



The Wolf in the Whale

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A sweeping tale of clashing cultures, warring gods, and forbidden love: In 1000 AD, a young Inuit shaman and a Viking warrior become unwilling allies as war breaks out between their peoples and their gods—one that will determine the fate of them all.

"There is a very old story, rarely told, of a wolf that runs into the ocean and becomes a whale."

Born with the soul of a hunter and the spirit of the Wolf, Omat is destined to follow in her grandfather's footsteps—invoking the spirits of the land, sea, and sky to protect her people.

But the gods have stopped listening and Omat's family is starving. Alone at the edge of the world, hope is all they have left.

Desperate to save them, Omat journeys across the icy wastes, fighting for survival with every step. When she meets a Viking warrior and his strange new gods, they set in motion a conflict that could shatter her world...or save it.

The Wolf in the Whale Details

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Author : Jordanna Max Brodsky

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From Reader Review The Wolf in the Whale for online ebook

Esmerelda Weatherwax says

This is a very different take on fantasy, I've never read anything from the perspective of the Inuit people so I was pretty excited about it going in.

This is a single POV book (I think, I DNF'd) about a girl growing up in a very remote Inuit clan. They are far removed from everyone else and are struggling to make it by, every decision they make can have long-lasting impacts on their group as a whole. One wrong move could be disastrous, and losing members of their clan when their numbers are so few is devastating. They are a close-knit but very pragmatic sort of people. What needs to be done gets done or face extinction. They live in close quarters so things like nudity, sex, sharing partners and all of that are very out in the open and not a big deal. There are strict rules on what men and women can't do with rigid adherence to gender roles. This makes things complicated for our main character. She was something of a miracle child, when she was born she was barely breathing, it was a difficult birth and her mother died shortly thereafter. She was left out in the snow overnight, assumed to be too weak to live anyway. However, the next morning she was found alive, and it was presumed that her dead father's soul came to inhabit her body, that she was blessed by a wolf that stayed by her side after she was abandoned and breathed life into her. Since she carried her father's soul, she was to be raised as a man. She would be allowed to hunt (a huge taboo for a woman) and treated just like all the other boys. However, as a teenager, she found out that she was, in fact, a woman. It was a huge blow and a traumatic event. She vowed never to bleed or take a husband, but things took a turn for the worse when another band of Inuit show up and wreak havoc in her world.

There was a lot of very organic world building in this, the first 30% or so was largely focused on character development and the lore of the world told through songs and stories Omat's grandfather would tell. He's an Ongakgook, a shaman of sorts, who is able to commune with the spirits and speak with the animals. The Ongakgook's other main role is keeping the stories and the lore of their people alive through song. Omat was training to be the next Ongakgook since she was able to speak to a caribou without any sort of training. There are a lot of references to the ancestors, stories about how the gods came into being, and stories of spirits and guides. I found all of that to be fascinating and was really trying to get into the book, but unfortunately, it didn't work out.

This book was a struggle for me despite it being on audiobooks. I'm just not that into hunting scenes – I tolerate them at best when they are used sparingly. I can't help myself, I cringe when I see animals get hurt or killed, even if the rational side of me is saying "this is essential for them to live", it's just a gut response. The first 30% of the book was dominated by hunting scenes and small talk amongst villagers. When the outsiders made it into the story the plot did pick up a bit, but there was still lots of hunting, lots of traveling around in snow covered wastelands and I just got bored and kind of grossed out. There's an off screen rape of the main character and I'm just not into it. I do believe it was handled well, I felt the right kind of angry when I read it. However, I've read 11 books so far this year, and 9 of them have had rape in it. I'm just not able to stomach any more of it right now. So, I made it to about 40% before I called it quits, this is sort of an "it's not you, it's me" break up. There's nothing wrong with it, and it's certainly a very different kind of book, and if it sounds interesting to you I'd say give it a chance.

Karen ?Mess? says

It's only January and I already know this is my favorite read of 2019. *The Wolf In The Whale* is a story that will stay with me.

A beautiful, vivid tale of two cultures inevitably bound to collide. An Inuit story of how one tribe survives at the edge of the world and Norsemen out to conquer and discover new lands.

I cannot just walk away from such an awe inspiring novel. Long after the pages stopped turning I still find myself seeking documentaries and movies about these beautiful people and their cultures. I sought out to learn more of the Viking history. I have come to hold a deep respect for Jordanna Max Brodsky for not only her extensive research but how she brought her knowledge together to bring us this fictitious tale that felt so true and real.

Thank you, Jordanna Max Brodsky. For this masterpiece. I wish so much my father was still alive. He would have loved this novel.

I was provided with a complimentary copy of this book, so I could give an honest review.

Holly (Holly Hearts Books) says

“Why would I continue life as a man trapped in a girl’s body when I could just as easily fly into the heavens or run with the wolves?”

Imagine a world so breathtakingly beautiful and dangerous, so hard and cold and brutal, yet bristling with colors that will never be brighter and enormous landscapes unmarked by the will of humankind. In this world, every step could be your last, and every breath is spent in the fight for survival.

I must praise Brodsky on her inimitable style and writing techniques that really make this book shine. There's one aspect in particular I'm referring to and it's the bold and heartbreak moves that I believe really work to this book's advantage. Brodsky wrote this book in such a unique and powerful way that really strengthens the storyline and our connection to the characters. I wish I could say more, but I'll leave it at this. The way Brodsky tells the story feels more personal, and it allows Omat to draw more conclusions, think more clearly on past events and how she felt at the time and what she was thinking etc..

Omat was born with a man's spirit in a woman's body. When she took her father's name, Omat, she also inherited his spirit and is raised as he had been. The main character is even called Little Son by her father who is technically her grandfather, she's confused on why she's not growing facial hair like the young men around her. She always believed she'd become a great hunter, take a wife, and father children. No one ever questioned her maleness until well, a certain scene in this book. I will go no farther.

But this makes her question everything she believed in. Including becoming the strong shaman for her people.

Now that statement brings in our magic system and I don't even like calling it that because it's so incredibly

spiritual and moving but it centers around animal transformations and Gods. To become a shaman which grants you that power, Omat must go on a treacherous journey to find her spirit guide. Now there is one rule you must follow with this responsibility and that is you must save your powers for the most direst circumstances.

Unfortunately the spirits have stopped listening and have different plans for her.

World mythologies can be tricky, in my opinion. They're alive, well-known, interesting by themselves. Choosing to use them as a retelling can become a boomerang in the hands of an incompetent author. Naturally, this isn't the case here. Brodsky takes the Norse and Inuit legends and transforms them into a beautiful and poetic story in a vast cold and brutal landscape. Stakes are risen at every turn and you will find yourself flipping the pages and wanting more in the end. This is a FANTASTIC novel and I am proud to display this on my favorites shelf.

Milena says

The Wolf in the Whale is a unique book, I haven't read anything like it! It has so many interesting elements: Inuit mythology (that I knew absolutely nothing about), Norse mythology, Arctic fantasy, discussion on different religions, and the aspect that I found the most fascinating - the complexity of gender identity.

The author, Jordanna Max Brodsky, conducted an extensive research about Inuit people and their way of life in the harsh Arctic wilderness. And it translated into a beautiful, descriptive writing and complex storytelling. I even enjoyed reading Author's Note at the end of the book, where she talks about what inspired her to write the story and explains the concept of "third sex" in Inuit culture. It made me understand Omat's journey better and appreciate the book even more. The only reason I am giving this book 4 stars instead of 5 is because it was slow in some parts and it could've been a little shorter.

Overall, I highly recommend The Wolf in the Whale to readers who love historical or Arctic fantasy, survival stories, mysticism and adventure.

*ARC provided by the publisher via NetGalley

Nigel says

In brief - Well crafted and clever story telling. 4.5/5

In full

I found the start of this very intriguing. It is about the birth of Omat's, the main character. We are in the land of ice with an extended family of Inuit and in a time of gods and legends. Omat will become a shaman like Ataata, her grandfather. With these powers she can talk to and see the gods. However when they stop listening to her why is it that a number of gods continue watching her with such interest?

While the setting for this story is largely the frozen north I found that the landscape did not dominate. The book is descriptive in some ways as the sense of isolation of the small extended family group is powerful.

There are a number of characters in this story from the extended family group, some Vikings, some animals and the gods however the main character is Omat. She is physically female but she is treated by her immediate family as a boy. Not only does this lead to some real gender confusion, there are laws and taboos which Omat will break and there may well be consequences. I really did find Omat an outstanding character who will live in my mind for some time to come I'm sure.

In general when I am reading a review book I try and make notes as I go along. In this case I did find that hard as I simply wanted to keep reading! I guess if I do have a slight reservation the pace in this is a little variable. However few people will find it easy to stop reading during the last 20% or so.

For me this is cleverly worked story telling. The weaving of the day to day Inuit world and their gods with Vikings and their gods is very well done. As is so often the case beware of gods and their tricks... This book also works in the power of stories themselves and I love that approach. I would suggest that, while Neil Gaiman's American Gods is very different in some ways, fans of his book might well enjoy this one. Whatever else it is a book I really enjoyed and one of the best books I've read in the past year.

Note - I received an advance digital copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair review
<http://viewson.org.uk/fantasy/the-wol...>

Holly (The Grimdragon) says

Review originally published on Fantasy Book Review

"There are few sounds at night on the frozen sea besides the roar of the wind. No plants to rustle, no waves to crash upon the shore, no birds to caw. The white owl flies on hushed wings. The white fox walks with silent tread. Even Inuit move as softly as spirits, the snow too hard to yield and crunch beneath our boots. We hear little, but what we do hear is vital: the exploding breath of a surfacing seal, the shift and crack of drifting ice. But in the forest there is always sound. The trees, even in their shrouds of snow, are alive, and their voices--groans, creaks, screams--never cease."

I am so happy this was my first read of the new year! It is absolutely stunning. Oof.

The Wolf in the Whale is based around the recorded events of the Norse explorer Leif Erikson and how around the same time, the Inuit people were heading on their own expedition.

Our main focus is on Omat, an Inuit shaman who is fighting for the survival of her people. Even though she is a powerful angakkuq (shaman) who can take the forms of her animal spirit guides, it is not enough to feed her tribe.

Chaos ensues. Bad shit happens.

Along the way, Omat crosses paths with Brandr, a Viking warrior. Their cultures may clash, but they soon learn that to survive, they will need to work together.

The setting is beautiful and fucking brutal. It takes place in a frozen tundra in 1000 AD at the edge of the world, which we now know as Arctic Canada. Jordanna Max Brodsky is a brilliant storyteller. The world-building shown here is captivating with the juxtaposition of history, magic and culture. The prose is lovely and engaging. The imagery is detailed and just so striking. You can feel the icy cold air on your face, your

fleeting breath twirling in misty clouds, the crunch of the hard packed snow as you walk.. you cannot help but become absorbed into this atmospheric tale that is draped in melancholy.

"They say that from the moment I took my first breath, I have lived between many worlds--between Sun and Moon, man and woman, Inuk and animal."

Brodsky explores the idea of sexuality, gender and identity in such a fluid way through Omat's story. It's a beautiful examination on how not everything has to fit into one narrow box placed in front of you. You can instead create your own box.

Omat was born in a female's body, but her family believe that she inherited her dead father's soul, so she lives as a boy. As you can imagine, the gender roles were even more strict back then and so, this becomes a major issue when another band that may be able to help her struggling tribe tries to force her to live as a woman.

This is not an easy read. It slowly builds and then you find yourself clawed at, something ravaging your emotions. There are.. there are incredibly difficult scenes throughout this. Rape, animals dying, physical violence.. but it never, ever feels gratuitous. The climate is harsh and so is the life lived.

The Wolf in the Whale is a journey. One filled with magic, mythology and adventure. I fell wicked hard for Omat! She is such a formidable character. Her personal trajectory is truly something special to behold. It's about finding fulfillment in your life and ultimately, what it means to be our authentic selves.

This book more than proves that Brodsky was not only deeply inspired by the Inuit and rich Norse mythology, but that she put in immense effort and research. The respect and care with which she told this is breathtaking. Such a gorgeous story filled with violence and heartache and hope. I sobbed when this ended. Sobbed.

This epic, sprawling standalone fantasy novel should not be missed. It will be one that stays with me for quite some time, certain scenes will continue to haunt me long after that.

(Big thanks to Redhook & Orbit Books for sending me a copy!)

The quotes above were taken from an ARC & are subject to change upon publication

Mara says

I really enjoyed this, especially as a breath of fresh air in the fantasy books I've been reading in the last year. I absolutely adored the Inuit & Viking lore interwoven to create the magic system & fantasy world. I loved the characters, and was delighted to see the exploration of fluidity in Omat's gender identity. That was definitely an unexpected thematic element to this 1000AD era fantasy world, and I thought the author's unraveling of Omat's feelings about her own status as both man and woman was really well handled. The writing in this was lovely, the action scenes were handled nicely, and I loved the slow unspooling of the romance between Omat & Brandr.

The only thing that docks this down for me is pacing - I thought it was rather uneven, with some stretches going by so slowly and then other bits flying by too quickly. Other than that, I really enjoyed my time in this world and would recommend for someone looking for a change of pace from a lot of other hyped fantasy

coming out this year

Also, definite CWs on explicit depictions of violence, including sexual violence

Kristen says

Full review is here on my blog!~

Wow. This book.

I'm not sure how I'm going to sum this up, because this book gave me all kinds of the feels.

This is the story of Omat, who is a young Inuit hunter and apprentice shaman. As there are very strong taboos about women hunting and women being shamans in Omat's culture, this is a bit of a difficult situation. Omat holds her father's spirit, and as such, she is raised like a boy, in fact she doesn't even realize that she is physically a girl until she's ten or so. Nevertheless, it is decreed that until she bleeds, she has the spirit of a man, and is therefore a man, and can hunt seals and walrus for her small family. And everything is fine, until strangers arrive and throw everything into chaos. Eventually, chaos brings Omat face to face with people she has never seen before.

This one took me a little while to really get into. The beginning is a coming of age story, and while I don't dislike those, and Omat does indeed have a very non-typical coming of age, I still found myself not really 100% sure of how I felt about her character. But I kept on going, because this book sounds very interesting indeed from the blurb.

And suddenly it was 3am, I couldn't put this book down, I was having a bit of a cry, and I realized that I was a bit hooked on it. This book is really hard to put down once you pick it up.

The prose was lovely, and it was a very well written book. There must have been quite a lot of research involved, and it was all very well put together. There is a fair deal of Inuit language and folklore involved, as well as Norse folklore and mythology and it was truly fascinating to read a fantasy story based in both cultures and how the two peoples are very different but not completely.

It's a bit of a difficult read at times, and I mean that in that Omat... generally does *not* have a good time of things in this one. There are some tough subjects at times, like sexual violence, violence against infants and children, and just general violence. But none of this stuff ever seemed like it was in there as a plot device or something bad that happens for badness' sake. It also uses the idea of gender and what makes a person male or female in an interesting way. It felt very realistic, as far as historical arctic-set fantasy with gods and magic can be.

When Omat crosses paths with the Norse, and spends time with Brandr, learning about him and his people, this one only got harder and harder to put down. Even with frequent breaks, I plowed through this one in just short of 3 days, and it's not a short book. The last 1/4 of this book had me in tears. Teeeeeaaaarssss!

All told, I really liked this one. There were times that I wasn't sure if I'd have to stop. As I've mentioned, sometimes books that have heavy themes make me a little antsy, and I have to take many breaks to avoid getting a little too ramped up. This was one of those books (it's not the first, and it won't be the last) but at

the same time, it was one that I always, always went back to as soon as I could.

Really well done! I loved it.

Many thanks to the author, as well as Redhook via NetGalley for the review copy.

kath | novelandfolk says

The Wolf in the Whale was a book that I expected to enjoy but found myself surprised by how much I ended up loving! so many feels - this book is grim, brutal, heartbreaking. the wolf in the whale is a powerful exploration of survival in the most barren of landscapes, family loyalty, and gender fluidity in a time that afforded no leniency for challenging the established ways.

these characters, especially omat and brandr, got under my skin and spoke to me deeply. i've never read anything like omat, an Inuit with a female body who has inherited the soul of her dead father. it was completely fascinating to experience Inuit spiritual beliefs through her character.

the Inuit and Norse cultures are meticulously researched and etched out in intricate detail with many magical elements mixed in, making this a book for history and fantasy lovers alike. i am of the opinion that we need much more aboriginal and non-binary rep like this and I am so very full of appreciation for this beautiful tale.

now please excuse me, i'm going to go have a nice long cathartic cry.

{trigger warning for graphic violence and rape.}

4 stars

thank you to the publisher for providing an ARC in exchange for an honest review.<\I>

Jes Reads says

After taking a few days to have a good cry now that I've finished this book I think it's time for me to sit down and finally give everyone my full review. There is also a scheduled video review of this going up on my Youtube channel this week if you're interested in watching me attempt to not cry for 15 minutes.

Thank you to Hachette Books for sending me an early copy for my honest review. Now to get into what I truly thought of this book. Often I struggle to put how I'm feeling about a book into words that can truly convey how I'm feeling. The Wolf in the Whale left me so gutted that you'll have to excuse any kind of rambling that may follow.

The Wolf in the Whale is a story about Omat and her Inuit tribe. They fear the old gods, living their lives plagued by hunger and death. But a shining star arises from their tribe and that would be Omat herself. Of her tribe she suffers the most. Raised a boy in her tribe, imbibed with the spirit of her dead father, she takes

on the roll of both hunter and woman. Omat's internal struggles attempting to decipher what it means to be either and which one is stronger truly speaks to what it means to be alive today, even if this book takes place 1000 AD. She has seen so much and lived and she is an inspiring realistic character. It's not often I find female MCs that I'm in love with and I'm definitely in love with her.

I love that this story has so much mythology in it. We have Omat's gods, the Viking god's and even Christ. It is so **rich** with lore. The gods only exist as long as people believe in them and watching them struggle to keep hold of their people was very interesting. The story takes place mostly in the arctic so much of the story centers around imagination, yet Jordanna does such a stellar job setting up the story and bringing the characters to life that it paints a beautiful picture in your mind. I was honestly so blown away by the amount of research our author must have had to do and how beautifully she executed it.

I avoid spoilers in all of my reviews, but if you want a bit more information there will be a video going up soon for this as well! I honestly could not put into words how much I loved this book. It took me a few days to be able to process my feelings and put down the tissues long enough to write this review. This is one of my favorite books of 2018 and easily one of my favorite books I've ever read. I feel that the Inuit representation in this was done spectacularly however I am not Inuit and would love to see some own voices reviews. If you know of any please let me know.

All in all this book was simply stunning. Magical, heartbreakingly, and beautiful. It has been a long time since I have read a book that truly ruined me. I loved it and I think everyone should read this, but especially if you're wanting more Inuit rep or you're interested in mythology!

Charlie - A Reading Machine says

This review was originally published at THE FANTASY HIVE - <https://fantasy-hive.co.uk/2019/02/th...>

I've just finished The Wolf in the Whale by Jordanna Max Brodsky and I'm a bit blown away. It starts as a very tight and intimate story about a young Inuit and their relationship with their family and with the spirits that guide their daily life, then introduces the Viking threat from the outside world, then throws their gods into the mix and by the end just goes absolutely maniacally insane.

When Omat is born, her tribe has just suffered a great loss and lost many of their hunting-age men to the angry spirits of the ice. As she is brought into the world, the soul of her father is called from the sea and he is reborn inside her, leading her to be raised as a man. As a powerful spirit guide, Omat crosses worlds and breaks boundaries as she lives as a man and hunter but is often treated by others as a woman. On top of this she is constantly questioning her own feelings as she struggles to establish her own identity and fulfil her own wants and needs without betraying the person she was raised to be. Her development and growth as a character is just as incredible as her physical journey across the ice.

The world is beautiful, harsh and cold. It is an ever present character and one that constantly determines what the other characters can and cannot do. One of the amazing things about a book set in the ice is it gives us is both a world we know and one that is completely foreign and alien to the average reader. I could not get enough of it and when I hit the final 200 pages I actually went and sat at an ice rink because I genuinely wanted to immerse myself as much as I possibly could.

The magic is quite wonderful. Gods are powered by their believers, the Inuit follow their animal spirits and tell stories of the sun and the moon, the Vikings worship the all-father Odin, the warrior Thor and the trickster Loki, and on the horizon a new threat builds. A god known as Christ has risen and given his life for ordinary people, his followers spread his word like a highly infectious disease with promises of an afterlife in heaven and eternal damnation in a fiery hell for non-believers. With their regular worshippers converting to this new upstart, the gods of old find themselves in need of new followers or at the very least a land this new god cannot reach.

The Wolf in the Whale is magical and awe inspiring. It moves at a lovely pace and brings together an incredible world of ice and magic and characters that will capture your heart. It is truly a book that will take you places and one I highly recommend, and you can pick it up right now.

<https://fantasy-hive.co.uk/2019/02/th...>

Nils | nilsreviewsit says

‘I am no longer scared of being a woman — it doesn’t make me any less a man. I am both. I am neither. I am only myself.’

?

The Wolf in the Whale by Jordanna Max Brodsky is the story of a young Inuit shaman, living on the edge of the world, trying to survive in a devastatingly hostile environment. WOW! This was one powerful, dark, atmospheric but absolutely beautiful read, and one I fell in love with instantly.

?

The world building in this book was incredible, I could really appreciate the amount of research that was shown here. The barren landscape of the Arctic was so well described, and I loved the inclusion of the animals found there, most of all the WOLVES!! Brodsky’s prose was a real pleasure to read. She fantastically wove together so much culture and mythology, and spiced it all with such a melancholic tone, which really made me feel for the main character, Omat. A word of warning; there are definitely some dark scenes in this, but I felt that they were needed and were not written for merely shock value, or filler. Every scene just portrayed how threatening life was.

?

I adored the two main characters, Omat and Brandr. Through Omat we explore gender and identity. In Inuit culture there were traditional male roles and female roles; for either gender to not conform to these roles would be seen as breaking an ‘agliruti’ (a taboo). As Omat is born in a female body but has the spirit of a man inside her, she is raised as a man; she participates in hunting, usually a male role. In a way this is a coming of age tale as we see Omat trying to grow and find a balance between her womanly body and her male spirit, and how she can use both and be comfortable with her own identity. I just loved her, she had so much strength!

?

Through Brandr, we see he shares a similar struggle with himself. Being part of a Viking clan, a culture that thrives on war and destruction, and wanting very little part in it all, made his character so interesting. Brandr is not perfect, he’s done some terrible things, but to see him try to come to terms with his past was really quite emotional.

?

My favourite scenes were definitely where the mythology of Inuits and Vikings played a heavy part. The

‘angakkuq’ (shaman) of the Inuit tribe could invoke Spirit animals, speak to them and transform into spirit animals themselves. There were Moon, Sun, Air and Sea gods that the Inuit’s worshiped, their stories were so fascinating. Then we had VIKING GODS too, such as Odin, Thor, Freya and Loki! I adored how Brodsky brought these cultures together, it made for one fantastic ending!

?

I believe that the main theme of this book reflected on the power of storytelling and the power of belief. Once we learn to believe in ourselves, believe in our inner strength and shape our own story that’s when we are truly free, and that’s what I loved about this book.

Thank you to Orbit for providing me a free copy in exchange for a honest review. The Wolf in the Whale is published in the UK on 31st January 2019, so it’s out now!!

Liz says

You should read this book. In fact, don’t even bother with my review, spend that few minutes getting the book instead and then reading it! Ciao!

...

OK, you’re still here :) Need more convincing? Not a problem! Well, first of all, I would like to say that this book is quite ‘dark’ in nature. I mean, literally, the Sun disappears for quite a while far up in the North... but... If you’re sensitive to the more cruel side of life and nature then you won’t manage to handle it in places. People (old and young) and animals (furry, fluffy and feathered) die in this book. You’re warned! It does get occasionally very grim!

But...

On the other hand, this book is structured perfectly around its historical, mythological Inuit/Viking theme where the plot takes us on a journey from the very beginning to the end... like one big circle... You’re born, you live, you die and you’re born again... that kind of way awesome! And every part of this journey is important! The Inuit way of life- so natural and common sense and down to earth and even a bit otherworldly as it tiptoes to the spiritual side; with its stories of spirits- well, I was left positively breathless. This book is everything! I definitely read myself into 2019 with a masterpiece that now sits firmly as my favourite for decades to come!

I even read all of the author’s notes in the end where she explains the research and work and effort that has gone into this book over a decade and I just want to... I don’t know, erect a monument for Jordanna! Yes, she has taken some artistic license with the historical facts, culture and mythology but she knows it, admits it and points it out, and as far as a fictional work- I think Jordanna has done herself well proud here.

They say that from the first moment I took my first breath, I have lived between many worlds- between Sun and Moon, man and woman, Inuk and animal.

This story is about Omat... about her birth and how she inherits her fathers soul and how her grandfather raises her as a boy to become a man and an angakkuq (shaman). And what a story this is! Spanning many

years of Omat's life. All these years of life that fit within them the challenges she faces with her own people being who she is, the challenges she faces when she meets threatening strangers (Norse vikings) and the challenges she faces when the gods interfere!

I was apprehensive throughout this book... With the inclusion of Norse mythology (Thor, Odin, Loki, etc) alongside Inuit beliefs and culture, the clash and contrast in between the 2 were striking. The implications of new people arriving to new lands bringing their own religion, perhaps even the desert walking Christ, were setting the whole story up for doom and I couldn't wait to see what kind of solutions Omat brought to the table in order to save her own people. The whole story, the plot is set up perfectly to make her character shine in the rich story-telling and she is someone you really learn to respect and love early on.

The Viking warrior Brandr that Omat meets is an interesting addition overall and his role is carefully considered and crafted by the author. Brandr also opens up the possibility for a bit more playful dialogue, which I really enjoyed! And yet, he has to work hard to gain the love and trust from both Omat and the reader. I found him intriguing and myself solid jealous of Omat for having his company! ^^\n

The story is not something you sit down and zoom through with speed. This story is meant to be savoured. Sure, of course, once I started reading this book I didn't want to stop but by the gods, I lapped up every word, every mythological story and element. Every setting and scene and piece of dialogue creating a seamless and vivid picture. I don't know, this book and the story just makes me feel like when I read it, I was looking at the sky and saw the Universe... that kind of way! The whole picture! Simply precious! So precious it makes me want to weep with adoration!

An Inuk planned for the future; a wolf lived in the now.

So, yes, there are hardships and death and war and revenge and the bloody Ragnarok. But they are all the obstacles that life would always place in front of every living being anyway.. well, kind of. I'm taking my own artistic license here! You get the gist- there is no good without the bad, ever. There is no easy or simple without the hard and the difficult, ever. There is only the way we accept the lot given to us and the way we decide to deal. There is some wisdom in this book and there are sacrifices but there is also the lesson of love and loyalty and doing the right thing!

Just... Get this book. Read this book!

Karen says

An ARC was provided to me for free by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

In 1000AD, an Inuit community is dying. A young girl grows up with the soul of a hunter, raised as a man and determined to follow in her grandfather's steps. She wants to become the next shaman-type leader of her community, communicating with the spirits. But the spirits have stopped listening. Her community is starving and hope is all they have left.

Wow. I LOVED this book. It was just so complex and layered. It incorporates both Inuit legends and Norse mythology. Yes, that's right. Inuit legends *and* Norse mythology. The story, after all, takes place roughly

when the Norse were travelling and exploring North America; the author herself states that we don't know what happened when the Norse met the American indigenous peoples, but she could imagine. In this world, Norse gods exist simultaneously with Inuit spirits.

Admittedly, it took me a while to get into this book. The beginning chapters are a bit slow but I felt they were also really realistic in depicting the life and difficulties of Inuit people. There are a few sections on hunting, which was to be expected. Although they were a bit boring, I honestly appreciated the look into the Inuit way of life.

For me, the highlight of the book was its exploration of gender. Omat is raised basically thinking she's a boy, even though she recognizes she has the body of a girl. Omat doesn't want to be a girl. She associates girls with weakness and domesticity; she wants to be a boy because they are stronger, and get to hunt and speak with spirits. Omat struggles to reconcile this throughout the book, and I just honestly loved it so much.

I also really loved the inclusion of the Norse gods and Vikings in general. It was bloody and exciting, and Omat absolutely shined throughout whatever hardships she experienced. I loved her grudging relationship with Brandr, and how they must work together. At some point, I just became addicted to this story and could not put it down.

This was honestly an unexpected gem. It was incredibly well-written, and don't let the slow beginning fool you. It's such a rich, complex story. Highly recommend!

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Mogsy (MMOGC) says

5 of 5 star at The BiblioSanctum [https://bibliosanctum.com/2019/01/29/...](https://bibliosanctum.com/2019/01/29/)

I expected to enjoy *The Wolf and the Whale*, but what I was not prepared for was how completely it swept me off my feet. In this stunning masterpiece, Jordanna Max Brodsky weaves a cinematic tale of adventure and survival, blending history, mythology and timeless romance. All of this is set to the epic backdrop of the Arctic wilderness at a time of great change towards the end of the first millennium.

Our story follows Omat, a young Inuit girl born into her tribe during a time of tragedy. But in death, her father gave his daughter his strong hunter's soul, and the spirits sent the Wolf to watch over the child so that she would survive. Omat's grandfather, a wise shaman, recognized the gift in her and believed that she was meant to follow in his footsteps, so he raises her as a boy to hunt and protect her people, while also teaching her the ways to commune with the spirits.

However, as Omat grew, some in her group began to question her role, concerned that the spirits are angered by the taboo of a woman hunting. Their people are starving, and with no new children being born, they are slowly dying out. So, when their group happened to come across another Inuit band on the ice one day, Omat and her grandfather thought for certain that their prayers have been answered.

Sadly, they could not have been more wrong. As Omat finds her entire sense of identity unraveling, her life is also now in danger because of the newcomers. But an even greater threat looms on the horizon, in the form of a group of Norse explorers bringing only violence and death. As the gods and spirits of multiple pantheons

look on, Omat must find common ground with an unlikely ally and embark on a perilous journey together that will determine the fate of both their peoples.

The *Wolf in the Whale* is a coming-of-age story unlike any other. It is also about a meeting of two cultures. Told in gorgeously lush prose, this tale unfolds over a number of years, though most of it follows Omat's life through her young adulthood. Painstakingly researched, as evidenced by the author's extensive notes on the historical period, the setting was brought to life with incredible attention to detail. Like her first trilogy, *Olympus Bound*, Brodsky's new novel perfectly balances myth and reality in an exquisite cocktail of facts and fantastical elements, creating a world infused with magic and folklore. Here you can read about the Norse gods, as well as Inuit traditions of animism and shamanism.

There is also much I would like to say about Omat. This is the story of her struggle to overcome many hardships, some horrific, but she manages to emerge a stronger and more determined person each time. Though her lessons in loss have been huge, they have also shaped her in ways that were fascinating to watch. Readers get to witness her transformation from an overconfident and short-sighted youth to a more levelheaded adult who has come to realize that no fate is set in stone—and one should never take anything, or anyone, for granted.

Omat's journey was also an exploration into gender roles that I found unexpectedly well-balanced and insightful. Our protagonist begins this tale as a proud, almost arrogant shaman-in-training who revels in her special place in the group, disdaining women's work and the female body because she believes them to be weak. Raised as a boy in a girl's body, all Omat wanted was to become a man—until the spirits turned on her and took away her magic, leaving her untethered and her future in doubt. Over the course of this novel, Omat gradually reconciles herself to her new path, learning to appreciate the strength and skills of a woman, ultimately embracing both the masculine and the feminine, because as in all things, life requires balance.

Speaking of which, one of the most significant events in this book is Omat's meeting with Brandr, a Viking warrior with whom she develops a complex relationship that teaches her more about that balance, as well as how to trust and love. I'm a sucker for stories about disparate strangers from worlds apart who come together and form a deep bond, so it was no wonder that I found myself completely enthralled by these two. Plus, what a delightfully interesting little family they made along with Omat's three companion wolves; I simply could not get enough of their interactions together.

In short, I think I have my first real contender for my list of best books of 2019. No surprise that it came from the imaginative mind of Jordanna Max Brodsky, who has impressed me before with her stunning prose and expert storytelling. With the courageous Omat at the story's heart and a beautifully rendered world filled with magic, myth and history, *The Wolf in the Whale* is a novel that will enchant and captivate fantasy and historical fiction fans alike.
