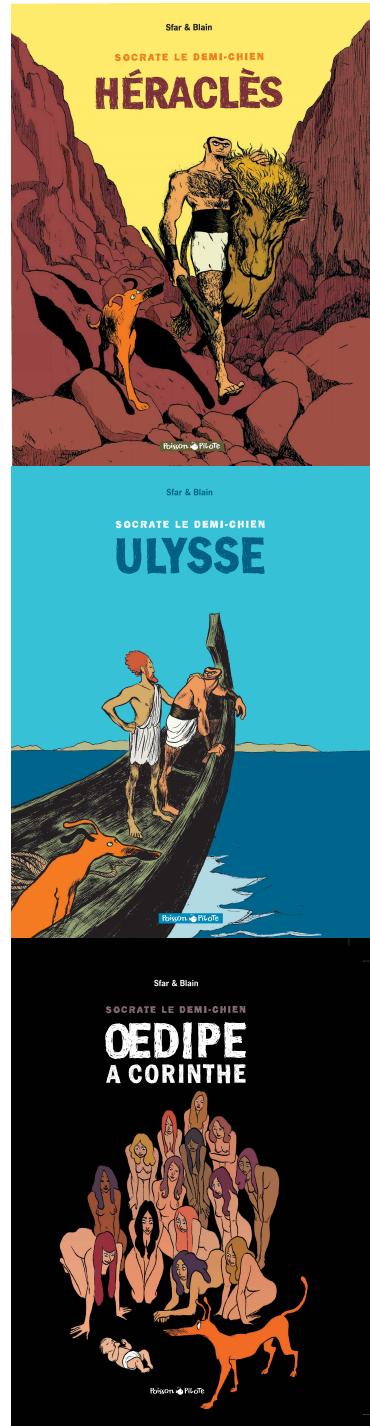


Christophe Blain, Joann Sfar

## Socrates the Half-Dog (Series): Heracles [Socrate le demi-chien. Héraclès] | Odysseus [Ulysse] | Oedipus in Corinth [Œdipe à Corinthe]

France (2002)

TAGS: [Athena](#) [Circe](#) [Corinth](#) [Cyclops](#) / [Cyclopes](#) [Destiny](#) [Heracles](#) [Ithaca](#) [Odysseus](#) / [Ulysses](#) [Oedipus](#) [Penelope](#) [Poseidon](#) [Socrates](#) [Telemachus](#) [Twelve Labours of Heracles](#) [Zeus](#)



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### General information

<i>Title of the work</i>	Socrates the Half-Dog (Series): Heracles [Socrate le demi-chien. Héraclès]   Odysseus [Ulysse]   Oedipus in Corinth [Œdipe à Corinthe]
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	France
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	France
<i>Original Language</i>	French
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2002
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Joann Sfar, Scénario, Christophe Blain, Dessin, Audré Jardel, Couleur, <i>Socrate le demi-chien. Héraclès</i> . Paris: Dargaud, 2002. Joann Sfar, Scénario, Christophe Blain, Dessin, <i>Socrate le demi-chien. Ulysse</i> . Paris: Dargaud, 2004. Joann Sfar, Scénario, Christophe Blain, Dessin, <i>Socrate le demi-chien. Œdipe à Corinthe</i> . Paris: Dargaud, 2009.
<i>ISBN</i>	2205050702   2205053671   2207057170
<i>Genre</i>	Action and adventure comics, Comics (Graphic works), Illustrated works, Mythological comics
<i>Target Audience</i>	Crossover (Teenagers and Young Adults)
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com
<i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, mauril68@gmail.com

## Creators



Autograph session with [Christophe Blain](#) at Salon du livre 18.03.2008, (Paris, France) photographed by Georges Seguin (Okki), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike, supported by Wikimedia France (accessed: July 4, 2018).

### **Christophe Blain , b. 1970 (Illustrator, Scriptwriter)**

Christophe Blain was born in Argenteuil to parents who were both teachers. Before becoming a script writer, illustrator and colourist of comic books, he studied economics and then graphic arts at the École Municipale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques in Paris in 1989-1991 and at the École des Beaux-Arts de Cherbourg-Octeville.

He works for magazines like *Astrapi* and *Okapi* and for book publishers including Albin Michel, Casterman, Dargaud, and Nathan.

He was awarded ten prizes, including the 1994 Prix Jeunesse Gabier at the Concarneau Festival Livre et Mer, and two awards for the best album at the festival d'Angoulême – in 2002 for the 1st volume of *Isaac le Pirate* and in 2013 for *Chroniques diplomatiques*, the 2nd volume of *Quai d'Orsay*.

Bio prepared by Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, [elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com](mailto:elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com)

### **Joann Sfar , b. 1971 (Author, Illustrator)**

Born August 28, 1971 in Nice, France, of Jewish heritage. His father André was a lawyer of Sephardic Algerian origin, his mother Lilou was a singer with Ukrainian Ashkenazi roots. Joann Sfar is considered one of the most successful and original authors of comic books and graphic novels in France (*Le Chat du Rabbin*, *Chagall en Russie*, *Le Bestiaire amoureux*, *Le petit Vampire*, and many others). He is also an illustrator, movie producer (*Gainsbourg, vie héroïque*, 2010) and novelist (*Le plus*



*grand philosophe de France, 2014). In many of his artistic achievements, he uses philosophical and religious themes.*

Bio prepared by Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw,  
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Portrait: Photograph entitled *Joann Sfar au salon du livre Radio France, 26 novembre 2011* by S. Veyrié, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) (accessed: May 29, 2018), via Wikimedia Commons.

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## Additional information

Translation	<p>Polish (three volumes in one): <i>Sokrates półpies</i>, trans. Wojciech Birak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Komiksowe, 2015.</p> <p>Sfar's comic books are quite popular in Poland, fifteen titles were translated into Polish and published by various publishers.</p>
Summary	<p>A trilogy about a special super-hero, Socrates, the half-dog, half-philosopher, whose father was a dog belonging to Zeus and whose master was Heracles. Each of the volumes centres on a different mythological hero: the first on Heracles, the second on Ulysses, the third on Oedipus.</p> <p>Socrates' powers make him similar to humans – he can think, talk, and even read, while claiming that his philosophy is based on doing nothing – eating when hungry, sleeping when sleepy, and following the master without being forced to make any decisions. As Heracles' dog, Socrates accompanies his master in all his adventures and provides a running philosophical commentary on all events. Heracles' main preoccupation in this modern version of the myth is to seduce the beauties he meets and fight the monsters.</p> <p>Socrates would like his master to settle down. That's why he thinks that the example of Odysseus and Penelope may inspire him towards this goal. Unfortunately, when the half-dog and his master arrive in Ithaca, they find Odysseus gone and Penelope in tears. Heracles comforts her in his usual way and kills Telemachus as he tries to defend his mother's virtue.</p> <p>Adventures of all sorts, discussed with brilliant humour by the half-dog, end by exhausting and frustrating the hero to the point of no return – Socrates chooses freedom and wants nothing to do with gods or masters</p> <p>Fate puts on his road an abandoned infant who makes him change his mind; Socrates decides to interfere and save the child destined for great tragedies – Oedipus. Zeus orders Socrates the Half-Dog to return to Heracles who is unable to behave properly without his help. They both take care of the infant Oedipus providing him with rather</p>

unorthodox counsel and education. Bringing up Oedipus becomes Heracles thirteenth labour.

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## Analysis

This is an original and inventive comic book about Heracles, Odysseus, and Oedipus. It is certainly inspired by the three mythological heroes but goes well beyond the retelling of the myths by introducing an additional figure – half dog, half philosopher, named Socrates, with an almost divine pedigree and a direct communication line to Zeus. It presents mythology and the three archetypal heroes through a satirical perspective, they are seen and judged by a hybrid creature with strongly animal features but a behaviour morally and intellectually equal and occasionally even superior to theirs. An imaginative and highly entertaining version of the myth of Heracles, who as described by Sfar and drawn by Blain, is a large man, with a hairy chest and limbs and a very small head. Odysseus and Oedipus are also greatly diminished as heroes, mainly in their personality make-up. The book emphasizes sexual exploits and interests of the characters (borrowed from the myths or simply invented) and this topic becomes an important source of humour, making it attractive for young adults. Sfar selected three mythological figures well entrenched in popular culture, who continue to inspire writers, playwrights, filmmakers, and musicians, and took away their heroic stature by highlighting, exaggerating and making fun of their ordinary human frailties and peccadilloes. It is an example of reception in which classical motifs are stood on their heads and their serious or even tragic aspects are questioned through proposing that things did not happen exactly according to what the myths tell us. This irreverent and playful treatment of classical legacy is a source of *vis comica* reinforced by the addition of the character of a dog-philosopher, son of Zeus' dog, a hybrid, like many mythological creatures and monsters.

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## Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

[Athena](#) [Circe](#) [Corinth](#) [Cyclops / Cyclopes](#) [Destiny](#) [Heracles](#) [Ithaca](#) [Odysseus / Ulysses](#) [Oedipus](#) [Penelope](#) [Poseidon](#) [Socrates](#) [Telemachus](#) [Twelve Labours of Heracles](#) [Zeus](#)

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

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[Adolescence](#) [Boys](#) [Coming of age](#) [Gender](#) [Girls](#) [Knowledge](#) [Learning](#)  
[Sexuality](#)

### Further Reading

Groensteen, Thierry, *Bande dessinée et narration. Système de la bande dessinée 2*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011.

Kovacs, George and C. W. Marshall, eds., *Classics and Comics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

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Leroy, Fabrice, *Sfar So Far. Identity, History, Fantasy, and Mimesis in Joann Sfar's Graphic Novels*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.

Olechowska, Elżbieta, "New Mythological Hybrids Are Born in "Bande Dessinée": Greek Myths as Seen by Joann Sfar and Christophe Blain" in *Chasing Mythical Beasts: The Reception of Ancient Monsters in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*, in the series: "Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature" 8, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020, 473–495.

Vessel, Joel E., *Drawing France: French Comics and the Republic*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

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