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Mythology in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series

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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná diplomová práce se bude věnovat využití řecké a římské mytologie v dětské fantasy literatuře, specificky v díle Ricka Riordna. V úvodní části diplomantka stručně nastíní historický a literární kontext tématu a vysvětlí základní pojmy, s nimiž bude pracovat (children's literature, fantasy, mythology, apod.). Dále představí zvoleného autora v literárním (žánrovém) kontextu a svůj výběr zdůvodní. Jádrem práce pak bude analýza zvolená z hlediska toho, jak pracuje s mýty, jak je modernizuje či vytváří novodobé paralely, jak využívá typické americké lokace, apod. V analýze diplomantka rovněž zohlední literární aspekty díla. Svě analýzy shrne a vysloví obecnější závěry o Riordanově práci s mytologií.

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ANNOTATION

This master's thesis focuses on the usage of Greek mythology in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. The first part of the thesis classifies the series as belonging to children's literature, and subsequently, it also discusses it in terms of fantasy and adventure genre, and also defines the term mythology as it is an essential aspect of the series. The second part of the thesis discusses myth criticism, focusing specifically on Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths* which is then used to analyze the series. The analysis is divided into three parts, based on Frye's theory, the first one focuses on structure, the second one on characters, and the third one on phases. Simultaneously, the way in which Riordan adapts, modernizes etc. Greek mythology in *Percy Jackson* series is analyzed.

KEYWORDS

Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Rick Riordan, mythology, myth criticism, Northrop Frye, fantasy, *Theory of Myths*

NÁZEV

Percy Jackson a Olympané, mytologie v sérii Ricka Riordana

ANOTACE

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá využitím řecké mytologie v sérii Ricka Riordana – *Percy Jackson a Olympané*. První část práce vymezuje tuto sérii jako dílo patřící do dětské literatury a následně jej také charakterizuje ve vztahu k žánrům fantasy a adventure, a dále také definuje pojem mytologie, který je nedílnou součástí této série. Druhá část práce se zabývá mytologickou kritikou, především pak *teorií mýtů* Northropa Frye, která je posléze použita k analýze vybrané série. Samotná analýza je, na základě Fryeovy teorie, rozdělena do tří částí, první zaměřenou na strukturu, druhou na postavy, a třetí na fáze. Zároveň s analýzou založenou na Fryově teorii je analyzován také způsob, jakým Riordan přizpůsobuje, modernizuje apod. řeckou mytologii ve vybrané sérii.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Percy Jackson a Olympané, Rick Riordan, mytologie, mytologická kritika, Northrop Frye, fantasy, *teorie mýtů*

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Introduction

Present-day children's literature encompasses a great number of literary works, with new ones appearing every day however, the interest of young readers is not easy to be caught. Nevertheless, the author of the selected *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, Rick Riordan, managed to create an extraordinary work about a young boy, Percy, who finds himself belonging into the world of Greek gods which exists side by side with the world of mortals. Throughout the series, Percy goes from one exciting adventure to another, has fun with his friends, and occasionally saves the world. However, even an ordinary reader is able to spot that these adventures which Percy goes through are often familiar. This is because in *Percy Jackson* series, Riordan relies heavily on Greek mythology which he incorporates into the present-day world.

As *Percy Jackson* series was, and still is, very successful among young readers, one cannot help to wonder why. One reason may be the inspiration by Greek mythology which, as Riordan says, provides stories full of "adventure, magic, romance, monsters, brave heroes, horrible villains, fantastic quests"¹ etc. which are appealing even nowadays. Sally Williams, on the other hand, points out in an interview with Riordan, that a resemblance to another incredibly successful series for children, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, is hard to overlook.² However, even though Riordan admits that *Harry Potter*'s success and popularity was a source of inspiration, he attributes the resemblance to a usage of the same archetype.³ Another reason for *Percy Jackson* series' popularity may lie within its main character – Percy. Specifically, in the fact that he is neither extremely smart nor strong, rather an ordinary boy with ADHD and dyslexia, characteristics to which many young readers can relate. However, in spite of that, Percy becomes the most important character – the hero. And that is what Riordan claims to appeal to children, especially those with similar problems as Percy has.⁴

Considering the author himself, Rick Riordan (born June 5, 1964) used to be a teacher of social studies and English before he became a full-time writer after the huge success of *Percy Jackson*.⁵ However, it was not his premiere as a writer as prior to *Percy Jackson*, Riordan wrote

¹ Rick Riordan, *Demigods and Monsters – Your Favorite Authors on Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series* (Dallas: BenBella Books Inc., 2013), 13.

² "Percy Jackson: My boy's own adventure," The Guardian, last modified February 8, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/feb/08/percy-jackson-rick-riordan>.

³ The Guardian, "Percy Jackson: My boy's own adventure."

⁴ The Guardian, "Percy Jackson: My boy's own adventure."

⁵ "About Rick Riordan," Rick Riordan, last accessed April 22, 2022, <https://rickriordan.com/about/>.

for example a mystery series called *Tres Navarre* for which he received several awards.⁶ After the *Percy Jackson* success, Riordan continued writing and until the present day he has written several series for children such as *The Heroes of Olympus*, *Kane Chronicles*, *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard*, *The Trials of Apollo* etc.⁷ Moreover, the first two installments of *Percy Jackson* series were made into movies, and there is also an up-coming tv series based on *Percy Jackson* planned.⁸

As for the reasons why Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series became the subject of this master's thesis, there are three. Firstly, the inspiration by and focus on Greek mythology, which is fascinating by itself, but in the context of this thesis, the focus is specifically on the usage of Greek mythology in contemporary, modern world which feels as natural as it can. Secondly, the interest in how Riordan managed to incorporate Greek mythology into his work in such a natural way. Thirdly, the series' popularity and personal experience with it both in the position of a teenage reader and an adult one.

Thus, the aim of this master's thesis is to analyze how Rick Riordan incorporates Greek mythology into *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, using Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths* as a framework for the analysis, which then focuses on three main areas – structure, characters, and phases.

Before the analysis itself, the first chapter depicts *Percy Jackson* series in its historical and literary context, classifying it as a work of children's literature, and discussing it in terms of fantasy and adventure genre. Moreover, the first chapter also defines mythology, focusing especially on Greek mythology which is present in the series (unlike Roman mythology which is, thus, not discussed in the thesis). The second chapter defines myth criticism, possibilities of its practical usage, and its problematic areas. The focus here is especially on Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths* which is subsequently used as a framework for the analysis of the series.

The analysis is then divided into three parts. The first part analyzes the structure of the series from the viewpoint of Frye's *mythos* of summer – romance as well as from the viewpoint of the *mythos* of spring – comedy, and the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy. At the same time, the first part analyzes the structure of the series with respect to structural and other resemblances with Greek mythology. For the second and the third part, the same procedure is used. The

⁶ Rick Riordan, "About Rick Riordan."

⁷ "Rick Riordan," Rick Riordan, last accessed April 22, 2022, <https://rickriordan.com/>.

⁸ "Frequently Asked Questions," Rick Riordan, last accessed May 5, 2022, <https://rickriordan.com/about/frequently-asked-questions/>.

second part focuses on characters, the third part on phases. Lastly, the final conclusion summarizing main findings of this master's thesis is presented.

1. *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* in Historical and Literary Context

This chapter will focus on historical and literary context. Firstly, it will put *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series into context of the twenty-first century children's literature, and subsequently, it will define it in terms of fantasy genre and adventure. Also, this chapter will define a very important aspect of the series – mythology.

With the first volume published in 2005,⁹ *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series can be situated in the context of the twenty-first century children's literature. Although it is rather early to evaluate literature of the twenty-first century, Joanna Paul for instance claims that *Percy Jackson* is “[o]ne of the most popular series in the children's literature of the twenty-first century.”¹⁰

A significant feature of children's literature is, as M. O. Grenby says, the fact that it is “the only category of literature that is defined in terms of its intended readership,”¹¹ or as Emmer O'Sullivan puts it, “children's literature is [...] literature for children,”¹² i.e. literature either intentionally written with the focus on a child reader, or for some other reason suitable for or chosen by children. Thus, *Percy Jackson* series clearly qualifies as children's literature because Rick Riordan, the author of the selected series, initially came up with the story of Percy as a bedtime story for his son, and subsequently wrote it into the first book.¹³

However, saying that the series belongs to children's literature does not say enough as the term “denotes a broad and diverse range of texts with different addressees, forms, genres, degrees of linguistic and aesthetic elaborateness, and functions.”¹⁴ In other words, children's literature comprises many different works. Concerning *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, Riordan says:

I didn't simplify anything to write *The Lightning Thief*. I didn't worry about vocabulary or sentence length or book length or any of that. [...] I made sure the content was appropriate for young readers [...] but as

⁹ Joanna Paul, “The Half-Blood Hero Percy Jackson and Mythmaking in the Twenty-First Century,” in *A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology*, ed. Vanda Zajko, Helena Hoyle (John Wiley and Son, Inc., 2017), 231.

¹⁰ Paul, “The Half-Blood Hero Percy Jackson and Mythmaking in the Twenty-First Century,” 231.

¹¹ M. O. Grenby, *Children's Literature* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2008), 199.

¹² Emer O'Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of Children's Literature* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2010), 4.

¹³ “An Interview With Rick,” Rick Riordan, last accessed November 25, 2021, <https://rickriordan.com/about/an-interview-with-rick/>.

¹⁴ O'Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of Children's Literature*, 1.

far as the writing style, I hope Percy Jackson will be just as enjoyable for adults as it is for kids.¹⁵

Therefore, it can be seen that the addressees of the first volume of *Percy Jackson* were children, as suggested above. However, considering the linguistic side of the series, it was not intended to be any different from adult literature.

Concerning genres there are many that can be found in children's literature, such as adventure stories, drama, science fiction etc.¹⁶ One of the genres that is significant for the selected series is fantasy which is, however, not easy to define precisely. Despite that, Richard Mathews says that "most critics agree it [literary fantasy] is a type of fiction that evokes wonder, mystery, or magic – a sense of possibility beyond the ordinary, material, rationally predictable world in which we live."¹⁷ Mathews also provides a further definition, saying that fantasy is "a fiction that elicits wonder through elements of the supernatural or impossible. It consciously breaks free from mundane reality."¹⁸ This is also supported by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn by saying that "[t]he major theorists in the field [...] all agree that fantasy is about the construction of the impossible[.]"¹⁹ It can be, therefore, said that fantasy literature contains unreal features which depart it from what is in the society considered to be normal or possible.

Other defining features of fantasy genre can be taken from J. R. R. Tolkien's work as it, according to Edward James, heavily influenced fantasy literature written not only in English but also in different languages, and thus, Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* can be considered the beginning of modern fantasy.²⁰ As for the specific features, according to James, they can be illustrated using John Clute's and John Grant's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*.²¹ These features are the following: wrongness ("recognition that the world is – or is about to become – no longer right, that the world has been subject to, or soon will be subject to, a process of thinning"²²), thinning ("a reduction of the healthy land to a parody of itself, and the thinning agent – ultimately, in most instances, the dark lord – can be seen as inflicting this damage upon the land out of envy"²³), recognition ("protagonists begin to understand what has been

¹⁵ Rick Riordan, "An Interview With Rick."

¹⁶ O'Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of Children's Literature*, 1.

¹⁷ Richard Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

¹⁸ Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 2.

¹⁹ Edward James, Farah Mendlesohn, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

²⁰ Edward James, "Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 62.

²¹ James, "Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy," 64.

²² John Clute, John Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1997) 1038.

²³ Clute, Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 942.

happening to them”²⁴), and eucatastrophe (“the final ‘turn’ of a plot which gives rise to ‘a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart’s desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story’”²⁵ or, in other words, the happy ending). Apart from the four stages of fantasy just described, “Tolkien also indulged in various plot devices which are commonly found in subsequent fantasies.”²⁶ These plot devices are: Cook’s Tour, Escape, Separation, Temptation, and Walking.²⁷

In addition, Tolkien’s work also influenced how the language (its usage, invention of a new language etc.) became viewed as a very important and significant feature in fantasy writing.²⁸ In *Percy Jackson* series, there is no new language invented, however, there is a stress on ancient Greek as it is said that half-bloods’ (which is, together with the term demigod, an official label for kids with one mortal and one godly parent²⁹) “mind is hardwired for [it].”³⁰ Take, for instance, Percy who has, as a dyslexic kid, a severe problem with reading, however, when it comes to ancient Greek, it is much easier for him.³¹ Also, in *Percy Jackson* series, there is an emphasis on names as one of the characters, Dionysus, says: “[N]ames are powerful things. You don’t just go around using them for no reason.”³² This very much resembles *Harry Potter* series and the need to call Voldemort by a nickname to avoid using his real name as it was considered forbidden.³³ Similarly, in *Percy Jackson*, names of gods or mythological creatures are not supposed to be said out loud as they can attract their owners which can be illustrated, for example, by a situation in which Percy called one monster by its real name – a Fury – and “Annabeth glanced nervously at the ground, as if she expected it to open up and swallow her.”³⁴

Speaking of *Harry Potter* series, according to Catherine Butler, J. K. Rowling came up with five transformations which are characteristic of her fantasy work, and these transformations are *realization*, *substitution*, *exaggeration*, *animation*, and *antiquation*,³⁵ and they apply to *Percy Jackson* series as well. For instance, the first one, *realization*, “involves

²⁴ Clute, Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 804.

²⁵ Clute, Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 323.

²⁶ James, “Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy,” 65.

²⁷ James, “Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy,” 65.

²⁸ Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 136.

²⁹ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* (Puffin Books, 2013), 95.

³⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 88.

³¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 107.

³² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 64.

³³ Joanne K. Rowlingová, *Harry Potter a Kámen mudrců* (Praha: Albatros, 2002), 98.

³⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 87.

³⁵ Catherine Butler, “Modern children’s fantasy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 233-234.

taking things that in our world exist only as myth or folklore [...] and making them real”³⁶ which in case of *Percy Jackson* would be Greek gods, mythological creatures, artifacts etc. Or the fourth one, *animation*, which “involves giving movement and/or sentience to inanimate objects.”³⁷ In the series, this can be represented by statues in New York programmed by Daedalus to move and do his bidding.³⁸ Or the last example, the *antiquation*, in which the “magical world is old-fashioned in many ways that have nothing to do with magic [...] but are used [...] to distinguish the magical world from the mundane present.”³⁹ In *Percy Jackson* series, several examples of these old-fashioned ways can be found. For instance, demigod kids live in a Camp Half-Blood which resembles an ancient Spartan training camp, because there is, for example, “the archery range, the canoeing lake, the stables [...] the javelin range, the sing-along amphitheatre, and the arena where Chiron said they held sword and spear fights,”⁴⁰ which illustrates that the demigod kids learn to fight in the old-fashioned ways.

Mathews adds another feature of fantasy, and he stresses that, in contrast with realistic fiction, setting and geography became essential and as a result characters in fantasy are less complex.⁴¹ However, it does not mean they would not be important. On the contrary, Mathews says that a “[c]haracter in fantasy is frequently generalized or idealized, but as in myth, the concept and quality of the hero are of great importance.”⁴²

Additionally, Butler states that fantasy tends to reflect current issues, such as global warming, racial issues etc.⁴³ In *Percy Jackson* series, examples concerning ecological awareness for instance can be found. One of the specific examples can be represented by a god of nature Pan who after many centuries died, because the wild nature has almost disappeared and thus, he lost his power and strength.⁴⁴ Another example can be Percy saying: “[D]on’t go swimming in New York Harbor. It may not be as filthy as it was in my mom’s day, but that water will still probably make you grow a third eye or have mutant children when you grow up.”⁴⁵ This statement is a clear reference to the still high level of pollution of coastal waters and similar references can be found throughout the whole series.

³⁶ Butler, “Modern children’s fantasy,” 234.

³⁷ Butler, “Modern children’s fantasy,” 234.

³⁸ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian* (Puffin Books, 2013), 162.

³⁹ Butler, “Modern children’s fantasy,” 234.

⁴⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 79.

⁴¹ Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 40.

⁴² Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 40.

⁴³ Butler, “Modern children’s fantasy,” 226.

⁴⁴ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth* (Puffin Books, 2013), 298.

⁴⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 164.

As for a classification of fantasy, likewise the definition, it is similarly unclear, and according to David L. Russel, “modern fantasy comes in many varieties.”⁴⁶ There are several possible classifications by numerous authors. For instance, Grenby in *Children’s Literature* divides fantasy into high fantasy (set in an imaginative world) and low fantasy (set in the real world).⁴⁷ However, Grenby’s classification is very simple and there can be found more specific ones based especially on the connection between the fantastic and reality. The fact that in fantasy there are features from the real world is supported by many authors such as Grenby who says that “the supernatural and the normal exist together in fantasy texts, in various proportions and combinations...”⁴⁸

A similar idea is suggested by Farah Mendlesohn who created a categorization of fantasy in which the “categories are determined by the means by which the fantastic enters the narrated world.”⁴⁹ In other words, the relationship between the fantastic and the normal, is what makes the categories specific. The four suggested categories of fantasy are: “the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal.”⁵⁰

Concerning *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, based on Mendlesohn’s classification, it can be set within the portal-quest fantasy as there is a typical “transition and exploration”⁵¹ narrative strategy used. What this means is that a character in portal-quest fantasy “goes from a mundane life, in which the fantastic [...] is very distant and unknown,”⁵² which would be Percy’s pretty much normal life at the beginning of the series, “to direct contact with the fantastic through which [the character] transitions, exploring the world until [the character] or those around [him or her] are knowledgeable enough to negotiate with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm.”⁵³ This would be Percy’s encounter with the fantastic world and subsequently the exploration process in which he learns about the world of Greek gods and subsequently is able to orientate himself in it well “enough to change it and to enter into that world’s destiny.”⁵⁴ The next reason for classifying *Percy Jackson* series as a portal-quest fantasy is the presence of a guide which is a character that provides the information

⁴⁶ David L. Russel, *Literature for Children – A Short Introduction* (New York: Pearson Education, 2015), 207.

⁴⁷ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 144.

⁴⁸ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 150.

⁴⁹ Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 13.

⁵⁰ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 13.

⁵¹ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 28.

⁵² Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 28.

⁵³ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 28.

⁵⁴ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 18.

necessary for understanding the story.⁵⁵ In the series, these characters would be, for example, Chiron or Annabeth as they give this information (about Greek gods, history etc.) to Percy (and to the reader) who is “expected to be ignorant.”⁵⁶ Therefore, as “portal fantasies require [...] we learn from the point of entry.”⁵⁷ Also, last but not least reasons to classify the series as a portal-quest fantasy are the dependance on destiny,⁵⁸ which is in the series particularly important, and the fact that “portal fantasies [...] are almost always quest novels and they almost always proceed in a linear fashion with a goal that must be met”⁵⁹ which is true for the selected series as well, and it will be discussed later in the thesis.

However, according to Mendlesohn, it is possible that some works might be categorized in terms of more than just one category⁶⁰ which could be a case of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series as well because, apart from the portal-quest fantasy features, features of the intrusion fantasy can be identified at the very beginning of the series as well. For instance, “[i]n intrusion fantasy the fantastic is the bringer of chaos[, i]t takes us out of safety without taking us from our place.”⁶¹ It can be said, that at the beginning of the series this was true as the fantastic entered the real world without Percy knowing it was, in fact, not natural (for example when he accidentally let out water in the Marine World and flooded his classmates⁶² or when he was attacked by his teacher/fury⁶³). Additionally, “in some fictions, those set apart from the protagonist may not be able to perceive the fantastic even as they experience its effects.”⁶⁴ This is, on the other hand, a feature present throughout the whole book as some characters are not able to see through the Mist (“[a] magical force [which] obscures the true appearance of monsters and gods from their vision, so mortals tend to see only what they can understand”⁶⁵). And thus, even though they are exposed to the fantastic, they never perceive it as supernatural but instead, try to explain it logically. A nice example can be taken from the last volume of the series when Typhon awakes and on its way to New York causes a huge destruction, but mortal people explain it as a natural disaster.⁶⁶

⁵⁵ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 38.

⁵⁶ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 38.

⁵⁷ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 18.

⁵⁸ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 18.

⁵⁹ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 18.

⁶⁰ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 14.

⁶¹ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 20.

⁶² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 2.

⁶³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 11-13; 86.

⁶⁴ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 20-21.

⁶⁵ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters* (Puffin Books, 2013), 17.

⁶⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 52-53.

Additionally, concerning the relation between the fantastic and reality, A. Doughty says that “children’s fantasy presents writer-characters who are responsible for shaping the stories of which they are a part [, and t]he narrative mode [...] affects how the fantasy/reality distinction is either exposed or erased.”⁶⁷ In other words, the way in which the narrator of the story is created can influence how the story is perceived. In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, there is a first-person narrator which “tend[s] to erase the line between fantasy and reality,”⁶⁸ which can be also supported by a few lines from the very beginning of the series: “If you’re a normal kid, reading this because you think it’s fiction, great. Read on. I envy you for being able to believe that none of this ever happened.”⁶⁹ Therefore, not only does the text itself say that the story is not fiction, but the use of the first-person narrator and the direct addressing makes readers feel as if they were personally involved.

Russel provides another way of classifying fantasy distinguishing for example animal fantasy, toy fantasy, magical fantasy, tall tales, the enchanted journey, epic fantasy, miniature fantasy, supernatural and time-shift fantasy, science fiction and speculative fiction, and dystopias.⁷⁰ Out of the provided categories, *Percy Jackson* series falls under the category of epic fantasy as it is “an elaborate adventure story, [there is] a brave hero [...] with a band of worthy and stalwart companions, [t]he villain represents ultimate evil and possesses unimaginable (but not invincible) power, [and] near the conclusion, a great battle occurs – [...] a battle between the massed forces of good and evil.”⁷¹ Moreover, Russel says that epic fantasies are often inspired by classics such as *Iliad* and *Odyssey*⁷² which is in case of *Percy Jackson* clearly visible, as will be also discussed later.

As for other reasons why *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series can be classified in terms of fantasy genre, there is, for instance, a usage of prophecies which must be realized.⁷³ This a very important part of the whole series as there is one huge prophecy⁷⁴ that influences the characters as well as the plot from the very beginning to the very end of the story. In addition, there are also smaller prophecies that direct the characters’ journeys.

⁶⁷ Amie A. Doughty, “*Throw the book away*” *Reading versus Experience in Children’s Fantasy* (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013), 7.

⁶⁸ Doughty, “*Throw the book away*”, 7.

⁶⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 1.

⁷⁰ Russel, *Literature for Children – A Short Introduction*, 209-216.

⁷¹ Russel, *Literature for Children – A Short Introduction*, 212-213.

⁷² Russel, *Literature for Children – A Short Introduction*, 213.

⁷³ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 158.

⁷⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 48-49.

Another way in which the series can be connected to fantasy is through “questions of identity.”⁷⁵ According to Grenby “[t]he journey to another world, or another time, decontextualises the protagonists, removing them from the structures that locate and bind them into a particular role within the family, the school, or the larger society.”⁷⁶ This pretty much summarizes the beginning of Percy’s story. In the real world, without gods, mythological creatures etc. Percy is a dyslexic kid,⁷⁷ expelled from every school he went to,⁷⁸ living with his mom and stepfather.⁷⁹ His own description might be even more fitting: “Am I a troubled kid? Yeah. You could say that. I could start at any point in my short miserable life to prove it...”⁸⁰ However, what follows is that characters “have to discover afresh who they are.”⁸¹ And this is the case of Percy too because after he enters the world of Greek gods, suddenly, his position changes. His dyslexia turns out to be a great advantage that enables him to survive,⁸² Percy himself turns out to be a son of a powerful Greek god Poseidon,⁸³ and he “must negotiate his identity as demigod and his dual inhabitation of both mortal and immortal, supernatural and rational worlds.”⁸⁴

Apart from fantasy, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series can be also classified in terms of adventure genre. According to O’Sullivan, adventure genre contains “scenarios of (young) protagonists overcoming natural and man-made disasters [...] themes of trials, survival, and [a need] to develop personal strength to overcome all manners of difficulties.”⁸⁵ Another, similar, definition provides Russel who says that “[a]n adventure tale depicts the realistic, often harrowing, adventures of a protagonist who often must struggle against formidable, usually adult, antagonists.”⁸⁶ Out of these definitions, *Percy Jackson* series meets most of the provided characteristics. The main character is twelve years old Percy⁸⁷ who is throughout the series exposed to dangerous situations, and often has to use all his powers and logic to complete a quest or to survive. However, the presence of an adult antagonist might be questionable as throughout the series, Percy’s nemesis is young Luke. He is, however,

⁷⁵ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 164.

⁷⁶ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 164.

⁷⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 7.

⁷⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 2.

⁷⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 17.

⁸⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 1-2.

⁸¹ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 164.

⁸² Rick Riordan, *Demigods and Monsters*, 11.

⁸³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 126.

⁸⁴ Paul, “The Half-Blood Hero Percy Jackson and Mythmaking in the Twenty-First Century,” 235.

⁸⁵ O’Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of Children’s Literature*, 20.

⁸⁶ Russel, *Literature for Children – A Short Introduction*, 235.

⁸⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 1.

manipulated by a Titan Kronos who is ultimately the greatest evil and the main antagonist, which will be discussed in detail in the analysis of characters.

Speaking of characters, in the adventure story, they are usually “born with, or come into possession of, a special asset which helps them: a special skill, a clever pet, a weapon.”⁸⁸ In the series, Percy and other demigods inherit special abilities after their godly parents, for example, Percy says: “Now, being the son of Poseidon and all, [...] I can breathe underwater just fine, and my clothes don’t even get wet unless I want them to.”⁸⁹ Also, Percy gets a magical pen that turns into a sword – Anaklusmos.⁹⁰ Moreover, the main characters in adventure are not usually left to go through the story by themselves, but they are provided with helpful friends.⁹¹ In *Percy Jackson* there is more of these characters such as a satyr Grover, or Annabeth.

Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, specifically *The Lightning Thief* but other installments to some degree as well, also shares a typical adventure plot which is, according to Grenby, the following: “[Adventure] stories start with a domestic crisis of some kind which means that protagonists have to leave the security of their home.”⁹² In the series, Percy gets into a fight with his stepfather Gabe and then leaves with his mom. “This is generally followed by a minor adventure, during which they prove their worth, and then the opening up of the quest which will provide the main excitement for the rest of the novel.”⁹³ This is true for Percy’s story as well because, soon after he leaves home, he has to fight a minotaur, wins, and later on, he is told a prophecy sending him on a quest. “This quest is generally structured as a series of more minor crises which culminate in the completion of the mission.”⁹⁴ This is, again, true for the plot of *The Lightning Thief* as the characters have to overcome many problems to successfully finish their quest.

Grenby also says that adventure stories for children do not have strict boundaries.⁹⁵ He, for instance, discusses the adventure genre in connection with fiction, saying that “almost all adventure stories are fantasies.”⁹⁶ Specifically, fantasies of empowerment because characters in an adventure story are often losers, who are treated badly by others, however, when the

⁸⁸ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 183.

⁸⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 25.

⁹⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 153.

⁹¹ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 183.

⁹² Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 183.

⁹³ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 183.

⁹⁴ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 183.

⁹⁵ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 171.

⁹⁶ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 173.

adventure comes they become important – powerful.⁹⁷ The same can be said about the character of Percy, as already suggested above.

Another essential element of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series is mythology. The term *myth* originates in Greek term *mythos* which can be, among other things, translated as a story, and this story usually focuses on the relations between humans and gods, and supernatural elements.⁹⁸ Moreover, myths “are sometimes referred to as *creation stories*,”⁹⁹ i.e. stories which explain for example how the world was created etc.

It is also important to note that there is a difference between so called true myth and saga, legend or folktale, which are terms sometimes used as synonymous to a myth.¹⁰⁰ However, these terms cannot be used as synonyms because the last three mentioned have roots in history whereas a myth does not.¹⁰¹ Moreover, myths do not have known authors which confirms Fritz Graf’s saying that a myth “transcend[s] the text: it is the subject matter, a plot fixed in broad outline and with characters no less fixed.”¹⁰² In other words, a myth is not a specific literary or other work, it is more of a concept that is being recreated. Consequently, “a single variant [...] has an author [but] a myth does not.”¹⁰³ That might be also a reason why not too different variants of one myth can be found in different cultures.¹⁰⁴ This further explain Guerin et al. saying that “although [...] myths take their specific shapes from the cultural environments in which they grow – myth is, in the general sense, universal.”¹⁰⁵

Concerning specifically Greek mythology, from which *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series draws, Ken Dowden says that it “is a shared fund of motifs and ideas ordered into a shared repertoire of stories. These stories link with, compare and contrast with, and are understood in the light of, other stories in the system.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, Greek mythology consists of stories (such as stories of Perseus, Prometheus, etc.) that are connected to each other and to the whole system of Greek mythology as well.

⁹⁷ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 173-174.

⁹⁸ Mark P. O. Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 7th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-5.

⁹⁹ Carol Lynch-Brown, Carl M. Tomlison, *Essentials of Children’s Literature* (Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 98.

¹⁰⁰ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 3-4.

¹⁰² Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, trans. Thomas Marier, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 2.

¹⁰³ Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, 211.

¹⁰⁵ Wilfred L. Guerin, Earle Labor, Lee Morgan, Jeanne C. Reesman, and John R. Willingham, *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184.

¹⁰⁶ Ken Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 6.

Apart from the obvious focus on gods, Greek mythology also depicts humanity. For example, Kathleen N. Daly says that it was firstly in Greek mythology where gods were portrayed to resemble humans.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the main focus of the stories in Greek mythology is not concentrated solely on divine beings, but it focuses on humans and their emotions too.¹⁰⁸

Considering the connection between mythology and literature, Mendlesohn and James associate ancient works, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, with fantasy.¹⁰⁹ More specifically, they say that "the ancient Greek [...] novel [...] commonly use[s] what we consider to be the tropes of fantasy: magical transformations, strange monsters, sorcerers and dragons, and the existence of a supernatural world."¹¹⁰ In other words, it could be said that the early ancient literature might be considered a predecessor of nowadays modern fantasy as it "influenced many modern fantasy writers."¹¹¹ This is also confirmed by Mathews who considers works of Homer, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, to be influential in respect to "the Western fantasy tradition"¹¹² as well, and Catherine Butler who states that "myth and folklore have long provided raw material for fantasy writers."¹¹³

In addition, mythology does persist to the present day. Moreover, not only do myths persist, but in fact, they are not bound to a certain period as Guerin et al. confirm saying that myth "transcends time, uniting the past (traditional modes of belief) with the present (current values) and reaching toward the future (spiritual and cultural aspirations)."¹¹⁴ In other words, even though the perception of myth may change, it will not disappear as it is considered to be ever-present.¹¹⁵ One reason may be due to its, not surprising, relation to religion as "specific creation stories and mythical conceptions of deity may still be considered true today."¹¹⁶ Riordan provides yet another reason why mythology is still important and that is the fact that mythology is both an attempt at understanding human existence in general and at providing explanation of a variety of phenomena.¹¹⁷ The last but not least reason may be that Greek

¹⁰⁷ Kathleen N. Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 3rd ed., (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), VIII.

¹⁰⁸ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, VIII.

¹⁰⁹ Farah Mendlesohn, Edward James, *A Short History of Fantasy* (Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2012), 7.

¹¹⁰ Mendlesohn, James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 7.

¹¹¹ Mendlesohn, James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 7.

¹¹² Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 9.

¹¹³ Butler, "Modern children's fantasy," 226.

¹¹⁴ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 184.

¹¹⁵ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 184.

¹¹⁶ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Rick Riordan, *Demigods and Monsters*, 12.

mythology provides inspiring stories which are still attractive,¹¹⁸ of which the popularity of *Percy Jackson* is a good proof.

¹¹⁸ Rick Riordan, *Demigods and Monsters*, 13.

2. Myth Criticism and Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths*

Focusing on Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths*, myth criticism will be explained and then applied to analyze *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. According to Michael Payne, "myth criticism has become the most important successor to formalist criticism"¹¹⁹ which is also a term sometimes used for American New Criticism.¹²⁰ This criticism "stresses the analysis of the literary work as a self-sufficient verbal entity, constituted by internal relations and independent of reference either to the state of mind of the author or to the 'external' world."¹²¹ In short, formalist criticism studies the text focusing on its form without any regard to the context in which it was created or analyzed.

Although following formalist criticism, myth criticism is not focused on the text without a context. On the contrary, it is connected to several specific fields of study, such as anthropology or psychology.¹²² According to Guerin et al. the "myth critic is concerned to seek out those mysterious elements that inform certain literary works and that elicit [...] dramatic and universal human reactions."¹²³ On this definition, there can be seen an obvious connection with psychology, as the critic is interested in how and why the text makes the reader react the way he or she does, and therefore, there is interest in more than just the text itself. Moreover, concerning psychology, Guerin et al. add that there is a connection to psychoanalytical approach, mostly linked with Sigmund Freud, as both approaches focus on "motives that underline human behavior."¹²⁴ However, they differ because mythology is more philosophically oriented, and also connected to religion, anthropology, and cultural history.¹²⁵ As can be seen on the provided examples, myth criticism is to be thought of in the wider context than just the text itself.

Moreover, in some sources, myth criticism can also be found as synonymous with archetypal criticism. For instance, Daniel Russel Brown suggests that in order to avoid confusion caused by the unclear term myth, myth criticism should be called archetypal criticism

¹¹⁹ Michael Payne, "Origins and Prospects of Myth Criticism," *The Journal of General Education* 26, no. 1 (April 1974): 37.

¹²⁰ M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 104.

¹²¹ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 104.

¹²² John B. Vickery, "Introduction," in *Myth and Literature – Contemporary Theory and Practice*, ed. John B. Vickery (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), x.

¹²³ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 182.

¹²⁴ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 183.

¹²⁵ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 183.

instead.¹²⁶ Similarly, Charles E. Bressler uses both these terms synonymously,¹²⁷ which is, however, according to others, for example Glen Robert Gill, not accurate. Gill says that archetypal criticism “is central to but does not encompass the field of ‘myth criticism’.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Nasrullah Mambrol says that archetypal and myth criticism differ in their historical development and process as well.¹²⁹ Additionally, there is also a connection between myth criticism and structuralism which will be, however, dealt with later in the text with regard to Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Now having addressed its relation to literary theories and other fields of study, it is important to define myth criticism as a whole. However, there seems to be no single definition as it comprises different authors with different approaches and literary critics do not always agree on how it should be defined. This may be due to several reasons such as lack of tools for analysis, reserved interest on the side of scholars and teachers, or unclear interpretation of main notions.¹³⁰

It may come as a surprise that one of these problematic notions is, as Brown also suggests, the very term myth. Payne argues that the problem with the term lies in the common usage of the word myth only in a negative sense – that is as something that is untrue – ignoring the fact that myth may not reflect what is considered real by the society at the present time, but it does not mean that it is, or was, not thought of a particular myth as true at some point or in some sense.¹³¹

Despite the difficulties connected to the term myth, there are possible definitions of myth criticism. For example, Michael Payne’s claiming that “myth criticism is not what is often called an ‘approach to’ literature; it is not a method [but r]ather it is a committed way of thinking of literary experience from within the experience itself.”¹³² M. H. Abrams defines myth criticism as a way of explaining “the formation of types of literature by reference to the views about myth and ritual in modern cultural anthropology.”¹³³ Despite differences in definitions,

¹²⁶ Daniel Russell Brown, “A Look at Archetypal Criticism,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, no. 4 (Summer 1970): 465.

¹²⁷ Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism – An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2011), 132.

¹²⁸ Glen Robert Gill, “Archetypal Criticism: Jung and Frye,” in *A Companion to Literary Theory* ed. David H. Richter (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 396.

¹²⁹ “Archetypal Criticism,” *Literary Theory and Criticism*, last modified October 22, 2020, <https://literariness.org/2020/10/22/archetypal-criticism/>.

¹³⁰ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 191-192.

¹³¹ Payne, “Origins and Prospects of Myth Criticism,” 38.

¹³² Payne, “Origins and Prospects of Myth Criticism,” 37.

¹³³ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 52.

critics generally agree that myth criticism tries to explain how mythology is used in literary works, how it affects the reading experience and the text, and how it can be interpreted.

John B. Vickery provides four principles that underline myth criticism. The first one is that “the creating of myths [...] is inherent in the thinking process and answers a basic human need.”¹³⁴ The second says that “myth forms the matrix out of which literature emerges both historically and psychologically. As a result, literary plots, characters, themes, and images are basically complications and displacements of similar elements in myths and folktales.”¹³⁵ The third principle says that “myth stimulate[s] the creative artist, but it also provides concepts and patterns which the critic may use to interpret specific works of literature.”¹³⁶ And the fourth principle says that “the ability of literature to move us profoundly is due to its mythic quality.”¹³⁷ In other words, based on Vickery’s principles a definition of myth criticism can be formulated. It can be said that myth criticism is actually an inborn way of thinking (humans tend to create myths to make sense of things, as already mentioned above), in which myths have a repetitive character, provide authors with inspiration and critics with a framework for analysis, and give literature its charm.

Concerning critics and scholars who are connected with myth criticism, there are many. For instance, Mambrol mentions “Frazer, Jessie Weston, Leslie Fiedler, Ernst Cassirer, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Richard Chase, Joseph Campbell, Philip Wheelwright, and Francis Fergusson.”¹³⁸ Similarly, M. H. Abrams speaks of already mentioned Fergusson and Chase, and he also mentions Robert Graves, Maud Bodkin, “and (the most influential) Northrop Frye.”¹³⁹

The importance of Northrop Frye is confirmed also by Mathews who, likewise Abrams, says that Frye is “[o]ne of the most influential critics of the twentieth century.”¹⁴⁰ Moreover, as Payne says, it was Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* which led to the recognition of myth criticism as an important field of study.¹⁴¹ In this publication, Frye “continued the formalist emphasis of New Criticism but insisted even more strongly that criticism should be a scientific, objective, and systematic discipline.”¹⁴² In other words, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye stressed

¹³⁴ Vickery, “Introduction,” ix.

¹³⁵ Vickery, “Introduction,” ix.

¹³⁶ Vickery, “Introduction,” ix.

¹³⁷ Vickery, “Introduction,” ix.

¹³⁸ Literary Theory and Criticism, “Archetypal Criticism.”

¹³⁹ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 171.

¹⁴⁰ Mathews, *Fantasy – The Liberation of Imagination*, 35.

¹⁴¹ Payne, “Origins and Prospects of Myth Criticism,” 37.

¹⁴² M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism – From Plato to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 631.

the importance of looking at literature in a systematic way which corresponds to a structuralist approach. Frye's claim that the aim of the book "is to give a rational account of some of the structural principles of Western literature in the context of its Classical and Christian heritage"¹⁴³ supports this too.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye discusses four essays, third of which is called "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths."¹⁴⁴ As visible from its title, Frye's theory is closely related to archetypes and myths. According to Payne, these two terms are frequently worked with as if they were identical however, "in the strict sense the archetype is a motif which appears in myth."¹⁴⁵ The term archetype is mostly connected with a psychologist Carl Gustav Jung whose archetypal theory influenced most of the myth critics, including Northrop Frye.¹⁴⁶ However, even though Frye admitted that he drew inspiration from Jung's archetypes, he reformulated them in such a way that separated him from so called 'Jungian' critics.¹⁴⁷ For Frye, archetype is „[a] symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole."¹⁴⁸ According to Robert D. Denham, Frye suggests that "archetypal patterns are most clearly discernible in myth"¹⁴⁹ which to Frye "means [...] a structural organizing principle of literary form."¹⁵⁰

In the third essay, "Frye suggests a conceptual means of drawing individual and apparently unrelated archetypal images [...] into a coherent and ultimately hierarchical framework [...] organizing not only individual literary works but the entire system of literary works, that is, literature."¹⁵¹ To put it differently, Northrop Frye created a systematic structure according to which literature can be read and analyzed. This structure constitutes of so-called *mythoi* which are by Frye described as "four narrative pregeneric elements of literature."¹⁵² Moreover, he says that these four *mythoi* consist of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony, furthermore, tragedy and comedy, and romance and irony are opposites to each other.¹⁵³ What

¹⁴³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1957), 133.

¹⁴⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 131.

¹⁴⁵ Payne, "Origins and Prospects of Myth Criticism," 39.

¹⁴⁶ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 202.

¹⁴⁷ Literary Theory and Criticism, "Archetypal Criticism."

¹⁴⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 365.

¹⁴⁹ "Northrop Frye & Critical Method," The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, last accessed April 13, 2022, <https://macblog.mcmaster.ca/fryeblog/critical-method/theory-of-myths.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 341.

¹⁵¹ "Myth Theory and Criticism," North Dakota State University, last accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/~cinichol/271/Myth%20Theory%20and%20Criticism.htm>.

¹⁵² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 162.

¹⁵³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 162.

is more, Abrams says that “these [narrative genres] are associated with the seasonal cycle of spring, summer, autumn, and winter”¹⁵⁴ respectively. This short view on what Frye’s *Theory of Myths* comprises is definitely not exhaustive. However, as it will be used to analyze the selected *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, it will be dealt with in more detail during the analysis.

It is also essential to focus on myth criticism from a practical point of view. There are several possible suggestions on how myth criticism can be applied. For example, according to Guerin et al. “the myth critic is interested [...] in prehistory and the biographies of gods [, ...] probes for the inner spirit which gives that form its vitality and its enduring appeal [, and] sees the work holistically as the manifestation of vitalizing, integrative forces arising from the depths of humankind’s collective psyche.”¹⁵⁵ To put it differently, the analysis focuses on mythology (how it is depicted, how it makes the work interesting), and sees the use of mythology, archetypes etc. as something that comes from the unconsciousness.

In the next example, Gill describes four areas on which the myth critic should focus on, and to each area adds questions to be asked.¹⁵⁶ The first area is about the overall definitions and the questions are for instance: “What is ‘myth’ for each mythologist? Where in culture is it to be located”¹⁵⁷ etc. The second area concerns the origin of myth and questions such as “How does myth act upon or emerge from human consciousness? How is it experienced?”¹⁵⁸ are suggested. The third area focuses on the structure of myths, asking the following questions: “What form does myth take in consciousness and/or culture? Can and do the archetypes of myth form a whole?”¹⁵⁹ And the fourth area is concerned with myth’s function, that is “What is myth’s role or purpose? What are its effects? What can be made of myth?”¹⁶⁰ etc.

E. W. Herd discusses the use of myth criticism in practice as well, stressing that “it requires the critic to consider the function of myth as part of the total structure of a given work.”¹⁶¹ Moreover, Herd distinguishes five cases in which it is possible to apply myth criticism.¹⁶² For instance, the first case is when the author of the work intentionally uses certain

¹⁵⁴ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 171.

¹⁵⁵ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 191.

¹⁵⁶ Glen Robert Gill, “Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2003), 17.

¹⁵⁷ Gill, “Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth”, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Gill, “Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth”, 17–18.

¹⁵⁹ Gill, “Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth”, 18.

¹⁶⁰ Gill, “Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth”, 18.

¹⁶¹ E. W. Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 2, no. 3 (1969): 70.

¹⁶² Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 70.

myth, and in this situation, the critic must work with the original myth and carry out an analysis “of the author’s attitude towards the original myth, of way in which this attitude is communicated through the new form, of style and of structure.”¹⁶³ In the second suggested case, which is quite similar to the first one, “the author uses myth as a means of literary allusion, intended to attract the attention of the reader and to add significance to a theme or situation by means of illustration or parallel.”¹⁶⁴ Herd says that “[i]t is also possible that a mythical pattern can emerge within the structure of a novel without conscious development by the author. The critic’s task is then to show that this pattern forms a coherent and meaningful whole within the overall structure of the work.”¹⁶⁵ In other words, it may happen that the critic uncovers a mythical pattern which the author had no intention to create. And the last example is a situation when the writer declares, or is declared by others, that he or she created a new myth which is, however, said to be controversial.¹⁶⁶

The following two possible ways of how to work with myth criticism in practice are related specifically to Frye’s *Theory of Myths*. The first one is suggested by Bressler who says that “[w]hat Frye provides for us is a schematic of all possible kinds of stories. Such structural framework furnishes the context whereby we can identify stories based on their particular genre, kinds of symbolization, themes, point of view, and other literary elements.”¹⁶⁷ To paraphrase, most of, if not all, the stories can be analyzed using Frye’s structure provided in his theory. Moreover, the theory also “allows us to compare and contrast stories on the basis of their relationships among themselves.”¹⁶⁸

Lastly, according to Denham, “[t]he procedure used to define each of the *mythoi* – comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony and satire – follows a similar pattern throughout and derives from Frye’s attempt to answer three questions: What is the structure of each *mythos*? What are the typical characters of each? And what are the six phases within each category?”¹⁶⁹ Thus, when analyzing a work using Frye’s *Theory of Myths*, it is possible to do it according to the suggested pattern and questions.

It is also important to point out some possible issues which are connected with myth criticism. One of the first problems that one encounters lies within the definition of the specific

¹⁶³ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 70.

¹⁶⁴ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 70.

¹⁶⁵ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 71.

¹⁶⁶ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 72.

¹⁶⁷ Bressler, *Literary Criticism – An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 133.

¹⁶⁸ Bressler, *Literary Criticism – An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 133.

¹⁶⁹ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

terms and myth criticism in general, as already discussed above. Another problem is suggested by Guerin et al. who actually refer to the problem with definitions as well, saying that

although myth critics have posited that certain archetypal and mythic patterns are ‘universal,’ some contemporary theorists disagree with this idea, arguing particularly that the work of Jung is based upon culturally specific, Western mythology – so that other cultures might be informed by significantly different mythic structures.¹⁷⁰

In other words, the importance of culture is stressed here as in each culture, mythology can differ, and thus, speaking of universal archetypes is believed by some to be wrong.

There are also other possible issues discussed by Herd who, for example, says that myth criticism “has at times strayed too far from the discipline of literary criticism; and it has produced work of dubious value, where the emphasis has been on the origin or on the identity of the myth, and not on its function as a structural element in a work of literature.”¹⁷¹ In other words, Herd once again stresses that the primary focus should be on the myth’s function and structure in the analyzed work. Another suggested problem concerns the impossibility to determine whether the use of mythical patterns in a work was, or was not, intentional without asking the author or getting the information from another source, however, Herd adds that this problem is not primary because the critic can analyze the work either way.¹⁷²

To conclude, despite the problems with defining myth criticism, many possible approaches towards it, many scholars and literary critics with different opinions, and limitations concerning practical usage, myth criticism is nevertheless a useful way for analyzing literary texts. Or, as Herd says:

Myth criticism can [...] profitably operate within the discipline of literary criticism as one approach among others, and it is most illuminating when it serves to elucidate the structure of a work. As a means of structural analysis it is in some cases indispensable, in others it opens vital new perspectives.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 218.

¹⁷¹ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 70.

¹⁷² Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 71.

¹⁷³ Herd, “Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities,” 73.

3. Structure

In his *Theory of Myths*, as already discussed above, Frye is concerned with the four *mythoi* which he defines from three points of view – plot's structure, characters, and six phases of each *mythos*.¹⁷⁴ The focus on structure of the plot of the four *mythoi* may come from its very definition as it is defined by Abrams as “plot forms, or organizing structural principles.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, the structure of each *mythos* – tragedy, comedy, romance, and satire – provides a pattern and, as Leo Rockas says, these four *mythoi* “may have exhausted the possible plots of literature.”¹⁷⁶

Percy Jackson and the Olympians series consists of five installments, and it can be classified as so called scripted series the main characteristic of which is that even though the main characters are not exchanged throughout the series, they are not what moves the story forward for that is the plot.¹⁷⁷ The structure of the scripted series is suggested as follows: “in the first volume the author presents a situation, a problem, a conflict and a cast of characters whose task is to resolve it. The middle volumes provide obstacles and short-term successes, often followed by further obstacles. The final volume contains resolution and character reward.”¹⁷⁸ This structure corresponds with *Percy Jackson* series, and at the same time it corresponds with the structure of Frye's *mythos* of summer – romance.

Percy Jackson series as a whole has one central story – Titan Kronos' rise in which Percy is supposedly bound by a prophecy to be either salvation or doom¹⁷⁹ – which is present through all five books. The books can be then considered as conflicts which have to be overcome in order to get to the final resolution. This corresponds with Frye's idea of a plot in romance as according to him, romance consists of minor adventures which lead to a major adventure which he calls the quest and considers it to be the basis of romance.¹⁸⁰ Frye also defines three stages of romance which he calls in Greek “the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery.”¹⁸¹ There is also a fourth stage called *sparagmos*,¹⁸² however, it will be dealt with later in the analysis.

¹⁷⁴ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

¹⁷⁵ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Leo Rockas, “The Structure of Frye's *Anatomy*,” *College English* 28, no. 7 (April 1967): 502.

¹⁷⁷ Kari Maund, “Reading the fantasy series,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 148.

¹⁷⁸ Maund, “Reading the fantasy series,” 148-149.

¹⁷⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 160.

¹⁸⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 186-187.

¹⁸¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

¹⁸² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

Viewed through Frye's three stages of romance, the first four instalments, and most of the last instalment as well, can be classified in terms of the first stage because they, through various conflicts and adventures, prepare the ground for the second stage. The second stage is by Frye described as "the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die."¹⁸³ Thus, the second stage can be identified as the final battle for Olympus at the end of which the Titan Kronos is defeated (the verb killed is not used intentionally here because, as Annabeth says to Percy in *The Lightning Thief*: "Monsters don't die, Percy."¹⁸⁴). Finally, according to Frye, in the last stage there is "the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero."¹⁸⁵ Identifying this stage is more complicated as there are many characters such as Percy, Annabeth, Grover, etc., who through heroic deeds help in defeating Kronos and his army. The character of Percy seems like an obvious choice as he fights against Kronos throughout the whole series however, there is another character who might be recognized as the ultimate hero and that is Luke. Even though Luke is for most of the series an antagonist as he fights against Percy, helps Kronos to rise, even shares his body with him, in the end it is Luke who turns against Kronos and defeats him sacrificing himself in the process. Afterwards, Percy realizes that the big prophecy did not speak of him as of the hero but of Luke and he himself acknowledges Luke's sacrifice saying: "In the end, I wasn't really the hero. Luke was."¹⁸⁶ However, this issue, that is the identification of characters, their roles etc., will be dealt with in more detail in the analysis of characters.

Moreover, in his analysis of romance Frye mentions "the point of epiphany"¹⁸⁷ which can be associated with the third stage of romance, *anagnorisis*. This association is possible because, according to Abrams, the term epiphany is used as a "term for the description [...] of the sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene,"¹⁸⁸ and therefore, it is in alignment with the idea of discovery in the third stage. In *Percy Jackson* series, the point of epiphany corresponds to the moment of the final battle with Kronos in *The Last Olympian* when the reader learns that the prophecy did not speak of Percy as of the hero. Moreover, Frye says that typically, the point of epiphany is depicted through symbols such as ladders, mountains, towers, islands etc.¹⁸⁹ which does correspond with the series as the scene corresponding to

¹⁸³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

¹⁸⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 86.

¹⁸⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

¹⁸⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 320.

¹⁸⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 203.

¹⁸⁸ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 81.

¹⁸⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 367.

anagnorisis takes place on Olympus which is situated above the Empire State Building, specifically on the 600th Floor,¹⁹⁰ to which one can get simply in an elevator.¹⁹¹ In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus is said to be a home of Greek gods set in Greece,¹⁹² thus, in the series, its place changes but the purpose of Olympus stays the same – it is a residence of Gods. Similarly, Riordan changes many other locations from Greek mythology, for example Mediterranean Sea which is in Greek mythology referred to as the home of monsters such as Circe, Charybdis, Scylla, the Sirens etc.,¹⁹³ while in the series, it is moved next to Florida and called The Bermuda Triangle.¹⁹⁴

Based on the provided description, not only does this example correspond with a mountain, a tower, and also a ladder (represented by the elevator), but, according to Darshini Gokli, it also shows that Riordan uses this typical American location in order to “create a new mythology whose centre is the American culture.”¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Gokli adds other examples which support this theory, such as the lifestyle of both demigods and gods which is typically American.¹⁹⁶ As an example can serve, for instance, food mentioned in the series such as a Diet Coke drank by the god of wine Dionysus,¹⁹⁷ hamburgers prepared by Medusa,¹⁹⁸ or a Happy Meal from McDonald which Nico used as a sacrifice for the ghosts of dead people. This example is especially interesting because Nico is told by a ghost of king Minos that blood from an animal would suffice,¹⁹⁹ however, Nico says: ““I will treat them with respect.””²⁰⁰ Thus, this suggest that Riordan makes the traditional offering inferior to American fast food. Similarly, Poseidon is depicted as “a beachcomber from Key West”²⁰¹ wearing “Tommy Bahama shirt”²⁰² both descriptions referring to the American culture, and Ares’s distinguishing features are in *Percy Jackson The Demigod Files* said to be “[b]iker leathers, Harley-Davidson, sunglasses ...”²⁰³ which are, again, features related closely to America. However, the most prominent in the making of the American culture, and America in general, central in the story is the following

¹⁹⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 186.

¹⁹¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 99.

¹⁹² Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 106.

¹⁹³ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 583.

¹⁹⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Darshini Gokli, “Americanization of the Greeks in *Percy Jackson* series” (Gujarat University, 2015), 8.

¹⁹⁶ Gokli, “Americanization of the Greeks in *Percy Jackson* series”, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 69-70.

¹⁹⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 174.

¹⁹⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth*, 82.

²⁰⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth*, 83.

²⁰¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 340.

²⁰² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 340.

²⁰³ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson The Demigod Files* (Puffin Books, 2018), 90.

example: “America is now the heart of the flame. It is the great power of the West. And so Olympus is here.”²⁰⁴

Frye’s three stages – the *agon*, the *pathos*, and the *anagnorisis* – can be used to analyze the structure not only of the series as a whole, but of the individual instalments as well. In the first one, *The Lightning Thief*, the first stage can be, again, identified as various conflicts and adventures (such as Percy’s fights with Minotaur and Medusa, getting lost in a Lotus Casino etc.) leading to the second stage which in the first instalment corresponds to the battle with a Greek god Ares whom Percy defeats, successfully returns a stolen lightning to Zeus, and thus finishes his quest. At the end, Percy is celebrated as a hero. Similarly, all the remaining books follow the same three-stage pattern going from one minor adventure to another which eventually leads to the major one, finishing the quest, and subsequent recognition of characters as heroes.

Moreover, Frye adds that this “threefold structure” concerns not only the plot of romance, but it appears in its other aspects as well.²⁰⁵ In *Percy Jackson*, several examples are present. For instance, Percy is the son of Poseidon, who is, together with Zeus and Hades, called the Big Three²⁰⁶ and whose major weapon is a trident.²⁰⁷ Being Poseidon’s son, Percy lives in cabin number three,²⁰⁸ and significant is also a trio that Percy makes with his two closest friends – Annabeth and Grover. Additionally, several characters from Greek mythology that appear in the *Percy Jackson* series can be read with this threefold structure in mind such as the Fates whom Percy encounters at the beginning of the first book, and who are in the series and in Greek mythology represented as three old ladies who govern people’s destiny.²⁰⁹ Other examples are a keeper of the Underworld – three-headed dog Cerberus, or three Furies which Percy encounters and fights several times throughout the series (in Greek mythology they are described as goddesses usually associated with vengeance, and even though their number sometimes differs, usually they are depicted as three.²¹⁰) There are also three Gray Sisters (in Greek mythology they are referred to as the Graeae, their names being Dino, Enyo, and Pempredo, and they are associated mostly with the story of Perseus who stole their eye and

²⁰⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 73.

²⁰⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

²⁰⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 113.

²⁰⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 126.

²⁰⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 127.

²⁰⁹ Michael Taft, *Greek Gods & Goddesses* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2014), 112.

²¹⁰ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 58.

tooth to get information from them.²¹¹) who, in *The Sea of Monsters*, own a taxi and drive Percy and others to the Camp Half-Blood on which a modernization of mythology can be seen as Riordan takes these original mythological characters and puts them in the contemporary world in which they have to adjust. As the last example will serve three judges encountered in the Underworld who are however depicted differently than in the original Greek myth. In Greek mythology, the judges are Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus²¹² while in *Percy Jackson*, Riordan, again, modernizes this myth as in *The Lightning Thief* it is said that the judges “switch around who sits on the bench. King Minos, Thomas Jefferson, Shakespeare – people like that.”²¹³ Thus, he makes the myth more accessible for the reader as he uses well-known historical figures which the reader is more likely to be familiar with. Even though more examples could be identified, the ones provided above show the frequent presence of what Frye calls the threefold structure in *Percy Jackson* series.

Frye continues his analysis of the structure of the *mythos* of summer – romance, saying that “[t]he central form of quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme.”²¹⁴ He further provides a pattern which is usually followed: there is a monster which destroys the land the ruler of which is usually old and not able to protect it; people, usually young, are sacrificed to the monster until the daughter of the ruler is chosen, after which the hero comes, kills the monster, and marries the daughter.²¹⁵ The suggested pattern can be identified in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series as well as to the old ruler who cannot protect his land correspond the gods of Olympus who, even though aware of the situation, do nothing to fight the monster. The monster can be identified as Kronos and his troops, and the sacrificed young people are the demigods who die fighting Kronos’s army while the gods just watch. The ruler’s daughter and the hero saving her can be identified in the already mentioned second stage of the series – *the pathos* – in which there is the final fight between Kronos/Luke and Percy, Annabeth, and Grover. The daughter is clearly Annabeth however, identifying her savior is more complicated. On one hand, there is Percy who, even though not being the hero mentioned in the prophecy, fights Kronos throughout the series, and at the end makes a choice that ultimately leads to Kronos’s defeat and Annabeth’s rescue. On the other hand, there is Luke who, despite being an antagonist, turns out to be the hero from the prophecy and by his own hand defeats Kronos and saves Annabeth as well. Thus, the problem of identifying the hero appears once again. However, if the series is

²¹¹ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 61.

²¹² Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 349.

²¹³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 291-292.

²¹⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 189.

²¹⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 189.

read according to the suggested pattern, it is Percy who should be identified as the hero because, after Kronos is defeated, he starts dating Annabeth. Moreover, identifying the series as quest-romance does at the same time correspond to the earlier classification of it as portal-quest fantasy, based on Mendlesohn's classification.

However, Frye does not only identify this dragon-killing pattern as he says that it encompasses "many complex elements"²¹⁶ but he further examines these elements. For example, according to Denham, Frye discusses the monster-dragon as "a displaced archetype of Satan."²¹⁷ To explain, according to Frye, displacement is a device that makes a mythical structure used in realistic fiction believable and probable.²¹⁸ He also says that "[t]he central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like."²¹⁹ In other words, if there is, in Greek mythology, Hephaestus, "the god of fire and of craftsmen,"²²⁰ he can be, for example, associated with a skilled worker in a factory. Thus, when Frye associates Satan with the serpent, sterility, or leviathan,²²¹ he actually uses the device of displacement. It cannot be, however, used to analyze the monster in *Percy Jackson* series as Kronos is so called "undisplaced myth" i.e. a myth which concerns two opposites – gods and demons, desirable and undesirable, heaven and hell, or apocalyptic and demonic imagery.²²²

In his analysis of romance, Frye also provides an example in which the hero who fights the monster gets lost in it, such as Jonah got lost in a whale, Israelites in a desert, or Theseus in a labyrinth,²²³ which Frye considers an important aspect of the quest-myth and thus, as already mentioned above, in addition to three stages of romance, Frye suggests one more called *sparagmos* or, in other words, tearing to pieces,²²⁴ the typical theme of which is the disappearance of the hero.²²⁵ There are at least two examples of this stage which can be identified in *Percy Jackson* series. The first one appears in *The Lightning Thief*, when the three protagonists – Percy, Annabeth, and Grover – enter a Lotus Hotel and Casino and, not knowing

²¹⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 189.

²¹⁷ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, "Northrop Frye & Critical Method."

²¹⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 136.

²¹⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 137.

²²⁰ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, XII.

²²¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 189.

²²² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 139.

²²³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 190-191.

²²⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

²²⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

that it is a lair of Lotus-Eaters (“people who lived on the fruit or the roots of the lotus plant [which] made them forget their pasts, their families, and their futures, so that they lived in a state of dream bliss”²²⁶), they get trapped in there for five days. Here, Riordan uses a parallel to the story of Odysseus as he and his crew encountered Lotus-Eaters on their travels as well.²²⁷ However, Riordan, again, puts the myth in the contemporary world as he sets Lotus-Eaters in a casino in Las Vegas, and makes the characters addicted not to the lotus plant but to unlimited credit cards, different kinds of entertainment such as computer games, virtual reality etc., and overall comfort.²²⁸ Also, the choice of Las Vegas as the place of Lotus-Eaters’ lair is significant as, according to Darshini Gokli, Riordan through it reflects the typical aspect of American society – consumerism.²²⁹

The second example is a parallel to Odysseus’s adventures as well. It is taken from the fourth volume, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, and, surprisingly, it does not concern the labyrinth. Instead, it focuses on Percy who, after almost dying when fighting Telkhines in the Labyrinth, appears on the island of Calypso (Atlas’s daughter, probably best-known from the story of Odysseus as they lived together for seven years after which Zeus ordered Calypso to help Odysseus leave²³⁰) where he spends two weeks until Hephaestus comes and urges Percy to leave. Both these examples illustrate the *sparagmos* stage as in both the hero gets lost, although the latter is not as clear as the first because, in the series, Calypso is not depicted as a monster. However, she presents a temptation to stay on the island forever, which would prevent Percy from finishing his quest, and thus, Calypso is, in fact, an antagonist.

Subsequently, Frye discusses typical “motives and rewards for the quest”²³¹ which appear in the structure of the *mythos* of summer – romance. Firstly, the discussion concerns “the Messianic hero as a redeemer of society,”²³² which could be labeled as immaterial motives and rewards, and secondly it speaks of motives and rewards typical of the secular romance, a treasure for example, which are generally of material character (although Frye adds that a treasure can mean also wealth in a sense of power or wisdom).²³³ In *Percy Jackson* series, immaterial motives and rewards can be identified more frequently than material ones, however,

²²⁶ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 88.

²²⁷ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 88.

²²⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 259-263.

²²⁹ Gokli, “Americanization of the Greeks in *Percy Jackson* series,” 13.

²³⁰ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 492.

²³¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

²³² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

²³³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192-193.

it is not usually possible to classify them strictly as immaterial due to their dependence on the material ones. To explain this further individual examples will be analyzed.

In the first example, taken from *The Lightning Thief*, the quest is simple: Percy has to find Zeus's lightning and return it in order to prevent a war between gods. Thus, the motive and subsequent reward are clearly immaterial as the ultimate goal of the quest is to protect the world from the war. However, it would not be possible without obtaining the lightning which can be therefore considered a material motive of the quest. Similarly, in *The Sea of Monsters*, the half-blood heroes are asked to find a Golden Fleece which is the only thing that can save Thalia, Zeus's daughter transformed into a tree, from being poisoned. Here an allusion to the story of Jason can be recognized as he was also sent on a quest to obtain the golden fleece.²³⁴ However, Riordan changed many details, from the quest being assigned to a girl – Clarisse,²³⁵ to the fleece being guarded by Polyphemus, not a dragon as it is in the original myth.²³⁶ Thus, Riordan uses Jason's story as sort of a framework for the story of his own, and at the same time mixes it up with Odysseus's adventures. Concerning the rewards and motives of this quest, again, the same distinction as in the first example can be inferred because the Golden Fleece can be considered a material motive of the quest while the act of saving Thalia's tree can be identified as the immaterial reward for the quest. Therefore, as can be seen on the provided examples, in *Percy Jackson* series, the motives and rewards identified as material (the lightning, the Golden Fleece) could be considered means of completion of quests rather than rewards or motives.

In addition, according to Frye, “the reward of the quest usually is or includes a bride,”²³⁷ and it can be identified in *Percy Jackson* series as well. Specifically in *The Sea of Monsters* in which Percy's friend, satyr Grover, is imprisoned by a Cyclops Polyphemus in a dark, wet cave on his island and thus, Percy sets on a quest to save him. This situation is equivalent with Frye's description as he says that the bride “is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place [and] rescued from the unwelcome embraces of another and generally older male, or from giants or bandits or other usurpers”²³⁸ to which Polyphemus and his cave correspond accurately. In the end, with help from his friends, Percy manages to save Grover – the bride. Another similar example can be found in *The Titan's Curse* in which Percy is again on a quest to save his friend, only this time it is Annabeth, who got tricked by Luke into holding the sky instead

²³⁴ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 80.

²³⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 88.

²³⁶ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 80.

²³⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 193.

²³⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 193.

of the titan Atlas. The place of Annabeth's imprisonment is a dangerous Mount Tamalpais, her captors are older Luke together with the titan Atlas, and in the end, Annabeth – the bride – is saved.

Furthermore, Frye goes back to the additional stage of romance, *sparagmos* – tearing to pieces – saying that some rewards, such as extraordinary power or wisdom, come with a price, usually in a form of mutilation or physical handicap.²³⁹ In the series, specifically in *The Last Olympian*, Riordan uses another parallel with Greek mythology as Percy follows the myth of Achilles (probably the best known for his invulnerability, except the heel, caused by being bathed in the river Styx by his mother Thetis and his subsequent involvement in the Trojan war²⁴⁰) and like Achilles, Percy takes a bath in the river Styx to become invulnerable in the subsequent clash with Kronos and his army. However, before doing so, Achilles himself warns Percy saying: ““It will make you powerful. But it will also make you weak. Your prowess in combat will be beyond any mortal, but your weaknesses, your failings will increase as well.””²⁴¹ Thus, this example does not only illustrate the price Percy pays for becoming invulnerable, but it also shows tearing to pieces of the hero as Percy is basically torn into two parts – one powerful, the other vulnerable.

Speaking of *sparagmos*, it is important to say that the already mentioned stages of romance – *agon*, *pathos*, *sparagmos*, and *anagnorisis* – do not apply only to romance. On the contrary, according to Frye, each stage is an archetypal theme of one of the four *mythoi*, that is, *agon* is the archetypal theme of romance, *pathos* of tragedy, *sparagmos* of irony and satire, and *anagnorisis* of comedy.²⁴² Consequently, each *mythos* presents one aspect of what Frye calls “a central unifying myth.”²⁴³

Now, having analyzed the structure of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series from the point of view of the *mythos* of summer – romance, the analysis will focus on the rest of the *mythoi* – comedy, tragedy, and irony and satire – because, as explained above, they are interconnected. More specifically, Frye says that “[t]ragedy and comedy contrast rather than blend, and so do romance and irony, [o]n the other hand, comedy blends insensibly into satire at one extreme and into romance at the other; romance may be comic or tragic; tragic extends

²³⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 193.

²⁴⁰ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 2.

²⁴¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 123.

²⁴² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

²⁴³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 192.

from high romance to bitter and ironic realism.”²⁴⁴ Thus, because *Percy Jackson* series’ structure is clearly romantic, based on Frye’s argument, it should be possible to identify aspects of other *mythos*’ structures as well, specifically those of comedy and tragedy. This interconnectedness is possible because, according to Frye, “there are two fundamental movements of narrative: a cyclical movement within the order of nature, and a dialectical movement from that order into the apocalyptic world above.”²⁴⁵ Frye further explains this movement as follows:

Top half of the natural cycle is the world of romance and the analogy of innocence; the lower half is the world of ‘realism’ and the analogy of experience. There are thus four main types of mythical movement: within romance, within experience, down, and up. The downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling from innocence toward hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe. The upward movement is the comic movement, from threatening complications to a happy ending and a general assumption of post-dated innocence in which everyone lives happily ever after.²⁴⁶

As said above, romance can be either comic or tragic. In *Percy Jackson* series, several aspects of the comic plot structure can be identified. It is typical that in comedy a young protagonist desires another young protagonist, however, there are obstacles, usually in form of parents, which are finally overcome and there is a happy end.²⁴⁷ In *Percy Jackson* series, there is a similar situation suggested as Percy falls in love with Annabeth, however, her mother Athena does not approve of their relationship. Even though she does not literary create obstacles, the characters are cautious of what she thinks. However, at the end, after Percy proves himself to be a hero and makes gods change their attitude towards their demigod children (Percy makes them acknowledge all their children, and also minor gods, in order to prevent feelings of jealousy and hatred which were reasons why Kronos was able to rise, but this will be dealt with later in the analysis of characters). Subsequently, Athena admits that Percy might not be as bad as she thought, and the relationship is thus approved. On this example, not only the victory of young protagonist can be seen, but also another typical aspect of comic structure can be observed. This aspect is “a movement from one kind of society to another”²⁴⁸ and it is represented by the gods fulfilling Percy’s wish and changing their approach towards their children, thus changing the society.

²⁴⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 162.

²⁴⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 161-162.

²⁴⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 162.

²⁴⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 163.

²⁴⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 163.

Furthermore, comedy usually tries “to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated.”²⁴⁹ This aspect of comedy appears in *Percy Jackson* series as well as at the end, characters who were thought of as antagonists, for example Hades, are accepted into the society. This acceptance can be proved for instance by the fact that in the Camp Half-Blood there is a cabin built for children of Hades alongside cabins of other Olympian gods.²⁵⁰ The previously mentioned character of Luke might be considered to fall into this aspect of comic structure as well, because, even though he stood on the side of Kronos, after his death he had a proper burial and was accepted by his father, Hermes, not only as a son, but also as a hero. Therefore, he was, in a way, redeemed. The same can be said about another character, Ethan Nakamura, who joined Kronos out of the same reasons as Luke, i.e. he felt like the gods did not care about him, or as Ethan himself says: “I renounce the gods! What have they ever done for me? I will see them destroyed. I will serve Kronos.”²⁵¹ He also says to Percy: “All I want is respect, Jackson. The gods never gave me that. You wanted me to go to your stupid camp, spend my time crammed into the Hermes cabin because I’m not important? Not even recognized?”²⁵² This latter example illustrates not only Ethan’s reasons to stand against the Greek gods, but also reasons of majority of other demigods as well. However, at the end of *The Last Olympian*, Ethan turned against Kronos to save Percy, for which he died by Kronos’s hand. Thus, Ethan got a proper burial at the end, and although being a traitor, he was, similarly as Luke, redeemed.

Consequently, the comic movement can be observed on the provided examples as through various obstacles characters reach a happy end, and those who were thought of as antagonists are redeemed (therefore, there is the movement towards innocence too).

Considering the structure of the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy, there is one aspect which can be identified in *Percy Jackson* series and that is the inevitability of fate as “tragedy seems to lead up to an epiphany of law, of that which is and must be.”²⁵³ This is a strong aspect in the series because various prophecies for various characters are present and they are always fulfilled (although sometimes they play out differently than they were understood) despite characters’ efforts to change them.

²⁴⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 165.

²⁵⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 356.

²⁵¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth*, 287.

²⁵² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 208.

²⁵³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 208.

To conclude, the structure of the plot of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series is in accordance with the structure of the *mythos* of summer – romance. The four stages of romance – *the agon*, *the pathos*, *the sparagmos*, and *the anagnorisis* – can be identified as well as the typical dragon-killing theme and its elements. Furthermore, the romantic structure of the series blends with the comic structure as the comic movement is observable. The structure of tragedy is partially observable as well in a form of finality of fate. It is also possible to identify parallels with the structure of stories from Greek mythology, those of Achilles, Jason, or Odysseus for example, which Riordan often changes to fit in the contemporary world, and also Riordan's tendency to Americanize Greek mythology is visible as well, for instance, in the use of Empire State Building as Olympus, Las Vegas as a lair of Lotus-Eaters, and overall incorporation of features typical of American society into the story.

4. Characters

The second aspect through which Frye defines the four *mythoi* are characters. More specifically, Denham says that the “aim [...] is to determine the typical character of each *mythos*,”²⁵⁴ because, according to Rockas, “characters [...] apparently also have a structure of their own.”²⁵⁵ Frye uses Aristotle’s work, which describes comedy, called *Tractatus Coislinianus*,²⁵⁶ to define the characters of comedy as he “derives three comic characters from [it]: *alazon* or impostor, *eirōn* or self-deprecator, *bomolochos* or buffoon.”²⁵⁷ Subsequently, Frye also adds a fourth Aristotle’s character called “*agroikos* or churlish, literally rustic.”²⁵⁸ Moreover, these four characters have sub-categories within themselves and also, they form two opposite pairs where “[t]he contest of *eirōn* and *alazon* forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood.”²⁵⁹ Denham rephrases this, explaining that the former, *eirōn* and *alazon*, “are isolated according to the structural functions they perform,”²⁶⁰ and the latter, the *buffoon* and the *churl*, “derive ultimately from the roles they play in creating the narrative mood.”²⁶¹ Consequently, it can be said that “[s]tructure and mood [...] determine character.”²⁶² Moreover, according to Denham, in addition to the oppositions based on structure and mood, Frye distinguishes also two more oppositions based on “the dialectical pattern within each *mythos*.”²⁶³ What this means is that “[c]haracters must fall on one side or another of the conflict of comedy and of the quest of romance.”²⁶⁴ Speaking of the connection with romance, the above-described character types of comedy have their corresponding equivalents in the remaining three *mythoi* as well,²⁶⁵ and they will be dealt with in the following part of the thesis.

The analysis of structure has shown that the structure of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series corresponds with the structure of the *mythos* of summer – romance and thus, the analysis of characters will firstly focus on this *mythos*. In romance, as well as in *Percy Jackson* series, the dialectic structure mentioned above can be seen well as characters usually stand on one side of the quest, i.e. they go along with it and try to achieve it, or they oppose

²⁵⁴ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁵⁵ Rockas, “The Structure of Frye’s *Anatomy*,” 503.

²⁵⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 166.

²⁵⁷ Rockas, “The Structure of Frye’s *Anatomy*,” 503.

²⁵⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 172.

²⁵⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 172.

²⁶⁰ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁶¹ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁶² The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁶³ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁶⁴ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

²⁶⁵ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

it.²⁶⁶ In other words, these two kinds of characters correspond to comic *eiron* and *alazon* – in romance the hero and the enemy respectively.²⁶⁷ Moreover, as a result of the hero and the enemy being two opposites, “everything [in romance] is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy,”²⁶⁸ and thus these two characters will be discussed together rather than independently.

This relationship between the hero and the enemy can be illustrated on *Percy Jackson* series using two main opposing characters – Percy and Kronos. Out of these two, Percy Jackson, whose real name is Perseus,²⁶⁹ can be identified as the hero. Riordan’s inspiration by Greek mythology can be seen here as Perseus is a Greek hero, son of Zeus, known especially for killing Medusa, saving Andromeda etc.²⁷⁰ however, even though Percy’s story does correspond to some of Perseus’ adventures (for instance killing Medusa in *The Lightning Thief* or encountering the Gray sisters in *The Sea of Monsters*), Percy, in *The Sea of Monsters*, says: “That Perseus always won. That’s why my mom had named me after him, even though he was a son of Zeus and I was a son of Poseidon. The original Perseus was one of the only heroes in the Greek myths who got a happy ending.”²⁷¹ While referring to this exact example, Riordan confirms that the inspiration for naming Percy after Perseus did not come from Perseus’ heroic deeds but rather from his ending.²⁷² Thus, being named after one, Percy is referred to as the hero. Another aspect that classifies Percy as the hero is his position on the side for the quest which is, when taking the series as a whole, stopping Kronos from raising, killing the Olympian gods, and destroying Olympus which would, as another character – a Greek god Dionysus – says, eventually lead to “the end of Western civilization.”²⁷³

On the other side of this quest stands the titan Kronos. According to Frye, the characters which “obstruct [the quest] are caricatured as simply villainous or cowardly”²⁷⁴ which is true of Kronos as he is described for instance as the “Crooked One,”²⁷⁵ empowered by “the chaos and barbarism,”²⁷⁶ “the evil titan lord,”²⁷⁷ and his voice is depicted as “raspy and metallic, like

²⁶⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 195.

²⁶⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 197.

²⁶⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

²⁶⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 68.

²⁷⁰ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 113-114.

²⁷¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 106.

²⁷² Rick Riordan. “Frequently Asked Questions.”

²⁷³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 251.

²⁷⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 195.

²⁷⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 237.

²⁷⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 240.

²⁷⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 242.

a knife scraped across stone.”²⁷⁸ All these examples picture Kronos as the evil enemy character, which he is. Moreover, in the previous part of the thesis Kronos has been identified as the undisplaced myth which corresponds with Frye’s saying that “the nearer the romance is to myth, [...] the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities.”²⁷⁹

Considering the conflict between the hero and the enemy, and thus between Percy and Kronos, Frye says that it “is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature [where] the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy.”²⁸⁰ In other words, Frye compares the characters and the conflict between them to cycles of nature and gives specific properties to each of the characters as follows: “The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth.”²⁸¹ A proof that the former description corresponds to Kronos provides the following example: “Even in the throne room of Olympus, far away from Tartarus, the name *Kronos* darkened the room, made the hearth fire seem not quite so warm on my back.”²⁸² It can be seen that the villain Kronos is, in *Percy Jackson* series, associated with both darkness and winter (or coldness), as suggested by Frye. Moreover, Kronos can be also linked to confusion as his success in defeating the Olympians would lead to chaos,²⁸³ and of course to the old age as the history of his dates back to “aeons.”²⁸⁴

On the other hand, there is Percy who, as said above, is twelve years old in the first volume, and therefore, when compared to aeons old Kronos, very young. Apart from youth, Percy represents vigor, seen in his sword-fighting skills and endurance rather than in his figure as several times it is suggested that Percy sees himself as less athletic than others which proves the following example when Percy compares himself to Annabeth: “She was probably my age, maybe a couple of centimetres taller, and a whole lot more athletic-looking.”²⁸⁵ Finally, Percy’s character can be considered to resemble dawn as it is thought of him as of the hero from the prophecy who appears to bring salvation such as dawn appears and brings light.

As in comedy, a heroic character in romance has several sub-categories and its enemy opposites. For example, “[r]omance has a counterpart to the benevolent retreating *eiron* of

²⁷⁸ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse* (Puffin Books, 2013), 101.

²⁷⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

²⁸⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187.

²⁸¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 187-188.

²⁸² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 344.

²⁸³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 65.

²⁸⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 50.

²⁸⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 63.

comedy in its figure of the ‘old wise man,’ as Jung calls him, [...] often magician who affects the action he watches over.”²⁸⁶ In *Percy Jackson* series, this kind of character could be represented by all the gods as they do, in fact, watch over what is happening, and sometimes even interfere to change the course of events (usually for their own benefit).

Other opposing characters within the hero/enemy framework are, for example, “[t]he faithful companion or shadow figure of the hero.”²⁸⁷ In *Percy Jackson* series more of these characters can be found, however, the most prominent is the character of satyr Grover who is, as said above, Percy’s best friend since the very beginning, and stays alongside Percy to the very end of the series. His opposite is, according to Frye, “the traitor”²⁸⁸ who can be in the series identified for example as Luke who, in *The Lightning Thief*, pretended to be friends with Percy and other demigods however, he got influenced by Kronos and betrayed everyone.

Subsequently Frye mentions another important opposing duo – “the heroine [who has] her opposite in the siren or beautiful witch.”²⁸⁹ In *The Sea of Monsters*, Percy and Annabeth appear on the island of Circe (sometimes also Kirke,²⁹⁰ who is, in Greek mythology, the witch known especially for turning Odysseus and his men into pigs²⁹¹) where Percy gets turned into a guinea pig while Annabeth is lured by Circe to stay and become something like her apprentice. In this example, it is obvious that the heroine is Annabeth, and the witch is Circe. Moreover, this example shows, once again, how Riordan adapts the Greek myths and modernizes and changes them to fit modern society. Here he, for instance, changes Circe’s spell as she now turns men into guinea pigs instead of regular pigs because, in her own words: “Men are pigs, Percy Jackson. I used to turn them into *real* pigs, but they were so smelly and large and difficult to keep. Not much different that they were before, really. Guinea pigs are much more convenient!”²⁹² Thus, Riordan basically makes Circe a practical woman, and at the same time, through her, he also points out feminist issues, for instance, when Circe asks Annabeth about female half-blood heroines, and to Annabeth’s reply she says: “Bah! Men get all the glory.”²⁹³

Another opposing pair is said to be “the dragon [having] his opposite in the friendly or helping animals that are so conspicuous in romance, among which the horse who gets the hero

²⁸⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 195.

²⁸⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁸⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁸⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁹⁰ Robin Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 494.

²⁹¹ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 35.

²⁹² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 169.

²⁹³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 172.

to his quest has naturally a central place.”²⁹⁴ The dragon has already been identified as Kronos, but it could be as well identified as other opposing monsters such as Medusa, Geryon, etc. The friendly helping animal, on the other hand, could be identified for example as a pegasus Blackjack whom Percy accidentally saved from Luke’s captivity, and who took Percy as his savior. Throughout the series, Percy uses Blackjack’s service (of transport mostly) several times, for example when he is not included in a quest to save the goddess Artemis however, he asks Blackjack to fly him in pursue of the quest party – thus, Blackjack gets Percy to the quest. There is one more example of the helping animal that appears in the series, a hippocampus Rainbow. Likewise Blackjack, Rainbow provides the means of transport for the characters, for instance, he takes them to Miami after their ship is destroyed by Polyphemus in *The Sea of Monsters*.

Considering the other two opposing types of characters in comedy and their parallels in romance, “[t]he comic buffoon and rustic turn out to be in romance the nature spirit and the reminder of reality.”²⁹⁵ As for the nature spirits (also labeled with the term “Golux”²⁹⁶) Frye says that these characters do not depict typical moral characteristics connected to heroes or villains, on the contrary “[t]hey represent partly the moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature and partly a world of mystery which is glimpsed but never seen, and which retreats when approached.”²⁹⁷ Frye then specifies these characters dividing them between the female shy nymphs and the half-wild creatures (he calls them daughter-figures), and the male wild boys (Mowgli for example), the green man (such as Robin Hood), or the faithful giant.²⁹⁸ Such characters can be identified in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series as well.

For example, to the faithful giant corresponds Percy’s half-brother Tyson who also happens to be a cyclops. Percy describes him as follows: “[Tyson] was so ... different. He was two meters tall and built like the Abominable Snowman, but he cried a lot and was scared of just about everything, including his own reflection.”²⁹⁹ According to Michael Taft, cyclopes are in Homer depicted as rough cannibals (such as the well-known Polyphemus), and in Hesiod they are described as skilled workers who created Zeus’s thunderbolts and worked for Hephaestus.³⁰⁰ Thus, Percy’s description of Tyson is kind of ironic. And it cannot encompass

²⁹⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁹⁵ Rockas, “The Structure of Frye’s *Anatomy*,” 503.

²⁹⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 197.

²⁹⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁹⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196.

²⁹⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 9.

³⁰⁰ Taft, *Greek Gods & Goddesses*, 52.

Tyson's character either as Tyson is much more than just a huge, scared guy. On the contrary, later on in the series it turns out that he is very skilled and even works in Poseidon's realm with other cyclopes. What is, however, the most important thing is Tyson's loyalty and will to help and protect Percy with his own life. For example, in *The Sea of Monsters*, Tyson becomes a very important character as thanks to him Percy and others manage to pass through Charybdis and Scylla and subsequently, Tyson is the one who gets the Golden Fleece and fights off Polyphemus. Moreover, Riordan's inspiration by the story of Odysseus can be seen on this example once again as he does not only recreate the mythological story but also directly refers to it when Annabeth calls herself Nobody, as Odysseus did, in order to provoke Polyphemus.³⁰¹

Even though the hippocampus Rainbow has already been discussed as a friendly companion of the hero, and the opposite of the dragon, he can be also placed within the spirits of nature kind of characters. According to Frye, these characters are often "children of nature, who can be brought to serve the hero."³⁰² This pretty much describes Rainbow's first appearance as he is sent by Poseidon to help Percy complete his quest. Moreover, Rainbow's character is in alignment with Frye's definition of this kind of characters as he does not show any moral characteristics typical of heroes/villains, and he can be also considered mysterious as there is not much information about him and he only appears when needed or called for.

Finally, the last kind of a character in the *mythos* of summer – romance, which, as said above, corresponds to comic *agroikos*, and is in the opposition to the nature spirits, is the reminder of reality.³⁰³ According to Frye, "[s]uch a character would call attention to realistic aspects of life, like fear in the presence of danger, which threaten the unity of the romantic mood."³⁰⁴ In other words, these kinds of characters' role is to point out the realistic features and, as Frye says, they are often represented by fools or jesters who can point these features out safely without breaking the romantic mood.³⁰⁵ In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* Percy's mom Sally can be identified as this kind of character. She is aware of the world of Greek gods being real and yet, she worries about "mortal" issues. In *The Lightning Thief*, in order to protect Percy, she lives with Gabriel Ugliano, Percy's stepfather whom Percy nicknamed "Smelly Gabe"³⁰⁶ and who could be described as abuser. They often argue about money, Percy, a car, and similar issues. However, at the end of the first book, Sally uses Medusa's head to turn Gabe

³⁰¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 202-203.

³⁰² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 196-197.

³⁰³ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, "Northrop Frye & Critical Method."

³⁰⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 197.

³⁰⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 197.

³⁰⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 158-159.

into stone. Thus, this example illustrates the difficult relationship she had with Gabe and, apart from the last part, a realistic approach to events as she, for instance, explains Percy that Gabe “is just worried about money”³⁰⁷ when he does not want to allow them to go for a trip.

The following example presents this realistic approach as well because, at the end of the first book, Sally writes a letter to Percy, telling him she found a school he could go to and that they could stay together. Thus, even though she knows what Percy has been through and how important he is, she still prioritizes his education and wants him to be with her. Apart from these examples, Sally also displays emotional reactions typical of certain situations, for example, when Percy gets back home in the end of *The Lightning Thief* and Sally hugs him and cries from happiness.

Moreover, the reminder of reality is in the series also displayed by the mortal news which report for example the disappearance of Percy and Sally in the first volume, or the destruction caused by Typhon in the last one. However, because of the Mist, they do not see anything unnatural about the events and explain it logically, as already mentioned in the previous part of the thesis. The news reports correspond well with the character of the reminder of reality as they report the events through realistic point of view which, however, does not go against the romantic aspects in the series.

Having discussed the four typical characters (and their sub-types) of the *mythos* of summer – romance, which appear in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, it is time to focus on characters from the series which can be analyzed as representatives of the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy, and the *mythos* of spring – comedy.

The first character to be analyzed is already mentioned Luke. As said above, Luke can be classified as the antagonist, the traitor, the enemy, however, as seen in the analysis of structure, he has also been identified as the hero of the series. To pursue this further, in his *Theory of Myths* focusing on the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy, Frye provides characteristic features of such a character, i.e. the tragic hero, saying that it is parallel to the comic *alazon* type of character.³⁰⁸ According to Frye, the tragic hero “disturb[s] a balance in nature [and] the righting of the balance is what the Greeks called *nemesis*”³⁰⁹ which corresponds to the comic *eiron*.³¹⁰ In Luke’s case, this disturbance may be seen as his connection with Kronos and his

³⁰⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 35.

³⁰⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 217.

³⁰⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 209.

³¹⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 216.

decision to help him in overthrowing the Greek gods. Subsequently, Frye says that “the agent or instrument of *nemesis* may be human vengeance, ghostly vengeance, divine vengeance, divine justice, accident, fate...”³¹¹ In the discussed example, the agent of *nemesis* is the fate as it is the already mentioned Great Prophecy which governs Luke’s destiny. What is, according to Frye, also important is the inevitability of *nemesis* happening no matter the circumstances.³¹² Thus, despite Luke’s change of heart at the very end, nothing could save him as he was destined by the prophecy to die.

Another thing that is essential is that “the great majority of tragic heroes do possess *hybris*, a proud, passionate, obsessed or soaring mind which brings about a morally intelligible downfall. Such *hybris* is the normal precipitating agent of catastrophe...”³¹³ In Annabeth’s words: “‘Hubris means deadly pride, Percy. Thinking you can do things better than anyone else... even the gods.’”³¹⁴ To find Luke’s *hybris*, it is important to uncover the reasons for his actions. The first, and the most important, reason is his anger towards gods, his father Hermes especially, for not acknowledging their demigod children. Secondly, Luke also shows signs of the above mentioned *hybris* as can be illustrated by the following example when Luke tells Percy that Hermes sent him on a quest “to steal a golden apple from the Garden of the Hesperides”³¹⁵ which Riordan uses clearly as an allusion to the story of Hercules. However, when Percy points out that Hercules managed to steal the apple Luke says: “‘Where’s the glory in repeating what others have done?’”³¹⁶ This shows that Luke was not only angry at his father for basically abandoning him, but also that he believed he was no less better than such heroes as Hercules which also proves another Luke’s statement through which he explains to Percy his decision to work with Kronos: “He [Kronos] showed me that my talents are being wasted.”³¹⁷ Thus, despite Luke being identified as the hero of the series in the analysis of structure from the viewpoint of romance, and the traitor from the romantic viewpoint of characters, the examples above prove that the character of Luke does fall the best within Frye’s characterization of the tragic hero when analyzed from the perspective of tragedy.

³¹¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 209.

³¹² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 209.

³¹³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 210.

³¹⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 191.

³¹⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 366.

³¹⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 366.

³¹⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 366.

Another character which is “[a] tragic counterpart to the vice or tricky slave may be discerned in the soothsayer or prophet who foresees the inevitable end.”³¹⁸ In *Percy Jackson* series this character is the Oracle which is in Greek mythology described for instance as “[t]he spokesperson of the ruling deity of a shrine”³¹⁹ the purpose of which was to “[answer] people’s questions about the future or the past.”³²⁰ In the series, Riordan takes one of the best-known oracles, the Oracle of Delphi,³²¹ and sets it into the Camp Half-Blood to tell prophecies about quests and futures of the half-blood heroes. However, even though Riordan’s version of the Oracle is based on the Oracle of Delphi and does have the same function, the author sets it into the attic “filled with Greek hero junk,”³²² and the Oracle itself is by Percy described as “the most gruesome memento of all: a mummy.”³²³ These descriptions imply that the Oracle is in the series perceived as scary, even disgusting. However, such perception does not correspond to the idea that the Oracle is supposed to be considered sacred because the gods themselves speak through it.³²⁴ Thus, by placing the Oracle in the attic instead of a shrine and giving it the pejorative properties, Riordan steps away from the original mythical version and changes it to fit the story (especially the appearance of the Oracle is important later in the series).

In his analysis of the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy, Frye also discusses another character from the comic *eirōn* group. This character is the opposite of the comic sub-category called the withdrawn *eirōn* which in tragedy may be “the god who decrees the tragic action, [...] a ghost, [...] or it may not be a person at all but simply an invisible force known only by its effects.”³²⁵ In *Percy Jackson* series this character can be identified in connection with Luke who has already been recognized as the tragic hero. It is no one else but Kronos because he stands at the beginning of Luke’s tragedy when he lures Luke to serve him. This also corresponds to Frye’s saying that such a character can also be described as “an event previous to the action of which the tragedy itself is the consequence.”³²⁶ Based on this definition, Kronos’s luring of Luke can be identified as the event previous to the action which can be then identified as Luke’s decision to join forces with Kronos, and the consequence is Luke’s tragic death.

³¹⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 216.

³¹⁹ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 106.

³²⁰ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 106.

³²¹ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 106.

³²² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 139.

³²³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 140.

³²⁴ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 106.

³²⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 216.

³²⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 216.

Out of the characters which Frye discusses in the part dedicated to the *mythos* of spring – comedy, the cyclops Polyphemus can be identified as belonging to the *alazon* group, specifically to the sub-category which Frye calls “*senex iratus* or heavy father.”³²⁷ Frye describes these characters as fierce, obsessed, and naïve, and he even uses the mythological Polyphemus as an example.³²⁸ In the series, Riordan’s Polyphemus is supposed to be the exact same Polyphemus that Odysseus encountered on his journey which is proved by the fact that Annabeth used Odysseus’s trick when she called herself Nobody to trick the cyclops as already mentioned above. However, Polyphemus is not the only character who can be in *Percy Jackson* series identified as *senex iratus* for there is also another mythological character who corresponds to the given description – Medusa. As well as Polyphemus, Medusa is full of anger and hatred for being turned into a monster by Athena,³²⁹ and at the same time she is obsessed with her desire for revenge aimed at Annabeth which illustrates the following example: ““You see why I must destroy the girl, Percy. She is my enemy’s daughter. I shall crush her statue to dust.”³³⁰ It can be also said that Medusa is naïve because she asks Percy to stay with her, to let her turn him into a statue thinking he would accept,³³¹ and also because she gets defeated in a similar way as she got when fighting Perseus, i.e. she is beheaded.³³² However, even though Medusa is in the series the one from Greek mythology, Riordan again modernizes this myth as he sets Medusa into a shop called ““Aunty Em’s Garden Gnome Emporium”” and makes her a business woman selling statues.³³³

Lastly, one more comic character can be identified in *Percy Jackson* series, and it is the already mentioned character of an “*eironeia* type [...] generally an older man, who begins the action of the play by withdrawing from it, and ends the play by returning. He is often a father with the motive of seeing what his son will do.”³³⁴ This description fits Percy’s father Poseidon, who left before Percy was born and whom Percy encountered for the first time at the very end of the first book *The Lightning Thief*. However, even though Poseidon is not present throughout first twelve years of Percy’s life, his motive for doing so is a bit different than simply watching what Percy will do. Most importantly, by having Percy, Poseidon broke an agreement not to have any children which he had closed with his brothers Zeus and Hades after the Second World

³²⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 172.

³²⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 172.

³²⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 180.

³³⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 180.

³³¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 180.

³³² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 180.

³³³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 171, 186.

³³⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 174.

War.³³⁵ Thus, he did not acknowledge Percy as his son until necessary. However, at the end of *The Lightning Thief*, when Percy and Poseidon meet, Poseidon says: ““You did well, Perseus. Do not misunderstand me. Whatever else you do, know that you are mine. You are a true son of the Sea God.””³³⁶ This implies that even though Percy was an unwanted child, Poseidon does nevertheless accept Percy as his son.

Furthermore, the pact between the Big Three also shows how Riordan reflects on history, and uses it to explain or justify specific decisions about the plot, changes of mythology etc. As suggested, the above mentioned Second World War is a good example. In the series, Grover explains that the Second World War “was basically a fight between the sons of Zeus and Poseidon on one side, and the sons of Hades on the other.”³³⁷ Subsequently, it is also specified that children of Zeus and Poseidon were victorious,³³⁸ thus Riordan clearly defines both, Zeus and Poseidon, as protagonists. On the other hand, Hades is on one occasion even described as follows: “The Lord of the Dead [Hades] resembled pictures I’d seen of Adolph Hitler...”³³⁹ which clearly connects him with the leader of Nazi Germany, and thus makes him an antagonist, and at the same time, it makes Hitler a son of Hades. Consequently, it can be said that Riordan used the Second World War to classify the position of the mentioned characters, and he also used it as a means of explaining why the Big Three sworn not to have any more children. At the same time, by using real historical events and figures, Riordan connects the world of Greek gods with the world of humans.

To conclude, similarly as structure, characters in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series are generally in accordance with Frye’s *mythos* of summer – romance. The first opposing pair of characters, hero and the enemy, can be identified as Percy and Kronos respectively, and other sub-categories and their opposites can be recognized as well. For example, the faithful companion and the traitor correspond to Grover and Luke respectively (although other characters, such as already mentioned Ethan Nakamura, can be identified as traitors alongside with Luke), or the dragon and its opposite in a form of the helping animal, where the dragon can be identified as pretty much all opposing monsters and the helping animal, for example the pegasus Blackjack, can be identified as well. Subsequently, to the second opposing pair, the nature spirits (Golux) and the reminder of reality, correspond the cyclops Tyson and the

³³⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 113.

³³⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 346.

³³⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 114.

³³⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 114.

³³⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 309.

hippocampus Rainbow to the former, and Percy's mother Sally and the mortal news reports to the latter. However, despite the characters being mostly romantic, there are also characters typical of the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy, centered around Luke who can be identified not only as the enemy or the traitor but also as the tragic hero. In connection with Luke, Kronos can be identified as the opposite to the withdrawn *eiron*, i.e. as the source of Luke's tragedy, and the Oracle as the prophet who foresees Luke's tragic end. Lastly, Polyphemus and Medusa can be identified as corresponding to the comic *senex iratus* kind of characters, and Percy's father Poseidon to the withdrawn *eiron* of comedy. Moreover, the analysis shows that Rick Riordan uses many figures from Greek mythology (such as Polyphemus, Medusa, Circe, etc.) whom he sets in the contemporary America and often adapts in order to fit not only the present-day world, but also to serve their purpose in the story.

5. Phases

Lastly, the third aspect through which Frye defines the four *mythoi* are phases, and he distinguishes six different phases for each *mythos*.³⁴⁰ Thus, as Denham says, there are consequently “twenty-four separate structures.”³⁴¹ Moreover, “the phases from adjacent *mythoi* tend to merge, or to blend ‘insensibly’ into one another.”³⁴² In other words, through phases it is possible to observe not only the structure of each *mythos* but also the above-mentioned interconnectedness of the four *mythoi*. As for the connection between the phases itself, Denham says that the phases in each *mythos* are divided into two groups by three phases, which subsequently correspond to the phases of the adjacent *mythos*.³⁴³ These relations will be further explained during the analysis of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series focusing on phases.

For example, looking from the viewpoint of the *mythos* of summer – romance, because the structure and majority of the characters in *Percy Jackson* series have been identified as romantic, Frye says that “as it [romance] moves from the tragic to the comic area, the first three [phases] are parallel to the first three phases of tragedy and the second three to the second three phases of comedy.”³⁴⁴ Thus, in this part, the selected series will be analyzed through these six phases of romance and their corresponding phases of tragedy and comedy.

Firstly, it is important to say that in romance “[t]he phases form a cyclical sequence in a romantic hero’s life.”³⁴⁵ In other words, Denham says that “the hero is established as the primary category, and each phase is seen therefore as a stage in the sequence of his life.”³⁴⁶ Thus, the initial phase concerns nothing else but “the myth of the birth of the hero,”³⁴⁷ and because, in the analysis of characters, the character of Percy has been identified as the hero of the series, the analysis will center mostly around him.

According to Frye, hero’s birth “is often associated with a flood, the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle.”³⁴⁸ In the series, there is no specific mention of a flood connected to Percy’s birth, however, in spite of that, a similar association with water can be inferred as Percy’s father is, as already stated, Poseidon – “the god of the sea (and of water

³⁴⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 177.

³⁴¹ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

³⁴² The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

³⁴³ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

³⁴⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 198.

³⁴⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 198.

³⁴⁶ The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

³⁴⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 198.

³⁴⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 198.

generally)³⁴⁹ – thus, the connection to water is very strong. Moreover, Frye says that in the first phase of romance, “there is a search for the child, who has to be hidden away in a secret place. The hero being of mysterious origin, his true paternity is often concealed, and a false father appears who seeks the child’s death.”³⁵⁰ As stated above, Percy had not met his father until the end of the first book, however, not only had he not met Poseidon, he had not even known his identity which was revealed only after a training battle in Camp Half-Blood. Moreover, in the series, the demigod children are searched for by various monsters and also by satyrs as Grover explains: “We [satyrs] try to sniff out the half-bloods who have the makings of great heroes. If we find one with a very strong aura, like a child of the Big Three, we alert Chiron.”³⁵¹ Thus, as this quote illustrates, the search for Percy is present as well.

Considering Percy being hidden away in a secret place, this aspect can be identified in the series too however, it is not connected to a secret place but rather to a specific person – already mentioned Smelly Gabe, Percy’s stepfather. As hinted, Percy’s mother married Gabe in order to protect Percy which can be explained further by quoting Grover who says to Percy: “Your stepfather smells so repulsively human he could mask the presence of any demigod. [...] Gabe has been covering your scent for years. If you hadn’t lived with him every summer, you probably would’ve been found by monsters a long time ago.”³⁵² In other words, Percy was not hidden in any secret place, but he was covered by Gabe’s human smell which kept the monsters away. However, apart from being Percy’s protection, the character of Smelly Gabe at the same time corresponds to the false father who seeks the child’s death. Such a claim is a little too excessive as Gabe is neither striving, nor does he desire, to kill Percy, however, he does not want Percy to be around either which illustrates the following example in which Gabe talks to Percy’s mother about Percy after Percy returned home at the end of *The Lightning Thief*: “‘He ran away,’ Gabe told her. ‘Let him stay gone.’”³⁵³ This is just one of many examples which illustrate Gabe’s attitude towards Percy.

Moreover, in the first phase of romance, “[t]he false mother, the celebrated cruel stepmother, is also common: her victim is of course usually female.”³⁵⁴ This aspect is connected to Annabeth (who has been identified as the heroine of the series) as she has a stepmother about whom she says: “[M]y stepmom [...] treated me like a freak. She wouldn’t let me play with her

³⁴⁹ Taft, *Greek Gods & Goddesses*, 104.

³⁵⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 199.

³⁵¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 116.

³⁵² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 159.

³⁵³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 349.

³⁵⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 199.

children. My dad went along with her.”³⁵⁵ Therefore, based on the quote, Annabeth can be identified as a victim to her stepmother. However, as the story progresses, both Annabeth and her stepmother reconcile. Moreover, Frye says that a father in such cases is usually depicted as an intelligent older man, such as a teacher, and as an example he provides a centaur Chiron.³⁵⁶ Annabeth’s father fits this description because he is described as “an older guy,”³⁵⁷ and he is also “a professor of military history,”³⁵⁸ however, Annabeth’s character is connected not only to her father but also very closely to no one else but the centaur Chiron who was, according to Nigel Rodgers, “[t]he wise, aged centaur who tutored heroes such as Jason as children. Chiron was regarded as a great educator and was also reputed to be learned in medicine, astrology, and astronomy.”³⁵⁹ In other words, in the story of *Percy Jackson*, Riordan uses a figure from Greek mythology in a very similar way as Chiron is depicted in the Greek myths, because, as well as in mythology, in *Percy Jackson* series, Chiron takes up a role of “the activities director,”³⁶⁰ and the “head trainer at camp.”³⁶¹ Moreover, apart from the provided characteristics, it can be also said that Chiron is somewhat a father figure to a lot of characters, Annabeth included, and therefore fits into this phase of romance.

Moreover, considering the way in which Riordan adapts this mythological character, in *The Lightning Thief*, Chiron answers Percy’s question whether he is the centaur from Greek myths as follow: “‘The Chiron from the stories? Trainer of Hercules and all that? Yes, Percy, I am.’”³⁶² Thus, as with the character of Medusa etc. Riordan incorporates the mythological character of Chiron in his story, but this time, he does not change this character as much as for instance in Medusa’s case, because he sets Chiron mostly in Camp-Half Blood where he can stay true to his original version. However, Chiron sometimes appears in the human world too, for instance in *The Lightning Thief*, and there, he takes up a role of Mr Brunner, a teacher of Latin in a wheelchair³⁶³ in order to hide his true form of a centaur. Thus, it can be said that the way in which Riordan adapts, and changes mythological characters is largely dependent on the

³⁵⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 201.

³⁵⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 199.

³⁵⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse*, 231-232.

³⁵⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse*, 233.

³⁵⁹ Nigel Rodgers, “A Glossary of Ancient Greek Myth.” in *Demigods and Monsters – Your Favorite Authors on Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series*, ed. Rick Riordan (Dallas: BenBella Books Inc., 2013), 172.

³⁶⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 5.

³⁶¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse*, 6.

³⁶² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 82.

³⁶³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 2.

setting, which can be shown on other characters, such as Mrs Dodds alias Fury, Grover, etc., as well.

As said above, to the first phase of romance corresponds the first phase of tragedy, and because Luke has been identified not only as a traitor in romance, but simultaneously as a tragic hero, this phase, and the other two phases of tragedy, will be analyzed from his perspective. According to Frye, the first phase of tragedy usually depicts the tragic hero as innocent and courageous,³⁶⁴ and at the same time it tries to create an image of the tragic hero being “pulled down by wolves.”³⁶⁵ In the series, the character of Luke when he was young is depicted, for example, as “carefree and happy,”³⁶⁶ and by his mother May as “so kind,”³⁶⁷ and she also says that Luke “left to protect [her,]”³⁶⁸ all of these examples showing young Luke as a brave, innocent character. However, Luke’s younger self is also described as “hungry and lean, with wild animal eyes [...] used to being attacked.”³⁶⁹ This example, on the other hand, can be associated with Frye’s depiction of the tragic hero as being pulled down by wolves because, in a sense, Luke was hunted by monsters which in this example represent the wolves.

The second phase of romance, described by Frye as the phase of “the innocent youth of the hero,”³⁷⁰ is not possible to be identified in the series. On the contrary, at the beginning of *The Lightning Thief* Percy describes his youth as “miserable,”³⁷¹ which can be associated with Percy’s problems at school, his stepfather Gabe etc. which is, however, in contrast with Frye’s further description of this phase as he says that it often depicts “a pleasant wooden landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys [...],”³⁷² that is the comfortable, pleasant environment to which a “little apartment on the Upper East Side”³⁷³ with “[c]risps and beer cans [...] all over the carpet”³⁷⁴ is the opposite.

The corresponding second phase of tragedy depicts “the loss of the innocence”³⁷⁵ which is in Luke’s case observable after his encounter with Hermes at his mother’s place, and their discussion about his fate. Subsequently, Thalia describes this encounter as follows: “After that

³⁶⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 219.

³⁶⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 219.

³⁶⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 84.

³⁶⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 86.

³⁶⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 86.

³⁶⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 137.

³⁷⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 199.

³⁷¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 2.

³⁷² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 200.

³⁷³ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 17.

³⁷⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 31.

³⁷⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 220.

night, after we left his mom's house? Luke was never the same. He got reckless and moody..."³⁷⁶ Thus, this example shows the moment when Luke changed from the brave, innocent boy he was in the first phase.

The third phase of romance can be considered the basis of the *Percy Jackson* series because, according to Frye, it concerns "the normal quest theme"³⁷⁷ aspects which have already been analyzed above in the analysis of structure and characters. Just to shortly summarize, the ultimate quest of the series is to stop the titan Kronos from destroying the society centered around Greek gods. On the side for the quest, that is the heroic character, stands Percy, and on the other side, against the quest, stands his enemy Kronos. Moreover, there are many minor quests included in the series.

Similarly as in romance, the third phase of tragedy is connected to the quest theme, specifically to its resolution, or as Frye says, there is "a strong emphasis [...] thrown on the success of completeness of the hero's achievement,"³⁷⁸ and because Frye also says that this phase "is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of the heroic life,"³⁷⁹ it is related to Luke's final decision to stand up to Kronos at the very end of the series. Thus, Luke's primary decision to help Kronos destroy the Olympian gods and begin "a new Golden Age"³⁸⁰ had not been achieved before he died.

The fourth phase of romance is, according to Frye, based on "the maintaining of integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience."³⁸¹ This description can be understood from two different points of view as it may concern either the individual characters or the society as a whole.³⁸² In *Percy Jackson* series examples of both, the individual and the society, defending their innocence can be found. Concerning the individual, Frye stresses the importance "of consolidating heroic innocence in this world after the first great quest has been completed."³⁸³ This can be related to Percy's final, victorious battle with Kronos – that is finishing his quest, and the fact, that even though he became a hero, this experience did not take away his innocence which can be seen in the following example in which Percy refused the offer made by Zeus to become an immortal god, and instead, he wished for the gods to

³⁷⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 217.

³⁷⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 200.

³⁷⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 220.

³⁷⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 221.

³⁸⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 369.

³⁸¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201.

³⁸² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201.

³⁸³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201.

acknowledge their demigod children etc. In other words, Percy did not become too proud and still thought of others rather than of himself.

Moreover, Frye adds that “[a] central image of this phase of romance is that of the beleaguered castle,”³⁸⁴ which can be in the series identified in *The Last Olympian* in a form of the battle for Olympus, because it is beleaguered by the army of Kronos and defended not only by the gods but by demigods and other characters opposing Kronos as well. In this example, the characters on the side for the quest can be related to innocence, while Kronos with his army of monsters can be associated with experience. Moreover, Riordan’s inspiration by the Trojan War, or at least by some of its aspects, can be seen here. One example can be Percy’s following of Achilles in order to become invulnerable, as mentioned above. However, because in this analogy the Olympus stands for Troy, and Kronos’s forces for the Greeks, Percy’s position is, compared to the position of Achilles, reverted as in the myth Achilles stood on the Greek side.³⁸⁵ Another example concerns a well-known event from the Trojan War in which Achilles, who refuses to fight, lets his friend Patroclus wear his armor into the battle, however, Patroclus gets killed by Hector, and since then, Achilles rejoins the war and leads Greeks towards victory.³⁸⁶ A female-version of this event can be seen in *Percy Jackson* series as Clarisse (representing Achilles) refuses to join the battle for Olympus and thus, her friend Silena (representing Patroclus), takes Clarisse’s armor and leads her warriors to the battle. Subsequently, she is killed, Clarisse becomes furious, and fights off the enemy forces. However, Silena also turns out to be a spy, helping Luke and Kronos from the inside, and thus, she can be at the same time considered a reference to the Trojan horse. Thus, even though Riordan was clearly inspired by the events from the Trojan war, it can be said that he followed its structure rather than the myth itself, as many details are changed.

Considering the second viewpoint, i.e. the viewpoint of the society, it is based on the idea that “power is the prerequisite of justice.”³⁸⁷ To this Frye adds several examples such as “the monster tamed and controlled by the virgin[,] the Gorgon’s head on the shield of Athene[,] the child leading the beasts of prey[,] an unusually truculent hero [...] brought to heel by the heroine.”³⁸⁸ Several of these examples appear in *Percy Jackson* series as well.

³⁸⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201.

³⁸⁵ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 142.

³⁸⁶ Morford, Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 461.

³⁸⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201.

³⁸⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 201-202.

For instance, the first example mentioned corresponds to Annabeth who, in *The Lightning Thief*, managed to control Cerberus through playing fetch with him. Here the power is not represented in a form of physical abilities, but rather through the power of wit and empathy, because Annabeth recalled her own experience of playing with her dog as a child, and used it with Cerberus, who turned out to be desperate for someone to play with him. On this example, a similarity with *Harry Potter* series can be spotted as in its first volume there is a scene in which Harry puts three-headed dog Fluffy to sleep by playing a flute. In both these examples, inspiration by a Greek myth of Orpheus, who tamed Cerberus by singing³⁸⁹ can be seen. However, in *Percy Jackson* series, the resemblance is not that obvious because of the change that Riordan makes as to calm Cerberus down, he uses attention and compassion instead of music. This change may reflect the effort to connect the series with the present-day world through using a familiar image of a lonely dog, and another reason might be the adding of plausibility to the story as the dog being calmed down by a nice girl who pays attention to him and plays with him seems more probable than a dog being put to sleep by music.

The second example mentioned, that is Athena's shield with the Gorgon head on it, can be related to the character of Thalia – daughter of Zeus – who, in the series, has a “magic shield, Aegis.”³⁹⁰ The term Aegis can be found frequently in Greek mythology as, according to Hard, it was “a fringed garment or piece of armour that could be worn as a corselet or serve as a sort of shield,”³⁹¹ which was given to Zeus by Hephaestus and later it was used by Zeus's daughter Athena.³⁹² Daly describes Aegis in a similar way, and adds that “it bore the head of the GORGON, MEDUSA, in its center.”³⁹³ As for its magical properties, Daly says that “[t]he shield had the power to terrify and disperse the enemy. When Zeus shook it, the shield produced tremendous thunder and lightning storms.”³⁹⁴ Most of the descriptions of Aegis provided above (except the one of its origin, as in the series it is said that the shield is “a gift from Athena”³⁹⁵) fit the one of Thalia's Aegis because, in the series, it is depicted, for example, as a “shield of terror,”³⁹⁶ “a death mask,”³⁹⁷ and about its effects Percy, for instance, says: “Just being near it [the shield] made me cold with fear,”³⁹⁸ or that “it's so horrible most people will panic and run

³⁸⁹ Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 552.

³⁹⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan's Curse*, 20.

³⁹¹ Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 74.

³⁹² Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 74.

³⁹³ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 4.

³⁹⁴ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 4.

³⁹⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan's Curse*, 20.

³⁹⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 137.

³⁹⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 182.

³⁹⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 182.

at the sight of it.”³⁹⁹ However, the shield Thalia uses is not the exact same as the one from Greek mythology which proves the following sentence: “Her [Thalia’s] shield is modelled on one her dad Zeus uses – also called Aegis.”⁴⁰⁰ Therefore, considering all the examples, it is clear that Riordan uses Aegis as a reference to Greek mythology in order to connect the character of Thalia with her godly father Zeus. At the same time, the shield presents the source of power through which Thalia can achieve justice, which corresponds to Frye’s definition of this phase.

The corresponding fourth phase of comedy “[moves] out of the world of experience into the ideal world of innocence and romance.”⁴⁰¹ In this phase, Frye for example mentions that often “the victory of summer over winter”⁴⁰² is presented. This victory can be partially identified in *Percy Jackson* series as well because, as the analysis of characters has shown, in romance, Kronos can be associated with winter, however, Percy is, due to his youth etc., associated with spring rather than with summer. Thus, it might be said that the series presents the victory of spring over winter, not summer.

Moreover, according to Frye, the fourth phase of comedy also concerns “the triumph of life and love over the waste land,”⁴⁰³ which can be in the series pointed out through at least two examples. The first one concerns the general picture of Kronos’s army being defeated by gods and demigods, similarly as in the example above. However, in this example Kronos represents the waste land as it is what his victory would bring (as already discussed above), and the gods and demigods represent life and love because those are the reasons they fight Kronos – to protect their lives and one another. The second example concerns Luke and is, again, connected to his final decision to stand up to Kronos. Specifically, this example shows the triumph of love because Luke’s decision comes from his promise to Annabeth of which she reminds him during the last fight as follows: “Family, Luke. You promised.”⁴⁰⁴ After this, Luke pushes Kronos away, is able to control his own body again, and manages to stab, and therefore destroy, Kronos. From this example, it is clear that the reason why Luke was able to oppose Kronos was his love for Annabeth, although more in a sense of a friendship than of a romantic love.

³⁹⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse*, 20.

⁴⁰⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Titan’s Curse*, 20.

⁴⁰¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 181-182.

⁴⁰² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 183.

⁴⁰³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 182.

⁴⁰⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 314.

The fifth phase of romance is characterized as “a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above,”⁴⁰⁵ and also as “a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it.”⁴⁰⁶ In other words, this phase follows the main action which characters reflect on, and often idealize; also, in this phase, instead of preparing for another action, characters tend to stand down. In *Percy Jackson* series, it is problematic to define this phase as on one hand there is a scene at the end of *The Last Olympian* in which Rachel, the new host of the Oracle, utters “the next Great Prophecy,”⁴⁰⁷ which, naturally, makes the characters think of what is going to happen next. On the other hand, Percy and Annabeth decide not to worry about it because, as Annabeth says, “[...] maybe the prophecy won’t happen for years.”⁴⁰⁸ To which Percy responds: ““Could be a problem for another generation of demigods.””⁴⁰⁹ On this conversation, it is possible to see that both, Percy and Annabeth, are not excited by the vision of another adventure, on the contrary, they would prefer not to be involved which is in accordance with Frye’s description of this phase.

Moreover, in the fifth phase of romance, characters, and the society in general, are divided according to their moral qualities, and in this division the true lovers are considered dominant.⁴¹⁰ It is possible to observe this aspect in *Percy Jackson* series as well because towards the end the focus is on Percy and Annabeth who start dating which is by other demigods celebrated. Percy describes this celebration in the following way: “With a huge cheer, they carried us down the hill, but they kept us close enough to hold hands.”⁴¹¹ In other words, the love between Percy and Annabeth takes in this phase of the series the central place.

As for the corresponding fifth phase of comedy, Denham says that in this phase “the ending is not so much a matter of the plot as it is the distanced perspective of the audience, who, looking down upon the action from a higher point of view, can distinguish the chaos of experience from the order of innocence.”⁴¹² In other words, this phase is related to the ending which is not determined by the plot as much as it is determined by readers themselves. That is the reason why Frye says that “the reader [...] feels raised above the action.”⁴¹³ This fifth comic phase is, however, impossible to be identified in *Percy Jackson* series, because, as mentioned

⁴⁰⁵ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴⁰⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴⁰⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 348.

⁴⁰⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 360.

⁴⁰⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 361.

⁴¹⁰ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴¹¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 353.

⁴¹² The Educated Imagination – A Website Dedicated to Northrop Frye, “Northrop Frye & Critical Method.”

⁴¹³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 184.

above, there is the first-person narrator, and, as a result, rather than being distanced, the reader feels to be a part of the story. Moreover, the ending clearly emerges out of the plot, and not from the readers' perspective.

However, in spite of the main idea of the fifth phase of comedy not being present in the series, it is possible to identify at least one of its features. This particular feature is related to the series' comic structural aspect, specifically to the one which concerns the change from one society to another which is in the series represented by the change in the gods' approach towards their demigod children, as mentioned above in the analysis of structure. On this example, it is possible to observe "a movement [...] from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order."⁴¹⁴

To explain, before Percy wished for the gods to acknowledge their half-blood children, it sometimes happened that they did not do that at all.⁴¹⁵ This, of course, led not only to the already mentioned rebellions on the side of the demigods who joined Kronos to get revenge, recognition etc., but on an individual scale it also meant uncertainty for every undetermined demigod. These kids are in the series described, for instance, as "teenagers who looked sullen and depressed, as if they were waiting for a call that would never come."⁴¹⁶ Or, similarly, in the following example, which is at the same time a part of his request towards the gods, Percy says: "No unclaimed demigods will be crammed in the Hermes cabin any more, wondering who their parents are."⁴¹⁷ Moreover, apart from uncertainty on the side of individuals, the presence of undetermined demigods proved to be problematic for others as well which can be illustrated, for example, by Percy saying to Tyson: "If they don't know who your Olympian parent is, they put you in the Hermes cabin [...] until you're determined."⁴¹⁸ However, because the acknowledgment from the gods did not always happen, the result was that "[t]he Hermes cabin was always full to bursting."⁴¹⁹ This subsequently led to negative feelings among the residents of the Hermes cabin, newcomers having to sleep on the floor,⁴²⁰ etc. In other words, the whole situation around the undetermined demigods caused a lot of confusion, problems, and chaos. However, after the gods had fulfilled Percy's wish and began to acknowledge their children,

⁴¹⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 184.

⁴¹⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 96.

⁴¹⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 96.

⁴¹⁷ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 333.

⁴¹⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 47.

⁴¹⁹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Sea of Monsters*, 61.

⁴²⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 83-84.

the situation changed, because cabins for children of smaller gods were built,⁴²¹ and as a result “[t]he Hermes cabin was a lot less crowded.”⁴²² Thus, everyone had its place in Camp Half-Blood.

Therefore, the provided examples prove that the fifth phase of comedy can be in *Percy Jackson* series distinguished through the aspect of change from confusion to order. This change corresponds to the above-described change in the society of Greek gods and demigods in which the state before the gods began to acknowledge their children can be associated with chaos while the latter state after the change can be associated with order.

The sixth, and the last, phase of romance is by Frye called “*penseroso*,”⁴²³ which is defined by Collins Dictionary as “a pensive, brooding, or thoughtful person,”⁴²⁴ and, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, it is also John Milton’s poem which, among other things, focuses on the meditative life.⁴²⁵ Therefore, it is no wonder that this phase “marks the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure,”⁴²⁶ which, in other words, means that characters in this phase are no longer actively involved in the adventure but rather think about it. As an example, Frye provides an “image [...] of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies.”⁴²⁷ However, even though in the analysis of *Percy Jackson* series with regard to the fifth phase of romance it is suggested that Percy wants to leave the adventure to others rather than continue in it himself, the image of the lonely man provided by Frye does not entirely correspond. For one, Percy is not alone. He is always surrounded by his friends, and even at the end of the series, where there is a scene in which Percy watches other demigods leave the Camp Half-Blood from the Half-Blood Hill, which might resemble the lonely tower Frye speaks of, Percy is not alone, for he stands there with Annabeth.⁴²⁸

According to Frye, the sixth phase of romance is also typically linked with a comfortable environment in which stories are shared by a group of people as, for example, in *Decameron*.⁴²⁹ It can be said that this aspect of the sixth phase is not present in *Percy Jackson* series either.

⁴²¹ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 356.

⁴²² Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 356.

⁴²³ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴²⁴ “Definition of ‘penseroso’,” Collins Dictionary, last accessed May 27, 2022, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/penseroso>.

⁴²⁵ “Il Penseroso,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, last accessed May 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Il-Penseroso-poem-by-Milton>.

⁴²⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴²⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202.

⁴²⁸ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 359.

⁴²⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 202-203.

Despite being clear that the story is shared by Percy (because it is told by him in the first-person narrator, and also because on the very first page of the series Percy speaks directly to the reader, stressing that his story is true etc.⁴³⁰) there is no group of people, no comfortable environment, and also, the audience, that is the reader, is not mentioned at the end of the series which is, according to Frye, an important aspect as “the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well.”⁴³¹

Lastly, Frye associates the sixth phase of romance with the archetype of the flood, or some similar disaster, which leaves behind only an individual or a small group of the society which then has to start living again in a safe place, and he also connects this new beginning with the very first phase of romance, that is the birth of the hero.⁴³² This archetypal image is connected especially with Noah’s Ark from the Bible, however, Greek mythology describes a very similar story in which Zeus sends a flood to destroy humanity, and Deucalion builds an Ark to save himself and his wife to restore life after the flood is gone.⁴³³ Therefore, the sixth phase represents the last, and at the same the first, event in the cycle of the hero’s life. In *Percy Jackson* series, this aspect of the sixth phase can be identified in a form of Kronos’s army of monsters, Typhon especially, which, on its way to New York, destroys everything that stands in its way – just like a flood. This claim can be also supported by already mentioned mortal news, which were identified as reminders of reality in the analysis of characters, because they ascribe the destruction left behind to natural disasters such as “[m]onumental floods.”⁴³⁴ Thus, the association with the flood archetype is clear. Moreover, even though it cannot be exactly said that only a small group was left because in the final society there is even more people included than at the beginning which is already discussed from the viewpoint of comedy in the analysis of structure, the association with a new beginning can be inferred here. It can be seen on the following example, because after the war with Kronos was over, a new, better society described above emerged and the last pages of the series depict its beginnings, from new demigods coming to Camp Half-Blood⁴³⁵ to Annabeth’s rebuilding Olympus after the destruction.⁴³⁶ Finally, there is also another hint that a new cycle is about to begin, and it is provided by Rachel and her new Great Prophecy also mentioned above.

⁴³⁰ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, 1.

⁴³¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 203.

⁴³² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 203.

⁴³³ Daly, *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, 44.

⁴³⁴ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 53.

⁴³⁵ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 355.

⁴³⁶ Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian*, 360.

Considering the last phase of comedy, Frye says that “the social units of comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual.”⁴³⁷ In other words, this is the aspect of the sixth phase of comedy through which it corresponds to the sixth phase of romance – in both, the society is shown as broken up into small groups or an individual. However, in the series the exact opposite can be seen as the society is by the end of the series united more than it was at the beginning which can be illustrated, for example, on the acceptance of characters who stood on Kronos’s side into the final society etc. as suggested above.

To summarize the analysis of phases of the *mythos* of summer – romance, and the corresponding phases of the *mythos* of autumn – tragedy and the *mythos* of spring - comedy, in Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, most of the phases, or at least some of their aspects, were identified. Based on Frye’s arguments, as the most prominent one was, naturally, recognized the third phase of romance because it deals with the quest theme, which was discussed throughout the analysis several times, and is an essential part of the series. Similarly, the first romantic phase is also important as it concerns the birth of the hero, his or her mysterious origin etc. which is in *Percy Jackson* a crucial issue. The fourth, the fifth, and to a certain degree even the sixth phase of romance can be recognized in the series as well. On the other hand, the second phase of romance, which is associated with the innocent youth of the hero, pleasant environment etc. was not identified as the series depicts the opposite. As for the first three corresponding phases of tragedy, they were identified from Luke’s point of view. In the first tragic phase, Luke’s innocent youth was recognized, in the second phase there was the loss of innocence, and the third phase focused on the accomplishment of the quest in which, however, Luke failed. Lastly, concerning phases, the last three comic phases which correspond to the last three phases of romance were identified. The fourth phase of comedy is in the series present in a form of the victory of the heroes, that is Percy and others, over the enemy, that is Kronos, which is associated to the victory of summer, or in this case spring, over winter. Similarly, the victory of love and life over wasteland was identified as well. In the fifth phase of comedy a movement from confusion to order was identified as corresponding to the movement from one society to another. And lastly, the sixth comic phase was not recognized as the series depicts its opposite, that is, it shows the society as united, not broken up. Apart from the correspondence of individual phases which appear in the series, this part of analysis has also shown how Riordan uses and incorporates Greek mythology in the story of Percy, which can be illustrated for example by the centaur Chiron, whose depiction is clearly related

⁴³⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism – Four Essays*, 185.

to the setting he appears in. Similarly, inspiration by, and adjustment of, the stories of Orpheus and the Trojan war can be seen. Moreover, Riordan also uses an allusion to a mythological object, the shield of Zeus – Aegis, in order to intensify characteristic features of Thalia’s character, and to connect her with her godly father Zeus.

Conclusion

The aim of this master's thesis was to analyze how Rick Riordan incorporates Greek mythology into *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, using Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths* as a framework for the analysis. The analysis focused on three main areas – structure, characters, and phases.

Before the analysis was conducted, *Percy Jackson* series was, in the first chapter, identified as the work of children's literature of the twenty-first century due to its primary focus on child readers. Subsequently, the series was discussed in terms of fantasy genre, being classified as the portal-quest fantasy with features of the intrusion fantasy, based on Farah Mendlesohn's classification, and as belonging to epic fantasy, according to David L. Russel. Moreover, features of two well-known fantasy series, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, were identified in *Percy Jackson* series as well as other features that place the series within fantasy genre. Then, the series was also discussed in relation to adventure genre, because, among other things, it presents a story of a young protagonist Percy and his friends going through various adventures, against the adult antagonist Kronos. Lastly, the first chapter defined the term mythology in general, stressed that unlike legends or folktales, myths do not have known authors or origin in history, focused on Greek mythology as a predecessor of fantasy, and acknowledged that even nowadays mythology is still highly influential.

The second chapter focused on myth criticism and placed it in the context of other literary theories, such as formalist criticism, structuralism, or archetypal criticism, the latter being used by some authors, such as Daniel Russel Brown or Charles Bressler, as synonymous with myth criticism, however, other authors, Glen Robert Gill and Nasrullah Mambrol for example, treat these terms as different. Afterwards, possible definitions of myth criticism were presented, and its representatives were discussed, stressing Northrop Frye as the most influential one, and discussing his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), specifically the third essay called *Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths*, as it was later used as a framework for the analysis. Subsequently, possible ways of how to work with myth criticism in practice were introduced, and lastly, problems connected with myth criticism, such as issues with terminology, were discussed.

The analysis was based on Northrop Frye's *Theory of Myths* for the following reasons. Firstly, Frye's theory presents a structure through which the analyzed work can be viewed which, as mentioned above, confirms for instance E. W. Herd who says that myth criticism is useful when the focus is on structural aspects of the given work, and that it opens new

perspectives. Secondly, the analysis grounded in Frye's theory makes the reader focus on specific aspects of the four *mythoi* which Frye in his third essay discusses mainly from the viewpoint of structure, characters, and phases, and this focus then opens the readers mind to see connections, and specific, repeated patterns not only within the analyzed work and mythology, or other literary works such as the Bible, but also within aspects of culture, history, etc. Therefore, in this thesis, Frye's theory provided a structural framework for the analysis, helped to see the series in wider perspectives, and thus helped in better understanding of how Riordan uses, adapts, modernizes, etc. Greek mythology.

The analysis itself was then, based on Denham's suggestion mentioned above, divided into three parts – structure, characters, and phases. Thus, the third chapter focused on structure of *Percy Jackson* series, and based on Frye's theory, it can be said that the structure corresponds with the structure of the *mythos* of summer – romance. There were identified the four stages of romance, *the agon*, *the pathos*, *the sparagmos*, and *the anagnorisis*, not only when the series was viewed as a whole, but in individual installments as well. Furthermore, the movement between romance and comedy, and romance and tragedy, was observed. The former especially as a movement from one society to another, and inclusion of great number of characters into the final society. The latter can be represented by the reliance on fate.

The fourth chapter firstly explained that to analyze characters, Frye uses the work of Aristotle from which he takes four comic characters – *alazon*, *iron*, *bomolochos*, and *agroikos* – which form opposite pairs, and have their corresponding equivalents in other *mythoi* as well. Then, the characters were firstly analyzed from the viewpoint of romance, focusing on the first opposing pair, that is the hero and the enemy, defining Percy as the former and Kronos as the latter. Then, characters falling into subcategories within the hero-enemy relationship were analyzed as well. Subsequently, Sally and mortal news were identified as reminders of reality, and Tyson and Rainbow as their opposites, the spirits of nature. Then, characters were identified from the viewpoint of tragedy with the character of Luke presenting the tragic hero. From the comic viewpoint, Poseidon, for example, was identified as the withdrawn *iron*.

Lastly, the fifth chapter focused on phases from the viewpoint of romance and its corresponding phases of tragedy and comedy. Thus, this chapter discussed twelve phases which, more or less, appear in *Percy Jackson* series. For example, the third phase of romance concerning the quest-theme was identified as the most important in the series, while the second phase of romance which concerns the innocent youth of the hero was not identified at all. Concerning tragedy, its three phases were defined from Luke's perspective, with all of them

being present in the series. As for comedy, the fourth and the fifth phase were recognized, the former depicting victory of life and love over waste land and of heroes over enemy, the latter depicting the movement from one society representing confusion, to another representing order. The last comic phase was not possible to be identified.

To summarize the way in which Riordan incorporates Greek mythology into *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, it can be said that the author often draws inspiration from well-known stories such as the story of the Trojan war, or stories of well-known heroes such as Jason, Achilles, Hercules, Orpheus, and mostly Odysseus, and incorporates their patterns into his own story. However, these patterns are often changed for the needs of the plot, and other reasons, such as adding on plausibility of the story etc.

Also, Riordan often takes characters from Greek mythology (e.g. Chiron, Kronos, Medusa, Polyphemus...) and sets them into the present-day world. However, these characters are usually changed, with the change depending on their current setting. To explain, if the characters appear in the world of Greek gods, their form is usually unchanged from the original version. If they, however, appear in the world of mortals, they take a form corresponding with the mortal world. A great example presents Chiron, appearing as a centaur in Camp Half-Blood and as a Latin teacher in a wheelchair in the world of mortal people. A possible reason why Riordan changes mythological characters, apart from connecting both the mythological and the mortal world, is because of the needs of the plot, as can be seen on the example of Oracle, for the description of which pejorative properties are used while in mythology it was considered sacred. Apart from different form, mythological characters are often modernized, i.e. adjusted to fit the contemporary world, such as shown on the example of Medusa who is, in the series, depicted as a businesswoman selling statues and preparing fast-food, or the three Gray Sisters who own a taxi.

In the series, Riordan does not only adjust characters, but also locations. Specifically, he uses well-known locations as can be illustrated on the shift of Olympus from Mount Olympus in Greece to New York's Empire State Building, the sea of monsters from the Mediterranean Sea to The Bermuda Triangle, or the lair of Lotus-Eaters to Las Vegas. This use of American locations can be seen as Americanization of mythology, that is as making America the center, despite depicting Greek mythology as prominent in the series. Other than on locations, the Americanization can be seen on other aspects as well. For instance, typical American food plays an important role as, for example, fast food from McDonald's, used as an offering for the dead, is presented as more valuable than the original animal blood, or the god

of wine, Dionysus, drinking diet coke. Similarly, mythological figures, such as Poseidon or Ares, are depicted wearing American clothes or driving American motorcycle. Thus, all these examples show how in the series Riordan makes American culture central, and superior to mythology.

However, it is not only mythology what is changed. The analysis discovered that Riordan also changes historical events by explaining it through mythology. In other words, Riordan provides alternative explanations of history, such as that the Second World War was actually a conflict between children of Hades and Zeus and Poseidon. Similarly, he uses historical figures and places them into the mythological setting, such as Shakespeare in the Underworld. The aim of these changes may lie simply within the effort to blend the two worlds, mortal and mythological, together, or in an attempt to make the story more accessible and believable for the reader through using real events and figures.

Lastly, Riordan also uses mythology to point out pressing issues in contemporary world, such as feminist problems through the character of Circe, or environmental issues through the dying god of nature Pan.

Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce je analýza způsobu, jakým Rick Riordan využívá řeckou mytologii ve fantasy sérii *Percy Jackson a Olympané*. Tato analýza je založena na teorii Northropa Frye, na jejímž základě je rozdělena do tří částí – struktura, postavy, fáze.

V první kapitole, ještě před samotnou analýzou, je série definována v literárním kontextu jako dílo patřící do dětské literatury dvacátého prvního století, a to převážně kvůli tomu, že je primárně zaměřena na dětské čtenáře. Dále je také vybraná série charakterizována z pohledu fantasy žánru, nejprve na základě klasifikace vytvořené Farah Mendlesohn jako tzv. portal-quest fantasy s prvky tzv. intrusion fantasy, a následně jako tzv. epic fantasy podle Davida Russela. Navíc je ještě série charakterizována v souvislosti se dvěma velmi známými fantasy sériemi, *Pánem Prstenů* a *Harry Potterem*, jejichž některé charakteristické prvky se objevují i v *Percy Jacksonovi*. Následně je série charakterizována z pohledu dobrodružného žánru, protože vypráví příběh mladého protagonisty Percyho a jeho přátel, kteří skrze všemožná dobrodružství bojují proti dospělému antagonistovi Kronovi. Dále pak první kapitola definuje mytologii, která je pro celou sérii velmi důležitá, a vysvětluje, že na rozdíl např. od legend nejsou autoři mýtů známi, a že mýty nejsou založeny na historických faktech. Nakonec se první kapitola zaměřuje přímo na řeckou mytologii jakožto na předchůdce fantasy a zdůrazňuje její přetrvávající aktuálnost a vliv v současné době.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na mytologickou kritiku a zasazuje ji do kontextu dalších literárních teorií, jako například formalismu, strukturalismu nebo archetypální kritiky, která bývá některými autory, například Danielem Brownem nebo Charlesem Bresslerem, používána jako synonymum pro mytologickou kritiku, což ale jiní autoři, například Glen Robert Gill nebo Nasrullah Mambrol, odmítají. Následně jsou ve druhé kapitole zmíněny možné definice mytologické kritiky a její představitelé v čele s nejvýznamnějším Northropem Fryem, jehož dílo nazvané *Anatomie kritiky* (1957)⁴³⁸ je posléze diskutováno hlavně ve vztahu ke třetí eseji, která nese název *Archetypální kritika: teorie mýtů*, a jenž je základem pozdější analýzy. Nakonec se druhá kapitola zabývá možnostmi využití mytologické kritiky v praxi, a problémy, které tuto kritiku provázejí, jako například nejednoznačná terminologie.

Ve třetí kapitole již následuje analýza, která je, jak už bylo zmíněno, založena na *teorii mýtů* Northropa Frye, a na doporučení Roberta Denhama je rozdělena do tří částí zabývajících

⁴³⁸ Northrop Frye, *Anatomie kritiky – Čtyři eseje*, trans. Sylva Ficová (Brno: Host, 2003). References are to specific Czech terminology used in the resumé.

se strukturou, postavami, a fázemi. Toto doporučení vychází z toho, že pro definování tzv. *mythoi* Frye využívá především právě tyto tři aspekty. Třetí kapitola se tak zaměřuje na část první, tedy na strukturu. Nejprve popisuje *mythos* léta, tj. romanci, a její čtyři stádia: *agón*, *pathos*, *anagnórisis*, a *sparagmos*, podle kterých je pak struktura zápletky v *Percy Jacksonovi* analyzována. Zvláštní pozornost je pak věnována stádiu *anagnórisis*, se kterým lze propojit tzv. okamžik epifanie, jenž je ve vybrané sérii vyobrazen jako prozření týkající se proroctví na hoře Olymp, která se nachází v šestistém patře Empire State Building. Analýza se pak v této části dále zabývá dalšími znaky, které strukturu vybrané série definují jako romantickou, například tzv. trojdílná struktura je v *Percy Jacksonovi* zastoupena například tím, že Percy je synem jednoho ze tří nejvýznamnějších bohů, je přidělen do srubu číslo tři, a dále je také zastoupena mnohými mytologickými monstry, jako např. tříhlavým psem Kerberem, třemi Líticemi apod. Mezi další velmi důležitý aspekt celé série, který ji řadí do romace, je shodnost se znaky tzv. romace hledání, neboli quest-romace, jako jsou například přítomnost souboje hrdiny s drakem (tedy Percyho a Krona), nebo uvěznění hrdiny v nestvůře (v sérii zastoupeno například Percyho pobytem na ostrově Kalypsó). Následně se pak třetí kapitola zabývá aspekty tzv. sjednocujícího ústředního mýtu a poté analyzuje strukturu *Percyho Jacksona* z pohledu komedie, což je *mythos* jara (v sérii zastoupen například změnou společnosti ve společnost jinou, zapojením velkého množství postav do finální společnosti apod.), a z pohledu tragédie, tedy *mythu* podzimu (patrný hlavně ve vtahu k závislosti na osudu).

Čtvrtá kapitola se zabývá analýzou postav. Nejprve definuje Fryeovo pojetí postav, které vychází z Aristotelova díla *Tractatus Coislinianus*, ze kterého odvozuje čtyři typy komických postav – *alazony*, *eirony*, *bomolochoi*, a *agroikos*, které mají své odpovídající protějšky v ostatních třech *mythoi*. Následně pak analyzuje postavy nejprve z pohledu romace, kde základem je, že každá postava má svůj morální protiklad a stojí buď na straně hledání nebo proti. Například jako hrdina je zde identifikován Percy, jako jeho protějšek, tj. nepřítel, Kronos. Dále se pak analýza zaměřuje na *mythos* podzimu, tragédii, kde je jako tragický hrdina identifikován Luke a ostatní postavy identifikované jako tragické (např. Kronos, Orákulum...) jsou s ním spojeny. Nakonec se analýza zaměřila na *mythos* jara, tedy komedii.

Pátá kapitola se zaměřuje na fáze. Nejprve vysvětluje Fryeovo chápání fází, které říká, že každý *mythos* má šest fází, které spolu vzájemně korespondují. Vzhledem k tomu, že jak struktura, tak i postavy se v předcházejících dvou částech analýzy ukázaly být převážně romantické, následující část páté kapitoly analyzuje fáze v *Percy Jacksonovi* z pohledu *mythu* léta, a zároveň analyzuje i korespondující fáze *mythu* podzimu a *mythu* jara. Jako nejvýraznější

fázi romance se v sérii ukáže být fáze třetí, která se zabývá již zmíněným hledáním (tj. quest), naopak druhá fáze romance vyobrazující nevinné mládí hrdiny, se v sérii nevyskytuje. Co se týká korespondujících fází tragédie, v *Percy Jacksonovi* jsou identifikovány všechny ve vztahu k tragickému hrdinovi Lukeovi. A konečně čtvrtá a pátá fáze komedie odpovídají např. vítězství života a lásky nad pustinou (tj. vítězství Percyho a jeho přátel nad Kronem a jeho armádou), a pohybu od chaosu k řádu (tj. změna společnosti zmíněná výše).

Zároveň s analýzou zaměřenou na Fryeovu teorii, je analyzován také způsob, jakým Rick Riordan pracuje s mytologií, jak ji využívá, mění apod. Na základě analýzy lze říci, že se autor ve velké míře inspirovuje příběhy hrdinů z řecké mytologie, jako například příběhy Iasona, Achilla, Hercula, Orfea a především Odyssea, a strukturu těchto příběhů zapracovává do svého vlastního. Ovšem, v závislosti na zápletkce, větší důvěryhodnosti příběhu etc. tuto strukturu také často mění.

Dále pak Riordan využívá postavy z řecké mytologie (například Cheiróna, Krona, Medúsu, atd.) a zasazuje je do prostředí současného světa. Ale, stejně jako struktury příběhů, i postavy jsou často odlišné od svých mytologických verzí, a na základě analýzy lze říci, že míra jejich změny odpovídá prostředí, ve kterém se nacházejí. Pro ilustraci, ty postavy, které jsou vyobrazeny v prostředí řeckých bohů mají obvykle svoji původní formu. Na druhou stranu ty postavy, které jsou vyobrazeny ve světě smrtelníků jsou změněny tak, aby do tohoto světa zapadly. Jako dobrý příklad tohoto vyobrazení funguje kentaur Cheirón, který je v Táboře polokrevných zobrazen ve své pravé podobě, ale jakmile se pohybuje ve světě smrtelníků, prezentuje se jako učitel latiny v kolečkovém křesle. Kromě propojení světa řeckých bohů a smrtelníků mohou být důvodem pro takové změny potřeby zápletky, jak lze vidět na příkladu Orákula, které je v *Percy Jacksonovi* vyobrazeno negativně právě z důvodu pozdější zápletky, což je ale v rozporu s mytologickými verzemi orákula, které byly považovány za posvátné, a tudíž vyobrazení v negativním světle je pravým opakem. Kromě odlišného vyobrazení jsou mytologické postavy často modernizovány, tj. přizpůsobovány současnému světu, na což poukazuje příklad s Medúzou, která je v sérii vyobrazena jako podnikatelka, která prodává sochy a připravuje fast-food, nebo obdobný příklad tří šedých sester, které provozují taxi službu.

Na základě analýzy lze také říci, že Riordan v *Percy Jacksonovi* nepřizpůsobuje pouze postavy, ale také lokace. Konkrétně lze říci, že využívá typické, dobře známé lokace, což lze ilustrovat na příkladech jako je přemístění Olympu z hory Olymp v Řecku do New Yorku na Empire State Building, přemístění moře nestvůr z moře Středozemního do oblasti Bermudského

trojúhelníku, nebo sídlo Lotofágů do kasina Lotos v Las Vegas. Toto využití amerických lokací může být viděno jako amerikanizace mytologie, to znamená přesouvání Ameriky do středu pozornosti, navzdory tomu, že středem pozornosti se zdá být řecká mytologie. Kromě lokací se tato amerikanizace projevuje i na dalších aspektech série, jako například na vyobrazení jídla, kdy je například fast-food z McDonaldu využit jako oběť pro duchy mrtvých, a je prezentován jako více hodnotný než tradiční zvířecí krev, nebo například Dionýsus, bůh vína, je velmi často zobrazen, jak pije dietní colu. V podobném duchu jsou také vyobrazeny některé mytologické postavy, například bohové Poseidon a Áres jsou zobrazeni v typickém americkém oblečení a Áres jezdí na americké motorce Harley Davidson. Tyto příklady tedy ukazují, jak Riordan, i za pomoci mytologie, vyobrazuje americkou kulturu jakožto centrální a nadřazenou mytologii.

Není to ovšem jenom mytologie, co Riordan v *Percy Jacksonovi* integruje a mění. Na základě analýzy lze také říci, že Riordan mění i historické události, které vysvětluje skrze mytologii. Jinak řečeno, Riordan poskytuje alternativní vysvětlení historických událostí, jako například druhé světové války, o které říká, že ve skutečnosti byla konfliktem mezi dětmi Háda, Poseidona a Dia. Podobně také využívá i historických osobností, které zasazuje do mytologického prostředí. Jako příklad může sloužit William Shakespeare, který je v *Percy Jacksonovi* vyobrazen jako jeden ze tří soudců v podsvětí. Cílem těchto změn, ať už u historických postav nebo událostí, může být buď snaha o propojení těchto dvou světů, mytologického a reálného, nebo mohou tyto změny poukazovat i na snahu o přiblížení příběhu čtenářům právě skrze využití známých a reálných událostí a osobností, a tím i o prohloubení uvěřitelnosti, že by se příběh mohl skutečně stát.

Nakonec se dá také říci, že Riordan mytologii ve svém díle využívá jako prostředek upozornění čtenáře na některé problémy současné doby. Toto se týká například otázek feminismu, spojených s postavou Kirké, nebo problémů týkajících se životního prostředí, na které Riordan upozorňuje například skrze umírajícího boha přírody Pana.

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