaeus, and steps on a viper whose poison kills her. Orpheus is crazed by grief but remembers that Apollo, when he gave him the lyre, told him that it would take him to a kingdom where no mortal goes. He realizes that Apollo was talking of the Underworld. He takes his lyre and descends to the Underworld. His music charms Charon and Cerberus, and finally, also Hades and Persephone who allow him to take Eurydice back among the living under one condition: she will walk behind him, but he cannot try to turn his head to look at her, if he does, she will remain in the Underworld forever. Orpheus, worried that Eurydice will be lost in the mist, looks back, and she instantly disappears. Devastated and distraught, Orpheus tries again to convince Charon to take him across the river Styx. He plays and sings for many days and nights but is not granted another chance. Finally, he returns to Thrace and lives there in isolation avoiding all human contact. This attitude offends the Maenads, who assault him and tear him to pieces. When his lyre continues playing on its own, they throw it after Orpheus' head into the river. The river brings both the head



and the instrument to a beach where a snake approaches and is at the point of striking when Apollo appears and turns the serpent into stone. He also punishes the Maenads, who are transformed into trees and cannot move. The lyre is brought to the sky, as the constellation Lyre – one of the 48 constellations listed by Claudius Ptolemy in 2nd c. A.D.

The shade of Orpheus quickly descends to the Underworld, pays Charon with many coins and finally reunites with his beloved Eurydice.

At the end, there is, as usual for the series, a *Pour en savoir plus* section with basic information about characters and sources.

Analysis

The tragic episode of Eurydice' death, the heart-rending failed attempt to bring her back to the world of the living, and the horrific death of the great musician himself are presented in a way that is more acceptable to children through a repeated emphasis on the enchanting and optimistic aspects of the story. Orpheus, playing on the instrument given to him by Apollo, can tame animals, calm the ocean, and call up favourable winds. When he sails with Jason and the Argonauts to Colchis, he ensures a harmonious voyage through his music. His wooing of the oak nymph Eurydice also resembles a scene in Paradise. Their love flourishes to the sounds of his lyre, unfortunately, there is no Paradise without a serpent, and Eurydice is attacked and then mortally bitten by a viper. Orpheus' love and longing bring him to the Underworld, where everybody is charmed by his art, and when a happy end is near, everything falls apart, and Orpheus' despair knows no bounds and is only stopped by raving Maenads, who kill him. This horrible event is presented optimistically as a final reunification with his beloved Eurydice. True love (and true art) conquer all. Apollo punishes the demented Maenads so they cannot harm anybody else, and the magic lyre becomes a constellation in the sky. Without major changes in the plot, the Greek myth becomes almost a Biblical parable, as far from a horror story, as possible.

Contrary to the tendency to sanitize aspects deemed inappropriate for children, such as the assault on Eurydice or the horrible death inflicted by the Maenads – as Enid Blyton does for instance, in her 1930 *Tales of Ancient Greece* – Montardre avoids such modifications,

preferring to stress the uplifting and optimistic approach to myths.

If the reader is interested in the characters and the sources of the myth, the final section of the book provides this information.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Apollo](#) [Argo](#) [Argonauts](#) [Calliope](#) [Cerberus](#) [Charon](#) [Colchis](#) [Eurydice](#)
[Golden Fleece](#) [Hades](#) [Jason](#) [Maenads](#) [Orpheus](#) [Persephone](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Adventure](#) [Appearances](#) [Art*](#) [Death](#) [Love](#) [Music*](#) [Relationships](#)

Further Reading

Blyton, Enid, [Tales of Ancient Greece](#), ill. Chris Price, 1st ed. 1930. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Children's Books, 1998.

Haslem, Wendy, Angela Ndalianis and Chris Mackie, eds., *Super / Heroes. From Hercules to Superman*, Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2007.

Lowe, Dunstan and Kim Shahabudin, eds., *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Prince, Nathalie and Sylvie Servoise, eds., *Les personnages mythiques dans la littérature de jeunesse*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015.
