

POSTMODERNISATION OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN RICK
RIORDAN'S *PERCY JACKSON* SERIES

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

May 2024

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing my degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis/project titled “Postmodernisation of Greek Mythology in Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson series” submitted by Tahsin Jahan Bushra (22363006) of Spring, 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in English on May 15, 2024.

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to identify and critically analyze the postmodern elements in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians series and explore how the author portrayed mythology in the modern-day setting. Percy Jackson and the Olympians is an action-adventure fiction targeted at young adult audiences. The story revolves around the protagonist in a twenty-first-century story setting and his journey to the world influenced by Greek mythology. The study will consider the five-book series as a single story. The first part of this thesis will analyze theories of postmodern aspects related to this study including pastiche, intertextuality, magical realism and historiographic metafiction. The next chapter will present a summary of the books and examine how they retell the mythical legends to young adult audiences while identifying the postmodern elements in this fiction. The third chapter will include a full examination and presentation of the book's discussion and supporting material on the subject. The study will demonstrate how mythology regains importance in postmodern fiction, as well as how the author modified Greek stories for modern audiences and breathed fresh life into them.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Pastiche, Intertextuality, Magical realism, Percy Jackson, Young-adult literature

Dedication

I want to dedicate my thesis to my mother. Not only this research but also all of my academic achievements till now were possible because of her tremendous hard work and numerous sacrifices. In my eyes, she is no less than a warrior queen who gracefully lived her life and raised her daughter to be a warrior rather than a princess.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to express my praise and gratitude to Almighty Allah, as this research would never have been possible without His grace. Second, I would like to express my utmost sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Abu Sayeed Mohammad Noman, for his support, guidance, and encouragement in completing this thesis. I will forever be grateful for his dedication to my thesis, and I am a bit ashamed of myself for being a troublesome student. I am very lucky to have him as my supervisor.

Thirdly, my life's shining stars—Momo, Sadia, and Nowreen—my amazing buddies.

Last but not least, I would love to thank my parents. My father who is like a banyan tree in my life and my mother whose contribution in every aspect of my life can't be expressed through words.

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Postmodernisation of Greek Mythology in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson Series*

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Old myths, old gods, old heroes have never died. They are only sleeping at the bottom of your mind, waiting for our call. We have need for them. They represent the wisdom of our race.”— Stanley Kunitz

In the contemporary postmodern era, the adaptation and the reinterpretation of classical fictional tales, especially mythology has become a sandbox of exploration. This recreation offers the authors a new way to overlay modern narratives and themes; one such manifestation of this trend is present in Rick Riordan's wildly popular Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, where Greek Mythology undergoes a compelling postmodern transformation. Riordan's reimagining of ancient Greek celestial beings, heroes, legends and monsters within a contemporary context not only captivates readers but also encourages the researchers to carry a critical analysis into the dynamics of retailing mythological stories in the modern era. *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series is a pentalogy following the adventure of a young half-god-half-mortal hero, son of Poseidon who lives in a world where ancient Greek mythological beings like Gods and monsters coexist with the modern era of the early twenty-first century. Through Percy's point of view, the author introduces the readers to the magical world of modernized Olympus, where Mount Olympus overlooks New York City and ancient creatures and deities blend in with mortals in unforeseen ways. The core of

Riordan's narrative style is highly influenced by traditional mythological tropes and archetypes. The story portrays how the mighty immortal Gods can also carry humanoid flaws and vulnerability to manipulation. This reflects the complexities of the human condition in the postmodern era which also influences the magical realm as well. Riordan highlights the ever-present significance of ancient myths while addressing timeless themes like destiny, heroism and identity through the adventures of the protagonist and his companions in this story. In addition, the author re-establishes these classical literary story elements and draws a parallel between mythical creatures and modern-day challenges. This way the author catches the attention of young to adult audiences and proves the timeless relevance of mythological storytelling in a contemporary setting.

This thesis aims to critically analyze the elements of postmodernization within Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, specially focusing on which intricate ways Greek Mythology is recontextualized and repurposed to resonate with contemporary audiences. This research will conduct a thorough analysis on the author's narrative techniques and story elements to prove that mythology with the help of postmodernization, is still relevant in this contemporary era.

1.1 Research Question

Since postmodernism is a broad field of study, not all aspects of postmodernism are included in the research. Therefore, three research questions are developed to focus the thesis and serve as a guide for the investigation. The following queries will be the main focus of this study's investigation -

1. What is the significance of intertextuality and pastiche in the portrayal of ancient legends in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series?

2. Do the concepts of mythology and historiographic metafiction intersect or clash in the narrative of Percy Jackson?
3. How does Rick Riordan portray the significance of mythological elements in contemporary fiction?

1.2 Significance of this Research

The previous studies in this particular field of interest primarily concentrated on the initial two volumes of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series. Nevertheless, there exists a notable deficiency of research within the last three books. Significantly, only a small number of researchers regarded this sequence as a unified narrative. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of thorough and analytical research on the postmodern elements present in Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, as well as their link and impact on the series' postmodernization. The purpose of the critical analysis of this thesis is to look at this series through a postmodern lens. As the researcher and having read the series multiple times over the past decade, it is noticeable that Riordan's reimagination and reinterpretation of Greek mythology not only captivates readers with its immersive storytelling but also creates a sense of relevance with the readers. This thesis aspires to contribute to future studies on mythology and postmodernization, demonstrating its relevance in the contemporary context.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 The Notion of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is impossible to describe precisely because doing so would limit its relevancy. The philosophy of postmodernism emerged in the early twentieth century and gradually spread into the culture. Jean-François Lyotard, critically acclaimed as the father of postmodernism provided a clear definition in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and states-

“ I define postmodernism as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it “ (Lyotard xxiv).

In today's world, postmodernism has had a significant impact on politics, intelligence, and creativity. It has had a significant influence on many different fields, most notably literature, and has been formed over a long historical period by several features. Postmodern literature challenges modernism and promotes ambiguity by rejecting rational, historical, and scientific concepts in favour of more sarcastic, self-aware, and experimental literary styles. Peter Burger named this experimental movement “Avant-Garde” in his book *Theorizing of Avant-Garde*. By using a postmodern deconstructive reading lens, readers can view popular fiction from a variety of angles and discover that it projects real-world issues rather than being snobbish about cultural hierarchies.

Postmodernism in literature, particularly postmodern fiction is the area of interest in this research. The writing style in postmodern literature provides an array of opinions and identities. Moreover, language in postmodern fiction serves a purpose other than simply depicting characters or events. It not only develops the universe but also the characters that

occupy it. Nicol gave an effective interpretation of the characteristics of postmodern fictions in his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* as he highlights-

“Identifying postmodern texts is a matter of determining which elements within them are especially dominant, in this sense. In my view, the most important features found in postmodern texts are:

- (1) a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text’s own status as constructed, aesthetic artefact
- (2) an implicit (or sometimes explicit) critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional ‘world’
- (3) a tendency to draw the reader’s attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text” (Nicol xvi).

Moreover, McHale's interpretation of postmodern fiction effectively proves how postmodern fiction is still following Girard's ever-classical mimesis theory as he further explains in *Postmodernist Fiction* that-

“Nowadays everything in our culture tends to deny reality and promote unreality, in the interests of maintaining high levels of consumption. It is no longer official reality which is coercive, but official unreality, and postmodernist fiction, instead of resisting this coercive unreality, acquiesces in it or even celebrates it. This means, ironically enough, that postmodernist fiction, for all its antirealism, actually continues to be mimetic” (McHale 219).

Moreover, McHale also observes that mythology can play a major role in postmodern fiction as he used the word "mythification" as a bridge to connect the real world with the mythical world (36). He further denotes -

“The evidence of such historical processes as mythification and fictionalization forces us to broaden our perspective. The external cut of the fictional heterocosm, it appears, is not determined only by fiction’s relation to

the real world and to other fictional texts, but also by its place among the whole range of other “unreal” and “quasi-real” ontologies in a given culture” (McHale 36).

In Percy Jackson's universe, the mythification process of Greek mythology vividly demonstrates the concept of "transworld identity" (McHale 35). For example, Riordan's series investigates American culture, morals, and imagery by combining ancient Greek figures and tales with a contextualised American perspective. The relationship between Greek mythology and the American setting is clear from the start, as demonstrated by Percy's conversation about Greek deities with Chiron, his tutor and guide, in chapter 5 of the first novel "The Lightning Thief". Chiron demonstrates how Greek characters are interwoven into American architecture, such as the Eagle and Prometheus statues, demonstrating Greek Olympians' great influence in America. Notably, the author's usage of American architecture is seamless throughout the series. In his third novel, he mentions the Hoover Dam and its bronze angel sculptures. Thalia claims that they were loyal to Zeus. In response to Thalia's plea to her father Zeus, the angels appear and save Percy and his comrades from their enemies. By weaving it into his wonderful story, Riordan gave life to the statues and they saved those heroes' lives at the last minute.

2.2 Pastiche

“Pastiche is a creative work that imitates or blends many styles, elements, or techniques from various sources. The term is derived from the Italian word "pasticcio," which means "paste" and is frequently used in similar contexts. The terms “mixed” and “mixture” are used symbolically. In the 17th century, the French term "pâteche" refers to an "opera potpourri" and was initially used as a noun” (“Pastiche”, Khabibullaeva 1).

However, the word "Pastiche" in literature was first interpreted by a French philosopher named Denise Diadrot in his book *Fundamentals of Literary Criticism* around 1767. The hypothesis is that "Pastiche in literary criticism is a parody of a work of art author's style " (Khabibullaeva 1). Berry points out in his theory that Pastiche refers to combining existing themes, concepts, or characters from other works with fresh perspectives (67). Khabibullaeva offers a useful denomination as he claims that "The idea behind pastiche is that contemporary characters take on the traits and characteristics of these historical figures by mimicking their style and appearance" (1). In postmodern literature, the term "pastiche" refers to the practice of merging styles or characteristics that were previously considered improper for literary works. This strategy honours traditional styles while representing modern society's disarray, multiplicity, abundance of information, and diverse identities. Postmodern fiction blurs the distinctions between different genres of literature, as well as between various types of human experience, dreaming, and reality, by including works from a variety of literary traditions. Because of this ambiguity, it is difficult to define postmodern literature as truly original and innovative. In short, In postmodern literature, the term "pastiche" refers to the construction of a new tale by mixing another work's techniques, characters, and settings. Unlike a structured work, a pastiche requires the writer to create original narratives that use pre-existing characters while also adding new ones. Hale and Riverlea, authors of *The Alphabetical Odyssey* reveal how mythology is related to pastiche as they write " postmodern pastiche that presents itself as a teenager's notebook about mythology, with drawings and notes, collage and found objects, emphasizing the strange and humorous aspects of the monsters" when they gave an example of another young adult literature *My Monster Notebook* (2011) by John Harries and Mark Todd. Percy Jackson series uses an ample amount of pastiche in the story. For example, according to Khabibullaeva, the existence of patiche is visible in the story elements like God's power which is partially passed down to their biological children to

represent their parenthood. Also, the research proves that architectural references and descriptions of mythical beings like the pegasus, monsters like Herpy and weapons like “Riptide” which can change its form into a common ballpoint pen are also a form of pastiche. Furthermore, Khabibullaeva also emphasises that all relevance with modern times makes “the plot more interesting” (961).

2.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the relationship that a text has with the other literary works around it. By referencing pre-existing cultural, historical, and literary contexts, it enhances tales in literature, art, and media and enables viewers and readers to interact with the text and its intertextual references actively. Bazerman gave an elaborate definition of intertextuality as he writes in his research “ Intertextuality: How Texts Reiles on Others” that-

“The explicit and implicit relations that a text or utterance has to prior, contemporary and potential future texts. Through such relationships a text evokes a representation of the discourse situation, the textual resources that bear on the situation, and how the current text positions itself and draws on other texts” (Bazerman 86)”.

Intertextuality creates a complicated web of allusions, borrowings, and references by blurring the distinction between originality and influence.

“Intertextuality refers to the way that texts speak to one another, creating a network of allusions, references, and shared ideas. It is an age-old idea and can be seen in classical literature through the idea of weaving” (Hale and Riverlea 67).

The interconnected nature of literary texts has been a prominent focus of postmodern literature studies. This is because postmodernism holds that art is not an individual creation,

but rather a decentralized viewpoint. a distinctive written work that utilizes a wide range of literary elements, such as analogies, figures, illustrations and transcriptions of source materials. By using those materials, postmodern novelists develop new narrative ideologies by combining concepts and meanings from other literary works into their own. They combine a variety of texts and traditions to create multi-layered, intricate works that encourage audience participation and active engagement in the process of giving them meaning. For this reason, it is often a topic of debate that postmodern works of literature lack imagination and rely on cliché tropes. However, Johnston gives a counterargument in his paper “Time-space: History as Palimpsest and Mise-en-abyme in Children’s Literature” as he emphasizes that

“These time-spaces are in a state of constant contextual and intertextual interaction. They are like a palimpsest: other, older, layers of script are glimpsed beneath the top layer of a document which is continuously being written, erased, and re-written” (Hale and Riverlea, *An Alphabetical Odyssey: Classical Mythology and Children’s Literature* 324).

Mythology and folklore offer a wealth of intertextual resources. Bazerman made the connection between intertextuality and literary creativity by using the term "appropriation". Appropriation is a type of intertextuality in which someone else's text is reused or reinterpreted. Different interpretations can arise from the deliberate reuse, recycling, or rewriting of a literary work's themes, ideas, characters, settings, plots, and imagery. In this case, myths can serve as the foundation for creating new tales while shedding light on ancient ones (95-96). In further reading of Bazerman’s hypothesis, easily shows that Riordan used implicit methods in Percy Jackson and the Olympians series to make intertextual connections with Greek mythology as he used “recognisable phrasing, terminology, language and patterns

that appear to mimic particular communication styles, genre, vocabulary, stock phrases and most importantly patterns” (Bazerman 88–89).

All in all, a postmodern work's intertextuality can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including contrasting it with another literary work, examining the work more thoroughly, or including more themes or other literary elements. This proves that authors can handle postmodernism's intertextuality in a variety of ways; some may keep to the original meaning of their works, whereas others may dismiss allusion and influence as passing trends. Postmodernists regard this method as an important tool utilized in popular fictional story setting such as sci-fi, dystopia, mythology and medieval fantasy. Intertextuality, postmodernism, and mythology are related ideas that study significance, narrative, and the human experience. Through gods, heroes, and paranormal occurrences, mythology, an old storytelling form, explains the world and human existence. Worldviews, moral principles, and cultural identities have all been influenced by these tales. Postmodernism questions objective truths as well as celebrates meaning fluidity and rejects grand narratives and metanarratives. The concept of intertextuality recognises the relationships between texts and how they affect one another. Intertextuality is a method used in postmodernism to dissect and reconstruct epic stories and myths. Through intertextual allusions, postmodern authors and artists frequently work with mythology, rewriting old tales to address current issues, question conventional wisdom, and delve into the complexity of the human condition. These three stories invite readers to reevaluate the conceptions of history, culture, and meaning by blurring the lines between the past and present.

2.4 Magical Realism

“Book’s greatness lies precisely in the fact that everything in it – not only events and scenes but also symbols, visions, spells, omens and myths“ (Aldea 41).

Magical realism blurs the lines between imagination and reality by fusing everyday events and the supernatural. Unlike classic fantasy literature, magical realism includes extraordinary events in ordinary settings without formality or justification. One of the common features of magical realism is its way of representing magic as an essential component of reality, giving it the same attention to detail and realism as regular everyday events. This method forces readers to reevaluate their perceptions of reality and adopt a broader, more diverse worldview. Moreover, Sharma and Chaudhary in their research reveals-

“Literary work marked by the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in a surrealistic manner. The themes and subjects are often imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dream-like quality. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, skilful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable “(Sharma and Chaudhary 196–97).

In short, postmodern literature used magical realism as a literary element to bring a fictional world and blend it with reality.

2.5 Mythology in Riordan's Percyverse

“The Greeks made their gods in their own image... Human gods naturally made heaven a pleasantly familiar place. The Greeks felt at home in it. They knew just what the divine inhabitants did there, what they ate and drank where they banqueted and how they amused themselves.....That is the miracle of

Greek mythology - a humanized world, men freed from the paralyzing fear of an omnipotent Unknown” (Hamilton 7–9).

The comments of Hamilton mentioned above have a strong impact on the Percy Jackson and the Olympians trilogy. Previous scholarly research of this novel series has centred on Riordan's ability to capture readers by presenting them with an extraordinary realm where mythology and the present-day world harmoniously coexist. Additionally, these studies have explored how ancient narratives from Greek mythology can be reimagined and retold in a modern storytelling context.

James and Priscilla emphasize this strategy as a "newfangledment” of mythology" for modern readers. Their research observed how Percy Jackson as a modern demigod makes the curious readers think about if there is any possibility that they are also half-blood. They also add, “If Percy Jackson was portrayed as a normal demigod of the past with ancient portrayal no readers would have been attracted towards it" (James and Priscilla 2456). Moreover, James and Priscilla add their research “Newfangled Mythology in Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief” how Riordan made the “evolution of demigod concept”(2459) to recreate mythology as well as pointed out why the "modernization occurred because the new era would never accept ancient ideologies" (2456). Overall, their research proves that Riordan wrote the novel according to the requirements of the era as contemporary readers anticipate something intriguing and unique.

Similarly, Morey and Nelson in their analysis verified the author's method of infusing Greek mythology with a healthy dose of playful humor, seamlessly blending classical elements with contemporary worldviews for a delightful comedic impact. Moreover, Rubin et al. in their research “The Reflection of Myth in Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson Series and Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy”, conducted a comparative analysis of the series and affirms how both authors expertly integrate mythological and contemporary elements to produce

engaging stories that provide thought-provoking insights into morality, human nature, and the never-ending battle between good and evil. The way these novels recreate myths demonstrates the timeless appeal of these ancient tales and their adaptability in a range of cultural contexts. The study also emphasizes,

“Rick Riordan's imaginative prowess has captivated young readers by transforming seemingly insignificant situations into his work, thereby, encouraging them to grow their imagination. His works have widened the fiction world, bringing myth literature to the present and future generations with impressionable minds.....a repetition of the same old myth rather he has retold the myth in such a manner that it includes logic and reasoning to which may be validated in the modern world” (Rubin et al. 2–3).

Another comparative analysis between Rowling's *Harry Potter* and *Percy Jackson and the Olympians series* was conducted by Kakkat and Sivasubramaniam and their study points to the similarities of "archetypes" between these series. They also add how the fact of being of mud blood or half-blood was hidden for the protagonists until they reached a certain age as well as how easily they adapted to the magical world as if they were "hardwired" for it. The research also proves how " character archetypes can be identified as well along with thematic archetypes like good vs. evil, love, loyalty, friendship, innocence, supernatural elements, mythical creatures and magic"(Kakkat and Sivasubramaniam 290).

Moreover, Leighton in his research comes into the conclusion that Riordan's reinterpretation of old tales seeks to establish a deliberate dialogue and interconnectivity between the original myth and the updated version. This technique utilizes well-known archetype storylines, which are familiar to people who are acquainted with them and places them within the context of modern cultural and social geography, particularly targeting

younger readers. Thus, the reader's reactions to this text do not undermine the credibility of the source material or their individually-developed interpretations (71).

2.6 Percy Jackson and the Depiction of Social Realities

It is important to note that the core inspiration behind Riordan's Percy Jackson series is the most common psychological and neurodevelopmental issues among children - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, in short, ADHD (“What Is ADHD?”). In one of the interviews with Jennifer Robinson, Riordan admits that -

“My son was the model for Percy since he's ADHD/dyslexic. My father is also dyslexic, a fact he did not discover until he was an adult. So clearly, the condition runs in the family. I doubt I'm fully dyslexic, but I do have some of the markers, and it may be one reason I came so late to read. I am still a very slow reader and an indifferent speller at best. The thing about dyslexia/ADHD is that these conditions turn into strengths later in life. ADHD/dyslexic kids tend to be extremely articulate and fun to be around. I've gotten many emails and letters from dyslexics and their parents. One child told me she now wears her dyslexia as a badge of honour. Another parent told me that her child was told he would never be able to read a book. A few months later, he discovered Percy Jackson and was reading all night under the covers until he finished the series!” (Riordan, “Typepad”).

Percy Jackson made the most of his ADHD shortcomings by using them to his advantage in combat, ultimately saving his life numerous times. Hale and Riverlea in their book *An Alphabetical Odyssey: Classical Mythology and Children's Literature* resonate with Riordan's point of view as they describe this situation as “ a vision in which disabilities can be understood as superpowers if viewed sympathetically” (Hale and Riverlea 61).

Similarly, Akhila Thomas in his article “Rediscovering Mythologies Through Popular Culture” proves how skillfully a disabled person can live a normal life despite being alienated by society. He points out Grover, the best friend of Percy and one of the notable characters in the series and claims,

“Grover is the satyr in the books and he is shown to be a boy who walks with a limp but yet is successful in his adventures with Percy. This representation subverts the general stigma surrounding disability and it does not stop him from any of his endeavours. As a part of books and movies consumed by children and young adults, such powerful representations will uplift the marginalised disabled community and address the stigma associated with them” (Thomas 512).

Rabbi took a different approach in his research titled “Percy Jackson and the Olympians: Reincarnation of Greek Mythology as an Alternate Reality” as he viewed the third book of Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, *The Curse of the Titan* through the lens of Marxism. In addition, Rabbi highlights the presence of a "pyramid-like social structure" at Camp Half-Blood, where fellow demigods are subjected to inferior treatment due to the camp superintendent being an exiled god from Olympus (6). Furthermore, the research highlights parallels between capitalism and civilization by offering additional evidence for the credibility of Olympus as the emblem of capitalism. Also, Rabbi proves the Greek Gods' bourgeoisie nature as “they give their children the power to win on the battlefield and thus use their children, like the typical bourgeoisie, for their cause” (Rabbi 8).

Chapter 3

Review of Existing Research: Elements of Postmodernism

3.1 Allusion & Pastiche

Khabibullaeva uses several examples like Percy's supernatural powers that align with Posidon's wherever he comes close to a water source. He also points out the the pastiche behind architectural style of "Camp Half-Blood", Percy's training place as "the image of the place is skillfully written with interesting details. Everything, from arenas, and amphitheatres in ancient Greece to the winged horses was used, but the only difference in the work was that it was all new, that is, all the details were imitated, and there is also a non-specific look to details" (Khabibullaeva 961). In addition, Khabibullaeva critically analysed the Lightning Thief and concluded that Rick Riordan creates new characters and adds elements to the "chronotype" by utilising pastiche, a contemporary version of Greek mythology as he creates a distinct story by emulating mythological heroes and utilizing the attributes of classical Greek gods (961).

Notably, Anusha Prasannan in her essay "Mythology Deconstructed: Tracing the Postmodern Elements in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" presents ample evidence of postmodern elements in the first book *The Lightning Thief* of Percy Jackson series (Prasannan 1–17). Firstly, Prasannan points out how Riordan used the "first person point of view" so that readers can enjoy the excitement of the adventure of saving the world through the eyes of the protagonist. The reader-story gap is closed by narrative storytelling, which lets readers interact with Percy, promotes dialogue, and makes it harder to distinguish between modern mythology and postmodern reality (4). Secondly, Prasannan also observes that Riordan uses "simple colloquial language", which he occasionally combines

with Greek vocabulary, to blur the line between myth and reality (4). Language is a key component in postmodernist fiction, helping to convey the hybridity of artistic creation. Thirdly, Prasannan also reveals that the language, the satirical tone, and the plot's rapid pace are what make *The Lightning Thief* so appealing. Simple vocabulary and everyday language with a selection of commonplace terms and expressions are implemented by Riordan throughout the novel to appeal to a wide range of readers, including adults and children. Not only is the novel's tone lighthearted and engaging, but it also resonates with readers. Thirdly, Prasannan writes,

“Riordan has used certain humorous modern-day names for some of his characters, who are ancient Greek Gods as well as modern-day city dwellers of the Western civilization. For instance, Medusa - the snake woman of Greek mythology, is Aunty Em, Procrustus - The Stretcher, is Crusty, Dionysius - the God of Wine is Mr. D. Riordan also uses certain Greek swear words to add credibility to his postmodern fantasy”(5).

Lastly, Prasannan notes the pastiche of the novel through the hybridity of mythical beings like minotaur, centaur and satyr.

On the other hand, the research titled “Allusion as the Way of Rendering Elements of Ancient Greek Mythology in the Tissue of Modern Literature” by Mirzaeva Aziza Shavkatovna highlights the connection between allusion and postmodernism presented in the first book *The Lightning Thief*. Nevertheless, the analytical study does not examine the connections as the author neglects to present any proof of the literature or theory Riordan relied on as a source of inspiration for allusion. In contrast, Hale and Riverlea present an effective counterargument as they claim-

In “Percy Jackson and the Olympians” series, the hero Percy Jackson’s dyslexia turns out to be caused by his demigod brain being hard-wired to read

Ancient Greek (reversing the phrase, “It’s all Greek to me”). Of course, one does not have to know Latin or Greek to be knowledgeable about classical myth. Reading books in which mentions of it are important or meaningful offers a final form of adaptation – namely, allusions” (Hale and Riverlea 66).

3.2 Questioning Grand Narratives

Leighton in his article “Re-discovering Mythology: Adaptation And Appropriation In The Percy Jackson And The Olympians Saga” mentions the female lead of this series, "Annabeth, a daughter of Athena, one of Riordan’s creative additions and the character who, throughout the series, most fully realises Riordan’s postmodernist concerns of challenging patriarchal tropes and expectations of mythological narratives"(Leighton 65).

Similarly, Prasannan, in her research also points out that the duel between Percy and Ares, the immortal God of war is the postmodern symbol of rejecting grand authorities (7). Moreover, Prasannan also notes Riordan's narrative way of showing the significance of the character's choice in the story and how “Postmodernism suggests that one’s real powers as an individual lie in the choices one makes independent of the defining conventions and metanarratives of the culture in which one lives. In so much as one refuses to accept categories and being categorized one self-actualizes and empowers oneself”(Prasannan 8).

3.3 Intertextuality

Pasanrangi et al. in their research proved the significance of recognizing the metamorphosis of legendary characters in literature. Their research centred on the portrayal of the Greek goddess Aphrodite in fictional works and classical myths, employing intertextuality and mythology. The research uses deconstruction and reconstruction in order

to uncover the transformational notions throughout Aphrodite's personas, exposing both her fictional character and the origins of her divinity. The concept of change is a perfect reflection of her importance, symbolizing eternal beauty (Pasanrangi et al.).

In another research titled "Intertextuality in Rick Riordan's Work," Shavkatovna discovered intertextual links between the second novel, *The Sea of Monsters*, and Homer's *Odyssey*. According to his findings, he noted that the primary character of both Samuel Butler's translation of Homer's *The Odyssey* and Rick Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters* experiences hardship. Though it has changed some aspects of *The Odyssey*, including the storyline, location, characters, and subject, *The Sea of Monsters* contains parallels and differences. While having separate characters and topics, both stories are set in the same location. The relationship between *The Sea of Monsters* and *The Odyssey* is constant despite certain variations because both have the same structure but with various changes. However, Shavkatovna's analysis is problematic as he fails to provide any in-text evidence from both of the literature pieces. Moreover, the study makes no attempts to provide evidence for critical analysis as the author downplays logical expectations.

Chapter 4

Discussion

This chapter will focus on the key elements of the novel series and conduct a critical analysis to find connections to postmodern elements focusing on pastiche, intertextuality and historiographic metafiction. The following analysis will highlight the elements of the story in the Percy Jackson series. Every legend in Greek mythology has three common components - Gods or Goddesses, Heroes and Monsters. Another two components are celestial weapons

and prophecy. These five elements were borrowed and later modernized by the author to give the foundation of this series.

4.1 Mist

Mist in the Percy Jackson series worked as the bridge between reality and fiction. It was first defined by Grover who simplified it as a hallucinogenic effect on human eyes. Later, based on the conversation between Charon and Percy, it shows that Riordan borrowed this story element from Homer's epic. In the ninth chapter of the first book when Percy was going on a quest he asks Charon

“What if a mortal sees me pulling out a sword?”

Chiron smiled. "Mist is a powerful thing, Percy."

"Mist?"

"Yes. Read *The Iliad*. It's full of references to the stuff. Whenever divine or monstrous elements mix with the mortal world, they generate Mist, which obscures the vision of humans. You will see things just as they are, being a half-blood, but humans will interpret things quite differently. Remarkable, really, the lengths to which humans will go to fit things into their version of reality" (Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*).

The mist was also mentioned in the *Iliad* with the same characteristics which Hansen in his book picked multiple points from Homer's *Iliad* and compiled to demonstrate the effect of mist and how Gods in Greek myth use it.

“The god seems to employ it to control the weather, shrouding Mount Ida in mist (Homer *Iliad* 17.593–594), the aegis perhaps acting as a conduit of the god’s powers. Physically it is a golden object with tassels that features iconic representations of frightening images and

forces including the Gorgon's head (Iliad 5.738–742), all intended to inspire terror. Made by Hephaistos and so of divine manufacture, it is so strong that it can withstand even Zeus's thunderbolts" (Hansen, *Handbook of Classical Mythology* 326)

The presence of mist is also visible in the *Odyssey* as well. According to Hansen, Athena used mist to blind Odysseus. Notably, the effect of mist is the same as the mist in the Percy Jackson series. Hansen further writes, "Even under normal circumstances, the eyes of human beings are clouded by an amount of mist that prevents them from fully appreciating the reality around them" (*Handbook of Classical Mythology* 39). Similarly, mist is also present in Riordan's story as in the third book mist works to shield human eyes from the terror sight of the celestial monsters. Typhoon was one of the major enemies of Greek Gods and in the final book, he freed himself from St. Helens, the new Mount Itna as civilization moved to the USA along with the Greek Gods. Percy remarked "I hoped the Mist would keep the humans from seeing it clearly because what I saw would've caused panic and riots across the entire United States" (Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympian*, ch.21). Not only mist is a reliable element for heroes in this story but also for god's as well. Mist helped most while cleaning up the aftermath of the battle with nationwide disasters caused by fighting between Gods and Titans. Hermes in the last book praised the work of mist as he says

"Amazing," Hermes murmured. He turned toward me. "Three thousand years, and I will never get over the power of the Mist . . . and mortal ignorance"(Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympian* 125)

As a messenger between Gods and mortals, Hermes uses mist the most as he assures Percy that "I'm the messenger of the gods. It's my job to monitor what the mortals are saying, and if

necessary, help them make sense of what's happened. I'll reassure them. Trust me, they'll put this down to a freak earthquake or a solar flare. Anything but the truth" (Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympian* 125).

Moreover, Mist is not only intertextual but also the core of bringing magical realism to this story. Secondly, Mist helps misunderstand weapons into something else. For example, when Percy and his team are chased by monsters in the third book, his sword symbolises a large-sized toothpick in front of human eyes. Secondly, Mist worked as a cover for God's presence in the real world. The celestial deities use humanized height and their outfit represent their power and personality. Percy witnessed several of them in his quest. For example, Ares, the God of war was disguised by Mist as a goon from a bikers gang. Ares was described as, "

“ The guy on the bike would've made pro wrestlers run for Mama. The motorcycle's headlight glared red. Its gas tank had flames painted on it, and a shotgun holster riveted to either side, complete with shotguns. The seat was leather—but leather that looked like ... well, Caucasian human skin. He was dressed in a red muscle shirt and black jeans and a black leather duster, with a hunting knife strapped to his thigh. He wore red wraparound shades, and he had the cruelest, most brutal face I'd ever seen— handsome, I guess, but wicked—with an oily black crew cut and cheeks that were scarred from many, many fights” (Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*, ch.15).

Similarly, Aphrodite transformed into the most stunning woman the spectators have ever seen in their lives with the aid of Mist. Thirdly, Mist provides the monsters with a humanoid aspect in front of them so they can also blend in with the real world and induces a kind of

hallucination to keep them away from mortals. In the first volume of Percy, for instance, Ms Dodds taught maths at his school. She was a fury, a bat-like creature with leather jacket-like wings. So many elements of magical realism were employed by Riordan that it would be difficult to list and describe them all. Notably, both monsters as well as Heros or half-bloods were immune to Mist and that helps them to differentiate between reality and the blend of the Greek realm. For this reason, monsters could omit their pseudonym and call them by their full name. For example, the true name of Percy Jackson was Perseus Jackson.

Lastly, it's simple to identify the pastiche that lies underlying this component. In the story, mist served as the video call's substitute. It debuted as a trackless calling system in *The Lightning Thief*.

“I-M'ing.”

"Instant messaging?"

"Iris-messaging," Annabeth corrected. "The rainbow goddess Iris carries messages for the gods. If you know how to ask, and she's not too busy, she'll do the same for half-bloods"(Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*, ch.15)".

The use of Iris-message is an example of a pastiche, even though it might be viewed as another instance of magic realism.

4.2 Monsters

Prime examples of pastiche and intertextuality may be found in the monsters found in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians books. They are also, without a doubt, the ideal illustration of magical realism. Monsters are indestructible according to Percy's narrative, just as the gods of Greek mythology are immortal. They can be banished, but they will ultimately

make a comeback. Some notable monsters are mentioned below which represent the postmodern elements, namely, intertextuality.

Riordan re-used the legendary monster minotaur in his story. According to Buxton, Minotaur are "bull-faced", "human bodied" and "carnivorous" (ch.6). Hamilton also agrees with the description. This monster made its appearance twice throughout Percy's quest towards the grand prophecy. Rick described the monster as they encountered first time - " His neck was a mass of muscle and fur leading up to his enormous head, which had a snout as long as my arm, snotty nostrils with a gleaming brass ring, cruel black eyes, and horns— enormous black-and-white horns with points you just couldn't get from an electric sharpener" (Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*, ch.4). The second battle with this monster was brief but iconic for the readers as it showed how strong Percy had become throughout the story. Minotaur, for the second time, was described as " The Minotaur's nostrils quivered. He seriously needed to keep a pack of Aloe Vera Kleenex in his armour pocket, because that nose was wet and red and pretty gross" (Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympian* 65).

Echidna, the mother of monsters is another of intertextuality. Rick borrowed this from Hesiod's *Theogony* where it is described as

“Echidna, half a quick-eyed beautiful-cheeked nymph, but half a monstrous snake, terrible and great, shimmering,.....an immortal nymph and ageless all her days” (Hesiod, v.295).

Riordan's first book also described this vicious monster in a similar way, despite being seen as an old lady with a Chihuahua who had a forked tongue, greenish reptilian skin and slanted eyes like a reptile (*The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*, ch.13). However, this interaction was comical as the name "Echidna" in the modern era is used to name a type of anteater. This is another example of pastiche.

The third book has a peculiar example of intertextuality as Riordan borrowed the monster "Manticore" from Persian mythology. Ctesias and Stronk identified Manticore as a sphinx-like creature with poisonous spikes in their tail which also aligns with the description from Percy in *The Titan's Curse*. The monster is as described-

"Dr. Thorn launched another volley of missiles at Thalia, and this time I could see how he did it. He had a tail—a leathery, scorpionlike tail that bristled with spikes at the tip. He grew larger until he was in his true form—his face was still human, but his body was that of a huge lion. His leathery, spiky tail whipped deadly thorns in all directions. A Manticore” (Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Three: Titan's Curse* 8–9).

Notably, as they use ballistic weapons like RPGs against the heroes, the monsters have also advanced in technology. Pastiche here is evident when a story heavily inspired by Greek mythology employs this type of attack strategy.

4.3 Heroes and Celestial Weapons

“In some cases gods and goddesses mated with human beings, producing offspring who were exceptional in one way or another. Such persons were common in earlier times when the gods spent more time on earth and were closer to us. These persons and their peers, heroes, went on great expeditions, engaged in seemingly impossible quests, fought in great wars like those at Thebes and Troy, established important cities, begot noble children, and founded prominent families. They rid the world of many monstrous beings, making it safe and habitable. They benefited the rest of us by civilizing deeds” (Hansen, *Handbook of Classical Mythology* 91).

It was well known that heroes from Greek mythology, such as Perseus, Theseus, and Hercules, had divine parentage. Their brave acts and legendary tales are universally recognised. But audiences in this day and age might not find their struggles relatable enough to feel empathy for them. Readers, especially young adults in particular may find it difficult to understand because it does not relate to their environment or way of life. Riordan designed the character and personality of Percy in such a way that it can capture the attention from the very first page of the story.

“Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood.

If you're reading this because you think you might be one, my advice is: close this book right now. Believe whatever lie your mom or dad told you about your birth, and try to lead a normal life.

Being a half-blood is dangerous. It's scary. Most of the time, it gets you killed in painful, nasty ways.

If you're a normal kid, reading this because you think it's fiction, great. Read on. I envy you for being able to believe that none of this ever happened.

But if you recognize yourself in these pages—if you feel something stirring inside—stop reading immediately. You might be one of us. And once you know that, it's only a matter of time before they sense it too, and they'll come for you.

Don't say I didn't warn you” (Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief* 1).

This note of warning not only draws relevance with the target audience, which is ten and above for this series but also allures them to take the first step towards the magical world of “Percyverse” (*Percyverse Shelf*). In one of his interviews, Riordan talked about this "hook" as

he adds "I tried to design a book that would keep the kids engaged, even right after lunch..... As a classroom teacher, my biggest thrill was taking a book that wasn't immediately accessible or an obvious kid-pleaser and turning it into a positive experience. To Kill a Mockingbird can be a really difficult read, but it can also be a very successful unit. It all depends on how well it's taught. Basically, whatever book I taught, I tried to find a connection with the kids. I tried to make it come alive" (Bach 2-4). This demonstrates the author's purpose in incorporating magical realism into the novel, aiming to enhance its relevance and ensure its lasting impact on readers. Moreover, Prasannan in the research "Mythology Deconstructed: Tracing the Postmodern Elements in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" gave an effective deduction that the first chapter of book one is the example of "metafiction" as it makes an effort to deceive readers into thinking the artwork is real while simultaneously ignoring the need to "willing suspension of disbelief" (Prasannan 11).

The blend of fiction with reality is also present in other aspects of this story. For example, at the earliest stage of Percy's first quest in *The Lightning Thief*, he received a magical sword named "Anaklusmos" a Greek word that Percy translates as "Riptide" (79). Riptide had the unique power to change its form as a regular ballpoint pen as well as returning it to the owner's pocket after a few minutes. This feature made the weapon more convenient to use as it will be concealed from human eyes as well as metal detectors. It is an important point in the story that the majority of the weapons used in the story remain hidden behind effects of the Mist and only work on other mythical beings. Charon further elaborates as he instructs Percy about Riptide-

"Use it only for emergencies," Chiron said, "and only against monsters. No hero should harm mortals unless absolutely necessary, of course, but this sword wouldn't harm them in any case."

I looked at the wickedly sharp blade. "What do you mean it wouldn't harm mortals? How could it not?"

"The sword is celestial bronze. Forged by the Cyclopes, tempered in the heart of Mount Etna, cooled in the River Lethe. It's deadly to monsters, to any creature from the Underworld, provided they don't kill you first. But the blade will pass through mortals like an illusion. They simply are not important enough for the blade to kill. And I should warn you: as a demigod, you can be killed by either celestial or normal weapons. You are twice as vulnerable"(Riordan, *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: Lightning Thief*, ch.10).

Moreover, he received a shield in the second book *Sea of Monsters* which could minimize itself as a wristwatch. Also, not only the weapons, but armour pieces also received a modernized look to blend in with reality. For example, the legendary golden fleece from the tale of Hercules, a piece of blanket made out of golden yarn, turned into a golden jacket. All of the above mentioned examples also demonstrate that in a world where myth and reality merge, Percy lives in the grey zone, where he is both a typical middle school student and a monster slayer. On the one hand, he piqued the reader's interest by diligently completing tasks and making his effort to defend society from mythical dangers while on the other, he is attending cram school and enjoying his summer vacation with his mother in his New York home. Overall, the postmodern components in this novel make Percy Jackson's journey more relatable to readers, as if he were just another normal person living a dual existence.

4.4 The Bridge Between Postmodernism and Mythology

Riordan deconstructed the grand narrative of stereotypical mythology and represented the flaws and hypocrisy behind it. Once-sacred and perfect Gods who were used to be symbols of justice and order are becoming more tangled with personal gain and petty acts of revenge like other human beings. For example, issues like child abandonment and parental negligence in this contemporary era are meticulously represented in this storyline. In fact, Gods' deeply flawed characteristics were also inherited by their children. The emotional scan and psychological trauma were one of the core elements behind The battle against the Olympian Gods. The character development of Luke, son of Hermes, showed how problematic Gods are behind the mask of benevolence as Luke in his early life was an errand boy for entertainment purposes only which later led him to be the archvillain of the story. Moreover, Riordan used the tragic death of Luke as a way to break down the everlasting rule of God's negligence towards their children. As the protagonist demands for acknowledgement rather than personal gain it also emphasizes the possibility of change.

Another form of grand narrative in Greek mythology is prophecy. Percy Jackson always challenged the prophetic expectations set on him and reshaped the outcomes of his quest. Riordan also rejected the grand narrative through the common troupe of Greek heroes who faithfully followed the prophecies and considered their fatal flaw as their misfortune. Instead, Percy took the opposite route to achieve success as in the end, he saved as many comrades as he could while winning over his mortal enemy. Athena was wary of Percy's hubris as she mentioned in the fifth book

"In each case, your loved ones have been used to lure you into Kronos's traps. Your fatal flaw is personal loyalty, Percy. You do not know when it is time to cut your losses. To save a friend, you would sacrifice the world. In a hero of

the prophecy, that is very, very dangerous" (Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympian*, ch.19).

Riordan through Percy showed how wrong Athena was as Percy never fell into any psychological trap, rejected the comforting eternal life and lived his life as mortal while refusing to accept the notion that his future is preordained. This also reflects the rejection of the authoritative narrative and accepting the alternative route of adventure.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In the end, myths are a reflection of what society wants to believe about itself and they continue civilization. Generation after generation has enjoyed and passed down these for their fanciful qualities. Myths are used by contemporary authors like Rick Riordan to help with narrative and establish a connection with their readers. Postmodern features like pastiche, intertextuality, and historiographic metafiction are exposed in the Percy Jackson series through critical study. The series' use of mist connects the actual world with the fantastic, taking cues from Homer's epic while also giving the characters an effective instrument against human sight. Moreover, the use of mist adds a layer of magical realism to the plot, enabling Gods and demons to change their appearance and weapons. Pastiche and intertextuality are on full display in the series' monsters, who borrow heavily from Greek and other legendary creatures such as the Echidna and the Minotaur. This way readers can relate to the heroes' challenges since they symbolize the mixing of truth and fiction. The series' heavenly weaponry and armour also show how mythical aspects have been updated to fit in with modern society. Overall, the Percy Jackson books are great examples of using postmodernism to make a story everyone can enjoy by finding relevance.

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