Defamiliarization Through Myth: A Pastiche Reading of The Sword of Summer

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Abstrak *– Artikel ini membahas bagaimana Rick Riordan menerapkan konsep sastra pastiche dan defamiliarisasi dalam novelnya The Sword of Summer (2015). Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana elemen mitologi Nordik dipadukan dengan latar dan karakter modern untuk menciptakan pengalaman membaca yang baru dan asing. Dengan menggunakan teori defamiliarisasi dari Viktor Shklovsky dan gagasan pastiche dari Fredric Jameson, analisis ini menunjukkan bahwa karakter Magnus Chase dan Samirah Al-Abbas dibentuk melalui penggabungan mitos kuno dan identitas kontemporer. Kemunculan simbol mitologi seperti pedang Sumarbrander, raksasa api Surt, dan reinterpretasi Valhalla sebagai hotel berteknologi tinggi juga merepresentasikan pilihan artistik yang disengaja untuk memperbarui persepsi pembaca terhadap mitos tradisional. Dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa karya Riordan menantang gambaran konvensional tentang pahlawan dan mitologi dengan mendorong pembaca untuk melihat narasi kuno dan realitas masa kini secara asing. Perpaduan antara nostalgia dan inovasi ini tidak hanya menarik bagi pembaca modern, tetapi juga menyajikan pengalaman estetis yang unik melalui teknik defamiliarisasi sastra (Jameson, 1992; Shklovsky, 2015).*

Kata Kunci: pastiche, defamiliarisasi, mitologi Nordik, Magnus Chase, Rick Riordan

Abstract *- This article explores how Rick Riordan applies the literary concept of pastiche and defamiliarization in his novel The Sword of Summer (2015). The study focuses on how elements of Norse mythology are blended with contemporary settings and characters to create a fresh and unfamiliar reading experience. Guided by Viktor Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization and Fredric Jameson's idea of pastiche, the analysis reveals that the protagonist Magnus Chase and supporting character Samirah Al-Abbas are constructed through a fusion of ancient myth and modern identity. The appearance of mythological symbols such as the sword Sumarbrander, the fire giant Surt, and the reinterpretation of Valhalla as a high-tech hotel also represent a deliberate artistic choice that renews readers' perceptions of traditional myth. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this study concludes that Riordan's work challenges conventional depictions of heroes and mythology by encouraging readers to see both ancient narratives and present-day realities in unfamiliar ways. This blend of nostalgia and innovation not only attracts contemporary readers but also delivers a unique aesthetic experience through literary defamiliarization (Jameson, 1992; Shklovsky, 2015).*

Key words: pastiche, defamiliarization, Norse mythology, Magnus Chase, Rick Riordan.

INTRODUCTION

Fantasy literature has long served as a bridge between the ancient and the modern, bringing mythological narratives into contemporary storytelling. Myths—once rooted in oral traditions and ancient cosmologies—now reappear in modern texts to provide both narrative depth and cultural familiarity. This trend is especially prominent in young adult and popular fiction, where myth is used not only to entertain but to reframe collective memory and identity (Sanders, 2006). As Umberto Eco (1990) suggests, fictional narratives often reinterpret the past in order to process present-day reality, making ancient material resonate with modern consciousness. Norse mythology, in particular, has gained renewed relevance in recent years, revitalized through works that blend gods, cosmology, and symbolism with urban sensibilities. These myth-based stories appeal to readers' desire for both escapism and continuity, allowing them to immerse themselves in alternative realities while remaining anchored to cultural history (Ryan, 2001). In this context, myth functions not merely as backdrop, but as a living structure that can be reshaped, reinterpreted, and repurposed to speak to new generations.

One of the most prominent stylistic strategies used in contemporary fiction to rework myth is pastiche. Fredric Jameson (1992) defines pastiche as "a neutral practice of mimicry," an imitation of past styles or voices devoid of parody or critical intent. Unlike parody, which seeks to mock, pastiche absorbs and reuses older forms in a gesture that is often nostalgic, aesthetic, or reconstructive. In postmodern literature, pastiche functions as a creative tool to blur historical boundaries and repackage cultural memory in new forms (Jameson, 2016). This approach allows writers to construct layered narratives that reference, reframe, and remix elements from prior texts or traditions. As Hutcheon (1989) notes, pastiche can also serve a critical purpose by "reinscribing" dominant historical discourses, especially when authors borrow styles or genres to subvert established meaning. In the

context of mythological fiction, pastiche enables the return of gods and legends—not as untouchable relics—but as characters reshaped to reflect contemporary dilemmas, cultural pluralism, and reader expectations.

Closely linked to pastiche is the concept of defamiliarization, introduced by Viktor Shklovsky in 1917 as ostranenie. In his essay Art as Technique, Shklovsky argues that the main function of art is to make the familiar appear strange, thereby renewing perception and breaking the automatic, unconscious patterns of recognition that dominate daily life (Shklovsky, 2015). This process—of seeing common things in unfamiliar ways—forces readers to re-experience language, narrative, and reality with heightened awareness. As Carter (2012) emphasizes, defamiliarization can take many forms: narrative disruption, unexpected metaphor, or even stylistic excess. Within literary texts, it operates as a device to refresh meaning and challenge the reader's comfort with established norms. When paired with pastiche, defamiliarization allows ancient mythological elements to be reintroduced not merely as nostalgic fragments, but as active agents of meaning, made strange through new contexts, hybrid characters, or altered cultural lenses. Together, these two techniques form the aesthetic backbone of literary works that aim to both honor and destabilize tradition.

Rick Riordan's *The Sword of Summer* (2015) offers a compelling example of how pastiche and defamiliarization converge within a single narrative. As the first installment in the Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard series, the novel reimagines Norse mythology through the life of Magnus, a homeless teenager in Boston who discovers he is the son of the god Frey. The juxtaposition of divine ancestry with urban marginalization challenges traditional heroic archetypes while inviting readers to reassess what it means to be a hero in the modern world. Likewise, the character of Samirah Al-Abbas—a hijab-wearing Muslim Valkyrie—subverts mythic expectations by blending ancient warrior duties with contemporary religious and cultural identity. Riordan's reinterpretation of Valhalla as a high-tech hotel and his stylized depiction of mythical figures like Surt as both terrifying and absurd reinforce the strangeness of the familiar. These narrative strategies position The Sword of Summer (2015)not only as a modern fantasy novel but also as a text deeply engaged in reworking inherited stories through techniques that both honor and unsettle their mythic origins.

Previous studies on pastiche and myth in literature have explored various genres and narrative strategies. Zhu (2023) examined the use of pastiche in Sylvia Plath's poetry, particularly how intertextual echoes of past voices reshape emotional expression. Jweid (2023) analyzed John Green's The Fault in Our Stars as a form of narcissistic pastiche rooted in postmodern nostalgia, while Khabibulaeva (2020) investigated Riordan's The Lightning Thief to show how Greek mythology is adapted into modern American settings. In addition, Erliani, Kuncara, and Lubis (2019) have analyzed The Sword of Summer (2015) from the perspective of the hero's journey, focusing on narrative structure rather than the stylistic strategies used. Meanwhile, Wulandari (2017) and Saleem (2023) examined pastiche in popular fiction and poetry respectively, but without exploring its defamiliarizing potential. These works collectively illustrate how pastiche serves as a tool for cultural adaptation and reinterpretation. However, the specific interplay between pastiche and defamiliarization in The Sword of Summer (2015)— particularly in the context of Norse mythology—remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap by addressing two central research questions: (1) What are the forms of pastiche found in The Sword of Summer? and (2) How does Rick Riordan use mythological elements to create a defamiliarization effect?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method to examine how literary techniques are used to reshape myth in Rick Riordan's *The Sword of Summer* (2015). The qualitative descriptive approach emphasizes close textual analysis, interpretation, and pattern identification within literary content (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This method is appropriate for analyzing narrative structures, symbolic meanings, and stylistic devices, especially in works of fiction that are rich in cultural and intertextual elements.

The primary data source for this research is Riordan's *The Sword of Summer* (2015), the first installment of the Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard series. The novel is examined as a complete text, with focus placed on its narrative elements, character portrayals, setting constructions, and intertextual references. The selection of this novel is based on its deliberate incorporation of Norse mythology into a contemporary urban setting, making it an ideal case study for understanding how pastiche and defamiliarization operate in young adult fantasy literature. Data were collected through intensive and repeated close reading. Particular attention was given to scenes that feature mythological reimaginings, cultural juxtapositions, and the use of popular media references. These scenes were marked and categorized into thematic clusters reflecting forms of pastiche and moments of defamiliarization. The analysis also included annotation of dialogue, imagery, and setting description to identify literary mechanisms that reshape myth.

The theoretical framework of this study combines Viktor Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization and Fredric

Jameson's theory of pastiche. Shklovsky's idea that literature should "make the familiar strange" guides the exploration of how myth is reframed to disrupt reader expectations (Shklovsky, 2015). Jameson's theory situates pastiche as a hallmark of postmodern aesthetics—where imitation and recombination of styles are used not to parody but to evoke cultural familiarity (Jameson, 1992). Additionally, the work of Abrams and Harpham (2012) and Carter (2012) provide guidance for analyzing literary form and aesthetic technique. These frameworks support a formalist-critical reading strategy, allowing the study to focus on how narrative techniques create meaning within the literary structure of the novel. This methodology enables a thematically organized analysis in the Results and Discussion section, where findings are interpreted not only through narrative observation but also through theoretical reflection. The approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how myth, identity, and cultural representation are embedded in Riordan's work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on how Rick Riordan employs pastiche and defamiliarization in *The Sword of Summer* (2015). The analysis is structured thematically to reflect different aspects of literary construction, including character portrayal, setting, and mythological adaptation. Each theme is discussed in light of the theoretical frameworks proposed by Fredric Jameson and Viktor Shklovsky. Rather than separating findings from interpretation, this section integrates both to show how pastiche and defamiliarization function simultaneously as narrative techniques and as aesthetic strategies. Through close reading, key passages are examined to reveal how Riordan reworks Norse myth into a contemporary, multicultural fantasy narrative.

1.Forms of Pastiche in *The Sword of Summer* (2015)

a. Magnus Chase as Postmodern Hero

In The Sword of Summer (2015), Rick Riordan constructs his protagonist Magnus Chase not as a glorified hero of epic tradition, but as a fragmented figure who embodies the contradictions of postmodern identity. As the son of a Norse god and a homeless teenager living on the streets of Boston, Magnus represents a collision of mythological legacy and urban marginalization. This contrast is a deliberate narrative strategy that foregrounds pastiche as a stylistic and thematic device. According to Fredric Jameson (1992), pastiche in postmodern literature functions as a "neutral practice of mimicry," where disparate historical and cultural forms are recombined without satirical intent. Magnus's character is not a parody of the epic hero, but a composite of mythic tropes and contemporary social realities, presented without judgment or hierarchy.

Riordan's treatment of Magnus reflects this logic. The protagonist's divine lineage is revealed not through prophecy or epic battle, but by an estranged uncle during a parking dispute in Boston: "Your father is a Norse god. Now, hurry. We're in a twenty-minute parking spot" (Riordan, 2015, p. 29). This blend of revelation and absurdity typifies postmodern pastiche—it destabilizes the sacred through the mundane. Jameson would argue that such moments erase the boundary between high and low culture, offering a narrative that is simultaneously mythic and banal. Magnus's world is filled with swords and subway stations, giants and falafel carts. It is a space where myth no longer towers above reality but unfolds beside it.

This characterization also produces a defamiliarizing effect, in the sense proposed by Viktor Shklovsky (2015), who claimed that art should "make the familiar strange." Magnus's reactions to mythic phenomena are not reverent, but ironic and uncertain. For example, upon witnessing a fire giant, he narrates: "I would've run if my legs had worked. Instead, I stood there like a frozen turkey" (Riordan, 2015, p. 33). This deliberate use of humor and understatement compels readers to reconsider the heroic encounter not as awe-inspiring, but as awkward and absurd. The reader sees the mythological not through an epic lens, but through the eyes of a reluctant, sarcastic, and socially displaced teenager. In doing so, Riordan both dismantles and reanimates the archetype of the hero.

This subversion has broader implications for how myth functions in contemporary fiction. By refusing to elevate Magnus into the realm of the divine, Riordan instead humanizes the mythic. This act of leveling reinforces Shklovsky's principle that estrangement reawakens perception. Magnus Chase is a hero not because he transcends the world, but because he navigates it with confusion, humor, and fractured resolve. His journey offers readers not a blueprint of valor, but a mirror of uncertainty—a myth that reflects modern selfhood as layered, conflicted, and perpetually in flux.

b. Samirah Al-Abbas as Cultural Pastiche

Samirah Al-Abbas is perhaps one of the most ideologically complex characters in The Sword of Summer (2015). As a hijab-wearing Muslim teenager who simultaneously fulfills the role of a Valkyrie—a warrior from Norse mythology tasked with guiding the souls of fallen heroes—she exemplifies a form of literary pastiche grounded in identity politics and cultural hybridity. Fredric Jameson's (1992) notion of pastiche as the juxtaposition of incongruent elements without satire finds a clear application in Samirah's character construction. She is not treated as a contradiction to the Norse mythos, but as an evolution of it. Her very presence within the mythic world reframes what it means to be chosen by the gods, adding ethnic, religious, and gender dimensions to a traditionally uniform archetype.

Stuart Hall's (1996) theory of identity as a process "not of being but of becoming" offers a deeper understanding of Samirah's function in the novel. She navigates her daily life with dual commitments: loyalty to her family and faith, and responsibility to her mythological duties. In one telling moment, she explains to Magnus: "I wear [the hijab] when I want to, or when I think I need to. Like when I take my grandmother to mosque on Friday, or—" (Riordan, 2015, p. 169). The sentence trails off, capturing the internal tension of reconciling overlapping identities. Yet Riordan does not resolve this tension—he leaves it intact, allowing Samirah to exist as a layered subject rather than a simplified stereotype.

Linda Hutcheon (1989) argues that postmodern texts are characterized by "complicity and critique," meaning they often engage with the cultural materials they present while also questioning their premises. Samirah's portrayal achieves this balance. She is a Valkyrie who flies through realms and wields supernatural power, but she also hides her armor from her conservative grandparents and tutors elementary students to cover up her absences. When she tells Magnus that she's supposed to be helping with math homework, not fighting fire giants, it's both amusing and deeply human (Riordan, 2015, p. 68). The mythic is not diminished; it is expanded to accommodate lives lived in multiplicity.

In doing so, Riordan not only defamiliarizes the Valkyrie archetype but also makes space for readers from underrepresented backgrounds to see themselves in myth. Samirah's dual identity is not a narrative obstacle but a narrative engine. Her characterization offers a powerful model of pastiche where cultural identity is not erased, but foregrounded as myth-worthy. Through her, Riordan bridges the epic and the everyday, reshaping mythology to reflect a pluralistic world.

c. Setting Elements as Visual Pastiche

The setting in The Sword of Summer (2015) plays a central role in expressing postmodern pastiche. Rather than presenting Valhalla as a lofty, ethereal domain removed from human experience, Rick Riordan reimagines it as a modern hotel with elevators, flat-screen TVs, video game consoles, and administrative staff. This spatial transformation exemplifies Jameson's (1992) view that postmodernism collapses distinctions between high and low culture. Valhalla is no longer a distant mythic hall; it is a hotel suite with "a big leather couch facing a plasma-screen TV with about six different game systems" (Riordan, 2015, p. 57). This comedic excess not only rewrites expectations of sacred space, but inserts the divine into the consumer logic of late capitalism.

Such reimagining is not ironic parody, but a strategic reorientation of myth toward familiarity. The viewer is not asked to marvel at otherworldliness but to recognize it in the banal. As Viktor Shklovsky (2015) notes, defamiliarization requires making the routine appear strange and newly visible. In Riordan's setting, the sacred is defamiliarized by being literalized—its power softened through recognizability. When the Valkyries project Magnus's death scene onto a holographic screen, readers are confronted with a spectacle that merges medieval honor with modern surveillance: "A ring of giant holographic screens flickered to life, floating in mid-air. The video was choppy, apparently taken from a camera on the shoulder of a Valkyrie" (Riordan, 2015, p. 75).

This integration of digital media and mythological performance mimics the entertainment culture that dominates contemporary life. It also reflects Jameson's view that postmodern pastiche is driven by surface over depth—myth becomes a performance, and heroic death becomes a broadcast event. Shklovsky's defamiliarization functions here not through symbolic estrangement, but through situational inversion: Valhalla becomes the office lobby, the battlefield becomes a media arena. By placing ancient tradition into modern technological contexts, Riordan draws attention to the shifting function of myth in the 21st century—not as eternal truth, but as mutable experience reshaped by screens, software, and sarcasm.

2. The Use of Mythological Elements in Creating Pastiche

a. Mythical Objects & Beings in Modern Context

Rick Riordan introduces Norse mythological figures and objects directly into the modern world, producing moments of incongruity that are central to both pastiche and defamiliarization. The fire giant Surt, for instance, emerges not from a legendary realm but from the Longfellow Bridge in Boston, interrupting the mundane reality of traffic and pedestrians. The moment is rendered with dramatic flair: "Flames danced across his armor. His eyes glowed like pools of lava. In one hand, he held a massive sword, its blade a column of fire" (Riordan, 2015, p. 32). Yet this confrontation unfolds in an urban setting, creating a jarring juxtaposition between myth and modernity. As Jameson (1992) suggests, such juxtapositions are typical of postmodern pastiche, which blends historical depth with surface-level cultural codes.

This encounter with Surt destabilizes the expected reverence of mythological awe. The terror of facing a godlike being is filtered through the sardonic voice of Magnus Chase, who narrates: "I would've run if my legs had worked. Instead, I stood there like a frozen turkey" (Riordan, 2015, p. 33). This use of contemporary humor reflects Shklovsky's (2015) theory of defamiliarization: rather than presenting myth as distant or sacred, Riordan renders it ridiculous, unpredictable, and newly strange. By doing so, the scene becomes a space where both the reader and the protagonist question the authority of mythic grandeur.

Sumarbrander, the sentient sword Magnus receives, offers another example of mythological defamiliarization. Traditionally, enchanted weapons symbolize heroic virtue or divine right. But in Riordan's novel, the sword—nicknamed Jack—has moods, opinions, and the capacity to sulk. It hums with satisfaction "like a cat purring" (Riordan, 2015, p. 91) and floats off in protest when ignored. Jack does not just subvert the idea of a noble weapon; it parodies it, or more precisely, remixes it. Through Jack, Riordan constructs what Jameson (1992) describes as a postmodern object: one that performs multiple, sometimes contradictory, cultural functions.

These objects and beings do not merely exist alongside the modern world—they are folded into it. Surt's destructive force is not relegated to mythical lands but unleashed on a Boston bridge; Jack is more roommate than relic. In these moments, Riordan rewrites mythology not as an origin story of civilization, but as a living cultural remix. The result is a world where gods, giants, and enchanted objects coexist with mobile phones and twenty-minute parking limits. Riordan's mythic beings no longer stand outside modernity—they embody its contradictions.

b. Nostalgia and Pop Culture Intersections

Riordan's pastiche extends beyond characters and setting to include overt references to popular culture. These references serve as cultural shorthand that enables readers—especially younger ones—to connect instantly with the narrative. Linda Hutcheon (1989) argues that postmodern art engages in "complicity and critique," referencing cultural artifacts while simultaneously destabilizing them. In The Sword of Summer (2015), this technique is apparent when Magnus observes a Valkyrie's entrance and compares it to modern entertainment: "The woman in the video dropped out of the sky like a superhero—Doctor Who meets Mortal Kombat" (Riordan, 2015, p. 75). The scene becomes legible through existing pop culture images, functioning as a narrative gateway into the mythic.

This strategy resonates with Fredric Jameson's (1992) notion of the "nostalgia mode," where cultural memory is built not on actual history but on the aesthetics of remembered media. References to Doctor Who or Mortal Kombat do not deepen the reader's understanding of Norse mythology but reframe it in familiar, consumable images. This is not a failure of depth but a reorganization of narrative recognition. Pop culture acts here as a narrative scaffolding, easing the reader's entry into a mythological world by encoding it in known symbols.

Frank Sinatra's unexpected presence in Thor's preferences further complicates this nostalgic layering. In one scene, Thor turns up the volume and says: "You know what I love about Midgard? Your music. The golden age stuff—real soul, not like this new garbage" (Riordan, 2015, p. 256). Here, nostalgia functions both diegetically and thematically. Thor's fondness for Sinatra becomes a character quirk and a cultural anchor. Jameson's critique of postmodernism as a system of recycled forms is mirrored in Riordan's portrayal of mythic figures who consume cable TV, listen to crooners, and argue about music genres.

In these references, Riordan does not trivialize myth but repurposes it. The sacred is not mocked; it is modernized, dressed in the language of familiarity. This transformation allows for a unique type of reader engagement. As Hutcheon (1989) observes, intertextuality in postmodern literature enables active participation, inviting readers to decode the collage of references and derive their own interpretive meaning. Riordan's pastiche is not merely visual or stylistic—it is emotional and cultural, resonating with the reader's own nostalgia-infused worldview.

3. Thematic Implications & Critical Reflection

The narrative techniques employed in The Sword of Summer (2015) do more than modernize mythology—they reshape how readers perceive cultural inheritance, identity, and participation in storytelling. Riordan's blend of pastiche and defamiliarization produces a mythological framework that is accessible, fluid, and open to reinterpretation. As Fredric Jameson (1992) suggests, postmodern texts often substitute depth with cultural coding, allowing meaning to emerge from the intersection of surface references. This is evident in the way Riordan's mythic world is built on familiar fragments—hotels, game consoles, hijabs, and holograms— assembled into a patchwork of symbolic resonance. Myth is no longer told from a pedestal but from the sidewalk.

By embedding mythic content into everyday spaces and voices, Riordan disrupts the sacred distance traditionally associated with mythology. The effect is intensified by his use of defamiliarization, as defined by Viktor Shklovsky (2015), which compels the reader to "make the familiar strange." Riordan reverses this logic: he makes the strange familiar—then strange again. Whether it is a sword that talks back, or a hotel for dead warriors with Wi-Fi and room service, the resulting narrative reframes epic concepts into accessible, even humorous, experiences. The power of myth is not diminished, but reinterpreted, reminding readers that ancient narratives are not static relics, but evolving tools of cultural expression.

This has significant implications for how readers experience identity in literature. Stuart Hall (1996) describes identity as a "production" that is always in process and never complete. Samirah Al-Abbas exemplifies this perspective, embodying religious, ethnic, and mythological affiliations that coexist without resolution. Riordan's portrayal of her—and other characters like Magnus—suggests that identity in a postmodern myth is not essentialist but contingent, constructed across multiple, often competing, discourses. Readers who share in this fragmentation can find recognition rather than alienation. Through its hybrid characters, Riordan's novel creates space for pluralist representation within epic traditions.

This narrative inclusivity reflects Linda Hutcheon's (1989) view that postmodern texts do not merely recycle the past, but rework it through irony, layering, and cultural code-switching. In The Sword of Summer (2015), myth becomes a flexible discourse, one that allows readers from diverse backgrounds to imagine themselves within the mythic canon. Rather than reinforcing a singular vision of the heroic, Riordan offers a multiplicity of roles and origins. His use of pastiche operates not only as a stylistic device but as a sociocultural gesture— an invitation to re-inhabit myth from within the textures of contemporary life. In this world, heroism is not confined to lineage or prophecy, but emerges through contradiction, community, and cultural memory.

Riordan's storytelling in The Sword of Summer (2015) positions him squarely within the field of popular postmodern literature—a genre that, as Umberto Eco (1990) suggests, operates by "recreating the past in the style of the present." This recreation is not passive reproduction; it is a mode of commentary, a form of cultural negotiation. By embedding Norse myth in the vernacular of teenage humor and digital reference, Riordan is not erasing mythic authority—he is testing its relevance, reshaping its borders. In this way, the text becomes more than an adaptation. It becomes a critique of how cultural memory functions in the age of memes, genre mash-ups, and streaming content.

Fredric Jameson (1992) argues that postmodernism signals a "waning of historicity," where culture no longer references the past directly, but reconstructs it through fragments of collective aesthetic memory. The Sword of Summer (2015) is built on precisely such fragments: a mythic fire giant framed like a Marvel villain, a magic sword that sulks, a hotel Valhalla filled with plasma screens and bureaucratic rules. These fragments do not aim for historical authenticity; instead, they reflect a world in which myth has lost its sacred distance and become entangled in entertainment logic. In doing so, Riordan does not trivialize myth—he interrogates what it now means to "inherit" tradition in a media-saturated world.

Riordan's myth-making is thus deeply postmodern—not because it's irreverent, but because it's recursive. It reads mythology through the lens of contemporary life, while simultaneously showing that contemporary life itself is steeped in half-remembered myths, recast in new images. His narrative invites readers not only to recognize this cycle, but to participate in it—to see themselves as part of the ongoing remix of cultural meaning.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how The Sword of Summer (2015) by Rick Riordan employs pastiche and defamiliarization to reshape Norse mythology for contemporary readers. Through characters like Magnus Chase and Samirah Al-Abbas, mythological symbols such as Surt and Sumarbrander, and a setting populated by

holograms, video games, and retro music, Riordan constructs a narrative where ancient traditions are reimagined in familiar, often humorous forms. These literary choices are not incidental; they reflect a deeper postmodern logic that foregrounds hybridity, irony, and cultural recycling as core aesthetic strategies. Guided by Fredric Jameson's (1992) concept of pastiche and Viktor Shklovsky's (2015) theory of defamiliarization, the analysis has shown how Riordan's work creates a space in which myth no longer functions as sacred truth but as cultural material to be reworked. The novel collapses historical distance, replacing solemnity with playfulness, and tradition with fluid reinvention. This transformation enables young readers to engage with mythology not from a position of awe, but from one of recognition and participation. Furthermore, Riordan's use of pastiche highlights the shifting nature of identity in a globalized world. As Stuart Hall (1996) argues, identity is not static but in constant formation—a view embodied in characters who must negotiate conflicting cultural, religious, and mythological expectations. The presence of pop culture references, from Doctor Who to Frank Sinatra, serves not just to entertain but to embed readers within the narrative fabric, transforming them from spectators to co-creators of meaning. In this way, the novel contributes to a growing field of literature that seeks to democratize myth by rooting it in the lives and language of its audience.

The findings of this study have broader implications for both literary scholarship and cultural education. By demonstrating how myth can be reconstructed through techniques like pastiche and defamiliarization, this research offers a framework for analyzing how traditional narratives adapt within globalized, media-rich societies. It also highlights the potential of contemporary fantasy literature to function as a pedagogical tool—one that not only entertains but challenges readers to reflect on identity, culture, and historical inheritance. These insights can inform further studies in myth criticism, reader-response theory, and even interdisciplinary approaches to literature and media. While this study provides a close textual analysis of The Sword of Summer (2015) through the lenses of pastiche and defamiliarization, it is not without limitations. The focus on a single literary work restricts the generalizability of its findings across other myth-based young adult novels. Furthermore, the study emphasizes formalist and poststructural interpretation over empirical reader-response perspectives. Future research could incorporate reception studies, cross-cultural analysis, or comparative genre frameworks to explore how diverse audiences engage with these layered narratives in practice.

Ultimately, The Sword of Summer (2015) offers more than a retelling of Norse tales—it offers a vision of myth that is recursive, dialogic, and radically open to reinterpretation. It affirms that myth does not belong only to the past or to academic discourse; it can live in the hands of those who remix it, question it, and make it their own. Future research might explore how Riordan's pastiche techniques evolve across his other mythological series, or how readers from diverse cultural backgrounds interpret these layered identities in their own reading experiences.

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