Chapter III

Unravelling the Magic: Exploring Narrative Techniques

The select novels of the PJO series – TLT, TSoM, TTC, TBoL, and TLO are a pastiche of genres and a bricolage (the construction from a diverse range of available resources) of both formulaic and non-formulaic narrative styles and techniques. Formulaic narrative style that adheres to norms and conventions has a predictable format of plot, familiar themes, tropes, characters, settings, standard grammar and sentence structure, choice of vocabulary, a conventional opening, and an ending, making the narrative easy to follow. Non-formulaic narrative style, experiments with unique opening and ending, unpredictable plots, themes, tropes, unconventional characters, original settings, and innovative use of language.

The narrative style identified in the select novels is a diluted form that trickles down from J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, the pioneers of High fantasies, who have made their novels believable with the invention of fictional geography, history, and language (Sammons 21). Rick Riordan does not invent new languages in the select works, but strategically lends authenticity to the narrative by creating a seamless experience for readers through a non-formulaic narrative style or subversion of the formulaic structure, via focalisation that presents the different points of views, chronology, the opening and the ending of the novels, and language. The non-formulaic narrative style offers a logical foundation to enrich the meaning of a text using the postmodern concept, metafiction.

Metafiction is “writing about the process of writing” (Childs and Fowler 122), referred to as ‘self-reflexive’ or ‘self-referential’ that emotionally distances readers from the text, drawing the attention of readers to the content of the text, the plurality of voice and narrative, diversity of experience, invalidating the concept of ultimate

truth, single interpretation, and objective reality, encouraging the 'decentering' or the rejection of a single, dominating perspective or worldview (Laszkiewicz 23). It breaks the barrier between readers and authors, revealing what goes through the minds of authors while they engage in the imaginative and productive activity of their writing which fosters awareness amongst readers regarding the fictionality or artificiality of characters and events in the text (Stephens 75). The characteristics are reflected in the select works, where Riordan resorts to blending fantasy and reality to induce familiarisation. The novels are bound by mimesis and verisimilitudinous despite the conviction of postmodernists to reject realism. Linda Hutcheon opines that postmodernism does not directly link the textual discourse to empirical reality, but it maintains a loose connection between fiction and realism, favouring the predicament of the select novels, exempting the exception to the postulates of postmodernism, as the novels start with realism, moves to fantasy, and ends with realism.

The fictional constructions and their realistic representations in the select novels are mediated by integrating fantastical elements of myth and magic using the narrative technique of magical realism, which makes a text ". . . imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dream-like quality. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction is the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre …" striking a delicate balance between fantasy and reality that it becomes difficult to distinguish the two (qtd. in Sharma and Chaudhary 196-197). The creation of the effects of reality in fiction is known as "fantastic realism" (qtd. in Jackson 34) or as the French philosopher, Francois Lyotard calls it, the "fantasms of realism" (Lyotard 3) and it is expressed through language and linguistics, which in itself is a basic model for the analysis of the structure of a narrative (Barthes and Duisit 239). Riordan incorporates several strategies in the

select novels that challenge the traditional notions of narration to make it life-like, with various dimensions using components of metafiction that contribute to subversion in language using a wide range of discursive techniques like the fragmentation of syntax, playfulness in language using verbal puns with parody, satire, sarcasm, irony, and humour.

The effect of reality in the select novels is analysed through the first-person and the omniscient narrative modes, a part of metafictional techniques, known by a distinctly dissimilar term – "focalisation", coined by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse* (1980), who identifies three kinds of focalisations – internal focalisation, external focalisation, and zero focalisation (Koppe and Stuhring 1). Internal focalisation is equivalent to first person narration and occurs when readers are granted access to the thoughts and feelings of characters. The narrator of the diegesis is a focal character who narrates the story exactly as it occurs, making it seem like a direct address to the readers. The Bulgarian structuralist literary critic, Tzvetan Todorov symbolises the focalisation using the formula ". . . Narrator = Character (the narrator says only what a given character knows)" (Genette189). External focalisation occurs when readers are solely allowed access to the actions and behaviours of all characters. It helps readers to perceive the tale objectively and grasp the implications of the actions of characters. It is symbolised with the formula ". . . Narrator < Character (the narrator says less than the character knows)" (189). Zero focalisation corresponds to the omniscient narrator, symbolised with ". . . Narrator > Character (where the narrator knows more than the character, or . . . *says* more than any of the characters knows)" (189).

Focalisation in the select novels alternates between internal focalisation and external focalisation, which the Swedish literary critic, Maria Nikolajeva provides

with an elaborate version of the idea and terms it "intersubjective reading" of characters, which enables readers ". . . to reconcile the two separate narratives, the two separate inner journeys, viewing them as two sides of the same quest for self. . ." (152). The oscillation between focalisations in the novels makes the narration more interesting, complex, and nuanced, enabling readers to view it from several angles and comprehend the reasons behind the decisions and actions of characters. The progression of the narrative creates a balance between the experiences of the twelve-year-old focal character, Percy Jackson and the other characters, allowing the upsurge of polyphonic voices in the narrative, with ". . . an air of complete authenticity . . ." (Watt 27).

The authenticity in the narration is enhanced through chronology of the events in the select novels, which as of any other texts falls under the linear/non-linear binary. Linear narration is the ". . . possibility . . . of there being an exact match or correspondence . . . between the chronological order of some set of events and the temporal deployment of the elements of some narrative utterance" (Smith 227). Non-linear narration is when ". . . (1) . . . there is a difference between "discourse-time. . ." and "story-time," that is, between the length of time it takes to read (or hear) a narrative and the length of time occupied by the events referred to in it, and (2) that a set of events that [occur] in one order can be narrated in another order . . ." (214).

The narration in the select novels follows a predominantly linear structure, except a single instance of non-linearity in the novels, which relates to the Great Prophecy, made by the Oracle, seventy years prior to Percy's birth. Linear or not, the function of a narrative, according to Roland Barthes and Lionel Duisit in the essay, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1975), ". . . is not to 'represent'; it is to put together a scene which still retains a certain enigmatic

character for the reader, but does not belong to the mimetic order in any way. The 'reality' of a sequence does not lie in the "natural" order of actions that make it up" (271). A non-linear narration is difficult for young readers to follow as they prefer to tell their stories in linear fashion, and the primarily linear narration of the select novels aids a better perception (Zajko and Doyle 24). Robert L. Fowler mirrors the same idea in the article "Greek Mythography" (2017) in which he writes, "As creatures in space and time we find the linear progression of the narrative reassuring; it recalls our earliest ways of making sense of the world. The comfortable succession of 'and then… and then,' what the ancient critics called the 'strung-on style', is at home in the mythography in all ages" (24).

The select novels depart from conventional, formulaic narratives that begin with "once upon a time" (Jackson, "Nameless things and Nameless Names" 33). The opening lines of the select novels, narrated through internal focalisation, "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", urge readers to believe in the fictionality of the text (Riordan, TLT 1). Similarly, the select novels, do not end with "happily ever after", rather asserts the unpredictability of future where both the characters and the readers must move forward in life with optimism.

Optimism is expressed in the reason behind choosing the name of the protagonist, as Percy, a derivation from the name of the Greek mythical hero Perseus, the son of Zeus in Greek mythology, but in the novels, Percy is the son of Poseidon. A justification for the incorporation is included in TSoM wherein Percy says:

> . . . Perseus always won. That's why my mom had named me after him, even though he was a son of Zeus and I was a son of Poseidon.

> The original Perseus was one of the only heroes in the Greek myths who got a happy ending. The others died—betrayed, mauled, mutilated, poisoned, or cursed by the gods. My mom hoped I would inherit Perseus's luck. Judging by how my life was going so far, I wasn't real optimistic. (Riordan 111-112)

The use of language looms unavoidably large in the discourse, where there is an exemplification of the shift from the formal/conventional language used in texts of mythical tradition like Hesiod's *Theogony* and Virgil's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to the highly Americanised, informal/unconventional, conversational style of narration in the novels as the text "…signals a critical distance within the world of representations, raising questions about the ideological and discursive construction of the past, and about not so much the truth as whose truth is at stake in these narrative constructions" (Selton et al. 200). The usage of conversational style in the novels is a subversion of the existing style and is an indirect questioning of the rules of conventional writing. The shift of language from formal to informal is a necessary change in fantasy novels for children like the select works that are great examples to view the diachronic use of language that takes an organic course, which disrupt the academicism that is assigned to mythical and realistic texts.

A contrast in the ancient and contemporary language is showcased in the select novels through the juxtaposition of the conventional style of narration in the original myths and the unconventional, informal speech style of the character Zoe with the modern character Thalia in the novels. Zoe partially speaks archaic language with ". . . an accent that is hard to place. It sounded old-fashioned, like she [is] reading from a really old book. . . starts talking really old-fashioned when she gets upset, so it [is] kind of hard to understand" and refers to people that she talks to as

"thy", "thee", and "thou" (Riordan, TTC 30-75). Annoyed with Zoe, Thalia asks her to update her language with the change in times and retorts that it is "Your" and that ". . . Nobody has said thy in, like, three hundred years . . . Zoe hesitated, like she was trying to form the word correctly . . . 'Yerrr . . .'" (93-94). Zoe expresses difficulty in keeping herself updated with the language that is constantly subjected to change according to the change in times and says that, "I hate this language. It changes too often" (178). The unconventional narrative method suits the contemporary aesthetic belief that sets a simplistic and unsophisticated emphasis on style, serving as an ingredient of the popularity of the novels among children and adults (Leighton 84).

The select novels shed light on linguistic clashes, resulting in instability of meaning, overturning of customary values and associations when Percy calls Persephone as "the goddess of flowers", and not the goddess of "Springtime", revealing that the words used by the younger generation represent dissociation from their customary meanings (Riordan, TTC 76). Similarly, Riordan enlists the confusing names in Greek mythology, drawing the attention of readers to the fact that they are not the same characters, making it easier for readers to differentiate between characters who might otherwise be confused with each other due to subtle differences in spelling and pronunciation. Riordan clears the possibility of confusion between the names Polydictes and Polydeuces that share a phonetic similarity as both begin with "po-li-d" and end with "es" (Riordan, TLT 18). Similarly, the pronunciation of Chiron and Charon differ only by a vowel, "i" and "a", and when Percy calls Charon as Chiron, Charon irritably responds that he hates ". . . being confused with that old horse-man" Chiron, making Percy realise the difference in their spelling (285). The deliberate clarifications about the unique identities of the characters educate readers, freeing them from confusing linguistic similarities.

The unconventional narrative strategies in the select novels include wide range of postmodern metafictional repertoires like the fragmentation of syntax, which forms the specifics of idiomatic language, providing reliability and legitimacy to the narrative. The syntax of the select novels is rudimentary as the novels follow a simplistic narration, engaging readers with an infusion of realistic conversation or dialogical speech style. The transcription has an economy of words, bereft of embellishment, casual and concise, omitting the usage of adjectives, adverbs, and meaningless details, termed as "minimalism". The novels are interspersed with lacunae of everyday language like vocal pauses, "um" and "erm", which are forms of fragmentations in language. Modern expressions like "blah, blah", "bang-up", "oh, man", "oh boy", and "duh", and the phrase "very, very dead" are regularly employed by characters throughout the narrative and do not enhance the meaning of the sentences uttered by the characters, but the inclusion of the realistic usages capture the attention of readers. Elvis Saal in "The Effect of Teenage Language in Health Communication: A Study among English and Sepedi Teenagers" (2011) states that ". . . when you want to reach or attract young people, you should speak to them in their own language, i.e. you should use their 'lingo'", which justifies the inclusion of the words in the novels (84).

The use of curse words, casual colloquial words, and nicknames are relatable conversational features and they indicate the playfulness in language through tongue-in-cheek verbal puns and humour in the select novels. Curse words that the characters use in Latin and ancient Greek provide scope for humour. They say, "*Braccas meas vescimini*!" which in Latin means "Eat my pants!" (Riordan, TLT 166); Ancient Greek phrases like "*Di immortales*" means "oh my god" (70); "*Vlacas*" means idiot (Riordan, TLO 71); "*Stêthi . . .Ô hárma diabolês*!" means "*Stop, Chariot of*

Damnation!" (Riordan, TSoM 29); and "*Erre es korakas*" means "I will have your soul!" (Riordan, TLO 138). The phrase "Go to Tartarus" is used instead of "go to hell" and "what in the Hades" for "what in the hell" (Riordan, TSoM 131). In TSoM, Percy comes across the biological name of a creature that has its root in Latin, which is not provided in the novels, but is mentioned in a simplified and straightforward descriptive term, "really-big-lizard-with-breath-that-blows-stuff-up" (254). Hyphenated works like "warding-off-evil gesture" is common and it meddles with the grammar and syntax of the sentence, which is an example of fragmentation in the select novels (Riordan, TLT 36). Characters in the select novels frequently refer to each other as "crazy" and "jerk", and Demeter specifically calls Hades a "bum" (Riordan, TLO 60).

Gods are colloquially referred to as "dude" and "guy" in the select novels and the words that precede the two are used as adjectives that aptly describe the characters – "wine dude" for Dionysus (Riordan, TTC 61); "wing-footed messenger guy" for Hermes (Riordan, TLT 101); "the green dude" for Poseidon's son Triton (Riordan, TBoL 36); "the tux dude" (Riordan, TLO 215) and "The fire-stealer guy . . . The chained-to-the-rock-with-the-vultures guy?" for Prometheus (217); and "old guy" for Daedalus (Riordan, TBoL 237).

The characters in the select novels are nicknamed in a way that they paint accurate pictures of the gods, offering insight into their playful side as observed through the conversation between characters. Nicknames are common among real-world individuals and a representation of present-day culture and social interaction, enhancing their connection to the novels. The nicknames of gods and their playful banter show readers, the social dynamics between the gods, which is a contrast to their traditional portrayal. Poseidon and Percy are referred to as "seafood" (Riordan,

TBoL 149) and “seaweed brain” (Riordan, TLT 147), respectively, as they are associated with the sea. Dionysus calls Poseidon “Barnacle-Beard”, making fun of his beard that looks like a barnacle, a small creature seen in oceans (132). Percy names his stepfather Gabe Ugliano as “Smelly Gabe” because “The guy [reeks] like moldy garlic pizza wrapped in gym shorts” (30). Tyson calls Grover, “goat boy” as he has the upper body of a human and the lower body of a goat (58). Ares calls Hades “Corpse Breath” as he is the Lord of the Underworld (228). Dionysus is called an “old drunk” as he constantly drinks wine (Riordan, TTC 289). Villainous characters modernise their names – the sorceress Circe uses the acronym “C.C” and the monster Procrustes shortens his name as “Crusty” (Riordan, TLT 277). The examples make it clear that the use of verbal puns deconstruct the standard myths, making it relatable for contemporary readers.

The narrative of the select novels is a deconstructed heroic tale that incorporates satire, parody, sarcasm, and humour to highlight the societal and cultural frameworks that forms the readers’ image of Percy as a hero who parodies the masculine tradition of heroism, portrayed as brave, fierce, and honourable warriors with no sign of weakness. Excerpts from the select novels depict Percy’s humorous, unconventional, sarcastic, and defiant character, who copes with challenging situations in his own distinct way.

The novels begin with the self-deprecating humour of Percy – “I could start at any point in my short miserable life to prove it, but things really started going bad last May . . . I was used to the occasional weird experience, but usually they were over quickly” (Riordan, TLT 2-16). Building up the rising action in TLT, the sympathy of Grover for Percy is described in a witty, dark sense of humour, when Percy says, “He looked at me mournfully, like he was already picking the kind of flowers I’d like best

on my coffin" (28). The humorous trait of Percy is that he trivialises serious situations. As narrated in TTC, when Percy, Thalia, and Zoe are on the way to rescue Artemis and Annabeth, they listen to the song of the Hesperides, which he describes that it sounds ". . . more like the sound track for a funeral" as they advance to the trap that awaits them (Riordan 158).

Percy's confrontation with the terrifying archvillain, Kronos, in Luke's body is a bone-chilling description:

> My fingertips turned blue. Frost gathered on my sword. . . I should have stabbed him right then. I should've brought the point of Riptide down with all my strength. But I was too stunned. . . His eyes opened . . . They were golden . . . where his feet touched the floor, the marble froze like craters of ice. . . I lunged at the thing that used to be Luke, thrusting my blade straight at his chest, but his skin deflected the blow like he was made of pure steel. . . Then he flicked his hand, and I flew across the room . . . (Riordan, TBoL 198-200)

Luke's demeanour instils fear in Percy and does not allow him to perform extraordinary feats. The encounter is portrayed realistically with a dash of humour where he runs for dear life – "There wasn't even any thought to it. No debate in my mind about—gee, should I stand up to him and try to fight again? Nope. I simply ran" (304).

Percy's inquisitiveness and sarcasm is visible when Artemis "pray(s)" that they are not being hunted by a terrible ancient monster, and Percy's tendency to ask unconventional questions is exhibited in a humorous way when he asks the goddess, "Can goddesses pray?" (Riordan, TTC 40). Similarly, when Poseidon expresses

concern about their success in battle to Percy saying, ". . . *my son, pray this works*", Percy says that "I am praying. I'm talking to you, right?" (Riordan, TLO 311).

Percy is purely sarcastic when Chiron, his teacher or "the ex-Mr. Brunner" as he is referred to in the context, corrects his grammar when Percy uses "who" instead of "whom" during their conversation, which brings him to the conclusion that "Once a teacher, always a teacher" (Riordan, TLT 135). The demigod sarcastically comments on Annabeth's neurodiversity as ". . . Annabeth was dyslexic, too. We could've been there all night while she tried to spell Cyclops" (Riordan, TSoM 108).

The witty sarcasm of Percy, reflective of his teenage angst, is expressed through his defiance of the authoritarian attitudes of Dionysus and Hades. On one hand, Mr. D is lethargic on the eve of the impending battle with Kronos, when Percy points out the outrageous behaviour of the gods and urges him to help in the battle saying, "Just because you were sent here as a punishment doesn't mean you have to be a lazy jerk! This is your civilization, too. Maybe you could try helping out a little!" (Riordan, TTC 61). Percy also finds it annoying that Dionysus deliberately calls him with wrong names like Peter Johnson, Jorgenson, Pierre, and Pedro and does not hide his displeasure at Dionysus, retaliating at the god at every chance he gets. Hades, on the other hand is dismissive of the real danger Kronos poses to the world and focuses on exerting personal vengeance on Percy by luring him to the Underworld. Percy is also, unfortunately, caught in the squabble between Hades and Demeter. Bored and impatient of the gods' lack of sense of responsibility, Percy retorts, "Excuse me . . . But if you're going to kill me, could you just get on with it?", displaying his defiance and sarcasm (Riordan, TLO 123).

The novels paint Percy in a mature and superhuman light, wherein his journey and the incidents that make him strong as an individual can be traced through a series

of the dreams and visions of Percy. The dreams serve as a recurring narrative device that offers insight into his inner thoughts and the unfolding events of the story. The dreams can be seen as instances of internal focalisation, as they provide readers with a glimpse into the subconscious mind and the emotional experiences of Percy. In TLT, Percy dreams of Kronos and Luke exchanging information during his quest, which is significant because it reveals crucial information about the plans of the antagonists and allows Percy to stay alert of their evil intentions, preparing him for the impending danger. Percy dreams about a fierce battle between a horse and an eagle, symbolising the fight between Zeus and Poseidon regarding the stolen bolt of Zeus (Riordan, TLT 41). In TSoM, Percy's dream revolves around Grover stranded in the Sea of Monsters, which reflects one of the central quests that Percy has to undertake to free his friend and also to save Camp Half-Blood as it is from the Sea of Monsters that the Fleece has to be extracted. In TTC, Percy's dream portrays Annabeth struggling under the weight of the sky, offering insight into her dire situation and the challenges they will have to face (Riordan 106). In TBoL, Percy dreams of Daedalus and Icarus in the Labyrinth, where he is imprisoned by Minos, which gives him hints about the treacherous nature of Minos and also about the pitiful condition of Daedalus. Percy's vision of the whereabouts of Nico, helps Percy to prepare himself to face Nico whose plan is to kill him. The dreams function as warnings that guide Percy through challenges in his heroic journey and the internal focalisation provides insight into Percy's psyche, allowing readers to experience his emotions, fears, and concerns, serving as a significant aspect of the narrative. However, in TTC, there is an external focalisation where Percy inhabits the body of Hercules and through the sequence, the readers come to know of the connection of Zoe with Hercules, the mythical hero who cheats her after he fulfils his labour with her help, a key point that results in the

growth and understanding of Percy regarding the unfairness that is meted out to the innocent Zoe.

Percy is portrayed in a superhuman light in the select novels when he slays monsters like the Fury, Minotaur, Medusa, Procrustes, Eurytion, the Nemean Lion, and finally Kronos. The encounter with the Fury makes him doubts that his ". . . lunch must've been contaminated with magic mushrooms or something" and if he had ". . . imagined the whole thing?" which refers to Percy's awareness of his own artificiality, jerking the attention of the readers to the fictionality of the novels (Riordan, TLT 14). Similarly, after defeating the Minotaur Percy thinks, "How did I do that? I didn't have time to figure it out" and in the resolution of TTC, Percy witnesses the shape-shifting abilities of Artemis when she fights Atlas, which is described to be an awe-inducing experience for Percy, but he says, ". . . perhaps that was just my fevered brain" (Riordan 269). Dr. Thorn, a disguised mythical creature, Manticore, who uses a walkie-talkie, invites Percy's comment that ". . . a monster using a mobile phone" is ". . . way too modern and creepy" (Riordan, TTC 19). Brian McHale in the book, *Postmodernist Fictions* (2001), states that representations of reality occur when the readers ". . . are made to experience the ineluctable *materiality* of the book; consequently, these fictional worlds, momentarily eclipsed by the real-world object, are forced to flicker in and out of existence" (187). The narrative alters between willing suspension of disbelief and emotional distancing of the readers from the artificiality of the narrative. In the select novels, the reality flickers for readers, jarring them awake and making them aware of its metafictionality when the mortal world is juxtaposed with the mythological world.

The narration of the novels consists of the verbal finesse to tell a story that honours the mythical component of the old tale in a new skin, which positively

informs and educates the young generation about Greek mythology and also delights readers with informal contemporary descriptive details that loom large in the narration. A background to the original tales and the characters of Greek mythology are provided through internal focalisation to help juxtapose the original grandeur of gods, mythological creatures, other mythical personages, and the morbidity and gruesomeness of the Greek myths, with stark contrasting laughter-inducing images, dark humour, wry, and sardonic descriptions which are recurrent in the select novels.

The birth of the Olympians is described as:

> Kronos was the king god . . . Titan . . . And . . . he didn't trust his kids, who were the gods. So, um, Kronos ate them, right? But his wife hid baby Zeus, and gave Kronos a rock to eat instead. And later, when Zeus grew up, he tricked his dad, Kronos, into barfing up his brothers and sisters . . . so there was this big fight between the gods and the Titans . . . and the gods won. (Riordan, TLT 5)

The description is one of the examples of dark humour in the novels as it is a stark contrast of the normal phenomena in the Greek myths where fathers eat their children and children murder their fathers. The grisly tale and its brutality are transformed into a fictitious, hilarious sequence, which eliminates the sense of alienation of the mythical world situated in the mortal world through the narration of Chiron, that:

> Zeus indeed fed Kronos a mixture of mustard and wine, which made him disgorge his older five children, who, of course, being immortal gods, had been living and growing up completely undigested in the Titan's stomach. The god defeated their father, sliced him to pieces with his own scythe, and scattered his remains in Tartarus, the darkest part of the Underworld. (6)

The process of the historification of myths is ". . . to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past . . . In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction", a part of the postmodern revisionism, the Canadian literary theorist, Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 16). It sees the shift from realism to magical realism wherein there is a ". . . blending of history and fantasy" (Lewis 115). In the select novels, as Hutcheon writes, ". . . the conventions of both fiction and historiography are simultaneously used and abused, installed and subverted, asserted and denied" along with blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 5).

Fiction and reality are blended in the select novels as it shines light on the intertextual references to Greek myths, educating young readers about various Greek tales, where they unknowingly grasp knowledge about Greek gods as the myths are introduced in a memorable manner, expressed through witty remarks and humour. In TSoM, the story of the Golden Fleece and its healing power is described in an unsophisticated manner using conversational style, giving the impression that the dialogue between characters is a direct address to the readers. The mythical tale is narrated by Annabeth where she explains that ". . . there were these two children of Zeus, Cadmus and Europa, okay? They were about to get offered up as human sacrifices, when they prayed to Zeus to save them. So, Zeus sent this magical flying ram with golden wool, which picked them up in Greece and carried them all the way to Colchis in Asia Minor" (Riordan, TSoM 86). Annabeth narrates the story, saying that Europa falls off the ram on the way and dies, but that the detail is "not important" as what she wants to stress on is the healing power of the Fleece. However, Percy

responds with a witty remark saying that the death of Europa is a sorry affair and that "It was probably important to her" (87).

References to the birth of gods are made in the novels through the focalisations of Percy, Annabeth, and Luke. Percy remembers that Athena takes birth ". . . from the head of Zeus in full battle armor or something", which is an informal account of the birth of the goddess and "or something" hints that he does not remember the details of the story (Riordan, TBoL 196). Riordan fictionalises the birth of the children of Athena through the focalisation of Annabeth where she confirms that Athena ". . . wasn't born in the normal way. She was literally born from thoughts" (196). The children of the goddess take birth in the same fashion, "When Athena falls in love with a mortal man, it's purely intellectual, the way she loved Odysseus in the old stories. . . Children of Athena are sprung from the divine thoughts of [their] mother and the mortal ingenuity of [their] father. [They] are supposed to be a gift, a blessing from Athena on the men she favors", making the offspring a literal brainchild (196-197). A recount of the birth of Athena is given by Luke, who says that the goddess ". . . was born from Zeus' split skull", making gory imagery (Riordan, TSoM 130).

The novels encompass the mythical references to the rivalry between Athena and Poseidon, which is conveyed through the focalisation of Annabeth in a whimsical manner as she explains to Percy that:

> One time my mom caught Poseidon with his girlfriend in Athena's temple, which is hugely disrespectful. Another time, Athena and Poseidon competed to be the patron god for the city of Athens. Your dad created some stupid saltwater spring for his gift. My mom created

> the olive tree. The people saw that her gift was better, so they named the city after her (Riordan, TLT 75).

An additional intertextual reference is the myth of the princess Andromeda, who is chained to a rock as sacrifice to a sea monster and, thereby, save the populace of her town from the threat of the monster (Hamilton 207). The same is imbued with humour in the novels where Percy notices that Luke's ship, Andromeda, has the statue of the princess tied to its mast. Percy remembers the mythical tale, but not completely, and his humorous head thinks that Andromeda was tied to the rocks because ". . . Maybe she'd gotten too many F's on her report card or something" (Riordan, TSoM 111). The novels also provide the mythical tale of Daedalus and his son Icarus, who are imprisoned by King Minos of Crete as punishment for helping Theseus to kill the Minotaur and eloping with his daughter. There is also a mention of Dedalus killing his nephew Perdix due to the fear that he might become a more brilliant creator than Daedalus.

The novels also provide references to the incestuous relationships of gods, which is one of the most striking details in Greek mythological tales. The same personality traits are inherited by the children of the gods who date the children of the other gods despite being members of the same family, but Riordan makes it humorous as he writes:

> . . . I know some of you might be thinking, aren't all demigods related on the godly side, and doesn't that make dating gross? But the thing is, the godly side of your family doesn't count, genetically speaking, since gods don't have DNA. A demigod would never think about dating someone who had the same godly parent. Like two kids from Athena cabin? No way. But a daughter of Aphrodite and a son of Hephaestus?

They're not related. So it's no problem. (Riordan, TLO 71-72)

The picturisation of gods with no DNA and the loopholes that the demigods find to date their own family members, contribute to the humour in the narration. The description also shines light on the difference in moral standards of both the ancient and the contemporary worlds urges readers to think critically on morality and ethics. The narration in the select novels not only induces amusement, but also demystifies the mythical grandeur of gods, monsters, and other characters of the Greek myths, bridging the gap between ancient mythology and modern readers.

The gods, Hera, Zeus, Poseidon, Persephone, Demeter, Hermes, Athena, Ares, Artemis, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hephaestus, Dionysus, Hestia, and Hades are represented as magnificently divine, through internal focalisation. Some of them are painted in a regal light, some in a fearsome light, and some are described as having different Americanised appearances according to the different contexts in which they appear in the novels. In TBoL, Hera, as seen at Olympus, is ". . . tall and graceful with long hair the colour of chocolate, braided in plaits with gold ribbons. She wore a simple white dress, but when she moved, the fabric shimmered with colors like oil on water" (Riordan 101). In TTC, she is ". . . a beautiful woman with silver hair braided over one shoulder and a dress that shimmered colors like peacock feathers", looking like "a regular mom" who addresses Percy, Annabeth, and Grover, as "dear", and serves them sandwiches and lemonade and chides Grover when he eats napkins instead of using them (Riordan 102).

The appearance of Hera's husband, Zeus, does justice to his role and the lord of the Sky as he is portrayed as sitting on a throne of "solid platinum", wearing a dark blue pinstripe suit with a beard that is ". . . marbled grey and black like storm cloud. His face was proud and handsome and grim, his eyes rainy gray" (Riordan, TLT 339).

During the Battle of Manhattan, he attacks Typhon with thunderbolt and lightning, which exemplifies his regality as a god.

The brother of Zeus, Poseidon, mostly appears as a fisherman or an ordinary man at a beach wearing:

> . . . leather sandals, khaki Bermuda shorts, and a Tommy Bahama shirt with coconuts and parrots all over it. His skin was deeply tanned, his hands scarred like an old-time fisherman's. His hair was black . . . His face had that same brooding look that had always gotten me branded a rebel. But his eyes, seagreen . . . were surrounded by sun-crinkles that told me he smiled a lot, too. (Riordan, TLT 339-340)

In TLO, he is illustrated as ". . . an old man with a bushy white beard and gray hair. His battle armor seemed to weigh him down. He had green eyes and smile wrinkles around his eyes, but he wasn't smiling now" as his realm is under attack and the worn-out appearance matches the weak state of his realm (Riordan, TLO 16-17). Poseidon in the Battle of Manhattan is sketched as a fearsome god who impales Typhon with his Trident (332).

Demeter is described as ". . . a dark-haired goddess in green robes . . . on a throne woven of apple-tree branches" in TTC (Riordan 288). In TLO, she is old and stern with ". . . the same hair and eyes, but looked older and sterner. Her dress was golden, the color of a wheat field. Her hair was woven with dried grasses so it reminded me of a wicker basket. I figured if somebody lit a match next to her, she'd be in serious trouble" (Riordan 60). During the battle she ". . . waved her hand and an entire column of giants turned into a wheat field" (Riordan, TLO 318).

Hermes wears a business suit when he is seated on his throne at Olympus to maintain a formal appearance (Riordan, TTC 288). When he is not at Olympus,

Hermes appears as a ". . . a guy in nylon running shorts and a New York City Marathon T-shirt. He was slim, with salt-and- pepper hair and a sly smile" and his staff, called the caduceus, is modernised as a phone (Riordan, TSoM 98). He also appears as "A middle-aged guy in a postal carrier outfit . . . leaning against the stable door. He was slim, with curly black hair under his white pith helmet, and he had a mailbag slung over his shoulder" (257). In TLO, he is described in his godly appearance, ". . . dressed in his classic outfit of white Greek robes, sandals, and helmet" (179).

Ares is featured as having a brutal appearance, whose presence itself creates agitation among mortals and looks capable of making ". . . pro wrestlers run for Mama" (Riordan, TLT 106). He wears combat boots and is ". . . 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" to hide his eyes where ". . . there was only fire, empty sockets glowing with miniature nuclear explosions" (106-107). He has the most ". . . cruelest, most brutal face [Percy had] ever seen. Handsome, I guess, but wicked-with an oily black crew cut and cheeks that were scarred from many, many fights" (106). During the Battle of Manhattan, Ares displays his rugged behaviour by stabbing Typhon in his nose (Riordan, TLO 332).

Artemis looks like a young girl not more than thirteen years old, ". . . the average age of [her] Hunters, and all maidens for whom [she is] patron, before they go astray" (Riordan, TTC 37). The goddess has "auburn hair gathered back in a ponytail and strange eyes, silvery yellow like the moon. Her face was so beautiful it made [Percy] catch [his] breath, but her expression was stern and dangerous" (26). She has the ability to shapeshift into ". . . a tiger, a gazelle, a bear, a falcon" during the fight with her captor, Atlas (269). She rides on a silver chariot drawn by a reindeer, a myth

that gives way to legend of Santa Claus riding a sleigh (275). Her twin brother, Apollo sports the look of a teenage boy, who drives a red Maserati and wears a ". . . jeans and loafers and a sleeveless T-shirt" (46). He also appears as a homeless man in TTC to help Percy in his quest (99). The twins are portrayed as showering their arrows at Typhon, helping the other gods in defeating the monster by setting its loincloth on fire (Riordan, TLO 174).

Aphrodite is described as breathtakingly beautiful, who takes on the appearance the fancy of the onlookers. When Percy lays eyes on her, he forgets his name, where he is, and even:

> . . . how to speak in complete sentences. She was wearing a red satin dress and her hair was curled in a cascade of ringlets. Her face was the most beautiful [Percy had] ever seen: perfect makeup, dazzling eyes, a smile that would've lit up the dark side of the moon . . . Pick the most beautiful actress you can think of. The goddess was ten times more beautiful than that. Pick your favorite hair color, eye color, whatever. The goddess had that. When she smiled at me, just for a moment she looked a little like Annabeth. Then like this television actress I used to have a crush on in fifth grade. (Riordan, TTC 183-184)

Hephaestus is described as ". . . a huge lump of a man with a leg in a steel brace . . . and a wild brown beard, fire flickering through his whiskers" (Riordan, TTC 287). In TBoL, he is described as wearing:

> . . . a jumpsuit smeared with oil and grime. Hephaestus, was embroidered over the chest pocket. His . . . left shoulder was lower than his right, so he seemed to be leaning even when he was standing up straight. His head was misshapen and bulging. He wore a

> permanent scowl. . . His hands were the size of catcher's mitts
>
> (Riordan 188).

References to the misshapen figure and fire-flickering beard of Hephaestus have been repeated throughout his appearances in the novels. Dionysus, who smells like freshly-pressed grapes is the god of wine, has ". . . a red nose, big watery eyes, and curly hair so black it was almost purple" (Riordan, TLT 62). He wears he a "tiger-pattern Hawaiian shirt" sometimes represents Hestia in the council of the Olympians (133). Dionysus is further comically depicted as a ". . . small, but porky" man, who looks like ". . . those . . . baby angels . . . hubbubs? No, cherubs . . . a cherub who'd turned middle-aged in a trailer park" (62).

Athena is portrayed as "a beautiful grey-eyed woman in an elegant white dress" (Riordan, TTC 288). Hestia is portrayed as a young girl not more than eight or nine years old ". . . with eyes as red as the firelight", who always tends to the hearth and is a reminder of home and family (Riordan, TLO 99). Hades appears ". . . at least ten feet tall, for one thing, and dressed in black silk robes and a crown of braided gold. His skin was albino white, his hair shoulder-length and jet black . . . he radiated power" (Riordan, TLT 309). True to his status of the lord of the Underworld, Hades is seated on his throne, made of ". . . fused human bones, looking lithe, graceful, and dangerous as a panther . . . black armor and a cloak the color of fresh blood. On top of his pale head was the helm of darkness: a crown that radiated pure terror" (309-316). He rides a chariot pulled by horses that are as frightening as him with ". . . their eyes and manes smoldering with fire" (Riordan, TLO 137). His weapon, the helm of darkness, is modernised and modified as a ski cap, which later transforms into a bronze war helmet, allowing ". . . him to become darkness . . . He can melt into shadow or pass through walls. He can't be touched, or seen, or heard. And he can

radiate fear so intense it can drive you insane or stop your heart. Why do you think all rational creatures fear the dark?" (Riordan, TLT 204). It is:

> . . . a crown that radiated pure terror. It changed shape as [Percy] watched—from a dragon's head to a circle of black flames to a wreath of human bones. But that wasn't the scary part. The helm reached into [Percy's] mind and ignited my worst nightmares, [Percy's] most secret fears. [Percy] wanted to crawl into a hole and hide, and [he] could tell the enemy army felt the same. (Riordan, TLO 316)

Hades's wife, Persephone changes her appearance with the changing seasons. During the Battle of Manhattan, she transforms the spears of the monster, dracanae into sunflowers (Riordan, TLO 318). Pan has "enormous" horns and "There was no way he could've hidden those under a hat the way Grover did" (Riordan, TBoL 312). He is described as an old satyr laying on the bed and ". . . his eyes as blue as the sky. His curly hair was white and so was his pointed beard. Even the goat fur on his legs was frosted with gray . . . Around his neck hung a set of reed pipes" (206). Prometheus looks like ". . . he'd been attacked by a small animal— a really, really mad hamster, maybe" (Riordan, TLO 215-216).

The Olympians, except Athena and Hestia are ascribed human-like attributes through playful descriptions like immaturity, hostility, a lack of concern, short temper, engagement in extramarital affairs, playfulness, irreverence, annoyance, jealousy, childishness, sarcasm, sibling rivalries, arrogance, flirtatious, narcissism, unempathetic attitudes, resentment, self-centeredness, laziness, irresponsibility, and a general disdain for demigods stand out in the novels. The characteristic traits make the narrative more engaging as it draws a comparison with the gods and the readers, humanising the larger-than-life figures through a portrayal of their imperfections. The

analysis is a starting point for discussions on ethics and morality that is relevant for both young and adult readers, reiterating the real-world dynamics and the complexities of rivalries and alliances.

The gods have been analysed not only through internal focalisation, but also through external focalisation, which is facilitated through the dialogues of different characters, giving voice to their perspectives and thoughts. Hera behaves like an immature girl and troubles Percy and Annabeth by using them as pawns in the game of her personal vendetta with other gods. When Annabeth opposes the untoward behaviour of the goddess, she challenges the demigod saying, ". . . you will regret this insult, Annabeth. You will regret this very much" (Riordan, TBoL 231). Following the event, the goddess sends cows after Annabeth as revenge and they leave the girl ". . . little presents all over the place—in [their] backyard, on the sidewalk, in the school hallways" and Annabeth had to be careful where she steps (Riordan, TLO 76).

Hera's hostility towards demigods extend to the illegitimate sons of Zeus like Hercules, which is referred to as "that little spat" in the novels. It is crucial to remember that in addition to her indifference towards demigods, she exhibits a similar lack of maternal concern for her own children like Hephaestus, whom she pitches ". . . off Mount Olympus when she [sees his] ugly face" (Riordan, TBoL 128). Her annoyance with her husband, Zeus's extramarital affairs are also made comical and it is mentioned in the novels that to overcome their marital discord, the couple undergoes "excellent marriage counselling sessions" (73). The pattern of neglect and mistreatment of both demigods and her own offspring underscores Hera's often harsh and vengeful character in Greek mythology.

Hera's husband, Zeus, shares his wife's petulant demeanour, often behaves like an angry teenager, who wants to punish Percy due to his displeasure with the

demigod as the god believes that he has stolen his master bolt on behalf of Poseidon and creates heavy rains over Camp Half-Blood and ends up punishing everyone. The arrogance of Zeus is displayed when Percy locates his missing weapon and returns it to him. Instead of acknowledging his mistake in blaming Poseidon and Percy for the theft of the master bolt and expressing gratitude for Percy's honourable deed, Zeus says, "I should have blasted him out of the sky for his impudence" for "Daring to fly through [his] domain" to reach Mount Olympus faster and prevent a war between the gods (Riordan, TLT 341). He also warns, "Do not presume to fly again. Do not let me find you here when I return. Otherwise you shall taste this bolt. And it shall be your last sensation" (343-344).

The instances expose the quick temper and vengeful disposition of Zeus, but also provide a humorous depiction of him and Poseidon, who engage in conflicts that resemble quarrelling children – ". . . The usual nonsense: 'Mother Rhea always liked you best,' Air disasters are more spectacular than sea disasters,' et cetera" (Riordan, TLT 135). Finally, when Zeus is helped by other gods in the Battle of Manhattan, he is forced to thank Hades for his role in the gods' victory and says, "'we are thankful'—he cleared his throat like the words were hard to get out—'erm, thankful for the aid of Hades'" (Riordan, TLO 346). He also hesitantly expresses gratitude to Poseidon and the conversation between the two gods is scripted as playful retorts:

> "And, of course," Zeus continued, though he looked like his pants were smoldering, "we must . . . um . . . thank Poseidon." "I'm sorry, brother," Poseidon said. "What was that?" "We must thank Poseidon," Zeus growled. "Without whom . . . it would've been difficult— "Difficult?" Poseidon asked innocently. "Impossible," Zeus said. "Impossible to defeat Typhon". (346-347)

The irreverence of Poseidon to Zeus is also illustrated comically where Poseidon comments that Zeus ". . . has always had a flair for dramatic exits. I think he would've done well as the god of theater" (Riordan, TLO 344). The sea of god himself has a playful side that is revealed during the Battle of Manhattan when he worries that if Kronos takes over the world, his recently renovated palace, particularly the game room that took six years to finish, will be demolished in an instant by him (310). The humorous observation shows the attachment of Poseidon to his personal luxuries even in the face of a world-threatening crisis. The novels also poke fun at the habit of gods, siring numerous offsprings, when Poseidon introduces his son Triton to his other son Percy through a tongue-in-cheek remark – ". . . this is my son Triton. Er, my other son" (36).

Hades is humorously characterised as a concerned keeper of the Underworld, who worries about the overpopulation in his realm, particularly the "sprawl of the Asphodel Fields" and the necessity to open "subdivisions" to accommodate the influx of the deceased (Riordan, TLT 311). The humorous side of Hades surfaces when he says to his wife that he wishes to kill Percy "just a little bit", which indicates that Hades, like his siblings, is short tempered. In an amusing turn of events, when Nico rebels against Hades, he puts an end to the incident and banishes Nico to his room, instructing, "Go to your room" (Riordan, TLO 125). The dialogue draws a comical parallel to the way mortal parents talk to their children, adding a relatable and amusing touch to the interaction.

Gods not only have disobedient children, but they also have issues with their own parents, which is tinged with sarcasm in the select novels. The sense of humour of Hades extends to his father, the Titan Lord, Kronos, to whom the god remarks, "As

much as I dislike certain upstart demigods, it would not do for Olympus to fall. I would miss bickering with my siblings" (Riordan, TLO 166). He comments that ". . . if there is one thing we agree on—it is that you were a TERRIBLE father", highlighting the complex dynamics in divine families, underscoring the idea that the apple cannot fall far off from the tree as the traits are passed down to their creation: the humans (166).

Hades is not the only god in his realm with family drama. His wife Persephone expresses dissatisfaction with her life in the Underworld and labels it "boring" (Riordan, TLO 282). Her discontentment extends to the affairs Hades has with other women, revealing that goddesses too experience jealousy, which is evident in her comment: "Could we please not talk about that woman?" (281). Persephone is not only discontent in her marriage, but also notably annoyed with her mother, Demeter who scolds her for marrying Hades instead of the god of doctor or lawyers.

Demeter is obsessed with cereals as she is the goddess of agriculture, which is evident when her daughter, Persephone humorously quips that she ". . . would rather fight in the war than eat another bowl of cereal", indicating Persephone's ability to find humour, which makes her a playful character (Riordan, TLO 147). Demeter's impatience extends to Nico when he rebels against Hades, who is infuriated to the extent that he contemplates incinerating the boy. Demeter, adds fuel to the fire saying, "Yes, please . . . Shut [Nico] up" (147). She suggests that Nico be sent for farming in the fields as "Six months behind a plow" is "Excellent character building", emphasising her role as the goddess of agriculture (281). During the Battle of Manhattan her devotion to her domain is once again evident as she complains that Kronos has "No appreciation of agriculture" (166). Although Demeter is a powerful goddess, she is portrayed with childish tendencies reflecting her impulsive and petty

nature, like deliberately causing the wilting of the flowers in the delivery division of the messenger of gods, Hermes (Riordan, TSoM 100). Similar to the other gods in the novels, Hermes displays sarcastic behaviour and passes a sarcastic comment about Athena, saying, "Why they pay her to be the wisdom goddess, I'm not sure" (Riordan, TLO 157). The remark follows Athena's advice to Hermes that during the battle, the demigods must hold fort on their own, "As if [Hermes doesn't] know that", highlighting Hermes's irreverence to Athena's wisdom and their playful rivalry. (157).

Ares, is a sarcastic god, who taunts Percy with statements like, "Why don't I turn you into a prairie dog and run you over with my Harley?" and the question "How would you like to get smashed: classic or modern?" indicate the god's short-tempered and mocking disposition (Riordan, TLT 227-325). He gleefully anticipates Percy's immortality, stating, "That means I can smash him to a pulp as often as I want, and he'll just keep coming back for more. I like this idea" (Riordan, TLO 185). Ares's arrogance and childish behaviour persists to the point where he begrudgingly sends a "thank-you card" to Hades when forced by his mother, Hera.

Artemis calls her twin Apollo as "annoying brother" since provokes her at every chance he gets, which display their playful sibling squabbles. Despite being the patron god of oracles, he speaks in bad riddles and poorly formed haikus like "'. . . *There once was a goddess from Sparta . . . I am so awesome*. That's five syllables!' He bowed, looking very pleased with himself" and it showcases the god's personality which is like that of a typical playful teenager (Riordan, TTC 47). He has a penchant for gothic settings – a ". . . cave in the hills . . . With torches and a big purple curtain over the entrance . . . really mysterious. But inside, a totally decked-out pad with a game room and one of those home theater systems" (Riordan, TLO 370).

His modern habits include wearing his iPod headphones during important meetings and responding non-verbally with a "thumps up" (Riordan, TTC 192). Apollo's flirtatious nature is evident when he flirts with the Hunters of Artemis.

Aphrodite is depicted as equally irreverent as Apollo, with a strong focus on narcissism and an obsession with beauty. When Artemis is kidnapped, Aphrodite dismissively comments, "Oh, Artemis. Please. Talk about a hopeless case. I mean, if they were going to kidnap a goddess, she should be breathtakingly beautiful, don't you think? I pity the poor dears who have to imprison Artemis. Bo-ring!" (Riordan, TTC 122). The portrayal of the goddess highlights her shallow and self-centred character traits, emphasising her fixation on physical appearance and her tendency to make light of serious matters. Aphrodite's husband, Hephaestus, on the other hand is portrayed as having little interest in his physical appearance and is described as "hideous". He is a resentful husband, who finds delight in punishing his wife and her lover for indulging in extramarital affair. The characterisation of the god underscores his less superficial nature and his inclination towards seeking revenge for the betrayal within his marriage.

The most self-centred, playful, and sarcastic god in the novels is unquestionably, Dionysus, who is appointed as the ". . . director of Camp Half-Blood to dry out for a hundred years—a punishment for chasing some off-limits wood nymph" (Riordan, TSoM 50). He boasts of having a pleasing personality – "I simply ooze niceness" (Riordan, TBoL 228). When the god meets Percy for the first time he says, "Oh, I suppose I must say it. Welcome to Camp Half-Blood. There. Now, don't expect me to be glad to see you" (63). Dionysus expresses his disdain for young demigods, for their impudence and their minimalist manner of speaking and mocks Percy saying, "What do they say, these days . . . Do the children say, 'Well, duh!'?"

(Riordan, TLT 70). Dionysus is lazy and irresponsible when Kronos attacks and the whole world is in danger. Instead of taking action, he nonchalantly flips through a wine magazine, claiming that he is a young god and is incapable of tackling the problem (Riordan, TTC 96). His characterisation highlights his self-indulgent and apathetic nature, adding humour to his role in the novels.

The inheritance of the personality traits of gods by their children shows a link between the past and the present. Some of the traits are represented through comical expressions as the kids of Hermes have "sarcastic smiles . . . like they [are] about to drop a firecracker down your shirt" (Riordan, TBoL 49). The children of Ares are good at making allies, but they are ". . . the biggest, ugliest, meanest kids on Long Island, or anywhere else on the planet". Dionysus's kids are good athletes. Demeter's children inherit her "nature skills", and the children of Aphrodite ". . . sat out every activity and checked their reflections in the lake and did their hair and gossiped" (Riordan, TLT 117-118). Their preoccupation with aesthetics is evident when they experience ". . . trouble suiting up their armor without breaking their nails" (Riordan, TTC 55). They employ unconventional strategies during the Battle of Manhattan that include accessorising monsters and spraying perfume on them as they ". . . like, totally hate the smell of Givenchy" (Riordan, TLO 169). Thalia, who is impulsive like her father Zeus, "fry off people's eyebrows" when she gets angry (Riordan, TTC 84). She is an extremely aggressive warrior who does her "*daughter of Zeus* thing" (Riordan, TLO 243), summoning lightning from the sky and burning monsters, but ironically, she is afraid of heights (Riordan, TTC 281). Hephaestus's kids are not "pretty", they are "big and burly", and they work at a metal shop all day (Riordan, TLT 117-118). Charles Beckendorf, the son of Hephaestus is skilled like his father as he ". . . made some seriously ingenius mechanical stuff" (Riordan, TLO 9). He also

shares the rugged exterior of his father that ". . . would make most monsters cry for their mommies" (9). Annabeth is intelligent and creative like her mother and wishes to be a great architect, building structures that live through ages. Even while playing games, she plays ". . . trivia games and other brainiac stuff" and a ". . . huge 3-D sim game where you build your own city, and you could actually see the holographic buildings rise on the display board" (Riordan, TLT 261).

Nico takes on the appearance and the powers of the Lord of the Dead, wearing ". . . an aviator's jacket, black jeans, and a T-shirt with dancing skeletons on it, like one of those Day of the Dead pictures" and a ". . . silver ring shaped like a skull. . ." and the colour black is associated with the appearance of Hades and his realm in the select novels (Riordan, TBoL 360). He also carries a Stygian iron sword, made out of the Stygian Sea of the Underworld (Riordan, TLO 80). He is excited at the prospect of death during the game of Capture of Flag and also expresses that "It would be awesome if we [his team] just, like, resurrected as soon as they were killed", but is disappointed when he learns that it cannot happen (Riordan, TTC 82). As the sons of Poseidon, Percy, Tyson, and the god Nereus share their father's control to breathe underwater. Nereus has an additional ability to shapeshift into sea creatures and Tyson's ability is shown in his skill in mechanics and weaponry and the ability to mimic the voice of others.

Riordan invents humorous methods using comical language to depict ways in which the demigods prank each other that are relatable to readers as they touch upon the theme of competition. When fights break out between the children of Ares and Apollo, the children of Apollo fire arrows at the Ares cabin, using their expertise in archery, which is associated with Apollo. The kids of Apollo "flew over the Ares cabin in a chariot", similar to the Sun chariot of their father (Riordan, TLO 69). In

retaliation, the children of Ares turn the arrows soft and make them bounce off targets. The children of Apollo curse the children of Ares to mimic Apollo's habit of speaking in riddles as he is the patron god of the Oracle, known to speak in cryptic language. A child of Ares shouts in frustration:

> *"Curse me, eh? I'll make you pay!*
>
> *I don't want to rhyme all day!"* (69)

The playful exchanges among the demigods add humour and light-heartedness to their interactions, even amidst conflicts.

The novels employ a consistent jocular narration in the depiction of monsters and antagonistic characters that are originally portrayed as formidable figures in the myth as well as in the novels, but transformed using comical descriptions. They are given different dimensions as traced through internal and external focalisations, but are predominantly portrayed in plain humorous language. In the novels, the monsters and the villain, Luke defy the traditional stereotypes that they are attributed with, in Greek mythology, where they are typically portrayed as unequivocally evil characters. Some of the ancient monsters are created as a result of the egoistic attitudes of gods and their interference with the lives of mortals. The monsters become a menace as they seek to take revenge on the gods, who in turn try to find a way to destroy them, mostly using heroes, which are recreated in the novels. The novels also highlight that the negligence of gods urge the monsters and Luke to turn bitter in life.

The select novels pave way for the ironical ". . . questioning [of] the idealism of the gods, and then bestowing of humanity on the monsters", which makes the narrative "doubly postmodern" (Laszkiewicz 25). The diverse representation allows a nuanced portrayal of characters that resonates with the contemporary readership as it reflects the morality of the real-world individuals that may not fit into the binary of

"good" and "evil". The subversion of the stereotypical dichotomy adds depth and complexity to the villainous and monstrous characters in the novels that are humanised through their humorous depiction. The novels have an inclusive and open narrative space, which allows the representation of a wider range of perspectives and multiple truths, increasing the relatability of the readers with thought-provoking characters.

Luke, one of the main villains in the novels, as viewed through internal focalisation is comically described as ". . . an evil male model, showing off what the fashionable college-age villain [wears] to Harvard" (Riordan, TSM 125). Despite being a villain, the novels offer a peek into Luke's life, and the reason why he runs away from home and strays into a negative path is due to parental negligence. Luke's father Hermes does not take care of him, which is sarcastically expressed in the novels as – "The Greek gods don't exactly show up for their kids' basketball games" (Riordan, TLO 34). Luke's mother is mentally unstable and displays bouts of insanity, due to which he does not get proper motherly attention. His eventual alliance with the archvillain, Kronos makes him powerful beyond measure, but at the cost of his soul. When he tries to attack Percy under the possession of Kronos, though extremely powerful, he is easily distracted by the "hairbrush" that Percy's friend, Rachel throws at him to save Percy, and Luke does not deflect it or attack the weak demigods like villains usually do, rather comically yells, "Ow" (Riordan, TBoL 201).

The minor villains and monsters in the novels are introduced through a sequence of intertextual references with comical attributes. The sequences provide internal and external focalisations emphasising that some deserve sympathy like the gorgon, Medusa, who appears modern like a ". . . tall Middle Eastern woman . . . [wearing] a long black gown that covered everything but her hands, and her head was

completely veiled. Her eyes glinted behind a curtain of black gauze . . . Her coffee-coloured hands looked old, but well-manicured and elegant" (Riordan, TLT 172). The description of her sophisticated appearance is disrupted by the comical comment of Percy, that he ". . . imagined she was a grandmother who has once been a beautiful lady" (172). The sequence is followed by Medusa's lamentation of her withered beauty, which is an unusual turn in the novels when compared to the Greek myths that portray the monsters in a fearsome and loathsome light. Medusa remembers the "terrible story" of her transformation which is ". . . not one for children. . ." (176). It is an intertextual reference to the Greek myths, which provides insight into how Medusa is turned from a "beautiful woman" into a gorgon as a cruel punishment by "The Gray-Eyed one . . . the cursed Athena", who is infuriated at Medusa and Poseidon's courtship inside the temple of the goddess. Medusa eventually turns vengeful towards the goddess and wishes to turn Annabeth into a statue and
". . . crush her statue to dust" as "She is [Athena's] daughter (180).

The tragic tale is recounted comically in the novels as ". . . a bad woman was jealous of me, long ago, when I was young. I had a … a boyfriend, you know, and this bad woman was determined to break us apart. She caused a terrible accident" (Riordan, TLT 176). Medusa's terrible fate subjects her to eternal loneliness and laments, saying that "My sisters stayed by me. They shared my bad fortune as long as they could, but eventually they passed on. They faded away . . . and Aunty Em is alone. I have only my statues. This is why I make them, you see. They are my company. . . I alone have survived, but at a price. Such a price" (176). The tale is narrated through Percy's focalisation and Medusa's point of view, which induces the sympathy of the readers for the monster and highlights the unfairness inflicted by Athena on Medusa. The unfairness of the subject is turned into a light-hearted one,

when Medusa wishes to kill Annabeth, but she makes a sarcastic comment to Percy, saying: “But you, dear Percy, you need not suffer” as she is a little less indignant towards Percy, for he is Poseidon’s son (180). Annabeth confirms the same and tells Percy that “Medusa wanted to slice [Annabeth] up, but she wanted to preserve [Percy] as a nice statue. She’s still sweet on [Percy’s] dad” (185).

The manipulation and interference of gods in the lives of mortals is visible in the illustration of the mythical tale of the bear-like humans Agrius and Oreius (as conceived through external focalisation and Luke’s point of view), the supporters of Kronos, who are resentful monsters born due to the games of the gods. It is elucidated in the novels that the mother of the mythical creatures is ordered by Aphrodite “. . . to fall in love. She refused and ran to Artemis for help. Artemis let her become one of her maiden huntresses, but Aphrodite got her revenge. She bewitched the young woman into falling in love with a bear. When Artemis found out, she abandoned the girl in disgust. . . The girl’s twin sons . . . Agrius and Oreius, have no love for Olympus” (Riordan, TSoM 126).

Descriptions of some villains and monsters in the novels are not worth any sympathy like Tantalus (viewed through internal focalisation), a villainous character, who begets the wrath of the gods in Greek mythology, banished to Tartarus by Zeus, and subjected to eternal hunger and thirst for killing his own son, cooking him, and serving it to the gods. In the select novels, Tantalus is picturised as the activities director at Camp Half-Blood, true to his image of a prisoner in mythology, but is modernised as “. . . a pale horribly thin man in a threadbare orange prisoner’s jumpsuit. The number over his pocket read 0001. He had blue shadows under his eyes, dirty fingernails, and badly cut gray hair, like his last haircut had been done with a weed whacker” (Riordan, TSoM 58). Millennia of punishment does not weaken

Tantalus's spirit of trying to consume something and he chases "breakfast pastries around the stands, every once in a while yelling, 'Everything's under control! Not to worry!'" (83).

Not all monsters are prisoners. Kampe, a terrifying female monster, that serves as a prison guard in the depths of Tartarus, is viewed through internal focalisation. Kampe is:

> . . . sort of like a centaur, with a woman's body from the waist up. But instead of a horse's lower body, it had the body of a dragon—at least twenty feet long, black and scaly with enormous claws and barbed tail. Her legs looked like they were tangled in vines . . . they sprouted snakes, hundreds of vipers darting around, constantly looking for something to bite. The woman's hair were also made of snakes, like Medusa's . . . around her waist, where the woman part met the dragon part, her skin bubbled and morphed, occasionally producing the heads of animals—a vicious wolf, a bear, a lion, as if she was wearing a belt of ever-changing creatures. (Riordan, TBoL 110)

The monster is tagged "weirdest" instead of horrific to include an element of playful exaggeration, inviting the readers to find amusement in unusual situations. The creature is also given a humorous image covered in ice-cream thrown at it by Tyson while he is chased by the monster during his expedition into the Labyrinth with Percy, Annabeth, and Grover (120).

Monsters like the Laistrygonian giants, Sphinx, Minotaur, Polyphemus, Geryon, and Eurytion are humorously described through internal focalisation with modernised appearances. The eight-foot Laistrygonian giants are menacing figures of Greek mythology, modernised with amusing details as having hairy tattooed arms

with snakes, hula women, and Valentine hearts. Naming of the giants as Joe Bob, Marrow Sucker, Skull Eater and a mention of the diet that includes French fries, enhance humour in the novels (Riordan, TSoM 13). The Sphinx is devoid of its mythical regalty and is modernised with hair ". . . tied back in a tight bun and she wore too much makeup" (181). The mythical monster has a reputation of challenging people for their intelligence and in the novels it is given a comical proof of intelligence where it wears ". . . a blue badge pinned to her chest . . .: THIS MONSTER HAS BEEN RATED EXEMPLARY!" (181). Similarly, in the novels, the Sphinx uses a grading machine to assess answers in a formal manner, which is an exaggeration. When Annabeth, Percy, Tyson, and Grover encounter the monster in the Labyrinth, Tyson destroys the machine, causing the Sphinx to cry, "My grading machine . . . I can't be exemplary without my test scores!", which adds humour and irony to the narrative (185).

The Minotaur looks like:

> . . . something from the cover of Muscle Man magazine—bulging biceps and triceps and a bunch of other 'ceps, all stuffed like baseballs under vein-webbed skin. He wore no clothes except underwear-I mean, bright white Fruit of the Looms-which would've looked funny, except that the top half of his body was so scary. Coarse brown hair started at about his belly button and got thicker as it reached his shoulders. 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, TLT 50)

Percy calls it, “Ground beef”, adding a comical touch to the fearsome monster of the Greek mythology (53).

Polyphemus, the mythical Cyclops, as observed through internal focalisation, wears “. . . a faded purple T-shirt that said WORLD SHEEP EXPO 2001” due to his love for the man-eating sheep that he affectionately calls “sheepies” and names one of them as Einstein, after the physicist, and another as Hasenpfeffer, a famous delicious Dutch dish, but uses the sheep for meat (Riordan, TSoM 211). Polyphemus has an “. . . enormous milky eye, scarred and webbed with cataracts. If he wasn’t completely blind, he had to be pretty darn close” due to which the Cyclops, an otherwise scary monster of the Greek myths is picturised in a humorous manner where he mistakes Grover for a female Cyclops and expresses the desire to marry him (72-116). Polyphemus is ultimately defeated by Tyson and the demigods, Percy, Annabeth, Clarisse, and the Cyclops is painted comically as he makes “. . . chicken wing motions that do nothing to help him fly as he tumbled into the chasm” (200).

Geryon, the mythical giant with one head and three bodies is described in the novels as having a comical appearance with “. . . a black pencil moustache like villains have in old movies” (Riordan, TBoL 139). His three torsos are:

> . . . connected at the shoulders, with a few inches in between. His left arm grew out of his left chest, and the same on the right, so he had two arms, but four armpits, if that makes any sense. The chests all connected into one enormous torso, with two regular very beefy legs, and he wore the most oversized pair of Levis I’d ever seen. His chests each wore a different color Western shirt—green, yellow, red, like a stoplight. I wondered how he dressed the middle chest, since it had no arms. (139)

Geryon's ranchman, Eurytion is humorously characterised as a:

> . . . huge guy with stark white hair, a straw cowboy hat, and a braided white beard—kind of like Father Time, if Father Time went redneck and got totally jacked. He was wearing jeans, a DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS T-shirt, and a denim jacket with the sleeves ripped off so you could see his muscles. On his right bicep was a crossed-swords tattoo. He held a wooden club about the size of a nuclear warhead, with six-inch spikes bristling at the business end. (135-136)

Monsters like the Nemean Lion, sirens, harpies, Charybdis, Echidna, and Procrustes are comically depicted through internal focalisation without modernisation in appearance. The Nemean Lion is given the traditional portrayal in the novels with no modernisation in the appearance, but the manner in which it is defeated is modernised. The lion is defeated by Percy who tosses a food pouch into the its mouth and he – ". . . charged, and as the lion lept to intercept me, I chunked a space food pouch into its maw—a chunk of cellophane-wrapped, freeze-dried strawberry parfait. The lion's eyes got wide and it gagged like a cat with a hairball" (Riordan, TTC 144-145). Percy reflects on the unappetising taste of the snack – "I couldn't blame it. I remembered feeling the same way when I had tried to eat space food as a kid. The stuff was just plain nasty". Percy's friend Zoe takes advantage of the situation and fires arrows into the lion's mouth that kills it (144-145). The Sirens are not modernised, but are described in a humorous manner, saying that it ". . . didn't look like they'd been feasting on Monster Donuts" (Riordan, TSoM 195).

Flesh eating harpies clean the kitchen in Camp Half-Blood, wash utensils with ". . . lava instead of water, to get that extra-clean sparkle and kill ninety-nine point nine percent of all germs. . ." (Riordan, TSoM 85). Charybdis is described as "an

orthodontist's nightmare" with ". . . bad teeth alignment . . . and she'd done nothing for centuries but eat without brushing after meals" (160). Echidna, the fearsome Greek mythological monster with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a snake is humorously confused for an anteater by Percy, which infuriates the monster. In a comedic contrast, the terrifying monster, Echidna is portrayed as calling her son, Chimera as "sonny". Procrustes is ". . . a guy who looked like a raptor in a leisure suit" (Riordan, TLT 280). He shortens his name as Crusty, a change he adopts to blend in with the current time and says, ". . . who can pronounce Procrustes? Bad for business. Now 'Crusty,' anybody can say that" (280).

The young counterparts of monsters find mention in the select novels. In TBoL, Percy and Annabeth encounter the sea demons, Telekhines, described through internal focalisation, which are ancient monsters that side with Kronos in the Titanomachy, the first war between the Titans and the gods. The intertextual mythical tale of the Telekhines is mentioned in a humorous way in the novels, where an older Telekhine conducts an orientation class and screens a film for the young Telekhines in which the young ones are taught that "As a young sea demon matures . . . changes happen in the monster's body. You may notice your fangs getting longer and you may have a sudden desire to devour human being" (Riordan, TBoL 199). The young ones are also taught to harbour revenge against the gods, especially Zeus because he "'. . . is evil!' . . . 'He cast us into Tartarus just because we used magic'" despite having cast the god's finest weapons (134). The external focalisation through Annabeth's point of view clarifies that the ". . . telekhines betrayed the gods" as "They were practicing dark magic . . . Zeus banished them to Tartarus" (136).

Monsters are not necessarily outsiders. Some are the offsprings of gods and Titans, like Anteus, who is a fifteen feet tall terrifying giant with a red skin, tattooed

in “blue wave designs” is nullified with a comparison to a “sumo wrestler” as he wears only a loincloth (Riordan, TBoL 257). Anteus is the greatest wrestler according to the Greek myths, but in the select novels he loses a wrestling match with Percy, which is comically described as, “Anteus tried to slip back to the ground, but his butt stayed suspended by his loincloth. He had to hold on to the other chains with both hands to avoid getting flipped upside down” (266). Chiron, son of the Titan Kronos, is neither a villain nor a monster and is given a humorous description to add a playful element to his character in the novels. He wraps his tails in curlers to make it stay curled, which he flicks back and forth, when nervous (Riordan, TLO 313).

The novels feature humorous characterisations for mythical creatures that are neither monstrous nor friendly like the Charon, Gray Sisters, Fury, Fates, and Ladon. Charon, the ferryman of the Underworld is modernised as “. . . tall and elegant, with chocolate-colored skin and bleached-blond hair shaved military style. He wore tortoiseshell shades and a silk Italian suit that matched his hair. A black rose was pinned to his lapel under a silver name tag” (Riordan, TLT 284). His portrayal shows that he is extremely conscious of his appearance, but to maintain the elite look is an expensive task and Charon is unhappy that he has not received a pay rise in three thousand years (287). The three sisters who share a single eye in Greek mythology, called Grey Sisters are portrayed to be fighting for the eye, which each of the three take turns to use in the novels. The sister named, Wasp smacks Anger, the one who is currently using the eye on the back and “There was a sickening pop and something flew out of Anger’s face. Anger fumbled for it, trying to catch it, but she only managed to bat it with the back of her hand. The slimy green orb sailed over her shoulder, into the backseat, and straight into [Percy’s] lap” (Riordan, TSoM 31). One of the three Furies of the Underworld look “. . . as if somebody has spray-painted her

face with liquid Cheetos" (Riordan, TLT 9). The Fates spin huge socks ". . . leaving [Percy wondering] who they could possibly be for—Sasquatch or Godzilla" (25-26). The mythical serpent, Ladon's ". . . heads lay curled in a big spaghetti-like mound on the grass . . ." (Riordan, TTC 254).

Argus, the hundred-eyed mythical character about whom the Roman post, Ovid writes in *Metamorphoses* (1987) and Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* (1991) is portrayed as the security guard at Camp Half-Blood as he has several eyes. His comical descriptions include ". . . one blue eye on the back of his neck winked at [Percy]" (Riordan, TLT 159). The hundred handed mythical giant, Hekatonkheires named Briares is a friendly mythical creature, who is humorously presented through internal focalisation. Briares ". . . wiped his nose with five or six hands. . . Other hands were scratching at the cement floor for no apparent reason. . . Others were playing rock, paper, scissors. A few others were making ducky and doggie shadow puppets against the wall" and when Tyson asks him for an autograph, Briares responds "Do you have one hundred pens?" (Riordan, TBoL 114-115). The mythical architect and craftsman, Daedalus is picturised as a man who takes on different bodies and has lived undetected through millennia, but no matter how many bodies he changes, he is recognised with the permanent mark his mother Athena had stamped on his neck as punishment for the murder of his nephew, Perdix who is as brilliant as Daedalus.

Humour in the novels includes descriptions through internal focalisation of the newly invented characters like the old and the new Oracle, Tyson, and Grover. The old Oracle is scary and looks like:

> . . . the most gruesome memento of all: a mummy. Not the wrapped-in-cloth kind, but a human female body shriveled to a husk . . . The skin

> of her face was thin and leathery over her skull, and her eyes were glassy white slits . . . she'd been dead a long, long time. Looking at her sent chills up my back. And that was before she sat up on her stool and opened her mouth. A green mist poured from the mummy's mouth, coiling over the floor in thick tendrils, hissing like twenty thousand snakes. (Riordan, TLT 140)

When the Oracle calls forth to Percy and asks what he desires, he is left thinking, ". . . *No thanks, wrong door, just looking for the bathroom*" (140). The spirit of the Oracle, shifts to Rachel, considered to be the new Oracle, who appears to be a normal girl and not as frightening as the other Oracle. She worries that someone might

". . . ask what's on the next math test and [she starts] spouting a prophecy in the middle of geometry class? The Pythagorean theorem shall be problem two . . . Gods, that would be embarrassing" (Riordan, TLO 380).

Innocence and nervousness of the characters, Tyson and Grover have been humorously illustrated in the novels. Tyson, the young Cyclops, is asked by Zeus as to what he desires in exchange for his chivalrous role in the success of the battle against Kronos, for which he replies, "'Stick!' . . . showing his broken club. 'Very well,' Zeus said. 'We will grant you a new, er, stick. The best stick that may be found'" (Riordan, TLO 183).

Grover's innocence is mentioned in the novels with his consistent preoccupation with food even while he is unconscious after the attack of the Minotaur when he groans, "'Food', and [Percy] knew there was hope". He chews on his shirt when he is nervous (Riordan, TLT 48) and faints when Dionysus promotes him as a lord of the Wild, which is a humorous depiction of his nervousness (Riordan, TLO 348). He is also witty like Percy while he is a hostage and is about to be eaten by

Polyphemus as he warns the Cylcops saying, “You don’t want to eat me raw. You’ll get E coli and botulism and all sorts of horrible things. I’ll taste much better grilled over a slow fire. With mango chutney! You could go get some mangoes right now, down there in the woods. I’ll just wait here” (Riordan, TSoM 207).

Modernisation of the mythological world adds a touch of humour to the novels. When Daedalus, the legendary architect and craftsman of Greek mythology is sent to the Underworld after his death, his life is depicted as peaceful and productive unlike the other souls in the realm. The judge of the Dead, Minos, “‘. . . wanted to boil him in cheese fondue for eternity’ as punishment for the deeds that Daedalus commits while he is alive, but Hades uses the opportunity to build “. . . overpasses and exit ramps in Asphodel for all time. It’ll help ease the traffic congestion”, which makes “. . . the old guy . . . pretty happy . . . He’s still building. Still creating. And he gets to see his son and Perdix on the weekends” (Riordan, TBoL 360).

The modernisation of the Greek characters in the select novels reiterates Gary Wolfe’s first principle of fantasy, which is the criterion of the impossible (Wolfe, 1-2). The second principle for the study of fantasy according to Wolfe’s phraseology, is the criterion for a cohesive Secondary World with:

> . . . a strategy or strategies by which the reader will be able to connect with, be able to understand, and be able to decode any meaning inherent in the story set in that Secondary World and also decode that Secondary World itself. There must be enough of the familiar, the mimetic, within the story so that the readers can understand the nature of the unfamiliar, the fantastic. (Sullivan 281)

The Secondary World in the select novels is a blend of two worlds, the mortal and the mythological, the creation of which abides by the criteria put forth by Gary

Wolfe. Riordan combines the elements of fantasy or the impossible in the worlds, as Wolfe puts it, with familiar elements of the contemporary world to provide an explanation as to why America is the heart of the Greek civilisation. The explanation is revealed to the readers through Chiron's elucidation:

> Look at [America's] symbol, the eagle of Zeus. Look at the statue of Prometheus in Rockefeller Center, the Greek facades of your government buildings in Washington. I defy you to find any American city where the Olympians are not prominently displayed in multiple places . . . America is now the heart of the flame. It is the great power of the West. And so Olympus is here. And we are her. (Riordan, TLT 73)

The narrative world of the select novels is built around the familiarity of the readers' reality. The novels develop a microcosm, "a world within a world" (Da Sylva 8), facilitating worldbuilding in which ". . . both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside" (Rohy 48). Microcosms in the narrative world bend and break realism and the laws of nature and physics. It consists of the real world of the author and the readers, the mortal world, the mythological world, and Camp Half-Blood.

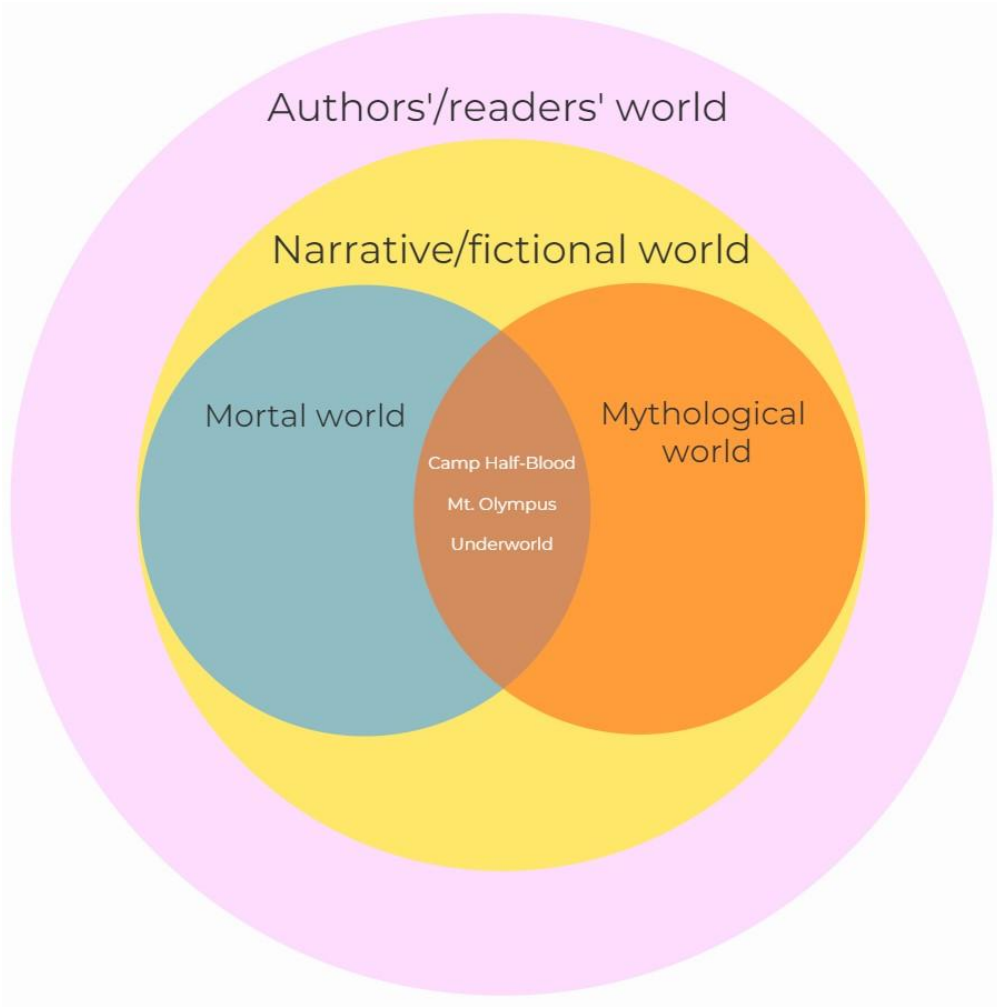

Fig. 1. Authors'/Readers' World

The author's world, ". . . corresponds to the microcosm that the entire series is based on: the imaginary secret presence of magic within a world aiming to mimic the world of the reader—which, in a way, becomes a macrocosm" (Da Sylva 10). The expansion and contraction of Percy's world is identifiable as Riordan reveals the mechanics of the narrative world and takes him through its different spheres. Riordan builds the mortal world, ". . . symbiotic with the real modern world", creating the illusion for the reader that the story happens in a world, which even though imaginary, is similar to their own (Byatt). The mortal world is coextensive with the mythological world, which is located in the interstices of the former and works hard not to draw the attention of the mortal world unto itself. As a result, the magic of the mythological

world is not apparent in the mortal world, but it sharpens the explanatory sense of the mortals, forcing them to see magical phenomena with a logical explanation. The mortals' perception of normality and the norms and explanations in accordance with which they conduct their lives, are to a very large extent the creation of the mythical world. It is not the mortals, who determine the condition of their world but the mythical characters who do it in a benign and mortal-friendly fashion, because the gods have direct influence on the mortals and their world.

The entity that aids in the logical perception of mythical phenomena in the mortal world is Mist, which acts as a camouflage and safeguards the mythical world from the mortal world by allowing access to only those who belong to it, rendering supernatural occurrences that include gods, monsters, magical artefacts, and locations as mundane. The Mist has a self-explanatory description in TLT where Chiron says that ". . . *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" (Riordan 155). The select novels enlist sequences of the effect of the Mist on mortals as news reports, where them being ignorant of the supernatural presence in their world, alter supernatural occurrences of large-scale impact to fit into their logic. The missing of Zeus's master bolt in TLT, which rakes the fury of the god, reflected in the mortal world as "weird", "freak weather" all across New York state. News channels report that New York witnesses ". . . massive snow storms, flooding, wildfires from lightning strikes" and an ". . . unusual number of small planes that had gone down in sudden squalls in the Atlantic . . ." (8-16).

The Minotaur's attack on Percy that leads to the wreckage of the car in which he and his mother Sally travel, is reported in the newspaper as, "Mother and son had

gone for a weekend vacation to Montauk, but left hastily, under mysterious circumstances" with signs of blood near the car wreck, but no sign of the missing people (Riordan, TLT 128). The only logical explanation given is by Sally's husband, Gabe Ugliano, who claims that Percy must be the reason for the disappearance of Sally as he has displayed violent tendencies in the past. However, the police neither confirm, nor rule out "foul play" and ". . . urge anyone with information to call the following toll-free crime-stoppers hotline" (128-129). Similarly, the ruckus that is caused during Percy's quest for the lightning bolt with Grover and Annabeth is reported in the mortal news as, "*Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson, wanted for questioning in the Long Island disappearance of his mother two weeks ago, is shown here fleeing from the bus where he accosted several elderly female passengers . . . Based on eyewitness accounts, police believe the boy may be traveling with two teenage accomplices*" (197). Percy's sword, a mythical artefact, is disguised as a gun-like article by a mystical illusion in CCTV footages and the news forums in the country debate if Percy is ". . . a terrorist, or perhaps the brainwashed victim of a frightening new cult?" and host discussions with child psychologists to make sense of the recent news flash (275).

Percy's eventual encounter with Ares in the beach at Montauk becomes a news flash. As the mortals cannot be told the truth about the reality of the incident, Percy spins a story to the news reports that the series of events that he has been found involved in is because ". . . a crazy kidnapper . . . (a.k.a. Ares)" abducts Percy and his friends ". . . and [brings them] across country on a ten-day odyssey of terror" (Riordan, TLT 334-335). Based on Percy's story, the newscasts come to a conclusion that "Poor little Percy Jackson [isn't] an international criminal after all. [He causes] a commotion on that Greyhound bus in New Jersey trying to get away from his captor

. . . Finally, brave Percy Jackson . . . [steals] a gun from his captor in Los Angeles and [battles] him shotgun-to-rifle on the beach" (334-335).

The news broadcast two more incidents of which one is in TBoL when Percy escapes from Telekhines in Mount St. Helens, which is reported to be a volcanic eruption, and the second is in TLO where Zeus's lightning streaks during the Battle of Manhattan, is reported as a structural failure caused by storms (Riordan 335). The responsibility of solving the "mortal dilemma" falls on Hermes as it is his ". . . job to monitor what the mortals are saying, and if necessary, help them make sense of what's happened" (Riordan, TLO 356). He is sure that the mortals will """. . . put this down to a freak earthquake or a solar flare. Anything but the truth"" as they have a remarkable gift to ". . . fit things into their version of reality" (Riordan, TLT 155).

In the mythical world, magic is apparent and it is manifested with no causal explanations. The narration of the mythological world in the novels is interspersed with reality, mentioning real, historical, and geographical elements. Events of historic significance like World War II have been fictionalised and subverted as ". . . a fight between the sons of Zeus and Poseidon on one side, and the sons of Hades on the other" (Riordan, TLT 113-114). Historical figures are introduced in the novels to create a blend of history and fantasy where Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly solo over the Atlantic Ocean is re-imagined as the daughter of Zeus. Harriet Tubman, an American abolitionist and social activist, believed to have created the Underground Railroad, is given a magical twist by suggesting that she is a daughter of Hermes, who used mortals to build the railroad thinking that they might see through the Mist in the Labyrinth if they ever get lost ("Harriet Tubman Biography"). Houdini, the famous escape artist is depicted in the novels as one of the very few to escape the depths of Tartarus (Riordan, TLT 272). Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who singlehandedly

changed the course of the American Civil Wars is re-imagined as a demigod. William H. Seaward, a New York governor, is mentioned as having mythical lineage as he is portrayed as the son of Hebe, aka Ganymede, one of the Grey Sisters and the cupbearer for the gods at Mt. Olympus.

The worldbuilding of the select novels stands out, as geographical boundaries of the mortal and the mythical world are interspersed and visualised using fictional maps to enhance the narration. The introduction of ". . . fictive maps, dictionaries, diagrams, quotations, genealogical trees, illustrations, and many other types of paratexts" (Maj 88) help to build a relatable fictional world ". . . and that is why it is typical for books of this kind to open with a map, or a whole set of maps" (qtd. in Hofel 32). Apart from worldbuilding, illustrations in form of geographical maps ". . . encourage the reader's imagination. At the same time, applied to novels for children, this feature makes them resemble more books for adults than children" (Hofel 213).

The maps in the select novels are introduced in the second book, TSoM and it compensates the gaps left by vocabulary, giving the fictional world, unity, and consistency.

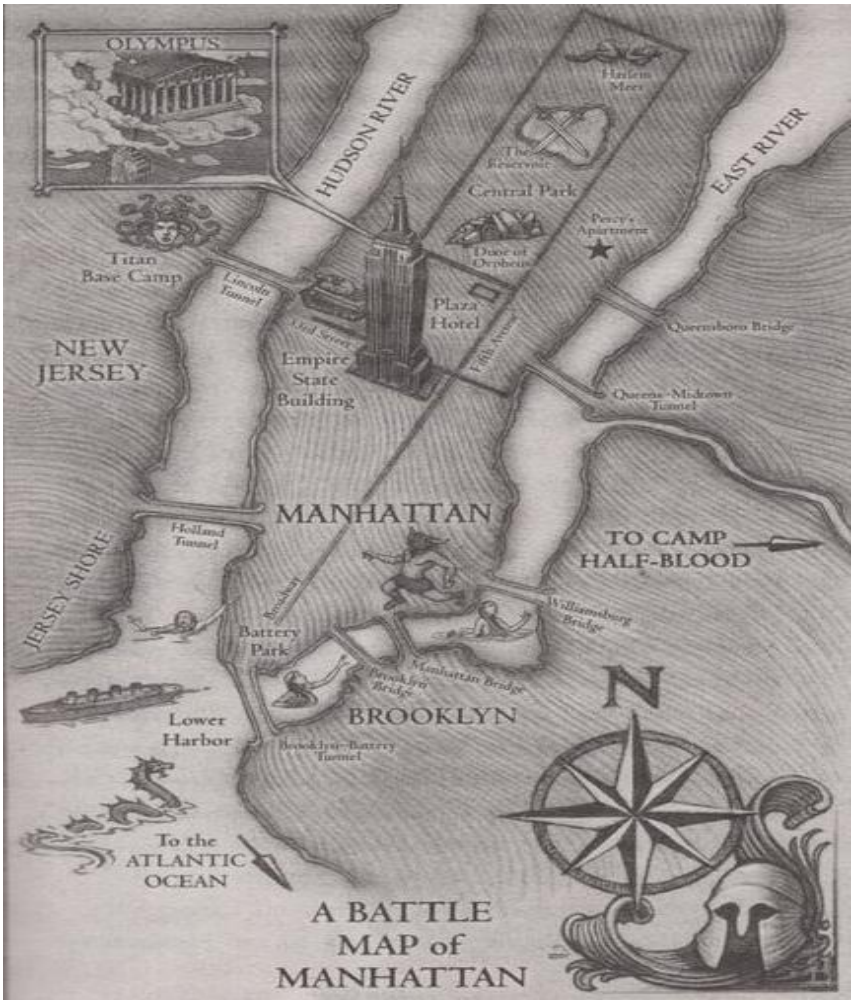

Fig. 2. Rick Riordan, *A Battle Map of Manhattan*, *The Last Olympian*. Disney-Hyperion, 2011.

The combination of ". . . two inherently different modes of representation—verbal and visual—the relations between which are always to some extent more or less dialogical", where words and pictures reflect each other, arise from the tendency to parody reality and convey a dialogue to the readers (McCallum 141). The parody does not include a reproduction of events of the real world in the fictional world of the novels, but present the reflections of the actual world in fiction.

Authors may assume the liberty to create worlds with realistic representations despite its clashes with the natural laws of the real world, but the impossibility of the creation of such a world must be logically explicated. The unique set of laws and

principles of the select novels makes the worldbuilding plausible within the system of the narrative world. One of the perfect examples of the functioning of the mythological world in accordance with its unique laws is regarding the gods' lack of omnipotence despite being extremely powerful beings. They are not allowed inside each other's territories without permission ". . . except by invitation" because it is an ". . . ancient rule" (Riordan, TLT 145). Demigods are an exception, as they ". . . have certain privileges. They can go anywhere, challenge anyone, as long as they're bold enough and strong enough to do it. No god can be held responsible for a hero's actions" (145). The rules have loopholes, allowing the gods to manipulate mortals and have their way without direct interference. The idea is expressed through Chiron's question, "Why do you think the gods always operate through humans?", which is clarified by the author by including conversations in the novels that are self-explanatory. It avoids confusions on the part of the readers regarding why the story must be told the way it is told, satisfying the "fantastic realism" of the novels (145).

The formulation of the fictional world in the select novels is the result of the author's liberty. The fictional world in the novels is modernised by blending the authors'/readers' world with the narrative world that comprises of both the mortal and the mythical worlds, making use of the illusion of the reality of cultural institutions, traditions, and social practices of the current times through magical realism. The novels are a "self-coherent narrative" with a structure of "narrative desire" where occurrences, which are bound by the logic of the secondary world are made possible.

An analysis of the functioning of the mythological world has been undertaken as most actions occur in the mythological world. Readers of the novels are introduced to the workings of the mythological world through the institution, Camp Half-Blood,

the parallel of a mortal school in the mythological world, which is modelled after a summer camp.

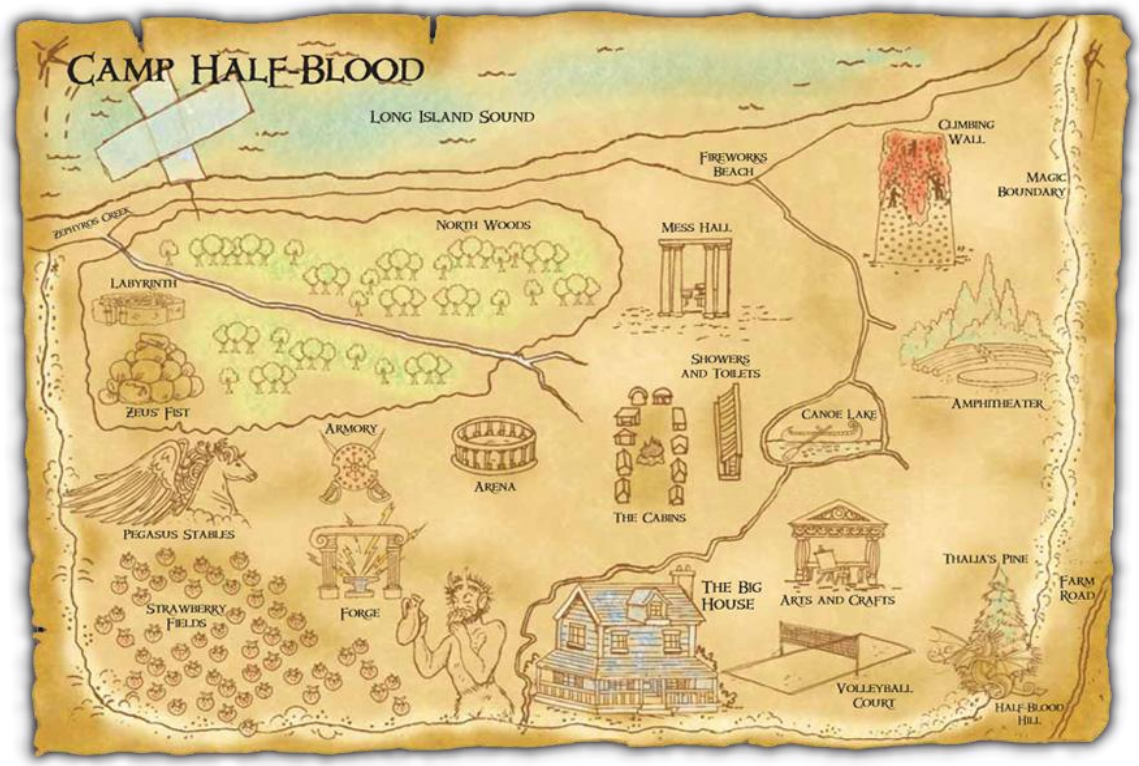

Fig. 3. Rick Riordan, *A Map of Camp Half-Blood*, 2003. Rick Riordan.

The featuring of the camp conveys that educational institutions exist in the mythological world just as they exist in the mortal world, where children are instructed with the basic survival skills. To mortals, the magically-concealed camp appears as a vast stretch of strawberry fields, obscuring the landscape of the Camp that is ". . . dotted with buildings that looked like ancient Greek architecture—an open-air pavilion, an amphitheater, a circular arena—except that they all looked brand new, their white marble columns sparkling in the sun" (Riordan, TLT 62). The demigods in the camp are accommodated in twelve cabins, one for each for the children of the twelve Olympians, which are ". . . arranged in a U, with two at the base and five in a row on either side" (79). Magic ensures that the weather at the camp remains pleasant and "It never rains [there] unless [the campers] want it to" (131).

The demigods wish for their favourite food and drinks, which automatically appear before them, a portion of which they give as offering to their godly parents (104).

The worldbuilding takes on a grander proportion, acquainting the readers with additional realms of the mythological world, cleverly concealed from mortals, like Olympus, the heavenly abode of the Greek gods, which hovers above Empire State Building with ". . . special elevator to the six hundredth floor" (Riordan, TLT 99). The streets of Olympus bustle with giggling wood nymphs, hawkers selling ambrosia on a stick, satyrs, a bunch of good-looking minor gods and goddesses, and the nine muses tune their instruments for a concert, creating a festive atmosphere as seen on Hephaestus TV (338-339). The palace at Olympus, which glitters with white and silver, has two replicas, one in the Underworld for Hades and the other Ocean for Poseidon. The Underworld has two hidden entrances in the mortal world – the Death on Arrival (DOA) studios in Los Angeles and the Door of Orpheus in New York City, which lead to a desolate landscape of "Craggy rocks and black volcanic sand stretched inland about a hundred yards to the base of a high stone wall", stretched infinitely amidst the sounds and "greenish gloom" of the realm (290). The entrance to the Underworld is depicted as a ". . . cross between airport security and the Jersey Turnpike" with metal detectors, security cameras, and tollbooths staffed by ghouls (290-291). The Underworld has a banner that reads, "Welcome, Newly Deceased!" and direction boards that lead to the Asphodel Fields, Elysium, Isles of the Blest, the Garden of Persephone, the river Styx, Lethe, Tartarus, and the palace of Hades (301). The underwater palace of Poseidon has columned pavilions, wide courtyards, and gardens, which resemble the palace at Olympus, except that it is sculpted with coral colonies and glowing sea plants. The buildings that shimmer with iridescent abalone shells are inhabited by sea creatures like fish, octopi, and mermen with blue skin and

". . . shark teeth. They don't show you stuff like that in The Little Mermaid" (Riordan, TLO 32-33). Other mythical locales hidden from mortals are the Sea of Monsters situated ". . . off the east coast of the U.S. . . just northeast of Florida. The mortals even have a name for it . . . The Bermuda Triangle?", and the mythical maze, Labyrinth (Riordan, TSoM 88).

The functioning of the Labyrinth can be analysed in the context of spatiotemporal condition or what the Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin terms as "chronotype", an independent unity of time and space. In the novels, the mythical maze is spread under the surface of the world with entrances in diverse locations like Camp Half-Blood, Alcatraz, an island near San Francisco, Colorado Springs, and Carlsband Caverns in New Mexico. The Labyrinth, with its spatial fragmentation and temporal distortion, features a relaxation of strict timelines as time within the maze moves at an accelerated pace when compared to the world outside. The spatio-temporal disruptions contribute significantly to the metafictional nature of the novels. The characters in the novels seamlessly traverse between the Labyrinth and the surface, rendering the boundary between fantasy and reality as increasingly elusive. Moreover, the reliance of the characters on archaic methods in a contemporary setting like eschewing phones to avoid attracting monsters is conveyed through the lines in TLT where ". . . cell phones [are] traceable by monsters; if [demigods use] one, it would be worse than sending up a flare", serving as an exemplified element of temporal distortion (Riordan 155). Instead of phones, Iris messages, that function as video calls, are used to send messages in the mythical world, where the sender flips a golden drachma (money used in ancient Greece) into a rainbow, whereupon the goddess of rainbow, Iris connects the caller with the recipient, who also has to offer a drachma to receive the message, highlighting that magic is conceived as a postmodern

". . . metaphor for the new age communication technology of mobile and the internet" in the select novels (Panda and Mohanty 14). The observation leads to an exploration of the postmodern concepts like technoculture and hyperreality, where technology is the main focus.

The select novels portrays Hermes as a technologically adept god who wields his staff, caduceus, transformed as a smartphone, and also runs a courier service, illustrating the contemporary world's inescapability of technology. The novels demonstrate the effects of hyperreality in the current postmodern era. Eugene L. Arva in "Writing the Vanishing Real: Hyperreality and Magical Realism", writes that hyperreality is to be considered as a medium of ". . . the literary consciousness engaged in coping with and reconstructing the real. . ." (60). Jean Baudrillard calls the phenomena as "an implosion of image and reality" where the boundaries between the two have significantly fused (Selden et al. 201).

The hybrid images of the real and its representations are unravelled using magical realism, that looks ". . . beyond the realistic detail and [accepts] the dual ontological structure of the text, in which the natural and the supernatural, the explainable and the miraculous, coexist side by side in a kaleidoscope reality, whose apparently random angles are deliberately left to the audience's discretion" (Arva 60). It is important to distinguish "magical realist simulacra" as different from Baudrillard's hyperreality, which arises from an aporetic attitude towards reality, embracing paradox and ambiguity, and it also recreates and recontextualises the real, rather than erasing its connection to reality. The select novels is a simulacrum with its own unique narrative identity, as ". . . the image-reality relationship follows four, more or less distinct, stages: in the first, the image still reflects reality; in the second, it disguises reality; in the third, it marks the absence of reality; and in the last; it loses

all connection with reality and becomes its own simulacrum" (64). The novels feature the Lotus Casino in Vegas, which entraps and indulges its customers by mesmerising them in the hyperreal world of technology where time elapses slower than the external world. The entire lobby of the Casino is:

> . . . a giant game room. And I'm not talking about cheesy old Pac-Man games or slot machines. There was an indoor waterslide snaking around the glass elevator, which went straight up at least forty floors. There was a climbing wall on the side of one building, and an indoor bungee-jumping bridge. There were virtual-reality suits with working laser guns. And hundreds of video games, each one the size of a widescreen TV. Basically, you name it, this place had it. (Riordan, TLT 258)

The Casino serves as a metaphor for the time lost when people are in technological addiction and simulations of reality replace the real. It indicates that technology grabs the central focus in the lives of several individuals, blurring the boundary between fantasy and reality. The series deconstructs the classical sacredness of myth and repackages it in a way that resonates with the young generation of readers to view the allure of hyperreal distractions, simulation, and virtual escapism. It becomes a psychological mirror in aiding the young readers to identify the encroachment of digital space in their daily lives, subtly warning them against the erosion of human experience.

The realistic components of the fictional world in the select novels encompass elements of popular culture and contemporary references like games, fast food chains, pop music, marketing campaign, psychedelic art, and fan culture of using merchandise from popular shows which serve to create a realistic backdrop to the

fictional world. Mr. D's obsession with "Pac-Man, one of the greatest games ever invented by humans", reflects the effort of the author to foreground the novels in contemporary culture (Riordan, TLT 65).

Characters in the select novels indulge in fast food like pizza, fries, and coke, indicating the prevalence of fast-food chains in the modern world. The author incorporates a metaphor for the rapid expansion of fast-food franchises across the world in TSoM through a fictional fast-food chain called Monster Donut, which is an example of fictionalising real events. Annabeth explains to Percy that the children of Hermes find a way to do it in the 1950s:

> Haven't you ever wondered how franchise stores pop up so fast?" she asked. "One day there's nothing and then the next day—boom, there's a new burger place or a coffee shop or whatever? First a single store, then two, then four— exact replicas spreading across the country? . . . some of the chains multiply so fast because all their locations are magically linked to the life force (Riordan 142-143)

of the monster Hydra, which once slain, sprouts two heads in the same spot.

The select novels evoke familiarity to the real world through the incorporation of popular music. The elevator to Olympus plays music according to the mood of the mythical world. When Percy uses the elevator for the first time, it plays Muzak's serene song, "Raindrops keep falling on my head" (Riordan, TLT 337). When he uses it again during The Battle of Manhattan, the song switches to old disco classic, "Stayin' Alive" (Riordan, TLO 145). The tunes aptly capture the sombre mood of the mythological world, emphasising the sole purpose, which is to indeed stay alive and survive the battle. Once the battle is won, the music changes to Neil Diamond's cheerful tunes, setting a joyful mood (360). Chiron's fondness for Dean Martin's

music, tunes like Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 12 (Riordan, TSoM 250), Hilary Duff's "So Yesterday" (Riordan, TLT 150), and "Poison Ivy" played by Grover on his reed pipes (Riordan, TTC 155), and Pan's recognition of Kumbaya that his dodo bird sings are mentioned in the novels (Riordan, TBoL 315). The musical preferences of the characters further weave depth and relatability of the real world into the mythological world.

The discussion of marketing campaign adds to the modernity of the novels. The Hunters of Artemis use promotional tactics by distributing brochures to induct young girls to join the Hunters, in a manner reminiscent of contemporary advertising trends. The brochure reads "A WISE CHOICE FOR YOUR FUTURE!" and features images of ". . . young maidens doing hunter stuff, chasing monsters, shooting bows. There were captions like: HEALTH BENEFITS: IMMORTALITY AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU! and A BOY-FREE TOMORROW!" (Riordan, TTC 77). The incorporation of the advertisement tactic taps into the contemporary trend of leveraging appealing words and visuals in advertising campaigns.

The obsession of characters with popular merchandise like t-shirts and miniatures are evident throughout the novels. They wear clothes with inscriptions of the things they believe in, similar to how people of the real world embrace trends and buy branded merchandise. The kids of Aphrodite make a silver t-shirt for the Hunters of Artemis with the print, ". . . ARTEMIS THE MOON GODDESS, FALL HUNTING TOUR 2002, with a huge list of national parks and stuff underneath" (Riordan, TTC 98). Grover, the nature loving satyr, wears a t-shirt that has a picture from the book *Where the Wild Things Are* (Riordan, TLO 112). Chiron wears a t-shirt while he teaches demigods archery the print, "#1 CENTAUR" (Riordan, TBoL 26).

The examples align with the modern trend of brands appealing to consumer-driven aspirations.

The connection between the characters in the select novels and their fans is exemplified by their adoption of character-inspired outfits. The fans who identify themselves as ‘demigods’ and ‘half-bloods’ wear outfits that resemble the ones that the demigods in the novels wear orange t-shirts that say Camp Half-Blood with the symbol of a Pegasus, pair it with shorts and jeans, along with necklaces with clay beads. The fondness of Hermes for collecting miniatures of Hercules’s busts which springs from his nostalgia for “Hercules Busts Heads”, which he describes as a “Great show”, enhances the immersive quality of the novels (Riordan, TSoM 103). The novels acknowledge psychedelic art, a notable facet of pop culture, which is evident in the depiction of the several-eyed mythical character, Argus, who is described as rolling his eyes in a manner that creates an illusion of his whole body, swirling, giving him a “pretty psychedelic” appearance (Riordan, TLO 164). The elements emphasise the integration of contemporary elements in the select novels to add depth to the narrative world.

Prior to achieving its status as a pop culture phenomenon, the select novels explicitly exhibit “textual metaconsciousness” through the conversations of characters, wherein they directly comment on the future popularity of the novels (Anatol 138). Mr. D tells Percy, “What if I told you, Perseus Jackson, that someday people would call *you* a myth, just created to explain how little boys can get over losing their mothers?” (Riordan, TLT 68). It indicates that characters in the novels display self-awareness within the narrative, highlighting its ability to acknowledge its own impact and cultural significance. Similarly, Chiron questions Percy about the Greek myths and his classmate mockingly remarks, “Like we’re going to use this in

real life. Like it's going to say on our job applications, 'Please explain why Kronos ate his kids'" (6). The comment highlights the juxtaposition of the Greek myths with the contemporary lifestyle as the novels are cognizant of its relevance and potential as a cultural touchstone.

The select novels are examples of children's literature that uses simple narrative language to craft the illusion of reality in a fictionally constructed world. The simple language eliminates narrative strain, making it exciting for readers, but beneath the simplicity lies a depth of metafictional and self-reflexive elements that invite exploration. As a work of fiction abounding in metafiction, it refers to its own fictionality and social commentary, which deserves critical attention. The language and concepts employed in the select novels accelerate the pace of their learning about Greek myths as it involves concepts that the contemporary readers are familiar with.

Myth is written in everyday language and recontextualised to challenge the absoluteness of tradition denoting the plurality and coexistence of perspectives, which amounts to the fact that truism is subjective as individual identities are multiple, making it difficult to box and categorise experiences. The grammar, syntax, and structure of children's literature are very important because not only does the subject matter, but the previously mentioned elements too, must be designed in such a way that they directly speak to children. The humorous presentation of the myths makes them more memorable wherein Riordan skilfully retells the old Greek myths using modern-day social concepts in order to create a refreshing new narrative without changing the historical significance of the original myths.

The select novels subvert the authoritative voice of myths through reinterpretation, preserving the stories while updating the canonical characters. The approach allows the exploration of alternative worldview and challenges traditional

categories. Riordan has built a new structure in place of the old one, shifting the focus from the typical Greek myths to the Americanised culture and characters. The select novels subvert the authoritative voice of myths by inverting them through a reinterpretation strategy of the conventional narrative combinations. The select novels exemplify the transformative power of children's fantasy literature aesthetically and socially, providing readers a blueprint to live within their culture and offering alternative ways of thinking.

The analysis of the chapter focuses on narrative language and worldbuilding, anchoring itself in the postmodern concepts of linguistic hybridisation, playfulness in language, fragmentation of syntax, self-reflexivity, focalisation, chronology, rooted in the postmodern concepts, intertextuality, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, and incredulity towards metanarratives of Julia Kristeva, William H. Gass, Linda Hutcheon, and Jean Francois Lyotard, respectively. The narrative employs both formulaic and non-formulaic techniques that render the text engaging, educational, subversive, a blend of myth and modernity, fact and fiction, high and low culture, polyphonic, and dynamic.

The conversational tone collapses the boundary between mythical fantasy and reality. The focalisation and the use of polyphonic voices demonstrates narrative multiplicity, plurality of perspectives, and decentering of absolute truth which is a postmodern move that destabilises authoritative narration, which echoes Lyotard's distrust of metanarratives, supporting the postmodern premise of non-rigid narrative frameworks. The use of humour, sarcasm, satire, irony, and parody are subversive literary strategies that challenge idealist notions of classical myths. The metafictional devices draw attention to the construction of the narrative and undermine the authority of myth. The extramarital affairs, jealousy, narcissism, and sibling squabbles re-

imagine the gods as not moral exemplars but dysfunctional entities that mirror real-life people with real-world complexities, which is not about good vs. evil, but navigating grey zones which is a postmodern ethos. The young heroes, demigods or otherwise, try to traverse through dilemmas regarding identity, loyalty, trauma, and growth. The monsters in the select novels are not all evil, but misunderstood as is revealed through the destabilisation of the traditional monster tropes that humanises them, subverting traditional reader expectations. The human characters, too, true to life, exhibit blurred identities.

A mythical world is interwoven with real-world geography, historical figures, pop culture, consumer culture, school culture, and technology into the fantasy landscape to build familiarity within the unfamiliar and help readers decode meaning within the new storyline. The temporal dislocation and spatial play are hallmark features of postmodern fiction wherein time and myth bend to narrative convenience. The Greek myths are made relatable, demystified, and embedded in the logic of contemporary readers.

The blend of the textual, thematic concerns with real-world experiences aligns with the research objective that links fantasy with reality through an analysis of the rewriting of classical myths by Riordan within a modern, subversive framework. An exploration of the concepts highlight that the traditional mythic storytelling is deconstructed and reconstructed for contemporary readers, fulfilling the research objective of redesigning traditional storytelling methods. The chapter argues through the analysis that the select novels are not simplistic or escapist, but rather complex and layered with the thematic and structural complexity of serious literature, dismantling its secondary status, satisfying the objective of relieving fantasy literature of its secondary status as it legitimises the genre within academic discourse. The real-

world references, cultural familiarity, and moral complexity demonstrates the capacity of the novels to engage with the reality of the readers in a less confrontational manner, justifying the objective – to analyse the positive impacts of the fictional reality in the select novels on the social reality of readers. The chapter showcases that myths are recontextualised using contemporary narrative techniques. It is not focused on myth-construction per se, but it does show that traditional myths are shaped by modern aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual sensibilities as they are not merely revered, but critically interrogated in the select novels, thus partly meeting the objective – construction and representation of myths in contemporary children's fantasy literature in accordance with the society's current intellectual, social, and cultural trends.