

Reevaluating Femininity: Gender Stereotypes
in *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*

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Abstract

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An examination of the way femininity is represented in young adult literature, particularly characters such as the female demigods in "Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters," is important to demonstrate how prevalent gender stereotypes can have a direct impact on nuanced representations. Cultural stories often stereotype women into specific emotions or characteristics, such as fear or anger, in order to maintain the social order and preserve a male-dominated power structure (Ni, 2024). This paper uses narrative discourse analysis and Hall's representation theory to reveal how conventional portrayals hinder nuanced female characterisations (Kimsey, 2020). By centring the creative power at the junction of feeling and power, this research raises questions about depictions of emotion and their implications for perceptions of the feminine in the young reader. Finally, this article argues for richer and more complex plotlines, which lead to critical and thoughtful reflection of the course of female identity and agency in opposition to the established genre pattern.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's representation in contemporary popular culture remains constrained within simplistic and reductive stereotypes. Such representations depict women as emotionally fraught, obstinate, aggressive, or illogical. These projections stem from deeply patriarchal frameworks. They not only shape social perception but also reinforce symbolic structures that disempower women (Afifulloh, 2022; Oktaviani, 2020).

In the realm of young adult literature, female protagonists often face being categorised as one-dimensional, including the angry warrior, the sentimental nurturer, or the irrational foe. These do not allow for depth or development. This problem

actively promotes self-imposed gender norms among young readers and audiences, influencing their understanding of femininity (Smit, 2020). Through neglecting complex portrayals of feminine figures, literature fosters a patriarchal society that undermines narrative multiplicity and curtails the possibilities of women's agency (Kimsey, 2020).

This trend is evident in *The Sea of Monsters*, the second instalment in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series. Following teenage demigod Percy Jackson battling mythological monsters and quests around identity is engaging for readers. In this volume, Percy and friends are on a quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece to save Camp Half-Blood. Clarisse

La Rue, daughter of Ares, leads the quest, which breaks traditional leadership expectations. She starts very loudly and aggressively, adding to her emotional stereotype as strongly as many women are portrayed throughout history, bearing intensely volatile tempers. Yet, her character development profoundly hints toward emotional vulnerability, suggesting deep self-isolation and self-doubt as she moves away from conventional, rigid interpretations of women's roles in literature.

The *Sea of Monsters* enables us to observe how flat representations evolve into multidimensional female agency. Clarisse's character development in the story challenges the notion of typecasting. It marks a transition in adolescent fiction where young female characters are given more intricate emotional breadth and layered contradictory depth as they deal with systems they have either embraced or opposed.

This matters: Demi-goddesses are portrayed as being hot-headed and emotional, aggressive, and angry. These are stereotypes that feel all too familiar (Mukrimah, 2019). However, the story does leave room to question whether such portrayals are exceeded or limited. This leads us to address an important issue in gender studies: examining how children and teens who read popular fantasy fiction perceive women's identities and empowerment (Beukeboom & Burgers, 2019; Fjellidal, 2022).

This analysis combines feminist literary theory with Stuart Hall's representation theory to analyse feminine representations in *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*. Representation, in Hall's view, involves purposeful creation of meaning via signifiers and cultural structures (Hall, 1997). Furthermore, stereotype frameworks perpetuate socially constructed status quo boundaries that delimit social realities (Hall, 1997, pp. 258-259).

Examining Hall's theories of representation cultivates a critical perspective that enables the analysis of texts such as *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters* about cultural contexts, particularly regarding the meanings that are produced, reinforced, or contested within the narrative. Hall effectively counters the argument that representation merely mirrors societal realities, emphasising instead

the complexities inherent in character depiction through gendered lenses. This perspective necessitates an understanding of the underlying ideological frameworks that shape narratives and inform how authors construct relationships concerning literary selves and identity politics.

Within the realm of young adult fiction, traditional gender roles persist, and female characters are often portrayed as static figures, only presenting from a male standpoint. Studies of the female demigod character in *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters* illustrate the shift in the representation of gender signifiers from a static, caricatured representation towards a layered representation possessing depth, power, and agency. This transformation represents a reevaluation of the stereotypical expected woman's role in literature and constitutes a paralexical shift in the narrative's dynamics. It is bigger than just critiquing books, though; it's a note on how portrayals in young literature can actually shape teens' views of themselves and what it means to be a girl. Literature has the power to re-draw the societal outline on young readers' concept and recognition of the self and other, and thus form a new narrative of identity and agency in literature.

Representational strategies are fundamental to the crafting of meaning. Hall (1997, pp. 15–27) proposes three models: the reflective, intentional, and constructionist models. While the reflective model views language as a mimic of reality, Hall critiques it as overly simplistic. The constructionist approach is more relevant to literary interpretation, as it focuses on the utterance and context—such discourse fills meaning into gaps in the world—and posits that meaning is derived from context. For example, describing Clarisse La Rue's aggressive tendencies is argumentatively construing femininity.

In addition to discussing relational aspects of stereotyping individuals, Hall (1997, pp. 258-259) touches upon the politics behind it, which enforces dominant social structures, reducing individuals to predetermined traits as fixed attributes. In a patriarchal world, such women portrayed in young adult fiction tend to be hotheaded and obsessed with

romance or emotionally fragile (Ni, 2024; Aji, 2023). Portraying this temperamental warrior as a simplification of complex characters' woman's frame mode further suggests that stereotypical portrayals overlook critical examination concerning the lack of ideological depth within narratives.

To analyse the representation of female characters and their active defiance against gender stereotypes in this study, Stuart Hall's theoretical dimensions are utilised as a holistic framework. Language, construction, stereotyping, and negotiation are processes that reveal how meaning is produced, fixed—and in some cases, subverted—in literary works. Such an analysis posits that narrative representation functions both as a locus of power and a counterspace for resistance. Hall's theory is applied here to investigate the construction and possible redefinition of women's characters in Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters, so that othered gendered representations may be critically interrogated from cross-sectional conflict frameworks.

It can be argued that popular literature, like most young adult novels, has the potential to construct one's identity alongside shaping one's worldview. One such text is Rick Riordan's novel, *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*, which serves as a notable example of female character development within the genre. A specific girl character is first described as stereotypically embodying the daughter of a war god—a very unpleasant, rough-shod woman who was bitterly angry all the time. As the story progresses, she demonstrates responsibility and empathy, leading her to resist being reduced to a mere stereotype (Riordan, 2006).

This article intends to achieve the following objectives: (1) study the representation of female identity concerning gender stereotypes in *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*, focusing on initial traits, actions, and speech attributed to the character which evoke stereotypical markers including emotionality, aggression, and irrationality; (2) analyze how the story overcomes or attempts to resist these stereotypes concentrating on feminized character evolution—key reflections, dialogues, and

behaviors deemed counter-heroic within a reductive framework from Hall's encoding/decoding theory—and frame. Examining stereotyping and its resistance within young adult fiction is important because these stories profoundly influence readers' understanding of selfhood and power dynamics, illustrating how literature can serve as an ideological battleground for gender identity.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyse the portrayal of characters within the framework of popular literature. Qualitative research, as explained by Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020), considers meaning, interpretation, and symbolism within cultural texts and practices as their constructs. Instead of relying on interview or fieldwork data, this study relies on textual analysis to reveal how gender stereotypes are reinforced or subverted within narratives. This approach is justified given that the research seeks to investigate how patriarchal stereotypes in literature are constructed through narrative strategies depicting women. The primary source for this study is Riordan's novel "*Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*," which serves as the primary focus for the representation analysis.

The primary data includes passages from the novel that depict stereotypical portrayals and counteracting behaviours exhibited by the female character. Secondary data includes scholarly articles and books that discuss theories of representation, gender stereotyping, and character analysis, with a focus on the portrayal of stereotypes in narratives.

As the reading technique has been applied to extract various linguistic and narrative elements, it helps in accurately portraying a character. As Catterson Shaw and Rubinstein put it, "reading with special attention" (2025) is a close reading technique that facilitates the exploration of intricate details. Employing literature goes well beyond cursory observations, focusing on language, themes, and structure on a much deeper level. This method allows for the discovery of both supporting and conflicting stereotypes present in a text.

To Panaou's (2019) merit, he describes how close readings of literary texts show how even the details are intertwined with larger social scientific inquiries about identity and authority. As a way of further explicating Cedeño-Puentes and Ávila-Rosales' (2022) claim, writing of all kinds, the literary included, requires a building through readings informed by systematic interpretations of understanding beyond that which is presented in their surface narratives. Moreover, Setyawan's (2022) research using qualitative content analysis evidences the empirical reading research paradigm by investigating the ideological aspects through narrative structures, revealing the reality of class differentiation.

Data analysis considerations in the present study use a qualitative content analysis articulated by Krippendorff (2018) and have been further developed in an organised interpretation of texts, which aims to extract underlying patterns, meaning, and themes. Key events, lines of dialogue, and character development are analysed for the presence of gender stereotyping and for any subversion of those stereotypes within *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*. The coding is conducted through the lens of Hall's theory about representation, which states that representation is the production and circulation of meaning through signs, language, and culture. Hall (1997) alerted us to the fact that representation is not only a reaction that one has to reality, but a fiercely contested site of ideological struggles, one involving processes of construction, combat, and in some cases resistance. Consequently, by drawing on an understanding of Hall, tempered by Krippendorff's systematic theory, it means that this study is able to engage critically in the process by which literary identities perform, incarnate, resist, or disrupt hegemonic constructions.

The results are significant since they consider multiple viewpoints that work within a single framework, synthesising a new meaning of character representations in works of fiction using existing discussions of character belief.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before looking at specific story developments, it's important to make clear the goals of this section, which are to answer the two main research questions: (1) What are the stereotypes that people have about Clarisse La Rue's character in *Percy Jackson: The Sea of Monsters*? Also, (2) how does she fight against or go against those stereotypes throughout the story? Using Hall's theory on stereotyping and meaning, this analysis explores Clarisse's shift from stereotype to complex, resistant characterisation.

Initial Representation of Clarisse as a Gender Stereotype

As the offspring of Ares, the god of war, Clarisse La Rue is introduced as his daughter. She is shown to be strenuously dominant and unapologetically pugnacious from her very first appearance. Her first encounter with Percy further solidifies these impressions because she seemingly headfirst drags a boy into a bathroom:

"Clarisse was wearing her usual combat boots, jeans, and a bright red T-shirt with the words ARES RULES! She'd just picked up a younger camper by the neck and was dragging him toward the bathroom" (Riordan, 2006, p. 5).

Clarisse's shocking image of dragging a younger camper by the neck while wearing what appeared to be combat attire solidifies her as an archetype of violence and domineering behaviour. This specific character framing explicitly illustrates how she differs from the typical, gentle, friendly, and passive young female representatives within literature and media.

Her silence around other campers not only distinguishes her but also isolates her because of her angered countenance. Clarisse eliminates any chance of emotional softness through her loud voice, coupled with a fighting disposition who frequently roams about ready to explode into a torrent of rage. The calm, tender interior sociability often expected in feminine personas makes Clarisse easier to identify as someone embodying brash masculinity due to her exaggerated physical dominance and aggression. In the reader's first encounter with Clarisse, "brute-like" mechanical monsters are attached to splintered stuff,

on account of the violent bullying and other unsavory conduct encoded in that stuff.

This ridicule of certain characteristics of popular, social teenage girls is a part of modern culture, causing them to appear even more so in female characters. A lot of people are upset without focus for theoretical narratives spinning overly labels amongst shadowy behaviour, trying to reflect rebellion sounding developed prescriptive criteria in growing teenage girls comes out here as an oddly over exaggerated bloater, an attempt to sync branded youth burden headers likened. Grant duty framed logo with a praising mark with strings bound by life. Observe Pierce's tenure-bound, loose-limbed endeavor. Try to let go of the unintentional air route—divergent shield. The rapture reveals an unexpected path that extends beyond horizon lines. Expand, disrobe, retrieve, ascend, and witness over a thousand ways the spirit raises flesh. Children freed from bank form evidence, gift resemblance, picture, eternally uncover, burst, seraphim blossom, growing, washed, unbound, kaleidoscope. Although the description may sound all-encompassing, the vividly woven tale discoveries portray nothing short of brilliance.

The representation of this first representation of Clarisse may be analysed in terms of Stuart Hall's representation theory. Stereotypes, writes Hall (1997:37), "fix" meaning by anchoring people to a shallow and narrow set of characteristics. Known for showing no mercy and absolutely dominating her opponents while being cold-hearted and unfeeling, Clarisse is categorised under the title of "brutal warrior" by Clarisse herself. That kind of fight strips more and more qualities that we associate with women and attaches them to masculine behavior. Restricting her narrative identity along such lines also constrains her interpretations and her ability to be located and understood.

In short, Clarisse is first described as a stereotype; that of the loud, fighting, non-feminine girl. Her physical stature, coupled with her fighting spirit, marks her as an outsider. This exemplifies the troubling trend in media where complex characters are reduced to one-dimensional caricatures. This

chapter provides a starting point for analyzing how, later on, Clarisse uses this opportunity not only to resist but also to reinvent the image imposed on her.

Conflict, Rivalry, and Social Exclusion

Clarisse's violent demeanor goes beyond her dealings with Percy. Looking at the broader picture of Camp Half-Blood, she holds a position that is both central and marginal. Unlike other campers who distrust and look down upon her, Clarisse is a capable fighter and daughter to an Olympian, which makes this paradox noteworthy. This illustrates the lengths to which individuals in power will go to uphold hierarchies, even when faced with an individual defying such norms.

The moment when Chiron assigns Clarisse the quest for the Golden Fleece serves as a notable example of exclusion within the narrative's social framework. The incredulous reactions of Annabeth and Percy underscore their exclusionary impulses: "You have got to be kidding. Clarisse?" (Riordan, 2006, p. 112). This disbelief reflects a reluctance to accept Clarisse as a competent leader despite her qualifications and highlights the gender stereotypes that often marginalize strong female characters in young adult literature. According to Hall's theory of representation, dominant societal norms shape perceptions and reinforce structures that can disempower women by portraying them as one-dimensional figures (Oktaviani, 2020). Female characters, such as Clarisse, are often depicted through a patriarchal lens, which can strip them of agency and complexity, relegating them to predefined traits that diminish their potential impact in the narrative (Oktaviani, 2020). For young audiences, the tendency to analyze feminine roles in literature through shallow and wide-ranging lenses diminishes their significance in the narrative and perpetuates constrictive notions of femininity. From the literature, if a semblance of these figures is more than just caricature, it is maximum affection, which a democratic audience is able to appreciate, including figures formless of emotion and will, that will is emotionless (Oktaviani, 2020). But the thing is, we need to correct those portrayals in order to shift the

conversation toward more inclusive and ultimately more freeing narratives of who we are.

Clarisse isn't any of these things. She's anti-social and fearless. The plot and the rest of the characters constantly undermine this form of compliance, transcending to a broader allegory much akin to how women in traditionally female positions of power are cancelled out socially once they start to assume leadership roles in the business space (Beukeboom & Burgers, 2019).

Her classmate's negative opinion of her is part of something bigger—self-harm. Clarisse is an example of how she has internalized cultural understandings of vulnerability and power by emotionally distancing herself from other people. Self-styled emotional vulnerability inspired by so much emotional-letting does not typically engender the readiness or willingness to be helped, or, heaven forbid, be "weak." Asserting that "acute socio-emotional silence dampens compassion," this ideology cultivates a camp culture that allows for the presence of gilts, known as demi-gods, who express the presence of "very rigid patriarchal structures."

The high-stakes brutalities that sit inside them are equally as clearly painted by the narrative, in order to highlight the constructed and arbitrary social dividing lines that these stereotypes have shaped. Clarisse in the novel serves as an example of having to fight back against traditional feminine and masculine roles. Clarisse's exclusion and then-inclusion process mirrors the experiences of women in an antagonistic sociocultural environment in which a cutthroat competition is mistaken for a competition. In these worlds, sincerity is replaced by betrayal, and honest love gets traded for, at best, cynical, counterfeit pieties masquerading as attempts to replicate tenderness as big fakes.

Additionally, Clarisse's interactions with male characters such as Tantalus and Percy illustrate how gendered aspects of social categorisation play into social stratification. For example, Tantalus's mistrust in the capacity of Clarisse to be an effective leader is based on a certain brand of historical patriarchal sexism that uses only random apical conditional "male" framings to locate apex female operability. La

Rue's dominion, however, is all dominion peculiar to her, full of vigorous dominion exclusion, even of cruelty, still less of finely shaded onyx all compact, as of strong, oaken-fibred firmness and steady fortitude, without one hairbreadth of self-asserting egotism. It is to be noted that no such surrender is found in La Rue.

Along with the other characters, it becomes clear that Clarisse undergoes a profoundly emotional and physically grueling journey. She is essentially left to complete this quest solo. In doing so, she must face monsters externally as well as internally. This journey captures the essence of her metamorphosis. It shows what Hall calls "negotiated reading"—a space where dominant interpretations are contested and transformed.

In one of the most memorable moments in the book, Clarisse states, "I cannot do this alone" (Riordan, 2006, p. 151). That moment captures her surrender to her new self-identity, separating her from her earlier version.

Now she moves away from being a one-dimensional, solely aggressive character into someone who has the capacity for reflection and self-doubt. It also serves as a moment that challenges the divisive masculine and feminine gender characteristics, as Clarisse now combines emotion with depth, counter to masculine rigidity.

This transformation is key because it further develops over-simplified representations imposed on characters based on their gender or sex. Her femininity turns into stereotype strength instead of embodying femininity, rejects them both, resolves the contradiction, merges both elements to create harmony among them because it blends masculinity alongside femininity, where a balanced dynamic exists instead of simplicity.

Ribeiro's (2025) analysis reveals that media narratives often convey considerable emotions towards male figures compared to females, by giving a woman the freedom to perceive and feel fear, loneliness, frustration, and ultimately self-acceptance. Clarisse's development challenges this tradition.

Her expression of dissatisfaction here is certainly legitimate, and the need to express doubt does not cancel the possibility for courage. She is also untethered from that theorem of tethering, the one that presses physical strength into service of emotional capacity and leans on physical strength as ever the counterbalance against emotional depth. That kind of evolution — something genuinely transformative as opposed to just good growth by a character — plays especially well in cultural contexts that infantilize weakness and are patriarchal to the bone, as ours has been.

She undergoes a process of embattled growth in which she encounters mythological antagonists and allies who affirm and challenge her convictions and become antagonists and allies in the narrative critical to her re-invention. It's these struggles that prompt Clarisse to negotiate herself better, doing more introspective thinking, and she arrives closer to the truth. With this knowledge, she knows that good governance must have two hands; one hand in protecting her own interests and actions from others at the same time as nurturing them under the same roof.

Reclaiming Leadership and Recognition

Clarisse's possible success in the quest reworks what readers think should happen, or might happen, since she competes with Annabeth, another character who makes the relatively naive protagonist realize when she's being ignorant. She returns now celebrated as much as a leader as a warrior. For this, she receives two kinds of accolades: the respect of her peers and the respect of God.

This acceptance, though, has its complications. The fact that Clarisse is recognized after enduring great adversity and social exclusion implies that validation for marginalized people, especially women, must be earned through exceptionalism. This disparity reflects the social norm that women in leadership roles should put in significantly more effort than men in order to be treated with the same respect.

However, this change in representational politics indicates that the story she leaves behind is not the same as the one she returns to. Instead of

being "the daughter of Ares," she is now a character who has negotiated identity formation, reconciled conflicting ideas, and dismantled the various expectations that were put on her. Her change defies the assumption that strength and compassion cannot coexist.

This award, as much as it is deserved, underscores the inequitable organization of how valor socioculturally and narratively decays. Clarisse's triumph matters for both herself and the ecosystem she represents and inhabits. She serves as an icon for turned expectations; a person who does not conform to the story's opening framing but succeeds precisely because she does not comply.

Recognition of her "victory" is not an incorporation of the dominant assimilationist framework but rather reframes that set of values on her terms. Regarding Clarisse, by maintaining her explosive decisiveness alongside emotional vulnerability, she creates a new form of heroism that transcends traditional notions of femininity equally.

Implications for Gender Discourse in Young Adult Fiction

The character of Clarisse La Rue illuminates the wider sociocultural ramifications of young adult fiction, specifically regarding the establishment or dismantling of gender roles. Her backstory is the best evidence of the pedantic nature of a single-gender story. Clarisse demonstrates to us the subversive potential of storytelling. As Hall argues, media texts are battlegrounds. There's still so much that needs to be redefined in mainstream fiction, and Clarisse does that.

And people—of every age—still find it difficult to fit their minds and hearts around that, when it's all about making yourself and other people into human beings, right in the noise of all that adolescence is. Moreover, more so, it can feel like a sort of plot twist for Clarisse to be so multi-faceted in such intricate moments of self-discovery; never relatable for she too is real- real in the emotions that mix, in the shine of some imperfection that is what every girl that rises highly always is like, always unreal, always detached to the real dictionary definition of 'expectations.

However, in another more academic one, such as a textbook for school, one may wish to trace Clarisse's case from an alternative perspective within the valuation of literary activities that breaks ethical literary fields, which furthermore is what literary strives are questions for, cultural value, and "entertainment" ascent.

The important realization that representation is never neutral permeates Clarisse's journey from stereotype to subjectivity. It can judge, limit, or liberate. Unwittingly or not, *The Sea of Monsters* endorses inclusivity in literature by featuring a female character who bucks the system and works to fight for who she truly is.

Her development expands the spectrum of the character in genre fiction, but also as a response against the stereotypes of the masculine. By insinuating that emotional honesty helps make heroes, her arc also subverts the trope of the emotionally impenetrable warrior. So Clarisse's story confirms that tenderness and tenacity are not enemies or even opposites but rather the stuff of survival.

Clarisse's story shows that representation is both a mirror and a map—it sets boundaries and carves out territories within a subjectivity shaped by culture. Via Clarisse, readers experience more open and optimistic possibilities regarding who they might be, as well as themselves as complicated individuals.

CONCLUSION

It is an inquiry into how a female character is depicted in "Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters". Built upon Stuart Hall's (1973) theory of representation, the results illustrate how Clarisse is pigeonholed into being represented primarily in the way of a masculine type with physical force, aggressiveness, as well as a lack of feeling.

Clarisse evolves a lot through the progress of the story. He starts to peel back a few layers to reveal her vulnerability and doubt that remain hidden under a hard shell. This confirms Hall's negotiated reading theory by demonstrating that a shift in representation is possible. What's more, as the book progresses, Clarisse becomes a character of strength and emotional depth, with wisdom beyond her years as she gains some insight into her own personality.

Clarisse, as a model of being, offers an alternative discursive trope that intersects sensitivity and power for young grade-school readers (e.g., girls). She is the type of character who cannot be pigeon-holed; not all female heroes are perfect characters or social norms adherent. Young kids are given permission to play-act in healthy ways by this kind of representation, where they see that they can try on identities rather than accepting fixed numbers.

This study can be useful for examining gender discrimination, stereotyping, and identity formation in contemporary fiction within the framework of education and reading culture. Clarisse's tale can serve as a springboard for discussions about representation and cultural relevance in the classroom. Thus, this study contributes to the discussion about teaching critical young adult literature in the framework of representational reading.

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