Elżbieta Olechowska, "Entry on: The Fight between Remus and Romulus [Le combat de Rémus et Romulus] by Benjamin Bachelier, Nicolas Duffaut, Hélène Montardre ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1234. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Benjamin Bachelier , Nicolas Duffaut , Hélène Montardre

The Fight between Remus and Romulus [Le combat de Rémus et Romulus]

France (2015)

TAGS: Alba Longa Amulius Faustulus Larentia Numitor (King) Ovid Plutarch Remus Rhea Silvia Rome Romulus Tiber Vesta





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Fight between Remus and Romulus [Le combat de Rémus et Romulus]
Country of the First Edition	France
Country/countries of popularity	France and French-speaking countries
Original Language	French
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Hélène Montardre, *Le combat de Rémus et Romulus* [The Fight between Remus and Romulus]. Nicolas Duffaut, cover design, Benjamin Bachelier, ill., Little Stories from Mythology [Petites histoires de la mythologie] 18, Paris: Nathan, 2015, 61 pp.
ISBN	9782092558577
Genre	Retelling of myths*
Target Audience	Children (9 years+)
Author of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Benjamin Bachelier , b. 1975
(Illustrator)

Benjamin Bachelier is a French painter and illustrator. Born in Grenoble, he studied fine arts there and later in Angoulème. He worked as a book cover designer and illustrator for newspapers, publishers of comic books and children's literature (such as Casterman, Nathan, Glénat, Actes Sud Junior, Tishina). His popular drawings and paintings have also been regularly exhibited at the gallery *Les Funambules* in Vennes and elsewhere in France.

Sources:

Profile at babelio.com (accessed: June 18, 2021).

Official website (accessed: June 18, 2021).

Bio prepared by Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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*

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

Odyssey:

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

L'Iliade 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).

Bio prepared by Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com



Portrait, courtesy of

Hélène Montardre , b. 1954 (Author)

Born in 1954 in Montreuil, in a family with origins in the Forez Mountains. Because of her father's occupation (the writer Georges Montforez, 1921–1974), during her childhood and adolescence she frequently moved and lived in many different places: Saint-Étienne, Marvejols, Nantes, Loudun, Issoire. She studied English at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, where she obtained her PhD (*L'image des personnages féminins dans la littérature de jeunesse française contemporaine de 1975 à 1995*. Lille: Presses universitaires du

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Univers Jeunesse–Nathan–Syros–Pocket Jeunesse.

Septentrion) in 1999. For the last forty years or so, she has lived with her family in the Haute-Garonne, Occitanie. During the last decade, she wrote a number of books based on a variety of Greek myths, with illustrations by Nicholas Duffaut; the books appeared in two series published by Nathan and called: *Petites histoires de la mythologie* and *Contes et légendes jeunesse*.

She has written over fifty books, mainly for children and received many literary awards:

- 1995 2nd prize for roman jeunesse du Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports;
- 1998 Price Livrami of the city of Pithiviers;
- 2003–2004 Price Tatoulu ;
- 2004 Price Livre, mon ami, New Caledonia;
- 2007 Price of the City of Cherbourg-Octeville, XVIIIe Livre d'Or des Jeunes Lecteurs Valenciennois, Price Ruralivres en Pas-de-Calais, Price Latulu des collégiens du Maine-et-Loire;
- 2007 and 2008 Price of Readers' Spring, Narbonne, 2007–2008 Literary price of the Montagnes d'Auvergne;
- 2008 Price Jasmin, Agen, Price Trégor ados, Price Livrentête Culture et Bibliothèques Pour Tous, category Junior Novel.

Chronological bibliography of Hélène Montardre's books related to classical antiquity

Non-fiction

- Hélène Montardre. *L'Empire romain, Les Essentiels Junior*. Toulouse: Milan, 2004.
- Hélène Montardre. *La Grèce ancienne, Les Encyclopes*. 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 aus Enfers*, Paris: Nathan, 2013.
- Hélène Montardre, Nicolas Duffaut, ill. *Les douze travaux d'Hercule*. Paris: Nathan, 2011.

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- 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

King Numitor of Alba Longa was forced to relinquish his throne to his brother Amulius and to live quietly in his estate. In order to reinforce his rights to the kingdom, the new ruler ordered Numitor's daughter, Rhea Sylvia, to become a Vestal Virgin, forbidden to marry and have children who could potentially claim the throne.

One morning, Rhea Sylvia falls asleep on the shore of a nearby stream. She dreams of a great and handsome warrior. When she comes back to the temple, she tells her Vestal companions a different dream: at the Vestal's altar, the woollen strand holding up Rhea Silvia's hair falls next to the sacred fire. Two palm trees start to grow there; one has branches that cover the whole world. Amulius arrives with a big axe and tries to cut down the tree, but a woodpecker belonging to the god, Mars, intervenes. The Vestals do not understand the meaning of the dream.

Time passes, and Rhea Sylvia realizes that she is expecting a baby. She is terrified, knowing that a Vestal's punishment for losing her virginity is death. She has no recollection of anything like that ever happening. The dream she had of the warrior was vague and unspecific. In the city square, a statue of Mars speaks to her. Rhea Silvia recognizes him as the warrior of her dream. Now convinced of the child's paternity, she informs Amulius about it, but he does not believe her. However, Amulius is concerned about a possible reaction of his universally respected brother and lets Rhea Silvia live, transferring her to a dungeon, where in due time, her twin sons are born.

For fear of punishment from the gods for executing members of his own family, Amulius leaves his brother's daughter rot in the dungeon and orders the newborns to be left in a cradle on the waters of the river Tiber, in an isolated and unfrequented place. The crying infants are washed up on the shore, where a she-wolf comes to nurse them, and they survive. Eventually, Faustulus, a shepherd looking for a lost ewe, finds them and takes them home to his wife, Larentia. The twins grow up active and strong and, like their adoptive father, become shepherds of herds belonging to Amulius.

The other main landowner of the region is Numitor, who is still well respected by the population, while Amulius is resented as a tyrant.

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The twins openly express their disapproval of the king and become leaders of the opposition against his rule. A dispute between Amulius' and Numitor's shepherds results in the brothers being recognized as Rhea Sylvia's sons, when the royal cradle preserved by Faustulus is provided as evidence. They lead the revolt against Amulius, who dies in the conflict, and the throne is restored to the boys' grandfather, Numitor. Rhea Silvia rejoins her father in the royal palace.

The boys – Romulus and Remus – feel restless after the excitement of the revolt and decide to visit the shores of the river Tiber, where the she-wolf had rescued them. Along with their companions, they decide to found a city on the Tiber. Numitor is relieved to see his grandsons and their boisterous former rebel companions leave Alba Longa.

A dispute breaks out between the brothers about the choice of the hill on which the city should be built. Unable to agree, they decide to rely on omens. Unfortunately, when Remus claims to have seen six vultures, Romulus counters by allegedly having seen twelve such birds. Amidst accusations of cheating, a fight between the brothers begins. By mistake the enraged Romulus strikes Faustulus, who tries to intervene, and then kills Remus. Romulus builds the city and prospers. He creates an army and a senate, and Rome becomes a place of refuge where protection is offered to all asylum seekers. Yet, now and then, Romulus mourns for his brother on the shore of the river where they were both washed up as infants. Sometimes a she-wolf supposedly joins him, and they look together at the flowing waters of the Tiber.

At the end, there is, as usual for the series, a *Pour en savoir plus* [To learn more about it] section with basic information about the characters and the sources of the myth. This data is provided in easy to read, short, individual paragraphs containing a question and an answer, e.g., How do we know this story? Who is Ovid? Who is Plutarch? Why was a flight of birds selected as an omen?

Analysis

This is the only book in the series retelling not a Greek but a Roman myth, or in fact, the legendary story of the foundation of Rome. The only supernatural factor in the story is the Roman god of war Mars, who derails Amulius' dynastic plans by a dreamlike romance with Rhea Sylvia, resulting in the birth of Romulus and Remus. The story of

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the dream is borrowed from Ovid's *Fasti*. While the babies' survival in the river Tiber's muddy waters seems almost miraculous, there is no magic or divine intervention at play. The cradle is sturdy, the river washes it up on the shore, and a maternal animal, a she-wolf, lets the infants drink her milk. The motif is well known from fairytales in many cultures. The she-wolf is an exceptional animal, but she has no special powers, just maternal instincts with an interspecies scope.

While naming the shepherd and his wife who rescued and adopted the twins, the author does not hint at the intriguing role Larentia (or Acca Larentia) plays in Roman mythology. This aspect was unimportant for the development of the story although it is present in Plutarch's life of Romulus. The names of Faustulus and Larentia are mentioned by Ovid and by Plutarch. Montardre's treatment of the source material – she rather faithfully follows Plutarch – highlights the essentials necessary for the narrative's basic understanding and enjoyment. She describes the scenery, characters, their behaviour and dialogues as if she were speaking about fairly recent and ordinary events; she makes them easy to visualize and relate to a child's experience. Livy's rendition of the story of Romulus and Remus is less suitable for children, contrary to Plutarch and to Montardre, Rhea Silvia is raped by an unknown assailant and then lies to Amulius blaming her pregnancy on a divine conception. Livy's first version of Remus death is the same as Plutarch's but then he quotes another one, where the twins refuse to accept the augury and then Remus mocks Romulus'wall infuriating the brother. who kills him. This longer and more complex version was probably less appealing to Montardre.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Alba Longa Amulius Faustulus Larentia Numitor (King) Ovid Plutarch Remus Rhea Silvia Rome Romulus Tiber Vesta
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Family Relationships Siblings Tradition Values

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Further Reading

Beard, Mary, *SPQR. A History of Ancient Rome*, London: Profile Books, 2016 (ed. pr. 2015).

Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James G. Frazer, revised by G. P. Goold (Loeb Classical Library 253), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.

Plutarch, *Lives*, *Vol. I: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Loeb Classical Library 46), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Thury, Eva M., Margaret K. Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology. Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths* (3d ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

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