Robin Diver, "Entry on: Tales the Muses Told by Don Bolognese, Roger Lancelyn Green", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1273. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Don Bolognese , Roger Lancelyn Green

Tales the Muses Told

United States of America (1965)

TAGS: Admetus Adonis Alcestis Apollo Baucis Callisto Clytie Daphne Erigone Hero(es) Hyacinth Leander Melampus Narcissus Orion Philemon Pyramus Thisbe Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Tales the Muses Told
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1965
First Edition Details	Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tales the Muses Told*. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Incorporated, 1965, 139 pp.
Genre	Mythological fiction, Mythologies
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, robin.diver@hotmail.com
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Creators



Don Bolognese , b. 1934
(Illustrator)

Don Bolognese (b. New York 1934) is an Italian-American illustrator. He graduated from the Cooper Union School of Art where he met his wife, fellow artist Elaine Raphael. He then launched a career illustrating books. He also ran workshops in schools, where he was impressed by the effect art had on children and taught at New York University, the Pratt Institute, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's medieval museum. Eventually, he decided to write his own books.

In retirement, he has created artwork depicting the cityscapes of New York. Bolognese enjoys gardening and collecting wild mushrooms.

Sources:

Simon and Schuster Bio (accessed: December 2, 2020).

Village Green Gallery (accessed: December 2, 2020).

Scholastic Biography (accessed: December 2, 2020).

Internet Speculative Fiction Database (accessed: December 2, 2020).

Bio prepared by Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, RSD253@student.bham.ac.uk

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Roger Lancelyn Green , 1918 - 1987
(Author)

Roger Lancelyn Green was born in Norwich, England, into a privileged and historic English family. He studied for a B. Litt. at Oxford University. CS Lewis was one of his tutors and Green became a member of the Inklings literary group along with Lewis and JRR Tolkien. Green remained close friends with Lewis throughout his life, including going on holidays in Greece. Green is credited with inventing the name *The Chronicles of Narnia* for Lewis' famous fantasy series.

Green became a university librarian and scholar of English literature, delivering the Andrew Lang lecture as part of a fellowship at the University of St Andrews in 1968. He published biographies of Lang, JM Barrie and CS Lewis, as well as researching the lives of Hans Christian Andersen and Lewis Carroll. In addition, between the late 1940s and the 1970s he wrote numerous retellings of myths and legends for children, including tales from the Classical, Egyptian, and Norse traditions, as well as the tales of King Arthur and Robin Hood. While most of the works are traditional retellings, *The Luck of Troy* (1961) is an original story focalised through the perspective of the boy Nicostratus, son of Helen and Menelaus, who grows up in Troy.

His son, Richard Lancelyn Green (1953-2004), also became an academic, and is regarded as a world-renowned expert on the work of Arthur Conan Doyle and the character of Sherlock Holmes.

Sources:

Profile at goodreads.com (accessed: September 15, 2020).

Profile at en.wikipedia.org (accessed: September 15, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This is a fairy tale style retelling of Greek myths for children, which displays Lancelyn Green's high level of knowledge of ancient source material. He often brings in lesser-known myths or obscure variant versions, such as Daphne's father being called Amyclas. The sections are divided into "Tales of Flowers", "Tales of Trees", "Tales of Birds and Bees", "Tales of the Stars" and "Great Lovers and True Friends". It is lightly illustrated with black and white character drawings.

Featured Stories:

- *Narcissus*,
- *Clytie and the Sunflower*,
- *The First Anemones* (Adonis),
- *Hyacinthus*,
- *Baucis and Philemon*,
- *Cyparissus*,
- *Daphne and Apollo*,
- *Pyramus and Thisbe*,
- *Cygnus the Swan*,
- *Enalus and the Dolphins*,
- *The First of the Crows* (Coronis),
- *Melampus and Bias*,
- *The Two Bears* (Callisto),
- *Erigone and Her Dog*,
- *The Flying Horse* (Bellerophon),
- *Orion and the Pleiades*,
- *Admetus and Alcestis*,
- *Acontius and Cydippe*,
- *Hero and Leander*,
- *Damon and Pythias*.

Analysis

This anthology retells Greek myth in the style of fairy tales. Nymphs are called "fairies" and satyrs are "gnomes or goblins of the wild places and the lonely valleys" (p. 43). Lancelyn Green inserts moments of compassionate emotion and softens some of the crueller actions of the characters. For example, Hermes' eyes fill with tears of sympathy for Baucis and Philemon (p. 40) and Zephyrus regrets his murder of Hyacinthus.

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Given the tone of this anthology, its focus on myths about women and animals and its evocation of goddesses in the title, it may have been marketed as the girls' version of Lancelyn Green's earlier Greek myth anthology *Tales of the Greek Heroes* (1958), which was fairly male-focused.

Friendship with animals is a major theme of this anthology. Lancelyn Green includes the animal-centric stories of Melampus and Erigone, which are not found frequently in children's anthologies, and he is often explicit about the need to show animals kindness. Enapus is saved by dolphins, Melampus is praised for his compassion and understanding for all animals and Baucis and Philemon call their goose their friend. Arcas initially does not want to harm Callisto the bear, but she goes to a forbidden part of his home and he then feels he has a sacred duty to kill her. Being kind to animals and not hurting them is usually represented as the default we would expect from good characters.

There is some attempt to soften Zeus' rape of Callisto. Here, Callisto does not want to marry, but Zeus wants her to have a great son. As in Ovid, he tricks her by disguising himself as Artemis. He kisses her and, "his power swept over her so that she no longer had any will to flee from marriage but was caught and held by the magic of his love" (p. 88). After this, the two keep meeting secretly. When Artemis finds out, she is sad and dismisses Callisto from her service, but acknowledges it was Zeus' fault, not hers. Hera, rather than Artemis as in Ovid, then turns up and angrily transforms Callisto into a bear. Overall, therefore, Lancelyn Green seems to want to make this episode less horrifying, particularly since he depicts Zeus positively elsewhere in this text. However, his version still minimises the importance of consent since Zeus essentially makes Callisto want sex with him through magic.

Lancelyn Green also seems to see Zeus wanting Callisto to have a great son (rather than being struck by blind lust as in Ovid) as an improvement in motivation. The idea of great sons as something that ought to be the highest goal of every person and justifies suffering and questionable acts seems particularly prevalent in children's myth anthologies of the mid-twentieth century. The D'Aulaires' 1962 *D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths*, for example, justifies Zeus' adultery by saying it created great hero sons and justifies what happens to Io and Europa by saying both have powerful sons and descendants. Edith Hamilton's 1942 *Mythology* also emphasises Europa's powerful sons

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as the positive outcome of her abduction.

In the story of Orion, however, Lancelyn Green includes something of a "do not be a rapist" message. Orion is criticised for his attempted rapes of Merope, Artemis and the Pleiades, and these are shown to be his downfall. In the case of Merope, Orion gets drunk, "burst into Merope's bedroom and tried to carry her off by force" (p. 108). In the case of Artemis, he "tried to force her to marry him" (p. 109). He tries to "seize" the Pleiades and chases them until they cry for help and Zeus turns them into doves, at which point the scorpion kills Orion (p. 110). The continuous bad things that happen to Orion are presented as consequences for his consistent character flaw of trying to force women to marry him.

Unlike most other versions of the story, Lancelyn Green's Daphne and Apollo retelling also has Apollo display awareness that pursuing Daphne against her will is wrong. In this version, Apollo tries to fight against the magic of Eros' arrow that forces him to love Daphne and want to approach her. He manages to stay away from her successfully for a while. When he does finally appear and beg her to marry him, this is implied to be the arrow forcing him to act in an unacceptable way against his better nature. Lancelyn Green is therefore unusual for an anthology of the time in tackling some of the issues of sexual violence in myth head-on and even using myth to suggest anti-sexual-violence messages in places.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Admetus Adonis Alcestis Apollo Baucis Callisto Clytie Daphne Erigone Hero(es) Hyacinth Leander Melampus Narcissus Orion Philemon Pyramus Thisbe Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Family Friendship Girls Love Nature
Further Reading	D'Aulaire, Ingri and Edgar Parin, *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths,*

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New York: Delacorte Press, 1962 (reprint 2003).

Green, Roger Lancelyn, *Tales of the Greek Heroes*, ill. Alan Langford, introduction by Rick Riordan, London: Puffin Books, 1958 (reprint 2010).

Hamilton, Edith, *Mythology*, New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1942 (reprint 2011).

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