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Reawakening the Myth: Retelling the Hero Journey in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*

by

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Abstract

The hero journey as theorised by Joseph Campbell in 1949 in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (reprinted 1993) has informed and influenced mainstream storytelling for more than half a century. In Campbell's work, it is argued that the mythologies of the world all share essential features, and could therefore be seen as analogues of what Campbell terms a 'monomyth', a single, identifiable story that unites and defines disparate myths from around the world, illustrating to readers the form of the journey on which they themselves must embark to reach self-actualisation in their own lives. This notion of the monomyth is problematic, however, as Campbell's theory and model have often been criticised for not being as universal as he imagined.

This study applies Campbell's model and theories to show the manner in which Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga, a re-imagining of the classical Greek myths, aimed primarily at adolescent readers of fiction, constitutes an example of the hero journey as Campbell describes it. Moreover, acknowledging the criticisms levelled against Campbell in the years since the publication of his seminal study, the study also argues that Riordan, aware both of Campbell's hero journey theory and its shortcomings, skilfully first conforms to and then subverts the expectations and implications of the hero journey theory throughout his saga.

Riordan's adherence to the hero journey formula is explored with reference to *The Lightning Thief* (2005), the first novel in the saga. Thereafter, the rest of the novels in the series are considered both collectively and individually to explore the ways in which Riordan's titular character challenges patriarchal assumptions about the hero journey, heroism itself and what constitutes heroic responsibility, particularly with regard to a gendered coming of age. The study also explores feminist challenges to Campbell's study, comparing and contrasting Campbell's model to the second-wave feminist version of the hero journey described in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981) by Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope.

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The study thus shows how Riordan creates characters who encounter an entirely different range of experiences and outcomes to those outlined by Campbell, thereby suggesting a possible model which is more inclusive of adolescents who do not conform to Campbell's prescriptive mode of representation. The hero journey itself, then, is arguably revised by Riordan to become a more efficacious means of reaching this particular audience.

Finally, through an exploration of adaptation and appropriation theory, the Percy Jackson saga is interrogated to illustrate how Riordan's conscious changes to character and focalisation challenge and deconstruct Campbell's original model, which is representative of much mainstream storytelling's patriarchal assumptions, to make it more relevant and closer to the frame of reference of contemporary readers. The conclusion of this study suggests that what Campbell (based on the theories of Carl Jung) believed to be the essential power of myth can be reawakened for a modern audience by Riordan's flexible re-workings of Greek myth. It is suggested that Riordan's retelling makes both the hero journey and mythology relevant to modern readers.

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Key Terms

Rick Riordan

Percy Jackson and the Olympians

Joseph Campbell

The Hero With A Thousand Faces

Carol Pearson

Katherine Pope

Hero Journey

Female Hero

Second-wave Feminism

Adaptation

Appropriation

Children's Literature

Greek Mythology

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the dénouement to Marc Webb's acclaimed 2012 reboot of the popular Marvel superhero franchise, *The Amazing Spiderman*, the superhero's alter ego, Peter Parker, and Gwen Stacy attend a lecture where they are told by their instructor: 'I had a professor once who liked to tell his students that were only ten different plots in all of fiction. Well I'm here to tell you he was wrong. There is only one: who am I?'

The manner in which we are supposed to go about answering this question has populated the plots of countless stories the world over. Indeed, it could be argued that this question is the single most important question any of us will attempt to answer in our lifetimes. Fiction is a useful tool in this regard, as it gives us credible and enjoyable characters through whom we can vicariously experience different modes and models of self-discovery, thereby allowing us to transfer those experiences into instructive guidance in our lives. One such model is that of the hero journey, which essentially argues that each of us is a hero in the tale of our own life. We undergo different phases of experience during our lifetime, each of which teaches us valuable lessons; tests our limits, prejudices and abilities; and rewards us with knowledge of the world and of ourselves.

This study seeks to apply two specific hero journey models of self-discovery to Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, a five-novel saga featuring characters who are the demigod offspring of the Greek mythological pantheon and who are coming of age. The five novels are *The Lightning Thief* (2005), *The Sea of* Monsters (2006), *The Titan's* Curse (2007), *The Battle of the Labyrinth* (2008), and *The Last Olympian* (2009).[1] Each of the novels in the series constitutes an individual plot, or micro story, which informs and is set against the

[1] These are the original dates. I used later reprints: *The Lightning Thief* (2006, Hyperion), *The Sea of Monsters* (2008, Hyperion), *The Titan's Curse* (2008, Hyperion), *Percy Jackson and the Battle of the Labyrinth* (2009, Penguin), and *The Last Olympian* (2011, Hyperion). To make it easier for readers to identify the texts concerned, I use only the titles and page numbers in the references to the novels in the text.

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backdrop of the Titanomachy, the macro story. The hero journey, then, is explored in two ways, as it exists both in the micro-stories themselves, in which the heroes set forth on adventures and must return, and in the macro-story, where the overarching battle for the fate of Olympus in itself constitutes a broader, but no less relevant hero journey.

Riordan, before becoming a successful author, was a middle school teacher. In this position, he would have dealt with adolescents[2] and their particular concerns, a proximity which I believe positively influenced the manner in which he imagines his characters. Riordan was already an acclaimed author before writing his Olympians series, which began as a means of making stories and learning accessible to his son who experienced barriers to learning; it has since experienced a great deal of commercial and critical success, including film adaptations. The Olympians saga, comprised of five novels set against the background of the Titanomachy, has since been expanded to include a series based on Egyptian mythology, a spiritual successor series based in Roman mythology, and most recently a Norse-inspired series which is to follow in the future.

In my own classroom, I have found the novel to be remarkably popular.[3] The series was in fact introduced to me by one of my students. Interestingly, it has been my experience that the series is well-received regardless of gender or ethnic background, and has often inspired the readers to seek out the root narratives on which Riordan's stories are based. Typically, students who read the first novel in the saga then go on to read the remainder, with many going on to explore

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[2] Percy Jackson, the series' protagonist, is twelve years old during the first novel, and I therefore posit that the primary audience of the series is adolescents. However, I do not exclude a slightly younger audience, young adults or adults as potential readerships. The categories of readership are contested in themselves, making accurate comments regarding readership problematic. As far as possible, the study uses the term audience broadly, to include, rather than potentially exclude, different age ranges.

[3] Minzheimer, Lopez and Donahue (2010:n.p.) report that the film version of the first novel in the series, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, 'earned $88.8 million'. *USA Today* (4 May 2010) reports that 'All five [of the novels in the series] have been in the top 25 spots in *USA Today*'s Best-Selling Books list for the past 14 weeks. They are now Nos. 11, 14, 18, 19 and 21'; Minzheimer, Lopez and Donahue (2010:n.p.) add that 'Publisher Disney/Hyperion reports 15 million copies in print, including two guide books'. In the week of 2 February to 9 February 2014, the series held the #6 spot on the New York Times Bestseller List for 'Children's Series' and previously held the #1 spot. Riordan, among many other prizes, was awarded the Children's Choice Book Award for Author of the Year in 2011.

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Riordan's other mythological settings as well. Hence, I have found the novels to be instructive and to be very useful as a suggestion to parents and students who seek assistance in creating reading lists.

This study seeks to apply two hero journey models to Riordan's saga. The first model was proposed by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1993), in which he describes a monomyth, a single, identifiable story that unites and defines disparate myths from around the world, illustrating to readers the form of the journey on which they themselves must embark to reach self-actualisation in their own lives. In reaction to this, Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope suggested a different model, for women, in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981). This model, to their view, allowed for women to be heroes in their personal journeys as well. These models are used because they share a number of features, and because both inform, and have informed, a great deal of popular thought regarding heroism, the nature of heroic responsibility and the journeys heroes undertake. Both of these models, their implications, and criticism of them are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

The goals of applying the two hero journey models to Riordan's saga are threefold. Firstly, I show that Riordan's first novel, *The Lightning Thief* (2005), constitutes a contemporary version of Joseph Campbell's hero journey model, in that the series' titular hero, Percy Jackson, undergoes a departure, initiation and return, and the novel is replete with the motifs and symbols that are typical of the model. In addition to illustrating the saga's adherence to Campbell's formula, it is shown how Riordan's conscious changes to the Greek myths, as well as his deliberate changes to Campbell's model and intentional subversion of its expectations, makes *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* better suited to assisting adolescent readers in answering the central question: 'Who Am I?' Secondly, Campbell's model is interrogated against a background of what has been called second-wave feminism to show how women are excluded from the traditional hero journey model. John Stephens and Robyn McCallum (1998:116) write that heroic 'narratives [often] hinge on the hero's active engagement with events and experiences, leading to the discovery of positive self-identity as masculinity'. This can then 'perpetuate a masculine model of rivalry and competition as the *normal*

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pathway to that self-identity' [my emphasis]. Ursula Le Guin (1993:5) also argues in *Earthsea Revisioned* that '[s]ince it's about men, the hero-tale has concerned the establishment or validation of manhood'. To show that this is not the case with Riordan's saga, a rival model offered by Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope is used to illustrate how a female hero journey and individual experiences may differ from those explained by Campbell while remaining equally valid. More importantly, this rival model is also used to indicate how Riordan's novels may serve as a valid and contemporary revision of this hero journey. Thirdly, the vehicle of adaptation and appropriation theory, by which Riordan has achieved this modernisation and subversion, is analysed both in terms of its manner and intent. In so doing, I suggest that Riordan's contemporary adaptation, by virtue of its subversion of outdated expectations and implied assumptions about gender and hero roles, not only constitutes a valuable reading experience for adolescent readers of fiction, but also serves the additional purpose of making mythology itself relevant again, by bringing it into the frame of reference of an audience which may otherwise never encounter it.

The first goal of the study is explored in the second chapter, in which the first hero journey model, as explained by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1993), is mapped out and interrogated in conjunction with the first novel in Riordan's saga, *The Lightning Thief* (2005), Campbell's model is exhaustively examined and Percy's adventures are mapped out on top of it. Stephens and McCallum (1998:74) explain that such mapping 'enables an interface between hieratic myth and the demotic narrative school of experience as metonymic of postmodern existence'. Riordan's subsequent subversion of the model in the later novels of the saga must then be seen as enabling an interface by which contemporary existence itself may also be challenged by adolescent readers. In this regard, the primary texts used are Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1993) and Rick Riordan's series. Additional reference is briefly made to the precepts of courtly love as explained by Roger Boase (1986) and Barbara Tuchman (1978), and brief analogous comparisons to Percy's journey are made in relation to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien (1965, 1977) and C.S. Lewis (1950, 1951, 1952, 1955). Finally, during the analysis of Riordan's subversion of Campbell's models, use is made of works by Robyn

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McCallum (2013), Brian Boyd (2009), J.R.G Harris, Robert Segal, and Mary Lefkowitz (1991), and Robert Segal (1999).

The second goal of the study is pursued in Chapter 3, in which the female hero model of Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981) is mapped out and explored in relation to Annabeth Chase, a character that Riordan did not appropriate from classical Greek myth, but instead invented and developed himself. Stephens and McCallum (1998:10) note that there is a pervasive assumption that

> …classical myths (among other functions) embody "timeless and universal" significance and are an indispensable part of Western cultural heritage, that they are metaphorical expressions of spiritual insights, and that they address archetypal aspects of the human psyche. If, in the face of such assumptions, myth is read from a feminist and/or cultural materialist position – that is, from an ideological stance which begins in rejecting the basis of the positions outlined – then myth may well be unrecuperable as part of children's experience of culture. As far as children's texts go, it remains a domain from which a substantial body of feminist rewriting is significantly absent.

The goal of the third chapter is to address that absence by suggesting that Riordan's adaptation fully constitutes such a feminist rewriting. In the course of the chapter, the nature of what has been termed second-wave feminism, to which Pearson and Pope's model could be said to belong, is explored, and my use thereof is explained and justified. Throughout Chapter 3, reference is predominantly made to the hero journey model of Pearson and Pope (1976, 1981), as well to the feminist theories of Carolyn Heilbrun (1981) and Brian Attebery (1992).

In Chapter 4, the theories surrounding the writing of adaptations and appropriations are explored, specifically as they pertain to the methods, goals and expected outcomes of Riordan's saga. The power relationships that exist between originary texts and their adaptations are considered, and the concept of *first reception*, in which audiences encounter adaptations first, before they come across the texts upon which those adaptations were based, is examined. In addition, the manner in which adaptations can shape perspectives on their informing texts, as

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well as their power to challenge and subvert the assumptions and stereotypes governing the societies which generated those texts, is considered. Crucial theories for this chapter are those of John Stephens and Robyn McCallum (1998), Julie Sanders (2006), Linda Hutcheon (2006) and David Buchbinder (2011).

The conclusion to the study illustrates Riordan's success in writing an adaptation of classical Greek myth that allows adolescent readers the opportunity both to explore the informing texts that inspired the adaptation, and to do so equipped with a subversive reading strategy that provides a safety net within which they may negotiate the values and attitudes of the ancient Greek myths, without the risk of believing them to be ubiquitously applicable or fundamental. With this net they may safely deconstruct outmoded assumptions, modes and motifs and begin to engage in an open discourse with historical texts and adaptations, formulating their own unique views and understandings. They are, therefore, better equipped with instructive tools with which to answer the all-important question: 'Who am I?' It is suggested that, by allowing readers to engage with texts in this way, through mythology which they may otherwise never have encountered, Riordan's retelling of Greek myths reawakens mythology and its uniquely transformative power for a contemporary adolescent audience.

Terminologically, a distinction is made in the study between Campbell's 'hero journey', which is intended to apply to any individual anywhere, and the 'female hero journey' which refers specifically to a journey encompassing a range of experiences primarily available to women. As far as possible, I have sought to be consistent in not using the two terms interchangeably, not as an indication of my personal views regarding their essentialist applicability to specific demographics, but rather to enhance clarity when contrasting them in discussing the experiences of Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase in Riordan's saga.

Finally, the term 'Other' or 'Othering', as used in this study to denote alienation, warrants a brief gloss. McCallum (2013:99) explains that,

> in general terms, alienation [or othering] in its various aspects – powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, self-

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> estrangement and cultural estrangement – denotes the radical, perceived or actual, separation of the self from the social world, the inverse of intersubjectivity.

It is my ultimate goal in this study to explore a fantastic series of novels, subject them to a range of critical theories, and thereby suggest that the series could be instructive to both adults and adolescents. Discovering ourselves is the central concern of our lives. I believe that Rick Riordan's series is useful in this regard and well worth our time. Eric Micha'el Leventhal (2013:n.p.) writes:

> The closer you come to knowing that you alone create the world of your experience, the more vital it becomes for you to discover just who is doing the creating.

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Chapter 2: Percy Jackson and the Hero Journey

Joseph Campbell ([1949] 1993) attempts to explore the importance of the question 'Who am I?' in his seminal *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, where he argues that all mythologies and religions are related, in that they form part of what he calls a 'monomyth'. This monomyth is the story of self-discovery and self-actualisation which each of us must complete individually (as heroes in our own lives). So important is the scope of his study, and so skilfully was it undertaken, that his model has served both as inspiration and a guiding hand in the shaping of some of the most popular fictional stories of our time. A pertinent example of how Campbell has inspired modern-day writers is the case of George Lucas who, according to Ridley Scott's 2011 documentary television series *Prophets of Science Fiction* (Episode 8), was inspired to write the basic plot outline to *Star Wars* while confined in hospital recovering from a serious vehicle accident. It was during his bed-rest that he encountered Campbell's work and discovered the monomyth. Indeed, tracing the hero journey through text and film is a common academic pursuit. For example, Susan Mackey-Kallis (2011:2-3) in *The Hero and the Perennial Journey Home in American Film* explores a number of heroes from popular modern films that conform to one or another of Campbell's heroic journey models, including

> Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz,* E.T. in *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, Roy Hobbs in *The Natural*, Ray Kinsella in *Field of Dreams*, Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*…Simba in *The Lion King*…Ellie Arroway in *Contact*, Ada in *The Piano*, Luke Skywalker in the "Star Wars" trilogy, Dave Bownman in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and Thelma and Louise in *Thelma and Louise*. And, in the strangest of all quest films, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Mihaela Paraschivescu (2011:218) explains Campbell's influence by suggesting that 'Campbell's enormous popularity in the United States in the late '70s and '80s was due significantly to his influence on Hollywood screenwriting – the scripts of *Star Wars, ET, Schindler's List, Babe*, to name just a few famous films, are linked to his name'. Furthermore, she cites the fact that 'the PBS TV broadcast

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in America of … *The power of myth* in 1988 had 2.5 million viewers, and the subsequent printed version of the interviews was a *New York Times* bestseller for over half a year' as evidence of this popularity.

In Campbell's chapter entitled 'The Hero and the God', he writes: 'The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula presented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return:* which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:30). As chapter headings, Campbell uses the nuclear parts of his monomyth: 'Departure', 'Initiation' and 'Return'. I also use these headings as subheadings in this chapter, and create one addition, 'Subversion'. As each of the three original constituent phases in the hero journey is scrutinised in some depth, this division forms the basis of the first part of my chapter, which attempts to track how the first novel in the Olympians saga, *The Lightning Thief*, might be considered a retelling of the hero journey, and is thus an example of Campbell's monomyth. Thereafter I attempt to consider how aware Rick Riordan was of Campbell's theories,[4] and whether he has used the remaining four novels in the Olympians saga to intentionally subvert some of the expectations raised by the monomyth about the hero journey. Perhaps the biggest divergence from the root formula of the hero journey in Riordan's series is the introduction of the character of Annabeth Chase, a daughter of the goddess Athena, so this particular case is dealt with separately in the third chapter.

Campbell himself, perhaps aware that his monomyth would be scrutinised in relation to infinitesimal and minute differences or inconsistencies within individual narratives, writes: 'If one or another of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted from a given ... myth, it is bound to be somehow implied – and the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:38). This is a significant point. Campbell argues that any apparent variations to the monomyth in a given text do not alter the basic structure of the monomyth, nor its applicability to any given

[4] Riordan (2008c) specifically mentions English literature drawing on mythology for its source material, particularly the hero's quest in his introduction to *Demigods and Monsters* (edited by Riordan and Wilson). This is discussed at length in the second part of this chapter.

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mythological story. It is for this reason that an in-depth study to determine if Campbell's claim is true in the case of Riordan's Olympians saga is relevant, as is speculation over what could possibly be learned from any identified divergences found within it. The first step is to trace the nuclear units of the monomyth in the first novel in the saga.

Departure

The journey begins, as it would have to, with the hero. Campbell ([1949] 1993:44) notes that 'mythology does not hold as its greatest hero the merely virtuous man'; and indeed this is true of Percy, as his character has complexity and depth. Percy represents a contemporary adolescent social minority, and is thus made Other by his peers within the mortal realm, because he is both dyslexic and suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Throughout the introductory passages, in which Percy experiences typical modern-day schooling, we see how he believes that he is separated from a normal adolescent life because of his learning disability. Percy feels as if he is only in some measure present in reality: 'I have moments like that a lot, when my brain falls asleep...as if a puzzle piece fell out of the universe and left me staring at the blank place behind it' (*The Lightning Thief*, 11). Campbell ([1949] 1993:37) explains that 'the composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained'. It is clear that Percy is treated with disdain by his microcosm of American society for being a member of a school for problem children; on a field-trip, he and Grover, his best friend and a satyr in disguise, isolate themselves from their peer group to avoid inevitable associations – '[w]e thought that if we did that, everybody wouldn't know we were from *that* school – the school for loser freaks who couldn't make it elsewhere' (*The Lightning Thief*, 8). Percy is even disliked by his classmates within his own school for being a misfit who holds himself apart from the rest because of his learning disabilities. Even though Percy is treated with disdain by his society, however, Riordan explains that Percy's learning disabilities are indeed the 'gifts' which Campbell mentions. In his introduction to *Demigods and Monsters,* Riordan (2008c:vii) writes:

> In *The Lightning Thief*, ADHD means that you have finely tuned senses. You see too much, not too little. These reflexes don't serve

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> you well in a boring classroom, but they would keep you alive on the battlefield. Dyslexia indicates that your brain is hard-wired for Ancient Greek, so of course reading English is a struggle.

We see these enhanced gifts in action when Percy faces the mythological Minotaur a little later in the story:

> The bull-man charged too fast, his arms out to grab me whichever way I tried to dodge.
> *Time slowed down*.
> My legs tensed. I couldn't jump sideways, so I leaped straight up, kicking off from the creature's head, using it as a springboard, turning in midair, and landing on his neck.
> How did I do that? I didn't have time to figure it out. (*The Lightning Thief*, 54; my emphasis)

Percy, despised by the society that Others him, nonetheless possess great gifts. His hero journey then, for which he is not fully prepared, must, perforce, begin with a departure.

The first stage of the departure is the 'Call to Adventure' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:48). While Campbell ([1949] 1993:51) argues that this is normally delivered by a herald, it is equally possible that '[a] blunder – apparently the merest chance – reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood'. In Percy's case, both are equally viable as explanations for his hearing the call to undertake the hero journey. During a visit to a museum in New York City, Percy is attacked by his mathematics teacher, Mrs Dodds, who is actually one of Hades' Furies (euphemistically referred to as Kindly Ones), and Percy is immediately saved by the timely intervention of Mr Brunner, who gives Percy a pen which, when uncapped by its owner, magically transforms into the celestial bronze sword, *Anaklusmos*, or *Riptide*.

On his way home from this 'blunder' into a different world, he sees three bent crones at the side of the road and witnesses the chief amongst them pointedly severing a thread from her knitting; this is Percy's first meeting with the Fates.[5]

[5] Percy interprets this omen as his own impending death. It is only revealed in the saga's fifth novel, *The Last Olympian* (2009), that the thread represents the life force of Luke Castellan, the

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Subsequently, Percy learns that he is *different* and a danger to his mortal relatives as his 'smell', the scent of his demigod blood, attracts mythological monsters. For his safety, and that of those he loves, he must leave and go to a place of comparative safety.

He is informed of the need for this journey by his best friend, Grover, who may be the herald Campbell ([1949] 1993:51) describes as 'a preliminary manifestation of the powers that are breaking into play'. Grover, a mythological satyr who is not supposed to exist in Percy's reality, is the manifestation of the divine powers that become evident and palpable in Percy's new reality. Simultaneously then, Percy receives the 'Call to Adventure' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:48) both by chance and at the hands of a herald, in this case, Grover. The herald 'may sound the call to some historical undertaking... [marking] what has been termed "the awakening of the self"' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:51); for Percy, his 'familiar life horizon has been outgrown; ... the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:51). Campbell ([1949] 1993:53) attempts to explain the many faces of the herald, but perhaps the 'veiled mysterious figure – [representative of] the unknown' is closest in this case. Grover is constantly in disguise and clearly symbolises all about his life which Percy does not yet know.

A mad flight to a place of safety is then undertaken, a place which may take many different forms in different mythological settings, but which is, according to Campbell ([1949] 1993:58), nonetheless 'always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delights'. Camp Half-Blood, the home of demigod children of the Greek pantheon, is where Percy learns about his true self, accepts his first quest, first encounters creatures such as pegasi, hippocampi, dragons and many others, and learns the identity of his real father; it is very much the place that Campbell describes.

Campbell's third subheading under 'Departure', 'Supernatural Aid', indicates that, before the hero can cross the first threshold, severing his umbilical cord to

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series' mortal antagonist. This is an example of Riordan's unique take on the hero journey and is explored later in the chapter.

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his old life and the world he knows, he must first receive divine aid. In a roundabout manner, this requirement of the hero journey has already taken place, since Percy has received *Riptide* from Mr Brunner (who, we learn, is actually the centaur Chiron) and the assistance of Grover, who escorts him to the magically protected border of Camp Half-Blood. Campbell ([1949] 1993:58) describes the role of the 'Supernatural Helper' by stating: 'The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher, the ferryman, the conductor of souls to the afterworld.' The 'Supernatural Helper' can clearly take many forms. Chiron and his alter ego, Mr Brunner, adopt the role of the teacher. In the role of the guide, however, and the ferryman who carries Percy not into the afterworld, but from one narrow reality into another, broader one, it is possible that Grover, in assisting Percy with valuable knowledge whilst on the threshold, simultaneously performs the roles of Herald and Supernatural Helper.

For Percy, crossing the threshold is not made difficult by psychological or emotional stumbling blocks, but rather by the very physical, and dangerous, presence of the mythological Minotaur, who kidnaps his mother, Sally Jackson, and nearly destroys Percy. It is while Percy recovers from the battle that he discovers that Mr Brunner, his Classics teacher, who originally gives him *Riptide,* is actually the centaur Chiron, holder of the archetypal position of the wise old man. Chiron then guides Percy and makes sacrifices for him throughout the novel and the saga as a whole. He tells Percy why Percy only received the call for adventure so late and explains that the border of the camp is the first threshold, a border only Percy can cross, since it bars entry to mortals and forever separates the two distinct worlds that Percy inhabits. Riordan, as if aware of the possibility of an analysis of his text, signposts this crucial stage of the first part of the journey's nucleus for us clearly, by having Chiron say in *The Lightning Thief*: '[Y]ou made it here alive, and that's always the first test' (65).

According to Campbell's model, after crossing the threshold into a new reality, a new understanding or higher plane of cognition, the hero must be spiritually reborn. He writes: 'The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:90). This is especially true of Percy, who is swallowed into what Campbell refers to as 'the

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belly of the whale' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:90) when he enters Camp Half-Blood. Everything is foreign to him, including the occupants of the camp. Crucially, Percy, struggling to understand the vast shocks of losing his mother and discovering that the Greek mythological tales are real, asks: 'Who are you, Chiron? Who...who am I?' (*The Lightning Thief*, 73). As is the case with Peter Parker, mentioned in the opening paragraph of the study, this central question of self-discovery is the principal motivation that drives Percy throughout his hero journey. In this way Percy seems to follow the pattern of Campbell's heroes accurately, since Percy's journey is, at its core, an internalised journey of self-discovery and actualisation. Chiron responds: 'Well, that's the question we all want answered, isn't it?'

Percy is known to very few at the camp, and he himself possesses none of the knowledge about either the world or himself that he needs to return home at the culmination of his journey, to deliver higher understanding and enlightenment; in his case, at the threshold, 'instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:91). It is an inner journey Percy must first experience, before his adventure can begin.

Percy, growing up in the mortal realm, has never known his father. However, on his second day at Camp-Half Blood, during a botched training exercise, he is injured, and then magically healed in the river:

> But they weren't watching my wounds heal. They were staring at something above my head.
> "Percy," Annabeth said, pointing. "Um..."
> By the time I looked up, the sign was already fading, but I could still make out the hologram of green light, spinning and gleaming. A three-tipped spear: a trident.
> "Your father," Annabeth murmured. "This is *really* not good."
> "It is determined," Chiron announced.
> All around me, campers started kneeling, even the Ares cabin, though they didn't look happy about it.
> "My father?" I asked, completely bewildered.
> "Poseidon," said Chiron. "Earthshaker, Stormbringer, Father of Horses. Hail, Perseus Jackson, Son of the Sea God." (*The Lightning Thief*, 126)

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In this one fateful exchange, in the belly of the whale, Percy Jackson, mortal, teen, insecure, Othered poster-child for learning impediments and social pariah, is reborn symbolically, in the whale's belly, in an unfamiliar womb, as the hero, Perseus, a champion. Although he may feel no different initially, it is relevant that Chiron declares: 'It is determined.' Percy's fate has been decided, and he is no longer as he once was. It is significant that immediately after this startling revelation, Percy, who has supposedly been welcomed to Camp Half-Blood by right of the blood of his ancestry and deeds in battle (botched though the battle exercise may have been for his team), is forced to live alone in the Poseidon cabin, and eat alone at the Poseidon dinner table.[6] This effectively distances him from the very people to whom his initiation was supposed to endear him. Robyn McCallum (2013:123) explains this as a 'Focalization' strategy which represents 'both societies as culturally alien, and from this position, the novel represents a negative critique of humanity and the homocentric assumptions which underlie conventional humanist ideas'. This strategy is important in Riordan's development of Percy's character.

In the next stage of the hero journey, Percy travels back and forth between the mortal and immortal world, conquering foes, overcoming tests and answering the question originally posed, 'who am I?' His journey is significant, not only to the characters within the mythology he inhabits, but to Riordan's readers as well. Campbell ([1949] 1993:93) explains:

> The hero whose attachment to ego [has already been annihilated] passes back and forth across the horizons of the world, in and out of the dragon [the whale], as readily as a king through all the rooms of his house. And therein lies his power to save; for his passing and returning demonstrate that through all the contraries of phenomenality the Un-create-Imperishable remains, and there is nothing to fear.

[6] The rules of Camp Half-Blood dictate that children of the gods must stay in a demarcated cabin, each built in dedication to one of the twelve gods of the Greek pantheon. Undetermined children (those not yet claimed by their godly parents) and children of the minor gods are sent to live in the Hermes cabin, because Hermes is the patron god of travellers and offers shelter to those without a home. Similarly, during meal times, the half-bloods are to sit at their cabin's tables only. Percy is the only child of Poseidon at camp (at least initially) and must, therefore, remain isolated.

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Initiation

In the second stage of the hero journey, the stage which is typically the longest and the most adventurous (and often the most interesting to read), the hero faces a number of trials which define his power, his character, and the nature of the boon, the prize or favour which he may ultimately request upon completion of his tasks. Campbell ([1949] 1993:97) notes:

> This is a favourite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world of literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region [the half-blood realm]. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage.

For Percy, both of these possibilities exist. Percy learns, as the story unfolds, that Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, brothers and the three most powerful gods of the Greek pantheon, are threatening each other with a cataclysmic divine war if Zeus' stolen master bolt, his most powerful weapon and symbol of his divine rule, is not returned. Percy, as the son of Poseidon, is accused of the theft, and must venture forth to recover what was stolen and return it, before Olympus itself descends into civil war, tearing asunder the fabric of reality and destroying all mortal life within it. To do so, as is customary before any hero may venture outside Camp Half-Blood, he is required to consult the Oracle of Phoebus Apollo and receive a 'quest'. The quests in Riordan's mythology are delivered by the Oracle of Delphi. Much like the predictions given by the Oracle in classical mythology, Riordan's prophecies are always equivocal passages, and are versed in rhyming couplets which typically are misleading or do not make complete sense until the quest has been completed. Armed with a quest, Percy may leave the comparative safety of the camp to travel along what Campbell ([1949] 1993:97) terms 'The Road of Trials'.

Percy is joined on his 'Road of Trials' not only by Grover, who originally occupied the role of Supernatural Helper and Herald, but also by Annabeth Chase. He is aided by their skills, their affection, and the supernatural powers of their divine ancestry. Grover is skilled at nature magic, allowing him to commune with

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animals and form semi-telepathic emotional links with Percy. Annabeth, as the daughter of Athena, is both intelligent and wise; she formulates the party's battle strategies and often saves their skins when they run into problems that cannot be solved at sword-point. She also guides Percy in his growing understanding of the immortal world, having been part of it for far longer. She possesses a deeper knowledge of the classical mythological stories, which gives her a distinct advantage in dealing with many of the challenges on their 'Road of Trials'. Percy manifests powers which allow for the control and manipulation of water: he is able to breathe underwater, establish telepathic communication with equine animals, and never lose his bearings at sea. Water heals him and provides strength to him. He is aided (or cursed) by dreams, which, variously, supply him with knowledge of his enemies' actions and movements, or allow him to be manipulated into interpreting *truth* in different ways. Always, however, he is shielded by the benign and immutable influence of the prophecy, the 'quest', gifted to him by the Oracle of Delphi.

When Percy meets the Oracle, a desiccated mummy, he sees a vision of his stepfather, Gabe, and Gabe's friends playing a game of poker. They deliver the first prophecy Percy hears in the series:

> My fists clenched, though I knew this poker party couldn't be real. It was an illusion, made out of mist.
> Gabe turned toward me and spoke in the rasping voice of the Oracle: *You shall go west, and face the god who has turned.*
> His buddy on the right looked up and said in the same voice: *You shall find what was stolen, and see it safely returned.*
> The guy on the left threw in two poker chips, then said: *You shall be betrayed by one who calls you friend.*
> Finally, Eddie, our building super, delivered the worst line of all: *And you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end.* (*The Lightning Thief*, 73)

Percy faces many trials. Riordan, aware of the power of mythology and the near-universal appeal of the hero journeys of the ancient Greek heroes, has Percy and his cohorts relive many of the most important and defining occurrences of the classics. As has already been mentioned, Percy relives Theseus' iconic battle with the Minotaur. Similarly, he must overcome the conniving and victimised Medusa (and possibly use her severed head as a weapon) as well as re-enact Orpheus'

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descent into Hades to save the soul of a lost loved-one, complete with crossing the Styx and using subterfuge to bypass Hades' guardian, Cerberus. He must face the terrible Echidna, and is nearly cast into Tartarus through treachery and betrayal. Percy is confused about why these monsters still exist when many of them were defeated by the ancient Greek heroes. Annabeth, who knows far more about the mythological world than Percy does, explains:

> Monsters don't die, Percy. They can be killed. But they don't die.
> ...
> They don't have souls, like you and me. You can dispel them for a while, maybe even for a whole lifetime if you're lucky. But they are primal forces. Chiron calls them archetypes. Eventually, they re-form. (*The Lightning Thief*, 86)

We may wonder why such stories appeal to us as they do, Campbell ([1949] 1993:104) suggests the following answer:

> There can be no question: the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance, we today...must face alone, or, at best, with only tentative, impromptu, and not often very effective guidance. This is our problem as modern, "enlightened" individuals, for whom all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence.

The story of the inception of the Percy Jackson series[7] perfectly supports Campbell's position on the instructive power of mythology, which is explored in more detail in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion in Chapter 5. In what Campbell calls our 'modern' world above, Riordan's breathing new life into old mythology is a significant undertaking.

Campbell ([1949] 1993:110) argues that the goal of the hero, that which he seeks so courageously to attain, is the 'meeting with the goddess'. She is the object of his desire, and the motivation or secret power which lends him aid in his darkest moments: 'She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bridge.' Chapter 3 deals more specifically with criticisms of this statement, but to explore Campbell's contention, we can assign the role of the

[7] See Chapter 4.

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'goddess' to a character within Riordan's mythology, Sally Jackson, his mother. Percy, while nominally accepting the prophecy from the Oracle to return the stolen master bolt, undertakes the quest as a cover to hide the real reason for his desire to abandon Camp Half-Blood: to search for his lost mother, Sally, who has been taken during his battle at the threshold.

Sally is attacked and captured during Percy's battle with the Minotaur. Her supposed death is described as follows: 'Then, with an angry roar, the monster closed his fists around my mother's neck, and she dissolved before my eyes, melting into light, a shimmering golden form' (*The Lightning Thief*, 53). Interpreted as something that could be loosely described as a supernatural goddess, Sally does not die, but is rather only spirited away. Percy, however, misinterprets her dissolving exit and believes her to be dead. He undertakes the quest as a cover to travel to Hades to recover her soul, in a manner meant to resemble the hero journey of Orpheus. She is the goddess, the paragon of all that is good in Percy's life, and the desire for which his heart yearns. 'Time sealed her away,' writes Campbell ([1949] 1993:111), 'yet she is dwelling still, like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea'. In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy is twelve years old and it is significant that, at this stage, the goddess role in the story is played by his mother, and not by an erotic charge as is more commonly found to be the case in adult literature.

While Sally is arguably supplanted as goddess by Rachel Elizabeth Dare and Annabeth Chase in later novels in the series, in some ways Percy's quest to save his mother resembles courtly love. Roger Boase's *Courtly Love* (1986) cites Gaston Paris (1883), who explains *amour courtois* as an idolisation and ennobling discipline, where the idoliser (Percy) tries to make himself worthy of the goddess (Sally) by acting bravely and honourably and by doing deeds which she may require performed, in this case facilitating her rescue.

The fact that courtly love was not considered purely platonic is echoed throughout Campbell's work. Campbell was influenced heavily by the work of Sigmund

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Freud[8] and ascribes a possible Oedipal motivation to the hero's pursuit of the goddess, writing that the goddess may be 'the desired but forbidden mother (Oedipus complex) whose presence is a lure to dangerous desire (castration complex)' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:111). In *The Lightning Thief*, however, the goddess takes on a benign personality and is 'the comforting, the nourishing, the "good" mother – young and beautiful' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:111). This significance is possibly best explained by the revelation of the final line of Percy's prophecy, '*you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end*': Percy cannot save Sally from Hades, she must be left behind.[9] His desire for the goddess is platonic and free of an erotic component. This marks a possible divergence from Campbell's formula for the hero journey.

Sally is being held hostage by Hades, as a bargaining chip with which Percy is to be manipulated. The very strength of his desire to rescue his mother is exactly what Hades believes will allow him to bend Percy to his will, and force him to sacrifice the stolen master bolt, for it is an even greater bargaining chip with which Hades seeks to manipulate all of Mount Olympus. Chiron explains the master bolt's significance:

> "Zeus' master bolt," Chiron said, getting worked up now. "The symbol of his power, from which all other lightning bolts are patterned. The first weapon made by the Cyclopes for the war against the Titans, the bolt that sheered the top off Mount Etna and hurled Kronos from his throne; the master bolt, which packs enough power to make mortal hydrogen bombs look like firecrackers." (*The Lightning Thief*, 135)

While the theft of such a weapon would be significant on its own, we may readily assume that the theft of that particular symbol is no accident on Riordan's part. Campbell ([1949] 1993:87) writes: 'The thunderbolt...is one of the major symbols in Buddhist iconography, signifying power of the Buddhahood (indestructible enlightenment) which shatters the illusory realities of the world.' He relates how

[8] The introduction to *A Hero With A Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1993) begins with a quote by Freud. Campbell ([1949] 1993:4) also writes, 'Most remarkable of all, however, are the revelations that have emerged from the mental clinic. The bold and truly epoch-making writings of the psycho-analysts are indispensable to the student of mythology'– he is speaking here of Freud and Jung in particular.
[9] She is later released by Hades as thanks for the return of his item of power, the Helm of Darkness.

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from its early origins the lightning bolt was assimilated and adopted by Zeus in Greek mythology. The lightning bolt then is useful and has a multiplicity of symbolic significances. Firstly, it is the symbol of Zeus' power in Riordan's mythology and is the powerful focus of Percy's quest. Secondly, it symbolises the theft of something precious, in the case of the novel, it represents an injustice against what was previously believed to be an omnipresent power, who now requires the aid of a demigod. Thirdly, it symbolises enlightenment or true understanding, which Percy must attain if he is to survive and succeed. It is significant then for this final aspect of the master bolt, 'indestructible enlightenment', that Percy unknowingly carries the master bolt with him to Hades. The bolt has been given to Percy without his realising it. This echoes the previously mentioned internalised and personalised nature of the heroic journey which Percy undertakes.

Percy achieves two significant moments of enlightenment, or understanding, in this section of the novel. Firstly, he learns that he must knowingly sacrifice his mother's soul to the control of Hades to thwart Hades' ability to manipulate Olympus. He must also intentionally abandon what he believed to be the prime goal or motivation for undertaking his quest. After 'meeting with the goddess', he must abandon her, choosing the needs of the many who would be destroyed in the war of the gods over the pressing needs of his own desire. He fails in his own quest, in order to succeed in the Oracle's, fulfilling the final line of the prophecy, '*And you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end*'. Secondly, he gains knowledge of his true parentage and he begins to realise what his role as a demigod hero within the multiverse is, and what sacrifices being such a hero may require. Additionally, he gains knowledge of his true enemy, Kronos, who is re-forming in Tartarus. Kronos becomes the series' principal antagonist in the remaining four novels.

Enlightenment, or true understanding of oneself, is often the prize of the hero journey. It is symbolically significant then that the master bolt, the 'indestructible enlightenment' which Percy unknowingly seeks, is with him already, without his knowing it; he has carried it with him all along. It could be argued that part of Percy's power, and of the powers which benignly shield him throughout his hero

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journey, is provided by the master bolt, however, Riordan, in a master stroke of didactic writing, pens a hero who relies not solely on the power of the gods, or the known or unknown boons of their benevolence, but rather also on the aid of his friends and the triumphant, triumvirate power of their fellowship. Percy, keeper of 'indestructible enlightenment', overcomes the temptation to retain the weapon or sacrifice it for his mother's life, and returns the master bolt to Zeus in the novel's dénouement, much like Digory who overcomes the temptation of eating the fruit at the behest of Empress Jadis.[10] Both feel, at the time, that the successful completion of their mission is contingent on their willingness to sacrifice a loved one (in Digory's case – his aunt). Both are, of course, mistaken. In a symbolic sense, the knowledge, the 'indestructible enlightenment', is and was within Percy, and the master bolt is relinquished, drained perhaps of its divine power, relegated back to its role as simply a symbol.

At some stage, after one or a number of trials have been faced and overcome, when the hero has met the goddess and, in some journeys, eluded the temptress, the hero must undergo 'atonement with the father'. This phase of the journey is often implied to be a spiritual or symbolic atonement, but in Percy's journey, it is remarkably concrete. Having discovered the truth about Zeus' master bolt, the final trial Percy must face is returning it to Zeus, who resides on Mount Olympus, the centre of the immortal realm. Here, when one may reasonably expect that Percy's trials are over and his journey may move onto the third of the nuclear constituents, he must first meet his true father and confront his inner demons. Campbell ([1949] 1993:147) describes the meeting with the father thus:

> The problem of the hero going to meet his father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its particular blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands – and the two are atoned.

Riordan describes the scene of Percy's crucial first meeting with Poseidon:

> I approached the fisherman's throne and knelt at his feet. "Father." I dared not look up. I could feel the energy emanating from the two

[10] See C.S Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew* ([1955] 2002:149-151).

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> gods. If I said the wrong thing, I had no doubt they could blast me to dust.
> To my left, Zeus spoke. "Should you not address the master of this house first, boy?"
> I kept my head down, and waited.
> "Peace, brother," Poseidon finally said. His voice stirred my oldest memories: that warm glow I remembered as a baby, the sensation of this God's hand on my forehead. "The boy defers to his father. This is only right."
> ...
> "Perseus," Poseidon said. "Look at me."
> I did, and I wasn't sure what I saw in his face. There was no clear sign of love or approval. Nothing to encourage me. It was like looking at the ocean: some days, you could tell what mood it was in. Most days, though, it was unreadable.
> I got the feeling Poseidon really didn't know what to think of me. He didn't know whether he was happy to have me as a son or not. (*The Lightning Thief*, 340-341)

Percy, as a child of one of the 'big three' (Poseidon, Zeus and Hades) is barred from existing by an agreement the three gods created to prevent the cataclysmic fulfilment of the 'Great Prophecy', which forms the basis of the remaining plot of the Olympians saga. Percy, aware of this, and aware of the very real possibility of his death being the reward for the completion of his quest, is in particular need of what Campbell calls 'atonement'. His very existence is an unanswered question, in defiance of Campbell's 'majesty of Being' for he has been born as the product of a crime against the agreement and is called a wrongdoing: 'Wrongdoing. A lump welled in my throat. Was that all I was? A wrongdoing? The result of a God's mistake?' (*The Lightning Thief*, 341). As indicated by Campbell above, Percy's is literally a crisis of 'Being', for his 'atonement' with the father is not just needed to validate the 'sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos' in the 'majesty of Being', but, in a more concrete sense, to allow him to continue being, which requires Poseidon to confront the Greek pantheon.

Moments after he is told by Zeus that, despite his being a danger to existence itself, and despite the laws forbidding his continued living, he will be spared, Percy learns from his father that Hades has released Sally from the underworld. Despite having sacrificed the chance to save her in favour of completing the quest,

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Percy has Sally restored to him,[11] although she is forever held apart from his reality by her mortality. Attaining her freedom from the underworld was his original goal, and he has won her life by the deeds of his hands, but she is forever denied him as they now inhabit two separate spheres of existence, which can cross over and overlap, but which must of necessity exist in parallel. Poseidon then seems to dismiss Percy, calling him an unforgivable mistake. He says, with no small amount of dramatic irony, 'I have bought you a hero's fate, and a hero's fate is never happy. It is never anything but tragic' (*The Lightning Thief*, 346). Percy, understandably shaken, and not having yet 'atoned' to his father, is about to leave when we read:

> I was five steps away when he called, "Perseus."
> I turned.
> There was a different light in his eyes, a fiery kind of pride. "You did well, Perseus. Do not misunderstand me. Whatever else you do, know that you are mine. You are a true son of the Sea God."
> As I walked back through the city of the gods, conversations stopped. The muses paused their concert. People and satyrs and naiads all turned towards me, their faces filled with respect and gratitude, and as I passed, they knelt, as if I were some kind of hero. (*The Lightning Thief*, 364)

The final two stages of the second part of the hero journey are 'Apotheosis' and 'The Ultimate Boon'. While the word apotheosis normally refers to deification or glorifying of the subject to divine levels, Campbell uses the normally theological term in a new sense. Campbell asserts that 'Apotheosis' is the expansion of consciousness or enlightenment that the hero achieves after defeating his foe. This defeat of the foe could signal the end of the 'Road of Trials', or signify the final stage of the journey before the hero is awarded his prize. By defeating his foe, the hero glimpses a deeper truth and his consciousness is expanded to include previously hidden knowledge. Campbell ([1949] 1993:167) describes those who have achieved 'Apotheosis' as the 'immortals', writing:

> Those who know, not only that the Everlasting lives in them, but that what they, and all things really are *is* the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish-fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord. These are the immortals.

[11] Digory's aunt is also restored to health by the power of Aslan and the fruit.

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The immortality of which Campbell speaks may not be immortality as we typically understand it. The 'Everlasting' of which he speaks refers to the understanding that we are all connected to a world soul, a deeper connection to the spirit abiding. However, in a concrete sense, the brew of immortality is the ambrosia that the gods and demigods in Riordan's mythology consume. The apotheosis too that a hero such as Hercules achieves is the literal everlasting life of the gods. In Riordan's novels we see both interpretations of this apotheosis, for Percy does come to deeper understanding. In connecting with the immortals around him, he discovers his true, divine father, and acknowledges the divinity in his blood through 'atonement' to Poseidon. He accepts his place in his existence and realises that everything, including he himself, is divine because it touches the divine. However, at the end of the complete Olympians saga, after the fulfilment of the Great Prophecy, he is also offered immortality and a seat among the Greek pantheon. The understanding the hero receives, or if he selects it, immortality, are both forms of the final part of the hero's Initiation stage: the Ultimate Boon.

In his subsection 'The Ultimate Boon', Campbell describes the various ways in which the hero, after defeating his foe and undergoing apotheosis, may receive a boon from the divine powers. Often, as described previously, this boon takes the form of immortality: 'The supreme boon desired for the Indestructible Body is uninterrupted residence in the Paradise of the Milk that Never Fails' (Campbell, [1949] 1993:176). However, Campbell ([1949] 1993:182) asserts that such a boon is not always freely given and must sometimes be earned despite the power of the divines, through trickery: '[T]he gods may be oversevere [sic], overcautious, in which case the hero must trick them out of their treasure.' Neither of these two options applies to the hero journey of Percy in *The Lightning Thief*, however, for in that novel, Percy is not given the boon of everlasting life, nor given a boon of his choosing, he is allowed only to go on living as a mortal. He is also not in a position to trick anything out of the gods, for indeed they have nothing material that he desires. Campbell ([1949] 1993:189) explains that the nature of the boon is closely related to the desires and character of its recipient:

> The boon bestowed on the worshipper is always scaled to his stature and to the nature of his dominant desire: the boon is simply a symbol of life energy stepped down to the requirements of a certain specific

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> case. The irony, of course, lies in the fact that, whereas the hero who has won the favor of the god may beg for the boon of perfect illumination, what he generally seeks are longer years to live, weapons with which to slay his neighbour, or the health of a child.

Generally speaking then, the hero, confronted with the possibility of divine understanding, is nonetheless consumed by the needs of his mortality and chooses a boon as reward which assists him only in furthering his seemingly petty goals, in the flesh. The model with which we are presented *The Lightning Thief* seems most closely to resemble this final case: Percy's desires are also of the flesh, and they are variously met by the boons given to him. Previously, Percy had no knowledge of his true parentage, nor did he have a relationship with his father. This is given to him. Percy's quest was to seek his mother's soul in Hades and restore her to life. This too is allowed to take place, for Hades releases Sally from imprisonment. In addition, while we may interpret 'longer years to live' as life extended beyond what is normally allowed, it could just as accurately describe Percy's situation, for his life is literally a breach of the godly agreement. He should not exist at all. He is, however, allowed to continue to exist, despite this breach in the agreement, and his years are extended by what would normally be allowed for a child of one of the 'Big Three'. He is not offered immortality (at this stage), but rather, a life which would otherwise be denied to him.

Return

Campbell ([1949] 1993:193) begins the final part of his explanation of the monomyth with the following paragraph:

> When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.

While the 'life-transmuting trophy' is often a physical item, such as the Golden Fleece, which is indeed brought back to the camp in *The Sea of Monsters* to heal a sick tree which renews and protects the community of Camp Half-Blood, it does

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not have to be only physical in nature. Nor does the hero have to return to 'humanity' in the strictest of senses. Often, the trophy as Campbell describes it is profound, life-altering enlightenment or knowledge, such as that brought by prophets or religious figures to their communities to shape their ability to attain their own deliverance. An additional complicating factor is that it happens in the monomyth structure that sometimes the hero, having transcended normal reality, and having stepped beyond the bounds of the world and glimpsed the divine, is unwilling to abandon this reality and return to a mundane existence surrounded by a community or world which may or may not believe his tale, may or may not accept his teachings and may or may not willingly allow his re-integration into their society. This uncertainty can result in the hero's refusing to return.

Campbell describes different instances of the form this return can take. He explains that if the hero has attained a physical trophy against the wishes of its owner (possibly through trickery, as described above) the return may take the form of a flight, or chase, which is often comical in nature. While it is true of *The Lightning Thief* that Percy has a trophy of sorts (the head of the gorgon Medusa), no god on Olympus opposes his ownership of the head and, therefore, he is not required to flee the realm of the gods, comically or otherwise. It is also significant that Medusa's head is a prize of victory, for Percy has defeated her in combat, not a 'boon' conferred on him by the gods.

The second form of the return is the 'Rescue from Without'. In the second instance, the hero must be summoned again by the world without. Campbell ([1949] 1993:207) explains the motivations of the hero: 'For the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state'. Percy is not given the option of remaining in Olympus in *The Lightning Thief*, however, nor is he given the option of being transported to his father's submarine kingdom; even when Percy later visits this, he is not allowed to remain there. He has no need then to be summoned by the world from without. In Campbell's monomyth, the hero must return to his previous world, or reality. This is not a simple issue in Riordan's mythology, however. To which world is Percy to return? With which *humanity* is Percy to share his life-altering knowledge? Percy inhabits an unfortunate space, being neither a full part of the demigod

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world, nor a full part of the mortal world. In both cases the blood of Poseidon separates him from the others around him. Percy must return to both, and bestow his understanding equally. Upon completion of his quest and return to the camp, Percy is hailed as a hero. However, although there is superficial acceptance, Riordan is quick to reinforce Percy's separation, this time as a physical distancing of Percy from his new-found family. Riordan describes the scene, and Percy's deep-set inner conflict:

> I'm not sure I'd ever felt as happy or sad as I did at that moment. I'd finally found a family, people who cared about me and thought I'd done something right. And in the morning, most of them would be leaving for the year.
> ...
> For the first time at camp, I felt truly alone. (*The Lightning Thief*, 359, 375)

Despite returning to the demigod world and Camp Half-Blood, he is nonetheless still isolated and alone. Physically separated from the others, he is also emotionally distanced, for he is now a hero who has successfully completed a major prophecy-associated quest, whereas the majority of his peers have not; they remain merely demigods. He is also still the son of Poseidon and technically should not exist because of the danger he poses to all existence; the Great Prophecy warns of the danger posed by the children of the Big Three. Percy must still stay alone in his cabin, eat alone at the Poseidon table, and train alone at the camp. Moreover, he may not remain at the camp indefinitely. Percy must also return home, to his mortal realm.

Early in the novel it is explained that demigods in the mortal realm exude a 'smell' which draws monsters and adventure nearer. For this reason, they need to go to Camp Half-Blood, not only to learn battle tactics and survival skills, but also for the protection of the mortals around them who are ill-equipped to deal with monsters such as the Minotaur, Cyclopes, the hydra and other mythological dangers. When Sally first explains to Percy that she has to send him away, we read:

> My mom's eyes welled with tears. She took my hand, squeezed it tight. "Oh, Percy, no. I-I *have* to, honey. For your own good. I have to send you away."

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...
"Because I'm not normal," I said.
"You say that as if it's a bad thing, Percy. But you don't realize how important you are. I thought Yancy Academy would be far enough away. I thought you'd finally be safe."
"Safe from what?"
She met my eyes, and a flood of memories can back to me – all the weird, scary things that had ever happened to me, some of which I'd tried to forget. (*The Lightning Thief*, 39-40)

Percy's return then, as noted above, is complicated by his indecision regarding which home it is to which he wishes to return. The choice which Percy must ultimately make in the novel's conclusion is one of belonging: he feels that he must either choose to be a hero and accept the solitude and loneliness such a life entails, as well as the emotional, social and physical distance it creates between him and Sally; or he must remain in the mortal realm with his mother, never tasting again the sweet fruit of adventure, and possibly being a very real threat to his mother's safety. Here he may enjoy closeness with his mother and his real family, but his life could be termed a mere existence in which he will forever be tormented by very real regret at never having tried to answer the question, 'what if?' How could mortal reality, with its schools, ADHD and dyslexia, Othering and lack of adventure, ever hope to compare to a demigod existence? Anticipating the need for this decision, before departing Olympus, Poseidon speaks to Percy:

Poseidon's eyes took on a little sadness. "When you return home, Percy, you must make an important choice. You will find a package waiting in your room."
"A package?"
"You will understand when you see it. No one can choose your path, Percy. You must decide."
I nodded, though I didn't know what he meant.
...
"I am sorry you were born, child. I have brought you a hero's fate, and a hero's fate is never happy. It is never anything but tragic." (*The Lightning Thief*, 346)

This issue of the hero's fate 'never [being] anything but tragic' is significant because, as Campbell ([1949] 1993:206-207) notes:

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> The myths of failure touch us with the tragedy of life, but those of success only with their own incredibility. And yet, if the monomyth is to fulfil its promise, not human failure or superhuman success, but human success is what we shall have to be shown. That is the problem of the crisis of the threshold of return[12].

When Percy returns to his mother's Manhattan apartment and finds his step-father still abusing his mother, his goddess whom he has rescued from Hades, he is reminded of the trophy of Medusa's head. It is the package of which Poseidon speaks, and represents for Percy the crisis at the threshold of return. As the first crossing of the threshold began the hero's journey, so too the return crossing of the threshold is a significant ending point, signalling the imminent conclusion of the journey. Percy realises that his choice could affect the people around him whom he loves. Percy desperately wants to save his mother from the torment of her marriage to an abusive husband. They have a crucial conversation relating to the trophy Percy brings back to the mortal world:

> "Mom, just tell me. That jerk has been hitting you. Do you want him gone or not?"
> She hesitated, then nodded almost imperceptibly. "Yes, Percy. I do. And I'm trying to get up the courage to tell him. But you can't do this for me. You can't solve my problems."
> I looked at the box.
> I *could* solve her problem. I wanted to slice that package open, plop it on the poker table, and take out what was inside.
> ...
> That's what a Greek hero would do in the stories, I thought. That's what Gabe deserves.
> But a hero's story always ended in tragedy. Poseidon had told me that. (*The Lightning Thief*, 351)

Percy's choice is significant then because it represents the supernatural success of which Campbell writes. Campbell ([1949] 1993:218) explains the fundamental crisis of the returning hero:

> How teach again, however, what has been taught correctly and incorrectly learned a thousand thousand times, throughout the millenniums of mankind's prudent folly? That is the hero's ultimate difficult task. How render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark? How represent on a two-

[12] Campbell goes on to analyse the situation in terms of its symbols, but notes, crucially, that the event, regardless of which symbols it utilises, nonetheless is important for its 'practical teaching for historic man'. This practical teaching aspect is relevant to the conclusion of this study.

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> dimensional surface a three-dimensional form, or in a three-dimensional image a multi-dimensional meaning? How translate into terms of "yes" and "no" revelations that shatter into meaninglessness every attempt to define the pairs of opposites? How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void?

For Percy to take his mother's marital problems into his own hands would resolve the problem, to be sure, but would leave us as readers unmoved (and Sally unchanged), for the very reason that Percy is no longer simply human. He, having returned from a transcendental journey, is something more now, something greater and more powerful, and his undertaking to solve the problems of those around him would rob them of the opportunity to grow for themselves. It would also rob us, as recipients of the story, of the practical teaching the story is meant to deliver, as indicated by footnoted 12.

In this decision we see clearly one of the many ways in which Riordan subverts the expectations of the formulaic hero journey. Riordan reveals here an original take on what is, and what is not, heroic responsibility. Percy is literally faced with the decision of choosing to be like the heroes of old, whose stories are 'never anything but tragic', or choosing to be something new, possibly even something better. Considering not only how well the series follows Campbell's formula, but how it diverges from it, is what makes this study significant. Percy's decision here, to deny heroic action and responsibility in favour of allowing his mother to become the hero of her own story is a significant departure from the expectations of the monomyth and is central to the understanding of Riordan's subversion discussed in the next subsection of the chapter.

Percy offers to rid Sally of Gabe forever, despite his misgivings. She, however, is not willing to allow him to do so, favouring taking charge of her own story:

> She wiped a tear off her cheek. "You sound so much like your father," she said. "He offered to stop the tide for me once. He offered to build me a palace at the bottom of the sea. He thought he could solve all my problems with wave of his hand."
>
> "What's wrong with that?"
>
> Her multicolored eyes seemed to search inside me. "I think you know, Percy. I think you're enough like me to understand. If my life is going to mean anything, I have to live it myself. I can't let a god take

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> care of me...or my son. I have to...find the courage on my own. Your quest has reminded me of that."
> ...
> A steely look of anger flared in my mother's eyes, and I thought, just maybe, I was leaving her in good hands after all. Her own. (*The Lightning Thief*, 352)

Wonderfully, we are given in *The Lightning Thief* the 'human success' of which Campbell wrote. Thereby the practical lessons, the lessons mythology is meant to teach those who brave its narratives, are made accessible to us as readers, as they were made accessible to Sally. We learn, as does she, that the hero, returned from his journey, cannot solve the problems of those he has come to instruct, he can only show us the path that we ourselves must inevitably walk on our own. Our task is to learn the lessons or grow in benefit by the power of the boon or trophy brought back from the adventure. Sally does this, using the head of Medusa to destroy her husband Gabe and free herself from his bondage. It is relevant to this interpretation that Robyn McCallum (2013:78) writes that 'the fantasy world functions primarily as a place in which [one] is able to achieve the position of intersubjectivity and agency which is denied in the real world…the relationship between the two worlds is to some extent allegorical'. While she may be speaking of the world of the reader and the world of the fantastic within a novel, her point is equally valid in relation to Percy's fantasy world of demigods and heroes and his real world. It is also equally evident that the relationship between those two worlds is exceptionally allegorical, for Percy's ability to walk between them at will is instructive to us as readers, and particularly so for adolescent readers. Percy has to master this relationship.

For the hero, Percy, the task is to become the 'Master of the Two Worlds'. Campbell ([1949] 1993:228) notes:

> Forces, however, will have been set in motion beyond the reckoning of the senses. Sequences of events from the corners of the world will draw gradually together, and miracles of coincidence bring the inevitable to pass. The talismanic ring from the soul's encounter with its other portion in the place of recollectedness betokens that the heart was there aware ... [of] ... a conviction of the waking mind that the reality of the deep is not belied by that of the common day. This is the sign of the hero's requirement, now, to knit together his two worlds.

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Part of the success of this knitting together is the realisation that Percy (and we as readers) do not have to choose between the different worlds (whether two in Campbell's case, or three in Riordan's) at all because they all are, in fact, one. Campbell ([1949] 1993:217) reminds us that '[n]evertheless – and here is the great key to the understanding of myth and symbol – the two kingdoms are actually one', connected and inseparable. Percy's mastery of the worlds he inhabits takes on a more concrete meaning than is explained by Campbell. For he, like heroes such as J.K. Rowling's (1997) Harry Potter, must travel regularly between the worlds. One can also compare him to J.R.R. Tolkien's (1977) outcast Eldar, who are refused re-entry to Valinor, and have to be delivered by Eärendil the mariner who, afterward, cannot travel back to his home, and Tolkien's (1965) Frodo, who is removed from Middle Earth to forever reside with the Valar. Lewis's (1950, 1951, 1952) Pevensie children are only summoned to Narnia through the wardrobe or the painting. By contrast, Percy and Harry Potter (and many heroes besides) do not find themselves so restricted. Percy, and demigods like him, can access Camp Half-Blood during the year when they are not at school, and equally, may access Olympus via the elevator in the Empire State building. After having endured and succeeded in his quest, Percy realises that the worlds may just be different geographical areas. While it is true that he feels sadness because he does not inhabit any single one of those areas exclusively, he comes to realise that he does, in fact, inhabit all three simultaneously. The bridge of his understanding collapses the separation between the worlds, and his easy transference between them, on a regular basis, allows those around him to also learn Campbell's 'practical lesson' of the mastery of the worlds.

The final stage in the hero journey is titled 'Freedom to live'. Campbell ([1949] 1993:238) rightly asks: 'What, now, is the result of the miraculous passage and return?' Percy is given the freedom to live, in the literal physical sense, by Zeus when he visits Olympus. However, being allowed to live, and choosing to live as a hero, are two very different things. This is especially true for Percy, who needs to decide (as indicated previously) whether he will continue to live simply as boy/man, simply as a hero doomed to a tragic fate, or as a world-redeeming traveller who can bridge the separation between the worlds and master them both. Campbell ([1949] 1993:243) notes:

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> The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he *is*...He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment...as destroying the permanent with its change...thus the next moment is permitted to come to pass.

Percy, at the end of his journey in *The Lightning Thief*, looks out self-reflectively from Camp Half-Blood at the ocean, the symbol of his heritage, his power, his troubles, and his new life and he muses:

> I looked out at Long Island Sound and I remembered my father saying, *The sea does not like to be restrained*.
> I made my decision.
> I wondered, if Poseidon were watching, would he approve of my choice?
> "I'll be back next summer," I promised him. "I'll survive until then. After all, I am your son." I asked Argus to take me down to cabin three, so I could pack my bags for home. (*The Lightning Thief*, 375)

Percy realises that his choice does not need to be a definitive 'one or the other'. Instead, he chooses to live *now* as the threshold-crossing saviour, master of the two worlds. He is not fearful of the 'the next moment...destroying the permanent with its change'. He realises his choice is one that he will make many times again and he thus attains, not only the 'Freedom to Live', but, more importantly, the freedom to live *as he chooses.* His decision, as indicated above, is significant in the context of the next part of the chapter, 'Subversion', because it is the first foreshadowing that Percy's decision – to simply survive as best he can – amounts very largely to the decision *not* to be the hero, and avoid a hero's tragic fate; clearly, this could be construed as an unique interpretation or re-imagining of the hero's journey.

Subversion

Scholars such as Camille Hayward (1987:97) have asserted that, fundamentally, a narrative needs only a few composite elements to be a heroic journey: 'The elements are: a hero, a journey, a test, the conquering of the guardians of the sought object, and the existence of characters who come to the hero's aid.' From my close study of *The Lightning Thief* above, it is clear that, measured by those criteria, the novel is generally formulaic and could rightly be classified as a

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relatively accurate retelling of the hero's journey. It largely fits the pattern outlined in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell, [1949] 1993) and many of the apparent minor inconsistencies can be readily accounted for by a close reading of Campbell. The satisfaction gained from such a study of adherence to a formula is in seeing the required elements from the story delivered and realised by an author, as Hayward (1987) shows is the case in her study of the novels of Maurice Sendak, *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963), *In The Night Kitchen* (1970) and *Outside Over There* (1981).

However, given that authors and novelists may be equally aware of such studies and that the composite requirements of Campbell's hero journey have pervaded so much popular media, it becomes equally interesting and rewarding to analyse the manner in which the hero journey may be altered, adapted or even subverted. Matt Ridley (2003:20) writes: 'Surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, is more informative than predictability.' This is as true for his study of genetics as it is for Riordan's novels. As noted previously, Riordan (2008c) displays in the introduction to *Demigods and Monsters*, of which he was the co-editor, that he is aware that his work was going to be subjected to serious literary criticism; the book itself is a collection of scholarly essays on his novels. He self-deprecatingly attempts to downplay the significance of such criticism by using as his epigraph to the introduction the famous 'Notice' with which Mark Twain ([1885] 2004:n.p.) prefaced the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

> Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.
>
> BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Under the heading 'The Power of Myth', Riordan comments: 'You would be hard-pressed to find any work of English literature that does not draw to some extent on classical mythology, whether it's the hero's quest or allusions to the Olympians' (Riordan, 2008c:viii). While Campbell might perhaps not have agreed that classical Greek mythology was the origin of the hero's quest, this statement nevertheless serves as notable evidence that Riordan was to some extent aware of the notion of the hero journey and its composite parts as a literary concept. Both the hero journey itself, as realised in Riordan's novels, and what I show is

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Riordan's subversion of it, become rewarding fields of study. Through this meditative contemplation, the foundation text by Campbell, as well as Riordan's saga, may be better understood and enjoyed. René Girard (1965:23), in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, explains this, noting: 'The very idea of mediation encourages literary comparisons at a level which is no longer that of *genre* criticism or thematic criticism…It may illuminate the works through each other.' This mediation, and its subsequent illumination, is one of the goals of my study.

Subversions of the hero journey are important to note because any definitive understanding of a hero journey is highly problematic. A large body of literary criticism surrounds Campbell's version of the hero journey and critics have considered why it may be anachronistic, or even incorrect. Some argue that the hero journey model is incorrectly applied to novels or religions (Harris *et al.*, 1991; Friedman, 1998; Segal, 1999). Many feel that the heroic journey model is too exclusive of certain social group or demographics, most notably women (Kirk, 2006; Lichtman, 1991; Pearson and Pope, 1981). [13] Others feel that the hero journey model is too inclusive, and needs to be further subdivided into separate archetype journeys (Vogel, 1974). This study then shares a number of points with those mentioned.

However, simple awareness of the criticisms is not the primary concern of the study. Rather, given that Riordan, a modern and successful author, was aware of Campbell's model, it is possible to argue that his unique adaptations and re-imaginings constitute a deliberate attempt to subvert some of the monomyth's expectations. Perhaps this is indicative of the realisation that our understandings of concepts such as *hero* (Jolley, 2007) and *journey* (Vogel, 1974) are not immutable, or even readily recognisable. Such terms must be defined and then challenged, and ultimately redefined by careful analysis of the texts which seek to illuminate them, in open communication between reader and text.

[13] This criticism is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

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McCallum (2013:24-25) highlights the interconnectivity of reader and character, discussing polyphonic texts. Riordan's texts appear to show this polyphony, given that an older Percy Jackson narrates the story, from a first person past tense perspective, although Percy's adolescent voice is still clearly evident in the manner of the retelling. McCallum (2013:68) explains:

> The commonplace notion of "finding one's self" underlying the idea of the formation of subjectivity as a quest for stable identity has clear ideological and teleological representations which are interrogated and subverted through their dialogic representations…The disparity between the object of the quest and its representation within the narrative discourse implies a dialogue between the idea of the selfhood of an individual as constructed within a series of provisional subject positions via specific social and discursive practises, and the self as unique and essential entity which exists prior to and in opposition to society.

This disparity is of paramount importance to Percy as a character who, as I have shown, is torn between the needs of subjectivity drawing him towards a narrative character archetype of the hero and what McCallum (2013:68) terms the more 'unique, singular and essential self', which may defy character tropes and archetypes, and which 'underlies a person's own sense of, or more specifically desire for, a single and stable personal identity within, and in relation, to the world and to others' (McCallum, 2013:68).

Before delving into some of the deviations and subversions of the hero journey, it seems worth noting that the viewing of discrepancies in the formulas in this study is by no means definitive or conclusive. It would be all too easy to wrestle and deform a text into a given model, to suit one's own needs. Thomas van Northwick (1992:184) warns against this in his own study: 'Supposing we *are* guilty of reading … in a distorting way that suits our needs, we only confirm one of the central lessons that these works teach as [we] read them: the objective world is very much more a product of our subjective ways of seeing them than we like to admit.' John Stephens (1992:207) has also noted this, saying: 'Notions of the "universality of human experience"…may amount to no more than the matter of re-presenting the past in our own image.' M.J. Clarke's (1993:69) assertion in response, that to dismiss all readings as purely personal and subjective is 'unnecessarily defeatist', is a hopeful reminder, however, that while subjectivity

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in this case is intrinsically unavoidable, this study seeks only to postulate that Riordan's changes to the hero journey might not be entirely unintentional, and may be instructive, as well as entertaining. They need not necessarily be universally applicable. The idea is to show that Riordan is, as Brian Boyd (2003:216-217), quoting Irene de Jong (1999:7) and Mark Edwards (1987:1), respectively, writes, 'an author "who is not subordinated to his tradition, but master of it," able to use, ignore, violate or transcend his "inherited techniques…as he wishes"'.

Percy's decision in the conclusion of *The Lightning Thief* is significant because Riordan (2008c) relates in his introduction to *Demigods and Monsters* that he was not convinced of the success of the Percy Jackson mythology. As it stood then, at the time of writing, Riordan did not know whether the saga would continue or not. Crucially then, this left the reader with something of a cliff-hanger, in that Percy had made his decision, as described previously, but the import of that decision, indeed what it *actually* meant, had not yet fully been realised or revealed. In this regard, it is relevant that Boyd (2009:169) writes: 'As both tellers and listeners, we use narrative strategically…We may wish to tell a story in order to move our listeners to a particular conclusion – and we might recall that the art of rhetoric was considered the core of formal education in the West for two millennia. And we may wish to reshape of even *invent* a story to stir exactly the response we seek.' It appears evident that Riordan did exactly that. As McCallum (2013:84) notes, '[t]he resolution to the quest is ambivalent'. While McCallum is referring in general to all texts, her sentiment is doubly true in Riordan's case for, while Percy has indeed completed a quest in *The Lightning Thief*, there remains the unfinished saga, the resolution of which was then still undecided.

Riordan intentionally completed the first novel in a manner in which the resolution of Percy's quest is incomplete, perhaps to bolster sales, or perhaps because his work with the hero journey was not yet finished. There are hints throughout the first text that Luke, the novel's primary antagonist, is merely being used by Kronos, and that Percy is the subject of a greater and longer prophecy which must still be fulfilled. Indeed, the Fates, who previously severed the life

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string, would have had to be forgotten had the saga not continued, for Percy does not die as he expected, and the Fates cannot be wrong.

For the purposes of this study then, the series needs to be considered in two separate parts. The initial novel, *The Lightning Thief*, which has been shown to be fairly close approximation of the hero journey, and then the other four novels, *The Sea of Monsters*, *The Titan's Curse*, *The Battle of the Labyrinth* and *The Last Olympian*, which together constitute a different journey altogether. Suffusing each of the later texts, as is the case in the first, are prophecies. (The Delphic Oracle's prophecies invariably provide the impetus for the heroes to travel out of Camp Half-Blood on their adventures.)

Notably, however, starting with *The Sea of Monsters*, none of the remaining four prophecies, nor indeed their resultant quests, are Percy's. While Percy accompanies the various heroic groups in each novel, none of the prophecies are given to him. This immediately removes Percy from a leadership role within his peer group. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Riordan writes of Annabeth's role at Camp Half-Blood: 'No one questioned her right to lead' (55). None but the last prophecy even deals with Percy in any specific capacity. Instead the remaining prophecies are all given to women, and Percy is in some sense very much a passenger in the adventures that ensue. Although he clearly remains the protagonist and the final four novels continue to use him as a focaliser, Percy resolves very few of the crises which they encounter. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Annabeth saves the camp from the Stymphalian birds, leads the party through the Sea of Monsters, rescues Percy from C.C. (*The Odyssey's* Circe,[14] now owner of a feminine health spa), has herself tied to the mast of the ship when passing the sirens and tricks Polyphemus the Cyclops.

[14] Riordan interprets C.C. as a daughter of Hecate, in accordance with accounts by Smith (1873) and Grimal (1996) which differ from Homer's accounts in A.T. Murray's translation of *The Odyssey* (1919). Using this account is an intriguing interpretation given that C.C. is now also a demigod, a peer to Percy and Annabeth, one who holds grudges against male demigods because of her treatment by Odysseus.

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Notably, after her encounter with the sirens, Annabeth reveals that her 'fatal flaw is hubris' (*The Sea of Monsters*, 199), a flaw traditionally shown in male heroes. Further underscoring the distinction between Percy's lack of heroic qualities in the second novel and Annabeth's unquestioned right to lead and be in charge, once the group has attained Jason's Golden Fleece, Percy chooses to not return the sacred item to Camp Half-Blood, and become the master of two worlds. Instead, Clarisse, the daughter of Ares, whose prophecy it originally was, is given the honour to make the journey. Percy submits to the realisation that this quest is Clarisse's and his part in it is done; he tells her: 'It's your quest' (*The Sea of Monsters*, 235). He then loses his second contest of arms to Luke, ending the novel not looking a great deal like a hero at all.

The third novel, *The Titan's Curse*, appears to continue this determined effort at underscoring Percy's relative unimportance, despite his being the series' protagonist. Frustrated by his inability to help his friends, Percy this time breaks camp rules and seeks out the Oracle, attempting to gain a prophecy in spite of the camp director and Chiron. He is steadfastly ignored by the Oracle, who instead delivers the prophecy to Zoë Nightshade, who later turns out to be the daughter of the Titan Atlas, and who forms a party to undertake the quest, a party from which Percy is deliberately excluded. Zoë, one of Artemis' chosen hunters, having sworn off contact with men, initially excludes Percy from the quest party for being male. Continuing in this vein, Dionysus tells Percy of heroes who have mistreated women:

> So you'll excuse me if I have no love for heroes. They are a selfish, ungrateful lot. Ask Ariadne. Or Medea…But mark my words, Son of Poseidon, live or die, you will prove no better than the other heroes. (*The Titan's Curse*, 124-125)

Dionysus clearly feels that, by his estimation, the classical mythological heroes were largely failures, or, at least, did not act in a way which he feels was entirely respectable. Given that by this point Riordan knew his series was a success, and was committed to writing two more novels in the series, it is clear to see the manner in which he is positioning Percy to prove Dionysus wrong. Riordan continues to drive home the point that Percy is different from other mythological heroes. It is Annabeth that must first bear Atlas's curse of holding up the sky (and

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she does it for a far longer period than Percy does). Percy attains the skin of the Nemean Lion, as Hercules did, but sacrifices it to Poseidon almost immediately to secure safe passage through the ocean for an innocent ocean dweller, saying: 'If I'm going to survive…it won't be because I've got a lion-skin coat. I'm not Hercules' (*The Titan's Curse*, 243). Zoë, ever mistrustful of men, and Percy in particular because he carries the sword *Anaklusmos* (a cursed blade which once belonged to her), tells Percy when he sacrifices himself to hold up the sky to save Annabeth and Artemis: 'You spoke the truth, Percy Jackson. You are nothing like…Hercules' (*The Titan's Curse*, 278) Percy, unlike so many other heroes from classical mythology and elsewhere, does not simply make use of the help of others, be they Guide or Supernatural Helper, and then stand alone, or continue on his journey as primary character in a solitary manner. He is dependent on his friends, and it is this dependence and loyalty, not hubris or hamartia or any of a number of crippling character flaws to which Percy is subject that shape his destiny.

This separates Percy from a great number of other heroes, particularly those of Greek tragedies, for whom hamartia, hubris and egotism in general are a habitual challenge. These weaknesses of character are sometimes called tragic flaws.[15] Notwithstanding the fact that the saga is not a tragedy, Riordan makes it clear then that a definite possibility exists that Percy may be subject to the same potentially tragic/fatal flaws to which other great heroes have fallen victim; such flaws, in moderation, are virtuous, as explained by Peter Struck (2000). In a fateful meeting with the goddess of Wisdom, Athena, who seems to be able to read Percy better than he is able to read himself, identifies Percy's fatal flaw and explains its significance:

> "Kronos knows your fatal flaw, even if you do not. He knows how to study his enemies. Think, Percy. How has he manipulated you?

[15] Aristotle coined the term in the *Poetics* (1932:1453a): 'The hero must not deserve his misfortunate, but he must cause it by making a fatal mistake, an error of judgement, which may well involve some imperfection of character but not such as to make us regard him as "morally responsible" for the disasters although they are nevertheless the consequences of the flaw in him, and his wrong decision at a crisis is the inevitable outcome of his character.' Peter Struck (2000:n.p.) expands on Aristotle's idea, explaining: 'The character's flaw must result from something that is also a central part of their virtue, which goes somewhat awry, usually due to a lack of knowledge.'

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> First, your mother was taken from you. Then your best friend, Grover. Now my daughter, Annabeth." She paused, disapproving. "In each case, your loved ones have been used to lure you into Kronos' trap. Your fatal flaw is personal loyalty, Percy. You do not know when it is time to cut your losses. To save a friend, you would sacrifice the world. In a hero of the prophecy, that is very, very dangerous." (*The Titan's Curse*, 298)

Fortunately, Percy is humble enough to recognise this about himself, an oddity in itself for a hero: 'I was only alive because so many people had helped me' (*The Titan's Curse*, 305). Riordan gives the reader a clearly noble and virtuous characteristic in Percy, but simultaneously warns of the future consequences of it.

Central to an understanding of the basis of Riordan's eventual subversion of Campbell's hero journey is the prophecy of the fifth novel, *The Last Olympian*, the 'Great Prophecy' which forms the basis of the Titanomachy backdrop against which the saga takes place. As with the other prophecies, it is ambiguous and Riordan has taken great pains throughout the preceding novels to nudge his readers towards a particular interpretation of the prophecy. It reads:

> A half-blood of the eldest gods
> shall reach sixteen against all odds.
> And see the world in endless sleep.
> The hero's soul, cursed blade shall reap.
> A single choice shall end his days.
> Olympus to preserve or raze. (*The Last Olympian*, 55)

Within the novel, the characters interpret the prophecy to indicate that Percy, one of only two half-bloods of the eldest gods, will reach sixteen, have his soul reaped by a cursed blade (of which there are a number in the saga, wielded by various important characters), and make a final decision to either preserve or destroy Olympus, a decision that will result in his death. Given the clear emphasis placed on tragic flaws in previous novels in the series through dire warnings such as Athena's to Percy, above, and our knowledge of the expected consequences of such flaws, it is easy to see how the cataclysm could easily come to pass.

Riordan continually underscores this idea of personal weakness wreaking havoc in the lives of others, to heighten the tension and ensure that his allegorical message is aptly relayed to the reader. Percy speaks to Achilles, a famous example of a

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tragic hero. Percy seeks to gain the same protection that Achilles had, by being submerged in the river Styx. Achilles warns Percy:

> "Do not do this," he said. "It will make you powerful. But it will also make you weak. Your prowess in combat will be beyond any mortal's, but your weaknesses, your failings will increase as well…[t]he heel is only my *physical* weakness, demigod. My mother, Thetis, held me there when she dipped me in the Styx. What really killed me was my own arrogance. Beware! Turn back!" (*The Last Olympian*, 133)

However, all is not hopeless for Percy. Although he is clearly subject to a virtuous character trait that, when experienced without moderation, could lead to destruction, he is nevertheless assisted by Hestia, goddess of the hearth. Kenneth Dorter (1971:279-288) explains that 'there was a discrepancy in the list of the twelve chief gods, as to whether Hestia or Dionysus was included with the other eleven. The altar to them at agora, for example, included Hestia, but the east frieze of the Parthenon had Dionysus instead'. In *The Gods of the Greeks*, Károly Kerényi (1951) explains that in some explanations for Hestia's omission from the pantheon, she deliberately offers her seat to Dionysus to prevent celestial war. Riordan also ascribes to this interpretation. Hestia's action is crucially important to our understanding of Percy's unique heroic role, particularly given all the heroes to which he has been compared before. Hestia is almost completely ignored by the demigods at camp, is infrequently even noticed and symbolises meekness and acceptance. She tells Percy:

> "It's easy to judge others," Hestia warned. "But will you follow Luke's path? Seek the same powers?"
> …
> "Not all powers are spectacular." Hestia looked at me. "Sometimes the hardest power to master is the power of yielding. Do you believe me?" (*The Last Olympian*, 102)

Percy answers in the affirmative, possibly in an attempt at placation. Hestia continues:

> The goddess smiled. "You are a good hero, Percy Jackson. Not too proud. I like that. But you have much to learn. When Dionysus was made a god, I gave up my throne for him. It was the only way to avoid a civil war among the gods."
> …
> "It was the best solution, not a perfect one. Now I tend the fire. I fade slowly into the background. No one will ever write epic poems

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> about the deeds of Hestia. Most demigods don't even stop to talk to me. But that is no matter. I keep the peace. I yield when necessary. Can you do this?" (*The Last Olympian*, 102)

Percy asks Hestia if she has come to warn him against continuing in the quest, as Achilles did. She responds:

> Hestia shook her head. "I am here because when all else fails, when all the other mighty gods have gone off to war, I am all that's left. Home. Hearth. I am the last Olympian. You must remember me when you face your final decision." (*The Last Olympian*, 103)

Strangely, it appears that Hestia both encourages Percy's fatal flaw, while also hinting at his having to make a final decision, an intentional allusion meant to guide the reader towards associating this decision with that which was mentioned in the great prophecy.

At the novel's climax, Percy carries with him Pandora's jar, a gift from Prometheus the Titan, which Percy is to open, to indicate symbolically that hope has been abandoned and that the demigods have surrendered their defence of mount Olympus. Percy gives the jar to Hestia, who sits alone in the throne room of the gods, telling her '[h]ope survives best at the hearth' (*The Last Olympian*, 308). This is significant, symbolically, because Percy decides in that moment that he will not abandon hope, nor his friends and loved ones in need, despite the dire prediction of Athena regarding his fatal flaw. Percy engages Kronos, who now possesses the body of Percy's hated enemy, Luke, and they fight. Percy loses the confrontation because Luke has also been dipped in the river Styx, and, therefore, he is able to best Percy once again. Before Kronos can deliver the fatal blow, Annabeth intervenes, and in so doing, saves Percy from annihilation, but she is grievously injured. In that moment, when Luke harms Annabeth, perhaps fatally, he reasserts control over his body for a very brief time. Luke, in that moment, begs Percy to hand him Annabeth's knife, a cursed blade. Percy is obviously torn, for to hand Luke a weapon in this crucial moment would surrender his advantage, and could spell doom. Luke has betrayed Percy and Annabeth a number of times and is clearly not trustworthy:

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> I raised the knife to strike. Then I looked at Annabeth, at Grover cradling her in his arms, trying to shield her. And finally I understood what she'd been trying to tell me.
> *You are not the hero*
> …
> The line from the great prophecy echoed in my head: *A hero's soul, cursed blade shall reap.* My whole world tipped upside down, and I gave the knife to Luke. (*The Last Olympian*, 336)

In the end, in making his final decision, Percy remembers the lesson of Hestia, remembers that the hardest power to master is the power to submit. Percy submits to Annabeth's greater knowledge of Luke. He trusts her more than he trusts himself, and he gives Luke the weapon. In 'Joseph Campbell [with replies]' in *The American Scholar*, Harris *et al.* (1991:155) write a response to Joseph Campbell's hero journey, stating that, '[s]urrender, not conquest is heroic – not just at the end of life…but throughout life'. Although he knows that his personal loyalty to his friends could spell doom for all, Percy submits his will to Annabeth's and risks literally everything, when the consequence is entirely unknown, and his very living future hangs in the balance. Luke uses the knife to destroy himself,[16] fulfilling the duty of the hero in the prophecy. He makes the final decision to save Olympus, and 'end[s] his days' with the choice. The thread the Fates cut in the first novel, it is finally revealed, is Luke's thread, which Percy saw being snipped, prophesying Luke's fateful decision. In a startling revelatory twist, after five novels guiding us towards thinking otherwise, we see that Percy is not the hero of the prophecy after all.

Percy's decision, not to act, valorously or otherwise, but instead to surrender, submit and trust Annabeth's decision regarding Luke (Percy's principal rival for her affections), is also an interesting subversion of one of Barbara Tuchman's (1978:66-68) stages of courtly love, in which the hero performs deeds of heroic valour to win the lady's heart. In a sense, he wins it not through valorous action, but rather through trusting and submitting to her right to choose for herself.

[16] The 'cursed blade' which shall 'reap' the 'hero's soul' is cursed because Luke gave it to Annabeth when Annabeth was very young, promising that, unlike Annabeth's family, he would never hurt her. Kronos breaks this promise while in control of Luke's body, an event so shocking to the core of Luke's personality that he can use it to assert control of his body for a brief time immediately thereafter.

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Segal (1991:151) also states that Campbell seeks 'only the similarities among myths and does disregard the differences'. Seeking to avoid the same error, we can recognise that Riordan's saga does not disprove or discredit Campbell's work in any way; it simply provides a refreshing re-imagining of it, an imagining where Percy is not the 'hero', with innate flaws and weaknesses, facing a fate that is 'never anything but tragic'. Rather, he is an entirely new hero, who trusts his friends, and who turns his weaknesses into strengths for the good of all. According to John Stephens and Robyn McCallum (1998:85-86), Percy Jackson would be a Promethean hero, because he is 'unlike legendary heroes such as Theseus, who undertook the adventure of the Minotaur largely for the glory of the deed, and all his subsequent behavior – abandoning Ariadne, carelessly causing his father's death – [which] reflects the self-centredness of the typical hero'. Percy, on the other hand, 'reflects aspects of two types of civic humanist hero: the rebel/revolutionary, willing to sacrifice himself for the cause, prepared to go on defiantly even though the cause seems in vain, and the person who places the well-being of others ahead of self (the unheroic hero)' (Stephens & McCallum, 1998:85-86).

This is similar to the experience of Susan Arpajian Jolley in *In Search of a Hero, in Search of Self* (2007), echoing the question, 'who am I?', which she uses to assist young teachers in viewing their teaching experience as a hero journey. Crucially to me, and to the relevance of this study, she encourages her students not to study the journeys of heroes through definitions and lore, but rather to interrogate what the meaning of the word 'hero' really is, how that definition of hero can change dramatically, and how each of her students can be heroes, uniquely and independently of broad definitions or denotations. In that sense, Jolley and Riordan are similar in using Campbell's hero journey to create their own variations of the journey. Their work embodies a refreshingly unique view of heroism, suggesting that weakness, with the right help, can become strength.

> "We need a shroud," I announced, my voice cracking. "A shroud for the son of Hermes."
> …
> The three Fates themselves took Luke's body.
> …

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As [the gods] left, I thought about the Great Prophecy. The lines now made sense to me. *The hero's soul, cursed blade shall reap.* The hero was Luke. The cursed blade was the knife he'd given Annabeth long ago – cursed because Luke had broken his promise and betrayed his friends. *A single choice shall end his days*. My choice, to give him the knife, and to believe, as Annabeth had [possibly *because* Annabeth had], that he was still capable of setting things right. *Olympus to preserve or raze.* By sacrificing himself, he had saved Olympus. Rachel was right. In the end, I wasn't really the hero. Luke was.

And I understood something else: When Luke had descended into the River Styx, he would've had to focus on something important that would hold him to his mortal life. Otherwise he would've dissolved. I had seen Annabeth, and I had a feeling he had too. He had pictured that scene Hestia showed me – of himself in the good old days with Thalia and Annabeth, when he promised they would be family. Hurting Annabeth in battle had shocked him into remembering that promise. It had allowed his mortal conscience to take over again, and defeat Kronos. His weak spot – his Achilles heel – had saved us all. (*The Last Olympian*, 340-341)

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Chapter 3: Annabeth and the Female Hero Journey

> If we have come to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural sphere of woman, we have done so exactly as English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot – because they have never seen one anywhere else. (Shaw, 1891:42)

As was indicated in previously, we are all pulled towards the necessity of self-discovery. All of us are individually tasked with attempting to answer the question 'Who am I?' Answering this question, and thereby attaining a better understanding of ourselves, our powers and our limitations, is a conscious and central concern in our lives. In Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1993), this concern is plotted out as a hero journey of self-discovery, based on Freudian and Jungian principles. It is a journey which each of us must travel in our own right and capacity. However, the pronoun 'us' in the case of Campbell's proposed hero journey is not used without significant difficulty. Joseph Campbell's hero journey model, and his concept of those who must travel the road, it will be shown, are not nearly as inclusive or universal as was perhaps originally constructed.

Pertinently, one of the most aggressive criticisms of Campbell's work is thus that it leaves no room within its structure for heroes who are not male, based, Carolyn Heilbrun argues in *Reinventing Womanhood* (1981:88), on 'the assumption that only a male character can stand for the full range of human experience, moving through action and quest to achievement or failure'. Unspoken perhaps, but unmistakable nevertheless is the assumption that, despite being sentient beings capable of thought, action, feeling, understanding, growth and pain, women are unable to stand as adequate examples in fiction for all the human experiences which make up the shifting landscape of the hero journey. The assumption appears to be that they are ill-suited to the undertaking of hero journeys. Campbell's omission of women from the hero journey model thus appears to imply that women have either no desire or no need to undergo heroic journeys in

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their own right; however, this viewpoint is hotly contested. In *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill (1993:5) writes:

> Let us then begin at the beginning, and remind ourselves of the few trite and primary facts which all practical persons agree to ignore. That beginning, for human thought, is, of course, the I, the Ego, the self-conscious subject which is reading it; and which declares, in the teeth of all argument, I AM. Here is a point as to which we all feel quite sure. No metaphysician has yet shaken the ordinary individual's belief in his own existence. The uncertainties only begin for most of us when we ask what else *is*.

Her meaning here is clear: the search for self-discovery and mastery of the self, the ego, is a primary focus of *all* humanity; it is not selected for or prohibited to a certain gender, class, race or social group only. However, even in her sentiment, we see the creeping, insidious nominalisations which categorise this thinking and which give tacit foundation to the understanding that the hero journey is a male concern.

In an article in *The Los Angeles Magazine* titled 'Paging Joseph Campbell', Jill Soloway (2011:162-163) writes of her experience as a Hollywood screenwriter, and how an executive at Disney, Christopher Volger, wrote a memo[17] to writers detailing the three act structure of films based on Campbell's journey, which would serve as an inspiration for their stories. When she questioned herself and colleagues as to whether the hero journey was applicable to females, many agreed it was, saying: 'You simply place the heroine on the journey and call it a day' (Soloway, 2011:162). And this is a valid option (representative of so-called 'first wave'[18] feminism), albeit one which is not explored in great detail in this chapter. Significantly, David Emerson (2009:133) writes in his article in *Mythlore*, titled

[17] The memo was originally titled 'A Practical Guide to the Hero with a Thousand Faces' and is freely available from many sources online. This memo was then later worked into a book, which Volger wrote while working for Disney. Originally released as *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* in 1992, it was then re-released in 1998.

[18] So-called 'first wave' feminism, according to Henry Astrid (2004:58) in *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*, is a term that was first coined by Marsha Lear, writing for the *New York Times Magazine* in 1968. This wave of feminism was concerned primarily with officially mandated inequalities, most notably women's suffrage, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In terms of the hero journey models of Campbell and others, it defends the rights of women to experience hero journeys as well, even where such hero journeys do not differ in form or mode from existing male models and where the journeys themselves may not entirely capture the full range of female experience, which later feminists argued was different from male experience.

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'Innocence as a Super-Power: Little Girls on the Hero's Journey', that 'a truly feminine version of the Hero's Journey must emphasize feminine qualities of the heroes, rather than merely the physical fact of being female'. For this reason a simple supplanting of the male by a female character is not thoroughly explored in this study because it would relate the male hero experience through a character who simply happens to be female. Brian Attebery in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992:91) states that this method of supplanting is an 'inadequate one if the writer wishes to connect with women's actual experience in our culture'.

Jill Soloway (2011:162) also rejects this proposed method of simple substitution. She refers to an interview in which Mary Davis interviewed Maureen Murdock (who was originally one of Campbell's students) and in which Murdock recalls proposing a model for a feminine hero journey to Joseph Campbell:

> I met with Joe (Campbell) and showed him my map of the feminine journey. He said, "Women don't need to make the journey, they are the place that everyone is trying to get to". (Davis, 2005:n.p.)

Campbell's view informed the popular belief at the time that women did not need to have a journey, heroic or otherwise; they were simply the prize. Referring to Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1982, cited in Kirk, 2006:47-48), Mary Kirk writes: 'Pratt notes that Campbell's work was created in the context of largely unchallenged patriarchal thinking' and that, therefore, 'women don't fit Campbell's model for the heroic journey'. It is this 'unchallenged patriarchal thinking' with regard to the hero journey that inspired Murdock to write *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (1990) in response to Campbell's position. Murdock, and many other scholars who have proposed feminine hero journeys or models for female heroes, argues, as does Soloway referring to Murdock's study, that the feminine journey does indeed exist. It is separate and different but not inferior; its nature is cyclical or circular, as opposed to linear, and it relates an altogether different experience than that described by Campbell.[19]

[19] This position is representative of so-called 'second-wave' feminism and is currently tendentious. This wave of feminism, by use of the term 'wave', indicates a resurgence of the previous wave, footnoted above, stressing a connection to the previous movement. However, the second wave's use of the term 'first wave', according to Astrid (2004:24) 'carried with it an assumption about the

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Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope (1981:77) explain this cyclical nature as being diametrically opposed to Campbell's 'sequential approach':

> [The] sequential approach has its limitations. Although it portrays a full, heroic journey leading on to an "ultimate boon," in some literary works a more accurate approach would be to view each stage as a journey in itself. The three stages [of the model] can be seen as metaphorical vehicles, which in varying degrees of depth and complexity act out the same myth.

Soloway (2011:162) refers to this as 'pattern storytelling'. She continues: 'My theory evolved. Women's stories weren't circles as much as coiled springs. Like Slinkies, female-centred plotlines seemed powered by their own momentum' (Soloway, 2011:162). Similarly, Maria Nikolajeva (1996:125) argues in *Children's Literature Comes of Age* that novelistic chronotypes are gendered, suggesting that 'male' texts are time structured in a linear fashion where space is open and unlimited, while 'female' texts are time structured in a circular fashion, where space is 'closed and confined' (Nikolajeva, 1996:125). It would appear that Soloway recognises intuitively that the impetus and momentum of both 'women's stories' and the female character's motivations can often be internal. Where Nikolajeva's male texts are gendered so that space is open and unlimited and the hero must experience a 'Call to Adventure'[20] from the outside, inviting him into that open space, female texts, where space is 'closed and confined', find female characters breaking free of confinement, experiencing an 'Exit From the Garden'[21]; such an exit is an internally motivated and conscious move away from a life of dependence and patriarchal subjugation. Such a rebellious rejection of the roles and spaces to which society confines women is, however, not without difficulty.

superiority over [the previous] movement, using the numerical delineation of the "second wave" to signify feminism's progress'. The validity of this position in terms of so-called 'third-wave' feminism, as well as a gloss of the term 'wave' in relation to feminism and its various iterations is provided later in the chapter.

[20] See Chapter 2.

[21] This is Pearson and Pope's term and is explained more fully later in this chapter.

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Indeed, many female characters in fiction often fail to successfully rebel at all. Patricia Meyer Spacks (1975:158, quoted in Attebery, 1992:92) writes of the female hero's plight:

> Female rebellion may be perfectly justified, but there's no good universe next door, no way out, young potential revolutionaries can't find their revolution. So they marry in defeat or go mad in a complicated form of triumph, their meaning the inevitability of defeat.

As will be shown, this assertion is being be challenged by modern literature for adolescents, particularly in Riordan's series.

Although not everyone may agree with Soloway's comparison of female narratives to Slinkies, it is useful to note how astute observations about the feminine hero journey and feminism itself can be drawn from many sources. Attempting then to unify all those thoughts and theories into a cohesive and all-applicable whole seems nearly impossible. Indeed, scholars seem no closer to a unified theory for the female experience than Campbell was to one on the male experience, for there is a wide range of scholastic debate dealing with the shortcomings or failings of his theory, or its lack of applicability.[22] It is not even clear that to unify feminism or the female experience within a single theory would be beneficial – Henry Astrid (2004:23) writes: 'In presenting feminism as contested ground, it appears both alive and lively, open and eager for a new generation to engage with it.'

Thus, to consign feminism or the female hero journey to a singular and pervasive theory might be counter-productive. This study then, however brief, constitutes just such an eager engagement as Astrid indicates, recognising that within its brief scope it is not necessary to attempt to create such a unified theory or even to propose that such a theory could exist. The goal of this study is instead to provide a viable model and understanding of one possible female experience of the hero journey, recognising that there are a number of different possible models and theories which attempt to define and categorise such experiences.[23]

[22] As noted previously in chapter two.
[23] The variety of these models and theories is vast. Models and categories for female experience are discussed by Spretnak ([1978]1992), Jezewski (1984), Stone (1984), Bolen (1984, 1994,

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I hope that such scrutiny will indicate whether it is possible that Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga provides discerning readers not only with a male hero journey, adapted and subverted though it may be, but *also* a viable female hero journey, which relates Annabeth's altogether different but equally important female experience. In so doing, the Jungian-based philosophy of an allegorical reading of mythology and mythological tales to inspire personal growth and self-actualisation could then be applied to Riordan's saga more readily and with greater efficacy.

Examining these structures is important particularly in Riordan's novels, which attempt to adapt existing mythological story structures to repurpose them for a new adolescent audience. In his *On the Origin of Stories*, Brian Boyd (2009:233) notes:

> The structures the greatest storytellers set up around the more evolutionary salient effects of character and event can shimmer with implications that invite us back again and again to their stories. Their shifting vistas help keep our attention alive.

Riordan's saga then, by virtue (I argue) of its engagement with contemporary feminist tropes, is important because it invites a new generation to read and engage with not only mythology – with which they may otherwise be wholly unfamiliar – but also with feminism and the very nature of the hero journey. The 'shifting vistas' of Riordan's adaptations, can 'shimmer with implications' about the nature of heroism, the role of young people coming of age, or even of feminism itself, stressing that such concepts are not immutable, but are, rather, constantly in motion. Such adaptations and re-imaginings can invite adolescent readers to engage with texts as 'contested ground' in which they can formulate their own understandings and experiences, re-awakening the power of mythology for a new generation.

As a starting point for my investigation, therefore, I use Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's (1981) female hero journey model as proposed in *The Female*

2001), Gimbutas (1989), Weinbaum (1999), Lichtman (1991), Estés (1992), Kirk (2006), and Emerson (2009), to name but a few.

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Hero in American and British Literature as the basis for the exploration of the viability of applying the female hero journey to Annabeth Chase, the daughter of Athena. Before doing so, however, it is important to acknowledge that this model arises out of what has come to be described as second-wave feminism and that this movement is now under attack. Feminist critics belonging to what is called the ‘third wave’ of feminism, while cognisant of the advances made by the second-wave feminists in breaking down gender stereotypes and emphasising that feminism is of importance to both men and women, have nonetheless challenged the second wave for its apparent essentialism in attempting to posit universal models for women’s individual experiences, thereby often failing to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of individual human experience. Ealasaid Munro in *Feminism: A Fourth Wave?* (2013:23) writes that ‘second-wave feminists treated women as a homogenous group, without paying attention to the many axes of difference that cleave apart the singular category of “women”’. The second wave is thus criticised for not properly recognising that women, as Rosemarie Tong (2009:284) writes, are of ‘many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds’, risking being as confining and prescriptive as the previous movements from which it sought to develop.

The term ‘wave’ itself is not uncontested. Henry Astrid (2004:24) indicates that the ‘wave metaphor signals both continuity and discontinuity’. Continuity is suggested because the ‘term “wave” is rarely used to stress the singularity of something but rather emphasizes the inevitability of – and connection to – other such waves’ (Astrid, 2004:24). However, he continues: ‘Discontinuity – and often progress and improvement – is highlighted by the numerical delineation of a new … wave’ (Astrid, 2004:24). The wave metaphor is thus complex, in that, by focusing on the commonalities existent in narratives or experiences within the waves themselves, the recognition of Munro’s ‘axes of difference’ is often obfuscated. In response to this complex need to acknowledge individual differences while continuing to seek solidarity and areas of common ground, Munro (2013:23) writes of the ‘need for multiple feminisms’, which she argues is in part responsible for the ongoing development of a new ‘fourth-wave’ feminism. As a result of this trend towards a multiplicity of feminism, Munro (2013:23) notes that as ‘the contemporary feminist movement [has become] both more

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visible and more fragmented, there has been a resurgence of interest in earlier waves of feminism'. This visibility of feminism and interest in its earlier waves is important, because it emphasizes the many entry points into feminist theory that currently exist for young readers of fantasy novels and indicates that contemporary readers may first encounter feminist theory through earlier waves, before gaining a deeper understanding of the need for the 'multiple feminisms' of equitable representation that were developed subsequently.

Despite the shifting of the focus of feminism away from second-wave models of the journeys of female experience, there is nonetheless still interest, on the part of writers of fantasy novels for young adults, in creating female characters that begin as oppressed or repressed, but who gain agency and autonomy through the course of the novel(s). These writers, in focusing on female characters, invite readers, whether they be male or female, to position themselves within the ongoing feminist debate and allow readers to begin to engage with the contemporary concept of 'multiple feminisms'. Young adults are thus offered entry into a fluid and developing debate regarding the many forms female autonomy and agency may adopt, stressing the esteem the various hero journeys and various female experiences command, rather than emphasising the doubt or unease engendered by an immutable and inaccessible single prevailing body of thought, or wave.

While it is thus openly acknowledged that the model proposed by Pearson and Pope (1981) in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* is representative of the tendentious second wave, its use is required specifically because it is being offered as a model of comparison to Joseph Campbell's hero journey, which, it has been shown previously, currently continues to inform a great deal of popular thought regarding the *hero journey* as a concept. Although feminist thought regarding the hero journey has seen significant development and adjustment over the course of the four 'waves', and although Pearson and Pope's model could therefore be argued to be out of date, popular culture is nevertheless still inundated with examples of filmic and literary narratives which have failed to take proper notice of these developments. The traditional hero myth, it has been shown, is not inclusive of women. Pearson and Pope, in their study, repeatedly highlight this fact and thereby place their model for a female hero journey in

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direct contrast to Campbell's. The use of Pearson and Pope's model is thus not indicative of either rejection or ignorance of the significant developments of feminist theory since the second wave. Rather, it seeks to highlight that many young adult readers of fantasy novels may first encounter Munro's 'multiple feminisms' through an introduction via an earlier wave, such as the second, precisely because this wave is an intentional and conscious reaction against Campbell's model, which is still considered by much of the mainstream to be the *de facto* standard. Pearson and Pope refer extensively to Campbell's theories and their model has a similar structure to his, which makes it a relevant counterpoint to the model applied to Percy previously, in Chapter 2.

Similarly, where relevant deviations or failings of the theory are noted, or where new theories or insights have occurred since Pearson and Pope's original work was written, such as Carolyn Heilbrun's (1981) *Reinventing Womanhood*, Brian Attebery's (1992) *Strategies of Fantasy* and Bruce Lincoln's (1981) *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*, these are explicated. The model developed by Pearson and Pope (1981) is used, then, as an instructive tool to illustrate some of the major divergences in popular thinking about hero journeys which are otherwise often informed by Campbell's original model.

Pearson and Pope (1981:vii) immediately position their study in relation to the existing patriarchal theoretic frameworks of Campbell, Norman and Raglan, classifying their work, and raising their chief objection to the patriarchal thinking which created it. In the book's introduction they write:

> The great works on the hero – such as Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Dorothy Norman's *The Hero: Myth/Image/Symbol*, and Lord Raglan's *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* – all begin with the assumption that the hero is male.

Campbell's comment to Maureen Murdock, that women are not for the journey because they are the prize, reveals patriarchal society's dismissal of woman's right to a hero journey. Pearson and Pope (1981:vii) argue that patriarchal society 'views women essentially as supporting characters in the drama of life. Men change the world, and women help them'.

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This view is still prevalent today, in many places. In Malala Yousafzai's (2013) autobiographical account, *I Am Malala*, she tells the story of how her public struggle to assert her right to an education resulted in her being shot in the head by the Taliban. In her story she shows how she experienced the disparity suggested by Pearson and Pope above: 'I was a girl in a land where rifles are fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give birth to children' (Yousafzai, 2013:9).[24] In relating her mother's life and why her mother chose to leave school, Yousafzai (2013:32) further illustrates how narratives have come to mirror real circumstances:

> She was unusual as she had a father and brothers who encouraged her to go to school … [but] [t]here seemed no point in going to school just to end up cooking, cleaning and bringing up children, so one day she sold her books for nine annas, spent the money on boiled sweets and never went back.

The ubiquitous and insidious idea which permeates literature that the female hero, in a sense, does not exist as a concept, finds a home even in literature meant to guide women to freedom and understanding. Non-fiction is not free of the intractable pull towards making women feel unlike heroes in their own lives. Although much so-called 'self-help' non-fiction may be intended to assist in developing the qualities a person will need to succeed on the hero journey, the assistance and advice can sometimes still propagate the patriarchal assumptions which are the very 'dragons' to be defeated. In a note to *In Search of a Woman's Passionate Soul*, Caitlín Matthews (1997) recognises that she invites a heated reaction by suggesting that women must find a muse of their own, a male or masculine inspiration she terms a 'daimon'.[25] She attempts to disarm any immediate rejections of her assertions about women achieving greatness through being inspired by a male by writing in a note, preceding the main text: 'It is therefore important for the reader to note that the daimon is not "a man" or,

[24] In contrast, one might consider the Tukuna menarche ceremony in the Northwest Amazon where '[e]normous trumpets and megaphones sound nightly for up to nine months before the event, and other musical instruments of various types contribute to the din' (Lincoln, 1981:50).

[25] A 'daimon', Matthews (1997:2) writes, 'comes from the Greek meaning "a spirit who bridges the divine and human state"' and is described as a 'mysterious male figure who is intimate with women'. According to Matthews, the daimon is the masculine counterpart to the muse.

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indeed, "men at large" but the "spirit of the divine and inspirational masculine' (Matthews, 1997:n.p.). Matthews (1997:4) argues that when Jung 'presented the anima, the inner ideal woman who appears in the psyche of men, as something desirable and helpful, he treated the animus with less partiality, seeing it as something doubtful and necessitating self-control on a woman's part'. Women, she advises, are to reclaim the animus by defining their masculine muse, or daimon, in a positive light.

While it is possible that Matthews's theories have helped people find inspiration in their lives, she would probably find little support from theorists such Pearson and Pope (or others from the second wave, for example), who might argue that by attempting to 'reclaim the animus', the 'contrasexual image of the female soul' for womankind, the female hero's essential spirit and power is still being defined as something masculine and something which must necessarily come from the outside, to be won or gained. The conclusion appears to be that women are depicted as having no agency, autonomy or power of their own until they experience inspiration from without, in the guise of an externalised masculine figure who gives women the ability to experience creativity and success when he is internalised.

Although Matthews (1997:58) writes that the 'daimon has always been the leading man in the stories women chose to read and tell; he mirrors and complements their role as leading lady…stories about the daimon are nearly always stories about *the woman herself*' [original emphasis], her argument might still be accused of betraying the very myth of romantic love and fulfilment through something (or someone) which exists outside of the hero herself, a patriarchal viewpoint which Pearson and Pope attempt to demythologise. Woman's salvation, as it is envisaged by Matthews, is still understood as something which a woman does not possess within herself, but must win or be given, robbing her of the transformative power which lies at the heart of the hero journey. Furthermore, this supposed rescue from without is described in patriarchal language and is defined in terms of masculine salvation, a subversive and subliminal message which, as Brian Attebery (1992) shows in *Strategies of Fantasy*, is still a large hurdle for the female hero.

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Carolyn Heilbrun (1981:166) writes that Adrienne Rich (1976:62) 'has recognized that "a woman's poetry about her relationship to her daemon[26] – her own active, creative power," has had to use the language of male love or male mastery', which seems to be very much the case for Matthews's daimon. In this regard, Attebery (1992:88) argues that, for women, the chief accomplishment is 'unleashing rather than mastering herself, and outside rather than within the institutional constraints of her culture' which suggests that, unlike Matthews, he believes that power, autonomy and agency already reside within women, who must unleash what is being repressed or oppressed inside of themselves.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) argues in *Women Who Run With Wolves* that it is stories, more than anything else, which guide women on their hero journeys. Estés (1992:18) describes the stories about the archetypal 'Wild Woman' and their use to the reader on the hero journey, claiming that 'here are some stories to apply to yourself as soul vitamins, some observations, some map fragments, some little pieces of pitch for fastening feathers to trees to show the way, and some flattened underbrush to guide the way back' (Estés, 1992:18). I contend that Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the* Olympians saga, and the characters of Annabeth and Percy in particular, serve as those 'observations', 'map fragments' and 'flattened underbrush' for readers on their hero journeys in a manner similar to that suggested by Estés about the stories of the Wild Woman.

It is worth noting that despite the fact that Annabeth is not the protagonist of the series, her story is definitely still worth close attention. Attebery (1992:97) describes how novels in a saga may use the first novel to focus on the male hero and then shift focus later to a female hero, even while sometimes maintaining a first person male narrative focalisation. He writes of Ursula Le Guin, Patricia Wrightson and Patricia McKillip:

> The heroes of Le Guin's, Wrightson's, and McKillip's fantasies are male because we have come to expect the heroes of the sort of book they are in to be male. However, like Orlando, Le Guin's Ged and the others are androgynous enough that their creators can, through them, express general ideas about youth and its trials and discoveries. Then

[26] Rich uses a different spelling from Matthews, but the subject seems to be interchangeable.

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> once the fantasy world is established, the writer may choose to explore the special experience of women in it.[27]

In Le Guin's *Earthsea Cycle*, in which Ged is the initial protagonist and experiences a clearly definable hero journey (as does Percy), the later novels are equally used to explore the female hero experience through Arha. Le Guin (1993) relates in *Earthsea* Revisioned how this is even more prominently the case in her fourth novel, *Tehanu* (1990), in which she wrote specifically from Tehanu's focalisation, as an intentional attempt to subvert patriarchal expectations regarding her series. Riordan adopts a similar approach by focusing on Percy in the first novel, and thereafter giving a greater focus to Annabeth in the later novels in his series.

Pearson and Pope (1981) divide their female hero journey into three nuclear parts: 'Part I: The Hero and Her World', 'Part II: The Journey' and 'Part III: The Return'. These three constituent parts are designed to resemble the basic three-part structure of Campbell's model, namely: 'Initiation', 'Departure' and 'Return'.[28] This model employs the three-part structure of Campbell's model, not to mimic it, however, but to more readily showcase the uniqueness of Pearson and Pope's model in comparison to Campbell's model, which is ubiquitous and widely recognisable. In 'The Hero and Her World', Pearson and Pope (1981) explain the theoretical and methodological framework which their study employs. Significantly, they explain that the proposed model is not only intended to fulfil the principle of self-discovery and actualisation that all hero journeys are intended to fulfil, but also (and almost more emphatically) their study seeks to challenge the patriarchal and exclusionist ideals which underpin the hero journey as a concept. They write:

> Freeing the heroic journey from the limiting assumptions about appropriate female and male behavior, then, is an important step in defining a truly human – and truly humane – pattern of heroic action. The macho hero represents in only an inadequate and distorted way the archetypal heroic ideal; for this reason, the recognition of female

[27] Attebery mentions the following works: Patricia Wrightson's *The Dark Bright Water* (1979); Patricia A. McKillip's *The Riddle-Master of Hed* (1976), *Heir of Sea and Fire* (1977) and *Harpist in the* Wind (1979); Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Earthsea Quartet* (1993).
[28] As explained in Chapter 2.

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> heroism is important, not only as way of reclaiming women's heritage, but also as a corrective to the male bias implicit in the discussions of the hero. Until the heroic experience of all people – racial minorities and the poor as well as women – has been thoroughly explored, the myth of the hero will always be incomplete and inaccurate. (Pearson and Pope, 1981:5)

In speaking of the hero then (male or female), the text is important not only as a narrative, but as a tool in shaping thinking. It is this facet of the narrative that this study seeks to explore, because it is significant in moulding the perceptions of the adolescent readers to whom Riordan pitches his saga. Pearson and Pope (1981:10) explain: 'If [the hero] and the author of her story are aware that sexism is not ordained by God or nature but that it is a social phenomenon that can be changed, the work will be explicitly feminist.' Examples of this social phenomenon that they cite include the 'axiomatic' fall from grace of the tragic hero because of hubris, and the 'destruction of the oppressed' because they 'accept the role of victim' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:10). Women, they write, are 'more often destroyed through insecurity than through pride' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:10). I contend that Riordan not only challenges the patriarchal traditions of the mythological narratives themselves, but that his texts could even provide useful challenges to existing female hero journey models, such as that by Pearson and Pope.

The broad outline of the journey's outcomes, as explained in the first part of Pearson and Pope's study is:

> The hero's reward for violating the sex-role taboos of her society is the miracle of combining inner wholeness with outward community.
> …
> For male heroes not devoted to the macho heroic ideal,[29] the experience is analogous. Both male and female heroes begin the quest for wholeness and selfhood by risking the violation of conventional norms, including conventions about appropriate sex-role behavior; both learn not to manipulate and restrain other people; and both reach accommodation with the best qualities associated with men and with women, integrating strength with humility, independence with empathy, rationality with intuition, and thought with emotion. (Pearson and Pope, 1981:15)

[29] As has been shown to be the case with Percy; see Chapter 2.

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This view presents a dramatic change from the more common views of sex-role delineations, as presented in, for example, Tennyson's *The Princess* ([1847] 2008). Pearson and Pope (1981:19) quote a particularly patriarchal passage from the poem:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
> Man for the sword and for the needle she;
> Man with the head, and woman with the heart;
> Man to command, and woman to obey;
> All else confusion.

It is Pearson and Pope's (1981) contention that this 'confusion' is a necessary reality only in a rigidly dualistic universe, and that the patriarchal assumptions governing these roles and appropriate behaviour need to be overcome and mastered if the hero is to achieve actualisation.

The remainder of Part I details the three central myths of patriarchal tradition which the female hero, and by implication the reader of the story, must overcome. This demythologising is central to the achievement of the female hero's quest. All three are commonly believed to be sex-role behaviours to which women must ascribe or conform, willingly or unwillingly; to do otherwise is to risk destruction. Pearson and Pope do not contend that any of these three roles can never be worthy or laudable within its own right. Indeed, they may well be when they are chosen consciously by an individual. What is being challenged is the patriarchal assumption than a female hero's journey and subsequent place in society may not be anything *else*. The institution itself, not the act, is challenged.

In the rest of the chapter, Pearson and Pope discuss three myths associated with acceptable femininity. Pearson and Pope (1981) use their own terms for these myths, naming them the myth of virginity, the myth of romantic love and the myth of maternal sacrifice. The myth of virginity indicates that the first model a young girl is expected to emulate is the '[p]refallen, preconscious, purely innocent virgin' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:41). The myth of romantic love tells the young female hero of the promise that 'she will be awakened by the kiss of a handsome prince' and that he will offer her 'the green world of vitality, love and prosperity' where the female hero's only choice is 'to take a relationship on [the male hero's]

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terms' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:41).[30] Finally, the myth of maternal sacrifice describes the mother who 'gives continually without expecting any reward but the joy she receives from making others happy' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:41). This role too must be demythologised because the 'myth of the perfect mother is an extension of the virginity myth; both images are asexual, both require selflessness, and both cast the woman in a scapegoat role' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:41). Heilbrun (1981:154) explains this as follows: 'That principle [of selfless motherhood], not its action in loving parenthood, but its establishment as an institution, must be demythologized and ritually destroyed.'

Female heroes are thus tasked not only with achieving self-actualisation, but also with breaking free from the traditional roles of womanhood, and demythologising the myths of virginity, romantic love and maternal self-sacrifice. This is particularly true and necessary in classical mythology, which typically is often unkind to humanity and women in particular.[31] Mary Lefkowitz argues persuasively in *Women in Greek Myth* (1986) that, despite the assertions of modern feminist critics, the ancient Greeks, and their mythology in particular, were not as misogynistic as currently believed. Her contention is that classical misogyny is only apparent when we look at the myths with a twentieth century lens, and that, in fact, Greek woman in mythology and in history were powerful shapers of their community.

Notwithstanding her arguments, however, the demythologising Pearson and Pope (1981) hope to achieve is still relevant, because it is highly unlikely that adolescent readers will be aware of such a scholarly position. In reading Riordan's saga, they *are* engaging in a discourse with a text which reflects upon the mythology and history of the Greeks through a modern lens. Whether the Greeks

[30] Pearson and Pope (1981:40) argue that the myth of romantic love is often misapprehended as the female hero's journey, but that ultimately this is an illusion: 'The myth of romantic love is held out to women as their version of the heroic quest. It promises them vitality, freedom, and fulfilment, but, as literary works show, the end of the quest is either annihilation or imprisonment.'

[31] Lefkowitz (1986:9) writes that the 'notions – now presumably obsolete – that a man should be active and aggressive, a woman passive and subject to the control of the men in her family, are expressed in virtually every Greek myth, even the ones in which the women seek to gain control of their own lives. That the most important phase of a woman's life is the period immediately preceding her marriage (or re-marriage) is preserved in the plot of many novel; also the notion that virginity, or at least celibacy, offers woman a kind of freedom that they are no longer entitled to when they become involved with a man'.

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truly were, or were not, misogynists is irrelevant, because society thinks that they were, and it is within *this* legacy that adolescents read novels and embark on their own hero journeys, not within the enlightened corridors of debate in academia. Riordan explicitly mentions mythological women who suffered unkind fates, such as Medusa, who is violated by Poseidon and punished by Athena for it; Medea, who is abandoned by Jason, and Ariadne, who is abandoned by Theseus after she risks everything to help him achieve his quest. These examples serve as concrete showcases of the challenging principles that adolescent readers can confront by reading the saga.

'Part II: The Journey' begins by describing the slaying of the dragon. Pearson and Pope (1981:63) explain the journey as follows: 'The Heroic journey is a psychological journey in which the hero escapes from the captivity of her conditioning and searches for her true self.' Where in Campbell's model, the journey has a more clearly linear beginning and end, the female hero's journey is encapsulated in that single thought, and slaying the dragon is the term used to describe the ultimate goal of the female hero. Variously and repetitively, the cycle is played out, illustrating one of the chief differences of the female model from Campbell's model as its precursor. In this female hero model the dragons may represent actual beasts, life-denying forces present in the hero's psyche or psychological barriers to be overcome. The victory over the dragon is the boon for the successful completion of the quest. Pearson and Pope (1981:69) explain that such a victory is not merely a rebellion against the dictates of societal reality with its patriarchal assumptions, but the gaining of an 'entirely new frame of reference'. This phenomenon is also explained by Ursula Le Guin in *The Left Hand of Darkness*:

> To be sure, if you turn your back on Mishnory, and walk away from it, you are still on the Mishnory road. To oppose vulgarity is inevitably to be vulgar. You must go somewhere else; you must have another goal; then you walk a different road. (Le Guin, 1976:147)

Heilbrun (1981:33) comments in the same vein: 'Both sexes, I believe, will gain enormously by ceasing to define themselves negatively against the other.'

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Insomuch as any stages of the female hero journey can be called discrete, Pearson and Pope name the three central stages 'The Exit from the Garden', 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and 'A Woman is Her Mother'. Intriguingly, each stage presents the hero with 'a powerful figure to interpret, a dragon to slay, and a treasure to win' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:68). The cyclical pattern of the female hero journey model becomes more readily apparent when we see how each of the three stages shares similarities not present in Campbell's model. Each of these three stages corresponds with a major myth which must be demythologised. In 'The Exit from the Garden' the hero must exit from her life of dependency and interpret the figures that held her captive, slay the dragon myth of virginity, and be rewarded with the treasure of freedom to explore 'unlimited possibility'. In 'The Emperor's New Clothes' she must interpret the figure of the seducer, slay the dragon myth of romantic love and achieve symbolic awakening into the world of experience. In so doing she achieves 'wholeness and autonomy'. In 'A Woman is Her Mother' the hero travels home, symbolically or physically to 'atone' with the father, only to find it her mother with whom she seeks to be rejoined. In this final stage, 'a rescue figure aids the hero in freeing herself from the myth of female inferiority and in identifying a viable female tradition' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:68).

In the first stage, Annabeth experiences the failure of authorities in her life (such as Chiron who overprotects her and tries to prevent her from attempting a hero journey), as well as of traditional structures of support. She is forced to draw on her own inner resources and carve a niche in the world on her own terms. In the second, she struggles with identifying qualities of her personality which are masculine and others which are feminine within the patriarchal tradition in which she exists. She learns to identify these qualities not by looking without, but by looking within. Finally, in the third stage, she learns that those very qualities she possesses can be seen within a female tradition, regardless of whether they were previously viewed as masculine or feminine. Her reward for recognising that she is a female hero within a female heroic tradition is community and the unleashed potential which resides within her. When readers see Annabeth adopt this new viewpoint of the female tradition, readers, whether consciously aware of it or not, can begin to experience the subversive reading techniques explained by Carolyn

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Heilbrun (1981) in *Reinventing Womanhood.* As Pearson and Pope (1981:71) note: 'What becomes apparent at this point is that the heroic journey affects not only the microcosm (the self of the hero), but the macrocosm (the hero's world) as well.' This is equally true for Annabeth and for the readers who vicariously enjoy the success attendant on Annabeth's unleashing of her potential.

'The Exit from the Garden' stage of the journey corresponds in part with Campbell's notion of crossing the threshold, in that it makes use of the motif of leaving one place's reality and entering into another kind of reality altogether. Pearson and Pope (1981:79) note that in 'British and American stories, the hero typically departs from a confining house rather than a garden'. This is true for Annabeth. We learn that as a young girl she flees her mortal father's house because he has chosen a mortal wife who has children of her own. Born from the union of minds between her mother, Athena, and her mortal father (much as Athena herself was born from the mind of Zeus), Annabeth feels like an outsider in her own family. Because of her 'smell', which attracts monsters, she feels her stepmother resents her for endangering her true children, and she thus flees the confining home, which is to her a constant reminder of guilt. However, it is not the physical fact of her departure that is most significant, it is the conscious psychological choice to select a reality for herself where she makes her own decisions and abides by the consequences of her own actions: 'The physical exit is also a psychological refusal, and it is the psychological more than the physical separation that is the crucial first step in the hero's journey' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:79).

The female hero also experiences a 'Call to Adventure'[32] from a supportive guide or voice. This voice may be 'another person, a natural force, or a commanding impulse from within the hero' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:79); and 'a commanding impulse from within' seems to fit Annabeth most readily. She is first introduced to Percy at Camp Half-Blood after Percy's encounter with the Minotaur. Immediately we are introduced to Annabeth's ambitious side in *The Lightning Thief*, as she says, upon seeing Percy for the first time after the battle: 'He's the one. He must be' (*The Lightning Thief*, 57). Annabeth is confined to camp and

[32] See Chapter 2.

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may not leave until she can join a hero on a quest.[33] Her first instincts in relation to Percy are to consider his relevance for her own future, her own escape from the captivity and the safety of Camp Half-Blood. Paradoxically, she is not concerned about whether or not Percy is the hero of the prophecy (of which she has knowledge) for his own sake. Rather, if he is, it means that her hero journey may begin, as she may once again exit the garden, manifested this time as lying within the borders that form the perimeter of Camp Half-Blood.

Pearson and Pope (1981:85) explain that this exit is important because it 'forces the hero to move beyond the familiar and secure life, and to discover new possibilities in the world and in herself'. It is interesting, therefore, that this change is not brought upon Annabeth unwillingly; she desires the exit but is initially barred from it. Pearson and Pope (1981:88) explain how heroes exit from the garden when their actual experience conflicts painfully with images of appropriate behaviour for women in their lives. In Annabeth's case, her exit from the garden highlights not the painful conflict of an image of another woman, but the image of women which she herself has lived. Rescued as a child by Luke, she looks up to him and idolises him in a somewhat unhealthy way; overcoming this idolisation is one of her chief victories. Part of her individual experience involves negotiating the dichotomy of being a person who is essentially brave and competent, but who has been rescued and made dependent. In seeing Percy and his potential to contrive her exit, she is overcoming her own dependence on Luke, as this dependence on him symbolises the status quo with regard to patriarchal assumptions regarding her position in life. In relation to these, she is not supposed to be the hero; she is supposed to assist the hero. Her experience thus far has reinforced this position. This subversion of Annabeth's supposed role in the story suggests 'the capacity of heroic women to learn from their experience and to change the world' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:92). Annabeth is worthy of her own hero journey, and it can now begin for her when she finds the opportunity to exit from her confinement.

The 'Exit From the Garden', according to Pearson and Pope, whether physical or psychological (or both), can take many forms. Each, however, is predicated on the

[33] This element of her confinement and its implications are explored more fully later.

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hero's ability to transcend her current reality and move into 'Another Universe'. This other universe is her ability to adopt a 'new way of seeing' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:92). Because the departure from her current captivity anticipates the final reward – the 'treasure' at the quest's completion – the reward then potentially exists throughout the journey, a companion within herself through the cyclical phases of her quest. In other words, the female hero must come to realise that her salvation and her true power are not externally won or gained. Her power is not gifted to her from an external source, nor won through attachment to a male. Instead, her power is internal and must be unleashed from within rather than gained from an external source. The female hero is powerful within herself and must adopt a 'new way of seeing' to recognise her agency and potency in opposition to a patriarchal world view which tells her she has neither. The occurrences and circumstances of the hero's life are the stimuli which nudge her out of a state of immobile inertia. Two forms that this exit and subsequent recognition of the other universe may take are named by Pearson and Pope (1981:103) 'Shattering the Mirror', and 'She Just Up and Left Him' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:126). Because of the cyclical nature of the female hero journey, the hero may experience both or neither of those forms of exit. In relation to Annabeth, only 'Shattering the Mirror' is dealt with in detail in this study.

In 'Shattering the Mirror', the hero must defeat her 'captors' who are representatives of a 'conventional society' which 'degrade[s] her and limit[s] her freedom, and cause[s] her to distrust her own perceptions' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:103-104). In Riordan's saga, Annabeth must confront and defeat a number of captors. Even Chiron, Annabeth's most trusted teacher, forbids Annabeth from leaving the camp until she is chosen for a quest. While he is ostensibly protecting her and ensuring her safety, his decree forces Annabeth into an auxiliary role in the quest (one which she immediately subverts by leading the party herself) and confines her to the camp, where she cannot grow. In idolising Luke, who rescued her as a young and impressionable waif, she is bound to the myth of romantic love. She thus casts herself in the role of damsel in distress, needing to be rescued and delivered by the handsome prince and given fulfilment through his romantic interest. Caught between the affections of two men, Annabeth must additionally wrestle with the possibility of opting out of the race altogether by becoming an

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immortal virgin huntress, another form of captivity. Annabeth, however, 'shatters the mirror when she values herself enough not to be imprisoned by her need for love or social approval' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:104).

Her most significant shattering of the mirror is that of the image of the woman society feels she is supposed to be. Because she is a person of great power, male-dominated perceptions see her as destined to become one of two possibilities: either a tyrannical and power-mad sorceress, or the self-sacrificing other-directed protector of the world.

The first possibility, of becoming a tyrannical and power-mad sorceress, is voiced in a discussion between Annabeth and C.C.:

> "We are not so different you and I. We both seek knowledge. We both admire greatness. Neither of us needs to stand in the shadow of men" … "Stay with me," C.C. was telling Annabeth. "Study with me and you can join our staff, become a sorceress, learn to bend others to your will. You will become immortal!" (*The Sea of Monsters*, 178)

Annabeth rejects the offering, recognising that neither immortality nor the mastery of others and their wills are important to her, because both prevent her from fulfilling her quest and both would leave her captive again. Annabeth seeks only understanding of herself, her nature, her potential and her ability to autonomously shape her world around her, on her own terms. When Annabeth defies C.C., the witch attempts to cast a spell of transformation on Annabeth, which fails because Annabeth has become immune: 'I watched horror-struck, but nothing happened. Annabeth was still Annabeth, only angrier' (*The Sea of Monsters*, 181).[34]

The second of the afore-mentioned possibilities, which would see Annabeth as a self-sacrificing other-directed protector of the world, is also described and shattered. Notably, in *The Sea of Monsters*, Annabeth relives Odysseus' encounter

[34] Before defying C.C., Annabeth is intelligent enough to recognise that C.C. is dangerous and a potential foe. She pre-emptively takes some of the vitamin tablets given to the party by Hermes. These vitamins protect her from C.C.'s magic and reverse the magic affecting Percy, who has been transformed into a guinea pig.

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with the sirens. It is she who asks to be tied to the mast of the ship, because it is she who seeks to know herself better. Percy has no such desire, as he does not yet seek mastery over himself. His mastery is gained as a subsidiary reward for the completion of his quest; it is never his goal as it is for Annabeth. Annabeth explains to Percy the power of the Sirens:

> They say the Sirens sing the truth about what you desire. They tell you things about yourself you didn't even realize. That's what's so enchanting. If you survive…you become wiser. I want to hear them. (*The Sea of Monsters*, 192)

Percy then has the opportunity to see the vision that Annabeth is granted, a New York designed entirely by her, which she shares with notable people:

> I knew immediately that Annabeth had designed it all. She was the architect for a whole new world. She had reunited her parents. She had saved Luke. She had done everything she'd ever wanted. (*The Sea of Monsters*, 196)

Having recovered from her experience, Annabeth has grown wise enough to recognise the true nature of the visions showed to her by the Sirens. Far from being motivated to attempt to create that particular reality, and become enslaved to other myths of fate or societal patriarchy which might imprison her as the other-directed world protector, she gains a better understanding of the person she really is:

> She pulled her blanket around her. "My fatal flaw. That's what the Sirens showed me. My fatal flaw is hubris." (*The Sea of Monsters*, 200)

Annabeth understands intuitively that a passive, self-sacrificing, other-directed role is not for her, even when great things might be accomplished by adopting it. She learns, as does Jane Austen's Emma[35] to value others' agency and not to give free reign to her hubris. She understands that the hero must have the freedom to live her life on her own terms, and that other people deserve this freedom also. Pearson and Pope (1981:117) explain:

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[35] Austen ([1815] 1996:273) writes of Emma, in the eponymous novel: 'With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings! with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny' (also cited in Pearson and Pope, 1981:118).

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> She realizes that the myth that women are spiritually superior – responsible for saving men and children through remaining spiritually pure and selfless – oppresses both women and those around them. The female hero ceases to be the still center of power, inactive herself, who seeks to control the actions of those around her. By electing to live her own life, she automatically frees those around her to live theirs. By refusing to play the selfless, dependent, other-directed role, the female hero becomes less selfish, less egotistical rather than more so.

Having exited from the garden, the female hero can thus begin her quest proper.

Once the female hero is properly engaged with the quest, she must recognise the patriarchal and misogynistic assumptions of society for the falsities they are. This stage is called 'The Emperor's New Clothes' by Pearson and Pope, referring to the story by Hans Christian Anderson in which only one person can state the truth that is plainly evident to the multitude who yet refuse to acknowledge it. Thus, this section of the female hero journey deals largely with demythologising the myths of virginity and romantic love, as well as with exploring women's sexual liberation. Throughout each of the three subsections, the woman has to discard the societal notion that her worth, her autonomy and her freedom to make choices are granted by association with or dependence on men. The hero must learn to trust herself, and unleash those qualities from within.

Of the three subheadings, or forms, that this lesson can take, the 'Seducer' and 'The Light Man and the Dark Man' are of most relevance to Annabeth. During her journey, she is influenced and often characterised in opposition to or in support of either Percy Jackson or his nemesis, Luke Castellan. Pearson and Pope (1981:142) explain that both 'female and male heroes in the heroic quest [experience] a fall from innocence into experience [which charts a progression from] timelessness to participation in time, from immortality to mortality, from ignorance to knowledge'. The seducer is any person (male or female, romantic interest or mentor) who leads the hero to this fall. The seducer characteristically restricts the hero so that she cannot independently slay the dragon. This is the case with Luke Castellan. Annabeth never completely registers romantic interest in Percy, because she has not yet demythologised Luke, a fact of which Luke is fully aware and routinely uses to Annabeth's detriment.

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In *The Titan's Curse*, Luke takes the place of Atlas, separating the earth and sky, knowing that Annabeth will recognise his plight and save him by taking his place. She suffers most horribly as a result. Motivated by the myth of romantic love, which subordinates her will to his, she becomes the 'self-sacrificing' woman and is literally, as well as emotionally and psychologically, trapped by him. Pearson and Pope (1981:143) write: 'By promising to complete and protect her, [seducers] perpetuate the belief that she need not undertake a heroic journey.' This is intriguingly close to how Annabeth describes it: 'Luke promised me he'd never let me get hurt. He said…he said we'd be a new family, and it would turn out better than this' (*The Last Olympian*, 264). The failure to be rescued, or in Annabeth's case to be saved from harm, allows the hero to develop within herself what Pearson and Pope (1981:153) call the 'masculine' qualities of 'autonomy, intelligence, courage and achievement'.

Pearson and Pope (1981:154) add that the chief joy of the hero who has overcome the seducer is work: 'Finally, the primary joy of her life is her work, because that work expresses rather than denies her full humanity'. It is fascinating to see how accurately Annabeth follows this particular part of the model. At the completion of the series, when the gods are bestowing boons, Annabeth is the only person in the series who appears to give any thought to life or a career after the adventure. Where Percy's decision is whether or not to accept immortality, Annabeth has long since seen through that hollow gift. Her desire is to be defined through her work, as an architect. Her duty, specifically, is to rebuild and, more significantly, to *improve* Olympus.[36] Athena grants her the boon:

> Athena smiled. "You, my daughter, have exceeded all expectations. You have used your wits, your strength, and your courage to defend this city, and our seat of power. It has come to our attention that Olympus is … well, trashed. The Titan lord did much damage that will have to be repaired. We could rebuild it by magic, of course, and make it *just as it was* [my emphasis]. But the gods feel that the city could be *improved* [my emphasis]. We will take this opportunity. And you, my daughter, will design these improvements." (*The Last Olympian*, 349)

[36] This transforming of the kingdom is explored more deeply in Part III.

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Throughout the series Annabeth is concerned with generating, growing, improving, rather than destroying or being in control. This expresses, rather than denies, her full humanity.

In 'The Light Man and the Dark Man', the hero's shift towards autonomy is complicated by the myth of virginity. Pearson and Pope (1981:161) explain that the 'Dark Man' is a 'secular Satan, who corrupts and betrays the hero' – a description which in many ways could fit Luke. 'The Light Man', however, values 'spiritual order' and is 'the agent for conventional morality' who *saves* her (Pearson and Pope, 1981:161). In some ways, it could be argued that Percy also fits the description of the 'Light Man'. Percy is cast as the good in opposition to Luke's bad, the light to Luke's dark. However, in terms of the female hero, the 'villainous seducer and the would-be-husband turn out not to be opposites, because both threaten the hero's autonomy'; when she 'demythologizes both men, she sees that they are neither villains nor saviors' but simply 'human individuals who can neither save nor damn her' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:161).

Annabeth beautifully displays mastery of this lesson. During the final confrontation between the forces of good (Grover, Percy and Annabeth) and the forces of evil (Kronos possessing the body of Luke), Percy is defeated. As explained in Chapter 2, he fails to save Annabeth from Luke, which demythologises Percy as the saviour who would otherwise win her hand. Furthermore, Annabeth does not save Luke. Having been 'liberated from the belief that her fulfilment will come from a man who will take care of her… [she] takes responsibility for her own life' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:144). As has been described, this crucial power she gains grants autonomy and power to those around her. Annabeth realises that 'no one can undertake another's quest', which is ultimately how Luke is defeated. Annabeth finally stops the attempts to help or save Luke with which she has been almost chiefly concerned for four of the five novels in the series. Instead, she demythologises his role as seducer and she implores Percy to give the cursed blade to him, realising that ultimately Luke, like the other heroes so far discussed, has to achieve his own autonomy, through his own actions. Percy gives Luke the cursed blade, the dagger Luke once gave Annabeth and the symbol of her idolisation of him (cursed indeed). After this,

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Luke 'unlatched the side scraps of his armor, exposing a bit of skin just under his left arm, a place that would be very hard to hit. With difficulty, he stabbed himself' (*The Last Olympian*, 337).

Luke learns, through Annabeth's example, not to devalue the qualities of his character that he believes to be feminine. Without Annabeth's personal growth and her conscious rejection of his protection of her, Luke would not have been able to achieve the required agency to subdue his possession by Kronos long enough to see the Titan defeated by his own hand. In other words, he learns the value of loyalty and sacrifice through Annabeth's example. Pearson and Pope (1981:178) describe this as an emerging pattern in which 'the male hero also reaches reconciliation with the qualities he has previously denigrated as feminine', such as personal loyalty and self-sacrifice.[37] This is important because both Percy and Luke are on a similar quest. 'Encountering [their] female counterpart' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:251) jars them out of 'traditional assumptions about sex roles and accelerates [their] development' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:251). They are greatly influenced by Annabeth. For both Percy and Luke it is true that, when they discover 'a natural woman, [they learn] that the male as well as the female sex role is an artificial, alienating convention…[the hero] is reborn to himself in response to liberated female power' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:265). In Percy's case, he too is able to then avoid the trap of immortality. As for Luke, he is reborn to understand that, even as a possessed husk who should by rights be dead, he nevertheless has agency and autonomy, and he can take his own life to prevent further damage to the world.

Having demythologised the male, Annabeth is able to explore her sexuality, expressed in this case through kissing Percy underwater in a bubble; significantly she may do so without succumbing to the oppressive forces of prophecy, guilt, or the corruptively patriarchal myth of romantic love, whereby she may be seen as redeemed through Percy's affection. Thus the hero 'may love a few people, many, or none, but she does not become an appendage to their reality, their vocation'

[37] Note, in addition, how interesting it is that Percy's fatal flaw of personal loyalty, which is seen as feminine, is ultimately what allows him to make the right decision in trusting Annabeth. Without this Olympus and the world will be destroyed.

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(Pearson and Pope, 1981:237). The female hero at this stage embodies the concept of the Virgin-Mother goddess, as given by M. Esther Harding in *Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern*:

> The term virgin, then, when used of the ancient goddess, clearly has a meaning not of today. It may be used of a woman who has had no sexual experience; it may even be applied to a prostitute. Its real significance is to be found in its use as contrasted with "married" … a girl belongs to *herself* while she is a virgin – unwed – and may not be compelled either to maintain chastity or to yield to an unwanted embrace. As virgin she belongs to herself alone, she is "one-in-herself". (Harding, 1971:121, quoted by Pearson and Pope, 1981:177)

Having completed the demythologising of the male, the female hero is free to reconcile with her mother. This is neatly done in Riordan's saga because Annabeth comes to reconcile with Athena, and recognises in her some of the co-mingling of feminine and masculine qualities over which she has gained mastery and understanding. In *Reinventing Womanhood*, Carolyn Heilbrun (1981:152-153) describes Athena as a 'rare female creature' who is 'vastly misunderstood and misrepresented'. She adds that Sarah Pomeroy (1975:4, quoted in Heilbrun, 1981:155), 'for example, calls her "the archetype of the masculine woman who finds success in what is essentially a man's world by denying her own femininity and sexuality"'. Heilbrun (1981:155) counters this argument, however, by stating that 'Athene, the goddess, has no more denied her femininity than have those modern, mortal women in any job or profession who have shown themselves capable of achievement'. This certainly fits in better with Riordan's interpretation of the goddess with whom Annabeth reconciles, for in recognising the masculine and feminine traits of her mother, Annabeth can reconcile those traits within herself through reconciliation with Athena.

Pearson and Pope (1981:218-219) thus summarise Parts I and II of the female hero journey in a way that clarifies Annabeth's progress, which prepares her for the final part of the journey, 'The Return' to the kingdom:

> Having affirmed a commitment to the discovery of the true self in exiting from the garden, and having discovered that she has within her both male and female attributes, the female hero discovers and affirms the full humanity obscured by traditional sex role. She learns to be autonomous and to achieve without exploiting or dominating others;

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> and she learns nurturance that is not accompanied by a denial of the self. With the achievement of this unified vision, the hero is prepared to return to the kingdom and to enjoy a new relationship with the world.

Part III of Pearson and Pope's model corresponds very neatly with Campbell's in that the hero, having defeated the dragon, having been initiated into experience through a calamitous fall and having reconciled with a parent and gained autonomy, can now return from whence she came. Pearson and Pope (1981:223) write that, for the female hero, the 'treasure [she] claims at the completion of her journey is herself'. She 'partakes of the eternal' and, therefore, 'enjoys a new sense of trust is her perceptions' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:223). Annabeth is rewarded with a vocation of her choosing, which allows her fundamental freedom of expression. As architect of Olympus, it is implied that she can rebuild not only the structures and aesthetic to match her desires, but also the community surrounding them. As Pearson and Pope note (1981:226): 'The treasures that attend the discovery of the true heroic self are wholeness and community, …[a] symbiotic relationship with the culture…[and the] kingdom is rejuvenated or transformed as a result of their deed'.

This transformation can be glimpsed through the reactions of the gods after the granting the boons in *The Last Olympian*. Percy has to choose whether or not to accept immortality as a reward, and he looks at Annabeth before making his choice. Athena, who is aware of their budding affection, moves to have Percy made immortal immediately, to get him out of the way. He chooses not to become immortal and Athena confronts him:

> Another god was waiting for me on the way out of Olympus. Athena stood in the middle of the road with her arms crossed and a look on her face that made me think *Uh-oh*…her gray eyes blazed.
> …
> "But think very carefully about how you proceed from here."
> …
> Just to prove her point, she erupted into a column of fire, charring the front of my shirt. (*The Last Olympian*, 359)

Athena, an immortal herself, despite having undergone reconciliation with Annabeth as a symbol of the co-mingling of masculine and feminine character

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traits, nevertheless cannot experience the same growth that Annabeth can, so she cannot dissociate Percy from the role society has cast him in, nor can she conceive of Annabeth's being wise in choosing to pursue a relationship on her own terms.

The gods, in Riordan's saga at least, appear to be representative of those traditional modes and mechanisms which restrict and repress humanity and women in particular. Hermes, in a discussion with Percy, highlights this important point:

> Hermes' shoulders sagged. "They'll try, Percy. Oh, we'll all try to keep our promise.[38] And maybe for a while things will get better. But we gods have never been good at keeping oaths. You were born because of a broken promise, eh? Eventually we'll become forgetful. We always do."
> "You can change."
> Hermes laughed. "After three thousand years, you think the gods can change their nature?" (*The Last Olympian*, 358)

The gods, it seems, are in desperate need of the changes to community and the transformation that Annabeth can bring. Annabeth has this power because she is no longer dependent on the agency of either the gods, including her mother, or the societies in which she exists. She as the hero 'values herself and therefore is not dependent on social approval or on a male figure to complete and validate her' (Pearson and Pope, 1981:226). This is a fact that Athena, representative of gods' inability to yield to the shifting of character and nature, as yet fails to understand. Athena in Riordan's saga is representative of a rejection of patriarchal assumptions and she believes that Annabeth does not need a male figure to complete her. A virgin goddess herself,[39] she cannot envisage any other reason for Annabeth's affection for Percy, seeing only the negative potential of their relationship. Annabeth has demythologised romantic love, however, and can freely enter any relationship without having to seek validation or completion through her partner. In Riordan's saga, it is only the mortal heroes, Percy and

[38] Percy chooses as his ultimate boon a promise from the gods that they will recognise their mortal offspring and never allow them to feel neglected or unwanted, in the hope of avoiding creating another Luke, whose chief psychological weakness was his unresolved feeling of abandonment by Hermes, his father.
[39] Although there is an Athena cabin full of Athena's *children*, Annabeth explains to Percy that the union of Athena with a mortal is not sexual in nature, but is rather a meeting of minds. From this intellectual union, her children are *born* from her mind in the same way that she was born from Zeus' mind.

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Annabeth most particularly, who can grow and change. Pearson and Pope (1981:278) write:

> Both the male and the female hero discover that in reclaiming human values – and specifically in rejecting the macho denigration of female qualities – they are rejoined to the natural world and to each other. The transformation of the kingdom promised by the hero's return creates a macrocosmic family in which the hero feels, finally, at home.

The remainder of Pearson and Pope's Part III discusses the various types of utopias or dystopias that a hero can create in her new community. None of those visions of a possible future are relevant to Riordan's saga, because Percy and Annabeth's future has not yet been decided. As is noted in the previous chapter, the ending of the saga is deliberately ambiguous. Annabeth's quest is completed, and she has entered into what appears to be an egalitarian relationship with Percy, and that is all that we are shown. Attebery (1992:103) writes: 'Fantasy's reliance on traditional motifs makes it less adaptable to such wholesale transformations of society; it usually focuses on the development of the exceptional individual rather than the reformation of culture.' It could be argued that this is true of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga, as the culture is reformed, entirely, but the effects of this are not fully envisaged. We are left to guess or imagine what they will be. Additionally, the victory at the conclusion, in a global sense, is not a feminist victory alone, for the acknowledgement of the child by a parent transposes gender delineation. If fantasy struggles to imagine wholesale transformations of society, it can, nevertheless challenge existing cultural institutions, as Attebery (1992:103) asserts:

> It can begin with inherited story structures and direct them toward unexpected ends, turning Cinderellas into Princess Charming and waking sleeping strengths in Sleeping Beauties. Its very avoidance of the details of contemporary society gives it flexibility, for its heroines need not carry such cultural burdens as women's economic dependency, religious rationales for the suppression of women, and the commercial exploitation of women as sex objects. Freed of these, heroines have a chance of coping with personal relationships and with their own limitations.

These challenges to contemporary culture are of the utmost importance to this study.

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Pearson and Pope (1981:238) note that both narratives themselves and the authors who write them can be limited by a prevailing adherence to the myths of virginity, romantic love and maternal self-sacrifice. The patriarchal assumptions governing an author and his or her creation can limit the capacity of the hero to shape a new society. After all, if an author cannot envisage any new society where women are freely independent and autonomous, then their characters surely will not be able to do so either.

Heilbrun (1981) argues this point most persuasively. She feels that women writers have become so indoctrinated and brainwashed that it is only male writers who can write applicable heroic models for female heroes to follow. At the completion of those male experience models, the female hero, she feels, is obligated to institute and propagate a society of support for other women. In this regard, it is worth noting a comment in her diary by Virginia Woolf ([1921] 1954:230, quoted in Pearson and Pope 1981:224): 'As I write, there rises somewhere in my head that queer and pleasant sense of something which I want to write; my own point of view' – a freedom I think would be far more possible to imagine within a supportive and structured community of women and women writers. Pearson and Pope (1981:251) express a similar sentiment, stating: 'In many cases, therefore, the community that is the female hero's reward is primarily composed of other women.' In terms of this view, the returned hero is not isolated to a female sphere of existence of relegation, only to fade into the background. Instead, she gravitates to that sphere of the standard reality which is most direly in need of her ability to transform and transfigure: the oppressed former society to which she once belonged.

Pearson and Pope (1981:255) advocate a new approach:

> The hero's ultimate weapon against the dragon myths is the sword of truth, yet many women believe that women's truth has been so obscured by patriarchal myths that new forms, new styles, and a new language must be developed to express women's heroic knowledge.

Their female hero model is part of that new language. Indeed, Bruce Lincoln (1981:106) in *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's*

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Initiation writes that ritual as it may currently exist 'serves only to introduce an individual into society as society already exists, not to alter the nature of that society'.[40] While this may be true, Heilbrun nevertheless suggests a similar strategy[41] to that of Pearson and Pope, though one without models, by which readers may subversively read texts to re-imagine and re-interpret them to learn qualities to allow for female autonomy. It is possible that this new language, or new reading, may succeed where ritual cannot. This reading assists readers in not being limited in their own identification with a passive and broken hero. On its own, as Attebery (1992:94) notes, this 'may not be workable for all, especially young girls untrained in the art of reading subversively'. Heilbrun's strategy is ideal for Riordan's saga, however, because much of the subversion (as has been shown in Chapter 2) has already been written by Riordan himself. The essential re-imagining, re-writing and re-inventing of the myths themselves already take place within the story, and Heilbrun's reading strategy can then be applied much more readily and successfully by readers because the author has already initiated and is guiding this action.

Attebery (1992:88) describes how the treatment of traditional modes and models, especially in coming of age stories (among which *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* is clearly numbered), 'may be made to reflect contemporary concerns, and how inherited story structures may be used to question the practices and beliefs that gave rise to them'. In the saga's conclusion, where the ending is made deliberately ambiguous, it could be argued that the ending does not necessarily reflect a failure of Riordan's imagination to fully realise a female utopia, but rather an invitation for readers to complete the reinvention process which he has

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[40] Riordan's saga is uniquely and positively positioned in this regard, however. As Stephens and McCallum (1998:18) indicate, '[w]hen values are identified in children's books, and when they are commended, they are usually presented as *natural* human values which reflect the world as it is. On the contrary, retellers [such as Riordan] and their commentators are both engaged in producing interpretations of the world, and, in some cases, in attempts to change it by changing the consciousness of readers and their attitudes towards pre-existing narratives and concepts.' Their suggestion, which is dealt with in much more detail in the next chapter, is that retellers are not bound to simply introduce readers to society as it is, but rather that they have the power to influence that society.

[41] Although she might not agree with having a separate female hero journey, as Heilbrun (1981:150) argues that 'structures are human, not sexually dictated'. Female models are too restrictive for her: '[O]ne feels particularly the importance of not limiting the female imagination to female models' (Heilbrun, 1981:147). She concludes: 'Ultimately, there are no male models, there are only models of selfhood which from which woman chooses to learn' (Heilbrun, 1981:140).

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begun, and imagine a proper utopia for themselves, to be created in the fulfilment of their own hero journeys. In this way, Riordan's fantasy, based on myth, comes to resemble very closely a new mythology in and of itself. Attebery (1992:89) explains that modern fantasy is becoming 'a compilation of narratives that express a society's conception of itself, its individual members, and their place in the universe'. Furthermore, women fantasists, he argues, are 'engaged in such joint enterprises as refurbishing the archetypal images of the goddess, redefining qualities of heroism to include female experience, and reaffirming women's access to the narrative storehouse of the past' (Attebery, 1992:89). Clearly, this is true of many women fantasists, but I would argue that it is also true of Rick Riordan, since he seems to understand and use the concept expressed in Heilbrun's (1981:98) explanation that 'the reinterpretation of history and myth is one of the most powerful means women have of demonstrating their historic fitness to play all the roles in human drama'.

To paraphrase Attebery (1992:104) then, when we follow Annabeth's path from frightened girl clinging to Luke, to the saviour of the prophecy whose intuitive wisdom and insight saves Olympus, we see clearly how an extraordinary individual, a hero, may defy societal expectations to achieve self-worth. When we see Annabeth wrestle with hubris, the awakening of her own special power and her struggle to demythologise virginity, romantic love and self-sacrifice, we note how the hidden mechanisms of culture and tradition may be subverted from within to offer support to adolescents coming of age. Annabeth, and indeed Percy too, explore different avenues to maturity and define those avenues in different terms, be they physical, sexual, cultural, geographical or political. The value in the analysis of these vehicles for maturity then is to develop a subversive reading strategy through understanding both male and female hero models, their similarities and differences. To read the stories of female heroes who emerge in power and self-awareness and, because of their constructed universality, intentionally adopt a subversive reading strategy is a challenging task. Yet, identifying with characters like Annabeth (and Percy), both male or female readers can learn more truly or completely how to position themselves within ongoing feminist and hero journey debates, and learn more fully also how to go about answering the question: 'Who am I?'

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Chapter 4: Adaptation and Appropriation in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*

The danger always exists, when entering into an exploration of an author's adaptation and appropriation of an earlier work, of becoming embroiled and entangled in discussions of originary value, of precedence by publishing date, of ownership and rights. While these arguments are not always without cause or merit, what they often fail to acknowledge is the value of the adaptation itself; an adaptation does not have to be secondary in value, nor indeed, second in terms of chronology as far as reception is concerned. Linda Hutcheon (2006:xiii) reminds us that '[o]ne lesson is that to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative'. Similarly, in the influential *Adaptation and Appropriation*, part of *The New Critical Idiom Series*, Julie Sanders (2006:158), writes:

> After need not...mean belated in a purely negative sense. Coming "after" can mean finding new angles and new routes into something, new perspectives on the familiar, and these new angles, routes, and perspectives in turn identify entirely novel possibilities.

It is these 'new angles' and 'new perspectives' which are central to this study of re-discovering and re-imagining classical mythology in Rick Riordan's saga.

Adaptations and appropriations such as Riordan's saga are becoming increasingly common, and scholars are beginning to acknowledge that adaptations and appropriations have value *as adaptations*, on their own, and do not stand beholden or secondary to the root narratives from which they have been formed. Sanders (2006:20) notes: 'Adaptation studies are, then, not about making polarized value judgements, but about analysing process, ideology, methodology.' Of particular relevance to the discussion of the adaptation and appropriation of the Greek mythological roots alluded to and referenced in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga, therefore, is the fact that, as David Buchbinder (2011:128) indicates, 'adaptation of an originary text is quite often treated as only a step away from plagiarism. However, much of the literary output of classical Greek culture,

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for instance, consisted of reworkings of already familiar narratives'. Indeed, the stream of our understanding becomes muddied even further when we consider that the root narratives themselves are often re-workings of older, orally transmitted stories, and are not necessarily the first to be read by contemporary audiences, particularly where such audiences may be adolescents; these are facts which challenge conventional notions of priority. Sanders (2006:158) writes: 'So influential, indeed, have some appropriations become that in many instances they now define our *first* experiences or encounters with their precursor work of art' [my emphasis].[42]

The concept of *first*, of primacy, of a canon by gerontocracy is being steadily eroded, subverted and shown to be increasingly irrelevant in the light of new readers, particularly adolescent readers, discovering these narratives for the first time via the texts that Gérard Genette ([1982] 1997:ix) terms 'hypertexts' and not the predecessor 'hypotexts'[43] – if such texts could even be said to exist in the case of Greek mythology. The very definitions of 'original text' and 'adaptation' thus often become politically troublesome and reveal values which may not reflect either the author's intention in creation, nor the audience's reception or understanding. According to Stephens and McCallum (1998:4), this is because

> …retellings do not, and cannot, also reproduce the discoursal mode of the source, they cannot *replicate* its significances, and always impose their own cultural presuppositions in the process of the retelling.

In the course of these adaptations or retellings, then, some aspect of the author's cultural and political presuppositions may be transferred to subsequent encounters with the pre-text. While Sanders (2006:158) rightly reflects that '[n]o appropriation can be achieved without impacting upon and altering in some way the text which inspired the adaptation', it is the purpose of this study to show that such alteration need not be negative, but may, in fact, serve not only to benefit the hypertext, *as adaptation*, but serve also the interests of the hypotext by re-introducing a contemporary adolescent generation to the very root narratives

[42] It is noted later on, in reference to the films based on Riordan's novels, how this can also be disadvantageous.
[43] Stephens and McCallum (1998:4) term the predecessor text a 'pre-text', and the subsequent retelling a 're-version', 'a narrative which has taken apart its pre-texts and reassembled them as a version which is a new textual and ideological configuration'.

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which served as foundation for the adaptation, and which they otherwise might never have encountered. This rediscovering constitutes the continuation of the shaping power and allegorical influence of the original texts throughout time.

In each of the five constituent novels of Riordan's series, Percy is engaged on a quest given by the Oracle of Delphi. However, the Titanomachy and the overarching conflict with Kronos serve as backdrop for the series as a whole, instead of being dealt with exclusively in any individual novel. While the battle for Mount Olympus between the gods and the Titans is a familiar mythological setting, more than the setting is adapted and appropriated. Percy himself is an adaptation of the mythological hero, Perseus. (His name is short for Perseus.) In the novels, Percy experiences Rick Riordan's re-imagined visions of the hero journeys and adventurous experiences of Odysseus, Achilles, Theseus, Bellerophon, Jason and Hercules and this is by no means an exhaustive list. Many of the adventures that the characters experience are described in idiomatic language and the fact that this is possible seems testimony to their far-reaching influence and popularity.

In his adaptation and appropriation of the Greek mythological root narratives, Riordan does not emulate or create an analogue of any one particular adventure. As explained in the introduction in Chapter 1, while Percy and his friends attempt to unravel the enigmatic prophecies of the Oracle, or face the denizens of Tartarus, they do so in a series of micro-narratives, scenes of iconic episodes, similar to the originary hero tales, each of which will be instantly recognisable to readers familiar with Greek mythology. Indeed, as indicated, Percy, in the course of even a single novel, re-experiences the adventures of a number of heroes who have preceded him. Yet he never completes even his namesake's particular hero journey in its entirety, but rather appropriates certain aspects from various tales as Riordan re-imagines them in a contemporary setting, formulating an entirely new adventure, a patchwork or bricolage of the most iconic scenes and occurrences in ancient Greek hero tales. Not only the setting and characters are made contemporary; many of the values, outcomes and associated morals of the Greek myths are revisited and given a new perspective, reflecting more closely perhaps the morals, values and attitudes of contemporary culture which has allowed the

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creation of such a series for young adult readers of fiction. Before an analysis of how this is achieved can be undertaken, an understanding of *why* such an adaptation was undertaken by Rick Riordan is illuminating.

Buchbinder (2011:129) points out that 'there may be many reasons why an adaptation is undertaken', citing a comprehensive list by Linda Hutcheon (2006:79-111). Riordan had personal reasons for his undertaking. Riordan (2008c) relates in the introduction to *Demigods and Monsters* how, when he was already a writer and middle school teacher in the United States, he learned that his son had ADHD and dyslexia. His son, who was othered in the classroom, gave him the idea of re-imagining the mythological narratives from the perspective of adolescents[44] who, by virtue of their stage of development and position in society, are in a state of 'in-between', fitting into neither the world of childhood nor that of adulthood. Only the class on Mythology was accessible to Riordan's son in school – nothing else held his attention. An adapted bedtime story became something far greater. Joseph Felser (1996:403) writes that Campbell (1990:40-41) said: 'Mythology opens the world so that it becomes transparent to something that is beyond speech, beyond words, in show, to what we call transcendence.' Felser (1996:407) explains that

> the primary function of myth is the mystical function: the awakening of a sense of awe and gratitude before the mystery dimension that lies behind and yet grounds all forms, whether they are relatively constant of relatively changing.

It is perhaps an indication of the power of myth itself that it could reach an adolescent where nothing else could.

Percy Jackson, and his demi-god compatriots, personify this state of flux Riordan's son felt, and wrestle constantly with the difficulties of being caught in between the other-world of their divine parents, and a contemporary society which classifies their gifts and birth rights as learning disabilities and marginalises them because they are different. The motive behind this particular temporal and cultural shift, or updating, is clear: this movement brings the events of the narrative closer

[44] This change of focalisation is an important adaptation, one which invests the adaptation itself with much of its instructive power for adolescent readers, as shown later in this study.

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to the audience's frame of reference in temporal, geographical and cultural terms. Buchbinder (2011:130) states that 'adaptation *transposes* the originary text into a new mode and/or context...and that transposition necessarily creates shifts of meaning and understanding for the reader'. This shift in meaning and understanding makes classical literature accessible to a young reader. Previously, mythology was explained as '[i]nvesting such powers with spirits that have a recognisably human nature...[allowing] people to make greater sense of a random and threatening universe" (Cotterell, 1999:7), but these same events, re-told and re-imagined in a new social and geographical and even political context, allow a new meaning to be created for adolescents.[45] For Riordan's son, as is indeed the case for many other adolescents, such created meaning may foster a sense of a belonging between two worlds, neither of which one is fully a part.

In *The Lightning Thief* Percy faces a number of mythological challenges. Briefly, he must accept his demi-god heritage, battle the mythical Minotaur, learn combat proficiency from a mythological beast, receive both a quest and a prophecy from the Oracle, wield magical weapons, face both Medusa and the chimera, travel to Hades via the lair of the lotus-eaters to save the soul of a loved one, and eventually complete his quest at Mount Olympus, where he is rewarded with the right to ask a boon from the gods themselves. The majority of the encounters listed are recognisable to readers familiar with Greek mythology. Readers familiar with these tales are also likely to note that the characters who were originally (a troublesome term) involved in these narrative scenes include Theseus, Achilles and Hercules. Each of the adventures warrants closer scrutiny to learn the details of how each is appropriated into a new hero journey, a re-imagined version of events, although such an undertaking would exceed the limited scope of this dissertation. In the preface to the excellent *Ultimate Encyclopaedia of Mythology*, Arthur Cotterell (1999:6) writes: 'The stories that have survived from these ancient civilizations describe gods that have long passed into history.' Percy learns that this is not so, as do the readers. The gods, and their associated mythology, were there all along, waiting to be discovered.

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[45] This new meaning, as indicated above, need not be pejorative in terms of the originary and founding narratives. Rather, it may invite readers to explore those pre-texts for themselves and come to appreciate more fully the different focalisations and cultural assumptions which governed the creation of each.

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What follows is a brief summary of some of the more obvious ways in which Riordan has adapted and appropriated mythology in the saga's first novel, *The Lightning Thief*, which serves as example of the adaptations and appropriations in the series as a whole. As indicated above, a fuller and more complete study highlighting both the actual adaptations being made and their cultural, political and social implications is not possible in the limited scope of this dissertation. While some changes seem purely aimed at modernising the stories, much of Riordan's input and style are his own, as are the socio-political implications of his changes to formulae, focalisation and narration.

Percy learns he is a demi-god (the progeny of Poseidon and a mortal woman) when he is attacked by his Mathematics teacher, who is a harpy in disguise. He is rescued, in part, by his Classics teacher, who entrusts him with a pen which magically becomes a golden sword, and by his best friend, Grover, who is a satyr in disguise. His Classics teacher, who upon first uses a wheelchair, is actually Chiron, centaur son of Kronos, who later trains Percy in combat proficiency and serves as his mentor and guide, as well as occasionally a mode of transportation. Percy is attacked by the mythical Minotaur (whom myth depicts as inhabiting Daedalus's labyrinth, which itself becomes the primary subject of a later novel in the series) outside Camp Half-Blood, the home and safe haven for demi-god heroes, re-imagined as an American summer camp. The camp is overseen by Mr D (the god Dionysus who has been banished from Mount Olympus for alcoholism).

Percy is rewarded with the Minotaur's horn after returning to consciousness following his victory in battle. Percy consumes ambrosia, the drink of the gods and general healing restorative, which tastes, to Percy, of chocolate-chip cookies. Percy meets Annabeth, a daughter of Athena, one of Riordan's creative additions and the character who, throughout the series, most fully realises Riordan's postmodernist concerns with challenging patriarchal tropes and expectations of mythological narratives. The camp itself is situated near Long Island in the United States, which is the current bastion of Western Civilization and home of the

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principles of democracy first envisioned and enshrined by the Greeks and Mesopotamians. Chiron explains to Percy how Greek civilization has moved both chronologically and geographically:

> What you call "Western Civilization." Do you think it's just an abstract concept? No, it's a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years...The fire started in Greece. Then...the heart of the fire moved to Rome, and so did the gods...The gods simply moved, to Germany, to France, to Spain, for a while...Wherever the flame was brightest, the gods were there...Every place they've ruled, for the last three thousand years, you can see them in paintings, in statues, on the most important buildings...America is now the heart of the flame. It is the great power of the West. And so Olympus is here. And we are here. (*The Lightning Thief*, 2006:73)

Riordan (2008c:ix) indicates that he uses mythology, itself originally 'man's attempt to explain phenomena', to explain the phenomenon that the forms of architecture, music, art, literature pioneered by the Greeks has exerted such a strong influence over much of Europe and the United States. His appropriation of mythology (re-)creates a new mythology, a new explanation for a new phenomenon, constituting what Robert Weimann (1983:14, cited in Sanders 2006:1) terms the 'reproductive dimension of appropriation'. At Camp Half-Blood Percy encounters a desiccated mummy in the attic of the camp's main cabin, all that remains of the once young and beautiful Oracle of Delphi. She delivers an enigmatic prophecy to Percy which leads to a fellowship consisting of Percy, Annabeth and Grover to seek Zeus' stolen thunderbolt. Their first dangerous encounter is with Aunty M., the gorgon Medusa, owner of a garden gnome and statue emporium. The fellowship defeat Medusa, avoiding her deadly gaze by looking into a gazing ball (instead of the more familiar polished shield, the absence of which Annabeth vocally laments). Afterwards, Percy packages Medusa's decapitated head and snail-mails it, using Hermes Overnight Express, to the current location of Mount Olympus: the 600th floor of the Empire State Building in New York.

After surviving an onslaught by a chimera later in the journey, Percy receives duplicitous divine aid from Ares, before moving on to the current location of the entrance to Hades, Hollywood. En route, the group becomes trapped briefly in the Lotus Casino in Las Vegas, the current home of the Lotus Eaters whom Odysseus

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encounters in *The Odyssey*. After eventually entering the entrance to Hades, Percy bribes Charon, the boatman, travels down the badly polluted river Styx and enters Erebus, avoiding being judged by the current court of the dead (presided over by King Minos of Crete, Thomas Jefferson and Shakespeare). Annabeth uses her cunning to enable the group to evade Cerberus, proffering a chew-toy ball to occupy him while they make their passage. In discussion with Hades, the group learn that the real thief of Zeus's lightning bolt (the goal of the quest) is the disgruntled son of Hermes, Luke, who thereby becomes the principal demi-god villain of the series, motivated largely by his father's dismissive attitude towards him. Percy, faced with impossible decisions, leaves his mother in Hades, although hers is the soul he ventured into damnation to save, to return the lightning bolt to Zeus. The friends travel to the Empire State Building, return Zeus' stolen property.

Finally, at the conclusion of the saga, Percy is given a boon of his choosing. Immortality is considered, but Percy opts for another choice: he decides to enforce the gods' acknowledgment of their mortal offspring so that children in his position may know both their true parents. An author trapped in an attempt at simply modernising the Greek myths might see the story of mortals making poor choices as being doomed to be repeated forever. Riordan, however, appropriates the meaning of the myths and imposes his own outcome on Percy's actions. This new action speaks pertinently to the concerns of an adolescent audience wishing to achieve acceptance and worthiness in the eyes of adults in general, and their parents in particular. Through the adapted and appropriated vehicle of pre-existing mythological narratives, Riordan constructs a pleasingly familiar narrative of his own, which, through its unique twists and endings, allows readers to make different inter-textual associations and form meanings and understandings of their own. As Stephens and McCallum (1998:68) note, myths 'are told in contrasting ways, then. They can be self-referential, somewhat exotic stories, appearing to be of the same formulaic kind as modern fantasy action stories, or they can be retold within a frame which seeks to express or evoke their capacity to be, as Egan [1989:283] expresses it, "powerful abstract concepts structured in concrete content."' Riordan's adaptations are of the latter variety.

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As scholars such as Barthes (1981) have indicated, texts are not necessarily indebted to their authors for the production of meaning. This is particularly true of mythology where 'there is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely' (Barthes, 1981:120, cited in Sanders, 2006:64). This lack of fixity allows for much meaning to be created by the readers themselves, who discover their own intertextual relationships within the tales. Indeed, in understanding the bricolage of literature which exists around them, adolescent readers might discover the adaptations and appropriations before they encounter the texts from which the versions they first encounter have been adapted. Because these readers may encounter the adaptation first, often, their first impressions are informed by the values and attitudes of the author engaged in the adaptation.

However, the adaptation always exists in relation to its predecessor and other texts within the bricolage of literature. Therefore, readers are shown that none of the associated cultural, social and political assumptions made or engendered on the part of the authors of either the pre-text or the re-version needs to be definitive or prescriptive. Rather, both the pre-text and the re-version may be read within a cocoon of safety. The readers may better appreciate, through having already read an adaptation, itself a conscious engagement with an existing cultural viewpoint, that assumptions about culture and society, and their associated values and attitudes, are not immutable, but rather openly invite discourse and reinterpretation. This acknowledgement of the lack of Barthes's (1981) notion of 'fixity' is the principal advantage of reading adaptations, and a powerful instructive tool in creating sensible and valuable reading strategies in readers of fiction for young adults, or in the case of Riordan's texts, adolescents. This is not to say, however, that the reading of adaptations need only be enjoyable in its ability to instruct young readers in reading strategies that allow for subversive encounters with adaptations and pre-texts in relation to one another.

It is certainly true that much of the enjoyment of reading adaptations stems from the recognition of ways in which a text has been adapted temporally or appropriated stylistically, and recognising the subversive power of this strategy. Of course, this is not to say that enjoying an adaptation *as adaptation* is any less

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possible, or indeed, any less rewarding. The motivation in writing an adaptation, according to James Andreas (1997:107, cited in Sanders, 2006:12), 'is serving the capacity of incremental literature…adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating. The aim is not replication as such, but rather complication, expansion rather than contraction'. The examples from *The Lightning Thief* discussed above show the capacity of temporal adaptations and stylistic appropriations to expand upon, and supplement the source material. It is the very interplay between readers' knowledge of root narratives, and the innovative expanded re-imaginings that informs much of the pleasure of reading adaptations *as adaptations*, particularly where such readings may inspire readers to seek out and explore their adaptations' hypotexts. The tension between expectation and surprise, the relied-upon similarities and unforeseen differences between new re-imagined visions of past literature and their pre-texts is central to the enjoyment of the experience of adaptation. As Genette ([1982] 1997:399) asserts, the hypertext compels us to participate in 'relational reading', which I feel is particularly true when the hypertext is the first text that is encountered.

Hutcheon (2006:121) argues, however, that for 'an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences'. Hutcheon refers here not to the knowledge of whether a text may be an adaptation or not, but rather implies that 'knowing' refers to readers who have encountered and have knowledge of the originary pre-text being adapted. Readers who are aware that a novel is an adaptation of an existing pre-text may still be classed as 'unknowing' if they have as yet not encountered the pre-text itself. This distinction is relevant because a novel which is an adaptation, but which makes no attempt to re-imagine either the implications of the pre-text or its associated socio-political views and assumptions, but rather simply modernises the settings and events of the plot and character, may well be enjoyable to an 'unknowing' reader, but would be likely to leave a 'knowing' reader unmoved and critical of the novel's value to a contemporary audience, who, they might feel, would be equally well served by reading the originary pre-text.

The question for the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga must then be whether Riordan is guilty of what Buchbinder (2011:138) calls 'dressing it up in modern

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costume and embellishing it'. Given the extensive evidence in the previous chapters around the way in which Riordan has not only adapted the ancient Greek myths, but subverted many of their less desirable cultural and socio-political assumptions as well, I contend that Riordan's saga is not, as Buchbinder might otherwise indicate, only a skin-deep reworking of the Greek myths. Because Riordan actively engages in an interrelationship with the mythological narratives which inspire his story, because he challenges the patriarchal imperialism and misogyny that inform many mythological narratives, thus assisting readers to develop subversive reading techniques, and because the novels engage adolescent readers within their own particular frame of reference, I believe that there is value in his novels for both 'knowing' and 'unknowing' readers. It warrants noting, however, that such value may suffer from undue obfuscation and may, in fact, sometimes go unrealised.

It is also recognised that a text's reception may be informed by the existing metanarrative framework in which it is received. In the case of these novels, then, this is problematic because of the existence of poor contemporary film adaptations: *Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (2010) and *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* (2013). There is a strong likelihood that the films may constitute the first encounter with the saga for many young adults; it is no secret that the popularity of television and cinema eclipses that of reading. In the case of the novels, the complication referred to above is compounded because now readers may first encounter Riordan's Percy Jackson character through watching a film adaptation of a series of novels which are themselves adaptations of mythology. While this is not necessarily problematic on its own, the complication arises because of the manner in which the film versions have been created. It is a complicating factor to the argued power of Riordan's novels, both as adaptations and in terms of the interrelationship informed by the source pre-text (which may inspire readers of fiction for young adults to search out and enjoy the root narratives of mythology), that they may possibly only be encountered after the films are. While this state of affairs would not normally be objectionable, the films, notwithstanding their monetary successes, make no claim to the transformative power of the novels and share few (or none) of their deeper

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significances, not least of which is the power to inspire an audience to seek out the pre-texts upon which the adaptation is based.

The films abandon the use of hero models,[46] relegating Annabeth, an important character, to a useless appendage who is, more often than not, simply absent from the screen entirely, and transforming Percy into a wind-swept reactionary who is blown from one encounter to another, during which he is constantly rescued by others while looking bewildered. Luke Castellan, the complex antagonist of the series who, as is explained in Chapter 2, is revealed in the final novel to be the hero of the prophecy, is replaced by an onscreen counterpart who is idiosyncratically evil, without motivation or purpose, and who is more comic than complex. Riordan's carefully realised deconstruction and subversion of the concepts of 'hero' and a 'heroic responsibility' is thus almost entirely lost and Luke is left a hapless and hopeless every-villain. That Percy and Annabeth thus defeat Kronos who possesses Luke is a feat with little worth and they too are therefore made less heroic. Furthermore, despite the fact that the conclusion of the series necessitates his presence at the final battle, Luke's death is implied at the end of *both* films. Variations to the plot, such as the inclusion of a Hydra battle, Hades' being a rock-star with relationship troubles, and Annabeth and Percy's being marginalised at the camp, while not necessarily objectionable in and of themselves, nonetheless make little attempt to recognise the place of events which take place early in the novels in the shaping of the overall story arc, while at the same time ignoring much of the character development which informs the growing process of the hero journey, and which readers encountering the journey are themselves presumably striving to achieve.

Each of the films appears to be have been made as an individual entity, depriving the series of its significance as a saga, and robbing each narrative arc of its continuity. The second film, for instance, closes with a bizarre battle in which Percy battles a building-sized Titan Kronos, who for some reason is molten in

[46] Although their use has been shown to be contentious, especially given feminist developments surrounding the roles and journeys of male and female heroes, a simple abandonment of any structure to a narrative arc is, arguably, even more detrimental than the use of a model which may be accused of being essentialist, particularly where such use is deliberately intended to subvert cultural and historical assumptions.

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form, and who is defeated by being stabbed by Percy's otherwise not unusual sword. His defeat in this second film will make problematic any climactic conclusion to the fifth film (should it ever be made), where Kronos' possessing Luke's body takes centre stage. While it would be counter-productive to argue in this study that a film adaptation cannot have value as an adaptation on its own (as I have already shown not to be the case), the very fact that the interrelationship between the films and novels is explicit, while at the same time being attempted without any evidence that this interrelationship is informing the structure and implications of the films, is extremely unfortunate for the modern reception of the novels (which are worthy of attention). Many young adults may feel uninterested in exploring the novels after having seen films 'based on the novels', if the films are so poor. It is worth noting, however, that their lack of meaningful discourse with their pre-text novels does not devalue the films as adaptations. Some audiences might find them very entertaining. However, because of the thoughtless manner in which they have failed to enter into an open discourse between pre-text and adaptation or made changes for specific and subversive purposes, the practical reality is that it is unlikely that the films will ever draw an audience from the big screen towards an active engagement with the pre-text, as it could be argued Riordan's series could do with its informing myths. Hence, I believe that the films are poor because they are retrogressive. They reinterpret the story in a manner which makes them more conservative and patriarchal, where the novels seem to have an opposite agenda. In this sense, they consciously choose to perpetuate the negative values that Stephens and McCallum (1998:63) argue that retellings often inadvertently do.

Although this is not always the case, in some adaptations and appropriations, as shown above, the interrelationship between hypertext and hypotext is explicit. While an awareness of the informing narratives alerts cognisant readers to more diverse reading enjoyment possibilities, it is clear that such knowledge is not always required for the enjoyment of those hypertexts as adaptations. It is possible that the films may be enjoyed on their own, as Riordan's novels may also be enjoyed without prior knowledge of mythology or the film adaptations. Indeed, adaptations are becoming increasingly common, and enjoying them *as adaptations* is entirely possible. Stephens and McCallum (1998:62) note that 'it

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would seem hardly surprising if classical myth had virtually disappeared even from children's literature.[47] It hasn't, however, and although it clearly survives as a lesser genre, new retellings consistently appear'. These retellings, because of their intended target audience of young readers, are often first enjoyed as adaptations, even where the interrelationship is made explicit, as explained above. What is important, however, is that through Genette's ([1982] 1997:304) 'Movement of Proximation', the very adaptable and re-usable myth is given new relevance in a new social context and contemporary social geography because it draws the pre-text and the re-version closer together, inviting the reader to participate in an exploration of both, whether individually or in relation to each other. While it may be that reading adaptations such as Riordan's saga *as adaptations* is enjoyable, in Riordan's case, doing so is arguably not as instructive as it might otherwise be, because part of this 'Movement of Proximation' is challenging the assumptions surrounding the significances of myth, which are also central to its great power.

Stephens and McCallum (1998:62) argue that '[a]dults who produce the retellings, however, generally further assume that myths also perform important literary and social functions'. They suggest five assumptions regarding myth: that 'a myth is invested with value as story itself' (Stephens and McCallum, 1998:62); that mythology 'forms part of "our" cultural heritage'[48] (Stephens and McCallum, 1998: 63); that 'because myths are linked with religious urges and aspirations they express spiritual insights in oblique narrative form' (Stephens and McCallum, 1998: 63); that 'as narratavized expressions of impulses within the human unconscious they distil psychic truth' (Stephens and McCallum, 1998: 63);

[47] It may be that the removal of classical mythology from the teaching curricula in many countries accounts for this virtual disappearance.

[48] They note, however, that 'quite modern retellings still often lack any apparent awareness that the corollary production of subjective wholeness attributed to the influence of classical mythology is radically flawed by the individualism, imperialism, masculinism, and misogyny which pervade that mythology' (Stephens & McCallum, 1998:63). It is, however, also the case that, for many authors of adaptations, Riordan in this case, part of the goal of writing the adaptation is the interrogation and refusal of the implications of these assumptions. Rather than being evidence of a lack of awareness, Riordan's adaptations appear to demonstrate a conscious desire to subvert such assumptions. Where a pre-text may be 'flawed by individualism, imperialism, masculinism, and misogyny', a re-telling, aware of the failings of the mythology on which an adaptation is based, can consciously subvert those flaws and improve upon the originary text – thereby highlighting the flaws for readers who may encounter the pre-text after the adaptation, and illustrating how such destructive ideas in society can be deconstructed and disproved. This has been shown in Chapters 2 and 3.

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and that 'myths facilitate intercultural communication by bringing out the similarities between various world cultures, and hence affirm the common humanity of the world's peoples' (Stephens and McCullum, 1998:64).

These assumptions surrounding myth are of paramount importance, not because any of the five is necessarily absolutely untrue for any given myth or its re-tellings, but rather because the adults engaged in the creations of the re-tellings cannot assume that the 'important social and literary functions' associated with their work are automatically invested with significance because of the mythical nature of their subject matter. Rather, as implied by Genette ([1982] 1997:304) above, the adaptation must begin a 'Movement of Proximation', informing, engaging with and creating an interrelationship between the pre-text and the re-version. The important social and literary functions can only be realised when the adaptation itself signals to the reader that the implied and assumed values and attitudes within the narratives are not immutable, but are open to reinterpretation by each new audience. It is this interrelationship and determined, conscious desire on the part of the authors to invest their novel(s) with 'movement', away or towards a pre-text, which often informs their value for a new (in this case, adolescent) audience. As McCallum (2013:176) indicates, this 'Movement of Proximation' or interrelationship

> …literally represents a dialogue between past and present by constructing historical characters as focalizers and narrators who tell their stories to a character in the present whose viewpoint is modified as a consequence of this exchange.

It is clear then that an 'unknowing' reader may read an adaptation that assumes any of the five points above, and which does not attempt a 'Movement of Proximation', and yet possibly enjoy it as an adaptation. However, it is equally clear to see that an adult writing such fiction for young adult readers deprives the adaptation of the very 'important social and literary functions' that might make it even more enjoyable to 'knowing' readers. Thus the adaptation might be a monetary success, as the film versions of Riordan's novels have been, but would not be a success by the standards set out by Hutcheon (2006) as discussed above,

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and would arguably be devoid of the 'important social and literary functions' that the work might otherwise perform.

I therefore contend that such unthinking adaptations miss the mark in not recognising their potential to be so much *more*. A re-version, which seeks explicitly to stand on its own, without reference to or a critical interrelationship with its pre-text, often risks perpetuating the same stereotypical assumptions and exclusionary principles as the narratives which inform it. It is for this reason that studies of adaptations, such as this one, are relevant. Stephens and McCallum (1998:22) note:

> In such a context, the retelling of old stories requires careful scrutiny. In all of the domains of reversion we are concerned with here there is a high probability of replication of, for example, old masculinist and anti-feminist metanarratives. At the same time, retold stories have the potential to disclose how old stories suppress the invisible, the untold, and the unspoken. Such a potential will be realized through changing the modes of representations as well as, and more than, changing the content: by careful attention to point of view; by focalization strategies, since agency cannot be manifested by characters who do not focalize; and by textual self-reflexiveness or other strategies which remind readers not only of how they read the text but of how they read the world.

It is difficult to imagine how an adaptation, standing on its own, could achieve the 'potential to disclose how old stories suppress the invisible, the untold, and the unspoken', without the determined strategies that Stephens and McCallum (1998) note. Given the information in the previous chapters, then, it is clear to see how Riordan has adopted the strategies mentioned above, and, in so doing, has invested his readers with the ability to adopt new reading strategies to 'read the text', but also, in deconstructing the hero journeys he appropriates, to 'read the world'. McCallum (2013:186) explains:

> Historical narratives are a primary means with which to assert and interrogate universalist notions of historical process, human experience and subjectivity. These strategies can have the effect of representing history as open, subject to other representations and interpretations.

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In re-imagining and re-working these ancient myths with a view to creating a conscious discourse and interrelationship between pre-text and re-version, therefore, Riordan is serving a dual purpose: both activating familiar archetype narratives (for those who are 'knowing'), and placing them in a contemporary cultural and social geography to deliver a message tailored for younger readers (who may as yet be 'unknowing'). Responses to readings, informed or uninformed, of the originary narratives, do not invalidate the informing source material, nor the value of personally formed understandings. Because of Riordan's creation of Genette's ([1982] 1997:304) 'Movement of Proximation', quite the opposite is actually the case. Where such unknowing young readers are introduced to these narratives first, before encountering a pre-text, as shown, they are invited to re-examine their original reading of an adapted text, and deliberately seek out the informing text to experience the joy of reading adaptation backwards; texts such as Riordan's ensure that an interest in the originary archetype narratives remains, albeit in revised and contemporary circumstances, and with re-envisioned understanding. This backwards reading strategy is also useful in illustrating the process by which an author has gone about deconstructing potentially destructive and anachronistic cultural and socio-political assumptions and stereotypes, thereby making more recognisable to readers the destructive ideologies and stereotypes possibly still operating in contemporary societies.

This circular process is often as instructive as it is enjoyable. Sanders (2006:14) suggests that for her (and indeed for many of us)

> …[p]art of the sheer pleasure of the reading experience must be the tension between the familiar and the new, and the recognition both of similarity and difference, between ourselves and between texts. The pleasure exists, and persists, then, in the act of reading in, around, and on (and) on.

Adaptations and appropriations are, she continues, 'endlessly and wonderfully, about seeing things come back to us in as many forms as possible' (Sanders, 2006:160). As Hutcheon (2006:167) so eloquently puts it, 'each [text] adapts to its new environment and exploits it, and the story lives on, through its "offspring" – the same and yet not.' Brian Boyd (2009:208) aptly summarises this power:

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[Fiction] helps us to understand ourselves, to think – emotionally, imaginatively, reflectively – about human behavior, and to step outside the immediate pressure and the automatic reactions of the moment. From pretend play and jokes to Homer, Murasaki, or James Joyce, fiction taps into the swift efficiency of our understanding of agents and actions. Old and new stories and characters open up and populate possibility space. All these fictions make us the one species not restricted to the here and now, even if that must be where we act and feel – and imagine.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

Stephens and McCallum, in *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (1998:n.p.), write in the preface:

> Obviously enough, two versions of a story involving the *same* characters, settings, and events can differ substantially in their implications or significances. What seems to us to be the crux of the difference is that any particular re-telling may purport to transmit elements of a culture's formative traditions and even its sustaining beliefs and assumptions, but what it always discloses is some aspect of the attitudes and ideologies pertaining at the cultural moment in which that retelling is produced.

Their point underscores the crucial value of Rick Riordan's adapted myth: that it discloses aspects of the values of the contemporary cultural moment in which the series was written. Part of this value system, at least in terms of the hero journey, is the pervasive influence of Joseph Campbell in determining the fundamental character of the principal players in the journey. Campbell's theories, rooted as they are in Jungian archetypes, are still frequently illustrated in mainstream storytelling. Le Guin (1993:4-5) notes that 'without devaluing Jung's immensely useful concept of the archetype as an essential mode of thought, we might be aware that the archetypes he identified are mindforms of the Western European psyche as perceived by a man'. Le Guin (1993:16) indicates that her final novel, *Tehanu*, in its challenges of the doctrines of patriarchy dominating the hero journey in literature might be 'essentialist' – the same may be argued about Riordan's saga or at the least this study of it – but she nevertheless correctly asserts that 'because in [*Tehanu*] the witch is allowed to speak, her mere presence subverts the tradition and its rules'. In the same way, although arguably essentialist in her replication a female model, Annabeth is given agency and her mere presence subverts the patriarchal model of Campbell's ([1949] 1993) hero journey and its prescriptions. Subversive, anti-establishment sentiment is given a voice in Riordan's series, and therefore a challenge to the prevailing thoughts of his particular cultural moment is voiced. What is crucial to this study is Le Guin's (1993:7) point that 'subversion need not be self-aware to be effective'.

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It is possible that Riordan may not have been fully aware of the subversive implications of his novels. Although I find it unlikely, it is possible that he wrote without consciousness of the implications of his changes to character and focalisation, or that he wrote without intent in terms of challenges to Campbell's use of Jungian archetypes. Some critics, therefore, both of Riordan and of this study, may comment wryly that it is a pity to politicise a series of novels, and to politicise children's literature itself. Such negative criticisms may be rebuffed, however, by the indication that, as Le Guin (1993:28) points out, 'the "world apart" of fantasy inevitably refers back to this world. All the moral weight of it is real weight. The politics of Fairyland are ours'.

The pity for such people is not in the politicising of novels, then, but rather in the revelation that, by its subversive nature, the series questions the existing politics of the real world in which the novels are read, and interrogates the invisible and unassailable values of contemporary society. What the critics lament then is the subversive challenge to the authoritative and infallible status quo. This is as true for Riordan's work as it is for the alleged power of myth itself. Stephens and McCallum (1998:88) comment:

> The large differences in the meanings and functions attributed to myths constitute a major challenge for children's literature, because it is potentially, if not yet actually, a critical area of conflict among desires and impulses within the children's literature community. That is, the urge to maintain traditional knowledge and a sense of the past, and to foster understanding of the modes of signification used in texts of the past, conflicts with the desire to reconstruct cultural formations, especially with regard to gender.

It is then crucial to this study to try to determine where Riordan's saga could be placed on this continuum. The question is whether it is possible for a series of novels to 'maintain traditional knowledge' (or at the very least to respect its formative power and successes), while at the same time 'reconstructing cultural formations' by modernising them and making them both applicable to and didactic for an adolescent audience who are clearly influenced by the literature to which they are exposed. Stephens and McCallum (1998:88) explain that it 'should be possible to effect a deconstructive retelling which simultaneously reconstructs a myth's [ideological] representations, though…the success rate in children's

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literature has not been very remarkable'. It is my goal in this study to document some success in this regard and to indicate that there is hope for placing contemporary authors favourably on this continuum. While Stephens and McCallum (1998) appear to feel that conflict in the desires of the community necessitates a bifurcation, it is my contention that Riordan's adaptation proves that this need not always be the case.

Adrienne Rich (1972:18) coined the term: *re-vision*, 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text with a new critical direction'. While Rich may have been advocating a reading strategy to be employed in similar manner to that, indicated previously, developed by Heilbrun, 'entering an old text' need not only apply to the way texts are received. In the case of adaptations and appropriations, as has been shown in Chapter 4, the very act of writing an adaptation can itself constitute a re-vision, whether the author is self-aware or not, specifically because adaptations are not only informed by their pre-texts, but because they also openly engage readers within the settings, characters and focalisations of their pre-texts and eagerly invite them to explore those precursor texts for themselves. Knowing that changes have been made by an author to an existing narrative, adolescent audiences are then more able to recognise those differences and the changes in cultural ideologies that such changes may signify.

Authors writing in their own worlds may struggle with the bifurcation of desires within the literary community, as indicated by Stephens and McCallum (1998) above, because their novels require the construction of a new world, with new characters and settings. In a sense, those characters, settings and events exist only within a certain limited space in time, and arguably with an equally limited reach. In other words, readers encounter the text on its own, and weigh its revelations against the current cultural period in which they exist. Where such novels may imagine their settings, character, focalisations and the like, in a manner which is familiar and close to the readers' frame of reference, they arguably place themselves towards the edge of the continuum of desires in the children's literature community, which often seeks to reconstruct cultural ideologies. Where such settings and characters are placed further away from the frame of reference of the adolescent audience, especially where such novels are set in the distant

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past, they risk inadvertently being placed on the other end of the spectrum. They may reinforce the cultural dogma of the 'traditional' past, which may no longer be relevant or beneficial to a contemporary audience. This is because young readers are often unequipped with informed reading strategies and may thus be unaware of cultural significations and outmoded ideologies.

Riordan, in writing his series as an adaptation of myth, however, places his novels within an entirely different space in time, thereby greatly increasing their reach. Because his novels are based on Greek mythology, the connection between his contemporary retelling and its classical precursor is consciously and intentionally explicit. Therefore, because his novels exist in an open interrelationship with the past, through the pre-text, their efficacy in terms of the desires of the children's literature community need not be weakened by division. In terms of Stephens and McCallum's (1998:88) concept of a bifurcation of desires above, because adaptations invite readers to explore the pre-texts upon which they are based, the novels automatically show a desire to 'maintain traditional knowledge and a sense of the past'. Because readers, aware of the explicit interrelationship that exists between a pre-text and its re-version, may encounter the adaptation first and then read the pre-text afterwards, they immediately also 'foster [a better] understanding of the modes of signification used in texts of the past' (Stephens and McCullum 1998:88), because they are reading those texts of the past often only in relation to the adapted text in the present. Additionally, because the adaptations are just that, re-versions, they are free to also attempt Rich's (1972) re-visioning in subverting, challenging and reconstructing cultural formations, thereby uniquely placing them in a middle position on the continuum. In this position they need not be limited to being successful only in fulfilling one of the children's literature community's desires. As Stephens and McCallum (1998:78, citing Alicia Ostriker 1985:318) note:

> [A] re-visioning of classical myths begins, according to Ostriker, with "the challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth," though this is more than a matter of remaking the myths themselves. Retellings must confront the social and literary conventions which sustain the myths.

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Because of this other space on the continuum in which Riordan places his adapted saga, the novels can begin to re- and de-construct contemporary re-visions of the concepts of myth, the hero journey, heroism and hero, without devaluing the historical formation and tradition of those concepts. They are engaged by audiences within a safe sphere, where it is more possible to recognise that those concepts are not immutable and fundamental. Rather, informed by tradition and a sense of the past, they are to be reinterpreted and redefined by each generation in open discourse with the past, challenging the conventions in contemporary society which continue to sustain those myths. Le Guin (1993:17) documents some of these culturally informed assumptions, saying, for example, that the 'myth of man alone, or alone with his God, at the center, as the top, is a very old, very powerful myth. It rules us still'.

This is particularly true where such a 'man' may be read as a 'hero'. The traditional concept of hero, as has been previously shown, has long excluded women, except in the sense of Campbell's assertion that woman is the destination to which all heroes wish to move. The woman in this sense is subsidiary, a complement, silent and invisible, before the hero's achievement. The myth of man alone, with his God, as shown, does not account for Promethean heroes such as Percy who reject immortality, or other selfish rewards, and who embody so-called feminine qualities of loyalty, self-sacrifice and wisdom. These assumptions about the hero journey, at one time concrete, absolute, unchanging, are now shown, through Riordan's adaptation, to have been constructed ideas, open to change and re-vision. The middle position that Riordan's series inhabits on the continuum allows his novels to deconstruct and reconstruct these assumptions, and to do so through tangible links to the past.

When Percy completes the saga, defined by his relationship to Annabeth, instead of the other way around, the concepts of the hero's abstinence from heroic action and heroic masculinity are subverted. In enjoying Annabeth's successes in unleashing her potential through the recognition of the interplay of masculine and feminine qualities within her, we are freed of the cultural ideology and archetype of the hero's being male and defined by masculine qualities and tendencies. When Percy realises at the pinnacle of his achievement and victory that he is not the

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hero at all and that he is dependent on his relationship with others, the concept of heroism itself is deconstructed and re-visioned to show that the so-called feminine qualities of loyalty, humility and sacrifice can define heroism just as much as the so-called masculine qualities of courage and strength can. Because the most influential Olympian god in the saga, Hestia, is not the oldest, wisest, most powerful or even male, but the one who sacrificed her power and throne for peace, we can reinterpret the efficacy of traditional power roles and agency. In meeting heroes who do not solve their loved ones' problems, but rather inspire them to act positively themselves, for themselves, we can de- and re-construct the concept of autonomy and recognise our own responsibility to travel our hero journeys in our own right.

These subversions constitute the 'Reawakening of the myth', the making relevant and popular again of the myth itself, anciently historic and also contemporary, complete with its intrinsic and unknowable allegorical power to both inspire and guide. The politics of Percy and Annabeth's world are our politics, the moral weight of their choices is our moral weight, and so too, their successes in completely redefining the hero journey as a concept by which to judge our successes and victories.

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