Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Zeustian Logic by John Mackey, Sabrina Malcolm", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/720. Entry version as of November 19, 2026.

John Mackey , Sabrina Malcolm

Zeustian Logic

New Zealand (2017)

TAGS: Achilles Andromeda Castor Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Constellations Gods Hades Helios Heracles Hero(es) Jason Lycaon Mars Mercury Phaethon Pollux Saturn Sirius Venus

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

General information	
Title of the work	Zeustian Logic
Country of the First Edition	New Zealand
Country/countries of popularity	New Zealand
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Sabrina Malcolm, *Zeustian Logic*. Wellington: Gecko Press, 2017, 209 pp.
ISBN	9781776571383
Genre	Novels, School story*
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yaahoo.com

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Creators

John Mackey (Illustrator)

Sabrina Malcolm , b. 1962
(Author)

Sabrina Malcolm is a writer, illustrator and graphic designer. She lives in Karori, Wellington with her family. Malcolm was born in the US in 1962, but immigrated to New Zealand when she was eight years old. She studied Botany, Geology and, later, Illustration and Design in Christchurch. After a career as a scientific illustrator, in 1994, she became a freelance graphic designer and ilustrator. Her illustrations have been published in scientific publications, issues of *The School Journal* (i.e. the reading booklets for year 4-8 students used in New Zealand Schools), and picture books. Malcolm illustrated *Koro's Medicine* by Melanie Drewery (2004), which was a finalist in the picture book category of the 2005 New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults and listed as a 2005 Storylines Notable Picture Book. *Zeustian Logic* (2017) is Sabrina Malcolm's first YA novel.

Source:

Profile at bookcouncil.org.nz (accessed: March 25, 2019)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington,

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babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz

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Additional information

Summary

This is a YA novel in which tales of Classical myth (in connection with astronomy) help a New Zealand teenager come to terms with his father's death. *Zeustian Logic* is about a family trying to deal with their grief, after the death of their father and husband. The novel is set in Wellington, New Zealand. Its protagonist is 14-year-old schoolboy and hobby astronomer Tuttle Theodorus, whose father Jamie has died in a mountaineering accident on Mount Everest. Jamie was a famous mountaineer and climbing guide, who became infamous because it appears that he left a client to die in the storm in which he himself disappeared. Tuttle finds it hard to deal with his father's death, but even worse is his worry that his father might have been a coward and that he might have inherited his cowardice.

Tuttle lives with his mother, Rose Cornelius, and his seven-year-old brother Fen. When her husband died, after a brief period of frantic activity (in which Tuttle compares her to Zeus in her efficiency), Rose has almost completely withdrawn from the world, including from her sons. This leaves Tuttle in charge of running the household and of taking care of his younger brother Fen who has mostly stopped talking and engaging with others. Tuttle is fiercely protective of his little brother, but struggles with all the responsibility for his brother and the household.

As the anniversary of the well-publicised death of Jamie Theodorus nears, Tuttle becomes more and more obsessed with the question of his father's responsibility for the death of his client. He tries to find out more from his father's friend and colleague Mike, who also was on Mt Everest when the accident occurred, and by reading online articles and blogs about the accident, but all this leaves him no wiser. A journalist tricks Tuttle into admitting that the family is not coping. And publishes an article about the dysfunctionality of the Theodorus family in a women's magazine. As a consequence, not only is Tuttle bullied at school and by his neighbour Boyd, but some concerned parents from Fen's primary school alert Social Services of the situation. This throws the family into further upheaval, especially Tuttle. He overhears his mother talking on the phone and misinterprets her words to mean he and Fen will be sent to a foster family. Tuttle loses the ability to cope with the strain and at night goes and vandalises Boyd's car. Shocked at his own behaviour, he turns himself in to the police a few hours later.

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The turning point of the story is when Tuttle's mother, after picking him up from the police station, clarifies that he and Fen will not be fostered out. She opens up to Tuttle about her debilitating feelings of guilt for her husband's death and infamy, as, before he left, she had insisted that he made his own safety his top priority. This gives Tuttle a new understanding of his mother's depression and makes him realise that it does not really matter to him whether his father made a mistake or not. This conversation is the catalyst for the family reuniting and starting to move on. Tuttle's strong interests in astronomy and Greek myth enable him now to remember his father in a positive way which he can share with his family: He invents his own constellation in memory of his father, which he calls "Viator the Explorer".

Analysis

Most references to Classical Mythology in *Zeustian Logic* are connected with astronomy. Tuttle is an avid hobby-astronomer. Star-gazing distracts him from his grief and worries. Hence, various constellations with names derived from Greek myth are mentioned, both very well-known ones, such as Orion, and lesser known ones, such as Ophiuchus. The focus is on myths of *katasterismos*. Tuttle also entertains his brother and sometimes his friend Attila with humorous retellings of stories from Classical Mythology. Of the 52 chapter headings in Zeustian Logic, twelve contain references to Greek mythology (connected to constellations). The changes in the myths of *katasterismos* underline Tuttle's feelings regarding his own maturation and coming of age, his wish for changes in his family (in particular his mother taking charge of the family once more, like Zeus of his) and his terrible grief for his dead father. They are a reflection of Tuttle's own reflections on fame and infamy related to his father. The focus on Zeus' might in many of the myths mentioned in the novel help emphasise Tuttle's feelings of powerlessness in his battles with his grief, family situation and bullying.

A number of names of characters in the novel are derived from Latin or Greek, such as Theodorus, Cornelius and Phoebe (the girl Tuttle is interested in). Tuttle's online/chatroom user name is Zeustian Logic, the same as the title of the novel. Tuttle's view of Zeus's unlimited power shifts during the novel from admiration to realising how Zeus' victims would feel. It is striking that the key scenes of the novel (such as Tuttle damaging his neighbour's car or his mother opening up to

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	him about her feelings) do not contain references to mythology, as these scenes show the sad reality of Tuttle's life, without any escape into the world of myths.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Andromeda Castor Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Constellations Gods Hades Helios Heracles Hero(es) Jason Lycaon Mars Mercury Phaethon Pollux Saturn Sirius Venus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Character traits Child's view Coming of age Communication Death Depression Emotions Family Knowledge Loss Orphans Parents (and children) Peers Relationships School Science Siblings Storytelling Teenagers Truth and lies

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