

Colorful God and Goddess as the representation of modern Greek mythology in Lore Olympus

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ABSTRACT

Lore Olympus is a webtoon that uses color as a sign for each of its characters. In interpreting symbols, this study applies Peirce's semiotic theory related to representamen or signs, objects, and interpretants. This study aims to describe the meaning of colors in the six characters of gods and goddesses in Lore Olympus. This research used qualitative methods. It was found that the colors in the six characters of gods and goddesses had a general and specific meaning that were used to convey their personalities. The blue color symbolizes Hades's cold personality, the pink color represents Persephone's kindness, the green color represents Demeter's overprotective personality, the purple color represents Zeus as the king of the gods, the yellow color symbolizes Hera's cheerful and jealousy, and lastly, the red color symbolizes Hermes's extroverted and passionate personality. Finally, it is hoped that this study can create more insight into color as an aspect that can affect personality.

Keywords: colors, Lore Olympus, semiotic, symbol

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INTRODUCTION

Every color has a meaning and becomes a symbol of various things. Every meaning always creates an impression or judgment to convey a message. Therefore, not infrequently, color is used as a medium of communication that reflects an implied meaning. For example, the use of color in a product, logo, flag, or visual work is not only a compliment but also a specific meaning and purpose to be conveyed. A psychologist, J. Linschoten (2014), said that colors are not something that can only be observed as colors can influence behavior and play an important role in aesthetic judgment and help determine whether we like various objects. Therefore, color is always considered a character image. This issue on color and image is applied by Rachel Smythe in her webtoon, *Lore Olympus*.

Lore Olympus (2018) is an original webtoon that presents the story of gods and goddesses from Greek mythology, where the background story is changed to be modern, where they already use communication tools. According to Lim and Ha (2016), a webtoon is a combination of two words, namely "website" and "cartoon," which means comics published through web media and adapted for computer screens. The webtoon was first published in 2004 in South Korea and has spread widely to various countries until now. *Lore Olympus* (2018) is challenging to study as different colors are applied to the body of characters. The use of different colors not only has an aesthetic function but also as a sign that has an implied meaning to strengthen each character. Color is an effective medium for communicating meaning. Colors also have certain psychological associations that can convey meaning and emotion depending on the context. Thus, to discuss the meaning of each color, a semiotic theory is needed. Semiotic is a study of signs and symbols in which signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odors, flavors, acts, or objects and invests such things with meaning (Chandler, 2017).

Semiotics believes that every sign has a meaning, including color. Charles Sanders Peirce is one of the prominent figures in semiotic theory. In Peirce's semiotics, a sign is something that denotes

some fact or object to some interpretant thought (Basin, 1974). Something can be called a sign or representamen if it can be perceived with the senses and thoughts or feelings. The object can be material that is caught by the senses, and it can also be mental or imaginary while the interpretant is meaning. The interpretant itself is divided into three concepts in determining the criteria for interpreting signs. There are themes, design, and argument. In this case, the colors in the webtoon characters are included in the theme, which means signs which can still be interpreted and have different meanings depending on backgrounds and references (Siregar, 2020).

Peirce also divides signs into icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a physical object that resembles what it represents. In other words, the icon is a relationship between a sign and an object or reference that is similar. Second, the index means the relationship between the sign and the object is casual because the index will not appear if the object is not present. Last is the symbol. A symbol is a sign whose relationship with the object is arbitrary and conventional.

Even though webtoons are starting to become the object of research, it is still very rare for research to use a semantic approach to analyze webtoons. A study by Daniar and Bernardus (2018), is a study that uses Roland Barthes's semiotic theory in analyzing color in Marvel superhero comic characters. This research reveals how the definition of color, the process of semiosis, and the psychological effects of color in the application of superhero costumes. It was found that the use of colors in superhero character costumes serves to communicate something because they contain hidden meanings and philosophies that reinforce the characters wearing them. Compared to the previous study, this current study is more focused on the meaning of the use of color in webtoon characters while at the same time allowing the reinterpretation of the personalities of the Greek gods and goddesses.

Nevertheless, it is challenging to figure out the color on the body of each character which serves as symbols in *Lore Olympus*, using Peirce's semiotic theory. Colors in these webtoon characters are included in symbols because their relationship with objects is arbitrary and conventional, requiring a more intensive meaning process (Siregar, 2020). It is hoped that this research can provide more insight into color as a factor that can affect human personality.

METHOD

This research applied the descriptive qualitative method. Sugiyono (2010) states that qualitative research is descriptive. It means that the collected data was in the form of words rather than numbers. In addition, Gay (2006) said that qualitative research is collecting, analyzing, and interpreting comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon. The purpose of qualitative was also to give understanding when describing an event from various perspectives, so it was closely related in terms of understanding literary works that can produce different perspectives (Sofaer, 1999). Data is collected by reading and re-reading the webtoon several times and noting important things related to the problem. It helps get a better understanding and deeper meaning of the webtoon. In addition, supporting references are also needed to assist the analysis obtained. Supporting references are collected through secondary reading from journals, books, and websites related to the topic of discussion.

In order to complete this study, several steps needed to be taken in collecting data. The first step was reading and re-reading *Lore Olympus* webtoon to understand some of the characters better. The second step was taking notes on the colors of some of the characters. In addition, several articles related to color semiotics were gathered to get supporting data and a better understanding of writing this article. Then, the next was describing, interpreting, and analyzing the meaning behind the color of the collected data. Finally, the researcher made a conclusion as the purpose of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this results and discussion section, to find out the meaning of each color, the theory used is Peirce semiotics. There are six colors of the six characters from *Lore Olympus* that are going to be analyzed. They are blue, pink, green, purple, yellow, and red.

Table 1. Characters and colors from Lore Olympus

No.	Characters	Colors
1	Hades	Blue
2	Persephone	Pink
3	Demeter	Green
4	Zeus	Purple
5	Hera	Yellow
6	Hermes	Red

Discussion

Hades: The Cold Blue

Blue is the first color needed to be discussed. Blue is one of the primary colors. In life, the blue color is always associated with the sky and the sea. Blue is also included as a cold color that causes both a feeling of calm and sadness. Thus, the blue color represents serenity, peace, intelligence, wisdom, cold, and solitude. Blue also gives the impression of being gentle, caring, and cautious. People who like blue are usually patient, sensitive, have good self-control and are always aware of their mistakes. They have stable personalities and are responsible for everything, but sometimes they are melancholic because of their serenity. In Greek mythology, blue is often associated with protection as well as sadness from rain and storms. It can also mean a sign to make distance and separate.

One of God in *Lore Olympus* is Hades. Hades is the god of the underworld or often referred to as the king of the underworld (Hamilton, 2015). Another name for Hades is Aidoneus which means ‘invisible one’. After defeating the titans along with Zeus and Poseidon, Hades got the underworld as his domain, which meant that he had to live apart from other gods. In Greek mythology, Hades is considered a fearsome god. Hades is described as a cold, passive loner and rarely interacts with other gods because of his nickname as the god of death. Although his appearance as a god of the underworld was frightening to other gods and goddesses, Hades is believed to be the wisest god in Greek mythology. His love story with Persephone is very famous in Greek mythology because it tells how he kidnapped and forced Persephone to become his wife.



Figure 1. *Hades: The Cold Blue*

In *Lore Olympus*, with a modern story setting, Hades is described as having a blue body color and living in the underworld where almost all the buildings there also blue, like his body color. After getting the underworld as his domain, Hades builds an office or underworld company with the help of several gods and goddesses who live there. As the king of the underworld, Hades is responsible for the souls of humans who have died and making judgments according to their actions during their lifetime. As a place for dead humans, the underworld had a terrifying atmosphere as everything was shrouded in a deep blue color. That is why there are rarely any Olympic gods or goddesses who like to visit the underworld. In the underworld, Hades lives with three dogs in his house. He rarely leaves the underworld. After working, he prefers to cook or play with his dog at home. Getting used to being alone makes Hades not easy to trust others and is often suspicious. However, Hades has assistants

named Hecate and Thanatos. They are like siblings who understand and trust each other.

The blue color on Hades' body is interesting to be discussed using semiotic theory. Using Peirce's semiotics, color includes a symbol that has a relationship to the object that is arbitrary and conventional (Siregar, 2020). Symbols are used to make associations with objects that do not need to be physically related to the object. The blue color on Hades' body is a symbol of calm, peace, intelligence, and wisdom. It also gives meaning to his calm personality and patience but is also firm in ruling the underworld. Therefore, the blue color as a symbol of wisdom reflects how Hades wisely leads the underworld company. It can be concluded that the blue color of Hades gives a slightly different impression from how he is told in Greek mythology. Hades is known as a scary god, while in *Lore Olympus* it is more of his calm side. In other cases, the blue represents his assertive, wise intelligence in Greek mythology and *Lore Olympus*.

Persephone: The Soft Pink

The second color is pink. In general, pink is associated with the color of women because it has the impression of softness. Pink symbolizes love, care, and affection. People who like this color are usually very affectionate and reflect motherhood. Therefore, the color pink is considered to represent femininity. Girls who like pink are usually romantic, funny, and soft. In addition, people who like pink are also patient, humble, and easy to make friends. They have a soft heart and like to help others, and they easily open up opportunities for others to get to know them better. Besides, Pink is a combination of red and white. These two colors make up the characteristic of pink. Red gives the impression of passion or lust, while the white gives the impression of sincerity and knowledge.

In Greek mythology, there is a story about a pink peony flower. The peony flower is a symbol of healing because when Hades was sick, Paeon, the god of medicine, healed Hades with a peony flower. In comparison, the pink color in flower represents natural beauty. It is said that the existence of flowers in Greece cannot be separated from Persephone, the goddess of spring. Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, was the wife of Hades and queen of the underworld. As the goddess of spring, Persephone is responsible for growing and caring for flowers throughout the spring. She also created beautiful gardens at Olympus for the other goddesses. In Greek mythology, Persephone is also known as Proserpine and Proserpere from Latin, which means creeping or is often associated with vines. Before becoming the underworld queen, Persephone was called Kore, an innocent girl (Hamilton, 2015). Persephone is usually depicted as a young goddess holding sheaves and a burning torch.



Figure 2. *Persephone: The Soft Pink*

In *Lore Olympus*, pink is the body color of Persephone. Persephone, the goddess of spring, is described as having a beautiful, cheerful, and kind face. After getting permission from Demeter, Persephone decided to live with Artemis so she could go to university. Persephone is a girl who is innocent, cheerful, and full of tenderness. She always made food for Artemis and Hermes while they were working. Persephone in *Lore Olympus* once joined the Goddesses of Eternal Maidenhood, where she is a goddess who is blessed with wisdom and knowledge. Persephone received a scholarship from Hestia, the leader of the Goddesses of Eternal Maidenhood. Persephone's life is not

always full of happiness. However, Demeter had always restrained her from falling in love with anyone. She fell in love with Hades when Hera, queen of the goddesses, sent her as an intern in the office of the underworld. Because of her kindness, she was always taken advantage of by others. Sometimes, she also looks sensitive and fragile when facing a problem.

Persephone can be studied further using semiotics as an object representing a symbol. Peirce argues that an object is whatever is pointed to a certain physical relationship or mental and imaginary in connection with the sign (Burks, 1949). The pink color as a symbol in relation to the interpretant is included as rhyme, which means it can be interpreted depending on the background and the interpreter's reference. Thus, the use of pink on Persephone's body may symbolize affection, tenderness, and sincerity and represents her personality. Based on *Lore Olympus*, pink as a symbol of affection can be seen in how Persephone treats the people around her with tenderness. However, her sincerity also often makes her look too emotional. She will feel sad if no one appreciates her sincerity. In the end, the pink color represents all of Persephone's sincerity and is a symbol of her natural beauty as the goddess of spring.

Demeter: The Greedy Green

Green is the color of nature. Green is a color that symbolizes harmony, balance, rebirth, and prosperity. The green color is favored by those who are gentle and honest. People who like green are usually frank in their words, like to be in the community, and are able to socialize well. They like to be seen as successful people because they have several things and exist in a social environment. Green is also closely related to nature and the environment. It gives the impression of a cool, fresh, and clean. Therefore, maintaining cleanliness is one of the habits of people who like green. They do not like to see things that are dirty and messy. In addition, people who like green tend to be very difficult to manage others. They feel able to take care of themselves without listening to other people's advice

In Greek mythology, green is a color that symbolizes fertility and love. This color is often associated with Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, and Persephone's mother. In Greek, Demeter means 'mother of the earth'. Demeter is responsible for taking care of the harvest and fertility of the soil on earth. She is considered the most meritorious goddess in human life because she is the only goddess who teaches humans how to grow crops so that they leave the hunting and gathering way of life. Demeter is described as having hair made of ears of wheat and wearing a circular crown (Hamilton, 2015). It is said that when Hades kidnaps Persephone, Demeter went around the earth for nine days in search of Persephone. Demeter was very sad and made the earth experience winter.



Figure 3. *Demeter: The Greedy Green*

Furthermore, in *Lore Olympus*, Demeter is described as having a green body color and wearing a crown made of wheat. She lives with Persephone and some nymphs or nature fairies. They manage

wheat, corn, and fruit plantations. Demeter loves Persephone very much, and she does not let anyone take Persephone from her, even when she asks for permission to live with Artemis, Demeter refuses until then she reluctantly allowed Persephone to live away from her. She also has ambitions to make Persephone her successor and keep all the gods from Persephone; hence her daughter does not marry. Therefore, Demeter is very angry when she finds out that Hera sent Persephone to become an intern in Hades's office until she fell in love with the underworld king.

In Peirce's theory, everything can be a sign or symbol as long as it can represent something according to the individual's interpretation and thought (Burks, 1949). Using Peirce's semiotics, the green color on Demeter represents fertility, rebirth, prosperity, greed, and ambition. Green, a symbol of fertility, represents her duties as the goddess of agriculture. Meanwhile, green as a symbol of greed comes from her personality who will do anything to fulfill her wishes and maintain her reputation. In *Lore Olympus* as well as in Greek mythology, Demeter affection for Persephone makes her overprotective. Thus, it can be concluded that the green color describes two sides of Demeter's personality. In *Lore Olympus*, as the goddess of agriculture and fertility she is friendly and loyal, but when it comes to her daughter, the green color becomes a symbol of ambition.

Zeus: The Majestic Purple

In general, purple is a color that is identical to luxury and loyal life. Purple symbolizes glory, luxury, majesty, and strength. Purple tends to be rarely found in nature because it is a combination of red and blue. Therefore, purple is rated as a mysterious, spiritual, and imagination color. Purple is the color of a person who is loyal, friendly, humorous, full of creativity, and has a leadership spirit. People who like purple tend to adapt easily to new environments. Moreover, they have a loyal and friendly characters, so it is easy for them to establish friendships. They are good at starting conversations which makes communication easier.

Purple emphasized authority, luxury, and a higher social class in the ancient Greeks and Romans. In ancient Greece, only people with political influence and high social class were allowed to wear purple clothes. Therefore, the purple color is associated with Zeus, the king of the gods as well as the god of the sky and thunder. In ancient Greek, Zeus means 'Bright'. He is depicted as an old man with a beard and holding a lightning rod and an eagle on his shoulder. Zeus lived on top of Mount Olympus along with other gods and goddesses. From his thorn on Olympus, Zeus observed and governed all human life and appreciated their good and bad behavior. Zeus had an affair with many goddesses and humans. He is believed to be the father of all the young gods and goddesses of Olympus.



Figure 4. Zeus: The Majestic Purple

In *Lore Olympus*, Zeus is depicted as not much different from Greek mythology. Zeus is described as having long hair and quite humorous even though he is a king. In contrast to Hades, who likes to be alone, Zeus is a god who likes socializing. He often held parties in his palace and invited all the gods and goddesses. That is why Zeus was famous among women and took advantage of having an

affair with either goddesses or humans. In addition, Zeus often disguises himself as a human to have an affair with them. Because of that, his relationship with Hera is unhappy because they often fight. Although he is the king of the gods, but in *Lore Olympus* there are rarely gods or goddesses who want to respect him because of his behavior that he likes to have an affair.

Therefore, the purple color is interesting to study further by using Peirce's semiotics. A sign can exist coincidentally when someone has interpreted something as sign, even though it was not purposely meant or communicated. Peirce's theory of signs encompasses everything, whether humans create it or not as long as it can be grasped and acknowledged by their minds (Eco, 1991). Rachel, the author of *Lore Olympus*, uses the purple color on Zeus's body to emphasize that he is a king of the gods. The purple color also explains his attitude as a wise and noble king in Greek mythology. On the other hand, purple also symbolizes temperamental and selfishness. This is shown when Zeus fights with his wife because he always has an affair behind Hera. Zeus never wants to admit his mistakes and accuses Hera of being too meddling in his affairs. In the end, purple describes the majesty of Zeus as the king of the gods and represents his friendly, humorous, but sometimes temperamental attitude.

Hera: The Bright Yellow

The yellow color is always identified with happiness and joy. This is because yellow is a bright and striking color among other colors. Yellow is a symbol of intelligence, happiness, and freshness. Yellow is usually chosen by people who are thirsty for adventure, love new things, and self-actualization. Just like the sun, whose light contains many elements of the yellow color, people who like yellow also have a 'bright' personality. As a symbol of intelligence, the yellow color represents intellect and all things related to the mind. That is why people who like yellow are usually smart, talented, and have a good sense of humor. They really like freedom, both in taking action and thinking. This indicates that they are independent people. On the other hand, they also like to forget responsibilities and find it difficult to work with others.

In *Lore Olympus*, the yellow color is used on the body of Hera. Hera is the goddess of marriage and family in Greek mythology. She is described as a goddess full of majesty and wisdom since she was the queen of the goddesses. Hera is often depicted sitting on her throne, holding a scepter and wearing a plain circular crown worn only by a few great goddesses. As the goddess of marriage, Hera is responsible for caring for and blessing every marriage of gods and humans. She is also considered to give protection to every birth in a family. Although she was a loyal goddess, it is often told in Greek mythology that Hera was always angry and cursed all of Zeus's mistresses.



Figure 5. *Hera: The Bright Yellow*

In *Lore Olympus*, Hera is described as a cheerful goddess who loves to help people who are having problems in their relationships. Hera lives with Zeus and their daughter Hebe in a luxurious mansion. Being the goddess of marriage made Hera socialize more and give advice in a relationship; therefore, she is highly respected and has many friends. Hera is like a mother to Persephone. She managed to disguise herself as Persephone when she went missing; thus, Demeter would not suspect and help solve Persephone's problems with Apollo. Hera also helped revive and get Hades out of his

toxic relationship with Minthe, one of the nymphs who works in his office. Just like in Greek mythology, Hera also often fights with Zeus because her husband was fond of having an affair.

As Peirce's semiotics allows color to be analyzed as signs from their relation with objects, the yellow color as a symbol has many meanings. In Peirce's semiotics, interpretant means every meaning conveyed by symbols about objects that were previously unknown, abstract, and did not exist in human perception (Masinambaw, 2001). In *Lore Olympus*, yellow is used on Hera's body. The yellow color on her body means intelligence and cheerfulness but also implies jealousy. The bright yellow color shows Hera's cheerful personality and a high sense of optimism. This can be seen when Hera is so optimistic when helping to solve Persephone's problem with Apollo. It can be concluded that the yellow color on Hera's body gives the impression of happiness because she is the goddess of marriage and her personality brings happiness to the people around her. In comparison, yellow has meaning of jealousy, which can be seen from her vindictive attitude, especially towards Zeus's mistresses and children.

Hermes: The Energetic Red

Red is the color of blood and fire, often associated with love, romance, longing, lust, joy, strength, courage, passion, and danger. Red is often described as a bright and warm color, capable of evoking strong, intense emotions. Hence, red is a color that symbolizes strength, courage, health, and spirit. Red is seen as attractive and even aggressive, but it can also evoke feelings of love and comfort. The red color is usually preferred by those who are open, aggressive, and passionate. Most people who like red are people who have extroverted personalities. They prefer to be in a crowd and hang out with their friends rather than spend time alone. As a symbol of courage and spirit, those who like red are very fond of nature-related activities, such as mountain climbing, camping, and hiking. They are also very optimistic and always on the move. Nevertheless, sometimes they are also too ambitious and judgmental of others.

In Greek mythology, red symbolizes love, sacrifice, and wandering. The red or green color symbolizes Hermes as the messenger of the gods. Red, as a symbol of wandering, represents his duty as a messenger for the gods. Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia and one of the Olympic gods. Hermes also conveyed messages from the gods to humans and often helped humans in their activities. In addition, Hermes has the unique task of escorting the human spirit to the underworld. They followed Hermes's wand all the way to the underworld. Because of that task, he regularly went to the underworld and met Hades.



Figure 6. *Hermes: The Energetic Red*

In *Lore Olympus*, red is the body color of Hermes. Hermes is the messenger of the gods and a best friend of Persephone. It is explained that Hermes first met Persephone when he was delivering a letter to Demeter's house. When they were teenagers, Hermes passed by a park and was Persephone playing alone. As a god who easily gets along with anyone, Hermes, without hesitation, greets Persephone, and regards her as a friend. Since then, Hermes has always been excited when delivering

letters to Demeter's house because he could meet Persephone. He also always helps Persephone by bringing some books that her best friend wants. They would spend time playing together in the garden. Hermes is also friends with Artemis, Apollo, Helios, and even some gods and goddesses of the underworld, such as Thanatos, the god of death. Since Hermes is a god who is passionate at work and loves his mother very much, he will gladly give all his salaries to his mother.

Therefore, the red color of Hermes's body is challenging to analyze using Peirce semiotics. In the words of Peirce, people think through the signs, which enable them to communicate with each other and give meaning to anything that exists in their environment (Zoest, 1991). A sign represents its object to its interpretant symbolically, indexically, or ironically according to whether it does. The red color is a sign that became a symbol for Hermes in *Lore Olympus*. Rachel uses the red color on Hermes's body because it symbolizes joy, courage, passion, and wandering. This is related to his passionate personality and full of hard work as a messenger of the gods. Through the red color as a symbol of love and romance, it can be said that Hermes is a person who loves and cares for the people around him. It may also be concluded that the red color conveys his extroverted, passionate and affectionate personality; it also, represents his duty as a messenger of the gods who always wanders and travels.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of color in the characters of gods and goddesses in *Lore Olympus* shows the results of the meaning of color in general and specifically. The general meaning is the meaning of color as a symbol of the six characters of gods and goddesses which are analyzed in general. While the specific meaning is the color as a symbol of the six characters of gods and goddesses has a different meaning that researchers can see through analysis. Based on this, it leads to the results of the analysis of the description of colors in conveying the personalities of the six characters. Each color has a different effect on each character's emotions, feelings, and behavior. The meanings of these colors then shape the personality of each character.

This result is also related to the aura that every human has. Basically, every human being has a color aura that shows their personality, emotions, moods, and mindsets. It can also explain a person's strengths and weaknesses. The results obtained from this study also figure out the meaning of color related to personality, not only in fictional characters but also in humans who have feelings. In the end, everyone will show their true color, which means that every human is unique as they have their character and personality.

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