Christelle Dabos

The Missing of Clairdelune [Les Disparus du Clairdelune] (The Mirror Visitor Quartet [La Passe-Miroir], 2)

France (2015)

TAGS: Arcadia Artemis Daedalus Helen Janus Labyrinth Midas Norse Mythology Ouranos / Uranus Persephone Pollux Venus





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General information	
Title of the work	The Missing of Clairdelune [Les Disparus du Clairdelune] (The Mirror Visitor Quartet [La Passe-Miroir], 2)
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Author of the Entry	Mary Appleby, University of New England, maryappleby99@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



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Christelle Dabos , b. 1980
(Author)

Christelle Dabos is a French author. She was born in 1980 and grew up in Cannes on the French Riviera before making Belgium her home in 2005. Dabos was working as a librarian when she endured a significant health battle which ignited her passion for writing. Dabos began working on *Les Fiancés de l'hiver* (A Winter's Promise) in 2007. During this time Dabos joined the Plume d'Argent, an online writing community, and through this community was encouraged to enter the Gallimard First Youth Novel Competition in 2012. Dabos won the literary prize in 2013 with her manuscript for *A Winter's Promise*, the first novel in the *Mirror Visitor* series. The first two novels in the series received the Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire in the French language youth category in 2016. Following significant success in France, the novels were picked up for publishing by Europa Editions and translated into multiple languages in 2018. The series was completed in French in 2019 with the final instalment translated and published in 2021.

Source:

Gallimard Jeunesse, available at Babelio website (accessed: July 28, 2022).

Kantor, Emma, "Europa Crosses into YA territory with *A Winter's Promise*", *Publishers Weekly,* 2018 (accessed: July 28, 2022).

Bio prepared by Mary Appleby, University of New England, Australia. maryappleby99@gmail.com or mappleb4@myune.edu.au

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Additional information

Translation

Hungarian: *Rejtélyes eltűnések a Holdvilágban*, trans. Zsófia Molnár, Budapest: Kolibri, 2018.

Russian: *Тайны Полюса* [Tajny Polyusa], trans. Irina Volevich, Yuliya Rac, Moskva: KompasGid, 2018.

Spanish: *Los desaparecidos del Clarodeluna*, trans. Jorge Salgar, Panamericana Editorial, 2018.

Czech: *Zmizelí ze Svitu luny*, trans. Drahoslava Janderová and Jakub Marek, Praha: Baobab, 2019.

English: *The Missing of Clairdelune*, trans. Hildegarde Serle, Europa Editions, Incorporated, 2019.

German: *Die Verschwundenen vom Mondscheinpalast*, trans. Amelie Thoma, Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2019.

Italian: *Gli scomparsi di Chiardiluna*, trans. Alberto Bracci Testasecca, Roma: Edizioni E/O, 2019.

Portuguese: *Desaparecidos em Luz da Lua*, trans. Sofia Soter, Editoria Morro Branco, 2019.

Slovenian: *Izginotja na Mesečini*, trans. Živa Čebulj, Ljubljana: Sanje, 2019.

Polish: *Zaginieni z Księżycowa*, trans. Paweł Łapiński, Warszawa: Entliczek, 2020.

Dutch: *De vermisten van Maneschijn*, trans. Eef Gratama, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Luitingh-Sijthoff, 2021.

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Mirror Visitor Book #1: *A Winter's Promise* [Les Fiancés de l'hiver].

Mirror Visitor Book #3: *The Memory of Babel* [La mémoire de Babel].

Mirror Visitor Book #4: *The Storm of Echoes* [La Tempête des échos].

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Summary

The Missing of Clairdelune, follows two narrative strands, the story of Ophelia and the backstory of Farouk.

Ophelia's story begins in the Gynaeceum on the Ark of the Pole, where she is now under the protection of Farouk (Family Spirit of The Pole and Master of Spirits) in the Gynaeceum. Farouk appoints Ophelia as 'Vice Storyteller'. The Pole's Ambassador, Archibald, a member of The Web (a clan of telepathically linked individuals), introduces Ophelia to her new guardians, The Valkyries, a pair of senile women from The Web. As Vice Storyteller, Ophelia is thrust further into the court lifestyle. She receives a letter urging her to call off her engagement to Thorn and leave The Pole before she is killed in the name of God. Ophelia cannot determine its origin and is unsettled by the religious tone as theology and the concept of a single primordial God is considered old-world folklore on most Arks. Despite the threats and demands of her role in the court, Ophelia assists Archibald by 'reading' a pipe belonging to the Provost of the Marshalls, who had also received threatening letters and has disappeared from the impregnable and labyrinthine, Clairdelune, constructed by Hildegarde ('The Architect' renown for space-manipulation abilities and LandmArk expatriate).

Failing as storyteller, Ophelia opens a 'reading' business. At the opening of her consultancy, Ophelia meets Lazarus, inventor of automatons and world traveller. Lazarus speaks of Hildegarde's construction of Clairdelune, and the interfamilial compass roses controlled by LandmArk Family Spirit, Janus. In the growing chaos of the store, Archibald calls to inform Ophelia and Thorn that another courtier is missing from Clairdelune. Thorn agrees to investigate and declares the Citaceleste unsafe for Ophelia.

Thorn sends Ophelia to Opal Sands (a resort on The Pole) with her family. After receiving another letter, Ophelia encounters a 'Milliface' (someone capable of metamorphosis). Ophelia tells Thorn about the letters and learns that a third courtier is missing. Thorn returns to the Treasury and the Citaceleste arrives in Opal Sands.

The story shows Ophelia rapidly moving about The Pole in response to commands of those around her. First summoned by Farouk, Ophelia learns Archibald is missing, and assisted by Melchior (Minister for Elegance), she must recover the missing by midnight. Ophelia 'reads'

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a sandglass pin used by Archibald (Hildegarde's sandglasses create an illusory vacation) and determines blue sandglasses were used for the abductions. At Hildegarde's workshop, Thorn, now commanding the investigation, discovers four sandglasses and sand beds unaccounted for. During the investigation Berenilde gives birth to Farouk's child and Ophelia arranges a meeting with Hildegarde.

Sandglasses transport the group to Hildegarde's non-place. Ophelia speaks with Hildegarde, who declares her innocence and that the abductor is serving God. Hildegarde kills herself with space manipulation to escape the threat of God.

To protect Ophelia from God, Thorn ends his contract with Farouk, a punishable offence. To protect Thorn, Ophelia continues investigating. This leads her to a defunct illusion house. She finds three victims dead, but Archibald alive. Ophelia breaks the sandglass, returning Archibald to Clairdelune. Thorn arrives and Melchior, the true culprit, reveals himself as God's servant. A fight ensues and Melchior tumbles to his death. Thorn is imprisoned. To prevent Thorn's conviction, Ophelia offers to read Farouk's Book if he upholds the marriage that day. Ophelia 'reads' a knife tip embedded in the Book and reveals that Farouk's amnesia stems from a missing page. A displeased Farouk declares Thorn will 'read' the book after inheriting Ophelia's powers that day. Thorn and Ophelia are married in his cell and their powers combined.

Farouk's backstory is interwoven throughout Ophelia's story through a series of flashbacks revealing his experiences growing up as a creation of God. The first flashback shows a young Farouk speaking with Artemis. They talk about their separation through their adjoined bedroom wall and Farouk worries about Janus, Helen, and Persephone. Farouk reflects that it was God who separated them.

In the next flashback Farouk watches Artemis console a child. Artemis refers to Farouk as Odin, his real name. Odin says he feels distant from humanity and Artemis insists he get along with humankind, as that is God's wish. Odin believes God has abandoned them and questions why they must follow God's orders, Artemis reminds him it is because it is written in their Books.

Farouk then observes some of his siblings: Midas is attempting transmutation while Artemis assesses her globe and many crayons orbit Ouranos as the twins Helen and Pollux perform acoustic

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experiments and Venus charms a beetle. Odin then remembers fearing God.

The final flashback reveals an angry Odin surveying his Book. It contains God's plan for his life, he is enraged and stabs it with a knife, the tip of which is later read by Ophelia.

The two stories align as Thorn reveals to Ophelia that he inherited Farouk's memories from his mother. Thorn intended to restore humanity's free will from God's control by reading Farouk's book. God (the Milliface) emerges from the cell door with Farouk's Book and says Ophelia is responsible for releasing 'The Other', an unknown apocalyptic entity. After severely injuring Thorn, God leaves them to be dealt with by Farouk. Ophelia reminds Farouk of his real name causing Farouk to honour the contract and orders Thorn's release. However, Thorn disappears from the cell by passing through the mirrored wall.

The novel ends with Ophelia determined to find Thorn but she must first return to Anima.

Analysis

The Missing of Clairdelune, employs elements of classical antiquity and Greek mythology, as well as blending multiple traditions to enrich the mode, conventions, and world-building of the fantasy novel.

The central focus of *The Missing of Clairdelune* is the abduction of multiple high-ranking courtiers throughout the novel. This functions as a key plot device, allowing for an exploration of the intricate world-building in the novel. Extending the established setting of Clairdelune in the first novel of the series, the sequel conveys a strengthening link to classical antiquity, particularly to the classical figure Daedalus and the Labyrinth. This is achieved through the depiction of Madam Hildegarde, also known as 'The Architect', and her construction of the space-defying architecture at The Pole. Whilst the novel does not attempt to re-tell or adapt Daedalus' story, there is a classical resonance between Hildegarde and Daedalus. Hildegarde is depicted as an expert architect, 'capable of reshaping space as if it were made of rubber', and able to, 'bring about a flip from one space to another with just the snap of the fingers.' (p. 112, 114). Hildegarde's renown stems from her construction of Clairdelune in service to The Pole. Clairdelune is described as a complicated structure containing

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labyrinthine corridors and rooms that separate from space when doors shut, as well as disappear or alter without notice. This ever-shifting nature of the setting enhances the puzzling atmosphere carried throughout the plot and contributes to the central mystery of the missing courtiers, particularly as Hildegarde's construction is believed impregnable. The qualities of Clairdelune are reminiscent of Daedalus' labyrinth in classical antiquity which is described as a structure, 'from which there was no escape after one entered, for it closed off its imperceivable exit with convoluted flexions'*, containing, "innumerous paths, and windings vague, so intricate that he, the architect, hardly could retrace his steps"**. The convoluted nature of Daedalus' labyrinth is reflected in Dabos' setting and world-building, though the structure of Clairdelune is more reliant upon the fantasy conventions which bolster it within the plot. Hildegarde's family power of space manipulation, and the supernatural approach to her talent, as opposed to the genius of Daedalus, is what fulfils the conventions of a fantasy novel whilst retaining a classical resonance. The quality of both Clairdelune and Daedalus' labyrinth as tools of confusion and complexity, results in a significant link between Dabos' novel and classical antiquity. This connection exhibits how Dabos has harnessed classical antiquity to enhance the fantasy world of the novel, by endowing the conventional expectations of the fantasy setting, Clairdelune, with a classical resonance.

The Missing of Clairdelune employs classical antiquity to enrich the immersive mode of the story. Interwoven classical signifiers provide depth and historicization to the otherwise fantastic aspects of the narrative. This is particularly important when applied to the immersive style of the series; as the reader navigates a completely realised fantasy world, classical signifiers as mimetic tools provide a familiar set of mythical concepts which orient the reader in an otherwise unusual setting and plot. (See further reading: Mendlesohn). In the fantasy setting of the Citaceleste, Ophelia is placed in the highest floor apartments known as the Gynaeceum, which houses Farouk's many mistresses or "favourites" (p. 45). As occupants of the Gynaeceum the women's social standing is simultaneously high-ranking within the court and reduced to mere entertainment beholden to the whims of Farouk (p. 42). The Gynaeceum in Dabos' novel signifies a link to classical Greek civilisation as, historically, a Gynaeceum served as women's living quarters in an Ancient Greek house. The separation of the sexes in ancient Greek civilisation is reflected, not only in the physical sense,

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but in the social sense as women were kept in more remote parts of the home or the upper floors, away from men. (See further reading: Pomeroy). This double effect of the Gynaeceum is represented in Dabos' novel, functioning as a tool of historicization and plot device spurring Ophelia's character development as she is thrust into increasingly unfamiliar settings and roles whilst navigating Pole society as a young woman. The Gynaeceum is simultaneously antithetic to Ophelia's goals of independence thus serving as an obstacle that she must overcome as well as a place of safety within the harsh court. Other classical signifiers arise in the form of the Family Spirits, whilst not portrayed with immense detail in young Farouk's memories, they enhance the novel's link to classical antiquity. The Family Spirits mentioned fleetingly are Midas, Janus, Persephone, Helen, Artemis, Uranus, Pollux, and Venus. The naming of these spirits and the sparse details hinting at their abilities speaks to the classical notions underpinning the series. The function of the names lies not only in their classical significance but also in the reservation of these classical names applying only to the Family Spirits, thus distinguishing them from their descendants and elevating them to a status like that of their namesakes, which include gods, goddesses, and kings. Within the estrangement of the fantasy setting and plot, classical elements provide a level of verisimilitude and familiarity. Thus, they anchor and enhance the world-building of the series and readers' engagement with the immersive style of the novel.

Dabos also employs multiple traditions in tandem with classical elements to enrich the fantasy world-building of the narrative. Both Norse and Abrahamic traditions are present within the plot and broader world of the novel. The most significant instances of Norse influence are portrayed in both the setting of The Pole and Odin (Farouk). As it is revealed in the novel that Farouk's name is indeed Odin, the name given to him by God, Dabos has interwoven several traditions to inform the world-building of the novel. These traditions originate from classical antiquity as proven by previous indicators, Abrahamic traditions in the form of the singular primordial figure God, and Norse mythology as denoted by Odin, who is considered, in Norse tradition, the ruler of the gods and the god of wisdom and knowledge. This intertwining of traditions further historicizes the world that is presented in the novel, whilst also endowing this fictional history with fantasy. This is achieved by deviating from a single tradition, instead layering, and obscuring the boundaries of multiple traditions. At the core of these amalgamated traditions is the common

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mythic pattern of relationships between 'ordinary' humans and the gods or forces which they believe in or interact with. Mathews (See further reading) highlights this notion explaining that, "In each model of antiquity we find expression of the human imagination dealing with powers of infinity. These models are the roots and archetypes of fantasy." (11). So not only does antiquity grapple with the notion of human-god relationships and interactions but the very patterns by which these traditions are conveyed can be considered early models of fantasy. This mythic model plays out in Dabos' series as the relationship between Ophelia (humans), Odin (gods), and God are centred within the plot of the novel. The Norse influence is also found in place names at The Pole such as, Helheim and Asgard as well as Ophelia's protection, The Valkyries. Whilst these factors are not accurate to their namesakes, they add to the overall Norse atmosphere that is present in the novel and are indicators that reveal Farouk's true name, Odin. This is also true of the Abrahamic influence within the novel, names such as Melchior and Lazarus, the names used not for biblical accuracy but as indicators of the figure of God. Therefore, by employing multiple traditions, Dabos has enhanced the classical atmosphere and historicized the fantasy plot of the novel.

The classical reception exhibited in *The Missing of Clairdelune* relies on significant classical figures, notions of classical civilisation and the amalgamation of multiple historical traditions to enhance and bolster the complex and immersive fantasy world and mode of the novel.

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* Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* III.XV.8:

οὗτος ἐν λαβυρίνθῳ καθειργμένος, ἐν ᾧ τὸν εἰσελθόντα ἀδύνατον ἦν ἐξιέναι: πολυπλόκοις γὰρ καμπαῖς τὴν ἀγνοουμένην ἔξοδον ἀπέκλειε.

** Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII. 166-168:

(...)ita Daedalus implet
innumeras errore vias vixque ipse reverti
ad limen potuit: tanta est fallacia tecti.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs,

Arcadia Artemis Daedalus Helen Janus Labyrinth Midas Norse Mythology Ouranos / Uranus Persephone Pollux Venus

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Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Authority Coming of age Expectations Family Gender expectations/construction History Knowledge Memory Names Relationships Religious beliefs Social class
Further Reading	Mathews, Richard, "From Antiquity to Infinity: The Development of Modern Fantasy", in Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002. Mendlesohn, Farah, "The Immersive Fantasy", in Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Wesleyan University Press, 2008. Pomeroy, Sarah B., "Private Life in Classical Athens" in Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, E-book, New York: Schocken Books, 1995.
Addenda	Dabos, Christelle, *The Missing of Clairdelune (Mirror Visitor Book #2)*, trans. Hildegarde Serle, New York, 2019, 540 pp. ISBN: 9781609455071

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