

# PEREGRINE QUINN AND THE COSMIC REALM



I remember my first mythology book, given to me by my mum. It was an illustrated book of Greek myths with a boy riding a white winged horse on the front cover. I devoured it, and was instantly hungry for more.

In my local library I found lots more books on Greek myths, but also Arthurian tales, stories of Robin Hood and brave Rhiannon from the Mabinogion, Norse myths and stories of the trickster god Anansi. There was something magical to me about the way that these myths had survived hundreds, even thousands, of years, and had been told by many different people that had all found something in them important enough, something true enough, to want to repeat the story.

These myths and their characters made a home for themselves in my imagination... and then never left. Seeing as they have been roaming around my head for three decades or so, they of course found their way into *Peregrine Quinn and the Cosmic Realm*.

Here are a few of the myths to look out for in the first book.

## Daedalus

The first two characters that we meet in *Peregrine Quinn and the Cosmic Realm* are Peregrine and her godfather Daedalus as they attempt to break into the Bodleian library in Oxford. In Greek myth, Daedalus was the designer of the labyrinth that held the minotaur, the half-man half-bull that King Minos hid in the labyrinth's centre. In Peregrine's world, Daedalus is a Grand Architect, which means that he was once the designer of all of the Cosmic Realm's technology or 'CosTech'. He also designed the portal system, which is its own kind of labyrinth that connects the Cosmic Realm and the Terran Realm.

## Nimue

You may have heard of Nimue by her other title as 'lady of the lake'. In some versions of the King Arthur legend it was Nimue who gave Arthur his sword, Excalibur. In *Peregrine Quinn* Nimue or 'Nim' is a water nymph and owner of Lake Designs. She does try and give Peregrine some weapons, but in the end settles for a CosBug instead.

## Hekate

Hekate is the goddess of witchcraft, and of mist. She is also sometimes linked to the moon, to crossroads and even to ghosts. In *Peregrine Quinn*, Hekate is a double-crossing Grand Architect who has a penchant for potion-making, *evil* potion-making...

## Yggdrasil

In the *Prose Edda*, the epic recounting of Norse myth, we are told that in the centre of the cosmos stands Yggdrasil, a magnificent ash tree whose branches reach to the nine realms and which houses a dragon, an eagle and four stags. Well, of course this makes complete sense to me! Yggdrasil was the inspiration for Bernadette, the plant that Peregrine has to bring on her adventures. There is another reason why Yggdrasil and Bernadette are similar, but you will have to read the book to find this out, as it is a bit of spoiler!

## Chiron

The peaceful centaur Chiron is amongst the most famous teachers of Greek mythology, with his illustrious pupils including the heroes Achilles and Jason. Jason has a special mention in Book 2 as the



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leader of the Argonauts that are painted on the walls of the Schola Physicae, and as one of Chiron's 'favourite pupils'. Chiron himself was said to have been mentored by the twin gods Artemis and Apollo, and so he did not only teach the heroes how to fight but how to play music and how to heal. In the *Peregrine* books, Chiron was the founder of Chiron Academy and husband to the librarian Tyron.

## The Sibyl

While there is only one Sibyll in the Cosmic Realm – the impressive and fairly terrifying Chief Inspector Sibyll of Cosmic Sprite Investigations – there were many 'sibyls' in the ancient world. The word 'sibyl' essentially meant prophetess. I did however have one particular myth in mind, and that is that of the Sibylline Books, which is one of the founding myths of Rome. An old woman arrived at the gates of ancient Rome, and offered King Tarquin (the *last* king of Rome, it turns out) nine books of prophecy for a princely sum. He declined so – in a very sensible move – she went away and burned three of them. She then returned with the remaining six and offered them to Tarquin at the same price. He refused *again*, and – yes, you guessed it – she went away and burned another three. When she returned for the final time, King Tarquin relented and purchased the final three books which were then kept in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in Rome before it too burned down.

## The Library of Alexandria

Built in the Fourth Century BC, the Great Library of Alexandria was said to have held an unprecedented collection of manuscripts and was visited by scholars from throughout the ancient world. In *Peregrine Quinn and the Cosmic Realm*, Peregrine and her friends race towards Alexandria as this is the home of the first portal. There are nine portals between the Terran and the Cosmic Realm, each based in an ancient library. This is a tribute to both the nine worlds of Norse mythology and the nine muses to whom the Library of Alexandria was dedicated.

The historian Plutarch writes that in 48BC during his occupation of the city, Julius Caesar

accidentally set fire to the library when trying to repel a political rival. Similarly, in the *Peregrine* books, we discover that Zeus set fire to the Library of Alexandria to cover up his own attempt to destroy (in this case, exile) his own political rival – Discord.

Deception and the politics of destroying information are themes within *Peregrine* – and what better way to show this than the burning of a library.

## Pan

Pan is one of my favourite characters of Book 2. Did you guess who he was based on? Yes, it was Bob Dylan. Pan is the god of the wild, of shepherds and of rustic music. Pan is where we get the 'pan pipe' from and also the root of the word 'panic' – so you can see why Cal is particularly fond of him. Pan's shout was so feared that it was said that in the battle of Marathon he put fear into the heart of the Persians.

A very big spoiler here – in Book 2, Pan is killed. You may have heard the phrase 'Pan is dead' or 'the death of Pan'. This is often associated (via G.K. Chesterton) with the death of mythology. So now that Pan is dead, in Book 3, anything can happen...

## Iris

Why travel by portal when you can travel by IrisPod, right? IrisPods are steampunk-style tuk-tuks that are driven by Pod Riders, all of whom have multi-coloured wings. In mythology, Iris is the goddess of the rainbow and is considered the messenger of the gods. In the world of *Peregrine* of course, the IrisPod riders are something akin to San Francisco bike couriers – but with gold helmets!

## The Golden Apple

Just like Peregrine, you have likely heard of the Trojan War, it's basics anyway. Eris (another word for Discord) was not invited to a marriage celebration and in her anger, threw a golden apple into the banquet. On this apple was written 'to the fairest'. In *Peregrine*, there is nothing written on this apple – but the Cosmics see it for what it is: a weapon. We learn that this apple was from the tree 'Hespera', in Greek mythology this apple was from the Garden of Hesperides.



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Both in *Peregrine* and in Greek myth, the same three goddesses step up to claim this prize: Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. In mythology, the goddesses take this apple to Paris (the prince of Troy), and play out what is often referred to as 'the judgement of Paris' where they each bid for the apple – would Paris like wisdom? Power? Or perhaps, a wife? Aphrodite wins – and suggests he seek out Helen of Troy, the 'most beautiful woman in the world' who just happens to be married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta. Thus begins the ten year Trojan War.

## Atalanta

If I were to have favourite figures in mythology, Atalanta would be one of them. She was a runner, and a hunter, and a favourite of the goddess Artemis.

Peregrine sees Atalanta in the form of a mountain lion amongst the Argonauts. Atalanta was indeed amongst the crew of the Argonauts, and could race with the best of them! Upon returning from her adventures, Atalanta was told that she should prepare to marry and hang up her bow and arrow. The Roman poet Ovid recounts how Atalanta only agreed to marry if a suitor could beat her in a footrace. Well, as mythology often goes, someone did find a loophole. A suitor called Hippomenes asked Aphrodite for help, and she gave him three golden apples (yes apples again!) to drop during the race so that he could catch up to Atalanta. After their union, both Hippomenes and Atalanta were turned into lions. And while it is often seen as a punishment, there is scholarly discussion around Atalanta's transformation into a lion being a way that she was able to defy the gender roles of the ancient world while still being in partnership.

## Poseidon

You might have noticed in Book 2, that Poseidon is referred to being quite grumpy with Athene. This is a reference to the infamous competition around the naming of Athens. The first king of Athens, Cecrops was given the unfortunate task of choosing between the gods – according to Ovid, Poseidon struck his trident to the ground and seawater sprung up, whereas Athene planted an olive tree. Can you guess who won?

Athene is also referred to as having a history of 'putting answers into people's heads' which is a little nod to her role in *The Iliad* where she is said to have done the same to her favourite Odysseus on more than one occasion.

## The Grey Ladies

In *Peregrine Quinn and the Mask of Chaos* we are introduced to The Grey Ladies. While of course they in some way inspired by the Men In Black (the sunglasses included!) The Grey Ladies also owe their origins to the Graeae – sometimes associated with the three gorgons. I combined these 'Graeae' with The Invisibles, the ghouls that are said to have served Hades, the god of the underworld and of invisibility. Invisibility is a pretty handy trick when you work in espionage, and in *Peregrine*, The Grey Ladies can 'realm shift' within realms, and are often seen just out of the corner of the eye.

## The Harpies

The eagle-eyed amongst you, will have spotted a few mentions to the harpies. Do you remember that Stan in particular is quite excited to meet them? Well, we have not met them yet, but you might have an idea of what they might look like. I don't want to spoil this for you, but I should say that the role of the harpies in *Peregrine* is quite particular in that their role – as bounty hunters for Olympus Inc. – is inspired the role of the Furies, as pursuers and punishers evil doers.

Maybe you don't want to meet them just yet.

