

# MAGIC REALISM REFLECTED IN RICK RIORDAN'S PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

*by Arwan Arisakti*

---

FILE	REVVSSSS_ARTIKEL_JURNAL_ARWAN_FFF.DOCX (40.44K)		
TIME SUBMITTED	02-MAR-2021 10:44AM (UTC+0700)	WORD COUNT	4302
SUBMISSION ID	1521936621	CHARACTER COUNT	22676

## MAGIC REALISM REFLECTED IN RICK RIORDAN'S *PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF*

Arwan Arisakti

Student of English Department  
University of 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya  
Email : arwanarisakti@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Using Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* as study material, this thesis explores the characteristic of Magic Realism. A type of literary work that portrays magic based on traditional values in the modern world is magic realism. This novel contains Greek mythology and appears to be literary work of magical realism about monsters, Gods and Goddesses, and mythological creatures. In this case, the magical realism theory proposed by Wendy B. Faris is used. The theory of magical realism proposed by Wendy B. Faris, consisting of the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realism, and disruption of time, space and identity, is used in this thesis. The aim of this research to identify the five characteristic of magical realism in the novel. The method used in this study is extrinsic approach, and the data collection technique used in this research is the reading and writing technique, while the data analysis technique used is the analysis description technique, which is achieved by explaining the facts that are then followed by data analysis. The result of the study of the characteristic of magical realism in each aspect suggest that, as a work of magical realism, this novel meets the criteria since the five features can be found in the novel.

### INTRODUCTION

Magical realism is type of storytelling designed to tell the truth of magical or fantasy things. Magical realism is special, according to Christopher Warnes, because it is an oxymoron or concept that is made up by two opposing terms. The word "magic" means extraordinary or imagination while the word "Realism" means fact or a fantasy-free universe (Warnes, 2009:3). Stephen M. Hart described in his book, *A Companion to Magical Realism*, that the word 'magical realism', had first been coined in German paintings in the early twentieth century to describe a modern, neo-realistic style. Later on, The term was extended to Latin American fiction, and now it can point to the most significant current issues in international fiction (Hart and Ouyang, 2005:1)

Wendy B Faris (2004: 7) offers five key characteristics for the investigation of the work of magical realism, namely: first, the text include magic's "irreducible elements"; second, magical realism descriptions detail the strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, in attempting to reconcile two conflicting understandings of events, the reader may

experience some unsettling doubts; fourth, the narration combines different dimension and becomes merging realms; and, finally, magical realism interferes with accepted ideas about time, space and identity.

To expose the elements of magical realism used by the author of the novel, this research uses the principles of the five elements of magical realism by Faris to show the correlation of these elements in building magic phenomena in reality. Then, in the book, these principles will be the focus of debate over the magical realism aspect. In this book, Percy Jackson, the main character, encounters several supernatural occurrences linked to his demigod status. This can be seen in the findings and debates such as the irreducible components of the magical experience of Percy, detailed explanations of the phenomenal universe used as a backdrop for the magical experience of Percy, the concerns of readers regarding the magical experience of young people, the convergence in the novel of the realm of scientific rationality and conventional mythology and the disturbance of time, space and identity with Percy Then, the

five elements are designed to create the story's magical realism.

Based on the background of the problem outlined above, then the problem can be formulated as follows:

What are five primary characteristics of magic realism reflected in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians : The Lightning Thief*?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The present work uses extrinsic approach, magic realism, as the literary approach. There are five main characteristics as a framework for examining the essence and cultural work of magical realism between modern and postmodern literature, according to Faris (2004:7). First, the text includes the "irreducible element" of magic; second, magical realism explanations detail the clear influence of the phenomenal world; third, in attempting to resolve two contrasting understandings of events, the reader may feel some disturbing doubts; fourth, the narration incorporates various fields; and finally, magical realism interferes with agreed concepts about time, space and identity. By the statement above, magical realism found in fantasy genre novels chosen by the writer as research subjects can be investigated using this approach.

The source of the study is Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* novel. The novel is 375 pages long which consists of 22 chapters. The data are in the form of quotation taken from the novel.

## RESULT

### THE IRREDUCIBLE ELEMENT

Things that are categorized into The Irreducible Element in the novel are those that contain magical elements as unusual elements or things that are not in accordance with human logic so far. The magical elements in *Riordan's Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* were adopted from Greek Mythology. The irreducible elements in this novel take the form of a magical atmosphere, magical characters, magical object and magical world.

### Magical Atmosphere

Events that show a magical atmosphere are events about natural disasters that often occur lately in the novel. Nature activities are often associated with the influence of gods. In the novel, Zeus is the god of heaven and lightning. He can change the weather to his liking. His emotions also affect the weather conditions around the world. In Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: the Lightning Thief*, Zeus is angry because his lightning is stolen at Christmas. This causes the sky to be in bad states. Percy has described this situation as 'weird' since Christmas. It can be seen in below quotation:

A big storm was brewing overhead, with clouds that were blacker than I'd ever seen over the city. I thought maybe it was global warming or something, because since Christmas the weather had been strange all over New York State. We had major storms of snow, rains, wildfires from lightning strikes. If this was a storm coming in, I would not have been surprised. (Riordan,2005:8)

Given that the cause of the natural disaster is the anger of Zeus, this event is included in magical atmosphere. All the disasters mentioned by Percy, ranging from snow storms, flooding, and wildfires from lightning strikes, came from the sky. As mentioned in the novel, the sky, lightning and weather are the territory and power of Zeus. Even though ordinary people cannot see Gods, but a series of strange disasters without clear causes can certainly be explained as the will of the authorized God.

### Magical Character

Percy is surrounded by mythological creatures. Even Percy's friend during school at the academy is a *satyr*. His name is Grover and he is in charge of guarding Percy until Percy arrived safely to Camp Half-Blood. On the way to Camp Half-Blood, Percy is chased by a minotaur who then attacks his mother. After that he defeats the Minotaur and arrived at the Camp. But then he is exhausted and passed out. When Percy wakes up, he still does not believe in what

has just happened to him. But Chiron, the guard of Camp Half Blood finally explained to Percy that what he experiencing is not mere fantasy.

*Satyr* is a Greek mythological creature who lives in the forests and mountains. They have a close relationship with Pan and Dionysus in Greek mythology. Usually they are male. *Minotaur* is also monster from Greek mythology. He is a human-shaped monster with a bull's head. The existence of mythological creatures and monsters are impossible to find in the real world, and they are also creatures that are beyond human reason, so they can be classified as magical characters.

### Magical Object

The next irreducible element is magical object / items. The existence of this object in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* has an important influence on the course of the story. These objects have their own characteristics, speciality and strengths. The ability of those objects is beyond human reasoning because there is no human technology that can make objects with the specifications as contained in the novel.

The magical object in the novel is riptide. Riptide is a sword that will later become Percy's special weapon. Riptide can change its shape into a pen to make it easier for Percy to carry it. Percy got Riptide from Mr. Brunner or later known as Chiron. Mr. Brunner gives Percy riptide so he can defend himself. At that time, he is attacked by Mrs. Dodds, an *Erinyes* disguises as a human. It can be seen in this quotation:

I escaped with a yelp and felt talons cut the air next to my neck. I picked the ballpoint pen out of the air, but it wasn't a pen anymore when it reached my palm. This was a sword—Mr. A bronze sword by Brunner, which he still used on the day of the tournament. (Riordan, 2005:12)

Riptide is a gift from Percy's father, Poseidon the Sea God. Riptide is kept for years by Chiron until he finally meets Percy and being convinced that Percy is the true owner of the sword. Riptide's original form is a double-edged sword made of *celestial bronze*, special bronze

that can hurt monsters but not dangerous to humans. Since Riptide is a gift from a God, it is a magical object.

### Magical World

The magical world is the nature / environment of life whose existence is irrational, which has properties and is inhabited by figures who have magical or unreasonable nature. In this novel, the magical world described is related to the Ancient Greek mythology regarding the existence of gods. The magical world is filled with magical characters who have feelings and experience the same events that ordinary people experience. The Greek gods are exist and they have their respective territories. The magical world in this novel include Underworld, which is belong to Hades, the god of death.

In Percy's journey of finding Zeus's lightning, he arrives at the Underworld or the World of the Dead. Percy and his friends enter the Underworld to meet Hades and find out the whereabouts of the lightning. The underworld is filled with magical things. To reach this place, Percy and his friends must cross the river of death with bunch of dead souls. After arriving in Underworld, Percy, Annabeth and Grover must pass through Cerberus, a three-headed dog guarding the gates of death to the Fields of Asphodel. Fields of Asphodel is a place where the dead spend time forever. Descriptions of Fields of Asphodel can be seen in the following quotation:

Imagine the greatest audience you've ever seen at a gig, a football field overflowing with a million people. Now imagine a million times the size of a stadium, full of people, and imagine that the power has gone out, and there's no noise, no sun, no beach ball flying over the crowd. There was something horrific going backstage. Masses of whispered people are just milling about in the shadows, waiting for a concert that will never start. You have a pretty good idea of what the Fields of Asphodel seemed like, if you can imagine it. Eons of rotting boots have trampled the black grass. Like the breath of a marsh, the wet, moist wind blew. Black trees—Grover told me they were

poplars—grew in clumps here and there. (Riordan, 2005:300)

The magical world which is described as the Underworld is a space or other dimension that is different from the real world in the text. This world is a place where the dead get rewarded for what they do in their life. People who do a lot of good deeds, people who are very bad, or people who just live as they should, each is placed in a different field. There are also magical creatures like Cerberus, who guard the gates of death from intruders such as Percy, or Erinyes, creatures who are tasked with torturing those who have done evil in their lives. The narrative above explains that there are striking differences between the Underworld and the real world.

### THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

The phenomenal world is the second aspect of magical realism. The features in this category reveal the realistic side of magical realism in the text or work. Realistic descriptions may construct imaginary universes that resemble, and are often portrayed in depth, the actual world we live in. "is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory "is the realism of magical realism, distinguishing it from a lot of fantasy and allegory (Faris, 2004: 14). Realism refers to objects, characters, events that match or describe the real world (in accordance with logic) that occurs in human life in general. As done with the irreducible element, this second characteristic will be explained according to : 1) Phenomenal world objects (places and things), and 2) Phenomenal world characters.

Real place in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* is included in the Phenomenal World category because it is truly real in the text and there are several realities based on the real-world social context in which we live in. The real object narrative in the text is at the beginning of the story when Percy introduces his life as a student. This can be seen through the following quote:

Percy Jackson is my name. I'm 12 years of age. I was a boarding student at Yancy Academy, a private school for troubled children in upstate New York, until a few

months ago. Am I a kid in trouble? Well. Yeah. That could you say. (Riordan, 2005:1)

The places described as in the real world are Yancy Academy, Percy's school. Percy tells from his point of view that Yancy academy is a school for troubled children located in New York. New York is a real city. He also tell that he is a trouble kids, someone that we can find in reality. It proves that the Yancy Academy has a realistic setting in the novel.

### Phenomenal World Characters

The next Phenomenal World category is character. In the phenomenal world, the characters discussed here are related to the character professions in the narrative. The characters discussed in this study are the characters who influence the storyline. The characters whose are discussed are Percy's mother, and also his stepfather, Gabe Ugliano.

She worked different jobs, took night classes to get her graduation from high school, and raised me on her own. She never protested or became frustrated. Not ever either. I realized I wasn't an easy child, though. "Oh, Percy." She closely embraced me. "I can't believe it. You've grown since Christmas!" Her red-white-and-blue Sweet on America uniform smelled like the world's finest stuff: cookies, licorice, and all the other stuff she sold at the Grand Central candy store. (Riordan, 2005:33)

In the novel, Percy's mother is an ordinary human. She lives like humans in general with a very real condition. We will have no difficulty finding the figure of Percy's mother in the real world. She is an ordinary woman who works to support her child. Percy's mother also underwents normal activities such as taking night classes and raising her children. This shows that Percy's mother is part of the Phenomenal World reality.

### UNSETTLING DOUBT

A further characteristic of magical realism is unsettling doubts or unsettling doubts. The reader may hesitate

between two contradictory understandings of events, and hence the experience some unsettling doubts. According to Faris, "Reader's primary doubt is most often between understanding an event as a character's dream or hallucination and, alternatively, understanding it as a miracle." (Faris, 2004: 17). Events in magical realism might look like dreams, but they are not dreams. However, the text might influence the reader to categorize them as dreams or hallucination.

The unsettling doubt occurred when Percy go on a school tour with his friends to the museum. Percy is a student who is considered problematic and is often become subject of punishment from Mrs. Dodds. When they are at the museum, Percy is called by Mr. Dodds. Then Percy notices the strange speed of Mrs. Doods when she moves. It can be seen in below quotation.

I turned to face Mrs. Dodds afterwards, but she wasn't there. She was standing at the entrance to the museum, at the top of the stairs, gesturing impatiently for me to come in. How will she get there so quickly? I have a lot of times like these, where my head goes asleep or something, and the next thing I know I overlooked something, like a piece of the puzzle dropped out of the world, leaving me looking at the dark spot behind it. The school psychologist told me that this was part of ADHD, misinterpreting stuff in my head. (Riordan,2005:10)

Unsettling doubt is shown here with Percy's doubts about Mrs.Dodds's fast movements. However, the author still hides the reality about the magical aspects of Mrs. Dodds at the beginning of the story. The author's explanation of this phenomenon and the same thing that happened before is Percy experiencing a psychological disorder , ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). This ADHD is told by school counsellor as a cause of how his brain interpret objects. As a result, Percy often feels missed something. Likewise with what happens in the quotation above. Mrs. Dodds originally can use magic to move quickly but the reader is given the choice to believe it is the effect of Percy's psychological disorders.

## MERGING REALMS

In the characteristics of Merging Realms, magical realism unites or fuses the magical world (which is related to traditional beliefs) and the real world. According to Faris, "In terms of cultural history, magical realism often merges ancient or traditional — sometimes indigenous — and modern worlds." (Faris, 2004: 21). Magical realist vision is at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point in a two-sided mirror that reflects both directions.

The magical world in the novel is adjacent to the real world. The monsters that are in the real world are disguised as humans. If they show their true form, ordinary people cannot see their form as a monster. This is because there is a phenomenon called 'mist'. This mist covers the existence of monsters and hides their existence before humans for the balance of nature. It can be seen from Chiron explanation to Percy:

"Yes. Read The Iliad. The stuff full of references. They generate Mist whenever divine or monstrous elements mix with the mortal world, which obscures human vision. You will see things just as they are, being a half-blood, but people will interpret things quite differently. The lengths to which humans will fit things into their version of reality are remarkable, really." (Riordan, 2005:155)

In Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* , monster, God and mythological creature often meet in real world. The existence of 'mist' is a 'barrier' between the existence of monsters and humans when they are in one dimension of space. Considering monsters and mythological creatures are beings that cannot be reasoned by logical thinking, a mist is formed which envelops human views to change monsters as objects they want to see and in accordance with logic. However, mist does not apply to Demigods, who have the qualities of being a mixture of humans and Gods. Because here, demigods are part of the human world, and the magical world.

## DISRUPTION OF TIME, SPACE AND IDENTITY

Finally, in addition to merging different worlds, this fiction disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity. According to Faris, Many magical realism fictions delineate near-sacred or ritual enclosures, but these sacred spaces leak their magical narrative over the rest of the texts and the worlds they describe, just as that exterior reality permeates them (Faris, 2004: 24). Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space but our sense of identity as well. So that the magical realism disruption in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* will be divided into the following categories:

### Disruption of Time

The disruption of time in the work of magical realism can bring new time as a substitute for sacred time. Evidence of the characteristics of disruption of time in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* is the slower time experienced by Percy when visiting the Lotus Hotel in his mission to find Zeus's Bolt. In modern knowledge based on Western empiricism, time will go on and nothing can slow down time. So slower time in the novel surely is a form of time disruption.

On their way to find Zeus's Bolt, Percy and his friends has stopped at a place called the Lotus Hotel. That place is a hotel with complete facilities and a complete playground. There is also a casino and other entertainment venues in it. When Percy, Annabeth and Grover are there, they feel the time difference between the Lotus hotel with the real world time. They also feel they do not want to leave and want to continue playing around in the hotel. They do not know they has spent a lot of time until Percy realizes first. It can be seen below quotation:

I began to talk to people, and I realized that it wasn't easy. They were glued to the TV or video game screen, or their snacks, or something. I met a guy who told me that 1985 was the year. I was told by another guy that it was 1993. They all said they weren't here for too long, a couple of days, a couple of weeks at the most. They just didn't know, and they didn't care. It

came to me then: how long have I been here? It just felt like a few hours, but was it? (Riordan, 2005:262)

The time difference between Lotus Hotel and the real world shows disruption of time. The people who are in the Lotus Hotel do not age at all. They remain in their physical condition when they first enter the hotel. In addition, they also feel that they only spend time there in a few days when in fact they have been there for decades.

### Disruption of Space

Just as the explanation of the disruption of time, in the confusion of the narrative space, magical realism can also bring up new spaces that totally different with present space. Space is a region or cavity that can be represented through a place but the definition itself does not stop at that. Space is liquid and through the fluidity of space created heterogeneous forms that are diverse. In Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, this form of space instability can be seen through a number of spatial dimensions that change or are different from their surroundings.

The disruption of space in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* is Camp Half Blood. That place is a space that cannot be entered by just any creature. Ordinary humans and monsters cannot enter into it and consider that place only a valley. Only certain demigods and mythological creatures can enter and live there. This was explained by Annabeth to Percy in the quote below:

Annabeth shook her head, "So monsters can't get in here?" "Not if they are purposely stored or summoned by anyone inside in the bush." "

"Why would anybody want to summon a monster?"

"The point is, the borders are sealed to keep mortals and monsters out. From the outside, mortals look into the valley and see nothing unusual, just a strawberry farm." (Riordan, 2005:97)

Besides being unable to be entered by monsters and ordinary humans, Camp half blood also

violates space rules such as its characteristics to ignore the weather conditions around it. Even though the area around Camp Half Blood is experiencing bad weather, Camp Half Blood remained stable. Even there will not rain inside the area unless the residents there want the rain.

### Disruption of Identity

The form of disruption of identity in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* is the existence of demigods. Demigods are the children of gods and humans. Their existence changes existing identities and brings about new characteristics. All Demigods have different characters depending on their god parents. They also usually inherit strength and specialties from their god parents.

The introduction of the first demigod is sparks by Annabeth when Percy is in Camp Half Blood. Percy who has just arrives has no knowledge at all about his identity as a demigod. Because Percy only lives with his human mother all this time and never meets his biological father in person, he doubts his father's true identity. At first Percy does not understand his mother's decision to send Percy to a Demigod camp. It can be seen this quotation:

Frowned Annabeth. "Don't you get it, Percy? You are home. This is the only safe place on earth for kids like us."  
"You mean, mentally disturbed kids?"  
"I don't mean humans. Not fully human, anyhow."  
"Half-human and half-what?"  
"I think you know."  
I didn't want to accept, but I was terrified that I did. I felt like a tingling in my limbs, I felt like when my mother spoke of my father sometimes I felt it. I said, "God," Annabeth grinned, "Half-god."  
"Your father isn't dead, Percy. He's one of the Olympians." (Riordan, 2005:94)

Annabeth also explains to Percy the general characteristics of demigods. They are often regarded as troubled kids because of their mental differences from normal children. In addition they all suffer from dyslexia and ADHD. All that is not without reason. Their impulsive reflexes and character guard them from danger. As children of gods, there are many monsters that target them because of their strength or revenge on gods who are their parents.

### CONCLUSION

After analysing the data, it can be concluded that there are five characteristics of magical realism found on Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians : The Lightning Thief*. These characteristics are the irreducible element, phenomenal world, unsettling doubt, merging realms, and disruption of time, space and identity. Considering all the characteristics of magical realism can be found in the novel, Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* can be categorized as a work of Magical Realism.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Faris, Wendy B. 2004. *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press
- Hart, Stephen M. and Wen-Chin Ouyang. 2005. *A Companion to Magical Realism*. Woodbridge: Tamesis
- Riordan, Rick. 2005. *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*. New York : Disney-Hyperion.
- Wames, Christopher. 2009. *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel : Between Faith and Irreverence* London :Palgrave Macmillan



# MAGIC REALISM REFLECTED IN RICK RIORDAN'S PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

% **8**

SIMILARITY INDEX

% **7**

INTERNET SOURCES

% **0**

PUBLICATIONS

% **7**

STUDENT PAPERS

## PRIMARY SOURCES

**1**

[thebookhub01.weebly.com](http://thebookhub01.weebly.com)

Internet Source

% **5**

**2**

[eprints.undip.ac.id](http://eprints.undip.ac.id)

Internet Source

% **1**

**3**

Submitted to University of South Dakota

Student Paper

% **1**

**4**

[epdf.pub](http://epdf.pub)

Internet Source

<% **1**

**5**

[docplayer.info](http://docplayer.info)

Internet Source

<% **1**

**6**

Submitted to State College of Florida, Manatee - Sarasota (formerly, Manatee Community College)

Student Paper

<% **1**

**7**

Submitted to University of York

Student Paper

<% **1**

**8**

Submitted to Pamukkale Üniversitesi

Student Paper

<% **1**



Submitted to Higher Education Commission

Pakistan

Student Paper

---

<% 1

---

EXCLUDE QUOTES OFF

EXCLUDE MATCHES OFF

EXCLUDE  
BIBLIOGRAPHY OFF