Chloe Roberta Sadler, "Entry on: Beyond the Odyssey (Who Let the Dogs Out, 3) by Aleksei Bitskoff, Maz Evans", 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/1246. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Aleksei Bitskoff , Maz Evans

Beyond the Odyssey (Who Let the Dogs Out, 3)

United Kingdom (2018)

TAGS: Aphrodite Athena Charon Hades Harpies Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hypnos Immortality Nyx Pegasus Sisyphus Styx Tartarus Thanatos Underworld Zeus Zodiac





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

General information	
Title of the work	Beyond the Odyssey (Who Let the Dogs Out, 3)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Germany, France, United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2018
First Edition Details	Maz Evans, *Beyond the Odyssey*, ill. Aleksei Bitskoff. Frome, Somerset: Chicken House, 2018, 373 pp.
ISBN	978191910655993
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Humorous fiction, Magic realist fiction, Mythological fiction
Target Audience	Children (9–12 years)
Author of the Entry	Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, sadlerc2929@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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



Aleksei Bitskoff by Wa88kazza. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: February 2, 2022).

Aleksei Bitskoff (Illustrator)

Bitskoff is an Estonian-born British illustrator, character designer and children's book illustrator. He received his Master of Arts degree in Illustration from Camberwell College in 2010. He is also the author of a number of children's books.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, sadlerc2929@gmail.com

Maz Evans (Author)

Maz Evans is a British author who began her career as a TV journalist. She has also worked as a lecturer of creative writing and a lyrics writer for the stage. Her first children's novel *Who Let the Gods Out* was published by Chicken House in February 2017, with the sequel, *Simply the Quest* published in August 2017. The third instalment of the series, *Beyond the Odyssey* was published in April 2018 and the fourth, *Against All Gods*, in 2019.

Who Let the Gods Out was selected as the Waterstone's Children's Book of the Month; it also entered the best seller list (according to davidhigham.co.uk, accessed: October 5, 2018). Evans was also shortlisted for the BAFTA Rocliffe New Writing Forum and the Scriptangel contest with her television script AFTER LIFE.

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Evans is also the founder of Book Buddy whose aim is "to help schools match up with interested donors to get books into their libraries" (cited from here, accessed: October 5, 2018).

She also writes for stage. Her original musical, *H. R. Haitch*, co-created with composer Luke Bateman, is being produced by Iris Theatre in London, and she has won a number of awards for her song-writing. Evans also runs creative writing events, which have been featured in many literary festivals, including Hay and Latitude. Evans also takes these creative writing events into schools.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: February 8, 2021).

Profile at the chickenhousebooks.com (accessed: February 8, 2021).

Bio prepared by Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, BA and MRes graduate, sadlerc2929@gmail.com

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Additional information

Translation	German, French
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	• *Who Let the Gods Out*, 2017. • *Simply the Quest*, 2017. • *Against all Gods*, 2019.

Summary

Beyond the Odyssey is the third book in the *Who Let The Gods Out* series by Maz Evans, and picks up the story of Elliot and his immortal companions a short time after the end of *Simply The Quest*. Elliot and the gods are still living at Home Farm, but Hermes remains in a coma and Elliot's mother's illness is getting worse. On top of all that, the school has a sent another "very scary letter'", saying that they are going to conduct a welfare visit to see how everything is going at Elliot's house.

The Zodiac Council invites Virgo (Elliot's best friend, a Constellation and former immortal member of the Zodiac Council) for a visit, and whilst there they convince her to sign a new law after intimating that they will return her Kardia eventually (the magical necklace which grants immortality to the members of the Zodiac Council) if she does so. The only problem is the new law makes Virgo"s "tummy feel funny".

Zeus, Elliot, Virgo and Hypnos (the daemon of sleep) go on a quest to retrieve the water stone and bump into Zeus' brother Poseidon. In order to retrieve the water stone Elliot must travel to the afterlife, and whilst there he sees his mother's name come up on the arrival board with a time.

Elliot and his companions race back to Home Farm only to find that his father has sold his home to the dreaded Patricia Porshley-Plum and moved his mother to a hospital. By the time Elliot and his friends reach the hospital, it is too late. Betrayed by his father, and after the loss of his mother, Elliot turns to his last resort: Thanatos. In exchange for the four chaos stones, Thanatos promises to return Elliot's mother to him. What Elliot does not know is, Thanatos is lying and the person he thinks is his father is really Nyx, goddess of the

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night and mother to Thanatos and Hypnos.

The third book in the series ends on a cliffhanger, with the gods having to trust Hypnos to look after Elliot in Thanatos' realm.

Analysis

The classical elements of *Beyond the Odyssey* are readily accessible for many young readers. Primary aged children may be familiar with names such as Zeus and Poseidon from school curriculums, for example, the Key Stage Two curriculum in England. Evans' modernisation of the classical characters aims to emphasise the primary role of each deity but perhaps misses out on a lot of the duplicity and malleability that makes the Greek pantheon so interesting.

Whilst the main focus for Elliot in the third instalment of Evans' series is his mother, it is Virgo and her decision to ratify a new law that offers one of the most fruitful storylines in this book. Thanatos, the primary villain of the series, is an "elemental" (a category of beings comprised of any immortal who is not a Constellation, a God, a Hero, a Neutral or a Daemon, and whose powers are connected to the elements) and the Zodiac Council uses this fact to justify a new law that states that any elemental can be rounded up and held against their will in Tartarus without any evidence of a crime, for the "safety and security of everyone". The Zodiac Council have made a deal with the Titans in order to enforce this new rule.

At first, Virgo is only concerned with what she gets out of the arrangement with the Zodiac Council (the insinuation that they may consider returning her Kardia), but as the book goes on, she becomes more and more uneasy. Virgo has acquired a pet baby gorgon (Gorgy). Gorgons are described in the book as a type of elemental along with fairies, unicorns, mermaids and many more. Though Gorgons in Evans' series grow up to become the fearsome creatures familiar in mythology like Medea, in this world, they are of bother sexes and start out as a creature more akin to a puppy. The young Gorgy is still learning how to use his powers, and just like a puppy, he adores his "mother" Virgo.

When Virgo first realises that this law may affect Gorgy she dismisses it by choosing to believe that only bad elementals who would hurt people would be taken away. But as Virgo witnesses more and more

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elementals being rounded up by the titans just for being elementals, she becomes more and more aware of how wrong the law is, and how wrong the Zodiac council are for writing such a law. By challenging the classical image of a Gorgon with the cute, puppy-like Gorgy, Evans' opens up questions about what we think we know about monsters. This in turn may allow young audiences to engage with the xenophobia and racism suggested by the Zodiac Council's new law.

This law bears an obvious resemblance to historical events such as the holocaust and the more recent Bambuti, Tamil and Rohingya genocides (a short and by no means an exhaustive list) which are all still happening or which have only recently ended. By engaging with such legislation within the safe confines of fantastical, mythological fiction, Evans opens a potential conversation about the realities of ethnic cleansing. It also offers a route into conversations on race and may enable conversations in the classroom or at home around systemic injustices that exist in our world. Such engagement could provide an interesting take on, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement. Being an elemental could be drawn up as a parallel to being a person of colour and could potentially offer a gentle way into discussions around racial profiling or racism broadly.

As the story goes on, Virgo becomes more and more uncomfortable about the law; she begins to see that it's "the right thing vs the things she wants". She wants her Kardia back, but the right thing to do is tell the Zodiac Council that they are wrong to have made this law. In the end, her pet Gorgy is rounded up too, this finally prompts Virgo to do the right thing and she confronts the Zodiac council. But they arrest her too! and send her to Tartarus with all the Elementals. Here Evans is using the classical characters well beyond the confines of the classical stories the reader may know them from. By doing so, Evans potentially enables critical conversations to take place. There is a degree to which using classical characters and stories allows for a separation from the here and now; antiquity, and mythology especially, can feel like a faraway land where the rules of our society do not apply. This creates an opportunity for "safe" conversations to happen as the reader need not initially consider these topics within their own lives. Conversations about the right or wrong of the new Zodiac law can happen without concrete connections to modern life, thus allowing for potentially more honest engagement. Yet, since the connection is there between the law in *Beyond the Odyssey* and systematic injustice in the modern world, any conclusions drawn from the conversation about the plot of the book can be intentionally

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complicated by later choosing to make such connection clear.

To enforce the new law, the Zodiac Council has employed the Titans. The titans have been locked away in solitary confinement in the far corners of Tartarus for thousands of years and have golden fetters around their ankles. These fetters keep the Titans from accessing their full powers and size. As part of their deal with the council, they will have their fetters removed and no longer have to be in solitary confinement but will have to return to Tartarus. The titans fulfil their obligation to the council once they have rounded up every single elemental, and the council remove their fetters as agreed. However, once their fetters have been removed the Titans refuse to go back to prison and join forces with Thanatos instead. Again, Evans offers an opportunity here to engage with heavy issues in the modern world, for example, abuse of power. But by using classical characters to raise this issue, Evans potentially lowers the stakes for anyone engaging in the conversation. Readers and students may think more critically as they are not bound by the rules of their own society since these characters hail from the mythical land of antiquity.

The backdrop for Elliot's adventures with the Greek gods has always been his mother's illness. Josie (Elliot's mother) continues to get worse in the third instalment of the series. Evans has chosen to write Elliot as mortally afraid of any adults finding out about his situation and painted the authorities (at least through Elliot's eyes) as enemies and not as a potential source of help. The adults in Elliot's life are: gods (who cannot help for fear of being discovered and who often behave more like children that Elliot must teach), his mother (who cannot take care of him anymore), an evil history teacher, a next-door neighbour determined to take his home away, a father who isn't really his father, and perhaps worst of all, the social workers are portrayed as terrible people who don’t understand children and will try to "take children away from their homes and parents", not people who are fundamentally committed to the wellbeing of children.

From the shape, hitherto, of Evans' *Who Let the Gods Out* series, it seems unlikely that we will see any textual change of heart when it comes to social services, however, the books can still open up a discussion that enables adults to drive home the message to any child suffering a similar situation to Elliot that adults can be trusted, and help will be there for them. *Beyond the Odyssey* in particular may provide a launchpad for conversations around asking for help, and how to find adults to talk to who can be trusted, since the adults in the

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story are unanimously untrustworthy. The uselessness of the gods, in particular, may offer a safe topic in which to consider such a challenging idea since they are from the mythical ancient realm of Greek mythology and therefore can be used as safe placeholders to talk around personal experiences without feeling too vulnerable.

At the end of *Beyond the Odyssey* Josie dies and it is revealed that the man who we thought was Elliot's father is really the goddess of night (Nyx) in disguise. This leaves Elliot feeling as though he has no one, he is totally alone and out of options. Of course, for adults who may be reading this to children as teachers, parents, guardians or carers, and hopefully as a young reader too, we are able to see that this is not true. Elliot has many friends, many of whom are adults even if they also are Greek gods. Evans' decision to disguise Nyx (the female goddess night) as a man is refreshingly understated in the book. There is no fanfare about Nyx's experience of crossing gender, and in my opinion, aids in normalising the fluidity of gender.

In a rather lovely closing chapter, the spirit of Josie flies around and visits each of the characters in the very difficult and sad situations they find themselves in. In this chapter, Evans can give a sense of hope to the hopeless situations at the end of book three. As a spirit Josie can be all-knowing, can know that Virgo will never give up and Elliot will start to see the good in things again, just as parents or beloved guardians often do for children in real life. And Josie reveals that Elliot's real father is a good man and he is looking for Elliot. This closing chapter creates a greater sense of magical realism than is perhaps present in the rest of the series to date. It closes the gap between the fantastical, mythical past and a very difficult and challenging present. Josie's spirit moving through Evans' world recognisably fits many images from the Judaeo-Christian tradition and is reminiscent of "loved ones looking down on us from heaven" more so than classical imagery of the underworld. Yet, Josie's spirit traverses the mythical world, travelling to Tartarus and Olympia, perhaps embodying the soothing quality that classical stories can have in the modern world.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Aphrodite Athena Charon Hades Harpies Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hypnos Immortality Nyx Pegasus Sisyphus Styx Tartarus Thanatos Underworld Zeus Zodiac

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Family Friendship Good vs evil Heroism Isolation/loneliness Magic powers Parents (and children) Race Small town life Society Teachers

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