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THE REINTERPRETATION OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY IDENTITY IN RICK RIORDAN'S PERCY JACKSON SERIES

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Annotation. In the process of literary creation in contemporary times, the analysis of classical myths has been seen as an efficient approach to talking about the questions of cultural continuity, individuality, and changing social values. In this paper, the process of transforming the Greek mythology and constructing a contemporary identity in the context of the book series "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" by Rick Riordan will be examined. The results demonstrate that re-interpretation of the classical myths helps to create a context of cultural heritage and discuss various topics.

Keywords. Classical mythology, mythological adaptation, contemporary identity, Rick Riordan, Percy Jackson, cultural identity, heroic archetype, young adult literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

Classic Mythology had become an integral part in the development process of literature around the globe in terms of providing the framework, imagery, and characters to the authors. The mythological tales have always been subjected to continuous reinvention at all times in all sorts of cultures. The Greek myths have become highly adaptable to reinventions in all times. The mythologies have been reinvented not only in ancient genres like poetry and tragedy but also in the new literary genre of fantasy fiction. The mythological tales have been consistently reinvented with maintaining the same themes concerning heroism, fate, morals and human relationships.

The utilization of classical myths in contemporary literature goes further than just maintaining the ancient stories. Modern writers have reinvented the mythological legends to reflect the modern social problems, cultural changes, and psychological experiences. As a result, mythology becomes a living literary tool that allows revisiting the meanings of the culture of the past and creating new identities. The example of such approach can be found in the literary works of Percy Jackson and the Olympians by Rick Riordan. From the book "The Lightning Thief" (2005), the series transforms Greek mythology and its characters into modern-day America. Percy Jackson, the main character of the series, is a regular teenager who faces the problems of poor academic performance, lack of clarity about the future, and social exclusion. However, learning that he is the son of Poseidon, he realizes something about himself and his role in life.

Myths have relationships with present-day locations, social institutions, and practices. For example, Mount Olympus has a relationship with New York City, mythological monsters exist at present, and the conflicts between deities in Greek mythology affect the present-day youths. Through that, the author builds up an imaginary universe where the classical culture plays a big role in the present-day world.

Importance of the work lies not only in the excellent retelling of Greek mythology but also in the treatment of issues of identity. Percy's story describes identity formation through different aspects of

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identity, such as being raised human, having divine origins, limitations, and social relations. The research problem at the heart of this analysis is the connection between the reworking of mythology and modern identity construction. While the novels contain many features associated with Greek mythology, their thematic significance lies in the alterations that have been made to the characters, settings, and perspectives.

This project will explore how author Rick Riordan reinterprets classical Greek mythology in order to portray the development of modern identity in the Percy Jackson series. Scientific relevance of the study is related to increasing relevance of adaptation of mythology in modern fantasy literature and the importance of young adult fiction in terms of cultural identity. This study suggests that Riordan's adaptation should be regarded both as a cultural reinterpretation and as a mechanism for creation of identity.

The research addresses three principal questions:

1. How are classical mythological characters and narratives transformed within Riordan's contemporary fictional universe?
2. In what ways does mythological adaptation contribute to the protagonist's personal and cultural identity formation?
3. How does the series reinterpret traditional heroic values in relation to contemporary social experiences?

The goal: The paper seeks to analyse the transformation of the classical Greek mythology in Rick Riordan's novel series Percy Jackson and its influence upon the contemporary identity. The analysis pays attention to how mythological figures, myths and heroes are interpreted with regard to modern culture, experience and self-perception of an individual. Also, the research looks at the connection between mythological interpretations and personal growth of the main character in the series.

The materials and methods: qualitative textual analysis, comparative literary analysis and myth criticism. The theoretical basis of the work includes Joseph Campbell's, Stuart Hall's and Linda Hutcheon's theories. The main emphasis is made on the first five volumes of the book series. The work studies how the ancient mythological traditions are transformed into the modern setting, teenage experience and notions of heroism.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.

A theoretical study of mythological adaptation calls for an interdisciplinary methodology encompassing literature studies, cultural studies, mythology, and identity theory.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949) by Joseph Campbell provides an influential framework for examining the repeated patterns typical of heroic narratives. Campbell focuses on the similar structure in mythological stories by highlighting the stages of separation from a routine environment, challenge, and transformation of the heroes.

Despite being accused of reductionism, Campbell's framework helps to analyse the heroism formation in Percy Jackson. The transformation of Percy from an unconfident teenager towards a more conscious sense of responsibility includes some stages of the traditional heroic journey.

Another theoretical work which helps to examine the novels in question is the one by Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon argues that the adaptation is a process of reinterpretation and transformation. This concept allows for analysing the independent literary constructs, which the Riordan's novels are establishing new meanings while working with classical sources (Hutcheon).

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The relocation of the myths from Greece into the contemporary America changes the cultural implications of the mythological characters and events. It creates the new relationships between the ancient narratives and current life experiences.

Stuart Hall's considerations about the nature of cultural identity help to explore the issues of the protagonist's identity formation. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" Hall explains that cultural identity cannot be solely considered an inheritance. The processes of identity formation include history, representation, and transformation.

Although the author's initial position concerns particular situations and contexts of the formation of cultural identity, his ideas can serve as an effective framework for studying the protagonist's negotiation of the inherited and acquired identities.

Scholars have also studied the issue of disability representation in the Riordan's mythological fiction. In Disabled Heroes: Disabilities in Rick Riordan's Greek and Roman Retellings (2020), Katelyn Colleen Balkum considers the disabled heroes in Riordan's novels. The researcher proves that while providing a positive image of disabled people, the author's books preserve the problem inherent to the exceptional portrayal of disabilities.

It seems especially important since the dyslexia and attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorders, the characteristics that the protagonist has, turn out to be part of his demigod nature in the fictional world. The transformation of socially stigmatized differences into the mythological characteristics is an integral aspect of the discussed novels' consideration of the self-acceptance theme.

Other research about the representation of Greek mythological heroes and gender roles can also be noted. Such approaches prove that the relationship between the ancient mythology and modern social norms is an important issue for contemporary scholarship.

At the same time, the relationship between the mythological reinterpretation and the process of identity construction needs to be examined from an integrated perspective. The present article addresses the issues mentioned above as they relate to the concepts of narrative adaptation, heroism development, cultural belonging, and difference representations.

III. METHODS

A qualitative literary research design based on textual interpretation and comparison is employed in the current study.

The basic research materials are the five original novels of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series written by Rick Riordan. The choice of this literary series is determined by its story continuity and the description of the development of moral consciousness of the novel's hero from the state of initial uncertainty.

Three methods form the basis of the current methodology.

First, comparative mythological analysis is performed for the purpose of tracing similarities and differences in the perception of classical Greek mythological tradition in the works of Riordan. Special attention is dedicated to gods, heroes, mythological beings and myths.

Second, textual and thematic analysis involves the examination of such recurrent themes as identity, belonging, exclusion, friendship, responsibilities and individual choices in the novels. It is interpreted as a tool for constructing understandings of selfhood in these stories.

Third, cultural analysis explores the interrelations between mythological material of the ancient past and the modern social context. This type of analysis takes into account the symbolic importance of the contemporary geography, education, family and social realities.

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The current analysis includes the identification of appropriate narrative episodes, their classification into major thematic categories and their interpretation in terms of the research framework.

The main categories are mythological modernization, hybrid identity, heroic transformation, social differentiation and moral responsibility. It should be stressed that the current study is interpretative rather than experimental. Hence, its results do not include experimentally verified impact of these literary texts on the readers. There were no questionnaires or statistical measurements performed.

IV. RESULTS

The analysis focuses on the original five novels of the series, investigating how ancient mythological traditions are reconstructed through contemporary settings, adolescent experiences, and changing representations of heroism. The findings suggest that Riordan transforms classical mythology from a relatively distant cultural inheritance into an accessible narrative framework through which contemporary readers can examine belonging, difference, personal agency, friendship, and moral responsibility. The protagonist's hybrid identity as both a modern American adolescent and a Greek demigod illustrates the relationship between inherited cultural narratives and individual self-definition.

Modernization of Classical Mythological Narratives. It can be seen from the analysis that the reinterpretation of Greek myths by Riordan is greatly influenced by the fact that he moves the ancient stories to the context of modern culture.

According to the classical mythological tradition, divine deeds and heroic exploits were often connected with sacred mountains, ancient cities, and legendary landscapes. Riordan transforms these spaces using modern settings, especially those in the United States. The most famous example of such a transformation is the move of Mount Olympus to New York City, where its entry is identified with the Empire State Building.

The process of modernization of mythological geography implies that mythology is not a phenomenon of a finished historical epoch. Rather, its symbolic constructions can be renewed in a new cultural context.

Mythological monsters have a modern incarnation which allows them to be active participants of the modern world. The Minotaur, Medusa, and other classic creatures are integrated into the environment that is understandable for the reader. This serves a significant narrative purpose. It makes the gap between classical mythology and the modern world smaller, enabling the reader to find ancient cultural symbols in a familiar environment.

Nevertheless, Riordan does not limit himself to the mere renewal of the classical myths in a new dress. He alters the conditions, motives, and consequences of mythological encounters. Thus, the process of creative interpretation takes place, when the known mythological elements get new thematic meanings.

Hybrid Identity and the Discovery of Self. One of the most significant findings concerns the issue of constructing hybrid identity through the hero's human and divine heritage.

In The Lightning Thief, Percy feels unsure about his own abilities, his family history, and his place in life. His problems at school and frequent disagreements with institutional norms are connected with this fragmented perception of himself.

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The revelation of Percy's divine parentage brings a new perspective on those events that seemed to be evidence of Percy's inadequacy. Consequently, Percy's identity is created through the interaction of two apparently different worlds: modern human society and ancient mythological heritage.

Being a demigod is more than supernatural feature of Percy's character. On the contrary, it is used by the author as a metaphor for a complicated process of constructing identity.

Percy cannot deny his human education and upbringing and, at the same time, cannot ignore the influence of his divine parentage. Consequently, the development of identity for Percy requires the combination of these two aspects.

Camp Half-Blood plays a special role in the creation of Percy's identity. As a community of demigods, this camp creates a social setting in which Percy receives recognition, friendship, and common identity.

However, such belonging to the demigods' community does not exclude the presence of uncertainties and problems in the process of creating identity. Percy continues to deal with the norms of his ancestors and norms of personal contacts.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These results indicate that the processes of mythological adaptation and identity formation are strongly interrelated in the Riordan's story world. The adaptation of classical mythology offers not only an easily comprehensible background for fantasy stories, but also a symbolic space where current issues about belonging, difference, responsibility, and personal growth may be explored using the well-known cultural narratives.

From the point of view of adaptation studies, the series is an example of how literary legacy receives its new meanings due to the changes in historical and cultural context.

In Riordan's work, many typical elements of Greek mythology remain intact, such as gods' family relations, hero's quest, mythical creatures, and generational clashes. However, these elements are now organized according to the experience of modern teenagers.

Thus, the story creates a dialogue between continuity and change of culture. Moreover, the formation of Percy's identity may also be seen as an illustration of Hall's idea that identity is a dynamic process rather than a totally fixed legacy. For Percy, his divine origins play an important role in forming his self-image, but they do not define his whole personality.

Percy's identity is formed in relation to other people, through his actions, conflicts, and interpretation of previous experience. This aspect becomes especially clear when comparing Percy with Luke. These characters face problems associated with divine origins and neglect from institutions. Still, their approaches are quite different.

Comparison makes it clear that even similar cultural heritage does not inevitably lead to identical identity and morality. The depiction of the hero's development shows the interaction of ancient and modern values. Campbell's idea of heroic cycle allows one to see the patterns in narration, such as the separation from the world of ordinary people, confrontation with various challenges, and transformation of the character. But Riordan changes the meaning of these patterns, stressing cooperation and emotional connection.

Percy's success is possible not only due to his personal courage but also because of the efforts of Annabeth, Grover, Tyson, and other companions. This point undermines excessive individualism of the notion of heroism. Moreover, the books challenge traditional views on strength and weakness.

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The lack of education, emotional instability, and lack of knowledge about the family make Percy a weak character at the beginning. Gradually, these features become an important part of Percy's development. But the correlation between disability and supernatural power needs careful interpretation. According to the results of Balkum's research, there can be positive representation in the narrative, which assumes that only successful people deserve recognition.

The research restricts itself to text analysis of the original five novels. No attempt has been made to determine how readers with different cultural backgrounds interpret these themes. Further research may therefore be conducted into reader response, cross-cultural translations, and depiction of mythological identity through the series' screen productions.

Conclusion. The results show that mythological adaptation plays a crucial role in shaping the identity of the main character. Percy finds out about his divine parentage, which starts a process of reinterpretation of his identity, but ultimately his identity is shaped through relationships, responsibility and involvement in the community. Another key point made by the study is that Riordan reinterprets the values of heroes. Loyalty, cooperation, compassion, and critical thinking are among those traits of a hero in Percy Jackson rather than having outstanding physical abilities. Heroism here is the ability to make responsible decisions in the situations of conflict.

The research concludes that mythological reinterpretation in Percy Jackson is not merely a strategy of literary entertainment. It functions as a significant means of exploring how individuals understand their origins, negotiate social expectations, and construct identities within a changing cultural world.

In addition, the representation of learning differences shows how mythological stories can break the stereotype about individual ability. On the other hand, the link between disability and supernatural exceptionalism shows interpretative tensions which should be further studied by researchers.

Thus, the study proves that mythological adaptation in Percy Jackson is not only an entertaining literature. It is an important tool for exploring individual origins, social expectations and identity construction in the cultural world.

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