Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Nymph (The Love Oracles, 1) by Tonya Alexandra ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/594. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Tonya Alexandra

Nymph (The Love Oracles, 1)

Australia (2014)

TAGS: Heracles Homeric Hymns Merope Orion Ovid Pleiades Prometheus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Nymph (The Love Oracles, 1)
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Tonya Alexandra, *Nymph*. Newtown, NSW: Walker Books, 2014, 420 pp.
ISBN	9781922077240
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Novels, Romance fiction
Target Audience	Young adults (Teenage girls)
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Tonya Alexandra (Author)

Tonya Alexandra (also known as Tonya Alexandra Ward) wanted to be a writer from an early age, and credits her grandparents with igniting her passion for classical mythology. She studied communications at the University of Canberra and publishing at Macleay College, and has worked in PR, marketing, web producing, and as a travel writer. Her writing has been published in Australian newspapers *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, and she was the editor of the children's magazine *Out and About With Kids*. She has three sons, and much of her first novel, *Nymph*, was written while her youngest son Vincent had his afternoon nap.Her second novel, a magic-realist romance written for teenage readers, *The Impossible Story of Olive in Love*, was published in 2017, and its sequel, *The Implausible Story of Olive Far Far Away* in 2018. She lives in Sydney with her family.

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

Merope is a Star Nymph, the youngest of the Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas and the Oceanid nymph Pleione. After rejecting the offer to take Orion as her consort, Merope is banished from Olympus to a small Greek island. She meets Lukas, a local teenager, and although they are not aware of it until much later, the pair are struck by Eros' arrows and fall passionately in love.Olympian law strictly forbids a relationship between a goddess and a mortal man, though Merope recognises the double standards that allow male immortals to consort freely with mortal women.

Still pursued by the threatening but devoted Orion, Merope establishes a home with her uncle Prometheus, who lives a quiet and humble life on the village outskirts. After concealing her divine beauty to appear as a regular teenager, she enrols at the local high school, determined to spend her time on earth learning everything she can. Her friend Eleni helps her navigate the modern world, teaching her how to speak, dress, and use a computer, though Merope keeps her true identity a secret.

Her new friends are astounded by the chemistry between Merope and Lukas, but despite her longing for him, she keeps him at arm's length, terrified that Zeus will hurt him for being with her. Their first kiss is violently interrupted when a lightning bolt strikes the tree they are sitting in. Confused by her mixed messages, Lukas becomes extremely jealous when Heracles appears on the scene, sent from Olympus to prevent the couple from getting any closer. Like Merope, Heracles is comically ignorant of the modern world but impresses the local teenagers with his brawn and outrageous style.

At a beach party Merope finally relaxes and discovers the pleasures of dancing, drinking and skinny-dipping with her friends. Although planning to dissuade Lukas by pretending an affair with Herc, as he calls himself, she ends up kissing him again. Merope discovers that her mother Pleione has cast a concealing charm so that they can be together and escape Zeus' vengeance.

Finally Merope reveals her true nature to Lukas, although she does not share with him her revelation that they have been struck by Eros' arrows. The couple share a happy summer together, assisted by Eleni who helps to conceal the relationship. But in the Epilogue Merope is

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tricked by Zeus and recalled to Olympus, and is devastated at the thought of never seeing her mortal lover again.

The planned, but as yet unpublished sequels to *Nymph*, *Heavenly Longing* and *The Darkness Beneath*, would continue the story of their romance.

Analysis

In *Nymph*, the immortal figures of ancient mythology appear in the modern world. The setting for the novel, an unnamed Greek island, has a direct link with the classical past, although the mortal characters seem to know and care little about the world of myth as part of their Greek heritage. The text exploits the comic potential of Merope's struggles to navigate and negotiate the contemporary world. For example, she takes the phrase 'You're hot' literally (p. 60) to embarrassing effect. Her experiences at the local high school draw upon the tropes of the school story genre, featuring social cliques, cranky teachers, and teenagers experimenting with risk-taking behaviour.Merope's friendships with Eleni and Despina, and the boys they hang around with, are represented as a vital part of growing up. She realises that 'all you need are true friends' (p.379), a common trope in young adult fiction.

Though light-hearted in its tone and treatment, *Nymph* engages with a range of profound themes: love, mortality, and the double standards of gender inequality. The intensity of the feelings between Merope and Lukas, "a thousand times stronger than normal levels" (p. 403), invite the reader to reflect on the power of love and its representation in literature, both in this genre and beyond. Merope is moved by the care Lukas gives to his ancient grandmother (Yiayia), though from her immortal perspective the 96 year old seems young. And she resents Herc's freedom to flirt with – and molest – the local girls, while she is forbidden to consort with Lukas.

Alexandra has drawn upon ancient material in shaping her narrative, and readers who are already familiar with the characters and storylines of myth will appreciate the humour of her depiction, particularly of Hercules. Ovid's *Fasti* 4.169–178, which suggests that Merope married a mortal man, is a key source, but the text ranges more widely. References to Icarus, Helen of Troy, and other mythological figures are woven into the metaphors of the narrative, and the residents of this small Greek village seem to have a casual

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	acceptance of their heritage. Lukas researches Homer on the internet and is appalled to read the outcome of the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*. As his suspicions about Merope's true nature are confirmed, he cannot 'help drawing parallels' (p. 354) with the fate of Anchises. The somewhat abrupt conclusion of the text anticipates the unpublished sequels, and celebrates the ability of love to overcome all obstacles in its path.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Heracles Homeric Hymns Merope Orion Ovid Pleiades Prometheus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Coming of age Desires Family Friendship Gender Learning Love Old age (Old people) Peers Romance School Siblings Small town life Youth
Further Reading	Alexandra, Tonya, "Why Reading to my kids has become the best part of my day", *Mumtastic*, available at mumtastic.com.au (accessed: March 18, 2018). "A Plea to Young Writers from Tonya Alexandra", *Better Reading* September 26, 2017, available at betterreading.com.au (accessed: March 18, 2018). Interview, "Meet Tonya Alexandra", *Reading Time* August 7, 2014 available at readingtime.com.au (accessed: March 15, 2018).
Addenda	The sequels *Heavenly Longing* and *The Darkness Beneath* are promoted in the final pages of *Nymph*, but Alexandra's website states that her 'publishers pulled the plug' on the subsequent books in the series, though she still hopes to complete them one day. Source: tonyaalexandra.com (accessed: March 15, 2018).

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