

Reimagination of Greek Mythology in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series*

Hrithuparna. T

M.A. English Literature, University of Calicut, Thenhipalam, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

This study aims to illustrate the significance of Greek mythology in this modern world and how it is reimagined by the American author Rick Riordan in his pentalogy, *Percy Jackson*, and *The Olympians Series*. In his novels, Riordan portrays the Greek gods centered in the focal point of the modern civilization, guiding the modern man in all his endeavors. He presents to us an out-of-the-ordinary scenario, where the Greek myths are embedded in the core of modern American society and how the pop culture and modernity is mixed with the archaic myths of Greece.

KEYWORDS: Greek mythology, modern fiction, Rick Riordan, archaic myths, Greek Gods, Intersexuality

How to cite this paper: Hrithuparna. T
"Reimagination of Greek Mythology in
Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the
Olympians Serie*"

Published in
International Journal
of Trend in Scientific
Research and
Development (ijtsrd),
ISSN: 2456-6470,
Volume-5 | Issue-4,
June 2021, pp.567-579, URL:
www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd42322.pdf



IJTSRD42322

Copyright © 2021 by author (s) and
International Journal of Trend in Scientific
Research and Development Journal. This
is an Open Access article distributed
under the terms of
the Creative
Commons Attribution
License (CC BY 4.0)
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



INTRODUCTION

The term 'myth' has often been a topic that has drawn many debates on whether it can be considered as stories relating to the truth or maybe of fallacy. Northrop Frye however, believed myth to have 'really happened', or to have some exceptional significance in explaining certain features of life, such as ritual. In his opinion, myth is often used as an allegory of science or religion or morality and it may arise in the first place to account for a ritual or a law, or it may be an example of a parable which illustrates a particular situation or argument. It may be told or retold, modified or elaborated or different patterns may also be discovered in it. Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) viewed myth as an effort to understand the origin of the world. He considered this kind of understanding necessary to maintain the divine order of the world. He saw myth as the essence of religion, and believed that it was the sacredness of the myth that gave it structure and meaning. Eliade believed that mythology connects different types of religion through the similar themes that are found across the globe.

Mythology could be seen as an archaic and profound record we have of the mankind's nature and spirit. To understand and connect with our past and our origin people relate to myth and myth making. Myths, whether it is Greek, American or Indian, are the survivals of those primitive ages when myth making mind reigned supreme. But myths respond to the basic human situations. And they are very much relevant in this modern day. By using myth in his literary and artistic works, modern man is able to understand and communicate the complexity of life, as well as, provide great deal of material for the modern-day writers. Northrop Frye

maintains, that the structural principles of literature are largely based on myths.

The things that happen in myth are things that happen only in stories, they are in a self-contained literary, world. Hence myth would naturally have the same kind of appeal for the fiction writer that folk tales has. It presents him with a ready-made frame-work, hoary with antiquity, and allows him to develop all his energies to collaborating its design. (Frye 590)

For a long time, writers have made use of mythology as a connection between past and present. In the hands of a writer, it is a tool to enlighten human beings by teaching them about virtue, honesty, integrity, honor and moral values. It helps the people to reconnect with their root and culture, helping them to learn from it. This paper attempts to study the significance of Greek mythology in this modern world and how it is reimagined by the American author Rick Riordan in his pentalogy, *Percy Jackson and The Olympians Series*. In his novels, Riordan portrays the Greek gods centered in the focal point of the modern civilization, guiding the modern man in all his endeavors. He presents to us an out of the ordinary scenario, where the Greek myths are embedded in the core of modern American society and how the pop culture and modernity is mixed with the archaic myths of Greece.

He created a utopic world where all humans and other mythical creatures are treated fairly. His pentalogy has characters who are mentally challenged, who are the members of LGBTQ, who are physically handicapped or

mental disabled. By incorporating Greek mythology into popular culture, Riordan tries to explain something that is difficult to understand, and show how mythology still can be used as an effective tool to give a message to the society.

In the first novel, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, Riordan places the adobe of the Olympians, the Olympus at the top of the Empire State Building, in New York. We are introduced to the ancient Greek gorgon Medusa and her lair, according to Riordan is situated in New Jersey, and the entrance to the underworld, where all the dead people are believed to go is situated in Los Angeles. In his second book, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, Riordan tries to tell the readers that the Bermuda Triangle or the Devils Triangle, is nothing other than the Sea of Monsters, in which resides all the sea monsters like Scylla, Charybdis, the Sirens etc. In his third novel, *Percy Jackson and the Titans Curse*, Riordan relate to us the story of the Titans and the fall of their reign after the ten-year war with the Olympian gods. As the Olympus is situated on top of the Empire State Building, the old palace of the Titans is placed at the top of Mount Tamalpais, in San Francisco, according to Riordan.

In his fourth novel, *Percy Jackson and the Battle of Labyrinth*, Riordan introduces to us the myth of Daedalus and his greatest invention, the Labyrinth. Riordan explains the Labyrinth as a second layer under the surface of the earth and above the underworld, which keeps on growing on its own. It has a spirit of its own and is connected to the life force of Daedalus. In the fifth novel, *Percy Jackson and the Last Olympian*, the gods unite with their demigod children against the Titans, and fight against them in a united front. The resurrection of the Titan Lord, Kronos and the worst monster of all, the Typhon, throws the gods off their balance, but with help of their children, they save their seats of power.

In all of these five novels, Riordan tries to embed the archaic gods and myths in the twenty first century, and he tries to wear off the distinction between the lines of reality and fiction. The great gods of Greek mythology remain the same in his pentalogy, but with some influence of the modern civilization. The fire of the power of the gods, as Riordan says is burning bright in America, and we can see that in their architecture, their national emblem etc. Thus, we could say that Riordan places these myths in the current scenario to help the readers understand and to relate to these stories and fables more deeply.

In short, we can conclude that the ideology studied in this research focuses on how the ancient Greek myths, which are entwined with the human beings' way of life, are incorporated in modern fiction. Following the footsteps of Homer, Ovid, Virgil etc. the twenty first century writer Rick Riordan wrote his own versions about the depiction of Greek gods, goddesses and creatures. The characteristics of the demigods developed by Riordan in the pentalogy resembles their parents from Greek mythology. It proves that Riordan stuck closely around the typical structure of Greek mythology in composing his novel.

Mythic Recursions

...myth is now so encyclopedic a term that it means everything or nothing. We can find it in whatever we want to say is essential about the way humans try to interpret their place on earth. Myth is a synthesizer of values which uniquely manages to mean most things to most men. It is allegory and tautology, reason and unreason, logic and

fantasy, waking thought and dream, atavism and the perennial, archetype and metaphor, origin and end. What a burden myth has to carry as a portmanteau term. (Gould 5)

Myth is one word in the English language whose meaning conveys both truth and revelation, as well as, false belief. Since the dawn of mankind, mythology has tried to answer the greatest questions queried by human beings, related to life and existence, through stories and legends. Our ancestors from different cultures around the globe had passed on tales of creation, elucidating the meaning of life, the stories of gods who ruled the earth and the heaven, the tales of the monsters which roamed through this earth scaring the human beings. Each culture has shaped and developed its own myths and as people moved about on this earth, they carried on with them these tales of wonder and wisdom. Thus, Mythology is both the link to our eventful past, as well as, the spark that ignites the inspiration of the modern-day storytellers.

The Swiss psychiatrist and psycholinguist, Carl Gustav Jung was of the opinion that myths and dreams were expressions of the collective unconscious and it manifest the core ideas that are part of the human race as a whole. In other words, myths express the wisdom that is inherent in all the human beings, perhaps encoded in us by the means of evolution or through some spiritual process. For Jungians, this common origin in the collective unconscious elucidates why the myths from different societies and cultures from different parts of the world can be strikingly similar to each other. To Carl Jung, myths contain the archaic truth about existence. It is the first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul. C. G. Jung expound that for the human psyche, myth is a necessary aspect as it needs to find meaning and order in a world that often presents itself as chaotic and meaningless. C. Jung writes:

The psyche, as a reflection of the world and man, is a thing of such infinite complexity that it can be observed and studied from a great many sides. It faces us with the same problem that the world does: because a systematic study of the world is beyond our powers, we have to content ourselves with mere rules of thumb and with aspects that particularly interest us. Everyone makes for himself his own segment of world and constructs his own private system, often with airtight compartments, so that after a time it seems to him that he has grasped the meaning and structure of the whole. But the finite will never be able to grasp the infinite. (Jung 23-24)

The word Mythology came from the Greek words 'mythos' which means narrative or fiction or myth or plot and 'logos' which is a word or speech. Thus, mythology is the spoken story of the people. Mythology could be defined as the study and elucidation of sacred fables or chronicles of a particular culture known as myths or is the collection of such stories that deal with various aspects of human conditions like the good and evil that equally resides in us, the origin of human beings, the meaning of suffering, the origin of names of many places, origin of several cultural traditions and values, the meaning of life and death, the afterlife, and the omnipresent beings called the gods. It is an allegorical narrative in which the main characters are gods, demigods or supernatural humans. Scholars Maria Leach and Jerome Fried define mythology along these lines:

A myth is a story, presented as having actually occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural

traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs, etc. The purpose of myth is to explain, and, as Sir G.L. Gomme said, myths explain matters in "the science of a pre-scientific age." Thus, myths tell of the creation of man, of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics (e.g., why the bat is blind or flies only at night), why or how certain natural phenomena came to be (e.g., why the rainbow appears or how the constellation Orion got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue. (Leach and Fried 778)

If myth is an idea, then mythology could be considered as the vehicle that carries this idea. Mythology comprises all the stories, fables, symbols and rituals that make a myth tangible. These stories, fables, symbols and rituals are fundamentally a part of language that have been heard, seen and performed and passed down to the forthcoming generations. Together these aspects of language construct the foundation of a culture on which it is built upon. From the myths come beliefs of the people and from the mythology comes the customs and it conditions the thoughts and feeling of the people. Mythology influences a person's behavior and communication in a society and thus has a far-reaching influence on the culture. "The symbolic world of mythology can be viewed as a mirror of our own inner landscape." (Bartlett 14)

Mythology allows us to explore the world of gods, heroes, monsters, and the adrenaline-filled quests and other such adventures through the stories that are told and it allows us to delve into the mysterious world that we live in. Mythology becomes a medium which enables us to comprehend the literary and artistic works created throughout the ages. Even today, themes and messages from mythology are incorporated in our culture using motifs and characters which can be found in ancient stories from around the world. Mythology reveals common themes such as how the universe came into being, elucidations on how the forces of nature are at work, the origin of people and civilizations, personal quests and behaviors, social rules, customs and beliefs. According to Joseph Campbell, myth represents the human search for what is significant, meaningful and true. He says that: "what we are searching for is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences will resonate our own innermost being and we actually feel the rapture of being alive." (Campbell and Moyers 5)

To Carl Jung, myth is the outside of the human consciousness and dream is the inside of the human consciousness, and together they shape the realm of archetypes. Jung opined that the mythological and religious traditions around the world hold in itself myriad archetypal images. The term 'archetype' was coined by Carl Jung himself, and he defined Archetypes as universal, archaic patterns and images that are independent and hidden forms which are transformed once they enter consciousness and are given particular expression by individuals and their culture. And as myth is a codification of our unconscious archetypes, literature is the cultural realization of our mythologies. Myths and stories, which play a huge part in our past, have been used, interpreted and reinterpreted for hundreds of years to create new stories out of the old ones. Through this process, a number of new "archetypes" have been created.

Once a myth is encoded into a language, it takes on the qualities of a literary text and obtains independent repute.

Here, the original interaction between the unconscious and the unknown is set aside and a second level of interaction between the myth text and the individual, the listener or the reader is obtained. It is no longer an original insight of the original myth that has been passed down through generations, but only an instrument or tool available to the storytellers of the coming generations. Over time, the myth users gradually disperse in geographical terms, and they take with them these myths and it results in the enlargement of the mythical system as additional variants are emerged out of this process. Thus, a modern novelist as a myth user has at his disposal, a whole repertoire of myths. He can reconstruct the old myths and tell the tales in a new perspective. He can use these myths for the purpose of allusion, allegory, parody, satire and can create several layers of new meaning simultaneously.

The study of psycho-analysis in the modern age shows that myth making is a part of the very nature of human beings. It appears to be a "permanent activity of all men." In fact, studies show that what happens is that man abandons one myth for the sake of another. That is why even the 20th century writers often look back to the past for the survival, revival and creation of myth. Thus, 'the return to myth' was a particular feature of the Modernist movement. The titles of some of the important works by some of the leading modernist writers show that they do not hesitate to borrow materials from the old mythologies, for example, *The Centaur* by John Updike, *The Labours of Hercules* by Agatha Christie, *Antigone's Claim* by Judith Butler, *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller etc. and this happens often because myth offers the writers a way through which they could symbolically comment on the modern events.

Northrop Frye, the Canadian literary critic and theorist, is of the view that certain forms of myths become the conventions and genres of literature. According to Frye, there are four main narrative genres- comedy, romance, tragedy and irony (or satire). These genres are associated with the second cycle of spring, summer, autumn and winter, coming under the Archetypal criticism. These myths have been borrowed by the writers in different languages and different times with the purpose of making their works lively and vital. The German Romantic writers, Joseph Schelling and Friedrich von Schlegel, have talked about the need of a unifying mythology. English writers such as James Joyce in his novel *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land*, Eugene O'Neill in his play *Mourning Becomes Electra*, have stressed the importance of integrative mythology to literature and has created mythical parallels based on the contemporary materials. Herman Hesse, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, W. B. Yeats etc. have used mythical modes of expression in their works.

The Greek mythology is generally supposed to present to us the way the human race acted, thought and felt eons ago. Taking these myths as a medium we can retrace the path the civilized man, who had once lived in harmony and close companionship with the nature to become someone who lives so far and distant from the nature. When the stories came into being the distinction between what was real and what was unreal had yet to be made out. The imagination of these people was vividly alive and dynamic and was not checked by reason, so that any person who happens to be near a spring or stream could see the reflecting face of a naiad in the depths of the water or could see dryads chasing each other in the woods.

It has been more than two thousand years since the Ancient Greek society has fell over. But the impact of one of the magnificent societies of the world still has its influence over the modern western society and how we live today in this world. References and allusions to Greek mythology can still be found in many areas of study including astrology, mathematics, biology, engineering, medicine, literature, architecture etc. There are references to Greek mythology where ever you turn to now a day. For example, Nike, a brand of sports shoe which is named after the Greek goddess of victory; the Starbucks logo is a siren which is intended to symbolize the irresistibility of the brand's coffee; Atlas which is a term that is used to describe books filled with maps and also the first vertebra of the spine which allows us to hold our heads up is the name of the Titan who was condemned to hold up the sky; the Olympic Games started in Ancient Greece in the city of Olympia and inspired by the ancient Olympics the International Olympic Committee was formed. Thus, we can say that the traces of Greek mythology can be seen in many places even now.

The impact of Greek culture and myths can also be vividly seen in the pop culture and arts. Greek mythology has been used in nearly every form of popular culture. Many Greek myths have been adapted into modern novels, movies, TV shows and video games. Even the word 'theatre' was derived from the Greek word 'theatron' which meant the section of outdoor arenas where people watched the plays. Many movies had been directed which are essentially based on Greek myths. For example, *Helen of Troy* (1956), *Spartacus* (1960), *Antigone* (1961), *Hercules* (1997), *Troy* (2004), *Minotaur* (2006), *Clash of Titans* (2010), *Wrath of Titans* (2012), *Immortals* (2011), *Wonder Woman* (2017) etc. We can also see the presence of many monsters and creatures in Popular Culture. Like the appearance of a Centaur, a half man and half horse figure in films like *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter*; the fire breathing monster, Chimera, is seen in *Beauty and the Beast* and *Wrath of Titans*; the one-eyed giant monster called Cyclops can be seen in *Doctor Who* and *Battlestar Galactica*; Pegasus, a beautiful winged stallion can be seen in *The Blood of Olympus*, *My Little Pony* and *Fantasia*.

The Greek mythology began with Homer and his work '*Iliad*' which is first written record of Greece as well as it is or contains the oldest Greek literature. The tales of Greek mythology doesn't really throw light upon what the early mankind as a whole was like, but it does shower light up on how the early Greeks were like. The Greeks, unlike the Egyptians, created their gods in their own image. Until the Greek mythology, the gods had no semblance of reality. They weren't like any living things on earth. They were beyond the power of imagination to bequeath movement, they were immobile and fixed in stone in colossal temples and even though they were represented the humans in their shape and appearance, they were deliberately made unhuman. The Egyptians had a rigid figure of a woman with a cat's head called Bastet, another god with the body of a man and head of a falcon named Horus etc. But as the Greeks took over, the universe became more sensible and rational. Saint Paul had stated that the invisible must be understood by the visible. This idea is often mistaken to be a Hebrew concept, when it really is a Greek thought. The Greeks found satisfaction in what was visible around them. They centered all their art and thoughts around human beings. Edith Hamilton in her book '*Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*' remarks that:

That is the miracle of Greek mythology- a humanized world, men freed from the paralyzing fear of an omnipotent Unknown. The terrifying incomprehensibilities which were worshiped elsewhere, and the fearsome spirits with which earth, air, and sea swarmed, were banned from Greece. It may seem odd to say that men who made the myths disliked the irrational and had a love for facts; but it is true, no matter how wildly fantastic some of the stories are. Anyone who reads them with attention discovers that even the most nonsensical take place in a world which is essentially rational and matter of fact...The terrifying irrational has no place in classical mythology. Magic, so powerful in the world before and after Greece, is almost nonexistent. (Hamilton 10-11)

The chief writers through whom these myths have been passed down to us are Homer, whose works '*Iliad*' and '*Odyssey*' are the oldest Greek writings; Hesiod, a poor farmer whose poem '*Theogony*' is entirely concerned with mythology; Pindar, the greatest lyric poet of Greece, wrote Odes which alludes to myths; Aeschylus, the oldest of the three tragic poets, have included mythological subjects and references in his works; Apollodorus, the Greek poet, is the most voluminous ancient writer on mythology. Most of these books about the tales of the classical mythologies are centered around the works of the Latin poet Ovid.

The Greeks believed that the universe was first formed. From empty Chaos, somehow the sea and earth and air appeared. The mother earth or Gaia disentangled herself from the water and gases and thus Pontus or the primordial god of the oceans and Uranus or the sky came into being. Gaia bore the first set of children of Uranus, the Titans. The Titans are often called as the Elder Gods. They were exceptionally powerful and gigantic in size. Only a few of them appear in the stories of mythology. The most important was Cronos (in Latin Saturn) who usurped his father Uranus or Ouranos by the scythe his mother Gaia gave him. Even though Cronos boasted his age as the Golden Age, it was a time of darkness and destruction. And later he was dethroned by his own son Zeus and seized the power for himself. And it was then the Golden Age for human kind came into being. The twelve great Olympians succeeded the Titans. They were called Olympians because Olympus was their home. There is no doubt that at first it was held to be a top of a mountain, preferably identified with the highest mountain in Greece, the Mt. Olympus in Thessaly. In '*Iliad*' it is mentioned that Olympus is situated at a mysterious region above all the mountains of the earth. The entrance to Olympus is a great gate of clouds guarded by the Seasons. The twelve great Olympians of the Greek mythology are Zeus (Jupiter), Poseidon (Neptune), Hera (Juno), Ares (Mars), Athena (Minerva), Apollo, Aphrodite (Venus), Hermes (Mercury), Artemis (Diana), and Hephaestus (Vulcan), Demeter and Dionysius. Hades (Pluto) is one of the three big brothers, but as his realm is underground, he not considered as one amongst the Olympians. And in some myths, it is said that Hestia (Vesta) is one amongst the Olympians, but some myths say that when Dionysius was made a god, she voluntarily gave her position in the council to Dionysius, thus making him the twelfth Olympian.

Zeus and his brothers Poseidon and Hades divided their share of the universe. Hades got the Underworld; Poseidon got the sea and Zeus became the supreme ruler. He is the Lord of the Sky and he wielded the thunderbolt. He was the greatest and the powerful of all the Olympians. In '*Iliad*' he

had even told to his family that he was the mightiest of them all. But he is being opposed and deceived. Some texts states that the mysterious power called Fate is stronger and more powerful than him. Zeus is often represented as falling in love with one mortal woman after another and does all kinds of tricks to hide his infidelity from his wife, Hera. Hera is Zeus's wife and his sister. She was brought up by the Titans Oceanus and Tethys. She is the protector of marriage. But as we go through the stories of Hera, we can see that she is mainly engaged in punishing the women folks with whom Zeus fell in love with. She never considered if they were reluctant to be in that relationship or not. She was adamant in punishing those who injured her ego. She does not even leave the children of these mortal women alone, as they were fathered by her husband. They are also doomed to bear the curse of Hera.

Then comes Poseidon, who is amongst the of three most powerful Olympians. He is the Lord of the sea and is married to Amphitrite, granddaughter of the Titan Oceanus. He was the one who created the horses from the foam of the sea and gave it to mankind. He is often called a the "Earth Shaker" and is found always with his Trident in possession. Demeter is the daughter of Cronus and Rhea. She is the goddess of harvest, agriculture, fertility, nature and seasons. She is the mother of Persephone. Athena, is the daughter of Zeus alone. She sprang from his head fully grown and in full armor. She is the Greek goddess of wisdom and strategy. She is preeminently the Goddess of the City and the protector of civilized life. She was Zeus's favorite child and one among the three virgin goddesses and is called the Maiden. The humans have built a temple for the goddess named Parthenon. And Athens was named after her to honor the goddess.

The next Olympian is Apollo. He is the son of Zeus and Leto in the island of Delos. He is often described as "the most Greek of all the gods." He is a beautiful figure and a master musician who delights Olympus while playing on his lyre. He is the Greek god of Healing, Medicine, and Archery and also of Music and Poetry. Apollo spoke through his oracle, the Oracle of Delphi, whose spirit Apollo possesses, in which state the Oracle can predict the next Prophecy. He is the twin brother of Artemis. Artemis is one of the maiden goddesses of Olympus. She was the Lady of Wild Things and Huntsman in chief to the gods and the protectress of the dewy youth. In her is shown most vividly the uncertainty between good and evil which is apparent in every one of the divinities. Aphrodite is the Goddess of Love and Beauty, who enchant both gods and men alike with her irresistible charm and appeal. She is the daughter of Zeus and Dione in the Iliad, but she is said to have sprung from the foam of the sea in later poems. In most of the stories she is the wife of Hephaestus. Hephaestus is the God of Fire, stone masonry, forges and the art of sculpture. Sometimes it is said that he is the son of Zeus and Hera, sometimes its he's Hera's alone, who bore him as a retaliation for Zeus's having brought forth Athena. In some myths it is said that he was throw out from the Olympus by Hera, because of his deformity and hideous looks, and some other myths claim that it was Zeus who had threw him off the Olympus for trying to defend Hera. He was a kind and peace loving god who was loved and admired both in heaven and earth. With Athena, he was important in the life of the city. They both were the patrons of handicrafts, the arts which along with agriculture are the foundation and support of civilization.

Hermes is the Greek god of Trade, Luck, Travel, Thieves, Language etc. He is the son of Zeus and Maia (daughter of the Titan Atlas). He had winged sandals and possessed the Caduceus, a magic wand featuring two snakes winding around a winged staff. He was the messenger of Zeus and was the most cunning and shrewdest among them. He was the Master Thief, who stole Apollo's herds when he was a day old. Zeus made him give it back and he earned Apollo's forgiveness when he presented Apollo with a lyre. He is also the solemn guide of the dead, the Divine Herald who lead the souls down to their last home. Ares is the Greek god of War and is the son of Zeus and Hera. Homer calls him murderous, bloodstained, the incarnate curse of mortals and strangely, a coward too, who bellows with pain and runs away when he is wounded. The Goddess of War, Enyo (Bellona in Latin) walks beside him, and with her are Terror, and Trembling and Panic. Ares figures little in mythology. In one story he is the lover of Aphrodite and held up to the contempt of the Olympians by Aphrodite's husband, Hephaestus.

Hestia is Zeus's sister and a virgin goddess like Athena and Artemis. She has no distinct personality and plays no part in the myths. She was the goddess of Hearth, the symbol of home. Every meal began and ended with an offering to her. Each city, too, had a public hearth sacred to Hestia, where the fire was never allowed to go out. In Rome, her fire was cared for by six virgin priestesses, called Vestals. But in most of the myths, its noted that she stepped down from the seat of Olympus when Dionysus was made an Olympian. Dionysus, is the Greek god of Wine, Wine making, Fertility, ritual madness, Theatre and Religious ecstasy. He is the son of Zeus and the mortal princess Semele.

Hades is the third brother among the most powerful Olympians (after Zeus and Poseidon) and he was given the underworld reign from where he rules over the dead spirits. Because he was ruling the underworld, far away from the Olympus, he is not considered as a member of the twelve Olympians. He is also the god of Wealth. All the precious metals hidden under the earth belongs to him. Like Zeus's thunder bolt and Poseidon's Trident, Hades has his Helm of Darkness, which helps him to become invisible and blend with the shadows and darkness. He is the King of the dead, not Death himself as most people mistakes him for. He married Persephone, the Greek goddess of vegetation.

Other than the twelve Olympians, there were other divinities in Mount Olympus. The most important among them was the God of Love, Eros. He is famously known as Cupid (Latin). In the early stories he is often described as a beautiful serious youth who gives good gifts to men. He is often represented as blindfolded, because love is often blind. Iris was the goddess of Rainbow and the messenger of gods. Hermes appears first in that capacity in the Odyssey, but he does not take Iris' place. Nemesis was the goddess of Divine Retribution. She meted out punishment for evil deeds, undeserved good fortune, and hubris. Pan is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks and rustic music. Hecate was the Greek goddess of magic and witch craft. She is often depicted holding two torches or a key. She is the daughter of the Titans Perses and Asteria.

Greek mythology was a way for the ancient Greece to elucidate the nature of the world around them, by attributing various circumstances and events to gods and other fantastical beings. We got to know about these myths from the ancient Greek poets and their works. Greek mythology

still remains as a popular topic in the contemporary society because of the large part that is played by the fascinating characters and creatures that inhabit these fables and tales. Many of the Greek myths features a hero who is on a quest and has to overcome a sinister monster. These monsters are sometimes human like in nature but with strange and unusual characteristics that set them apart from people. They can be a mixture of various animals into a single creature and sometimes, they combine both human and animal features to create a completely new being altogether. A Greek hero on an epic journey or a quest in search of something, encounters at least one of these monsters. Sometimes they are unlucky enough to encounter several.

Thus, we can deduce that the literary artist now can appropriate myth for his own purposes, whether it is to demythicize, distort, deconstruct, satirize, parody, educate, or simply shock. He can create new myths, which can correlate with the existing one or clash with it. "Myth serves us, not as a compendium of belief, and still less as a reservoir of history and convenient fiction, but rather as a modality wherein we consciously mediate between fiction and belief, between language and whatever it is that lies beneath and beyond language" (Cook 266) And this study is to analyze how the American writer Rick Riordan reinvents the Greek myths in his pentalogy *The Percy Jackson Series*, as the author borrows the epic myths of Greek gods and demigods told by Homer, Hesiod, Ovid etc. and root them in the modern western civilization, dissolving the boundaries between facts and fiction.

Percy Jackson and The Olympians: A Realm of Alternate Reality

Julia Kristeva, the Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic, commented that, intertextuality is "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (Kristeva 37). Intertextuality is a field of study that analyses the relationship between different texts. The basic idea of intertextuality is that a text may contain elements of syntax, diction, plot, ideas and themes that can be identified in other texts. One of the notable examples of intertextuality applied in literature is James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a retelling of Homer's *the Odyssey*, another example is William Faulkner's story *Absalom Absalom* which is a retelling of the story *Absalom* told by Samuel in the Hebrew Bible.

Rick Riordan's pentalogy, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, often called as Percy Jackson or PJO series is a fantasy adventure novel which borrows a great deal from Homer's *the Odyssey* and *The Iliad* and from *The Theogony* by Hesiod. The readers are easily able to recognize the analogy between these celebrated texts to that of the five novels written by Riordan. The parallels between the themes and ideas are appreciable and significant. *The Percy Jackson and the Olympians series* introduces to the readers the titular character, Percy Jackson, a twelve-year-old boy, who is diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. He is seen as a regular mundane boy who is expelled from six schools in six years. But things take a turn when his class at the Yancy Academy, a private school upstate of New York for 'troubled kids', went on a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan. A series of over whelming incidents happen, which at last make Percy realize that he is a special child, which is putting it mildly. He happens to be the son of one of the Olympian

gods in Greek myth, Poseidon, the Greek god of sea, storms, earthquakes and horses. And was also the Lord and the Ruler of the Sea (the Mediterranean Sea) and the Friendly Sea (the Euxine, now the Black Sea). Percy, with the help of his mother Sally Jackson and his satyr friend Grover Underwood reaches Camp Half Blood, a summer camp for the children of the Olympian gods. These kids or the Demigods as to say, train and goes on quests from this camp which is situated at the Long Island, New York. From there he meets Chiron, a Centaur, who unlike his kinsmen, is famous for his wisdom and knowledge of medicine and Annabeth Chase, daughter of the Olympian Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and strategy.

The five novels of the pentalogy are namely *The Lightning Thief*, *The Sea of Monsters*, *The Titan's Curse*, *The Battle of Labyrinth* and *The Last Olympian*. In the pentalogy, Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase and Grover Underwood together goes on many dangerous quests and even escape from the depths of Underworld. They bond over their adventures and is met with many challenges. They slay many demons and monsters, like Medusa, Minotaur, Echidna, Chimera, Drakon, Empousa, Telekhines, Scythian Dracaena etc. Percy learns the skills becoming of his lineage and discovers his own peculiar gifts. As he being the son of Poseidon, he can be healed when he is injured if he steps into the water and has the ability to control and command water.

This pentalogy places the Greek gods in the modern-day scenario and it applies the ancient Greek archetypes in the world that we live in today. Riordan is trying to show us how these primordial gods, who are the central forces that guides this world forward, is still culturally prevalent. For example, Ares, the Greek god of war, appear in one of the novels as an impertinent and brusque modern-day biker and Hermes, once showed up in front of the characters in the form of a mailman, whose Caduceus was disguised as a mobile phone, a modern-day gadget. The intertextual relationship between the Percy Jackson and the Olympian series to the prehistoric works namely *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Theogony* etc. are significant. To apply intertextuality in a work and for it to work the magic, something additional has to be implemented and applied to the previously commemorated myths or stories. Rick Riordan, by placing these myths in the current society, tries to acquaint the readers with the mystic beings and is trying to normalize them by placing them in this mundane and terrestrial world. The splendorous and magnificent Mount Olympus, the abode of the gods, is said to be hovering over the Empire States Building, and to get there, we have to take an elevator ride to the six hundredth floor. The terrifying Sphinx, who asked riddles to those stumbled upon her is seen to be asking simple and factual questions and provides the quest goers with answer sheets which are far from the traditional conundrum.

While going through these books, we can see that Riordan has mixed the elements of myth with the prosaic modern world in a way that it creates a humorous backdrop to the story by maintaining the spirit and quintessence of the plot. The mighty and divine Greek gods, Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Athena, Ares etcetera are always seen to be fighting and quarrelling with each other like any other siblings for trivial reasons. Zeus accuses Poseidon for stealing his master bolt, Hermes blames Zeus for not letting him fight the monster Typhon along with his family, Ares tries to start a full-fledged civil war between the three Big brothers by stealing the master bolt of Zeus and the Helm of Darkness from

Hades and blaming it all on Poseidon, Hephaestus sets up traps all over the world to capture Aphrodite and Ares to mock them in front of the Olympians, to Demeter the solution to every problem is farming and eating cereals. Analyzing these scenes gives the reader the impression that these mighty Greek gods can be deemed as a very basic and mundane set of siblings, fighting over frivolous things by giving them the basic qualities of earthly beings like jealousy, fear, ego, hatred etcetera. Along with it, there are many other humorous instances in the novels which the author weaves alongside with the original myths, like where Grover the satyr is captivated by the cyclops Polyphemus, who thinks that Grover is a lady cyclops and wants to marry him soon and then Annabeth fights him by introducing herself as "Nobody", the name used by Odysseus to trick the cyclops (used by Homer in his work *Odyssey*); there is this scene where Rachel Elizabeth Dare, the girl who becomes the new Oracle of Delphi by the end of the pentalogy, throws a plastic hair brush at the Titan Kronos to escape from him; and another instance where Percy teases the river gods of the Hudson river and the East river to provoke them and gain their attention and so on.

Riordan's incorporation of mythology with the modern society and its ethos is remarkable. The Mount Olympus of Greece, as we know from the myths was where the abode of gods was situated. In Homer's *Iliad*, this ancient acropolis is said to be built just below the peaks of Mount Olympus. Olympus, is the seat of power of all the gods. Throughout the ages, the exuberance and fire triggered by their presence made it change its center. First it was centered in Greece, then the heart of the fire moved to Rome, Germany, France, Spain etc. and at last it has reached the pivot of modern civilization, America, as mentioned in the pentalogy. The powers of the gods are bind to their majestic golden palace. And as their center of power moved from one place to another, their names changed too. For example: Zeus in Greece changed into Jupiter when the fire reached Rome, Hera into Juno, Hades changed into Pluto, Poseidon into Neptune, Demeter into Ceres, Athena into Minerva, Artemis to Diana, Ares into Mars, Aphrodite to Venus, Hephaestus to Vulcan, Hermes into Mercury. Hestia into Vesta and Dionysus to Bacchus. As they changed their names and forms, so did some of their characteristics. But more or less they remained the same guiding force of humanity.

In this pentalogy, Riordan places the power of the gods at the very heart of western civilization, America. The sumptuous palace of Olympus is situated hovering above the Empire State Building in the New York City, the entrance to the Underworld is situated in Los Angeles, the lair of the gorgon Medusa is situated at New Jersey and so on. In the first novel, *The Lightning Thief*, Riordan says:

What you call 'western civilization', do you think it's just an abstract concept? No, it's a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years. The gods are part of it. You might even say they are the source of it, or at least, they are tied so tightly to it that they couldn't possibly fade, not unless all of Western civilization were obliterated. The fire started in Greece. Then, the heart of the flame moved to Rome, so did the gods. Oh, different names, perhaps- Jupiter for Zeus, Venus for Aphrodite, and so on- but the same forces, the same gods The gods simply moved, to Germany, to France, to Spain for a while. Where ever the flame was brightest, the gods were there. They spend several centuries in England. All you need to do is look

at the architecture. People do not forget the gods. Every place they have ruled, for the last three thousand years, you can see them in paintings, in statues, on the most important buildings. (Riordan 72- 73)

Riordan inextricably intertwines the past with the present by placing the gods where the heart of the west is. Thus, the symbol of the United States which is the Eagle of Zeus, the statue of Prometheus at the Rockefeller Center, the Greek facades in their government buildings in Washington, all shows that America is the heart of the flame, the great power of west and so Olympus moved to this hub of civilization and with it, the gods.

The novels are basically set in Long Island, New York, where the Camp Half Blood is situated. Camp Half Blood is a training facility in disguise of a summer camp, where the demigods go to train, take up quests and learn how to survive in the mortal world where they are constantly hunted by the mythical monsters. The camp has magical boundaries around it, which makes it invincible to the eyes of mundane people and it also keep the monsters away. The landscape is dotted with buildings that looked like ancient Greek architecture. There were twelve cabins, each distinguished in its own way for the campers belonging to each one of the Olympian gods. And in Percy's words:

There were twelve of them, nestled in the woods by the lake. They were arranged in a U, with two at the base and five in a row on either side. And they were without doubt the most bizarre collection of buildings I'd ever seen. Except for the fact that each had a large brass number above the door (odds on the left and evens on the right), they looked absolutely nothing alike. (Riordan 79-80)

Cabin one was dedicated to Zeus and it was the biggest of them all. It was polished in bronze with lightning bolt stripes over it. Cabin two belonged to Hera, and is an honorary one, as she is the goddess of family, and can't have relations with mortals like other gods. Cabin three belongs to Poseidon. It wasn't high and mighty like cabin one, but was long and solid and studded with pieces of seashells and corals. Cabin four belongs to Demeter and their roof is made of grass and had tomato vines on the wall. Cabin five belonged to Ares and was bright red and the roof was lined with barbed wires. Cabin six belongs to Athena and had a symbol of owl on the outside and was the tidiest of them all. Cabin seven belongs to Apollo and it seemed to be made of solid gold. Cabin eight is also an honorary cabin which belonged to Artemis, who is a maiden goddess. Cabin nine is that of Hephaestus and had smokestacks like a tiny factory. Cabin ten belonged to Aphrodite and it was decorated with fragrant flowers and plants. Cabin eleven belonged to Hermes and was worn out than all of the other cabins. It had an engraving of the Caduceus on the door. Cabin twelve belonged to Dionysius and had grape vines growing along the walls. Thus, we can say that each cabin takes on some of the features of the god it represents.

America, in the eyes of Riordan, became the hub of all the mystic activities. He borrows heavily from the Greek myths and successfully merged it into the modern society. The Empire State Building and the Camp at Long Island are not the only places pulsing with the metaphysical activities. The entrance to the realm of Hades, the Underworld, is situated in Los Angeles, at the DOA Recording Studios, which is guarded by the psychopomp, Charon, who is the ferryman of Hades and carries souls of the newly deceased across the

river Styx. Then there is the mystery of the Bermuda Triangle, which is on the east coast of Florida, unraveled by Riordan, as he states that it is the Sea of Monsters, where the monsters like Scylla, Charybdis, the Sirens etc. inhabit. Riordan explains that normal mortal beings doesn't really understand what goes on those waters, but they do know that there is something strange about that part of the ocean and thus they named this part of the ocean as the Bermuda Triangle or the Devils Triangle. It is to be noted that this is the same sea that Homer's Odysseus had sailed through on his adventures. Then there is the palace of the Titans reassembling itself brick by brick on the top of the Mount Tamalpais which according to Homer, was situated on top of Mount Othrys. Another important borrowing from Homer's *Iliad* is the Labyrinth, which Riordan says is right under the surface of the mortal world and its been growing and expanding under the western societies.

In every myth, tale or chronicle, the characters play a great role in keeping the plot to move forward and not all Greek myths are centered on gods. We are familiar with the stories of many great heroes who had special abilities and faced terrible monsters through the words of some prominent writers like Homer, Ovid, Hesiod etc. Homer, in his works *Iliad* and *Odyssey* introduced to the readers, heroes like Heracles, who tricked Atlas into taking the sky back into his shoulders and fought the giant Antaeus; Perseus, who slayed the gorgon Medusa (this myth is also recounted by Hesiod in *Theogony*); Achilles, the great hero of the Trojan war who was submerged in the river Styx by his own mother Thetis to become invincible during a fight; Jason, the hero who along with his Argonauts, went on a quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece (Jason appears in various other works like *Argonautica* by Apollonius and *Medea* by Euripides). Along with the heroes, we are also introduced to many monsters like Scylla and Charybdis in *Odyssey*, Medusa in *Theogony*, Minotaur in *Iliad* etc.

Even though Riordan doesn't directly use these heroes in his plot, he does make use of the quests they have gone on and also many of the monsters they have encountered on their quests. The interesting aspect of the intertextual relationships between all those epic tales and Riordan's pentology is that on a basic level they function exactly in the same way as tropes and figurative language. The leading heroes of Riordan, namely Percy, Annabeth, Thalia, Nico, Luke, Clarisse, and Grover (a satyr) and Tyson (a cyclops), have in one way or the other encountered with the mythical creatures or been to places which is significant in Greek mythology. And heroes as we know are destined to have a grievous ending. But Riordan, unlike his predecessors, gives the readers a glimpse of hope that his heroes would have not be meted with such grave fate.

In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy, Annabeth and Grover goes on a quest, after Percy was accused of stealing the master bolt of Zeus. It is on this journey that they stumble upon to the lair of the gorgon Medusa in New Jersey. In both *Theogony* and *Iliad*, she is beheaded by a hero named Perseus, and Riordan adapts this myth, and Percy beheads her by looking at her reflection through a polished shield. After their encounter with Medusa, Percy is forced to fight with the mother of all monsters, Echidna. Both Homer and Hesiod features Echidna in their writings and Riordan uses Echidna to taunt Percy and makes him to jump off the Gateway Arch, but Percy being the son of Poseidon, doesn't die or feel any kind of pain as he plummeted down from the top of that two-hundred-

meter monument. After encountering such various hardships, they reach Los Angeles from where they come across Procrustes who calls himself Crusty in this novel. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Theseus kills him the same way he used to kill his prey, by "fitting" them into his bed and either cutting off the parts that is hanging down or by stretching the victim's limbs to fit the bed, resulting in their death. Percy, just like Theseus, tricks Procrustes into lying down in the bed and kills him.

In *The Sea of Monsters*, Clarisse, Percy, Annabeth and Tyson goes on a quest to save Grover and also to find the Golden Fleece to save their Half-Blood camp. The first monster they encounter is the vicious Hydra. Its was defeated by Heracles in Homer's *Iliad*. After this encounter they set sail to the Sea of Monsters or the modern day Bermuda Triangle, as per the author, and as they near the waters of the Monster infested sea, they are forced to fight the monsters Scylla and Charybdis, mentioned by Homer in his *Odyssey* when Odysseus had to fight with these creatures while on his voyage. But the heroes were overwhelmed by these two monsters and get separated. Percy and Annabeth escape and reaches an island named C. C's island which was the island of Circe the Sorceress, who turns men into pig, according to Homer. And Percy, unfortunately was turned into a guinea pig by Circe, but is rescued by Annabeth and they set sail from that island. As they continued their quest, they happened to pass the island of the Sirens, which are creatures that enticed the sailors to their destruction with their beautiful singing. In *Odyssey*, Odysseus successfully escapes the enchanting calls of the Sirens, but as for Annabeth, daughter of Athena, she wanted to hear them singing because she knew that they sung about the greatest desires of the people they see. Annabeth was almost killed by the Sirens, but in the last moment Percy comes to her rescue. Percy and Annabeth are reunited with Grover, Clarisse and Tyson from the island of the Cyclops Polyphemus. In *Odyssey*, Odysseus had tricked Polyphemus by claiming that his name is "Nobody" and stabs him in the eye making him half blind and as he bellowed in pain, he cried out to his fellow giants that "Nobody" has hurt him. This same trick was played by Percy, Annabeth and Clarisse to save Grover from the Cyclops. And they retrieve the Golden Fleece, which Jason in *Odyssey* seized from king Aeetes of Colchis.

In *The Titan's Curse*, Zoe, Bianca (huntresses of Artemis), Percy, Grover and Thalia is given a quest to save Artemis and Annabeth who had been kidnapped by the enemy forces. Before going on this quest, Percy, Annabeth and Thalia are sent on a mission to help and escape two demigods, Bianca and Nico who were the children of Hades. But things go sideways when they are ambushed by a Manticore who is eventually killed by Dionysius at the end of their quest. Even though Percy managed to save Bianca and Nico, Annabeth was taken away by the enemies. Also, Artemis was ambushed by the Titans forces and thus the group set out on the quest to save both of them. As they started their journey, they are led into the Air and Space Museum in Washington DC where they had to fight the Nemean Lion, a beast in Homer's *Iliad* which had been slayed by Heracles. The Titans army had sent some skeletal warriors to stop the heroes and during their fight, they are blessed by the Wild with an Erymanthian Boar, which was again captured by Heracles in Homer's *Iliad*. An Ophiotauros is an ancient monster that could bring down the gods if it was slain and its entrails burnt. In the first battle of Titans and gods, the Titans had

slayed the beast, but Zeus' eagle retrieved its entrails before it was burned. We can find references to this creature in Ovid's poem *Fasti* and Riordan makes use of this monster by tempting Thalia to kill it and burn its entrails to overthrow the gods and let the Titan army win. But Percy helps Ophiotauros escape from the scene along with Grover to protect it. Homer in his *Iliad* mentions about the Garden of Hesperides where the dragon Ladon protects the golden apples sacred to Hera. Zoe distracts Ladon while Percy and others pass around the garden to reach Mount Othrys. Even though Heracles had defeated the monster, the group of heroes was sure that they didn't want to fight Ladon.

In the fourth book, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Percy, Annabeth, Grover and Tyson come across many monsters in the Greek mythology. Starting with Kampe, who was the guard of Cyclopes and Hecatoncheires, according to Hesiod in *Theogony*. Kampe is seen in novel at Alcatraz, guarding the last hundred-handed one, Briareus. But by the end of the novel, Briareus with the help of Tyson, kills Kampe. Next, they encounter the famed Sphinx, a monster which is seen in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. Sphinx is supposed to ask people the riddle "What goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?" the answer being Humans. But in this book Riordan attempts to bring a change by making the Sphinx ask a series of random trivia questions instead. After escaping the Sphinx, they reach the Triple G Ranch where Geryon a fearsome giant with three bodies and one head resided. In Homer's *Iliad*, Geryon was killed by Heracles by shooting an arrow through three of his hearts at the same time. Percy, with the blessing of Hera, kills Geryon and escapes from there to go and meet Hephaestus, who tasks them to investigate one of his forges in Mount St. Helens' which the Telekhines had been using to forge the scythe of Kronos. Telekhines are mysterious smiths and sea demons who made both Kronos' Scythe and Poseidon's Trident. They were first mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony* during the Titan-God war.

In the last book of the series, *The Last Olympian*, Riordan makes use of all of these multifarious monsters and demons from the Greek mythology as the demigods take their final stand against the invasion of the Titan army in New York. Other than the monsters discussed above there are several other references of such beasts, both friendly and evil, in this pentalogy. From Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Riordan borrows characters like, Argus, a one hundred eyed giant who is the guardian of the heifer-nymph Io and son of Arestor, and works at Camp-Half Blood as their security chief; Centaurs, which are thought of as being wild and untamed horses with upper body of a human. They are the children of Ixion and Nephele, except for Chiron, who is the son of Kronos and Philyra. They are good with their bows and are good healers. In the pentalogy they help the Demigods in their fight against the Titans; Cerberus guards the gates to the Underworld and is fiercely loyal to Hades. in the novel he is described as "pure-bred three headed rottweiler" by Percy and loves to play with Mrs. O'Leary; Chimera, the fire breathing hybrid offspring of Typhon and Echidna is killed by Bellerophon in myth. It appears in *The Lightning Thief* and attacks Percy from the Gateway Arch

The Clazmonian Sow, which is a sow with wings which ravaged the territory of Klazomenai in the myths. In this book, the Titan's release this sow to overwhelm the demigods and take them down. In *The Last Olympian*, Percy with the help of the automatons, kills the beast; Empousa is a

shape shifting female being that seduces men and feeds on them. In *The Battle of Labyrinth*, we can see two Empousai trying to kill Percy on his first day back to school; Hellhounds are children of Nyx and Cerberus and are feared by half-bloods. In the pentalogy we see that the hellhounds side with the Titan army to fight against the demigods, except for one named Mrs. O'Leary, which is the only friendly hellhound who is loyal to Daedalus and later to Percy; The Stymphalian birds, in the myth was killed by Hercules by scaring them first using the brass bells. In *The Sea of Monsters*, the camp is attacked by these birds and Percy and Annabeth use the stereo to confuse the birds and kills them; Pegasi are winged horses and are named after the original Pegasus, the son of Poseidon and Medusa. In the pentalogy there are a number of Pegasus which are used by the demigods and the notable pegasi is Blackjack, Percy's pure black Pegasus; Laistrygonian giants are a race of man eater giants encountered by Odysseus in his travels. In *The Sea of Monsters* a group of giants tries to attack Percy; the Scythian Dracaenae in mythology are female reptilian monsters who stole Hercules' horses. They fight along with the Titan army in the pentalogy.

Riordan also borrows from Hesiod's *Theogony*, namely, the Hyperboreans which were mythical giants who lived far to the North of Thrace. In *The Last Olympian*, they side with the Titan army to fight against the demigods; The Furies or Erinyes are the deities of vengeance that sprang from the blood of Uranus, and are referred to as the Kindly Ones in the novels and serves Hades; the Lydian Drakon is a serpent like creature which is killed by Damasen. In *The Last Olympian*, a Lydian Drakon is unleashed by Kronos which is fated to die by the hands of a child of Ares and is killed by Clarisse; Spartoi are the "sown" warriors who spring up full grown from a giant serpents teeth killed by Kadmos. In *The Titan's Curse*, they are resurrected by Atlas from the teeth of a Drakon, to hunt down the demigods on the quest; Typhon, the youngest son Gaea and Tartarus, and is the father of Hydra, Cerberus and Chimera. In *The Last Olympian*, Typhon is released from his confinement under mount Etna and tries to destroy mount Olympus.

It is undeniable that Riordan has come up with a clever conceit, which is amusingly sustained. The gods are portrayed in a humorous fashion where they are given the basic human qualities and are made mundane and terrestrial as possible. We can see eye to eye with Riordan's version of Olympian gods. Take for example, Poseidon, the Greek god of the Sea. He is humble and unostentatious and seems to care for his son Percy dearly. He playfully ignores the bickering of his siblings like a good-natured person. Even though in the myths the thrones of these gods are said to be in full grandeur, his throne in this pentalogy is described as a fisherman's seat in a boat, simple and cozy and a perfect fit for the Lord of the Seas. Like a regular father these days, he visits Percy on his birthday, even though gods are not allowed to interact with their children like that. Then comes Zeus, the Greek god of the Sky, whose character could be described as one who is short tempered and someone who turns a blind eye to the problems he is facing, which is a typical feature of a human being as humans would love not to face their problems and think that it would go away just like that. Like a stubborn human being, he refused to take into his consideration the warnings of Percy and some of his fellow demigods that the Titan Kronos was indeed trying to reform and take over this chaotic yet mesmerizing world. He is

presented to the readers wearing a sophisticated suit, like a serious business man, instead of the traditional chiton and cloaks. Hephaestus works in his workshops like a crazy mechanic in his numerous forges around the world and leaves the inoperative inventions all around. He casts traps in remote and abandoned places in hope of catching Aphrodite and Ares in their romantic strolls, like the one he had laid in the water theme park, The Water Land, where Percy, Annabeth and Grover were tasked to retrieve the shield of Ares, only to get trapped inside. And it is to be noted that Ares, the god of war, appears as a biker in a red muscle shirt and is armed with a huge knife and intimidates mortals like a bully.

Basically, the whole series is built upon the plan laid upon by the Titan lord Cronos, who plans to overthrow the mighty gods from their seats of power and to rule over the world. The Great Prophecy, which had been foretold by the Oracle decades before the novels are set, unfold in front of the characters and the readers alike. Some of the Olympians anticipated about the revival of the titans and their allies when the prophecy was spoken, and that is when Zeus, Poseidon and Hades made the pact not to have any more children with mortal women. But Zeus and Poseidon broke the rule and as the result Thalia and Percy were born. And in the pentology all of the beings in this mystical realm within the bounds of the terrestrial world looks up to Percy and his progress as a hero as he was the one who would cause either the Olympus to fall or to triumph in the war between the Olympians and Titans. This war between the Olympians and the Titans is called as Titanomachy and was first explained by Hesiod in his work *Theogony*.

In the written account of Hesiod, we can find that the Titanomachy took place in Thessaly between the Titans and the Olympians for ten consecutive years. Just like Cronos usurping his father Uranus with his mother Gaia's help, Cronos was usurped by his youngest son Zeus with his mother Rhea's help. It was a cycle of struggle for power and desperate attempts to change their fate. Uranus had imprisoned his children, the Cyclopes and the Hecatonchires, and Gaia helped Cronos, the youngest amongst the other set of their children, the Titans, to castrate him and help save the Cyclopes and Hecatonchires. Uranus was easily defeated by Cronos and he took the place of Uranus and ruled the world. Cronos' sister-wife, Rhea, bore him six children, Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. But Cronos knew that he was destined to be overcome by his own son. Therefore, he kept no blind outlook, but watched and swallowed his children. But Rhea hid Zeus when he was born and gave Cronos a rock to eat instead. When Zeus grew up he came in disguise as a cupbearer for his father and gave him a potion which made Cronos regurgitate his children who being immortals had grown up inside him. Thus, Zeus with the help of his siblings fought the ten-year war to overthrow the Titans, which Hesiod named as the Titanomachy. Hesiod then narrates to us that this same fate was destined upon Zeus too, that he was to be overthrown by his own son by Metis. So, in an attempt to escape his fate, he swallows the pregnant Metis all together and thus Athena was born from his forehead. We can see that the pattern of events is the same. The father, in fear of losing his power tries to enslave or eliminate his children but it backfires and he ends up meeting his fate.

Riordan makes use of this myth in his series, where Cronos is trying to reform and gather allies to fight against the

Olympians after their loss in the first Titanomachy, to take back the power that once had been his. The plot of the series revolved around Cronos' plans, who hoped to rise from Tartarus and rule the world once more by defeating the Olympian gods. There were five major battles over the course of the war; the Attack of Camp Half-Blood, the Battle of the Princess Andromeda, the Siege of Poseidon's Palace, and contemporaneous battles of Mount Othrys and Manhattan. It lasted approximately four years after Luke Castellan stole the Master Bolt and the Helm of Darkness, which happened in the first book, *The Lightning Thief*. As the plot develops Riordan unravels the plan of Cronos on how to take over the world. We can interpret it as the second Titanomachy, but the difference here is that most of the minor gods and their demigod children sided with the Titans because they were neglected and disregarded by the Olympians. So, did all of the monsters that has been ever mentioned in the Greek mythology. The Olympians had with them the demigod children of the Olympian gods, the nature spirits, the army of Underworld, the Hunters of Artemis, Cyclopes, Centaurs, and Briareus (the last one of the Hecatonchires). And while the Olympians fought the gruesome monster Typhon, it was the others who defended the Mount Olympus from the direct attack of Cronos. This battle, as Riordan mentions, the Battle of Manhattan, can be regarded as the second Titanomachy.

While analyzing the Percy Jackson pentology, it is imperative that we discuss about the prophecies stated in each of the five books. In Greek mythology, people came to consult the Oracle of Delphi, Pythia, a role played by the priestess of Apollo, to know about their future. We can see references to the Oracle in *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Theogony* etc. She relays the messages from Apollo to her visitors that typically had something to do with the future or how to achieve a desired outcome. The prophecies mainly focused on politics and warfare. Pythia prophesied for hundreds of years, as she was a role played by different priestesses and not just one person.

It is usually assumed that the Pythia's original words were coherent, but not very clear... it was always the responsibility of the recipient to interpret the oracle correctly. And the oracles, even in their final form, were always ambiguous. Frequently (though not always), the recipients did not interpret them correctly, and they suffered as a result. (Mellenthin and Shapiro Ch. 13).

Many of the prophecies were anecdotal and have survived as proverbs. Some of the most prominent and historically significant prophecies of Delphi are the ones she gave to Croesus of Lydia, which ultimately led to the war with Persians and to Laius, father of Oedipus, telling that he would be murdered by his own son.

In each of Riordan's novel, we can see the Oracle of Delphi relaying the prophecies to the heroes. In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy accepts to go a quest. He is then being sent to the attic where the Oracle is residing. He asks for his "destiny" and the Oracle says in a rasping voice:

You shall go west, and find the god who had turned.

You shall find what was stolen, and see it safely returned.

You shall be betrayed by one who calls you a friend.

And you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end.

In *The Sea of Monsters*, Clarisse, the daughter of Ares takes up the quest. She goes to consult the Oracle and the prophecy she gets is:

You shall sail the iron ship with warriors of bone,
You shall find what you seek and make it your own,
But despair for your life entombed within stone,
And fail without friends, to fly home alone.

In *The Titan's Curse*, it was Zoe Nightshade, daughter of the Titan Atlas, currently a huntress along side with Artemis, is the one who gets the chance to lead the quest. The prophecy predicted for her was:

Five shall go west to the goddess in chains,
One shall be lost in the land without rain,
The bane of Olympus shows the trail,
Campers and Hunters combined prevail,
The Titan's curse must one withstand,
And one shall perish by a parent's hand.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, the quest is taken up by Annabeth Chase, the daughter of Athena. The prophecy goes like this:

You shall delve in the darkness of the endless maze.
The Traitor, the Dead and the Lost one raise.
You shall rise or fall by the ghost king's hand.
The child of Athena's final stand.
Destroy with a hero's final breath,
And lose a love to worse than death.

In the last book of the pentology, *The Last Olympian*, the Great Prophecy which had been predicted years ago is revealed, as Percy takes up his final stand against the army of the Titan Cronos. The Great Prophecy is as follows:

A half-blood of the eldest gods
Shall reach sixteen against all odds.
And see the world in endless sleep,
The hero's soul, cursed blade shall reap.
A single choice shall end his days.
Olympus to preserve or raze.

These prophecies don't always convey the literal meaning of the sentences, there are different types of interpretations and deeper levels of meaning to these prophecies. These prophecies drive the story forward. The heroes undertaking the quests and adventures rely upon these words as to where to begin the quest from or what all things they may face in their adventure. For example, in *The Lightning Thief*, Percy and his friends goes west, that is to the city of Los Angeles, to the entrance of the Underworld and along the way they find the god who has turned, who was mistaken to be Hades, but in real was Ares. And he is betrayed by his friend Luke Castellan, who gave him the enchanted flying shoes which made Grover fly into the deep pit which was the entrance into the Tartarus. In *The Titan's Curse*, Zoe and other members of the quest reach a dessert and Bianca loses her life while attempting to save others in "the land without

rain" which is the junkyard of gods where a giant automaton made by Hephaestus guards the place. The heroes confuse "the bane of Olympus" to a titan or a devilish monster, but it turns out to be the Ophiotauros. In *The Battle of Labyrinth*, Annabeth and her friends mistakes "the ghost king" for Minos, when it really was Nico, son of Hades all along. They were afraid that the "child of Athena" mentioned in the prophecy would be Annabeth, but as it turns out, it was Daedalus, who destroyed his own creation, the Labyrinth by giving up his life to save the campers. In the last book, *The Last Olympian*, we get to know the Great Prophecy which had been predicted decades ago. Everyone thinks that Percy is the hero of the prophecy and that he would die by making a single choice and with a "cursed blade" he shall die, which was thought to be Percy's sword, the Anaklusmos or Riptide which had a tragic story behind it. But the hero of the prophecy was Luke, son of Hermes, who had sided with the Titans and gave up his body for Kronos to take over. In the end Luke realizes the grave mistakes he had done and stabs himself with the dagger he had given to Annabeth years ago right after he had promised her that he would never hurt her.

Riordan incorporates mythology in his works to update the traditional idiosyncrasy. The way he modernizes the gods, demigods and their quests help the readers to rationalize the extramundane. The direct allusions to Homer, Hesiod, Ovid etc. can be seen throughout the novels. And these allusions and references are woven together with the ultra-modern context by the author. Thus, the borderline between fantasy and reality, facts and fiction fade, leaving the readers with a new genre to explore. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Riordan says:

I tend to think of a myth and then explore how it would play out if it were happening in the modern-day world. I modify all the myths I use, but I stick very closely to their structure – it is the hidden teacher in me. With a lot of them it is easy to imagine the modern context by, say, having Aries riding on a motorcycle. These myths are universal and are totally ingrained in our culture. We are still struggling with the same things, so they fit neatly into the modern world. (Riordan)

Riordan delivers puns, jokes and subtle wit, alongside a gripping story line. He blends myth with the modern and shows mordant satirical quality in this pentology. The satyrs in his works are environmentalists and vegans who complain about how the humans are destroying the world; his gods and monsters fears oblivion; his heroes are flawed (haunted by their hamartia and are diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD) but are also resilient and valourous; his mortals are a bunch of ignorant people who will "believe anything but the truth". He communicates the complexities of life with his readers by referring to these myths. The monsters and the Titans trying to destroy the Olympians shows that evil will prevail in this world and as long as such threats are there, there will emerge heroes who will change the course of history from that of doom to that of boon.

Conclusion

"I made my song a coat

Covered with embroideries

Out of old mythologies

From heel to throat;" (Yeats, lines 1-4)

The term 'myth' has often been a topic that has drawn many debates on whether it can be considered as stories relating to the truth or maybe of fallacy. Northrop Frye however, believed myth to have 'really happened', or to have some exceptional significance in explaining certain features of life, such as ritual. In his opinion, myth is often used as an allegory of science or religion or morality and it may arise in the first place to account for a ritual or a law, or it may be an example of a parable which illustrates a particular situation or argument. It may be told or retold, modified or elaborated or different patterns may also be discovered in it.

Mythology could be seen as an archaic and profound record we have of the mankind's nature and spirit. To understand and connect with our past and our origin people relate to myth and myth making. Myths, whether it is Greek, American or Indian, are the survivals of those primitive ages when myth making mind reigned supreme. But myths respond to the basic human situations. And they are very much relevant in this modern day. By using myth in his literary and artistic works, modern man is able to understand and communicate the complexity of life, as well as, provide great deal of material for the modern-day writers. Northrop Frye maintains, that the structural principles of literature are largely based on myths. In his essay *Myth, Fiction and Displacement*, he writes:

The things that happen in myth are things that happen only in stories, they are in a self-contained literary, world. Hence myth would naturally have the same kind of appeal for the fiction writer that folk tales has. It presents him with a ready-made frame-work, hoary with antiquity, and allows him to develop all his energies to collaborating its design. (Frye 590)

This study aims to illustrate the significance of Greek mythology in this modern world and how it is reimagined by the American author Rick Riordan in his pentalogy, *Percy Jackson and The Olympian Series*. In his novels, Riordan portrays the Greek gods centered in the focal point of the modern civilization, guiding the modern man in all his endeavors. He presents to us an out of the ordinary scenario, where the Greek myths are embedded in the core of modern American society and how the pop culture and modernity is mixed with the archaic myths of Greece.

Riordan borrows myths and themes from the previous texts of Homer, Hesiod, Ovid etc. and tries to create various layers of meaning in his pentalogy. Thus, the readers are able to interpret the text in different ways. The fashion in which he recounts the timeless tales is different from that of his predecessors. In all of the five novels, Riordan tries to embed the archaic gods and myths in the twenty first century, and he tries to wear off the distinction between the lines of reality and fiction. The great gods of Greek mythology remain the same in his pentalogy, but with some influence of the modern civilization. The fire of the power of the gods, as Riordan is burning bright in America, and we can that in the architecture, their national emblem etc. Thus, we could say that Riordan places these myths in the current scenario to help the readers understand and to relate to these stories and fables more deeply. It is almost like he spots things around him that have echoes in the ancient world.

The recurring parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity given shape and significance in the works of the new writers or 'myth creators' helps us to see the world in new ways. Though in the surface level these novels talk

about the story of demigods and their adventures and quests, in a deeper level we could even interpret it as the story of some brave and courageous youngsters who rights the wrong and help those in need. They keep aside their differences and fight for justice. Instead of backing away from the perilous quests, they come forward willingly without knowing what the future holds for them. This pentalogy is not only a piece of literature which entertains its readers, but also gives them hope in this often-chaotic life. And that can be seen as a quality of myth. Even in its mystical context, a myth, conveys to the readers about the truths of life and helps people to find worth and purpose in their existence.

Ivan Strenski in his work *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Levi Strauss and Malinowski* quotes:

Myth is everything and nothing at the same time. It is the true story or a false one, revelation or deception, sacred or vulgar, real or fictional, symbol or tool, archetype or stereotype. It is either strongly structured and logical or emotional and pre-logical, traditional or primitive or part of contemporary ideology. Myth is about the gods, but often also the ancestors and sometimes certain men... it is charter, recurring theme, character type, received idea, half-truth, tale or just plain lie.

In conclusion, one could say that not reason but imagination was the key to myth. Myth is not failed attempt to articulate rational truth but is the creative impulse underlying human history. Primitive mythopoeia was the source of all experience and all expression. In the case of modern writers or in particular Rick Riordan, the use of myth in their works, is not aimed to rationalize or reason with the history of humans and the psyche, but to build a bridge that connects the past to the present, to erase the boundary between the reality and fantasy.

Works Cited

- [1] "About Rick Riordan." *Rickriordan.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 December 2019.
- [2] Bartlett, Sarah. *The Mythology Bible: A Definitive Guide to Legendary Tales*. Sterling Publishing Co., 2009.
- [3] Campbell, Joseph and Moyers, Bill. *The Power of Myth*. Doubleday, 1988.
- [4] Cook, Albert. *Myth and Language*. Indiana University Press, 1980.
- [5] Frye, Northrop. "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement." *Daedalus*, vol. 90, no. 3, 1961, pp. 587- 605, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20026675?seq=1>.
- [6] Gould, E. *Mythical Intentions in Modern Literature*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- [7] Hamilton, E. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes (75th Anniversary Edition)*. Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2017. Print.
- [8] Jung, C. J. Ed. Campbell, J. *The Portable Jung*. Penguin Classics, 1992.
- [9] Kristeva, Julia. *Word, Dialogue, and Novel*. Columbia University Press, 1986.
- [10] Leach, M. and J. Fried. *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folk lore, Mythology, and Legend*. Harper and Row Publishers, 1984.

- [11] Mellenthin, Jessica and Sharipo, Susan O. *Mythology Unbound: An Online Textbook for Classical Mythology*. Press books. Rebus Community, <https://press.rebus.community/mythologyunbound/chapter/the-delphic-oracle/>
- [12] "Myth." *ahdictionary.com*. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2015. 15, November, 2015. <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=myth>
- [13] Riordan, Rick. "Rick Riordan: 'Myths are universal and are totally ingrained in our culture.'" Interview. By Venessa Thorpe. *The Guardian*, 9 December, 2019. www.theguardian.com/books/2012/dec/09/rick-riordan-interview-heroes-olympus.
- [14] Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Battle of Labyrinth*. Puffin Books, 2008. Print.
- [15] Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Last Olympian*. Puffin Books, 2009. Print.
- [16] Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. Puffin Books, 2005. Print.
- [17] Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*. Puffin Books, 2006. Print.
- [18] Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Titan's Curse*. Puffin Books, 2007. Print.
- [19] Strenski, Ivan. *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Levi Strauss and Malinowski*. London: Macmillan, 1987.
- [20] Yeats, W.B. "A Coat." *Poetry Foundation*, 2020, www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12893/a-coat.

