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Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri: Mythological Encounters in Contemporary and Renaissance Literature

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Anotace

Tato diplomová práce se bude zabývat mytologickými prvky v dílech Ricka Riordana a Danta Alighieriho, se zvláštním zřetelem na mytologickou tradici řeckého náboženství. V teoretické části bude podrobně představen výběr bohů, monster a hrdinů, jak jsou popisováni v klasické mytologii. Samostatná kapitola se bude věnovat životu a dílu Ricka Riordana a Danta Alighieriho. V praktické části budou analyzovány konkrétní příklady využití mytologie ve zkoumaných textech. Závěrečná kapitola bude zahrnovat komparativní analýzu mytologických setkání v dílech obou autorů. Mytologická setkání odkazují na postavy, se kterými se Percy Jackson a Poutník Dante setkají během svých cest.

Klíčová slova: Rick Riordan, Dante Alighieri, mytologie, *Percy Jackson*, *Božská Komédie*.

Abstract

This thesis will examine mythological features in the works of Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri, with particular reference to the mythological tradition of Greek religion. The theoretical part will present in detail a selection of gods, monsters, and heroes as they are described in classical mythology. A separate chapter will be devoted to the life and works of Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri. The practical part will analyze specific mythological elements in their works. The final chapter will include a comparative analysis of mythological encounters in the works of both authors. The mythological encounters refer to the characters Percy Jackson and Dante the Pilgrim meet during their travels.

Keywords: Rick Riordan, Dante Alighieri, mythology, *Percy Jackson*, *The Divine Comedy*.

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Introduction

With their potential for embellishment and mixing fact with fiction, myths become an important outlet through which humanity can process its fears, hopes, and values. An essential part of storytelling through the ages, mythology has modernized from the ancient epics that outlined gods and heroes in their classic form to today's contemporary narratives reimagining those timeless tales. In this thesis, the mythological experience in the work of two prominent authors, Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri, will be explored. Despite being separated by centuries and genres, their work is united in how it intricately manipulates myths to form rich tapestries of adventure, existential inquiry, and morality for the reader, making their work as relevant today as it was in their time.

As with his other high-adventure novels for young readers, Rick Riordan offers an expert blend of traditional myth and modern-day life that is as exciting to the reader as it was centuries ago. Not only do his works, including the best-selling *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* series, entertain children and young adults with nighttime reading sessions under their covers, but Riordan also educates readers about Greek mythology that has lasted all these centuries.

Conversely, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* is a classic Renaissance literature work filled with Greco-Roman mythology and Christian theology. Dante's Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise are full of a host of mythological figures whose stories are viewed through the prism of an existent poetical interpretation. That collision of myth and allegory provides a space for reflection on deep, complex issues about sin, repentance, and Biblical justice.

This thesis explores how Riordan and Alighieri engage with and reconstituted legendary stories by considering the mythological encounters present in their works. The theoretical part will explore a number of the gods, monsters, and heroes presented in classical mythology as an introduction. A separate chapter will discuss the lives and literary works of both authors.

The practical part will assess mythological encounters found in writings by both Riordan and Alighieri, emphasizing overlaps as well as independent storytelling techniques. This will be considered in a comparative analysis of the mythological encounters, pointing out the areas where the two authors agree and differ in their narrative techniques and thematic emphasis. Merging Riordan's fantastic landscapes with Alighieri's, this thesis seeks to reveal how myths fold upon each other through time and across generations.

1 Mythological elements

1.1 Mythological Deities

1.1.1 Theogony and the Primordial Deities

The theory of how everything came into being in Greek Mythology remains a matter of great debate today. However, the sequence of events that is the most accepted by ancient mythology scholars has survived and been passed down to us was initially transcribed by Hesiod in his *Theogony*.

Chaos, also known as the Abyss, existed before any other deities came into existence. Hesiod marks him as a "gap," and because Chaos came into being as the first entity, there is no way to describe it. Nevertheless, in the later works of Hesiod, Chaos is defined as the founding gap between Earth and Tartaros.¹ After Chaos came Gaia, the Earth, whose "*broad bosom laid the ever-firm foundation of all.*"² Secondly, enter Tartaros, deep underground he resides, deeper than Chaos ever did. While Tartaros is presented as the lowest part of the cosmos and essentially a plain where specific figures are imprisoned, his personification is sometimes mentioned, for example, when he procreates with Gaia, who subsequently gives birth to Typhoeus. Therefore, Tartaros represents a Primordial God and the deepest pit in the cosmos.³

Eros represents the third deity that came into being on its own, and he commands the essential power of Greek Mythology – Eros represents procreation. Not to be confused with his later namesake bow and arrow-wielding mischievous God of Love born to Aphrodite and Ares, Eros the Primordial gave a command to mind and limb bodies.⁴ After Eros assumed his embodiment of procreation, the next two Primordials were born: Erebus, son of Chaos, the embodiment of darkness, and his sister and consort Nyx, the darkest night. Nyx is the more important of the two since she created several children by herself. Those children would not always possess concrete substance, let alone a body, yet they would personify dark and destructive forces.⁶ The

¹ GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*. 1993. p. 3.

² HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (Trans.) 1993. *The First Gods*, verse 118.

³ GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*. 1993. p. 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (Trans.) 1993. *The First Gods*, verses 120-123.

⁶ HARD, Robin and H.J. ROSE. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H.J. Rose's "Handbook of Greek Mythology."* 2004. p. 23.

everlasting darkness and the darkest night copulated, and from their seed, Hemere, the brightest day, and Aither, the brightness himself, represented in the bright upper air, were born.⁷

When progressing through the timeline towards Gaia's offspring, a reoccurring feud between a child and a father is mentioned for the first time. Born to Gaia without a partner, Ouranos became the Sky to close the Earth from above, with Tartaros "embracing" the lowest part of the Underworld. Furthermore, Hesiod refers to Ouranos creating a home for the gods, a notion towards Olympus. With Ouranos in the sky, the two siblings that followed finished the world-building with Ourea, the Mountains, and Pontos, the Sea. Finally, Gaia mated with Ouranos and accordingly gave birth to the twelve Titans, six of which were male (Okeanos, Koios, Kreios, Hyperion, Lapetos, and Kronos) and six females (Theia, Rheia, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoibe, and Tethys).⁸ The youngest male, Kronos, is described by Hesiod as despicable with vicious feelings towards his father, Ouranos.⁹

Gaia continued procreating and gave birth to three Kyklopes, Brontes, Steropes, and Arges, who would later forge the thunderbolt for Zeus. Kyklopes were similar to other gods apart from having a single large round eye in the center of their foreheads. Furthermore, the three children that came after Kyklopes were even more monstrous as they each possessed fifty heads and one hundred hands, thereby acquiring the name Hecatoncheires (literally meaning "Hundred-Handers").¹⁰ Ouranos hated his last six children (although Hesiod is vague about this, and Ouranos may have hated his children altogether). Therefore, he trapped them in the Earth (possibly Gaia's womb) right after birth, leaving them to live in the darkness. This ordeal was spiteful; nevertheless, Ouranos was pleased with himself.¹¹

Ouranos's joy in trapping his children inside Gaia angered her tremendously, so she concocted a plot. Gaia formed a new mineral (possibly adamant), and a sickle was created from it. She then confronted her children and told them one of them must take up a fight against their father with the sickle. Her children were shocked by this proposition and remained mute, all except one. Holding already ill-fated feelings towards his father, Kronos took the sickle and anticipated Ouranos's arrival at Gaia's "bed." When Ouranos idled, Kronos castrated him, and from his

⁷ HARD, Robin and H.J. ROSE. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H.J. Rose's "Handbook of Greek Mythology."* 2004. p. 24.

⁸ GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources.* 1993. p. 10.

⁹ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony.* Stanley Lombardo (Trans.) The Castration of Ouranos, verses 137-139.

¹⁰ Ibid. verses 140-154.

¹¹ GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources.* 1993. p. 10-11.

blood, Gaia created the Erinyes, the Gigantes, and the Melian Nymphai. Furthermore, Kronos threw Ouranos's testicles into the ocean, forming foam from which the goddess Aphrodite was born.¹²

Since Aphrodite is born from the genitalia of Ouranos, this would make her a Titanide. However, when it comes to Aphrodite's origin, another version is told by Homer in the *Illiad*, where Aphrodite is a daughter of Zeus and Dione, making her an Olympian. Furthermore, Dione's origin is likewise contested as Hesiod groups her as Oceanid (sea goddesses born to the Titan Oceanos and Titanide Tethys).¹³ However, Apollodorus says she was the seventh Titanide born to Ouranos and Gaia. This would increase the number of Titans and Titanides that Ouranos fathered to thirteen.¹⁴

After the Castration of Ouranos, the Titans paired with their female siblings. The last such couple is Kronos and Rheia. Although Hesiod does not mention Kronos's actions after the castration, it can be safely assumed that he began ruling instead of his father.¹⁵ Kronos's parents present him with the prophecy that one of his children is to overthrow him. Heeding this prophecy, Kronos swallows all five children immediately after Rheia gives birth to them. However, when Rheia is expecting the sixth son, she consults Gaia and Ouranos, who are moved by her words, and thus, they agree to help her. Gaia moved Rheia to Lyctus on Crete, where she safely birthed the mighty Zeus. Gaia hid him in a cave and wrapped a rock in Zeus's clothes, and Kronos, in his utter foolishness, swallowed it.¹⁶

Hesiod mentions that Zeus grew swiftly, and when he reached an appropriate age, he decided to overthrow his father and free his siblings. With his strength and Gaia's clever words, he made Kronos disgorge the substituted stone first, followed by Poseidon, Hades, Hera, Demeter, and Hestia. Furthermore, Zeus freed his uncles, the Kyklopes and the Hecatoncheires (Hundred-Handers). As a sign of gratitude, they all joined his side, and the Kyklopes forged him the thunderbolt. Thus, the war between the Gods and the Titans began.¹⁷

¹² GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*. 1993. p. 10-11.

¹³ CYRINO, Monica S. *Aphrodite: Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World*. p. 14.

¹⁴ APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. Book I. Ouranos, Gaia, and the Birth of the Titans.

¹⁵ GANTZ, Timothy. *Early Greek myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*, p. 41.

¹⁶ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (Trans.) The Birth of the Olympians, verses 456-493.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* The Birth of the Olympians, verses 494-508.

1.1.2 Zeus

Zeus, known as the Sky Father, has a distinct etymology that sets him apart in Greek mythology. His name has its roots in Latin *deus*, meaning “god,” and Slavic *dyeu* derivative to “sky, heaven, god”.¹⁸ Etymologically, this indicates that he serves the role of a weather deity. However, Zeus stands out from other weather gods due to his immense significance. As the god of the sky, he holds the highest position in Greek mythology and governs all other gods. His weapon of choice is the famous Thunderbolt.¹⁹

Throughout Homer's literature, Zeus is often hailed as the "cloud gatherer," the "dark clouded," and the "hurler of thunderbolts." In fact, it was not uncommon for individuals to say, "Zeus is raining" instead of "It is raining." Such reverence for Zeus in folklore highlights the belief that one could control the weather with enough human sacrifices. A sanctuary was even built in his honor at the site of a lightning strike, further attesting to his power and the fear he instilled in both mortals and fellow gods.²⁰

Zeus was a deity of immense power, revered by all other gods for his incredible strength. According to Homer, they would fail even if all the gods and goddesses banded together to bring him down by tugging on a golden chain from the heavens. Conversely, if Zeus wished to vanquish another god, it would be a simple feat. He alone held the ability to govern and overpower anyone at his wish.²¹ Other gods may attempt to protest, disobey, or plot against Zeus, but they are no match for his unparalleled power and superiority.²²

However, as per Hesiod's account, there was a time when Zeus was not bestowed with excessive power compared to other divine entities. Zeus had to face significant challenges in his quest to become the supreme ruler of the gods. His mother, Rhea, saved him from certain death by deceiving his father, Cronos, into consuming a stone instead of Zeus. During the Titanomachy, Zeus and his siblings engaged in a fierce battle against the Titans, ultimately emerging victorious thanks to Zeus's formidable power of thunderbolts. Even after attaining his position as the ruler of the gods, Zeus had to fend off opposition and revolts, a remarkable accomplishment indeed.²³

¹⁸ DOUGLAS, Harper. *Zeus. Online Etymology Dictionary* [online]. 2023 [cit. 2023-09-11].

¹⁹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Zeus.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ HOMER. *The Iliad*. Samuel Butler (Trans.) 2019. Book VIII, p. 49.

²² BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Zeus.

²³ Ibid.

Upon examining *Theogony*, one can observe the succession of power as the tyrant Ouranos was dethroned by his son Cronos, who was later defeated by his own son Zeus. However, Zeus was not naive and foresaw the potential danger of being overthrown by his own offspring. He became enamored with the wise goddess Metis, who bore his child. Zeus decided to heed the warning from Gaia and Ouranos that Metis's child would eventually overthrow him. Therefore, he cunningly outsmarted Metis and consumed her before she could give birth.²⁴

Zeus was known for his impressive number of offspring. He first married Themis after swallowing Metis, and together, they had the Seasons, Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene. He also fathered the Graces - Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia - with Euronyme, daughter of Oceanus. With Demeter, he sired Persephone, who was later taken by Hades with Zeus's permission. The nine muses, indulging in the beauty of songs and festivals, were born to Zeus and Mnemosyne. Apollo and Artemis were born to Leto. Zeus's wife Hera gave birth to Hebe, Eileithyia, and Ares. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare with the eyes of an owl, sprouted from Zeus's head as the result of swallowing Metis. Hera was displeased with Zeus and produced Hephaistos, the legendary smith and god of artisans, on her own. Additionally, there was Hermes, the messenger of the gods, born to Maia, daughter of Atlas, and Dionysus, the god of wine and celebration, born to Semele, daughter of Cadmus.²⁵

Zeus, the mighty ruler of the gods on Mount Olympus, fathered many offspring with mortal women. These offspring, referred to as demigods, possessed incredible strength and abilities that set them apart from ordinary mortals. Although most demigods were mortal themselves, a select few, such as Helen of Troy and Polydeukes, were exceptions to this rule. Some of Zeus's most famous demigod children included Heracles, born to Alcmene, and Perseus, born to Danae. Other notable demigods included Minos and Rhadamanthys, who were born to Europa after Zeus took on the form of a magnificent bull and carried her away to Crete. After their mortal lives ended, Minos and Rhadamanthys became eternal judges in the Underworld, alongside Aiakos, who was born to Zeus and the nymph Aigina.²⁶

Zeus is widely recognized as the Father of both gods and humans due to his immense number of offspring. Even those gods who are not directly descended from him still view him as their father and show him great respect. Similarly, humans pray to Zeus as a father figure because of his power to control the world. Those who attempt to force or control Zeus will face his wrath

²⁴ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (Trans.) 1993. Zeus in Power, verses 890-950.

²⁵ Ibid verses 900-935.

²⁶ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Zeus.

and vengeance. In the Iliad, Hera tricks Zeus during a seduction on Mount Ida, but he ultimately regains control and restores order despite her deceit. Hera is left trembling before the force of Zeus's anger. This proves that Zeus cannot be compelled, not even by his wife.²⁷

1.1.3 Hades

Since the resolution of Titanomachy (the war between the Gods and the Titans), the oldest of the three brothers, Hades, became the God of the Underworld. In contrast, his younger brothers assumed the mantle of the sea and the sky, respectively.²⁸ Nevertheless, not being labeled under the misconception that being the God of the Underworld does not make Hades the God of the Death. This mantle would go to Thanatos, the son of Nyx and Erebus. Hades rules over those that Thanatos "reaps," and more importantly, he oversees the vast expanses of the Underworld.²⁹

As the souls of the dead venture to the plains of the Underworld, they are deemed to spend eternity there without the possibility of escape. The impossibility of escape and the overall darkness gave way to the scientific term "the hadal zone," referring to the depth of the ocean from 6km to 11km beneath the sea level where all the different species live enveloped in total darkness as the light from the surface no longer reaches these depths. Furthermore, the organisms rarely leave the hadal zone as they are not acclimated to other ocean parts. As Hades was furious at anyone leaving his kingdom, so does the sea decompression difference obliterate any organisms trying to escape the hadal zone.³⁰

In ancient times, it was believed that placing a coin under the tongue of a deceased person would allow them to pay for passage across the river Styx, which was guarded by the ferryman Charon. Those who did not have a coin would be forced to wait for 100 years before being allowed to cross. Upon arrival at the entrance to the Underworld, the dead were greeted by Cerberus, a fearsome three-headed dog whose duty was to keep the living out. Consequently, only the deceased were permitted to enter the Underworld.³¹

According to mythology, Hades' realm was overseen by three judges - Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Aecus. These judges were responsible for determining the fate of a person's soul. Those

²⁷ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Zeus.

²⁸ APOLLONORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. Book I—the birth of Zeus and his war against Cronos and the Titans.

²⁹ SLATER, Niall W. *Euripides: Alcestis (Companions to the Greek and Roman Tragedy)*. p. 16, 20.

³⁰ JAMIESON, Alan. *The Hadal Zone: Life in the Deepest Oceans*. p. 19.

³¹ EVSLIN, Bernard. *Heroes, Gods, and Monsters of the Greek Myths*. 2012. Hades.

who led morally neutral lives were sent to the Field of Asphodel, a place that was neither heaven nor hell. The genuinely righteous were rewarded with a place in the Elysian Fields to enjoy music and leisure. Conversely, those who lived a life of wickedness were condemned to eternal suffering in Tartarus. Interestingly, Hades had a special punishment for those who angered the gods. The most famous of these was Sisyphus, tasked with pushing a massive boulder up a steep hill. However, each time he neared the summit, the boulder would slip and roll back down, forcing Sisyphus to start over again.³²

Hades, the ruler of the Underworld, was known for his stern and wrathful nature towards those he punished. Although he was not considered as evil as Lucifer, the fallen angel, the Greeks still feared him greatly. Speaking his name aloud was viewed as a transgression that would bring bad luck, so he was often referred to by other names such as "Plouton," which means the Rich One, referencing his dominion over the precious metals found within his realm. Hades had little interaction with ordinary people, which explains why he is only mentioned in a few myths (except when demigods enter his domain, the Underworld, also known as the "House of Hades").³³

Nevertheless, the exception is the major myth of Abducting Persephone (sometimes referred to as "The Rape of Persephone"), where Hades laid his eyes on the daughter of the goddess Demeter and Zeus and decided to make her his bride. When he confronted Zeus with his proposal, Zeus agreed, and Hades took Persephone to the Underworld. However, when Demeter found out about the abduction of her daughter, she brought great famine and drought upon the world. Due to these circumstances, Hades agreed to let Persephone return to the domain of Demeter in a specific part of the year to spend with her mother. Nevertheless, Persephone became the Queen of the Underworld, ruling with her husband.³⁴

1.1.4 Poseidon

Following the defeat of the Titans, Poseidon took over as ruler, being the brother of Zeus, Hades, Demeter, Hestia, and Hera. Although Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades are considered equals, Poseidon is seen bowing his head towards the sky, acknowledging Zeus' superiority. While each brother has a distinct domain, the Earth and Mount Olympus are seen as shared territories among the three siblings. However, considering the "Deception of Zeus" found in the *Iliad*,

³² EVSLIN, Bernard. *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths*. 2012. Hades.

³³ NARDO, Don. *The Greenhaven Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*. 2002. p. 93.

³⁴ *Ibid* p. 93-94.

Poseidon must acknowledge his elder brother's superiority as the Sky god. It is worth noting that Hesiod's account differs from Homer's in terms of chronology, portraying Zeus as the youngest sibling while maintaining the same hierarchy of domains.³⁵

According to mythology, Poseidon is the ruler of the oceans and seas and has been attributed with the power to cause earthquakes. Hades holds Poseidon in high regard, as he fears the possibility of causing a cave-in in his realm if he were to anger his brother. However, some, like Nardo, believe Poseidon's dominion extends beyond the sea and tremors. Moreover, Poseidon is also famously known as the "Great Tamer of Horses." It is no surprise that one of his symbols is a horse, in addition to the legendary trident and dolphins.³⁶

Although Zeus had more offspring than him, Poseidon was also a prolific father. His spouse Amphitrite, who may have been the offspring of another marine deity and a direct descendant of the sea god Nereus or the titan Oceanus, bore Triton, Rhode, and Benthescyme for him. In addition, Poseidon sired numerous giants, such as Antaeus, Otus, and Ephialtes, through liaisons with other deities. Otus and Ephialtes famously attempted to scale Mount Olympus and seize the goddesses Hera and Artemis, but their endeavor was ultimately unsuccessful.³⁷

Another of Poseidon's enormous offspring, the Cyclops Polyphemus, was vanquished and rendered blind by the Greek hero Odysseus, infuriating the god, who then punished him by sinking the raft on which he sailed away from Calypso's island.

Theseus, the hero of the Athenians, murdered two more evil sons of Poseidon—Sciron and Cercyon—who had long amused themselves by murdering innocent bystanders on highways.³⁸

Poseidon's anger and fury are recurring themes in Greek mythology, with his presence felt in numerous tales, most notably in Homer's *Iliad*. Poseidon supports the Greeks in this epic, as the Trojans owe him for his aid in building their impressive wall. It is worth mentioning that Poseidon had previously punished the daughter of Trojan king Laomedon by sending a sea monster to attack her long before the war started.³⁹

During the unfolding of the *Iliad*, Ajax, a Greek hero, commits a heinous act by raping the Trojan princess Cassandra within Athena's temple. Consequently, Poseidon, the god of the sea,

³⁵ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Poseidon.

³⁶ NARDO, Don. *The Greenhaven Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*. p. 112.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

unleashes his wrath upon him. Multiple Greek ships are sunk, and the individuals aboard are punished for not bringing Ajax to justice for his crime. Poseidon's punishment seems to serve a twofold purpose: to penalize the offending individual (Laomedon and Ajax) and hold the collective population associated with that individual accountable.⁴⁰

1.1.5 Aphrodite

Throughout various myths and legends, the Goddess of beauty and love frequently plays a prominent role, and her stunning appearance is one of the catalysts for events within the *Iliad*. Known as Aphrodite, her name directly alludes to the joyful consummation of intimate relations, as the Greek word aphrodisia signifies the act of love. While Aphrodite holds sway over the romantic inclinations of others, she herself falls for Ares, the god of war. Unfortunately, this creates a quandary as Aphrodite is already wed to Hephaistos. When her spouse uncovers their affair, he ensnares them in a net during their tryst, resulting in their being the object of ridicule amongst other deities.⁴¹

Aphrodite was worshipped in ancient Greek religion as the goddess of love, beauty, and sexual desire. Her mythology is full of legends and symbolic meanings. Burkert explores her roots, which are frequently linked to Eastern influences, highlighting her relationship to Near Eastern deities such as Astarte and Ishtar. This link emphasizes how Greek religion was syncretic—foreign gods were frequently assimilated and modified into the native pantheon.⁴²

Burkert notes the variation in her reverence as he also looks at her worship and cult activities throughout the Greek city-states. Aphrodite was more highly valued in some areas for her beauty and sensual qualities than in others, where she was predominantly revered as a fertility and conception goddess. This local variance highlights how flexible and adaptive Greek religious customs were.⁴³

Burkert also looks at the imagery and creative interpretations of Aphrodite in classical Greek art, where she is frequently shown as a beautiful but approachable goddess. Greek idealization of physical beauty is reflected in her sculpture and ceramic iconography, which often has symbolic connotations associated with childbirth and love.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ NARDO, Don. *The Greenhaven Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*. p. 112.

⁴¹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Aphrodite

⁴² BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Aphrodite

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The myths involving Aphrodite deeply demonstrate the importance of love in mythological narratives; the Trojan War saga is a prime example. Traditionally, this mythical battle is linked to the crucial occasion, the Judgment of Paris, a story entwined with the complexity of beauty, desire, and divine competition.⁴⁵

Legend has it that the goddess of discord, Eris, started a competition that resulted in the Trojan War by throwing a golden apple among the goddesses and declaring the winner to be the "fairest." The contenders for this prize are Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, who all lay claim to this title. Zeus assigns Paris, a prince of Troy, the duty in an attempt to avoid taking on the role of judge in this contentious competition. This judgment is scheduled to take place on the slopes of Mount Ida.⁴⁶

The rival goddesses provide Paris with bribes representing their respective realms in an attempt to influence the verdict in their favor. Hera portrays the charm of controlling all people, Athena guarantees unparalleled military prowess, and Aphrodite, showcasing the powerful force of love and beauty, offers Paris the love of Helen of Sparta, the pinnacle of beauty of her day. The fact that Paris chose Aphrodite's favor shows how powerful love is and can overcome the allure of wealth and military prowess.⁴⁷

The choice to side with Aphrodite starts a series of events that ultimately result in the Trojan War. In addition to creating the conflict, Paris's journey to Sparta and his subsequent kidnapping of Menelaus's wife, Helen, exemplify the far-reaching effects of decisions motivated by love and want. The story highlights the theme of love as a powerful and turbulent force in mythology that shapes destinies and histories in its wake. It is intricately linked to the deeds and influences of Aphrodite.⁴⁸

Subsequently, Aphrodite demonstrates her maternal instincts and compassionate nature in her efforts to rescue her son Aeneas from Diomedes during battle. In this endeavor, however, she faces her vulnerability; Diomedes, undeterred by her divine status, wounds her by piercing her

⁴⁵ APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. Book III. The Judgement of Paris and the Abduction of Helen.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. Book III. The Judgement of Paris and the Abduction of Helen.

⁴⁸ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Individual Gods, Aphrodite.

wrist with his spear. This injury causes ichor, the immortal blood of the gods, to flow from Aphrodite's veins, revealing her susceptibility despite her immortality.⁴⁹

Diomedes brazenly rebukes the injured Aphrodite in a further insult, admonishing her to confine her influence to the realms of love and seduction, traditionally associated with 'weaker' women, and to abstain from war affairs. He cautions her that continued interference in battle might lead her to recoil at the mere mention of war. This confrontation highlights Diomedes' boldness and underscores the distinct roles and expectations of deities within the Greek mythological framework, especially in matters of warfare versus love and beauty.⁵⁰

1.1.6 Hephaestus

Burkert mentions that the name Hephaestus did not originate from Greek culture. Nonetheless, the city of Hephaistias on the island of Lemnos was closely associated with this deity. The inhabitants of Lemnos, known as Tyrsenoi to the Greeks, were independent people who did not identify as Greek. They celebrated a festival where a newly kindled fire was distributed to artisans in homage to the god of craftsmanship.⁵¹

According to mythological tradition, Hephaestus, the god of blacksmiths and craftsmen, was brought into existence independently by the goddess Hera, without paternal contribution. Regrettably, the infant Hephaestus was physically frail and imperfect, eliciting a sense of embarrassment in Hera. To obscure this perceived dishonor, she threw him from Mount Olympus, casting him into the sea. Miraculously, Hephaestus survived this precipitous descent and was subsequently rescued by the goddesses Thetis and Eurynome. They provided refuge and nurturing care, fostering his recovery. In gratitude, Hephaestus constructed an underwater forge in a grotto, where he commenced his illustrious career as a craftsman, creating an array of ornate and skillfully wrought objects for the goddesses' pleasure.⁵²

Years later, Hera encountered Thetis, adorned with an exquisitely crafted brooch. Intrigued by its intricate design, Hera inquired about its artisan. Initially hesitant, Thetis eventually disclosed Hephaestus as the creator. Upon learning this, Hera reintroduced Hephaestus to the pantheon of Olympus, bestowing upon him a fully furnished forge replete with twenty bellows that perpetually fueled its fires. Additionally, Hera arranged the marriage between Hephaestus and

⁴⁹ HOMER. *The Iliad*. Samuel Butler(trans.) Book Five, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Hephaistos.

⁵² GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. p. 83-84.

the resplendent Aphrodite, a union of significant stature. These gestures facilitated Hephaestus's reconciliation with his mother, fostering a sense of reverence towards her.⁵³

However, this familial harmony was disrupted when Zeus, angered by Hera's attempt to constrain him, subjected her to a punitive measure by binding her in the heavens. Hephaestus, outspoken against his father Zeus's harsh treatment of Hera, faced retribution. Zeus, whose tolerance was limited, expelled Hephaestus once more from Olympus. This second fall resulted in Hephaestus landing on the island of Lemnos, where he sustained grave injuries, fracturing both legs. Despite his eventual restoration to Olympus, Hephaestus was left with a permanent physical impairment, necessitating the use of golden leg supports. These supports not only aided his mobility but also served as an enduring symbol of his tumultuous familial relationships and the physical consequences of divine conflict.⁵⁴

Although highly skilled in crafts, Greeks did not favor craftsmanship as much as warrior prowess. Therefore, Hephaestus was not as revered as other gods and goddesses. Nevertheless, this was not true for Athens, where he had a monumental temple as he sired Erichthonius, the legendary early ruler of ancient Athens.⁵⁵

1.1.7 Hestia

According to Hesiod, Hestia belonged to the first six Olympian gods, born to Cronos and Rhea, along with her siblings Hera, Demeter, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. She was a highly respected goddess, and both Apollo and Poseidon sought her hand in marriage. However, Hestia chose to remain a virgin goddess and took a chastity vow, preventing conflict between the two suitors. As a reward for her role in maintaining peace at Olympus, Zeus appointed her as the recipient of the first offering in every public sacrifice.⁵⁶

Later, when Dionysos became a god of wine and joined Olympus, there were 13 Olympians, which was considered an unlucky number. Hestia voluntarily stepped down from her throne to preserve the harmony of the household. Nonetheless, she remained the keeper of the hearth flames of Olympus even though she gave up her seat of power.⁵⁷

⁵³ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. p. 83-84.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Hephaistos.

⁵⁶ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. p. 71-73.

⁵⁷ SMITH, Tyler Jo and Dimitris PLANTZOS. *A Companion to Greek Art*. 2018. p. 400.

Throughout antiquity, the goddess Hestia occupied a crucial role as the deity of the family hearth. As the heart of every household, the hearth was cherished for its ability to provide warmth without smoke, offering physical and emotional comfort. To drive a family from their hearth was to banish them from their very existence. Additionally, the hearth served as an altar where food offerings could be made to honor the gods. While seemingly mundane, the role of Hestia was of paramount importance in ancient times.⁵⁸

Hestia had a vital role in uniting both mortal and Olympian families. In times of strife and warfare, she diligently kept the fire burning on Mount Olympus, guaranteeing a cozy haven for the Olympians to return to after intense frays. Her dedication to this duty was particularly notable during the Gigantomachy.⁵⁹

1.1.8 Hera

While Hera is often called the queen of the gods, her position appears somewhat overshadowed by her husband, the ruler of the skies, who wields supreme power over the divine realm. Homer portrays her as a slightly comedic figure. According to mythology, Hera is depicted as the jealous wife of the promiscuous Zeus. However, she rarely takes action against her husband's countless love affairs. And when she does act, she usually punishes either Zeus' love interests or his offspring, as was the case with Heracles.⁶⁰

It is widely acknowledged that Zeus engaged in numerous extramarital affairs, yet his wife Hera remains steadfastly by his side on the illustrious throne. As the eldest daughter of Cronos, she holds a privileged position as Zeus' wife, and her standing is further reinforced by her bestowal of the gift of power during the Judgement of Paris. Despite the appearance of instability, Hera's significance is undeniable.⁶¹

According to the *Iliad*, Hera, Zeus' wife, successfully entices him with a girdle borrowed from Aphrodite. Their union atop Mount Ida results in the creation of a magnificent golden cloud. However, this event is viewed as deceitful since Zeus was too preoccupied with his love for Hera to oversee the Trojan War. As a result, the Greeks gained an advantage in the conflict without any intervention from Zeus.⁶²

⁵⁸ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Lesser gods.

⁵⁹ SMITH, Tyler Jo and Dimitris PLANTZOS. *A Companion to Greek Art*. 2018. p. 405-409.

⁶⁰ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Hera.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

While Gaia is known for her supreme power, Hera's personality is quite different. She is strong-willed and sometimes temperamental, often taking action herself rather than relying on her children like Gaia. Despite being a mother to children with Zeus, some may argue that Hera is not seen as a particularly nurturing figure. Her offspring, including the powerful Ares, do not receive much attention from her, and she does not show favoritism towards any of them. While she does offer her breast to Heracles at one point to reconcile with him, this action is driven more by her interests than a desire to care for him and does not necessarily add to her portrayal as a maternal figure.⁶³

1.1.9 Demeter

Demeter's name carries the significance of motherhood, which is closely tied to her involvement in agriculture. However, it's essential to note that she is not regarded as the embodiment of Mother Earth, as this distinction belongs to Gaia. Some have associated her with the title of Corn Mother, as corn represents the focal point of her influence and affection. Nevertheless, this interpretation lacks linguistic appeal.⁶⁴ Therefore, the term "mother" appears to primarily allude to her unwavering love for her children and the ability to bless newlyweds with fertility, a power that priestesses of Demeter would invoke during their religious ceremonies.⁶⁵

When Demeter was younger, she had two children named Core (later known as Persephone) and Iacchus with her brother Zeus, who was already married to Hera. One day, her happy life was torn apart when her beloved daughter, Core, was taken. Demeter searched tirelessly for her daughter, wandering through the land with torches for nine long days without food or water until she learned Hades had taken her to the Underworld. Demeter was devastated and demanded her daughter's return. Her grief caused crops to wither and a famine to strike the land.⁶⁶

Zeus, fearing that humanity would face extinction, ordered Hades to release Core back to her mother. However, it was later discovered that Core had eaten pomegranate seeds from Hades' garden, meaning she had to remain in the Underworld. Demeter was heartbroken upon learning this and refused to restore the barren land until her daughter was returned to her.⁶⁷

⁶³ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Hera.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Demeter.

⁶⁵ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Demeter's nature and deeds.

⁶⁶ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Demeter.

⁶⁷ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Demeter's nature and deeds.

The gods eventually came up with a compromise: Core would spend nine months of the year with her mother, but for three months, she would return to the Underworld as Persephone, the wife of Hades. These three months would be known as winter, during which no crops would yield as Demeter mourned her daughter's absence. But when Persephone returned, spring would begin, and the crops would blossom, bringing joy to Demeter's heart.⁶⁸

The myth centers around Demeter's profound love for her daughter, Core. Demeter's unwavering maternal qualities are showcased as a parent, surpassing any other god's care for their child. The pain of losing a child is deeply intertwined with Demeter's own experience, and her joy is directly linked to her daughter's reunion with her.⁶⁹

1.1.10 Hermes

According to myth, Hermes was the son of the Pleiade Maia and Zeus. He was a prodigious child who had already learned to play the lyre by noon on the day he was born. Later that evening, he famously stole Apollo's cattle. Hermes was known as a swift god, and his rapid growth was in keeping with this reputation.⁷⁰

After stealing the cows, Hermes used the shell of a tortoise and a cow's gut to create a musical instrument. Apollo brought Hermes to Olympus to face judgment when he discovered the theft. Zeus is surprised by his son's behavior, but Hermes is honest about his wrongdoing. He admitted to killing two cows but explained that he had only eaten what he needed and offered the rest as a gift to the gods. This was the first recorded instance of a flesh-offering.⁷¹

Upon resolving their conflict, Hermes and Apollo departed for Hermes' residence. Apollo was thoroughly intrigued by the musical instrument Hermes had fashioned from a tortoise shell and cow gut. The latter forgave him as Hermes played a sweet melody that captivated Apollo's senses. To show his goodwill, Apollo offered to trade the remaining livestock in his possession for Hermes' lyre, which Hermes eagerly accepted.⁷²

⁶⁸ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Demeter's nature and deeds.

⁶⁹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Demeter.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Hermes.

⁷¹ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Hermes' nature and deeds.

⁷² Ibid.

As they watched the cows graze on the lush grass, Hermes crafted a pipe from a reed. Apollo made yet another proposition, this time offering his golden staff, which he used to tend his cattle. And so it was that Hermes became the patron deity of all herders and shepherds.⁷³

When Hermes approached his father, Zeus, he expressed his desire to become the messenger of the gods. Zeus granted his request and bestowed upon him a pair of winged golden sandals, enabling him to move as swiftly as the wind. He also gave him a hat to shield him from the rain. Most notably, Zeus presented him with his famous herald's staff, adorned with two white ribbons that were later perceived to be two snakes. Due to his role as a herald, Hermes was held in high esteem by all the gods. Nevertheless, he was also known as the god of thieves, owing to his infamous theft of Apollo's cattle. Additionally, he was celebrated for his numerous inventions, including astronomy and the cultivation of the olive tree.⁷⁴

While commonly known as the god of thievery, Hermes' true nature is much more complex. In Greek mythology, he is celebrated for his cunning and stealth, traits that allow him to skillfully arrange meetings, escort individuals to safety, and even retrieve lost loved ones from the Underworld. Hermes also possesses remarkable physical abilities, including the power to fly across bodies of water using his winged sandals, as demonstrated during his mission to find the distant island of Calypso. When Odysseus encounters difficulties on Circe's island, Hermes comes to his aid, showcasing his unwavering commitment to helping those in need.⁷⁵

1.1.11 Pallas Athena

The etymology of Athens has been a mystery for centuries, with scholars debating whether the city was named after the goddess or vice versa. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the goddess was named after the town, as she was known as Pallas of Athens. From a linguistic perspective, this conclusion is supported by an analysis of the ancient Greek language and its evolution.⁷⁶

The story of Athena's birth is quite intriguing. Her mother was Metis, the goddess of wisdom, and her father was Zeus. However, Zeus was warned by a prophecy that his child with Metis would overthrow him. To avoid this fate, he swallowed Metis whole. But to his surprise, Athena - fully armed - sprang from Zeus' forehead, which was split open by Hephaestus' axe. As a

⁷³ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Hermes' nature and deeds.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Hermes.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Athena.

result, Athena was not born in the typical way but rather emerged from her father's head. This is why she is sometimes called the virgin goddess of wisdom.⁷⁷

Athena was pursued by numerous gods and titans seeking her hand in marriage, yet she declined each one to maintain her virginity. During a time when Hephaestus was crafting weapons for her, Poseidon deceived him with a cruel prank. Poseidon falsely informed Hephaestus that Athena wanted to pay him a visit to his workshop and engage in intimate relations. When Athena arrived at Hephaestus' workshop, he tried to make advances towards her. Athena repelled him, and he released his seed on her thigh. Athena, repulsed, cleansed herself with wool, which, upon being discarded, fertilized the earth near the city of Athens. From this union, Erichthonius was born, whom Athena fostered. He subsequently became Athens' inaugural ruler, highlighting the intertwined destinies of the city and its divine protectors.⁷⁸

Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, was not only revered for her physical prowess in bearing a shield but also for her metaphorical ability to shield entire cities from attacks. In ancient times, civilizations perceived their cities as sanctuaries. They built temples in Athena's honor at the very center of the city as an act of faith to ensure the protection of their polis from enemy assaults. This practice was observed not only in the illustrious Parthenon of Athens but also in other prominent cities like Argos, Sparta, Gortyn, Lindos, Larisa, and Ilium. Notably, the temple dedicated to Athena in Troy, though she was perceived as an enemy of the city during the Trojan War, exemplified this concept as well. Athena was bestowed with the title of the protecting maiden of the city, and any attempt to weaken a city was considered an affront to her power.⁷⁹

Athena is a deity of great significance in the realm of warfare, celebrated for her ability to imbue soldiers with a keen sense of battle readiness. Often depicted as an inspiring force on the battlefield, she is known to incite warriors to embrace the conflict with a fervent battle cry and an unwavering commitment to victory. As a battle rouser and a victorious idol, Athena holds a revered place in the hearts of men, instilling within them the courage and will to emerge triumphant from any conflict.⁸⁰

Athena's aegis, her iconic shield, strikes fear into her enemies' hearts. Its name comes from "aigis," a goatskin once worn by the monstrous Gorgo Athena defeated and skinned. Depictions

⁷⁷ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Athena.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Athena.

of the aegis often feature the Gorgon's head surrounded by snakes. But Athena's crafting skills aren't just limited to skinning beasts. In another myth, she flayed a giant named Pallas and created clothes from his hide. This act cemented her status as a patron of craftspeople and a wise goddess, attributes that carried over to her Roman form.⁸¹

Athena's weaving skills are also prominent in her mythology, particularly in the story of Arachne. Arachne was a skilled weaver from Lydian Colophon, famous for its purple dye. Her work was so impressive that Athena grew jealous and searched for flaws in her craftsmanship. When she found none, Athena destroyed Arachne's work in a fit of rage. The princess was so distraught that she took her own life by hanging herself. In response, Athena transformed her into a spider and her rope into a cobweb.⁸²

1.1.12 Apollo

Amongst the gods, Apollo is often portrayed as the most physically attractive. Burkert notes that he was commonly referred to as "the most Greek of the gods." It is no surprise, then, that he was highly admired and worshipped, with his statues and temples scattered throughout Greece. It's worth noting that he is consistently depicted as a youthful god in his prime physical condition. The veneration of Apollo in ancient Greece had a significant influence on the popular names chosen for children during that time, with names such as Apelles, Apollonios, and, notably, Apollodorus, which also happened to be the name of the renowned Greek historian.⁸³

Depictions of Apollo, the Greek deity associated with music, healing, and prophecy, often show him holding a bow and arrow flanked by a stag and lion. While it remains unclear why Apollo is portrayed with the bow and arrow, given that he is not a hunter, it is believed that his arrows can carry both healing and disease, making him a god of both health and plague. The bow is also intimately connected to Apollo's musical abilities, and it is said that his bow produces a melodic hum while he plays his lyre. Apollo is sometimes referred to as "far striking," underscoring his mastery of archery and his cultural significance.⁸⁴

Apollo, the offspring of Zeus and Leto, was born concurrently with his twin sister, Artemis. The bond between Apollo and Artemis extends beyond their familial relationship, as both deities are associated with archery and frequently collaborate in mythological narratives. This

⁸¹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Athena.

⁸² GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Athena's nature and deeds.

⁸³ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Apollo.

⁸⁴ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Apollo.

collaboration is notably evident in their mutual support for the Trojans during the events depicted in Homer's *Iliad*. In the evolution of Greek mythology, Apollo has been conflated with Helios, the god of the Sun, which paralleled Artemis's identification with Selene, the lunar goddess. Thus, the connection between Apollo and his sister transcends mere kinship, reflecting a profound celestial duality and symbiosis between the sun and the moon.⁸⁵

Apollo, a prominent figure in Greek mythology, is often associated with violent deeds. Together with his twin sister, he punished Niobe by taking the lives of her children after she disrespected their mother, Leto. Apollo is also known for his role in the death of Achilles, who fell under the precise aim of his arrow. Additionally, he defeated the giant Tityos, who had attempted to rape Leto, and famously slew the dragon Python at Delphi.⁸⁶ Following this victory, he convinced the satyr god Pan to reveal the art of prophecy and subsequently took over the Oracle of Delphi and its priestesses. This association with prophecy and premonitions is a key aspect of Apollo's mythology.⁸⁷

It is worth noting that Apollo doesn't have a wife, but he has fathered many children with both nymphs and mortal women, which sets him apart from his twin sister. He had Corymbantes with the muse Thalia and conceived the famous physician Asclepius with Coronis. Additionally, he also has children with Phthia, Aria, and Cyrene.⁸⁸

Apollo seems to take after his father and uses metamorphosis to attract women. In one instance, he transformed into a tortoise, which Dryope and her friends played with on Mount Oeta. When Dryope placed the tortoise on her chest, Apollo transformed into a serpent, scaring the other dryads, and had his way with Dryope. She bore him a son named Amphissus, who later founded the city of Oeta. A temple was built there in honor of Apollo, his father.⁸⁹

1.1.13 Artemis

Artemis, similar to her brother Apollo, is frequently depicted alongside animals, most notably stags or does. This portrayal underscores her profound connection to the natural world, a theme that is more prominently emphasized in her persona than in Apollo's. In contrast to Apollo, whose interactions with animals are less pronounced, Artemis embodies the dual role of hunter and protector, deeply intertwined with the wilderness. As the goddess of wild animals, she is

⁸⁵ SMITH, Will. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*. 2000. Artemis.

⁸⁶ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Apollo.

⁸⁷ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Apollo's nature and deeds.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Apollo's nature and deeds.

revered not only for her prowess in hunting and her capability to capture and kill, but also as a guardian of wildlife. This duality is epitomized in her epithet "potnia theron," derived from Homeric literature, which translates to "Mistress of the Animals," highlighting her dominion and care over the animal kingdom.⁹⁰

Her iconic attributes, such as the bow and arrows, shared with Apollo, signify more than mere tools of the hunt; they represent her authority and competence within both realms of life and death in the natural order.⁹¹ Moreover, while both siblings possess the power to invoke and heal plagues, Artemis's role therein is less emphasized compared to Apollo's association with medicinal healing. This nuanced differentiation further accentuates Artemis's unique stature within the pantheon, underscoring her complex relationship with both the wilderness she protects and the creatures that inhabit it.⁹²

Artemis is widely acclaimed not only as a guardian of the wild but also as a protector of children and youth. She embodies a holistic approach to protection that extends across the domains of both human and animal offspring. Her role encompasses safeguarding the young of all species, with a particular emphasis on juvenile animals, underscoring her integral connection to the cycles of life within the natural world. Moreover, Artemis's guardianship is closely linked to her patronage of childbirth, further solidifying her association with the processes of nature and life.⁹³

In mythological narratives, Artemis's multifaceted role as a protector is highlighted by the legend of her childhood. It is recounted that Artemis, in her youth, petitioned her father, Zeus, with several requests that would define her divine responsibilities and attributes. She sought eternal virginity, which symbolizes her autonomy and purity, and a bow and arrows akin to those of her brother Apollo, emphasizing her competence and readiness as a huntress. Additionally, Artemis requested a saffron hunting tunic and the companionship of sixty young nymphs to join her in her hunting and travels, illustrating her leadership and communal engagement with the natural world.⁹⁴

Pleased with her ambitions, Zeus granted her these requests, thereby not only fulfilling her personal desires but also assigning her the role of guardian over the thoroughfares and harbors

⁹⁰ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Artemis.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Artemis's nature and deeds.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Artemis's nature and deeds.

of more than thirty cities and their territories. This role further established her as a key divine figure in the safety and welfare of communal spaces, linking her protective influence to the broader human realm as well as the natural environment.⁹⁵

Artemis is distinguished within the Greek pantheon as the goddess of virginity, a characteristic that markedly differentiates her from her brother Apollo's persona. This aspect of her divinity underscores a thematic emphasis on purity and autonomy, which she also expects her attendant nymphs to uphold. The narrative of Callisto, one of Artemis's hunters, illustrates this expectation and its severe implications. Callisto's breach of chastity manifested through her pregnancy, which provoked a drastic response from Artemis, who transformed her into a bear and subsequently sanctioned a hunt against her.⁹⁶

This mythological episode not only highlights the stringent codes of conduct enforced by Artemis but also reflects the intertwined themes of punishment and transformation inherent in Greek mythology. Zeus's intervention in the ordeal represents a common motif of divine rescue and retribution. He saved Callisto by placing her among the stars, thereby immortalizing her as a constellation, and also ensured the survival of her son, Arcas. Arcas's lineage would continue, as he became the progenitor of the Arcadians, thus perpetuating the intersection of human and divine narratives within the mythological tradition.⁹⁷

The silver bow of Artemis serves dual roles, functioning both as her weapon and as a symbolic representation of the new moon, underscoring her celestial domain as the goddess of the moon.⁹⁸ This attribute not only highlights her martial prowess but also aligns her with lunar imagery, reinforcing her connection to the nocturnal and cyclic aspects of nature. Artemis's acquisition of the lunar domain and her corresponding title mirror those of Selene, another ancient deity traditionally associated with the moon.⁹⁹

The division of celestial responsibilities between Artemis and her brother, Apollo, further delineates their distinct divine spheres. While Apollo is widely recognized as the god of the sun, Artemis was designated the goddess of the moon. This dichotomy not only reflects the gendered distribution of power within the Greek pantheon but also symbolizes the balance and

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Artemis's nature and deeds.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ SMITH, Will. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*. 2000. Artemis.

contrast between the solar and lunar influences, encapsulating the comprehensive scope of cosmic governance attributed to these sibling deities.¹⁰⁰

1.1.14 Ares

Ares, the ancient Greek god of war, embodies the darker aspects of martial conflict. He is typically depicted as a voracious, violent warrior clad in heavy armor, and his presence is frequently associated with the negative consequences of war, such as aggression and chaos. His chariot, emblematically drawn by the personifications of Fear and Terror, further accentuates his formidable and fearsome nature. Despite this imposing image, Ares is paradoxically often unsuccessful in mythological battles, highlighting a notable contrast between his appearance and prowess.¹⁰¹

This recurrent theme of Ares' defeats is most vividly illustrated in his encounters with Athena, who, in stark contrast, is not only a goddess of warfare but also of wisdom and strategic combat. Athena's victories over Ares, including a notable episode where she wounds him despite his use of a spear against her aegis, underscore the preferential reverence she enjoyed among the Greeks, reflecting their valuation of tactical intelligence over brute strength.¹⁰²

The cult of Ares found favor primarily among the Thracians, who were contemporaneously viewed by other Greeks as barbaric and inclined towards violence, mirroring the attributes of Ares himself. This alignment with Ares further marginalized his worship within the broader Greek cultural and religious landscape. Additionally, Ares' affiliation with the Trojans, who were ultimately defeated in the Trojan War, reinforces his association with the futility and destructiveness of war, distinguishing him significantly from other deities of the Greek pantheon, particularly the more strategically adept and victorious Athena.¹⁰³

Ares, in Greek mythology, was broadly disfavored, a sentiment that extended from the human realm to the divine. Among the Olympians, he was particularly despised, with Athena standing out as his most notable detractor, reflecting the ideological divide between their respective domains of warfare. The exception to this general disdain was Aphrodite, who, as Ares' lover, represents a contrasting relationship of affection and alliance. Furthermore, Hades displayed a

¹⁰⁰ SMITH, Will. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*. 2000. Artemis.

¹⁰¹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Ares.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

certain appreciation for Ares, valuing him for the influx of souls sent to the Underworld as casualties of war.¹⁰⁴

This negative perception of Ares within Greek culture undergoes a significant transformation with the transition to Roman mythology, where he is known as Mars. In this context, Mars is not only more powerful but also garners much greater admiration and reverence compared to his Greek counterpart. This shift is emblematic of broader cultural differences between the Greek and Roman views on warfare and the deities associated with it. Remarkably, Mars occupied a central place within the Athenian polis, a privilege traditionally reserved for Athena in Greek practice. This placement underscores the elevated status and integral role Mars played in Roman society, starkly contrasting with the marginalization of Ares in Greek mythology.¹⁰⁵

1.1.15 Dionysus

Dionysus, born to Zeus outside his marriage, was inevitably subjected to Hera's relentless vengeance. At his birth, Hera commanded the Titans to seize the infant and dismember him. According to myth, a pomegranate tree sprang forth where his blood touched the ground. However, Rhea intervened, rescuing the remnants of her grandson and, through her nurturing care, restoring him to life. Persephone, assigned the responsibility of his care, entrusted Dionysus to King Athamas of Orchomenus and his wife, Ino, for upbringing. Nonetheless, Hera uncovered this subterfuge and exacted retribution by driving Athamas to madness, resulting in him tragically killing his own son, Learchus.¹⁰⁶

According to the poet Nonnos, Dionysus underwent a unique dual birth. Semele, identified as the mother of Dionysus, made a perilous request for Zeus to reveal himself in his divine form. Despite Zeus's reluctance, he acceded to Semele's demand, which led to catastrophic consequences. The sight of Zeus in his full immortal splendor was lethal to mortals, resulting in Semele being consumed by flames until only ashes remained. Nevertheless, Zeus was able to rescue the unborn Dionysus. He then sewed the infant into his own thigh, where Dionysus continued to develop until he was ready to be born, thus experiencing a second birth. This narrative underscores the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the origins of Dionysus as recounted by Nonnos.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Ares's nature and deeds.

¹⁰⁵ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Ares.

¹⁰⁶ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Dionysus's nature and deeds.

¹⁰⁷ NONNOS. *Dionysiaca*. H.W. Rouse (Trans.) 1940. Book VII.

Although Dionysus is commonly associated with wine and ecstatic intoxication, his significance extends beyond these superficial attributes. Dionysus transcends the typical depiction of a deity associated with alcohol; his presence is often linked to the phenomenon of mania, a term originating from the Greek word for frenzy. This mania is not confined to an individual but rather manifests collectively, spreading through groups and intensifying the collective madness. Consequently, Dionysus is frequently depicted in the company of his frenzied followers, who surrender their individual identities to the deity and succumb to madness. Intriguingly, these followers, driven by mania, are referred to as Bacchus, a name also adopted by Roman mythology for Dionysus. This highlights Dionysus's complex and multifaceted nature, who embodies both the liberating and chaotic aspects of ecstatic worship.¹⁰⁸

Dionysus was known for inciting riots and violent frenzies wherever he traveled. One notable account details his visit to Boeotia, where numerous women celebrated his presence on Mount Cithaeron. These revels did not go unnoticed, as Pentheus, the King of Thebes, intervened by arresting Dionysus and his female followers. However, the king himself succumbed to madness, mistaking a bull for Dionysus and placing it in shackles. Subsequently, the female followers, driven by Dionysian frenzy, rampaged through the mountain meadows, dismembering calves in their path. Pentheus attempted to quell the disorder, but under the influence of Dionysus, the frenzied mob dismembered him. Tragically, it was his own mother, Agave, who led the rampage and ultimately decapitated her son.¹⁰⁹

However, categorizing Dionysus as a malevolent deity would be inaccurate. Although he intentionally induces frenzies, these episodes do not invariably lead to punishment or violence. On the contrary, Dionysus often pacifies the angry mob by intoxicating them with joy and liberating them from their self-restraint. Throughout ancient Greece, Dionysus was both revered and esteemed, as he alleviated the burdens of daily life by cultivating his vine.¹¹⁰

A myth that casts Dionysus in a more favorable light is the story of Ariadne. The princess of Crete famously assisted the Greek hero, Theseus, in navigating the infamous labyrinth. Despite her invaluable help, Theseus abducted Ariadne and subsequently mistreated her, as she did not bring him sufficient joy. Ultimately, he abandoned her on the island of Naxos. There, Dionysus

¹⁰⁸ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Dionysos.

¹⁰⁹ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. Dionysus's nature and deeds.

¹¹⁰ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Dionysos.

discovered Ariadne, married her and provided her with a loving and supportive home. This narrative highlights the benevolent and compassionate aspects of Dionysus's character.¹¹¹

1.2 Notable demigods and entities

1.2.1 Jason and Medea

King Pelias of Iolcus, upon consulting an oracle, was forewarned that his demise would come at the hands of a man wearing a single sandal. In due course, Jason, the legitimate heir to the throne of Iolcus, arrived in the kingdom, having lost one sandal during his journey. Consequently, when Jason stood before Pelias, the king perceived him as the prophesied threat destined to depose him. Pelias devised a stratagem to circumvent this fate, tasking Jason with the perilous mission of retrieving the Golden Fleece from the distant island of Colchis.¹¹²

In preparation for this formidable quest, Jason called for volunteers to join his expedition and commissioned Argus the Thespian to construct an appropriate vessel for the journey. Many illustrious heroes responded to Jason's summons, significantly bolstering his contingent. The mighty Heracles and the legendary poet Orpheus were among those who heeded the call. The Dioscuri twins, Castor and Polydeuces, joined, as did Polyphemus the Arcadian. Additional notable members included Zetes, Ismon, Euryalus, Peleus, and Oileus the Locrian, among many others.¹¹³

With a numerous and formidable crew, Argus completed the construction of the ship, which was aptly named the Argo. Consequently, Jason and his companions became known as the Argonauts in honor of their renowned vessel.¹¹⁴

The narrative of *the Argonautica*, akin to other epic voyages such as the *Odyssey*, is replete with the deaths of several crew members. Before reaching the island of Colchis, three Argonauts perished during the arduous journey. Firstly, Tiphys, the ship's helmsman, succumbed to illness. Subsequently, Hylas, the squire and beloved companion of Heracles, was abducted by water nymphs, which led Heracles to abandon the quest in his futile search for Hylas. Lastly, Idmon, the seer, met his demise at the hands of a wild boar in the land of the Mariandyni. Idmon's death

¹¹¹ BURKERT, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. 1991. Individual Gods, Dionysos.

¹¹² RHODIUS, Apollonius. *The Argonautica*. R.C. Seaton (Trans.) 1967. p. 3-48.

¹¹³ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. The Argonauts Assemble.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

was particularly devastating for the Argonauts, as losing their seer engendered a profound sense of uncertainty within their ranks.¹¹⁵

After arriving in Colchis, Jason sought an audience with King Aeëtes to negotiate the surrender of the Golden Fleece, which was guarded by a sleepless dragon. Aeëtes agreed to relinquish the Fleece only if Jason could complete a series of seemingly insurmountable tasks. These tasks included subduing and gaining control of two brazen-hoofed bulls, creations of the god Hephaestus, and using them to plow the Field of Ares before sowing it with dragon's teeth.¹¹⁶

Jason's exceptional handsomeness earned him the favor of the goddesses Hera and Athena. These goddesses enlisted the help of Aphrodite, who persuaded her son Eros to make King Aeëtes' daughter, Medea, fall in love with Jason. During the audience with the king, Eros shot an arrow that struck Medea, causing her to fall deeply in love with Jason.¹¹⁷

Medea subsequently approached Jason and offered her assistance in completing the assigned tasks on the condition that he would take her as his wife and allow her to accompany him away from Colchis. Jason agreed to these terms. Medea then gave him a magical lotion to protect him from the bulls' fiery breath. With this newfound immunity to fire, Jason was able to subdue the bulls and successfully plow the Field of Ares.¹¹⁸

After sowing the dragon's teeth in the field, an army of warriors sprang forth from the earth. Jason cleverly incited conflict among them by throwing a rock into their midst, which led to a fierce battle. In the ensuing chaos, the warriors fought and killed each other, leaving Jason to deal easily with the few survivors.¹¹⁹

Upon successfully completing the tasks set before him, Jason returned to King Aeëtes. However, Aeëtes, incensed by Jason's success and suspecting deceit, refused to relinquish the Golden Fleece. In response, Medea proposed that Jason seize the Fleece without her father's consent. Utilizing her magical abilities, she cast a spell to lull the dragon guarding the Fleece into a deep slumber, thereby enabling Jason to retrieve the coveted Fleece from the sacred tree.

¹¹⁵ GRAVES, Robert. *The Greek Myths: Complete Edition*. 1992. From The Symplegades To Colchis.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. The Seizure of The Fleece

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Subsequently, Jason and Medea, along with the Argonauts, made their escape from Colchis aboard the Argo.¹²⁰

Upon their arrival in Thessaly, Jason and Medea found Jason's father, Aeson, and his uncle, Pelias, enfeebled by age. Concerned for his father's well-being, Jason inquired whether Medea could restore Aeson to his youthful vitality. Medea proceeded to extract blood from Aeson and infused it with potent herbs. Upon reinjecting this concoction into Aeson, he indeed regained his youthful vigor and vitality.¹²¹

Witnessing this miraculous rejuvenation, the daughters of Pelias implored Medea to perform the same restorative procedure on their father, promising in return to relinquish their claim to the throne of Iolcus. Medea consented and instructed them that the process would require dismembering their father and boiling the pieces in a cauldron with specific herbs, after which he would emerge revitalized. Initially hesitant, the daughters were convinced when Medea demonstrated the process on a ram, which emerged from the cauldron as a young lamb.¹²²

However, this was a deceitful ploy. As Pelias's daughters followed Medea's instructions and dismembered their father, they watched in horror as he failed to be restored to life or health. This act effectively eliminated Pelias, leaving his daughters in despair and ensuring Jason's position.¹²³

After the heinous act, the populace incited an uprising, prompting Jason and Medea to flee to Corinth. Ten years later, having lived harmoniously for a time, Jason grew weary of his marriage to Medea and fell in love with another woman. Enraged by this betrayal, Medea murdered the two children she had borne for Jason and subsequently fled to Athens. There, she married Aegeus, the King of Athens and father of Theseus.¹²⁴

Upon Theseus' return to Athens, Medea attempted to deceive Aegeus into murdering his own son. However, her plot was unsuccessful, and she fled Athens in the same manner as she had previously fled Corinth.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ RHODIUS, Apollonius. *The Argonautica*. R.C. Seaton (Trans.) 1967. p. 295-320.

¹²¹ GODWIN, William. *Lives of the Necromancers*. 2012. p. 28.

¹²² GODWIN, William. *Lives of the Necromancers*. 2012. p. 28.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

1.2.2 Charon

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Charon serves as the grim ferryman who transports the souls of the dead across the river Styx. Occasionally, Charon agrees to ferry a living hero, provided the hero pays him a fee in gold.¹²⁶

Charon is described as a fearsome and grim figure. His long, unkempt beard, tattered old cloak, and eyes burning with an unsettling flame contribute to his fierce and intimidating appearance. He is very strict about whom he allows onto his boat, only permitting souls that have been properly buried and possess the necessary passage token, an obol. Those who lack these requirements are left to wander the riverbank for a hundred years.¹²⁷

When Aeneas and Sibyl arrive at the river, Charon initially refuses them passage, noting the rarity of living beings traveling to the Underworld. However, upon seeing the golden bough that Aeneas carries as a token, Charon begrudgingly agrees to ferry them across. This depiction highlights Charon's essential role as a gatekeeper in the afterlife and emphasizes his intimidating, almost otherworldly presence.¹²⁸

In speleology, the term "Charon's cave" or "Charonium" refers to a type of cave characterized by high concentrations of carbon dioxide or other toxic gases, rendering them extremely hazardous to humans and animals. This designation is believed to have been introduced by ancient Greek scholars. The Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus noted that any living creature entering these caves would succumb to the lethal atmosphere within. Consequently, these caves were named after Charon, symbolizing the passage from life to death.¹²⁹

The most renowned Charonium is situated near Lake Avernus, close to Naples, and is traditionally associated with the cave that Dante Alighieri depicted as the entrance to Hell in his epic poem *The Divine Comedy*. This association underscores the symbolic significance of Charonium caves as thresholds between the mortal world and the afterlife.¹³⁰

1.2.3 Chiron

Chiron, also known as Cheiron, is a notable figure in Greek mythology. He is distinguished from other centaurs by his unique parentage and disposition. Born to the Titan Cronos and the

¹²⁶ VIRGIL. *Aeneid*. Frederick Ahl (Trans.) 2007. p. 134-141.

¹²⁷ VIRGIL. *Aeneid*. Frederick Ahl (Trans.) 2007. p. 134-141.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ CÍLEK, Václav. *Archeologie a jeskyně*. 1997. p. 68.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Oceanid Philyra, Chiron was renowned for his benevolence and affinity towards humans. He was revered as a wise and compassionate teacher.¹³¹

One of the most significant aspects of Chiron's legacy is his role as a mentor to numerous legendary heroes. Among his distinguished pupils was Asklepios, as mentioned by Pindar, who attributes the centaur to imparting knowledge of healing and medicine to Asklepios. Under Chiron's tutelage, Asklepios acquired such profound medical expertise that he was reputed to possess the ability to resurrect the dead.¹³²

Chiron, distinct from his centaur brethren typically characterized by their wild and unruly nature, presents a more complex and nuanced figure in Greek mythology. While Pholus is also an exception to the overall bestial nature of centaurs, Chiron's differences are even more pronounced. Artistic depictions often emphasize his unique status by portraying him with human front legs rather than those of a horse, symbolizing his more human and civilized disposition. Additionally, he is frequently depicted wearing elaborate robes, a stark contrast to the appearance of his fellow centaurs.¹³³

Despite his more human attributes, Chiron retains certain bestial elements. This duality is highlighted in the myth of his care for the infant Achilles, whom he fed the blood of hares after his mother, Thetis, abandoned him. This unusual nourishment is often linked to the later savagery Achilles exhibited in his life.¹³⁴

Chiron's pedagogical legacy includes mentoring not only Asklepios but also other prominent heroes such as Achilles and Jason. His prowess as both a philosopher and a healer is well-documented, further distinguishing him from other centaurs. His unique combination of wisdom, healing abilities, and philosophical insight solidifies his role as a pivotal figure in the education and development of several key characters in Greek mythology.¹³⁵

In contemporary times, the symbol associated with Asklepios, known as the Rod of Asclepius, has become emblematic of the medical profession. This symbol, featuring a single serpent entwined around a staff, is widely recognized and utilized across the healthcare system. It is an

¹³¹ PINDAR. *Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes*. William H. Race (Trans.) 1997. p. 245.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ HORNBLOWER, Simon and Antony SPAWFORTH. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. 2014. p. 158-159.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ HORNBLOWER, Simon and Antony SPAWFORTH. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. 2014. p. 158-159.

insignia for numerous medical organizations and is a common emblem worn by doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers. The Rod of Asclepius endures as a testament to the enduring influence of Chiron's teachings and Asklepios' legacy in the field of medicine.¹³⁶

1.2.4 Heracles

Heracles demonstrated his inherent prowess as a son of Zeus from his birth. Hera, seeking to eliminate him in infancy, sent two colossal serpents into his crib. However, Heracles wrestled with the snakes and strangled them, showcasing his extraordinary strength even as a baby.¹³⁷

Throughout his youth, Heracles was instructed by various eminent teachers. Amphitryon taught him the art of chariot driving, Autolycus instructed him in wrestling, Eurytus imparted the skills of archery, Castor trained him to be a formidable warrior in heavy armor, and Linus educated him in playing the lyre. However, a tragic incident occurred when Linus, the brother of the legendary Orpheus, struck Heracles. In retaliation, Heracles delivered a fatal blow with his lyre, a testament to his immense strength. Heracles cited the law of Rhadamanthys, which stated that self-defense absolved one of guilt.¹³⁸

In response to this incident, Amphitryon, fearing further unintended consequences of Heracles' strength, sent him to tend cattle. This period proved to be beneficial, as Heracles gained remarkable strength and size. While tending the cattle, he killed a lion that was terrorizing the land. Heracles used the lion's skin as armor, with the lion's mouth serving as a helmet, marking the beginning of his legendary exploits.¹³⁹

The Labors of Heracles constitute some of the most renowned myths surrounding the mightiest son of Zeus. These narratives are marked by a profoundly tragic inception, as Hera, driven by jealousy, induced a fit of madness in Heracles, causing him to kill his own children as well as those of his half-brother Iphicles. In the aftermath of this horrific act, Heracles condemned himself to exile and sought counsel from Apollo at Delphi regarding his future. There, the priestess Pythia instructed him to serve under the Mycenaean king Eurystheus. She further

¹³⁶ BRUCE-MITFORD, Miranda. *Signs & Symbols: An Illustrated Guide to Their Origins and Meanings*. 2008 p. 314.

¹³⁷ APOLLODORUS. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. Michael Simpson (Trans.) 1976. p. 91.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ APOLLODORUS. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. Michael Simpson (Trans.) 1976. p. 91.

prophesied that Heracles would attain immortality upon completing all the labors assigned by Eurystheus.¹⁴⁰

The first labor assigned to Heracles was to procure the skin of the Nemean lion. Heracles subdued this nearly invulnerable beast by strangling it and subsequently bringing its skin to the king. Eurystheus, alarmed by Heracles' success, forbade him from entering the city. Henceforth, Heracles was required to report his accomplishments and receive further instructions from Eurystheus' herald at the city gates. A bronze jar was also installed at the palace for Eurystheus to conceal himself whenever Heracles approached.¹⁴¹



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The second labor entailed eradicating the Lernaean Hydra. Due to the considerable distance to the swamp of Lerna, Heracles was conveyed there in a chariot by his companion, Iolaus. During the confrontation with the Hydra, Heracles discovered that two more would emerge in its place each time he bashed one of the creature's heads with his club. To counter this, Iolaus ignited a nearby forest and used the flames to cauterize the neck stumps, thereby preventing the heads from regenerating. However, upon reporting his success to Eurystheus, Heracles was informed

¹⁴⁰ APOLLODORUS. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. Michael Simpson (Trans.) 1976. p. 92.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 93.

¹⁴² RUBENS, Peter Paul. Heracles and The Nemean Lion. *Wikimedia Commons* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

that this labor was deemed invalid due to the assistance he received from his companion, Iolaus, in its completion.¹⁴³

The third task assigned to Heracles was to catch the Cerynithian Hind, a sacred and fast creature that belonged to the goddess Artemis. Heracles relentlessly followed the hind for a full year until he ultimately captured it and presented it alive to Eurystheus. Furthermore, Heracles was tasked with capturing the Erymanthian Boar, a fearsome creature that caused much fear in the Psophis area, as part of his fourth labor. Heracles effectively tamed the boar by guiding it into a thick layer of snow and then offered it to the king. The sixth task entailed purifying the Augean stables, which harbored a considerable number of livestock and had not been cleansed for an extended period of time. Heracles achieved this seemingly enormous feat by diverting the courses of the rivers Alpheus and Peneus to expel the accumulated waste in just one day. The sixth task was exterminating the Stymphalian Birds, predatory creatures armed with bronze beaks and metallic plumage. Heracles employed Athena's rattle bestowed upon him to intimidate the birds, causing them to take flight, and thereafter eliminated them using his arrows.¹⁴⁴

Heracles was tasked with capturing the Cretan Bull, a formidable creature causing destruction on the island of Crete, as his seventh labor. Heracles subdued the bull through wrestling and then presented it to Eurystheus. The seventh task entailed the pilfering of the Mares of Diomedes, flesh-eating equines owned by the Thracian monarch Diomedes. Heracles tamed the mares by offering Diomedes as food to them, thereby calming the horses and successfully bringing them back to Eurystheus. Heracles was required to acquire the belt of Hippolyta, the ruler of the Amazons, as part of his ninth task. Despite initially acquiring the belt without any opposition, a miscommunication resulted in a clash when Heracles was driven to fatally wound Hippolyta and forcibly take possession of the belt. The ninth task entailed the apprehension of the bovine livestock belonging to the colossal Geryon. Heracles vanquished Geryon and his herdsman, reclaiming the livestock and returning them to Eurystheus. The twelfth task entailed the retrieval of the golden apples of the Hesperides. Heracles sought the help of Atlas to obtain the fruits while he temporarily shouldered the responsibility of supporting the sky. Ultimately, the twelfth task demanded Heracles to apprehend Cerberus, the tri-headed sentinel of the

¹⁴³ APOLLODORUS. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. Michael Simpson (Trans.) 1976. p. 93.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 93-101.

Underworld. By obtaining Hades' permission, Heracles successfully conquered Cerberus and delivered him to Eurystheus, thereby concluding his challenging sequence of tasks.¹⁴⁵

Upon the completion of his labors, Heracles returns to his family. However, Hera, driven by her jealousy and desire to punish Zeus for his infidelity, devises a new scheme against Heracles. In collaboration with Iris, Hera instructs Lyssa, the primordial personification of rage and madness, to incite Heracles to violence. Under the influence of this divine madness, Heracles is driven to a frenzied state in which he murders his wife and children. Once the madness dissipates, Heracles regains his senses only to find himself surrounded by the lifeless bodies of his loved ones, realizing the horrific nature of his actions. Desiring to end his life, Heracles is ultimately dissuaded by Theseus, who provides both moral and emotional support. Theseus then escorts Heracles to Athens, where he aids him in restoring his mental fortitude and facilitates the necessary rites of purification to cleanse him of his transgressions.¹⁴⁶

After some years, yet another woman enters Heracles' life, Deianira. Heracles wins Deianira's hand after a struggle with the river god Achelous. Together, they have a son named Hyllus. Sometime later, Heracles engages in conflict with King Eurytus. Lichas, Heracles' messenger, brings a group of captives to Deianira, including Iole, the daughter of Eurytus. Unaware of Iole's true identity, Deianira treats her kindly. Later, Deianira learns from Lichas that Heracles intends to take Iole as his mistress. To reclaim Heracles' affection, Deianira sends him a robe soaked in the blood of the centaur Nessus, who falsely claims that his blood would act as a love charm.¹⁴⁷

Upon receiving the robe, Heracles dons it and is subjected to excruciating pain. Realizing the grievous outcome of her actions, Deianira is overwhelmed with guilt and takes her own life. Heracles, enduring immense suffering, eventually returns home. Discovering Deianira's death, he is overcome with grief and demands to be burned alive on a pyre. As he prepares for his demise, he instructs his son, Hyllus, to marry Iole. When Heracles is burned on the pyre, his mortal flesh is consumed, and his immortal essence ascends to Olympus. There, he attains godhood and eternal peace.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ APOLLODORUS. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. Michael Simpson (Trans.) 1976. p. 93-101.

¹⁴⁶ EURIPIDES. *Herakles*. Tom Sleight (Trans.) 2001. Lines 960-1798.

¹⁴⁷ SOPHOCLES. *Ajax; Electra; Trachiniae; Philoctetes v. 2*. Francis Storr (Trans.) p. 259-309.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 309-359.

1.2.5 Minos

Minos, the notorious king of Crete, was reputed for his cruelty. During a tumultuous period of his reign, his son, Androgeos, died under suspicious circumstances. Minos attributed his son's death to the people of Attica, whom he accused of treacherous murder. In retaliation, Minos waged war against Attica, exacerbating their suffering with military aggression. Additionally, the gods did not favor the people of Attica, as their land was afflicted by plague and drought.¹⁴⁹

Seeking relief, the Athenians consulted the gods, who advised them that appeasing Minos would bring an end to their suffering. Zeus specifically instructed them that their miseries would cease if they placated Minos. Consequently, Minos imposed a severe demand: Athens was to send a tribute of seven young men and seven young maidens to Crete every nine years.¹⁵⁰

A particularly grim version of the myth suggests that these fourteen youths met a tragic fate within the Labyrinth. They either succumbed to starvation and thirst or were killed by the Minotaur, a monstrous creature residing within the maze. This version underscores Minos' extreme cruelty and the dire consequences faced by the Athenian youth.¹⁵¹

After his death, Minos assumed the role of one of the three judges in the court of the Underworld. In this capacity, Minos and his fellow judges presided over the souls of the deceased, hearing their accounts and assessing their lives and transgressions. The court held the responsibility of assigning each soul to the appropriate region of the Underworld according to their deeds and sins during their lifetime.¹⁵² Despite his reputation for cruelty during his reign, Minos was acknowledged as the king of Crete, a kingdom renowned for its legal system. Consequently, Minos was accorded a seat in the court.¹⁵³

1.2.6 Achilles

Achilles, the protagonist of Homer's *Iliad*, is depicted as an exceptionally skilled Greek warrior whose unmatched combat abilities are emphasized. Achilles possesses exceptional power and expertise, being the offspring of the mortal Peleus and the sea nymph Thetis. His near-invincibility results from his mother immersing him in the River Styx, rendering all parts of his body except for his heel impenetrable to damage. Achilles possesses a formidable and

¹⁴⁹ PLUTARCH. *Plutarch's Lives: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*. Bernadotte Perrin (Trans.) 1967. p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² VIRGIL. *Aeneid*. Frederick Ahl (Trans.) 2007. p. 142.

¹⁵³ Ibid p. 368.

practically invincible presence on the battlefield due to his divine favor and exceptional combat skills, making him a crucial asset to the Greek forces in the Trojan War.¹⁵⁴

The central focus of the *Iliad* is the emotional intensity experienced by Achilles, specifically his profound fury. His anger is sparked by a disagreement with Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek army, regarding the spoils of war, specifically Briseis. Agamemnon's request for Briseis, a lady Achilles had developed affection for, greatly offends him, causing Achilles to abstain from the war as a form of protest. The withdrawal has substantial ramifications for the Greek soldiers, highlighting Achilles' crucial role in their triumph. The protagonist's intense fury and unwavering commitment to his principles significantly contribute to the epic's plot, emphasizing the themes of arrogance and the detrimental consequences of warfare.¹⁵⁵

Achilles' interactions with women, such as Briseis and others, are characterized by intricacy and a combination of fondness and ownership. Briseis, a Trojan woman who was taken captive, represents Achilles' honor and prestige among the Greek people. Although his initial bond with her may seem possessive, their subsequent separation uncovers a more profound emotional attachment. Achilles' lamentation over the loss of Briseis implies that his emotions towards her are above mere possession, implying a sincere, however intricate, fondness.¹⁵⁶

Achilles' closest comrade, Patroclus, shares a profound bond with him, which is another key relationship in Achilles' life. Their friendship is portrayed with profound emotional profundity, frequently perceived as surpassing mere friendliness. The demise of Patroclus, caused by Hector, serves as a crucial turning point in the *Iliad*, motivating Achilles to rejoin the battle with a revived and nearly self-destructive intensity. The anguish displayed by Achilles emphasizes the significance of Patroclus in his life, highlighting a love that numerous scholars and readers perceive as both platonic and erotic.¹⁵⁷

Achilles' response to Patroclus' demise is a blend of deep grief and unrestrained fury. Driven by this defeat, he abandons his previous conflict with Agamemnon and returns to the battlefield with an unwavering determination to seek revenge for his friend's demise. Achilles' sorrow is profound and complex, encompassing grief rituals that emphasize the intensity of his emotional

¹⁵⁴ HOMER. *The Iliad*. Samuel Butler(trans.) Book I.

¹⁵⁵ NAGY, Gregory. *Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*. 1999. Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁶ WILLCOCK, Malcolm M. *A Companion to the Iliad*. 1976. Book 1, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Book 16, 18.

bond. The protagonist's actions, motivated by a combination of affection and a desire for revenge, push the story towards its most intense confrontations, notably his duel with Hector.¹⁵⁸

Achilles' skill and ability on the battlefield are unparalleled. His reentry into battle signifies a pivotal moment for the Greeks, as he swiftly penetrates the Trojan forces with an intense and vengeful determination. The climactic confrontation between Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad* is widely renowned for highlighting Achilles' exceptional combat skills and unwavering determination to pay tribute to Patroclus. The demise of Hector at the hands of Achilles serves as a triumph on both personal and strategic levels. However, it also intensifies the epic's tragic nature, highlighting warfare's senselessness and harmful consequences.¹⁵⁹

The narrative of Achilles in the *Iliad* also explores the concepts of destiny and the inevitability of death. Although Achilles possesses almost unbeatable strength, he is well conscious of his own mortality and the prophecy that predicts his demise should he persist in fighting at Troy. The character's awareness of this choice gives his persona a sense of sad inevitability, as he deliberately opts for fame and a brief lifespan rather than a lengthy and unremarkable existence. Therefore, his actions are permeated with a profound feeling of fatalism, which mirrors the ancient Greek conviction in the supremacy of fate and the gods in shaping human existence.

Achilles' legacy in the *Iliad* is ultimately that of a hero characterized by his exceptional powers and his profound, frequently conflicting emotions. The affection he feels for Briseis and Patroclus adds a human touch to his character, contrasting with his essentially divine presence on the battlefield. Achilles' character is characterized by the interplay of love, honor, fury, and sadness, making him a figure that remains relevant throughout time. His story serves as a testament to the intricacies of human nature and the lasting influence of myth.

1.2.7 Cerberus

Cerberus, the legendary three-headed canine guardian of the underworld, is predominantly described in classical literature as the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, as endorsed by esteemed authors such as Hesiod, Homer, Apollodorus, Sophocles, and Euripides. However, an intriguing alternative parentage is suggested in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where there is an implication that Medusa might be Cerberus' mother. Ovid's account does not definitively resolve the question of Cerberus' sire. Given that Medusa's only recorded consort was Poseidon,

¹⁵⁸ SHAY, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam*. 2003. Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁹ WILLCOCK, Malcolm M. *A Companion to the Iliad*. 1976. Book 18, 20, 22.

it can be speculated that Poseidon would be Cerberus' father in this version of the myth. This speculation aligns Cerberus with Pegasus and Chrysaor as siblings and Geryon as a nephew. Despite this alternative narrative, the account of Cerberus being born to Typhon and Echidna remains the more widely accepted and conventional version within classical mythology.¹⁶⁰

Cerberus' duty is to guard the underworld's gates, permitting only the dead to pass through. If the hound detects any living being attempting to enter, he devours them. Cerberus instills fear in all who behold him and is devoid of pity. Moreover, the loyal guardian himself knows no fear.¹⁶¹

However, in certain myths, some heroes manage to pass Cerberus by employing various stratagems. For instance, during Orpheus' quest to retrieve his wife, Eurydice, he encounters Cerberus at the gates of the underworld and attempts to persuade the hound to allow him to speak with Hades and Persephone. Despite Orpheus' pleas, Cerberus remains unmoved and prepares to attack. In response, Orpheus plays a tune on his lyre, and the enchanting melody induces Cerberus into a deep sleep, allowing Orpheus to proceed.¹⁶²

During Aeneas' journey to the underworld, the hero is filled with trepidation at the sight of Cerberus and the other monstrous creatures lurking in the underworld. He observes that his steel sword would be ineffectual in confronting Cerberus. The guardian is monstrously massive, and his bark reverberates throughout the cavern he occupies. Fortunately, Sibyl throws Cerberus a honey cake, which induces sleep, allowing Aeneas and his seer to pass safely into the realm of the dead.¹⁶³

Finally, Heracles is tasked with retrieving Cerberus from the underworld and presenting him to Eurystheus as his final labor. Heracles successfully subdues Cerberus in combat, making him the only hero to have ever accomplished this feat. In Euripides' play *Peirithous*, Heracles also rescues Theseus and his companion from the underworld. Theseus offers assistance in completing Heracles' labor, but Heracles declines, concerned that Eurystheus might accuse him of cheating.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ OVID. *Metamorphoses*. David Raeburn (Trans.) 2004. Orpheus and Eurydice.

¹⁶¹ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (trans.) Tartarus, verses 772-780.

¹⁶² VIRGIL. *Virgil's Georgics*. Janet Lembke (Trans.) 2005. p. 72-76.

¹⁶³ VIRGIL. *Aeneid*. Frederick Ahl (Trans.) 2007. p. 137-141.

¹⁶⁴ PAPADOPOULOU, Thalia. *Heracles and Euripidean Tragedy*. 2005. p. 180-181.

1.2.8 Geryon

Even before the birth of Geryon, his arrival was foretold. The eldest of the Fates advised Hera to refrain from killing the naiad Callirhoe, as she was destined to bear a formidable monster that no one could kill—not even the legendary Heracles. This monster was to be named Geryon.¹⁶⁵

Geryon's father, Chrysaor, was the son of Poseidon and Medusa and the brother of Pegasus, thus making Geryon Pegasus' nephew. Geryon was described as having a single body with three heads. He was accompanied by Orthus, a two-headed dog born to Typhon and Echidna; therefore, he is Cerberus' brother.¹⁶⁶

After Geryon grew, having been abandoned by his mother, he was summoned to Olympus by Hera, who had instructed him to prepare to kill Heracles. The river god Castelos, concerned about the potential devastation Geryon might cause near his river, sought to make an arrangement with Heracles. At the time, Heracles was tasked with the labor of cleaning the Augean Stables, a task complicated by the extensive accumulation of filth and stench.¹⁶⁷

Castelos devised a strategic ruse to address both his concerns and assist Heracles with his labor. He proposed staging a scenario that would appear to Hera as if Heracles were battling Castelos. By directing the river's waters to wash over the stables, Castelos aimed to cleanse them of their accumulated filth. In return for this ingenious plan, Heracles was to eliminate Geryon. As Geryon's slaying was already designated as a part of Heracles' next labor, he readily accepted Castelos' offer.¹⁶⁸

When Heracles engaged Geryon in battle, he quickly realized that the monster could not be killed by conventional means. Heracles discerned that a certain power of fate protected Geryon from his attacks. Upon further analysis of the prophecy concerning Geryon, Heracles devised a strategy to defeat the monster. Ensuring that Geryon was in pursuit, Heracles broke into a run and, upon reaching a hill, released a goat, a boar, and a sheep, each in a different direction.¹⁶⁹

As Geryon's three heads focused on each animal respectively, the monster became uncoordinated. Driven by hunger, Geryon inadvertently tore his own body apart as each head

¹⁶⁵ EVSLIN, Bernard. *Geryon*. 1987. p. 31-35.

¹⁶⁶ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (trans.) Other Early Gods, verses 280-315.

¹⁶⁷ EVSLIN, Bernard. *Geryon*. 1987. p. 39-49.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 45-49.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 62-77.

attempted to chase a different animal. Thus, Heracles succeeded in causing Geryon's self-destruction through his cunning and understanding of the prophecy.¹⁷⁰

1.2.9 The Harpies

According to Hesiod, the Harpies are the progeny of the sea god Thaumas and the Oceanid Electra. Hesiod identifies them by the names Aello and Ocypete. He describes them as possessing luxuriant hair and notes that their rapidly beating wings enable them to travel with the swiftness of storm winds or birds. This characterization underscores the Harpies' exceptional speed and relentless nature when engaged in a pursuit.¹⁷¹

Despite their lineage from essentially pure sea deities, Harpies are frequently seen carrying out the wishes of Zeus, the lord of the skies. One of the most renowned myths illustrating their servitude to Zeus is found in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, concerning Phineus, the elderly son of Agenor.¹⁷²

During their expedition to retrieve the Golden Fleece, the Argonauts encountered Phineus, a blind prophet subjected to relentless torment by the Harpies. Phineus revealed that he was punished by the gods for divulging too many divine secrets, a consequence of his prophetic abilities. As retribution, Zeus blinded him and commanded the Harpies to deprive the aged seer of his food.¹⁷³

The Boreads, Zetes and Calais, agreed to help Phineus by preparing an opulent feast for him. As the Harpies descended to seize the food from Phineus' grasp, the Boreads attempted to strike them down with their swords. However, the Harpies proved too swift and agile for Zetes and Calais to land a blow. At this juncture, the goddess Iris descended from Olympus and commanded the Boreads to refrain from harming "the hounds of Zeus." She assured them that she would keep the Harpies away from Phineus. Trusting Iris's vow, sworn upon the river Styx, the brothers complied, understanding that breaking such a promise would result in her demise.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ EVSLIN, Bernard. *Geryon*. 1987. p. 62-77.

¹⁷¹ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (trans.) Other Early Gods, verses 265-270.

¹⁷² RHODIUS, Apollonius. *The Argonautica*. R.C. Seaton (Trans.) 1967. p. 117-126.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

1.2.10 The Furies

In his *Theogony*, Hesiod describes the Furies, goddesses of vengeance. According to this account, when Gaia bore the Cyclopes and Hecatoncheires, their father Ouranos imprisoned them within the Earth. Enraged, Gaia instructed her son Cronos to mutilate Ouranos. Cronos castrated him, casting his genitals into the sea, from which Aphrodite emerged. However, the Furies were born from the blood of Ouranos that fell upon Gaia. This mythological origin underscores their role as embodiments of vengeance and the consequences of familial violence.¹⁷⁵

In Aeschylus' *The Oresteia*, the Furies are depicted as relentless in their pursuit of Orestes, who has murdered his mother, Clytemnestra. Their pursuit exemplifies their role as agents of vengeance, tracking and confronting those who commit matricide. However, their pursuit does not always result in bloodshed. At the climax of the play, Athena intervenes and establishes a court to judge Orestes. He is acquitted by Athena, and the Furies are subsequently transformed into the Eumenides, becoming benevolent protectors of justice and civic order.¹⁷⁶



Orestes Pursued by the Furies

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¹⁷⁵ HESIOD. *Work and Days and Theogony*. Stanley Lombardo (trans.) 1993. Castration of Ouranos, verses 140-187.

¹⁷⁶ AESCHYLUS. *The Oresteia*. Robert Fagles (Trans.) 1977. The Eumenides.

¹⁷⁷ RATH, Carl. The Erinyes in Greek Mythology. *Greek Legends and Myths* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

During his visit to Tartarus in Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas encounters Tisiphone, one of the Furies. Tisiphone is depicted wearing robes drenched in blood, and she wields a whip in her hand. She is stationed as the guardian of a massive fortress, which is described as impenetrable, even by the Olympian gods. From within the fortress emanate the agonized screams of those undergoing punishment for their transgressions. Tisiphone, along with her sisters, administers these punishments, demonstrating that the Furies, when not engaged in their primary role of vengeance, also partake in the chastisement of the damned in Tartarus. This portrayal underscores the multifaceted role of the Furies within the mythological framework, serving both as agents of retribution and as enforcers of eternal punishment.¹⁷⁸

1.2.11 Minotaur

The Minotaur is a renowned creature in Greek mythology, residing within the labyrinth of King Minos of Crete. The Minotaur's existence began when Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, engaged in a union with a bull. Several months later, she gave birth to the Minotaur, whose name signifies "Minos' bull." The Minotaur inherited physical traits from both parents, possessing a bull's upper body and a man's lower body.¹⁷⁹

King Minos confined the Minotaur within a complex labyrinth designed by Daedalus. As part of a tribute demanded from Athens, the Minotaur was fed seven boys and seven girls every seven years. Among these tributes was the legendary hero Theseus, who was the son of Poseidon. Upon his arrival in Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, fell in love with Theseus and provided him with a thread to navigate the labyrinth.¹⁸⁰

Utilizing the thread to retrace his steps, Theseus successfully traversed the labyrinth. Eventually, he encountered the Minotaur, whom he defeated and killed. Emerging from the labyrinth unscathed, Theseus' triumph marked a significant victory in Greek mythology.¹⁸¹

1.2.12 Medusa

Medusa, a prominent figure in Greek mythology, is the daughter of Phorcys and his sister Ceto. She is one of the three Gorgons, alongside her sisters Stheno and Euryale, although Medusa is the most renowned among them. Phorcys and Ceto's offspring extend beyond the Gorgons, as they also parented the Graeae, often referred to as the "Aged Ones." The Graeae consist of three

¹⁷⁸ VIRGIL. *Aeneid*. Frederick Ahl (Trans.) 2007. p. 146-147.

¹⁷⁹ EVSLIN, Bernard. *The Minotaur*. 1987. p. 25-35.

¹⁸⁰ MORFORD, Mark P. O. and Robert J. LENARDON. *Classical Mythology*. 1985. p. 416-417.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

sisters who collectively share a single eye and one tooth among them. This unique attribute of the Graeae highlights their distinct role within the mythological canon, akin to the unique and formidable nature of the Gorgons.¹⁸²

Medusa was not always depicted as a monstrous figure. Initially, she was renowned for her extraordinary beauty, attracting the attention of many suitors. Her hair was particularly striking, captivating even the gods and goddesses. However, her fate took a tragic turn when she caught the eye of Poseidon, who subsequently raped her in Athena's temple. This desecration so profoundly shocked Athena, the pure daughter of Zeus, that she could not bear to look upon Medusa. In response, Athena transformed Medusa's hair into serpents, cursing her with the power to turn anyone who gazed directly into her eyes to stone. Furthermore, Medusa's visage was later affixed to the Aegis, the shield borne by Athena, which instilled fear in her adversaries.¹⁸³

Medusa figures prominently in the myth of the legendary hero Perseus. To locate Medusa, Perseus first seeks out the Graeae, the daughters of Phorcys and Ceto, who share a single eye among them. By seizing this eye, Perseus compels the Graeae to reveal the location of Medusa's lair, as it is their most valued possession. Upon obtaining this information, Perseus returns the eye.¹⁸⁴

Armed with this knowledge, Perseus ventures into Medusa's abode. Employing the reflection in his shield to avoid her lethal gaze, he successfully decapitates her. Notably, at the moment of her death, Medusa is pregnant. From her severed neck, the winged horse Pegasus and the warrior Chrysaor emerge. This dramatic scene underscores both the monstrous and life-giving aspects of Medusa's character within the mythological narrative.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² MORFORD, Mark P. O. and Robert J. LENARDON. *Classical Mythology*. 1985. p. 106.

¹⁸³ OVID. *Metamorphoses*. Horace Gregory (Trans.) 1958. p. 114-115.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

2 Establishment of the authors

2.1 Rick Riordan

2.1.1 Biography

Rick Riordan, born on June 5th, 1964, in San Antonio, Texas, emerged from a lineage deeply rooted in education. His mother, an art teacher with a passion for music, and his father, a vocational technology instructor with an interest in pottery, provided a nurturing educational environment. This familial dedication to teaching extended to Riordan's grandparents, establishing a strong educational foundation that influenced his eventual career choice as a teacher.¹⁸⁶

Despite initially being a reluctant reader, preferring activities such as playing with Legos or building robots, Riordan's interest in literature was kindled during his middle school years. At this stage, he discovered the enchanting world of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Legendarium*. Riordan's fascination with *The Lord of the Rings* series subsequently led to an interest in Norse mythology, spurred by his English teacher, Mrs. Pabst, who informed him of Tolkien's mythological influences. Recognizing Riordan's innate storytelling talent, Mrs. Pabst encouraged his writing endeavors, and together, they submitted his work to a literary magazine, although it was ultimately rejected.¹⁸⁷

Riordan attended Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio, where he distinguished himself as an editor for the school newspaper and earned third place in a state writing competition. Additionally, he contributed to an underground school newspaper that humorously critiqued the football team's losing streak, inciting the ire of the athletes to the extent that they vandalized his car. Nevertheless, these experiences solidified Riordan's passion for writing.¹⁸⁸

Initially aspiring to major in music, Riordan eventually shifted his academic focus to English and history at the University of Texas at Austin. To support himself during his studies, he performed in a rock band. During his college years, Riordan's engagement with reading intensified, encompassing a wide range of literature, including classical works he had previously overlooked.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ FURGANG, Adam. *Rick Riordan*. 2013. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Upon earning his degrees in English and history, Riordan pursued a teaching certification at the University of Texas in San Antonio. During this period, he achieved his first publication with two short stories. Riordan's teaching career began at a middle school in New Braunfels, Texas. This phase of his life saw a significant change when he married his wife, Becky, prompting their move to San Francisco, California, where Riordan continued his teaching profession at Presidio High School. Later, Riordan reflected that his teaching career brought him considerable fulfillment and joy. He has occasionally expressed a sense of nostalgia and a lingering affection for the teaching profession.¹⁹⁰

This academic trajectory underscores Riordan's evolution from a hesitant reader to a devoted educator and writer, influenced by his familial background and pivotal educational experiences.

Alongside his teaching career, Riordan authored a narrative centered on a detective named Tres Navarre, set in his hometown of San Antonio. This creative endeavor allowed Riordan to reconnect with his cherished hometown, albeit through his writing. Despite receiving numerous rejection letters, Riordan's work was eventually accepted by the fourteenth publisher to whom he submitted it. This persistence culminated in the publication of *Big Red Tequila* three years later.¹⁹¹

After the birth of their two sons, Haley and Patrick, Riordan and his wife relocated back to San Antonio. There, Riordan commenced teaching at Saint Mary's Hall, where he integrated world mythology into his English and social studies curriculum, a subject he found particularly gratifying. His enthusiasm for mythology deepened further when his son Haley experienced difficulty sleeping. Riordan began narrating bedtime stories about the Greek gods, recognizing Haley's interest in Greek mythology. When he exhausted the traditional myths, Haley encouraged him to create original stories. This encouragement led to the inception of the celebrated *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series.¹⁹²

2.1.2 The Riordanarium: Riordan's Mythological Fiction

The *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan is an absorbing epic that tells of the adventure of Percy Jackson, a twelve-year-old boy who discovers he is a demigod, son of Poseidon. The series opens with *The Lightning Thief*, in which Percy learns about his divine heritage and begins his quest to prevent a war among the gods. Over the five installments, Percy,

¹⁹⁰ FURGANG, Adam. *Rick Riordan*. 2013. *Becoming a Writer*.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Annabeth Chase, and Grover Underwood go on various adventures to stop the Titan tyrant Kronos from toppling the Olympian gods. It is famous for its perfect blending of modern situations with Greek mythology, which has made classical myths easy to grasp and, at the same time, appealing to young readers.

Riordan extended the fictional world he built around *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* by creating the series *The Heroes of Olympus*. This new series introduces new demigods and features Roman mythology to accompany his Greek myths. The series' storyline is based on a prophecy that consists of seven demigods who are to unite against the awakening of an ancient Earth goddess, Gaea. Now, Jason Grace, Piper McLean, Frank Zhang, Hazel Levesque, and Leo Valdez team up with Percy and Annabeth on dangerous quests that illustrate themes of teamwork, bravery, and even how to weave together mixed mythological traditions.

Riordan did not stop his pursuit of mythical realms there; instead, he released *The Kane Chronicles*, based on Egyptian mythology alone. It is a trilogy about the siblings Carter and Sadie Kane, finding out they are descendants of a pharaoh bloodline of mighty magicians. The series follows the plot of the complicated web of Egyptian mythologies, and the Kanes try to save the world from destruction by the serpent of chaos, Apophis. Riordan could expand the worldviews of his readers by utilizing his superlative narrative techniques and less familiar legends while firmly cementing his place as a rejuvenator of old tales for modern readers.

This *Trials of Apollo* series is a new adventure in the world of Percy Jackson, now concentrating on the god Apollo, who has been exiled to Earth and takes on the life of a teenage mortal named Lester Papadopoulos. Deprived of his divinity, Apollo has to navigate the trials of being human and find his way back to the top of Mount Olympus. Over this series of five books, Apollo teams up with the demigods— some familiar from other series— to fight a new group of enemies: The Triumvirate Holdings, an influential group of historic Roman emperors. Rick Riordan brings a sense of humor and an insight into Apollo's journey through the world of mortals; he gives an entirely new perspective on gods and men.

Another big series he wrote is *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard*, based on Norse mythology. The trilogy follows the story of Magnus Chase, a homeless teenager who learns he is the son of Frey, the Norse god of summer. Magnus travels through the nine worlds of Norse mythology with the help of a diverse ensemble, including a Muslim Valkyrie and a gender-fluid child of Loki. This series is widely praised for incorporating and re-imagining Norse tales in the modern world. Riordan's writings have entertained and educated millions by revealing

world mythologies' depth. His incredible talent lies in blending ancient legends with contemporary settings.

2.2 Dante Alighieri

2.2.1 Biography

The renowned poet T.S. Eliot famously asserted that Dante Alighieri and William Shakespeare have effectively divided the modern world between themselves in terms of literary significance and influence. Eliot contended that no other author approaches the paramount importance of these two literary giants. Furthermore, James Joyce expressed profound reverence for Dante, equating his admiration for Dante's work to his reverence for the Bible. Joyce described Dante's oeuvre as his "spiritual food," deeming all other literary works as secondary or redundant.¹⁹³

Dante Alighieri was born in the Italian city of Florence in May 1265. Although his baptismal name was Durante, he consistently referred to himself simply as Dante, a practice reflected in all his works and those of other authors who mentioned him. Rarely was he also referred to by his surname, Alighieri. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed that a person's name, when properly interpreted, could reveal the actions and destiny of its bearer. In this context, one could argue that the name Dante signifies the extraordinary intellectual gifts he would bestow upon others, gifts believed to be received directly from God.¹⁹⁴

During Dante's childhood, Florence was characterized by a pronounced social segregation, which constrained his mother to socialize exclusively with other women. This societal division, however, did not extend to young children. In this context, Dante encountered Beatrice, whose father uniquely addressed her by her full name, Beatrice, whereas others preferred the diminutive form, Bice. Notably, Dante was never called by his full name, Durante. Dante himself recounts that his heart was ruled by love from the moment he first beheld Beatrice.¹⁹⁵

Dante's education was formal and likely included instruction in philosophy. While the literacy rate in other parts of Europe during the 13th century was approximately 10 percent, Florence boasted a significantly higher rate of literacy among its inhabitants. This widespread literacy contributed to Florence's status as a hub of commerce and education. Despite this, Dante never acquired knowledge of the Greek language. Nonetheless, he engaged with Aristotle's works

¹⁹³ BARBERO, Alessandro. *Dante: A Life*. 2022. Why Dante Matters.

¹⁹⁴ SANTAGATA, Marco. *Dante: The Story of His Life*. Richard Dixon (Trans.) 2016. p. 3-4.

¹⁹⁵ BARBERO, Alessandro. *Dante: A Life*. 2022. Chapter Six, Love and Friendships.

through Latin translations and held Homer in high esteem, even though he never read the original texts.¹⁹⁶

It is noteworthy that, similar to other prodigious artists who commenced their significant works at a young age, Dante demonstrated exceptional talent early in his life. Much like how Mozart composed music with instinctive brilliance and Picasso mastered pencil control, each poem crafted by Dante was meticulously composed. Indeed, Dante was a prodigy in his literary field.¹⁹⁷

Dante was intimately familiar with *The Romance of the Rose* by the French author Guillaume de Lorris. His profound fascination and inspiration drawn from this work led him to produce a condensed version consisting of 232 sonnets. Wilson has compared this endeavor to rewriting Homer's *Odyssey* in the form of limericks, underscoring the remarkable nature of Dante's achievement.¹⁹⁸

Italian cities functioned as independent states during this period, each with formidable defensive structures, including strong walls and towers, designed to withstand attacks. The urban layout itself was often fortified to resist invasions. In 1289, the Guelphs, primarily comprising forces from Florence, clashed with the Ghibellines from Arezzo in the Battle of Campaldino. Dante Alighieri participated in this battle, fighting on the side of the Guelphs. The experience profoundly influenced Dante's subsequent works, leaving an indelible mark on his psyche as he witnessed the brutal realities of warfare.¹⁹⁹

In his *Purgatorio*, Dante encounters Buonconte da Montefeltro, a renowned cavalry commander for the Ghibellines, who recounts his death and the defeat he suffered at Campaldino. Buonconte expresses that the most distressing aspect of his demise was the absence of his name in the prayers of his wife and children, highlighting a deep-seated fear of dying in obscurity and being forgotten—an anxiety that Dante also explores in various parts of his literary oeuvre. This encounter in *Purgatorio* underscores the theme of existential isolation and the longing for remembrance and legacy after death.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ WILSON, Andrew Norman. *Dante In Love*. 2011. Dante's Education.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid Late teens – The Dream.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid The Warrior Who Fought At Campaldino.

²⁰⁰ WILSON, Andrew Norman. *Dante In Love*. 2011. The Warrior Who Fought at Campaldino.

Beatrice's death profoundly impacted Dante one year after the Battle of Campaldino. Already grappling with the concept of mortality, which had been sharply impressed upon him during the battle, Dante was devastated by the loss of his beloved. In the throes of a fever-induced delirium, Dante envisioned a scene where Beatrice was being buried by other women, causing him intense emotional anguish and fits of weeping. This period marked a critical point in Dante's mental and emotional state, highlighting the poet's vulnerability and profound grief.²⁰¹

Dante Alighieri's life took a severe downturn in 1301 when Charles of Valois entered Florence with 1,200 knights. During the subsequent raid, many of Dante's possessions were destroyed. A year later, the new rulers of Florence exiled him along with many others, decreeing that if Dante were ever captured by Florentine forces, he would be burned at the stake.²⁰²

Although exiled, Dante's wife, Gemma Donati, whom he married three years after Beatrice's death, and their children remained in Florence due to her aristocratic connections. During his exile, Dante began composing his magnum opus, *The Divine Comedy*, completing it just a few months before his death.²⁰³

Initially residing in Verona, Dante later moved to Ravenna at the invitation of Guido Novello da Polenta, a loyal supporter of the Church. In Ravenna, Dante established many connections. However, under still unclear circumstances, he died on either September 13 or 14, 1321. Despite his death, Dante's literary legacy endures through his influential works, especially *The Divine Comedy*.²⁰⁴

2.2.2 The Divine Comedy

Dante began writing the *Divine Comedy* in 1308 and finished it in 1321 when he died. It is regarded as one of the most significant works of world literature. The poem is written as a trilogy: Inferno (Hell), Purgatorio (Purgatory), and Paradiso (Paradise). Each part stands for one of the realms of the dead; the journey through all of them symbolizes the soul's path toward God. The entire work is written in the first person, with Dante himself serving as the protagonist.

²⁰¹ WILSON, Andrew Norman. *Dante In Love*. 2011. The Death of Beatrice.

²⁰² BARBERO, Alessandro. *Dante: A Life*. 2022. The Banishment.

²⁰³ Ibid An Exile's Family.

²⁰⁴ Ibid Ravenna.

2.2.2.1 Inferno

The journey begins on Good Friday in the year 1300. Dante, the protagonist, finds himself lost in a dark forest, symbolizing sin. He tries to climb a hill toward the light but is blocked by three beasts: a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf, representing various sins. Unable to free himself, he is rescued by the Roman poet Virgil, who is sent for him by Beatrice, Dante's ideal woman, who lives in Paradise. It is Virgil who will guide him through the nine circles of Hell, each representing a sin and punishment for it. The very design of Hell is like a conical pit, with the punishments for sins less severe as they go higher or milder with each turning point.²⁰⁵

1. **First Circle (Limbo):** Here reside the virtuous non-Christians and unbaptized infants. They are left in an imperfect place of heaven; they are not tormented but live in a lack of fulfillment. The poet meets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan.²⁰⁶
2. **Second Circle:** The lustful are tormented by a violent wind that throws them back and forth. Francesca da Rimini is one of the damned souls who speak with Dante.²⁰⁷
3. **Third Circle:** The gluttonous lie in a vile slush produced by ceaseless foul, icy rain. They are guarded by the three-headed dog, Cerberus.²⁰⁸
4. **Fourth Circle:** The avaricious and prodigal are divided into two groups, pushing great weights against each other, symbolizing their selfish drive for fortune.²⁰⁹
5. **Fifth Circle:** The wrathful fight each other on the surface of the river Styx while the sullen gurgle beneath the water.²¹⁰
6. **Sixth Circle:** Heretics are trapped in flaming tombs. Here, Dante converses with Farinata degli Uberti and Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti.²¹¹
7. **Seventh Circle:** It has been divided into three rings for the violence against neighbors (tyrants and murderers), themselves (suicides), and God (the blasphemers, sodomites, and usurers). Each group must undergo different, horrible punishments.²¹²
8. **Eighth Circle (Malebolge):** This is a substantial funnel-shaped cavern with ten stone ditches. Each trench contains various kinds of sinners, including seducers, flatterers, simonists, soothsayers, hypocrites, thieves, evil counselors, and sowers of discord.²¹³

²⁰⁵ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Inferno*. Robin Kirkpatrick (Trans.) 2013. Canto I – Canto III.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Canto IV.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Canto V.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. Canto VI.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Canto VII.

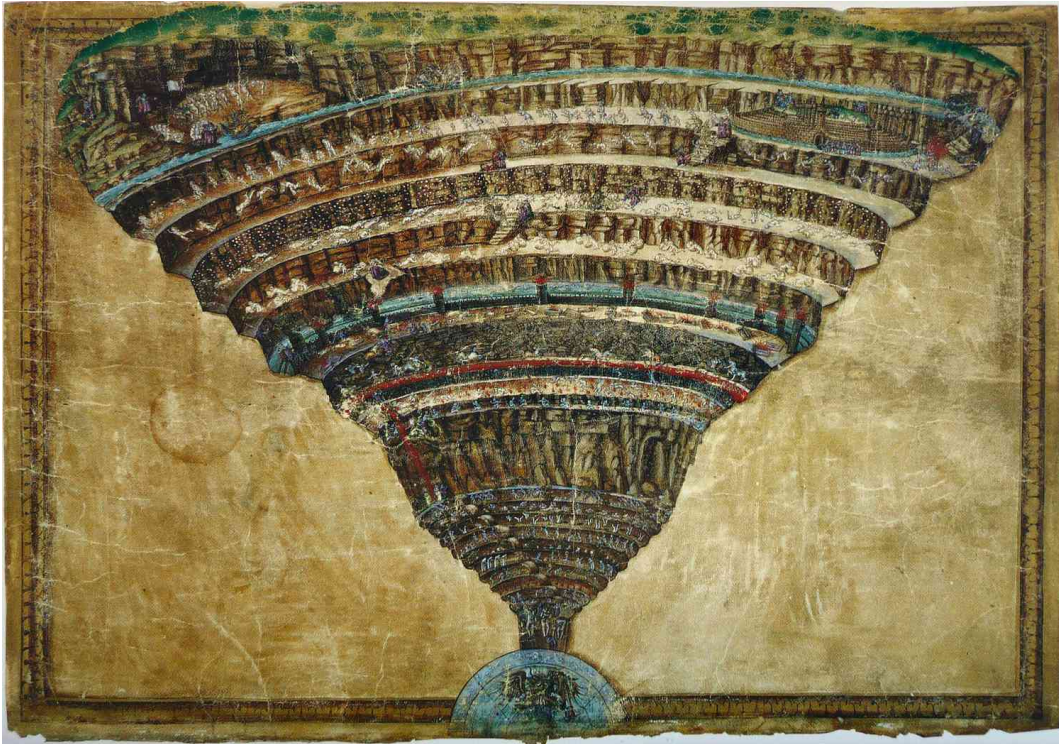
²¹⁰ Ibid. Canto VII- Canto VIII.

²¹¹ Ibid. Canto IX – Canto X.

²¹² Ibid. Canto XII – Canto XVII.

²¹³ Ibid. Canto XVIII - Canto XXX.

9. **Ninth Circle (Cocytus):** This is a frozen lake where traitors are condemned. The circle is broken down into four regions: Caina, dedicated to traitors to their kin; Antenora, traitors to their country; Ptolomea, dedicated to the traitors of guests; and Judecca, traitors to lords and benefactors. In the center is Satan. He is frozen in the ice and is seen munching the heads of Judas Iscariot, Brutus, and Cassius. Having had their fill of Hell, Dante and Virgil continue their journey through the body of Satan to be spat out on the opposite side of the earth and into Purgatory.²¹⁴



Dante's Nine Circles of Hell

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²¹⁴ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Inferno*. Robin Kirkpatrick (Trans.) 2013. Canto XXXII – Canto XXXIV.

²¹⁵ BOTTICELLI, Sandro. Dante's *Inferno*: A Guide to the 9 Circles of Hell. *Thought Co.* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

2.2.2.2 Purgatorio

On the surface, Dante and Virgil find themselves on Purgatory's beaches. Purgatory, considered a mountain in the Southern Hemisphere, is divided into seven terraces, each representing one of the seven deadly sins. Souls here are purged to ascend to heaven. At the base of the mountain is the Ante-Purgatory, where souls who delayed repentance confront their faults. The terraces are described as such:²¹⁶

1. **First Terrace (Pride):** The proud bear heavy stones on their backs that bend them low and make them look down—the image of humility.²¹⁷
2. **Second Terrace (Envy):** The envious have their eyes sewn shut with iron wire and wear rough haircloths.²¹⁸
3. **Third Terrace (Wrath):** The wrathful tread within acrid smoke—the blindness of rage.²¹⁹
4. **Fourth Terrace (Sloth):** The terrace is designed so that the idle are made to continuously run around it, which may just cancel out what the lazy sloths did during their lifetimes.²²⁰
5. **Fifth Terrace (Avarice and Prodigality):** The avaricious and prodigal are prostrate with their faces in the dust, weeping and sighing.²²¹
6. **Sixth Terrace (Gluttony):** The gluttonous, though surrounded by trees with luscious fruit, have their sustenance kept out of reach, causing them insatiable hunger and thirst.²²²
7. **Seventh Terrace (Lust):** The lustful have to pass through flames, which help to purify the sexual desire in them.²²³

On every terrace, the souls offer prayers and think over instances of virtue and vice connected to their very sin. On this journey, Dante meets many historical and other contemporaries who can share their accounts and wisdom with him, providing an accurate picture of sin and how it could be overcome with penitence. As Dante ascends, he goes through his process of purification. Upon the summit, he arrives at the Earthly Paradise (the Garden of Eden) and is again met by Beatrice instead of Virgil. She rebukes him for his sins during life, and

²¹⁶ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Purgatory*. Mark Musa (Trans.) 1985. Canto I – Canto IX.

²¹⁷ Ibid. Canto X – Canto XII.

²¹⁸ Ibid. Canto XIII – Canto XV.

²¹⁹ Ibid. Canto XVI – Canto XVII.

²²⁰ Ibid. Canto XVIII – Canto XIX.

²²¹ Ibid. Canto XX – Canto XXI.

²²² Ibid. Canto XXII – Canto XXIV.

²²³ Ibid. Canto XXV – Canto XXVII.

subsequently, he goes through the rivers Lethe and Eunoe, cleansed, and regains his memory of good deeds.²²⁴



Purgatory

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²²⁴ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Purgatory*. Mark Musa (Trans.) 1985. Canto XXVIII – Canto XXXIII.

²²⁵ THURMAN, Judith. Reading Dante's Purgatory While the World Hangs in the Balance. *The New Yorker* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

2.2.2.3 Paradiso

With Beatrice beside him, Dante ascends the nine spheres of heaven, which refer to those postulated by the Ptolemaic universe. Each sphere stands for a given virtue and houses the souls that followed that particular virtue.

1. **First Sphere (The Moon):** This sphere houses the souls of those who were unfaithful in keeping their vows. There are two beings that Dante encounters. These are Piccarda Donati and the Empress Constance.²²⁶
2. **Second Sphere (Mercury):** Those who in life desired honor and fame. Dante converses with the Emperor Justinian.²²⁷
3. **Third Sphere (Venus):** The lovers. Dante meets Charles Martel of Anjou and Cunizza da Romano.²²⁸
4. **Fourth Sphere (The Sun):** The Intellectual Dante speaks with St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure.²²⁹
5. **Fifth Sphere (Mars):** Those who were warriors of the faith. Dante meets his ancestor, Cacciaguida.²³⁰
6. **Sixth Sphere (Jupiter):** The sphere in which the just rulers are found. Dante meets King David and the Emperor Trajan.²³¹
7. **Seventh Sphere (Saturn):** Those who are contemplatives or monastics. Dante meets St. Benedict of Nursia.²³²
8. **Eighth Sphere (the fixed stars):** The apostles and other saints. He is then questioned about the three virtues by St. Peter, St. James, and St. John.²³³
9. **Ninth Sphere (The Primum Mobile):** The angels occupy this sphere, which is the source of motion for everything in the universe. Dante views the angels and is ready for his final elevation.²³⁴

The ninth sphere leads to the Empyrean, where God resides. It is a place where one can have a direct vision of the Divine, gazing upon the harmony of all creation and the love that moves the sun and the other stars. In the Celestial Rose, an innumerable number of saints are seated around

²²⁶ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Paradise*. Mark Musa (Trans.) 1986 Canto II- Canto V.

²²⁷ Ibid. Canto V- Canto VII.

²²⁸ Ibid. Canto V – Canto VII.

²²⁹ Ibid. Canto VIII – Canto IX.

²³⁰ Ibid. Canto X – Canto XIV.

²³¹ Ibid. Canto XIV – Canto XXVIII.

²³² Ibid. Canto XXI – Canto XXII.

²³³ Ibid. Canto XXII – Canto XXVII.

²³⁴ Ibid. Canto XXVII – Canto XXIX.

and about the Virgin Mary. St. Bernard now replaces Beatrice in Dante's company as they approach the final destination. At one point, Dante is accorded a glimpse of his God in divine grace. He sees three concentric circles representing the Holy Trinity and is made to comprehend the mystery of the Incarnation. Though he is half-bemused by what he has seen, Dante's soul is drunk on the divine light of truth and love.²³⁵

The Divine Comedy concludes with Dante's soul achieving perfect harmony with God's will. The poem provides closure and infinite peace as Dante has completed his journey from the depths of sin to the heights of love and wisdom. It narrates the story of the soul's journey into God through repentance, virtues, and divine grace. Through symbolism, imagery, and profound philosophical and theological insights, *The Divine Comedy* remains a timeless account of the human predicament and one's search for spiritual redemption.



Paradise

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²³⁵ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Paradise*. Mark Musa (Trans.) 1986. Canto XXX – Canto XXXIII.

²³⁶ DORÉ, Gustave. *Paradise*. *Granger Art on Demand* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-27].

3 Notable mythological elements found in *The Divine Comedy*

3.1 Demigods and Entities

3.1.1 Charon

In Canto III of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, the first part of his epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, Dante and his guide, the Roman poet Virgil, encounter Charon, the ferryman of Hades. Charon transports souls across the river Acheron to the realm of the dead. This meeting is one of the initial significant encounters that Dante and Virgil face as they begin their journey through the circles of Hell.

Upon arriving at the shore of the river, Acheron, after passing through the gates of Hell, which famously bear the inscription, "*Abandon all hope, ye who enter here,*"²³⁷ Dante and Virgil are greeted by a chaotic and foreboding scene. The souls of the damned are gathered in great numbers, wailing and lamenting their fate. This setting fills the atmosphere with darkness and despair, setting a grim tone for the journey ahead.

Charon is depicted as an imposing figure, described as an old man with a long, white beard and eyes glowing like coals of fire. His appearance embodies both fear and authority, befitting his role as the conductor of souls to their eternal punishment. He is portrayed standing in a boat, poised to ferry the souls across the river, thereby reflecting death's inevitability and imminent judgment.

Charon's demeanor is unwelcoming and stern. Initially hostile towards Dante, he recognizes Dante as being among the living and thus not belonging among the dead. Charon reprimands Dante, commanding him to stay away from the dead and seek another route, as the ferry is reserved for souls who have crossed the threshold of life. His voice exudes harshness, filled with the authority of his eternal duty.

Despite Charon's initial refusal to allow Dante to board the ferry, Virgil intervenes on Dante's behalf, emphasizing the divine nature of their sanctioned journey and the necessity to cross the river. Virgil reassures Charon that Dante's passage is willed by higher powers. Virgil's authoritative explanation pacifies Charon, albeit reluctantly, and he eventually allows them to

²³⁷ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Inferno*. 2013. Robin Kirkpatrick (Trans.) Canto III.

proceed. This moment illuminates the motif of divine intervention and guidance prevalent throughout *The Divine Comedy*.

As Charon ferries the souls of the damned across the river, Dante is overwhelmed by the horror of the scene. The sheer agony and despair of the souls waiting to cross the river profoundly influence him, symbolizing the transition from the realm of the living to the realm of the eternally damned. The crossing of the Acheron marks the commencement of Dante's deeper exploration into the circles of Hell, each representing various sins and their corresponding punishments.

The encounter with Charon in *Inferno* is pivotal in Dante's journey through Hell. It underscores the gravity of his expedition and the severity of the punishments awaiting the damned. Charon's role as the ferryman underscores the inescapable nature of divine justice and the enduring consequences of sin. This encounter lays the foundation for the harrowing journey that follows, as Dante continues to witness the torments of the damned and the structure of Hell as envisioned by medieval theology.

In Dante's *Inferno*, Charon's association with the cave is significant. The cave, referred to as Charonium, is a type of cave with a high concentration of carbon dioxide and other gases, making it extremely hazardous for humans and animals without modern equipment. These caves are named after the Greek ferryman of the underworld, as people who entered them in ancient times never returned, leading to rumors that they might be entrances to the Underworld. The cave that Dante describes may be the most well-known Charonium.²³⁸

²³⁸ CÍLEK, Václav. *Archeologie a jeskyně*. 1997. p. 68.



Charon on the River Acheron

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3.1.2 Limbo

After crossing the river, Dante and Virgil arrive in the first circle of Hell, Limbo. Limbo is designated for those who led a virtuous life but were not affiliated with Christianity and also for unbaptized infants. As a realm, Limbo does not necessarily embody a distressing environment. The essence of Limbo lies in its representation as a Pseudo-Paradiso. While the souls residing in Limbo are not subject to torment, their pre-Christian existence forbids their entry into true Heaven. Hence, they are consigned to Limbo, where they can behold the radiant allure of Heaven but are perpetually denied access, becoming their form of punishment. Nonetheless, Limbo is characterized as a tranquil garden and can genuinely be conceived as a Pseudo-Heaven given its inhabitants' virtue.

Dante and Virgil encounter esteemed poets such as Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. Of these poets, Dante accords Homer the role of their leader, signifying a certain hierarchy in Dante's reverence for their literary contributions. Upon sighting Dante, these poets extend greetings and extend an esteemed invitation to join their circle, an honor that Dante holds in great regard.

²³⁹ The Divine Comedy: Inferno 2 Crossing with Charon. *The Eclectic Light Company* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

Furthermore, Dante and Virgil come across a substantial assembly of philosophers, including notable figures such as Socrates and Plato. These eminent philosophers engage in discussions concerning life, and Dante references several prominent individuals, including Democritus, Diogenes, Tales, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Zeno, Dioscorides, Seneca, Linus, Tully, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Avicenna, Galen, and Averroes.

Aside from the poets and philosophers, Limbo is also inhabited by revered heroes, notably Aeneas, Hector, and Orpheus. This presents a compelling premise, as Limbo is regarded as a haven for those who did not have the opportunity to embrace Christianity. Consequently, the presence of mythological heroes within Limbo implies that they led genuinely virtuous lives, seeking exemption from the circles of Hell reserved for sinners.

Aeneas, in particular, is extolled for his bravery and piety. However, he incurs moral scrutiny for forsaking Dido despite their profound bond. His adherence to the gods and subsequent abandonment of Dido, who later takes her life due to the anguish, raises ethical questions. Additionally, Aeneas slays Turnus in a fit of rage upon witnessing a belt belonging to his fallen comrade. While this act may be construed as an act of justice, it also bears the stain of wrath and violence.

Furthermore, the valorous exploits of Hector and Aeneas during the Trojan War serve as a testament to their combat prowess. Hence, it appears that slaying numerous adversaries in battle exonerates warriors of sin. This underscores the notion that not all forms of violence are inherently condemnable, and abstention from violence does not serve as a definitive deterrent from the torments of Hell.

3.1.3 Minos

In Canto V of Dante's *Inferno*, the poet and his guide, Virgil, depart from Limbo and proceed through a colossal gate that leads them to the deeper circle of Hell. Dante observes that the second circle appears considerably more confined than Limbo, attributing this phenomenon to the *Inferno*'s conical structure, which contracts as they venture further, akin to a funnel.

Continuing their journey, the poets encounter a substantial mass of people, a customary occurrence in this locality as informed by Virgil. Positioned ahead of the crowd is Minos, a colossal figure tasked with the role of a judge, responsible for allocating souls to their respective circles of damnation. Described as possessing a voluminous tail capable of encircling his own frame, Minos conducts individual assessments of each soul. His method involves making a

number of loops around himself corresponding to the appropriate circle of punishment for the respective soul.

While Dante finds Minos's countenance disquieting, resembling that of a monstrous entity rather than a human, he concedes to Minos' expertise as a judge. Notably, Minos allows every soul to present their case and plea before rendering a verdict, exemplifying fairness and impartiality despite his menacing appearance.

The Greco-Roman influences on Dante's *Inferno* are unmistakable, as exemplified by the portrayal of Minos, the chief judge of the Greek Underworld, presiding as the judge of Christian Hell. This depiction underscores the profound impact of Greco-Roman mythology on Dante's construction of the afterlife. The weighty responsibility of assigning everlasting retribution to souls is emphasized, and Minos, despite his monstrous demeanor, is portrayed as a proficient and equitable adjudicator in this capacity.



There Minos stands. *Canto V., line 4.*

Minos

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²⁴⁰ DORÉ, Gustave. Minos, The Infernal Judge. *Florence Inferno* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

3.1.4 Achilles and Paris

As Dante and Virgil enter the second circle of Hell, reserved for the lustful, the first phenomenon that captures Dante's attention is a great cry of lamentation. He describes this sound as reminiscent of the ocean crashing against the shore. Gazing upward, Dante witnesses a tempestuous whirlwind of souls being driven in endless circles, a chaotic motion he likens to the frenzied dance of birds in the sky. Amidst this tumult, Virgil identifies several notable figures, including Helen of Troy, Achilles, Paris, and Dido.

Achilles's presence among the punished underscores the complexity of his affections, particularly his profound feelings for his cousin Patroclus, alongside his adulterous liaisons with various women. The relentless hurricane symbolizes the unending torment inflicted upon those who succumbed to the passions of love. This representation affirms that Achilles's duel with Hector transcended mere wrath or violence; it was an act propelled by love and a sense of justice for his beloved Patroclus.

Paris's inclusion in this circle is more straightforward. His decision to accept Aphrodite's offer of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Troy, epitomizes the destructive power of lust. Had Paris chosen the gifts offered by Athena or Hera—military prowess, wisdom, or political power—he likely would not have found himself in Hell, as these attributes do not correspond to any particular circle. Consequently, Paris's fate directly results from his lustful desires.

The placement of Helen of Troy, however, raises questions about the justice of her punishment. Unlike other adulterers, Helen did not willfully commit her transgression; she was struck by the arrow of Eros. In contrast, Dido's position in the second circle is intriguing, as she might have been placed in the second ring of the seventh circle reserved for suicides. Nevertheless, her suicide, driven by unrequited love, justifies her assignment to this less severe circle, reflecting the nuance in her sin.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, love functions as a profound and multifaceted force, shaping the actions and decisions of souls in Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. This theme is critical for understanding the placement of various figures in the second circle of Hell, reflecting Dante's examination of love's noble and destructive facets. Achilles's presence highlights his intense and complex emotions for Patroclus, demonstrating that even heroic love can lead to eternal consequences when tainted by excess or infidelity. Conversely, Paris embodies the destructive

nature of lustful decisions, his choice precipitating the catastrophic Trojan War. Though manipulated by Eros, Helen of Troy illustrates the tragic outcomes of love influenced by divine forces. Dido's tragic end, fueled by unrequited love and despair, underscores the depth of her passion and the ultimate futility of her sacrifice.

This intricate portrayal of love's dual nature—its capacity to inspire noble deeds and its potential to cause damnation—is central to the *Divine Comedy*. Dante's own journey is fundamentally driven by his love for Beatrice, which transcends earthly bounds and guides him toward divine comprehension and redemption. Beatrice epitomizes the ideal of courtly love, elevated to a spiritual realm, serving as a pure, guiding force in stark contrast to the corrupted forms of love seen in Hell. Her influence on Dante underscores the idea that while misguided love can result in eternal torment, true and virtuous love has the power to elevate the soul and lead it to salvation. Therefore, the second circle of Hell not only punishes the lustful but also illustrates the broader spectrum of love's influence on human experience, emphasizing the significance of directing passions towards the divine and eternal.

3.1.5 Cerberus

As Dante listens to the climax of the story of lustful Francesca, the emotion is so powerful that the pilgrim loses consciousness. When he awakens, he finds himself in the third circle reserved for the gluttonous. Instantly, he notices the heavy, endless, icy rain accompanied by hail, sleet, and misery. At the base of the third circle is a mud pit of sludge and slime where the sinners found in this pit are deemed to writhe and crawl.

Dante notices that Cerberus is at the mud pit, clawing and ripping the flesh of the poor sinners. Cerberus turns and notices Dante and Virgil. Almost immediately, he runs to attack them, but thankfully, Virgil is quick-thinking and throws three pieces of sludge into each of Cerberus' jaws, silencing him for a while.

Unlike his traditional role as the guardian of the gates into hell, Cerberus serves as a tormentor of the gluttonous. This might simply be due to the fact that Cerberus' hunger complements the source of his food in those gluttonous individuals who ate like pigs during their lives and, therefore, must suffer being ripped apart by Cerberus. Nevertheless, Cerberus retains his black fur while also having vermilion-colored eyes, highlighting Cerberus' fury and insatiable hunger. Although Cerberus did not retain his original role, he still remains a memorable encounter within the transformed mythology that Dante presented.

3.1.6 The Furies and Medusa

When Dante and Virgil journey through Hell, they arrive at the City of Dis, which marks the entrance to lower circles. They encounter a locked gate, behind which three figures suddenly appear, positioning themselves as guardians. Virgil identifies them as the Furies, tasked with avenging crimes, especially those involving murder and betrayal within families.

Dante describes the Furies, Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone as being covered in blood and having snakes instead of hair, resembling the Gorgons. When they spot Dante and Virgil, they summon Medusa, the Gorgon, to petrify Dante. Virgil quickly shields Dante's eyes to protect him from Medusa's gaze.

Amid the threatening situation, a divine intervention occurs as a heavenly messenger descends from Heaven to aid Dante and Virgil. This angelic being possesses such authority and power that the infernal creatures are left powerless. The messenger chastises the rebellious angels and demons guarding the gate and effortlessly opens the gates of Dis.

This encounter is laden with symbolism. The Furies represent eternal remorse and the torment of a guilty conscience, while Medusa embodies the paralyzing power of despair and hopelessness. Dante's need to shield his eyes symbolizes the importance of spiritual guidance and faith in resisting being overwhelmed by sin and despair. The arrival of the heavenly messenger signifies divine grace and the triumph of divine authority over evil, highlighting the theme that human reason and virtue, personified by Virgil, are crucial but ultimately insufficient without divine assistance.

3.1.7 Minotaur

Dante and his guide Virgil have progressed through the higher levels of Hell and are now entering the Seventh Circle, which is subdivided into three rings to administer punishment for various forms of violence: violence against others, violence against oneself, and violence against God, nature, and art. They reach a precipitous, rugged incline that descends into the circle.

This particular area of Hell is protected by the Minotaur. He epitomizes irrationality and savage brutality, appropriately positioned in the circle designated for the punishment of individuals who have perpetrated crimes of violence.

Upon the arrival of Dante and Virgil, the Minotaur responds with an intense display of furious anger. He is characterized as a ferocious creature, grinding his teeth and thrashing around with great force. He is deliberately present to instill fear and intimidate.

Virgil faces the Minotaur with a combination of assertiveness and cleverness. He incites the creature by recalling his previous loss to Theseus, who successfully killed the Minotaur in the labyrinth. Mentioning Theseus provokes the Minotaur, intensifying his frenzy and forcing him to lose control.

Exploiting the Minotaur's temporary lapse in control, Virgil and Dante swiftly maneuver around him. The Minotaur's uncontrolled fury renders him flailing aimlessly, impeding his ability to successfully chase or halt their progress. This episode showcases Virgil's wisdom and ingenuity in successfully maneuvering through the perils of Hell.

The Minotaur symbolizes the illogical and harmful essence of violence. His positioning at the entrance to the circle of the violent highlights the savage and irrational nature of these sins. Virgil's utilization of the Minotaur's fury against him highlights the thematic assertion that reason and intellect have the capacity to prevail over sheer force and irrationality.

3.1.8 Chiron

Following their confrontation with the Minotaur, Dante, and Virgil advance to the initial level of the Seventh Circle. The Phlegethon, a river of boiling blood, is located within this circle. It serves as a punishment for those individuals who committed acts of violence against others during their lifetime. The depth to which their souls are buried in the river corresponds to the severity of their transgressions. The Centaurs are stationed along the riverbanks, ready to shoot arrows at anyone trying to escape this harsh punishment.

As the companions approach the river, they encounter a tribe of Centaurs. Among them, Chiron stands out as the smartest and most just, taking on the role of leader. Chiron, known for his wisdom and guidance of Greek heroes such as Achilles, is highlighted in Dante's book, emphasizing these qualities.

Virgil respectfully approaches Chiron and explains the purpose of their journey, emphasizing Dante's current existence and divine mission. To demonstrate Dante's strength and energy, Virgil highlights his capability to move rocks just by walking, a task that the spirits inhabiting the region are unable to accomplish.

At first, confused and cautious, Chiron grows convinced of Dante's existence through Virgil's explanation and evidence. This episode highlights Virgil's function as a mediator and guide who possesses the ability to converse and negotiate with the various inhabitants and guardians of Hell.

Recognizing the importance of their voyage, Chiron instructs Nessus, a Centaur, to securely guide Dante and Virgil across the river. In this capacity, Nessus bears Dante on his back to protect him from the scorching blood and projectiles of other Centaurs. Chiron's gesture of generosity demonstrates his wisdom and fairness as he upholds his divine duty and offers necessary assistance.

The Centaurs, especially Chiron, embody the contrasting aspects of violence, serving as a representation of both unrestrained power and the necessity for self-control and fairness. While the rest of the Centaurs represent uncontrolled savagery, Chiron personifies the concept of intentional and logical implementation of justice. The presence of individuals in Hell who acknowledge and uphold higher values and divine power is demonstrated through his leadership and desire to assist Dante and Virgil.

Moreover, this incident highlights the concept of divine justice. The souls in the Phlegethon suffer punishments that are proportional to their transgressions. They are drowned to different depths, which correspond to the severity of their violent actions. Chiron's function as a fair monitor of such punishment strengthens the idea that Hell is controlled by a divine justice that is both fair and unstoppable.

3.1.9 The Harpies

Dante and Virgil have descended from the First Ring, where they encountered the Minotaur and the Centaurs. They now navigate through a dark, dense forest comprising the Second Ring, which creates an eerie atmosphere with its twisted, gnarled trees and thorny bushes, heavy with despair and suffering.

The Harpies, depicted as mythological creatures with the bodies of birds and the faces of women, embody both physical and spiritual ugliness in Dante's work. These terrifying entities perch in the trees and play a significant role in the torment of the souls in this section of Hell.

The souls of those who committed suicide are transformed into trees and bushes as a punishment, reflecting their rejection of human form and life. These souls can only vocalize and express their suffering when their branches are broken or injured.

As Dante and Virgil explore the forest, they encounter a tree that speaks after Virgil breaks a branch. The tree reveals itself to be the soul of Pier della Vigna, a former advisor to Emperor Frederick II, who took his own life after falling from favor and being unjustly accused of treason.

Pier della Vigna recounts his story with a mix of sorrow and bitterness, explaining the torment he endures in this forest. His blood flows from the broken branch, and he speaks through the wound, illustrating the intimate connection between his punishment and his sin.

The Harpies serve as agents of further torment for these souls. They feed on the leaves and branches of the trees, causing the souls excruciating pain and compelling them to bleed and cry out. This continual torment ensures that the souls of the suicides cannot escape their suffering or remain silent.

The presence of the Harpies in the forest and their actions of consuming the trees emphasize the perpetual nature of the punishment and the unceasing suffering of the souls. This symbolism reflects Dante's view of suicide as a profound violation of God's gift of life and the natural bond between body and soul, as evidenced by the transformation of the suicides into trees, representing the loss of human dignity and the natural order of life.

3.1.10 Geryon

Dante and Virgil have descended from the Seventh Circle, where the violent are punished, and are now preparing to descend into the Eighth Circle, where the fraudsters are punished. To facilitate this descent, they must summon Geryon, a mythical creature serving as a symbol and means of transport to the lower depths of Hell.

Geryon is portrayed as a monstrous creature with three distinct parts:

- Human Face: The creature possesses an honest and kindly human face that masks its true nature.
- Serpentine Body: Its body resembles that of a giant serpent or dragon, symbolizing deceit and danger.

- Scorpion Tail: Geryon's tail is barbed and lethal, comparable to that of a scorpion, capable of inflicting deadly harm.

This composite appearance renders Geryon a quintessential representation of fraud. It presents itself as trustworthy and benign on the surface but conceals deadly deceit within.

Virgil instructs Dante to employ a cord he has around his waist and cast it into the abyss to summon Geryon. This action holds symbolic significance, signifying the transition from the sins of violence to the sins of fraud and the necessity of divine intervention to navigate this perilous path.

Geryon emerges from the depths, ascending from the darkness below. Its approach is deliberate and methodical, evoking a sense of anticipation and dread. Once Geryon lands, Dante meticulously observes it, recognizing the incongruity between its benign visage and its terrifying body and tail.

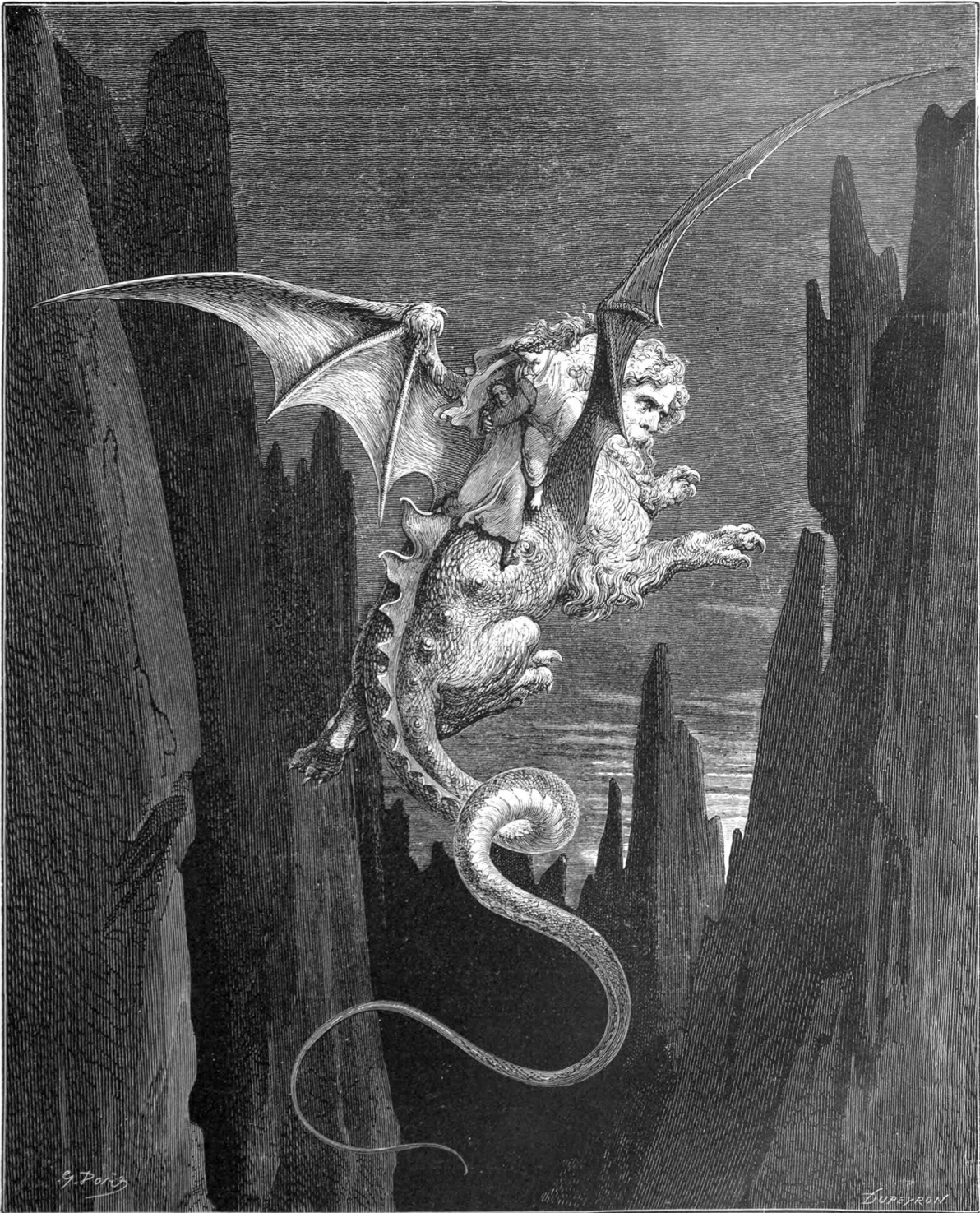
Virgil negotiates with Geryon, entreating it to safely convey them to the Eighth Circle. He reassures Dante, who understandably fears the creature. Geryon's willingness to comply indicates that even in Hell, there are entities amenable to reason.

Dante's ride on Geryon's back constitutes one of the *Inferno's* most vivid and dramatic moments. The descent is depicted in meticulous detail, emphasizing the fear and uncertainty that Dante experiences. Geryon descends in a spiraling motion, symbolizing the complexity and entanglement of deceit. As they descend, Dante clings to Geryon, enduring both physical and psychological terror.

The embodiment of Fraud: Geryon's appearance as a creature with a trustworthy face but a dangerous body symbolizes the nature of fraud, which often appears harmless or appealing on the surface but is inherently harmful and deadly.

Transition to Fraudulent Sins: The encounter symbolizes the transition from violent sins to fraudulent ones, highlighting the disparity in the nature of sins and their respective punishments in Hell.

Guidance and Trust: Dante's reliance on Virgil and their interaction with Geryon underscore the themes of trust, guidance, and the necessity for wisdom in navigating the intricate realm of sin and punishment.



Geryon transporting Dante and Virgil

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²⁴¹ DORÉ, Gustave. Flight of Geryon. *On Verticality* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

3.1.11 Jason

Upon descending atop Geryon, Dante and Virgil reach the Eighth Circle of Hell. The poets proceed into the initial bolgia, a profound trench filled with exposed spirits suffering from the torment inflicted by demons. The demons continuously whip the afflicted souls, representing the perpetual nature of their wrongdoings.

Jason, the famous Greek hero and captain of the Argonauts, dwells among the seducers in this bolgia. Dante recognizes and portrays him with a combination of adoration and criticism. Jason is shown as a dignified and illustrious character, reflecting his heroic status in Greek mythology. Nevertheless, his existence in Hell highlights the complex moral aspects of his personality.

Jason is classified as a seducer due to his deceitful and manipulative behavior towards women. More precisely, Dante clarifies two of Jason's infamous deeds:

1. Hypsipyle's Betrayal: Jason enticed Hypsipyle, the queen of Lemnos, into a romantic relationship and made a promise to marry her. However, he ultimately abandoned her after she gave birth to their two children.

2. Medea's abandonment: Jason not only seduced and married Medea but also relied on her supernatural powers to obtain the Golden Fleece. However, Jason later abandoned her for another woman, which led Medea to carry out terrible crimes as a form of revenge.

Jason's actions demonstrate his skillful manipulation of charm and deception in order to accomplish his goals, only to later betray and abandon people who had placed their faith in him.

Dante chooses not to confront Jason immediately; instead, Virgil specifically addresses him and elaborates on his presence in this particular part of Hell. Jason's punishment is being tormented by demons, which is a suitable payback for his actions of seduction and betrayal. The scourging forces him to move constantly, reflecting the restlessness and disruption he caused in the lives of the ladies he fooled.

Jason exemplifies the sin of seduction, utilizing deceit and manipulation to attain personal benefits at the detriment of others. His presence in the first bolgia highlights the issue of deceptive behavior and its consequences.

Dante's depiction of Jason in his work exemplifies the complex and multifaceted character of heroism. Although Jason is highly respected for his courageous achievements, his ethical shortcomings and maltreatment of women expose a more sinister aspect of his personality. This

contradiction emphasizes the idea that heroism in classical mythology does not always conform to Christian moral principles.

Jason's endurance of ceaseless scourging by demons serves as a representation of the unrelenting and terrible character of his dishonest activities. The physical suffering he experiences is a direct result of the emotional and psychological pain he caused others.

Jason's prominent yet imperfect character exemplifies the idea that even the most praised heroes can be vulnerable to moral shortcomings. The punishment he receives in the initial bolgia of Malebolge reinforces the idea of divine justice, where wrongdoers are sentenced to endure suffering that mirrors the nature of their offenses. In this encounter, Dante skillfully incorporates mythological and historical figures to provide a detailed analysis of human actions' moral and ethical consequences, creating a complex and thought-provoking narrative.



Jason and Demons

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²⁴² DORÉ, Gustave. *Inferno: Jason and the Demons*. *Myth and Folklore* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

4 Notable mythological elements found in the Percy Jackson

4.1 Notable demigods and entities

4.1.1 Minotaur

In *The Lightning Thief*, the first book of the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan, the Minotaur is among the initial mythological adversaries Percy Jackson confronts and ultimately defeats. After being expelled from school, Percy and his mother, Sally, borrow Gabe's Camaro and travel to their cherished retreat in Montauk, a beach cabin that holds significant memories for them. This location is particularly meaningful to Sally as it is where she first met Poseidon, Percy's father. Sally continues to bring Percy to this spot, hoping that Poseidon might reappear.

However, their trip takes a dark turn with the arrival of an unexpected storm and the appearance of Grover, who reveals his true identity as a satyr. Grover warns them of imminent danger, prompting a hurried departure towards Camp Half-Blood, where Sally believes Percy will be safe. Despite their efforts, they are intercepted by the Minotaur, who crashes their car, forcing them to continue on foot. Upon reaching the camp's protective barrier, Sally urges Percy to carry Grover into safety. In a tragic turn of events, the Minotaur catches up, and Sally vanishes before Percy's eyes.

Overwhelmed by the loss of his mother, Percy devises a plan to distract the Minotaur using his red raincoat, intending to make the beast charge and collide with a tree. The Minotaur anticipates this maneuver and tries to capture Percy. In a surprising display of instinctive combat skills, Percy leaps onto the Minotaur's back, breaking off one of its horns. Using this horn as a weapon, Percy successfully defeats the Minotaur by thrusting it into the monster's side, causing it to disintegrate into dust. Percy then loses consciousness and is subsequently rescued by Chiron and Annabeth, who treat his injuries.

This victory over the Minotaur is significant for several reasons. It marks Percy's first major accomplishment among the campers at Camp Half-Blood, earning him a mix of admiration and envy. The Minotaur, one of the most recognizable monsters in Greek mythology, effectively introduces Percy and the readers into the mythological world. The Minotaur's reappearance in the series' final book, *The Last Olympian*, during the battle against Kronos's army, underscores Percy's growth as a demigod. In this encounter, Percy defeats the Minotaur with ease, highlighting his development in combat skills and confidence and symbolizing his maturation

throughout the series. This progression not only demonstrates Percy's journey but also resonates with the reader's sense of growing up alongside him.

The deliberate choice of the Minotaur as the first monster Percy defeats serves to ground the narrative in familiar mythological elements, facilitating the reader's engagement and comprehension of the series' broader mythological context.

4.1.2 Heracles

During the events of *The Mark of Athena*, the seven demigods sail towards Gibraltar with the intention of entering the Mediterranean Sea. Annabeth Chase explains to her companions that the Pillars of Hercules historically marked the boundary of the known world for the Greeks and Romans, inscribed with the phrase *non plus ultra*, meaning *nothing further beyond*. As they approach the Rock of Gibraltar, they observe the pillars emerging alongside an island with a sandy beach bearing the same inscription. On this beach stands an imposing figure, who they correctly deduce to be the legendary Heracles.

The group's initial perception of Heracles is conflicted. They recognize him as a former demigod, which makes them hopeful for a friendly encounter. However, his transformation into a god and the unpredictability of divine beings make them cautious. Given Heracles' formidable reputation as the most powerful demigod, the seven demigods quickly rule out combat, especially since they would face him in his immortal form. Consequently, they opt for a diplomatic approach, appointing Jason and Piper as their envoys due to Jason's shared lineage with Heracles (both being sons of Zeus/Jupiter) and Piper's charm speak abilities inherited from Aphrodite.

Upon initiating the conversation, Piper notices that Heracles' demeanor is disinterested, treating them with the same nonchalance as he would seabirds. Heracles' voice, though modern and casual, carries a concealed sadness and darkness, which Piper discerns. Jason observes that Heracles is not wearing his infamous lion skin, to which Heracles retorts, questioning the necessity of such attire on a tropical island. Heracles warns Piper about the potential dangers of her relationship with Jason, drawing from his own tragic experiences with relationships, which led to his eventual suicide.

Piper expresses their desire to enter the Mediterranean and requests Heracles' permission. Heracles acknowledges this as part of his duty but laments his solitary existence on the island, a godly role he finds far from the grandeur he had imagined. He offers to allow them passage

but stipulates that they complete a quest to prove their readiness for the dangers of the ancient lands. Heracles, reflecting on his own Labors, wishes to assign them a trivial task, which momentarily reassures Piper and Jason.

However, when Jason mentions that Hera assigned their quest, Heracles' demeanor changes drastically. His deep-seated hatred for Hera, stemming from the suffering she inflicted upon him and his family, prompts him to assign a more difficult task: retrieving the second horn of Achelous, the river god residing on the same island.

When the demigods confront Achelous, he recounts his tragic story involving Heracles, who stole his wife, Deianeira, and broke his first horn. This history fuels Achelous' bitterness, and he attacks them. During the struggle, Achelous nearly drowns Jason, but Piper uses her charm speak to momentarily disorient the river god, allowing her to break off his second horn. Despite their success, Piper honors her promise to Achelous by refusing to give the horn to Heracles. Instead, she uses it to ambush Heracles with a torrent of food, enabling Jason to transport them back to the Argo II. With Percy's power of the sea, he creates a massive tidal wave to incapacitate Heracles further, allowing their escape into the Mediterranean.

This encounter underscores the complexities of divine existence, exemplified by Heracles' unfulfilling godhood and mental torment. Despite his physical invincibility, Heracles' tragic end due to psychological trauma paints a poignant picture of heroism and its burdens. His narrative serves as a reminder of the immense mental strain faced by mythological heroes, making him a profound representation of the modern hero's plight.

4.1.3 Medusa

In the narrative, the trio encounters Medusa relatively early in their journey. After crashing a bus during an altercation with the Furies, they wander into a nearby forest and discover a shop displaying cement sculptures of humanoids and animals. Grover is particularly struck by a sculpture of a satyr that reminds him of his lost uncle, Ferdinand. Grover's satyr instincts also detect the presence of monsters, but their suspicions are quickly interrupted by a Middle Eastern woman who introduces herself as Auntie M.

Auntie M offers the trio delicious food, which the hungry teenagers eagerly accept. However, Annabeth remains wary, suspecting Auntie M of harboring ill intentions. Auntie M notices Annabeth's grey eyes, a characteristic feature of Athena's children, and although this observation angers her, she conceals her emotions.

As the heroes become drowsy from the food and Auntie M's soothing voice, she laments her loneliness due to the absence of her two sisters. Annabeth becomes alarmed and tries to persuade the boys to leave. Auntie M then insists on taking a photograph of them for her next sculptures, noting the high demand for statues of children. At this point, Grover realizes that the satyr statue is indeed his uncle Ferdinand. As Auntie M transforms into Medusa, Annabeth acts quickly to save the boys, and together they engage in battle with Medusa.

Medusa expresses her deep-seated hatred for Athena during the confrontation and shares her life story. The narrative diverges from the original myth by portraying Poseidon as Medusa's boyfriend rather than her rapist, which paradoxically makes Medusa less sympathetic to the reader. In this version, Medusa's fondness for Percy, as a son of Poseidon, is emphasized.

Annabeth quickly discerns Medusa's weakness, stemming from her affection for Percy. She instructs Percy to use a shiny ball to fight Medusa by utilizing its reflection. Despite Medusa's attempts to dissuade Percy from fighting her, she ultimately lunges at him, and Percy decapitates her with a clean cut. Percy then sends Medusa's head to Mount Olympus using Hermes' parcel service and learns the address of the underworld from Medusa's accounting book. At the conclusion of *The Lightning Thief*, Percy receives the parcel containing Medusa's head, which he gives to his mother to petrify her abusive boyfriend, Gabe.

Although Medusa attempts to kill the trio, she inadvertently aids them by providing food, rest, and the address of their goal. Medusa's story remains tragic and unjust, and it introduces Percy's burgeoning defiance against the Olympian gods. Throughout the series, Percy seeks his father's approval while simultaneously rebelling against the gods, reminding them of their dependence on demigods. This defiance culminates at the end of the final book, where Percy rejects Zeus's offer of immortality and instead compels the gods to pay more attention to their mortal children and support the minor gods by constructing cabins at Camp Half-Blood for their demigod offspring. This evolution in Percy's character begins with his encounter with Medusa, highlighting the moral complexities and imperfections of the Olympian gods, thereby contributing to a more balanced distribution of power in the universe.

4.1.4 Charon

During Percy's initial visit to the Underworld to retrieve the Master Bolt from Hades, we encounter Charon. He is depicted as having chocolate-colored skin and fair hair. Rather than embodying an intimidating aura through mystery and gloom, Charon's intimidation stems from

his elegance and stature. He is dressed not in a concealing robe but in an Italian suit that complements his hair, paired with very expensive sunglasses.

Charon is not stationed on a boat floating along the river Styx, but instead, he is situated at a reception desk, adorned with a receptionist name tag. When Percy addresses him, he mistakenly calls him "Chiron" due to his dyslexia, which slightly annoys Charon. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover offer Charon three golden drachmas to gain entry to the Underworld, which piques Charon's curiosity, as he exhibits a notable greed for the coins. Upon discovering that the trio is not dead and are demigods, Charon initially attempts to dismiss them and seize the coins, but Percy swiftly retrieves them.

Ultimately, Charon allows them passage after Percy astutely exploits his avarice. Percy comments on the inadequate compensation Charon receives from Hades and offers him additional golden drachmas. Furthermore, he promises to petition Hades for a raise on Charon's behalf, which convinces Charon to escort them to an elevator descending deeper underground. During the elevator ride, Charon's attire transforms; his suit is replaced by his renowned black robes, and he removes his sunglasses, revealing empty eye sockets.

Upon reaching the river Styx, the trio observes the polluted state of the river, littered with bones, dead fish, plastic dolls, dead plants, and drenched college diplomas. Charon explains that the river's pollution is due to people discarding their unfulfilled hopes and dreams into it. After ferrying them across, he drops them off on the other shore, cautioning them that they will not find luck or hope in the Underworld. This warning may allude to the inscription Dante sees upon entering Hell: "*Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.*"²⁴³

Through Percy's perspective, Charon loses some of his enigmatic and ominous intimidation, appearing more as an underappreciated and disgruntled worker of the Underworld who believes he deserves greater compensation. His attempt to steal the gold from Percy contrasts with the original depiction of Charon, though the element of greed remains a consistent characteristic.

4.1.5 Cerberus

After their encounter with the underpaid ferryman Charon, the trio approaches the entrance to Erebus. As they near the gate, they observe three lines of souls entering the underworld, accompanied by the ominous sounds of a dog howling and barking, although the source remains

²⁴³ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Inferno*. 2013. Robin Kirkpatrick (Trans.) Canto III.

unseen. As they blend with the dead and draw closer to the gate, the terrifying visage of Cerberus gradually becomes apparent. It appears that the living cannot initially perceive Cerberus; however, the closer they venture to the gate, the more they assimilate the characteristics of the dead.

Upon seeing Cerberus, Percy is taken aback, having expected the creature to resemble a mastiff. Instead, Cerberus manifests as a colossal black Rottweiler, towering at twice the size of a mammoth. The beast immediately turns hostile, detecting that the trio is not among the dead. Grover, a satyr able to communicate with animals, partially understands Cerberus's growls and barks.

The reader might speculate on the trio's strategy for bypassing the formidable guardian at this juncture. Historically, Orpheus utilized his musical prowess to lull Cerberus to sleep, Aeneas's guide employed a sleep-inducing cake, and Heracles famously overpowered the beast in combat. However, Grover lacks the musical skill to induce sleep, Annabeth is without any soporific confections, and Percy, devoid of a water source, is far from capable of defeating Cerberus in battle. Consequently, their plan necessitates a simpler, more ingenuous approach befitting a group of twelve-year-olds.

Percy initially attempts to distract Cerberus by throwing a large branch, hoping the creature might fetch it. This tactic only serves to aggravate Cerberus, intensifying his aggression. Seizing the moment, Annabeth retrieves a red ball they had acquired earlier at a waterpark. She proceeds to engage Cerberus as one would a puppy, an action that initially confounds both the beast and Percy but proves remarkably effective. Cerberus, captivated by the red ball, focuses all three heads on it. Percy and Grover take advantage of this distraction to slip past the gate. Annabeth then throws the ball to Cerberus and swiftly joins the boys. The success of this plan saddens Annabeth, as it underscores Cerberus's neglect and lack of companionship, suggesting that Hades does not engage with him. This scenario resonates particularly with the perspective of children, who empathize with Cerberus's desire for play and affection.

Subsequently, when the trio confronts Hades and makes a hasty retreat from the advancing dead, Percy boldly admonishes Hades, insisting that he should compensate Charon more fairly and engage in play with Cerberus, who is evidently melancholic. This moment illustrates that even the fearsome Cerberus requires affection, reinforcing the notion that, at his core, he remains an enormous, misunderstood puppy in need of care.



Annabeth training Cerberus

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4.1.6 Chiron

Chiron plays an integral role in the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* and *Heroes of Olympus* series, serving as a mentor, guide, and protector for the demigods at Camp Half-Blood. His introduction as Mr. Brunner, a Latin teacher in a wheelchair, establishes his covert presence in Percy's life. When Percy is first attacked by Mrs. Dodds, Chiron provides him with Riptide, a celestial bronze sword, and uses the Mist to make mortals forget the incident. Upon Percy's arrival at Camp Half-Blood, Chiron rescues and heals him, eventually revealing his true identity

²⁴⁴ Cérbero e Annabeth. In: *Pinterest* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-27].

as the legendary centaur. Chiron's tour of the camp and explanation of the world's workings serve both as guidance for Percy and an introduction to the series' universe for readers.

When Percy is claimed by Poseidon, Chiron calms the camp and offers Percy crucial guidance regarding a prophecy from the Oracle. He instructs Percy on the necessity of choosing two companions for his quest, emphasizing the sacredness of the number three in demigod adventures. Chiron provides necessary equipment, including Riptide, Percy's iconic weapon throughout the series. Similar to Dumbledore in the *Harry Potter* series, Chiron provides closure and wisdom at the end of each book, helping Percy understand his troubles and offering advice for the future.

In the second book, Chiron is wrongfully blamed for poisoning Thalia's tree and is forced to leave Camp Half-Blood. His absence parallels Dumbledore's forced retirement in *The Order of the Phoenix*. Tantalus, his replacement, proves to be a poor leader, favoring the children of Ares, particularly Clarisse, who parallels Draco Malfoy. Tantalus's actions and eventual return to Tartarus mirror Dolores Umbridge's narrative arc. Upon Chiron's return, he resumes his role as a stabilizing force at the camp.

Throughout the third book, Chiron provides critical support and mentorship, especially when Annabeth is imprisoned. He reveals the Great Prophecy to Percy, a pivotal moment in the series, underscoring the potential threat posed by Nico di Angelo, a powerful son of Hades. This prophecy becomes the focal point of the remaining books. In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Chiron explains the significance of the labyrinth and the potential threat it poses if navigated by enemy forces. As commander during the camp's climactic battle against Kronos's forces, Chiron leads the demigods to victory.

In *The Last Olympian*, Chiron discusses strategies for the impending battle with Kronos. When the demigod forces are driven back during the Battle of Manhattan, Chiron arrives with reinforcements of Party Ponies, his kin. These wild, carefree centaurs contrast sharply with Chiron's sophisticated and calm demeanor. His ability to unite the Party Ponies proves crucial, potentially saving the entire battle.

During the *Heroes of Olympus* series, Chiron continues to play a vital role. He mentors Jason, who struggles with an identity crisis, which deeply concerns Chiron as he recognizes in Jason echoes of the original Jason, whom he also instructed. This connection reflects Chiron's deep care for his students and his personal investment in their success and well-being. Throughout

the series, Chiron protects Camp Half-Blood in the absence of other heroes and prepares the demigods for potential attacks by Camp Jupiter. Chiron's strategic planning and leadership bolster the camp's defenses in *The Blood of Olympus*. During the final battle, he coordinates the defense against Gaea's forces, with his combat skills and leadership being instrumental in maintaining the camp's defenses.

Chiron's importance in the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* and *Heroes of Olympus* series cannot be overstated. He serves as a mentor and guide, providing critical philosophical and psychological support to Percy and other demigods. As the leader of Camp Half-Blood, Chiron is responsible for organizing activities, managing daily issues, and commanding the camp during attacks. His wisdom and strategic acumen are crucial in key battles, while his ability to provide closure and guidance mirrors that of Dumbledore in the *Harry Potter* series. Chiron's mentorship and leadership ensure the safety and success of his students, making him an indispensable figure in their heroic journeys.

4.1.7 The Furies

In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy Jackson's initial encounter with a monster is with Alecto, one of the three Furies, disguised as his math teacher, Mrs. Dodds. This encounter occurs during a school trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art after Percy unconsciously uses his water-manipulating abilities to throw the bully Nancy Bobofit into a fountain. Mrs. Dodds takes Percy aside, transforms into her true form, and demands to know where he has hidden a stolen item. Percy is saved by his Latin teacher, Mr. Brunner, who throws him a pen that transforms into a sword, enabling Percy to defeat Alecto temporarily as she disintegrates.

Percy later learns at Camp Half-Blood that monsters do not die permanently; they re-form after varying periods. This is proven true when Percy encounters Alecto and her two sisters again at the start of his quest with Annabeth and Grover. The Furies attack them on a bus, but Percy uses Annabeth's invisibility cap to conceal himself. Despite this, he intervenes when Annabeth and Grover are being interrogated, causing the bus to swerve and using the ensuing confusion to defeat two of the Furies, leaving Alecto behind. The Furies are described as servants of Hades in this adaptation, differing from their traditional role as independent deities of vengeance.

The final encounter with the Furies in *The Lightning Thief* occurs in the Underworld. They lead Percy to Hades' palace, where Percy demands the Master Bolt, only to learn that Hades never stole it. Hades sent the Furies after Percy under the suspicion that Percy had stolen the Master

Bolt and Hades' Helm of Darkness. The Furies' mission was to retrieve the Helm of Darkness, which had also gone missing. After a confrontation with Ares, who had stolen both items, Percy retrieves the Helm and hands it over to Alecto, who returns it to Hades.

The integration of the Furies in the Percy Jackson series raises some issues. Firstly, in classical mythology, the Furies are not servants of Hades but rather autonomous deities of vengeance. Their pursuit of Percy, motivated by the retrieval of the Helm of Darkness rather than vengeance for murder or familial betrayal, deviates from their traditional role. Secondly, the ease with which Percy defeats the Furies at the beginning of his demigod journey diminishes their perceived power. According to the mythological canon, the Furies are formidable opponents, and their encounters should reflect their true strength and relentless nature.

While creatively engaging, the adaptation of the Furies' roles and actions in the series diverges significantly from their mythological origins. While this interpretation provides narrative tension and development for Percy, it simplifies their traditional complexity and diminishes their mythic authority.

4.1.8 The Harpies

Harpies, one of the rare "monsters" present within Camp Half-Blood, play a significant role in the Percy Jackson & the Olympians and The *Heroes of Olympus* series. Within Camp Half-Blood, harpies are part of the camp's cleaning service. They are responsible for cleaning the cabins and washing dishes in lava, which Percy Jackson humorously notes as highly effective for germ eradication. Moreover, they act as enforcers, deterring campers from wandering after dark under the threat of being eaten, thus maintaining order within the camp.

In The *Heroes of Olympus* series, harpies gain greater prominence. The trio, Percy, Hazel, and Frank, encounter them in Atlanta in connection with the resurrected blind seer Phineus. Traditionally tormented by harpies who stole his food, Phineus, now revived by Gaea, exacts revenge by tormenting the harpies in return. He strikes any harpy attempting to eat, rendering them extremely malnourished.

The demigods seek Phineus to obtain crucial information about their enemy's location. Phineus offers the information in exchange for capturing a specific harpy, Ella, who has continually evaded him. They find Ella at a nearby parking lot and learn that she is not only different in appearance—being smaller and more beautiful than other harpies—but also possesses an

extraordinary ability: she has memorized the lost prophecies from the Sibylline Books, making her immensely valuable.

Recognizing Ella's significance, the trio resolves to help her. Percy engages in a risky gamble with Phineus, utilizing two vials of Gorgon's blood—one that heals and one that fatally poisons. Phineus, confident in his prophetic abilities, chooses first, leaving the other vial for Percy. Subconsciously contacting Gaea, Percy relies on her intervention to ensure his survival, banking on his perceived value to her. Upon drinking the vial, Percy appears to be in distress, leading Phineus to celebrate prematurely. However, Phineus succumbs to the poison, fulfilling his agreement to free the harpies and provide the enemy's location.

After this encounter, the demigods liberate Ella and the other harpies. Ella becomes a valuable ally and later enters a romantic relationship with Tyson, Percy's Cyclops half-brother, further integrating her into the ongoing narrative.

This portrayal of harpies and their interactions with Percy Jackson highlights both the creative adaptation of classical mythology and the development of new, engaging storylines within the series. The reimagined roles and relationships of mythological figures serve to enrich the narrative and connect readers with the broader mythological context.

4.1.9 Achilles

In *The Last Olympian*, the final book of the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series, Achilles' brief but significant encounter plays a crucial role in the plot. Nico di Angelo brings Percy to the Underworld in preparation for the impending battle with Kronos, who has taken over Luke Castellan's body. Nico's plan involves immersing Percy in the River Styx to gain invulnerability, mirroring the legendary Achilles, whose mother dipped him in the same river, leaving only his heel vulnerable.

Before heading to the river, Nico insists on visiting his father, Hades. However, Hades, harboring his own ambitions, imprisons Percy, aiming for Nico to fulfill the prophecy about a child of the Big Three (Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades), stopping Kronos. Nico manages to put Hades' guards to sleep and rescues Percy from the prison. They then make their way to the river, pursued by the army of the dead.

At the river's edge, Percy questions Nico about the ritual when the ghost of Achilles appears. Unlike many other demigods and deities who adapt modern appearances, Achilles retains his

ancient battle armor, complete with a bloody arrow in his heel. Described as a muscular warrior with dark skin and fair hair, Achilles first appears to Percy as a formidable figure, reminiscent of Ares, the god of war.

Achilles attempts to dissuade Percy from undergoing the ritual, warning him of the immense power and corresponding increased vulnerabilities it would bring. Percy humorously suggests that Achilles could have avoided his fate by not wearing sandals, to which Achilles angrily responds, emphasizing that his downfall was due not to his physical weakness but to his arrogance, which the river imbues as a fatal flaw.

Unable to convince Percy otherwise, Achilles provides instructions for the ritual, advising Percy to focus on something that anchors him to the mortal world. He also needs to identify a specific spot on his body that will remain vulnerable. When Percy inquires about Luke's vulnerability, Achilles, angered, cryptically states that Percy's fate is sealed and then disappears.

During the ritual, Percy experiences excruciating pain and nearly drowns. The memory of Annabeth speaking to him in his mind anchors him, allowing him to emerge from the water. Upon surfacing, he confronts Hades and his army, unleashing a tidal wave from the River Styx that decimates a significant portion of the army. Percy effortlessly defeats Hades' forces and even bests Hades in combat.

This encounter with Achilles stands out as one of the most serious in the series, as Achilles is portrayed not as an adaptation to modern times but as a tormented echo from the past. His presence underscores the weight of Percy's decision and the ancient, enduring power of the myths that continue to shape the demigods' lives.

Achilles' advice and the subsequent ritual mark a pivotal moment in Percy's journey, blending ancient mythological elements with the protagonist's personal growth and the broader narrative of the series.

4.1.10 Geryon

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Percy Jackson and his companions—Annabeth, Grover, and Tyson—encounter the red cattle of Apollo while searching for answers in the Labyrinth. During this quest, they meet Eurytion, a demigod son of Ares, distinguishable by his t-shirt emblazoned with “Do not pollute our Texas” and a jean jacket. Eurytion wields an enormous wooden club

with iron spikes. He is accompanied by Orthrus, a two-headed greyhound and sibling of Cerberus.

Upon learning from Eurytion that Nico di Angelo is at the ranch, Percy and his group demand an audience with him. Consequently, Eurytion leads them to Geryon, his employer. Geryon, depicted in this mythological adaptation with three bodies and a single head, wears three cowboy shirts in green, orange, and red, resembling traffic lights. He provides a tour of his ranch in a peculiar, cow-spotted vehicle reminiscent of a toy train. During the tour, they observe various mythical animals, but the most notable are the carnivorous horses housed in stables filled with manure.

When Percy and his friends accuse Geryon of monstrosity, he detains them, declaring his intention to sell them to Cronos. Percy proposes a business deal, prompting Geryon to challenge him to clean the stables by sunset. Success would ensure the release of his friends, including Nico di Angelo; failure would result in their sale to Cronos.

Percy initially attempts to reason with the horses, leveraging his ability to communicate with them as a son of Poseidon. However, the hungry horses ignore his authority. Inspired by Heracles' cleaning of the Augean Stables, Percy decides to reroute a river through the stables. When he reaches the river, an angry Naiad opposes his plan, fearing pollution and ecological damage. The Naiad's refusal to recognize Poseidon's authority leaves Percy feeling brutish. To his surprise, when he promises to protect her river, she relents and provides a clue that the valley used to be a sea, suggesting the presence of shells beneath the dirt.

Percy uses his power over water to conjure saltwater from the shells in the stables, effectively cleaning them and salting the horses. Upon returning, he finds Geryon wearing a "Kiss the Chef" apron. Impressed by Percy's ingenuity, Geryon refuses to honor his promise, citing the absence of a binding oath on the River Styx.

A conflict ensues, during which Percy discovers that Geryon can regenerate unless all three of his hearts are pierced simultaneously. Percy retrieves a bow, prays to Apollo and Artemis for guidance, and successfully shoots an arrow that pierces all three hearts, causing Geryon to disintegrate.

Post-battle, Eurytion expresses relief at Geryon's demise and anticipates peace. Annabeth advises Eurytion to treat the animals with respect, suggesting that when Geryon eventually reforms, he will be compelled to cooperate with Eurytion due to the animals' loyalty.

In this modern mythological retelling by Rick Riordan, Geryon is reinterpreted as a capitalist rancher who breeds animals for meat and mistreats them, violating ecological principles. His deceitful nature and broken promises cast him as a morally corrupt character, echoing themes from Dante's *Inferno*, where deceit is considered a grievous sin.

4.1.11 Jason and Medea

Jason Grace, a central protagonist in Rick Riordan's *The Heroes of Olympus* series, is shown as a pivotal character distinguished by his leadership attributes, courage, and inner struggles pertaining to his sense of self. Being a son of Jupiter, Jason naturally assumes a position of leadership, driven by a deep sense of responsibility to safeguard and lead his fellow demigods. His tremendous prowess in combat and ability to think strategically solidify his reputation as a dangerous fighter. Jason's character narrative is mostly focused on the challenge of reconciling his dual background, as he must navigate between his Roman upbringing at Camp Jupiter and his encounters at the Greek Camp Half-Blood. The internal conflict plays a crucial role in his journey, highlighting the issues of identity and belonging. In addition, Jason's loyalty and the profound connections he establishes with his friends highlight his compassionate disposition and ability to cultivate robust, supportive partnerships.

On the other hand, the original Jason from Greek mythology is well celebrated for his leadership of the Argonauts in their pursuit of the Golden Fleece. Jason is distinguished for his leadership and bravery, effectively bringing together a varied collection of heroes and skillfully overcoming several hurdles. Contrary to Jason Grace, the mythological Jason is frequently portrayed as morally intricate and imperfect. The act of betraying Medea, despite her great assistance in his quest, demonstrates his ability to deceive and prioritize his own interests, resulting in serious consequences for his personal and moral well-being. His turbulent relationships, including his union with Medea, expose a more self-centered and opportunistic aspect, which strongly contrasts with the fidelity and compassion demonstrated by Jason Grace.

Both characters exhibit qualities of leadership and courage, but they greatly diverge in terms of their moral character and personal relationships. Jason Grace personifies a contemporary hero who wrestles with questions of self-identity and pursues moral uprightness, placing great importance on loyalty and empathy. Conversely, the mythological character Jason is motivated by ambition and the pursuit of personal renown, frequently disregarding the well-being of others, which finally results in his downfall. These distinctions emphasize the transformation

of the heroic archetype from ancient mythology's morally intricate and imperfect heroes to the more self-reflective and morally motivated heroes of modern literature.

The depiction of the interaction with Medea in *The Lost Hero* skillfully exemplifies these ideas. Jason Grace, Piper McLean, and Leo Valdez visit Medea's department shop in Chicago as part of their mission to rescue Hera. Medea, portrayed as a shrewd and manipulative character, employs her physical attractiveness and charm to make the heroes feel comfortable. Nevertheless, her genuine motives quickly become evident as she employs her supernatural powers to manipulate the protagonists, exploiting their vulnerabilities and aspirations in order to create conflict and undermine their determination.

Medea manipulates Piper by taking advantage of her concerns over her father and her position among the demigods. She also exploits Leo's need for approval and acknowledgment and Jason's uncertainty about his history and his ties to the Roman demigods. Her objective is to utilize her charm speak capability to manipulate their actions and divert them from their mission.

By perceiving Medea's strategies, Piper employs her own persuasive abilities, channeling her intense emotions into her words to shatter Medea's influence over Jason and Leo. This instance of resistance showcases the heroes' inherent fortitude and the potency of solidarity. Piper's deeds result in Medea's downfall when the sorceress collides with her stock of potions, resulting in turmoil and devastation throughout the department store. Leo's bronze dragon, Festus, arrives promptly, enabling the heroes to make their escape by going through the roof.

Medea's character exemplifies the concepts of deceit and manipulation as she skillfully exploits the vulnerabilities of the heroes. This incident highlights the significance of being watchful and having confidence in oneself and one's companions. The heroes' capacity to withstand Medea's sway and triumph over her trickery underscores their inherent fortitude and the need for collaboration. The success of each character is enhanced by their distinct qualities, highlighting the need for unity and collaboration. This confrontation compels each hero to confront and surmount their individual challenges as Piper acquires the ability to have faith in her abilities, Leo develops assurance in his resourcefulness, and Jason starts to comprehend his intricate identity.

As a whole, the meeting with Medea acts as a crucial examination for the demigods, putting their determination, cohesion, and individual development to the test. It strengthens

fundamental concepts in the *Heroes of Olympus* series, such as the significance of inner fortitude, the worth of solidarity, and the capacity to triumph over deceit and manipulation. During this meeting, the characters cultivate and reinforce their connections, equipping them for the more formidable obstacles they will face in their journey.

4.1.12 Minos

Minos, the legendary ruler of Crete, plays a significant role as a character in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series, specifically in the fourth book, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. Minos is renowned for his role in commissioning Daedalus to construct the labyrinth, which was designed to contain the Minotaur. His historical reputation is defined by his merciless governance and complex associations with many mythological beings. In Riordan's story, Minos is portrayed as a spectral entity whose essence remains in the world of the living because of unsolved matters and a strong want for vengeance.

Minos makes his initial appearance to Nico di Angelo, the offspring of Hades, in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. Minos manipulates Nico's intense sorrow over his sister Bianca's demise by pretending to be a mentor and offering to grant him the ability to bring her back to life. Minos is using Nico in order to exploit his powers for his own agenda, which is to overthrow Hades and take control of the Underworld. This instance of deceit highlights Minos's astute and calculating disposition in accordance with his mythological depiction.

Ultimately, Minos's hidden intentions and genuine character are unveiled. By working together, the main characters successfully prevent his plans from succeeding. Minos is obliged to confront the consequences of his deeds, resulting in his final downfall. This resolution highlights important themes in the series, particularly the victory of justice and the main characters' determination.

Minos has a multidimensional role in the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series, functioning as a complex enemy whose actions and intentions are intricately connected to his legendary origins. His engagements with important characters like Nico di Angelo and Daedalus and his cunning and spiteful inclinations make him a crucial player in the story. The protagonist's ultimate demise serves as a prominent illustration of the key concepts of justice, resilience, and the eventual triumph of righteousness, which are essential components of the series' moral structure.

4.2 Mythological Deities

4.2.1 Poseidon

Poseidon plays a crucial role as one of the main gods and as the father of Percy Jackson. His deeds, attire, demeanor, appearance, encounters, and relationship with Percy are carefully detailed, highlighting his importance in the mythological world and Percy's life.

Throughout the series, Poseidon's deeds are both direct and indirect due to his powers as the god of the sea, earthquakes, and horses. In *The Lightning Thief*, Poseidon claims Percy as his son by making the trident symbol appear above Percy's head during a capture-the-flag game at Camp Half-Blood. This moment establishes Percy's identity and destiny as a demigod.

In *The Sea of Monsters*, Poseidon indirectly aids Percy by sending hippocampi (sea horses) to rescue him and his friends, demonstrating his protective nature and ability to help from afar. Poseidon also provides guidance through dreams and Iris's messages, advising and warning Percy at crucial times.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Poseidon's influence is felt through Tyson, Percy's Cyclops half-brother and another son of Poseidon. Tyson's strength and loyalty reflect Poseidon's support. In *The Last Olympian*, Poseidon takes an active role by joining the battle against the Titans, helping to defend Olympus, and ultimately influencing the outcome in favor of the gods.

Poseidon's appearance is fitting for the god of the sea. Like a seasoned fisherman, he is described as a tall, imposing figure with a deeply tanned, weathered complexion. His hair is black and neatly trimmed, accompanied by a well-kept beard, giving him a regal yet approachable look. Poseidon's eyes are a striking green, reflecting the color of the sea and conveying power and depth. His attire is simple yet symbolic: a sand-colored fisherman's tunic, highlighting his connection to the sea and the lives of ordinary fishermen. He often goes barefoot, further emphasizing his bond with nature. The trident, his iconic weapon, is always present, symbolizing his authority over the oceans and his status as one of the most powerful Olympian gods.

Poseidon's demeanor combines stern authority with paternal care. He exudes a commanding presence and speaks in a way that demands respect. However, his interactions with Percy reveal a more complex character. He is often serious and reserved, but moments of pride and concern for Percy show his deep, though restrained, affection. Poseidon's encounters with Percy are crucial for Percy's character development and the series' narrative.

The first major encounter is in *The Lightning Thief*, where Poseidon acknowledges Percy as his son at Mount Olympus. This encounter is formal, with Poseidon expressing pride in Percy's achievements and setting the stage for their relationship. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Poseidon communicates with Percy through dreams and indirectly aids him, demonstrating his protective nature. In *The Titan's Curse*, Poseidon provides guidance via Iris messages, emphasizing his supportive role even from a distance. In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Poseidon's influence is felt through Tyson's heroics, showcasing the god's indirect involvement in Percy's quests. The most significant encounters occur in *The Last Olympian*. Poseidon appears to Percy in his palace under the sea, revealing his vulnerability due to the ongoing war with the Titans. This meeting is more personal, with Poseidon expressing his concerns and giving Percy crucial information. During the final battle, Poseidon's arrival with his forces underscores his commitment to defending Olympus and aiding his son. After the battle, Poseidon has a heartfelt conversation with Percy, expressing pride in his growth and heroism.

The relationship between Poseidon and Percy evolves from initial sternness to mutual respect and growing affection. As Percy proves himself, Poseidon's initial reserve gives way to a deeper understanding and connection. Despite the distance and complexities of being a god, Poseidon consistently shows his care and support for Percy, guiding him through challenges and celebrating his victories.

In summary, Poseidon's deeds, attire, demeanor, appearance, encounters, and relationship with Percy Jackson are integral to the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series. Poseidon's character blends authority and paternal care, making him a key figure in Percy's journey from a confused demigod to a hero of Olympus. Their interactions highlight the enduring bond between gods and their mortal children within Greek mythology.

4.2.2 Dionysus

Dionysus, also known as Mr. D, is the director of Camp Half-Blood and plays a significant role in the story. Despite his seemingly indifferent attitude, he carries out important tasks to ensure the safety and training of the demigods. His appearance, mannerisms, and interactions with Percy Jackson and other characters reveal his complex and essential role in the narrative.

Dionysus's presence at Camp Half-Blood is a result of a punishment from Zeus, who assigned him the position of camp director, a role he reluctantly undertakes. In *The Lightning Thief*, he enforces the camp's rules and maintains order, displaying his divine power when he manipulates

grapevines. In *The Titan's Curse*, he demonstrates his ability to protect the campers by transforming hostile mortals into dolphins.

Throughout the series, Dionysus oversees the camp's activities, assigns quests, and ensures the demigods receive proper training. Despite his seemingly lackadaisical approach, his actions reflect a deeper commitment to his responsibilities, even if he rarely shows it openly.

Dionysus's appearance, characterized by unkempt and casual attire, reflects his disdain for his role. His mannerisms are marked by sarcasm, irritability, and a general air of indifference. He prefers to spend his time playing pinochle and drinking Diet Coke, a substitute for the wine he is forbidden to consume.

His relationship with Percy Jackson is marked by a mix of antagonism and grudging respect. Although he frequently mocks Percy and seems dismissive, there are moments when his deeper sense of duty and care for the campers becomes evident.

Throughout the series, Dionysus's interactions with Percy reveal a gradual shift in his attitude, suggesting a growing respect for Percy's resilience and heroism. In *The Last Olympian*, Dionysus continues to mock Percy but also acknowledges the significance of his role in the lives of the demigods.

Dionysus is a multidimensional character who combines irreverence with hidden depth. Though often begrudging, his actions play a crucial role in protecting and developing the demigods at Camp Half-Blood. Through his interactions with Percy Jackson, Dionysus evolves from a seemingly indifferent director to a figure whose underlying commitment to his duties becomes increasingly apparent. His character adds complexity and humor to the series, illustrating the nuanced nature of the gods within Greek mythology.

4.2.3 Hermes

Hermes, the god associated with travelers, thieves, and communication, is portrayed as a multifaceted and dynamic character in the context of his interactions with Percy Jackson and other characters. These interactions showcase Hermes' distinct role within the mythological realm and his intricate relationship with the series' central protagonist.

Hermes is described as youthful and dynamic, reflecting his role as the divine messenger. He is depicted donning a tracksuit and sneakers, modernizing his image while retaining his classical attributes, such as the winged sandals and the caduceus (a staff entwined with snakes). This

fusion of ancient and modern elements underscores Hermes' adaptability and relevance in both mythological and contemporary contexts.

Hermes' significance in the series is notably pronounced, particularly in *The Sea of Monsters* and *The Last Olympian*. Renowned for his astuteness, resourcefulness, and wit, Hermes assumes the roles of a mediator and a guide. He functions as both a supporter and an instigator to Percy and the other demigods. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Hermes assists Percy by furnishing him with enchanted items, such as strength-enhancing vitamins and a thermos containing the winds, which are crucial for their quest. This form of support underscores Hermes' nurturing nature and his vested interest in the triumph of demigods.

In *The Last Olympian*, Hermes' actions take on a more personal dimension, revealing the depths of his emotions. The loss of his son Luke, who falls under Kronos's sway, profoundly affects Hermes. This tragic event emphasizes Hermes' intricate position as both a deity and a father, grappling with the consequences of his divine and paternal responsibilities.

His demeanor is characterized by charm, wit, and a playful, sometimes mischievous nature. Hermes is renowned for his quick thinking and astute problem-solving, often employing humor to defuse tense situations. Despite his lighthearted exterior, Hermes also exhibits moments of solemnity and deep concern, particularly concerning his children and their fates.

Hermes' rapport with Percy is multifaceted, encompassing elements of mentorship, challenge, and camaraderie. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Hermes first encounters Percy at a pivotal juncture, providing him with the necessary tools and encouragement for his quest. This initial interaction sets the tone for their relationship, with Hermes assuming the roles of both a helper and an authoritative figure.

Hermes' interactions with Percy often convey an undercurrent of urgency and significance throughout the series. He offers advice and guidance to Percy while also holding him to high expectations. Hermes' assistance is not devoid of its challenges, as he frequently encourages Percy to think innovatively and act decisively.

In the series' final installment, Hermes' personal sorrow over Luke's downfall contributes a layer of complexity to his character. His conversations with Percy lay bare his inner turmoil and the struggles associated with reconciling his responsibilities as a god with his paternal emotions. Hermes' anguish and remorse are palpable, rendering him a more relatable and sympathetic figure.

Hermes' interactions with other characters, particularly his children, serve to further illustrate his complexity. His relationship with Luke Castellan is central to his character arc. Luke's betrayal and eventual redemption profoundly impact Hermes, unveiling the challenges associated with divine parenthood. Despite his imperfections and missteps, Hermes' unwavering love for Luke is evident, underscoring the god's capacity for deep emotional bonds.

Hermes' role as a mediator holds paramount importance in the series. He frequently acts as an intermediary between the gods and demigods, facilitating communication and contributing to the maintenance of balance. His diplomatic skills and adeptness at navigating complex situations prove invaluable in the face of mounting conflicts.

Hermes' character enriches the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series, infusing it with depth and dynamism. His actions, driven by a fusion of support, wit, and personal struggle, render him a compelling figure. The portrayal of Hermes, featuring his modern and ancient attributes, underscores his adaptability and enduring relevance.

The culmination of Hermes' character arc in *The Last Olympian* spotlights his dual role as a god and a father. His grief over Luke's fate and his interactions with Percy reveals a formidable and deeply human character. Hermes' transition from a playful, resourceful deity to a figure grappling with loss and responsibility enriches the narrative.

4.2.4 Hades

Hades, the god of the underworld, is portrayed as a complex and multifaceted character. His interactions with Percy Jackson and other characters reveal his unique role within the mythological world and his intricate relationship with the series' protagonist.

Hades's role in the series is diverse, with his actions and motivations often shrouded in mystery and ambiguity. Hades is initially depicted as a potential antagonist when Percy believes he has stolen Zeus's lightning bolt. This initial belief sets the stage for Percy's journey to the underworld. However, it is later revealed that Hades is not the true culprit but is himself a victim of deception. This revelation underscores the intricacies of his character and his position within the pantheon of gods.

Hades is depicted as having a dark and foreboding appearance that suits his dominion over the underworld. He is often described as tall and imposing, with pallid skin and a stern, brooding expression. His attire is typically somber, consisting of dark robes that reflect the gloomy nature

of his realm. The aura of death and mystery surrounding him is enhanced by his piercing, intense eyes, which convey his power and melancholy. Furthermore, during their first encounter, Percy remarks that Hades is the first god who truly looks and feels like a god.

Hades is stern, aloof, and often bitter. His isolation in the underworld has made him resentful of his brothers, Zeus and Poseidon, and their realms. This bitterness is evident in his interactions with others, where he often comes across as harsh and unyielding. Despite this, Hades demonstrates a strong sense of duty and justice, adhering strictly to the laws of the underworld and ensuring that the balance between life and death is maintained.

Hades's first significant encounter with Percy occurs when Percy, Annabeth, and Grover venture into the underworld to retrieve the stolen bolt. Hades confronts them, accusing Percy of stealing both the bolt and his Helm of Darkness. This confrontation is tense and highlights Hades's distrust and his readiness to protect his domain. However, it also reveals his vulnerability and his desire to reclaim his stolen property.

Hades's relationship with Percy evolves throughout the series. Initially, there is mutual distrust and animosity, exacerbated by the misunderstandings surrounding the theft of the lightning bolt. However, in *The Last Olympian*, Hades's character is explored more deeply, revealing his motivations and the burdens of his role. His participation in the final battle against the Titans showcases his commitment to maintaining cosmic order, even if it means allying with those he distrusts.

Hades's interactions with other characters, such as his children Nico and Bianca di Angelo, further illustrate his complex personality. His relationship with Nico is strained, marked by Hades's difficulty in expressing affection and Nico's struggle with his own identity. Despite these challenges, Hades's protective nature emerges, particularly in his efforts to shield Nico from danger and to guide him in mastering his powers.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Hades's influence is felt through Nico's actions and the revelations about his past. Hades's desire to protect his children and his realm often puts him at odds with other gods and demigods, but it also highlights his deep sense of responsibility.

Hades's character adds depth and intrigue to the series. His actions, driven by a complex blend of duty, bitterness, and protectiveness, position him as both a formidable figure and a tragic character. The visual portrayal of Hades with his dark, imposing appearance complements his somber and authoritative nature.

The culmination of Hades's arc in *The Last Olympian* sees him joining the battle against the Titans. This crucial alliance underscores his ultimate commitment to the balance of the cosmos and his recognition of the larger threat posed by the Titans. His grudging cooperation with Percy and the other gods highlights the necessity of unity in the face of overwhelming danger.

Hades's role is integral to the narrative's exploration of power, duty, and family. His interactions with Percy Jackson, marked by initial antagonism and eventual grudging respect, reflect the complexities of his character. Hades embodies the darker aspects of the divine world, serving as a reminder of the intricate balance between life and death within Greek mythology.

4.2.5 Zeus

Zeus plays a pivotal role in the series, particularly in *The Lightning Thief* and *The Last Olympian*. As the god of the sky and thunder, Zeus wields immense power and is central to maintaining order among the gods and mortals. His actions are often driven by a desire to preserve this order and assert his authority.

Zeus is described as imposing and majestic, fitting his status as king of the gods. He is often depicted as a tall, muscular man with a commanding presence. His dark hair and beard streaked with gray symbolize both his agelessness and his immense power.

In *The Lightning Thief*, Zeus's stolen master bolt sets the entire plot in motion. Believing that Percy has taken it, Zeus demands its return, setting Percy on his first major quest. This misunderstanding underscores Zeus's quickness to judgment and his formidable presence in the series. His desire to find and punish the thief highlights his commitment to justice and his often rigid sense of authority.

During the events of the last book, Zeus plays a crucial role in the final battle against the Titans. His leadership and power are vital in defending Olympus and maintaining the balance of the cosmos. Despite the challenges and conflicts within the pantheon, Zeus's ultimate goal is the preservation of order and the protection of his domain.

Zeus usually wears flowing robes, often white or sky blue, adorned with gold accents, emphasizing his royal status and his connection to the sky. His clothes are reminiscent of ancient Greek royalty, designed to project authority and reverence. In moments of battle or high tension, he might also be depicted wearing armor, further underscoring his role as a protector and warrior.

The most striking aspect of Zeus's appearance is his eyes, which are often described as electric blue or stormy gray, reflecting his dominion over thunder and lightning. His gaze is intense and piercing, capable of conveying both his immense power and his unyielding authority.

Zeus's demeanor is characterized by sternness, pride, and an unyielding sense of authority. As the ruler of Olympus, he exudes a commanding presence that demands respect and obedience. He is often quick to anger, especially when his authority is challenged or when the natural order is threatened.

However, Zeus's pride frequently leads to significant problems. His insistence on maintaining strict authority and his quickness to assert dominance often result in strained relationships and miscommunications among the gods and demigods. In *The Lightning Thief*, Zeus's immediate assumption that Percy has stolen his master bolt not only sets the protagonist on a dangerous quest but also heightens tensions between the gods, nearly leading to a catastrophic war. Similarly, in *The Heroes of Olympus*, Zeus's prideful decision to close Olympus and cut off communication with the demigods in *The Lost Hero* exacerbates the challenges they face, leaving them to fend for themselves against rising threats. This isolationist stance and refusal to seek collaborative solutions contribute to the sense of urgency and danger throughout both series, highlighting the detrimental impact of Zeus's pride on the stability of both the mortal and divine realms.

Despite his stern exterior, Zeus also displays moments of deep concern for the well-being of the world and the other gods. Though sometimes harsh, his decisions are often made to preserve balance and prevent chaos. Zeus's leadership style is autocratic; he expects loyalty and adherence to his rules but bears the burden of immense responsibility.

Zeus's interactions with Percy Jackson reflect his complex nature. There is tension and mistrust initially, especially when Zeus believes Percy has stolen his master bolt. However, as the series progresses, Zeus's respect for Percy grows, particularly as Percy proves his bravery and loyalty to Olympus.

Zeus's relationships with other gods and his children are complex and often strained. For instance, his interactions with his brother Poseidon are marked by rivalry and tension, reflecting the ancient conflicts and power struggles within the Greek pantheon. However, in times of crisis, Zeus is willing to set aside differences and work together to face common threats.

His relationship with his children, particularly Thalia and Jason Grace, highlights his challenges as a father. Zeus's sternness and high expectations often create distance, but his deep care for their safety and success is evident. The tension between his divine duties and paternal feelings adds depth to his character.

Zeus represents the power and authority of the king of the gods. His actions, driven by a desire to uphold order and assert his dominance, are central to the series' storyline. Zeus's majestic and regal attire emphasizes his status and connection to the sky. His stern and proud demeanor reflects his role as a powerful and often uncompromising leader.

Throughout interactions with Percy Jackson and other characters, Zeus's character complexities become apparent. His initial mistrust of Percy evolves into respect as Percy proves his worth. Despite his stern exterior, Zeus's actions are ultimately guided by a desire to protect the cosmos and maintain balance.



Zeus

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4.2.6 Ares

Ares first encounters Percy in Los Angeles, presenting himself as an ally by providing a ride and advice. However, it soon becomes clear that Ares has his own agenda, using Percy as a

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pawn. This encounter culminates in a dramatic duel on a beach, where Percy manages to wound Ares despite his relative inexperience. This battle is a turning point for Percy, showcasing his growth and ability to challenge even a powerful god.

Ares's role in the series is crucial, especially in *The Lightning Thief*. His actions set much of the plot in motion. Ares's cunning plan involves having Percy unwittingly carry Zeus's lightning bolt and Hades's Helm of Darkness, aiming to incite a war among the gods. His manipulation of events underscores his desire for chaos and conflict.

Ares is described with a menacing, biker-like appearance. He is tall, muscular, and sports a black leather jacket, jeans, and combat boots, often riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. His eyes are depicted as flames, reinforcing his fiery and aggressive nature. This rugged and rebellious look complements his persona as the god of war, exuding an aura of danger and intimidation.

Ares's demeanor is defined by arrogance and aggression. He relishes conflict and enjoys provoking others, often using threats and intimidation to assert his dominance. His presence is a constant reminder of war's violent and chaotic aspects, with little regard for the well-being of mortals or demigods, whom he views as mere pawns in his schemes.

The enmity between Ares and Percy is further explored in subsequent books. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Ares's influence is felt through his children, particularly Clarisse La Rue. Initially, Clarisse acts as an antagonist to Percy, mirroring her father's aggressive nature. However, over time, she and Percy develop a grudging respect for each other, showcasing the complexity of relationships within the demigod community.

In *The Last Olympian*, Ares's involvement in the battle against the Titans underscores his nature as a god who thrives in conflict. Despite being on the same side in the larger war, Ares and Percy's relationship remains strained, with Ares viewing Percy as a persistent nuisance. This ongoing antagonism highlights the challenges Percy faces, not just from external threats but also from powerful gods with their own agendas.

Ares's character adds significant tension and conflict to the series. His actions, driven by a desire for chaos and dominance, position him as a formidable adversary. The visual portrayal of Ares as a tough, biker-like figure with flaming eyes reinforces his aggressive and rebellious nature.

The duel between Percy and Ares in the first book's climax is a pivotal moment in the series. Percy's ability to stand up to and wound Ares is a testament to his growth and courage. This encounter sets the stage for Percy's continued defiance of powerful beings and his evolution as a hero.

In summary, Ares's role is multifaceted. His actions and interactions with Percy Jackson highlight the ever-present threat of conflict and the strength required to overcome it. Ares embodies war's chaotic and violent aspects, serving as a constant adversary to Percy and a reminder of the complexities of the divine world.



Ares

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4.2.7 The Primordial Deities

Primordial deities play a crucial role in the overarching narrative. These ancient beings represent the fundamental elements and forces of the universe, predating the Olympian gods. The primordial deities encountered by Percy Jackson and his friends include Gaia, the Earth Mother and primary antagonist in *The Heroes of Olympus*; Tartarus, the deity of the deep abyss; Nyx, the goddess of the night; and Akhlys, the personification of misery and poison. Their interactions with these deities highlight the primordial entities' immense power and ancient

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wisdom, presenting significant challenges and enriching the mythological depth of the series. As Gaia is the primary antagonist of the entire series, she influences or encounters all the heroes. However, the same cannot be said for Tartarus, Nyx, and Akhlys, as these equally important Primordials are encountered solely by Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase during their time in Tartarus.

4.2.7.1 Gaia

Gaia's actions are primarily motivated by her desire to overthrow the Olympian gods and establish a new world order ruled by her and her offspring, the giants. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, Gaia manipulates events from behind the scenes, gradually awakening from her slumber deep within the Earth. She orchestrates the rise of her giant children; each designed to counter and defeat a specific Olympian god. Her ultimate goal is to create a world of chaos and destruction, reclaiming the Earth from the gods who she believes have misused their power.

Gaia's influence is felt through the numerous trials and tribulations faced by the demigods. She manipulates dreams, sending terrifying visions to demigods like Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase, and others, undermining their confidence and sowing discord. Gaia also commands nature to work against the heroes, causing natural disasters and summoning monstrous creatures to impede their quests. Her most notable deed is her plan to sacrifice two demigods to fully awaken and regain her physical form, a plot that drives much of the action in *The Heroes of Olympus*.

Gaia's appearance is deeply connected to her identity as the Earth itself. When she manifests, she is often described as a giant, beautiful woman with features that reflect the natural world. Her skin appears as rich, fertile soil, and her hair is like flowing grass and leaves. Her eyes, often depicted as pools of molten lava or deep, endless abysses, convey her ancient and formidable nature. This imagery underscores her role as a primordial deity, embodying the very essence of the Earth.

Gaia's attire is typically described as being formed from natural elements. She wears robes made of woven plants, flowers, and vines, blending seamlessly with the landscape around her. This attire emphasizes her dominion over nature and her seamless integration with the Earth, making her both a part of and apart from the world she seeks to reclaim.

Gaia's demeanor is marked by a cold, calculating nature, driven by an implacable will to achieve her goals. She is patient, having waited millennia for the right moment to strike against

the Olympians. Gaia exhibits a sense of superiority and disdain towards both gods and mortals, viewing them as usurpers of her domain. Her approach is manipulative and ruthless, using psychological tactics to break the spirit of her enemies.

Gaia can also be persuasive and seductive despite her harsh demeanor, luring her followers with promises of power and a new world order. Her ability to instill fear and loyalty in her minions, such as the giants and other creatures of the Earth, highlights her charismatic and commanding presence.

Gaia's relationship with Percy Jackson and the other heroes is antagonistic and deeply adversarial. Throughout *The Heroes of Olympus*, she is the primary force behind the obstacles and dangers they face. Gaia's manipulation of dreams particularly affects Percy, who experiences haunting visions that challenge his resolve and determination.

The heroes' encounters with Gaia are often indirect, as she prefers to work through her minions and the natural world. However, her presence is always felt, a looming threat that drives much of the tension in the series. Gaia's influence over the giants and other earth-born monsters creates numerous battles and challenges for Percy and his friends. These encounters force the demigods to confront their deepest fears and push their limits.

In *The Blood of Olympus*, the final book of *The Heroes of Olympus*, Gaia finally rises in her full form, presenting a direct and existential threat to the world. The climax involves a desperate battle in which Percy, Annabeth, and their allies must use all their skills and strength to thwart her plans. Despite Gaia's immense power, the heroes' unity, bravery, and strategic thinking ultimately lead to her downfall.

4.2.7.2 Tartarus

Tartarus's deeds are intrinsically linked to his nature as the personification of the abyss and the prison for the most dangerous entities in Greek mythology. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, Tartarus becomes a more prominent figure as the heroes venture into the depths of his domain. His primary deed is creating and sustaining the prison for the Titans and other malevolent beings, ensuring that they remain imprisoned. However, as the series progresses, Tartarus himself becomes an active antagonist, directly opposing the demigods' efforts to thwart the rise of Gaia and the giants.

Tartarus's influence is felt most strongly in *The House of Hades* as Percy and Annabeth journey through his domain. He actively works to break their spirits and destroy them by unleashing various monsters and challenges designed to exploit their weaknesses and fears. His domain is a place of constant peril, filled with traps and horrors that test the demigods' resilience and courage.

Tartarus's appearance is difficult to define, as he is more of a primordial force than a physical being. When he does manifest, he is described as an enormous, shadowy figure with an almost tangible aura of malevolence and darkness. His form is vast and amorphous, symbolizing the boundless and chaotic nature of the abyss he represents. He is depicted as a monstrous entity, with swirling shadows and darkness comprising his essence, making him both awe-inspiring and terrifying. Tartarus' being transcends physical forms and material concerns. His "attire" can be considered the very essence of chaos and destruction that surrounds him, a living embodiment of the darkest aspects of the underworld.

Tartarus's demeanor is one of pure malevolence and hatred. As the embodiment of a prison for the most vile and dangerous creatures, he is inherently hostile and sadistic. Tartarus takes pleasure in the suffering and torment of those who enter his domain, viewing them as playthings for his amusement. His interactions are marked by an overwhelming sense of dread and an intent to break the spirits of his victims.

Tartarus is uniquely portrayed not only as a primordial deity but also as a living landscape, embodying the very essence of the underworld. His body constitutes the entire realm, with different parts manifesting as various biomes that present distinct challenges and horrors. This conceptualization adds a surreal and nightmarish quality to Percy and Annabeth's journey. For instance, the River Phlegethon, a river of fire, represents Tartarus's bloodstream, providing both a source of peril and the healing properties of the fiery water that keeps them alive. Other regions, such as the blistering plains of volcanic rock and the suffocating darkness of the shadowy valleys, reflect the harsh and diverse environments that make up Tartarus's physical form. Each biome within Tartarus's body is designed to test different aspects of the demigods' abilities and resilience, creating a constantly shifting landscape of danger and despair. This living, breathing world underscores Tartarus's malevolent nature and his intrinsic connection to the very fabric of the underworld, making the journey through his domain a uniquely terrifying and immersive experience.

Tartarus's relationship with Percy Jackson and other heroes is intensely antagonistic. In *The House of Hades*, Percy and Annabeth's journey through Tartarus's domain is a harrowing experience that tests their endurance and resolve. Tartarus takes a personal interest in their suffering, sending various monsters and utilizing the treacherous terrain of the underworld to impede their progress.

The most significant encounter occurs when Percy and Annabeth face Tartarus himself near the Doors of Death. This confrontation is a climactic moment in their journey, where they must summon all their strength and courage to survive. Tartarus's immense power and malevolence are almost overwhelming, but Percy and Annabeth's determination and teamwork along with the sacrifice of the giant Damasen and Titan Iapetus enable them to escape.

Tartarus's influence also extends to other demigods, affecting characters like Nico di Angelo, who has a deep connection to the underworld. The presence of Tartarus amplifies Nico's experiences and traumas, highlighting the pervasive and corrupting influence of the abyss.

Tartarus is a representation of the darkest and most terrifying aspects of the Greek mythological world. His deeds, centered around maintaining a prison for the most dangerous entities, place him in direct opposition to the heroes. Tartarus's appearance as a vast, shadowy entity and his malevolent demeanor underscore his role as a primordial force of evil and chaos.

4.2.7.3 Nyx

Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase's encounter with Nyx is a harrowing and crucial moment in their journey through Tartarus. As they traverse the bleak and dangerous landscape, they inadvertently stumble into Nyx's domain, a realm shrouded in perpetual darkness and filled with an eerie silence that amplifies their sense of foreboding. Nyx appears before them in her full, terrifying glory, her presence commanding and her gaze piercing. She initially seems amused by their audacity to venture into her realm, but her demeanor quickly shifts to one of cold disdain as she realizes they are demigods with the intent to escape Tartarus. Nyx, embodying the very essence of the night, conjures illusions and manipulates the shadows to disorient and frighten them, creating phantoms of their worst fears and memories.

During the encounter, Nyx's power is overwhelming, and she uses psychological manipulation to break their spirits. She mocks their bravery and questions their loyalty to each other, attempting to sow discord and doubt. However, Percy and Annabeth's bond proves unbreakable, even in the face of such overwhelming fear. They rely on their mutual trust and

unwavering determination to see through Nyx's deceptions. Percy, tapping into his inner strength and Annabeth's strategic mind, counters Nyx's illusions with their combined wit and courage. This confrontation is not just a physical battle but a mental and emotional one, testing their resolve and unity. Ultimately, their ability to stay focused on their love and commitment to each other enables them to resist Nyx's manipulations. They escape her domain, more determined than ever to complete their quest and emerge from Tartarus stronger and more united, having faced and overcome one of the primordial forces of fear and darkness.

Nyx's appearance is both beautiful and terrifying, embodying the essence of the night. She is depicted as a tall, imposing figure with flowing black hair that seems to merge with the shadows around her. Her skin is pale, almost luminescent, contrasting starkly with her dark surroundings. Nyx's eyes are described as deep and inscrutable pools of darkness, reflecting the night's mysteries. Nyx wears a gown made of shadows and starlight, which shimmers and shifts like the night sky. This gown, adorned with constellations and cosmic patterns, emphasizes her celestial nature and her dominion over the nocturnal realm. Her attire and appearance create an aura of elegance and menace, making her a captivating yet intimidating figure.

Nyx exudes a sense of quiet confidence, knowing that her dominion over the shadows and their terrors makes her a force to be reckoned with. Nyx is not prone to outbursts of rage or displays of brute strength; instead, she wields her power with subtlety and precision. Her interactions are often laced with an eerie calmness as if she is always in control of the situation.

Despite her calm exterior, Nyx is deeply protective of her domain and her children. She reacts strongly to any threats against them, displaying a fierce maternal instinct. This protective nature adds a layer of complexity to her character, as it contrasts with her otherwise composed and detached disposition.



Nyx

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4.2.7.4 Akhlys

In a tough part of their journey through Tartarus, Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase encounter Akhlys, the goddess of misery and poison. Akhlys is described as an ancient and gaunt figure, emitting an aura of suffering and despair. Despite her frail appearance, she holds immense power over poison and agony.

The encounter takes place as Percy and Annabeth search for the Death Mist to protect themselves from the monsters of Tartarus. They find Akhlys surrounded by noxious fumes and lethal plants in her lair. Though initially appearing feeble, Akhlys soon reveals her malevolent intentions, delighting in their suffering by releasing a toxic mist that weakens them. This reflects her control over poison and the inherent danger of her abilities. As Percy and Annabeth struggle against the suffocating haze, Akhlys plans to use the Death Mist to ensure their misery and potential demise.

Desperate, Percy taps into a darker side of his powers, using his control over water to manipulate the toxic substances. This demonstrates his resourcefulness and the perilous extent of his abilities. Seeing the toll this takes on Percy, Annabeth strategically supports him, helping

²⁴⁷ ATHENA, Alilia. Nyx Greek Goddess. *Paleothea* [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

to focus his efforts and reminding him of their goal. Together, they manage to turn the poison against Akhlys, briefly driving her back and seizing the Death Mist.

The encounter with Akhlys has a lasting impact on both Percy and Annabeth, testing their physical and mental endurance and showcasing the depths of their resolve. Akhlys proves to be a formidable opponent as the goddess of misery, adding psychological terror to the ordeal. This encounter emphasizes the relentless challenges of Tartarus and the resilience needed to navigate such a treacherous path while also foreshadowing the escalating dangers awaiting them.



Akhlys, Protophenos of Misery and Poison

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²⁴⁸ Akhlys. *Riordan Wiki*. [online]. [cit. 2024-06-26].

5 Alighieri's and Riordan's Mythological Encounters: Comparison

5.1 Function of Mythology

The Divine Comedy, composed in the early 14th century, is a vast poem that explores the realms of the afterlife: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Heaven). The text functions as a spiritual and moral compass for its readers, employing metaphor and classical mythology to delve into Christian principles and the redemption of humanity. In contrast, the Percy Jackson series, targeted towards a younger demographic, updates Greek mythology to tackle current concerns such as personal identity, companionship, and the hero's quest. Riordan's work combines ancient tales with contemporary settings, rendering them easily comprehensible and sympathetic to youthful readers.

The narrative of *The Divine Comedy* incorporates mythology in a complex manner to represent several moral and philosophical ideas. Dante used mythical characters and narratives as symbolic representations of human vices and virtues, leading the main character (as well as readers) toward a comprehension of sin, repentance, and divine grace. In the *Inferno*, the Minotaur symbolizes intense animalistic anger, while Geryon personifies dishonesty and trickery, symbolizing the vices they were associated with in ancient mythology. These legendary motifs serve to depict the repercussions of ethical shortcomings and the journey toward atonement.

Mythology in the *Percy Jackson* series serves as a means for human development and contemporary social critique. The main character, Percy, becomes aware of his status as a demigod, namely the offspring of Poseidon, and sets forth on missions that mirror the stories of ancient Greek mythology. These tales function as metaphors for the obstacles encountered by contemporary teens. The mythological creatures and deities that Percy encounters represent internal and external conflicts, including feelings of uncertainty, the search for one's true self, and the battle against societal injustices. Riordan recontextualizes old tales by incorporating them into a modern environment, allowing him to explore themes such as loyalty, courage, and the significance of friendship.

Both works employ mythology to shape the character development of their heroes. Dante's interactions with mythological characters in *The Divine Comedy* symbolize his personal journey from a condition of sin to spiritual enlightenment. Virgil and Beatrice serve as allegorical

mentors, guiding Dante on a journey of introspection and ethical enlightenment. Virgil, serving as an emblem of human rationality, accompanies Dante on his journey through Hell and Purgatory, while Beatrice, embodying heavenly affection, guides him through Paradise. These mythological mentors assist Dante in navigating the spiritual road toward comprehension and salvation.

Similarly, throughout the Percy Jackson series, legendary characters fulfill the roles of mentors and foils, assisting in Percy's transformation from a bewildered adolescent to a self-assured hero. Characters like Chiron, the centaur who instructs heroes, and Annabeth, the daughter of Athena, represent intelligence and tactical reasoning, providing guidance to Percy in his adventures. These characters assist Percy in comprehending his abilities and limitations, thereby promoting his development and fortitude.

The Divine Comedy employs mythology to examine concepts of justice, redemption, and heavenly hierarchy. Dante's cosmology, consisting of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, is inhabited by legendary beings and characters and represents his belief in a universe regulated by divine justice. The *Inferno* methodically symbolizes each sin and its appropriate penalty using mythical references, highlighting the moral implications of one's conduct.

Conversely, the Percy Jackson series employs mythology to tackle present-day issues, including ecology, the significance of familial bonds, and the fight against oppressive rule. Percy frequently encounters deities and creatures who symbolize wider social concerns. For instance, the Titan Kronos represents the immense capacity for harm that comes with unrestrained authority, and Percy's confrontations with different creatures depict his struggle against individual and societal challenges. Riordan conveys lessons about endurance, the significance of diversity, and the necessity of opposing injustice through these legendary allegories.

Dante's incorporation of mythology in *The Divine Comedy* mirrors the cultural and intellectual atmosphere of the Middle Ages, extensively relying on classical literature and Christian theology to convey its ideas. The utilization of legendary figures in an allegorical manner facilitated the connection between the old pagan realm and medieval Christian ideology, so rendering intricate theological ideas more comprehensible to readers of that time.

Conversely, Riordan's integration of Greek mythology into a contemporary backdrop in *Percy Jackson* rejuvenates these age-old tales for a fresh cohort. Riordan's technique of situating mythological creatures in familiar settings, such as high schools and New York City, effectively

renders the tales accessible and captivating for young readers. This contemporary reimagining motivates readers to delve into ancient mythology and its significance in their personal lives.

The use of ADHD and dyslexia as attributes of demigods in the *Percy Jackson* series provides a symbolic and utilitarian function within the storyline. Riordan, who has a son with similar problems, reframes ADHD and dyslexia as not being limitations but rather as expressions of the demigods' enhanced sensory perception and distinctive lineage. ADHD manifests as an increased state of preparedness and heightened vigilance, qualities essential for survival and achievement in their fantasy realm. Dyslexia, however, is sometimes described as a result of their brains being naturally wired for Ancient Greek, the language associated with the gods, rather than modern English. This reinterpretation questions the traditional understanding of these circumstances, giving confidence to young readers who may identify with certain traits of the characters. Riordan's incorporation of these attributes not only normalizes and destigmatizes these disorders but also implies that what society perceives as limitations can, in fact, be distinctive strengths, particularly under certain circumstances.

Ultimately, both *The Divine Comedy* and the *Percy Jackson* series employ mythology to enhance their stories and communicate deep moral and philosophical ideas. Dante's literary masterpiece utilizes mythology to explore the intricacies of sin, salvation, and divine justice. In contrast, Riordan's series takes these ancient tales and reinterprets them to tackle contemporary problems and explore individual development. Both works utilize mythology to convey enduring insights into human nature, morality, and the process of self-exploration.

5.2 Selected Mythological Encounters

5.2.1 Charon

Charon, the ferryman of the dead, is a character featured in both Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series and Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. In each work, Charon plays distinct roles and displays different characteristics specifically tailored to the thematic and narrative requirements of the respective works.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Charon is depicted as a fearsome, elderly figure with a white beard and fiery eyes. He is responsible for ferrying souls across the River Acheron, which serves as the boundary of Hell, displaying a stern and merciless demeanor that instills fear and signifies the irrevocable journey into the infernal realms. His portrayal emphasizes his role as an unyielding enforcer of divine justice through the use of his oar to drive souls into his boat.

On the other hand, the portrayal of Charon in the *Percy Jackson* series is a modern reinterpretation. He is depicted as a well-dressed, impatient figure, often frustrated with the bureaucratic aspects of his job. Charon is concerned with his monetary compensation and demands a raise. His stylish attire and contemporary irritability add a layer of humor and relatability, making the underworld more accessible and less terrifying for young readers.

In Dante's work, Charon serves a multifaceted symbolic function. He represents the inevitability of death and the stern passage to the afterlife, guarding against unworthy souls escaping their fate and reinforcing the themes of justice and order within Dante's cosmology.

In Riordan's series, Charon symbolizes the intersection of ancient myth and modern life. His impatience and concern with mundane details highlight the absurdities and challenges of adapting ancient duties to the modern world, underlining the series' emphasis on the coexistence of the mythological and the mundane, showing that even ancient figures have adapted to the changing times.

In both works, Charon symbolizes the passage to the afterlife and the inevitability of death, although the contexts and tones differ significantly. In *The Divine Comedy*, Charon's role is deeply serious and rooted in the themes of divine justice and retribution, serving as a reminder of the moral consequences of one's actions. In contrast, in the *Percy Jackson* series, Charon's symbolic function is more light-hearted and adapted to modern sensibilities, blending humor with the underlying acknowledgment of ancient duties.

This difference in portrayal highlights the distinct narrative approaches: Dante's epic seeks to impart profound moral and spiritual lessons, while Riordan's series aims to entertain and educate about mythology in a way that is engaging and accessible to modern readers.

5.2.2 Cerberus

In Dante's work, Cerberus symbolizes the sin of gluttony and the corresponding eternal punishment. His fierce, uncontrollable hunger reflects the voracious appetites of the gluttonous souls he torments. As a guardian of this particular circle of Hell, Cerberus enforces divine justice, his presence a perpetual reminder of the consequences of overindulgence. His monstrous appearance and actions reinforce the grotesque nature of the sins committed by those he guards, illustrating the theme of retributive justice central to Dante's vision of the afterlife.

It's intriguing to note that in Dante's work, Cerberus departs from his traditional role as the guardian of the Underworld and the discerner of the living, assuming a tormenter's role instead. However, like in other encounters with Cerberus, the heroes must confront him to progress. In *Inferno*, Virgil distracts Cerberus by throwing a part of the gluttonous sludge into each of his mouths, allowing him and Dante to slip past.

In the *Percy Jackson* series, Cerberus retains his traditional image as a massive, three-headed dog that guards the gates to the Underworld. However, Riordan's depiction introduces a more nuanced and sympathetic portrayal. In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy and his friends encounter Cerberus as they try to enter the Underworld. Despite his fearsome appearance, they discover that Cerberus has a playful side and enjoys playing with a red rubber ball. This interaction highlights his dual nature: both a fearsome guardian and a creature with simple, dog-like desires.

In Riordan's series, Cerberus symbolizes the blending of fearsome mythological creatures with relatable, even endearing traits, making ancient myths accessible and engaging for young readers. This portrayal underscores the theme of looking beyond appearances and finding common ground, even with seemingly terrifying beings. Cerberus's love for play humanizes him, offering a more compassionate perspective on mythical monsters. This approach aligns with the series' broader themes of understanding and empathy, encouraging readers to see the humanity in all creatures.

In both works, Cerberus serves as a guardian of the Underworld, but the symbolism diverges significantly. In *The Divine Comedy*, Cerberus embodies the punitive aspect of gluttony, reinforcing the moral and ethical lessons about the consequences of sin. In the *Percy Jackson* series, Cerberus's symbolic function is more complex, combining his role as a guardian with attributes that evoke empathy and understanding. This duality reflects the series' aim to make mythology relatable and to highlight themes of compassion and the importance of looking beyond surface appearances.

It's interesting to note that portraying Cerberus with a gentle aspect isn't unique to Percy Jackson. In Evslin's work, Cerberus is depicted as the loyal companion of a mortal girl named Delia. Cerberus adored Delia and cherished spending time in her company. However, one fateful day, Delia was killed by Argus. After Cerberus avenged her death, he was confronted by Hades, who promised to revive Delia if Cerberus agreed to guard the underworld for a thousand years, denying entry to any living soul. This tale not only explains how Cerberus

assumed his role as the guardian of the Underworld but also presents a more tender and caring side to Cerberus, likening him to a regular dog, much like his portrayal in Percy Jackson.²⁴⁹

5.2.3 Geryon

In *The Divine Comedy*, Geryon is depicted as a monstrous creature with an honest human face, the body of a serpent, and a scorpion's tail. Dante encounters Geryon in the seventh circle of Hell, where he serves as the guardian and transporter across the abyss to the eighth circle, which punishes fraudulent souls. His outwardly benign face contrasts starkly with his serpentine body and deadly tail, embodying deceit and treachery. Geryon's primary function is to safely carry Dante and Virgil from the seventh to the eighth circle, serving as a facilitator of their journey through the underworld.

Dante's portrayal of Geryon symbolizes fraud, embodying the duality of appearance and reality. His human face suggests trustworthiness, while his serpentine body and venomous tail reveal his true nature of deception. This representation reinforces the theme of fraud's insidious nature, where outward appearances can be misleading. Geryon's role as a transporter across the abyss also symbolizes the transition from violence to fraud, two major categories of sin in Dante's moral framework. Thus, Geryon becomes a vivid representation of the complexities and dangers of deceit.

In the *Percy Jackson* series, particularly in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Geryon is portrayed as a ranch owner with three torsos, each capable of independent movement, presenting an imposing and grotesque figure. He oversees a ranch where he keeps dangerous mythical creatures and becomes an antagonist whom Percy must confront. Geryon's actions include attempting to deceive and exploit Percy and his friends, using his multiple bodies to gain the upper hand in combat.

In Riordan's series, Geryon symbolizes greed and exploitation. His ownership of the ranch and his treatment of creatures and demigods reflect themes of corruption and abuse of power. By placing Geryon in a modern, albeit mythical, setting, Riordan connects ancient mythological themes to contemporary issues such as unethical practices and the exploitation of others for personal gain. Geryon's multiple torsos and deceptive nature also highlight the challenges Percy

²⁴⁹ EVSLIN, Bernard. *Cerberus*. 1987. p. 15- 87.

faces in discerning and combating deceit and corruption, aligning with the series' emphasis on the hero's journey and moral growth.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Geryon's symbolic function is intricately tied to the theme of fraud. His deceptive appearance encapsulates the essence of deceit, making him a fitting guardian for the fraudulent. In contrast, in the *Percy Jackson* series, Geryon's symbolism extends to broader themes of exploitation and greed, reflecting contemporary moral concerns. While both portrayals emphasize deceit, Dante's Geryon is more focused on the abstract concept of fraud, whereas Riordan's Geryon embodies practical, modern-day manifestations of corruption and unethical behavior.

Geryon, in Dante's work, is a solemn and terrifying figure, reinforcing the grave and moralistic tone of *The Divine Comedy*. His presence serves as a dire warning about the nature of deceit and the severe consequences it brings. In Riordan's series, while still menacing, Geryon is presented with a tone that blends seriousness with the adventurous spirit of the narrative. This portrayal fits the engaging and didactic approach of the *Percy Jackson* series, aiming to teach lessons through action-packed encounters and relatable moral dilemmas.

The depiction of Geryon in *The Divine Comedy* and the *Percy Jackson* series showcases the flexibility of mythological figures to serve various narrative and symbolic purposes. Dante's Geryon, embodying the deceit of fraud, seamlessly integrates into the poem's exploration of sin and retribution. Riordan's Geryon, representing greed and exploitation, addresses more modern ethical issues within a hero's journey framework. Both portrayals utilize Geryon to enhance their respective stories' thematic depth, demonstrating the mythological symbols' enduring relevance and adaptability.

5.2.4 Chiron

Chiron, the leader of the centaurs, is portrayed as the guardian of the violent souls in the seventh circle of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*. Characterized by his composed disposition and commanding aura in the company of other centaurs, he partakes in a concise conversation with Virgil and Dante, directing Nessus to escort them across the scalding river of blood that serves as punishment for those who commit acts of violence against others.

The representation of Chiron by Dante signifies the application of reason and the prudent utilization of power. The individual's composed demeanor stands in stark contrast to the disorder and aggression exhibited by the others under his protection, thereby emphasizing the

notion that violence ought to be regulated and guided by rationality. Chiron protects the violent, ensuring that divine justice is upheld by ensuring that the penalty is commensurate with the crime. His contact with Virgil and Dante highlights the crucial role of guidance and protection during their voyage, symbolizing the necessity of intelligence and rationality in navigating the perils of the infernal realms.

In the *Percy Jackson* series, Chiron fulfills the role of a kind and wise mentor to the demigod heroes at Camp Half-Blood. He disguises his true nature as a centaur by appearing as a middle-aged man confined to a wheelchair. He trains Percy and his friends, offers knowledge and counsel, and plays a vital part in preparing them for their missions.

Chiron in Riordan's series represents the concepts of education, mentorship, and the cultivation of potential. As the activities director of Camp Half-Blood, he exemplifies the principles of personal development, education, and ethical advancement. The teacher's position as an instructor and mentor emphasizes the significance of acquiring knowledge and being prepared to confront difficulties, promoting young heroes' growth into competent and self-assured individuals. Additionally, his character exemplifies the principles of allegiance, integrity, and the passing down of age-old knowledge to a younger cohort.

The metaphorical role of Chiron in *The Divine Comedy* is centered around the deliberate utilization of power and the logical implementation of justice. Conversely, in the *Percy Jackson* series, the protagonist's symbolism encompasses education, mentorship, and the fostering of young heroes. This underscores the importance of guidance, knowledge acquisition, and moral encouragement in one's personal development and heroic quest.

Chiron symbolizes a person in a position of power and influence in Dante's writing. He embodies *The Divine Comedy's* grave and moralistic atmosphere, strengthening the ideas of fairness and the logical handling of aggression. Chiron, as portrayed in Riordan's novel, embodies the mentor archetype and offers stability and encouragement to the young heroes as they face their problems. His warmth and knowledge connect with the engaging and supportive tone of the *Percy Jackson* series.

The depictions of Chiron in *The Divine Comedy* and the *Percy Jackson* series highlight how mythical characters may be used in many ways to convey diverse narratives and symbolic meanings. Both works employ the character of Chiron to enhance their stories and communicate

deeper philosophical and moral teachings, showcasing how mythical symbols remain meaningful and adaptable for readers today.

5.2.5 Achilles

Achilles is depicted in the second circle of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*, which serves as a punishment for the sin of lust. In Dante's portrayal, Achilles is seen as one of the numerous souls suffering in a turbulent storm, symbolizing their unrestrained emotions. While Dante does not offer a comprehensive bodily portrayal, Achilles is identifiable by his notoriety as a formidable warrior whose tragic fault was an unquenchable craving for love and glory.

In Dante's narrative, Achilles represents the catastrophic consequences of untamed love. The fact that he is present in the circle of lust highlights the concept of how even the most powerful heroes are susceptible to the same vulnerabilities as regular people. Achilles' position in Hell serves as a moral example warning against the dangers of valuing strong emotions over rationality and responsibility. The protagonist's persona epitomizes the traditional archetype of the tragic hero, whose collapse is triggered by a fatal fault, in accordance with Dante's comprehensive examination of sin and its repercussions.

Achilles manifests as a specter in *The Last Olympian* within the *Percy Jackson* series. While Percy is accessing the River Styx to acquire invulnerability, he encounters the spirit of Achilles, who warns him of the ritual's risk of magnifying one's fatal flaw. Although Achilles tries to convince Percy otherwise, their meeting becomes a crucial turning point. Percy decides to imitate Achilles by submerging himself in the river to get almost complete invulnerability, albeit he bears the danger of having a vulnerable spot like Achilles' heel.

In Riordan's work, Achilles symbolizes both the relentless pursuit of excellence and the inherent susceptibilities that come with it. The spectral warning to Percy emphasizes the inherent perils and sacrifices involved in pursuing invulnerability, highlighting the themes of bravery and recognition of one's weaknesses. By comparing Percy to Achilles, Riordan underscores the importance of understanding and accepting one's limitations while pursuing greatness. This aligns with the book's broader themes of personal development and heroism.

The representation of Achilles in *The Divine Comedy* symbolizes the harmful capacity of uncontrolled desire, aligning with the moral structure of the poem that revolves around sin and punishment. His narrative serves as a warning on the perils of yielding to cravings that might result in one's ruin. In contrast, in the *Percy Jackson* series, Achilles personifies the duality of

heroism, encompassing the quest for exceptional might and recognizing human weaknesses. The spectral manifestation serves as a cautionary reminder to Percy about the potential outcomes of his decisions, strengthening the underlying themes of wisdom and attentiveness in the protagonist's quest.

As shown in Dante's work, Achilles serves as a tragic character whose exceptional qualities are overshadowed by his imperfections, enhancing the somber and moralistic atmosphere of *The Divine Comedy*. The actor's performance serves as a powerful reminder of the dangers that come with letting strong emotions guide one's behavior, which resonates with the poem's central ideas of fairness and ethical principles. In Riordan's work, Achilles takes on the role of a spectral guide, providing forewarnings that teach and caution the protagonist. This depiction corresponds to the captivating and encouraging style of the *Percy Jackson* series, employing mythology to convey teachings about bravery and self-improvement in an easily understandable way for young readers.

The portrayal of Achilles in *The Divine Comedy* and the *Percy Jackson* series highlights the versatility of mythical characters in fulfilling diverse narrative and symbolic functions. Achilles in Dante's epic serves as a symbol for the terrible outcomes that result from intense emotions, which complements the poem's examination of sin and morality. Achilles' ghost in Riordan's series functions as a didactic element, emphasizing the themes of heroism, vulnerability, and human development. Both works utilize the story of Achilles to strengthen their storylines and express greater philosophical and moral ideas. This demonstrates the lasting significance and versatility of mythical characters.

5.2.6 Jason

Jason is located in the eighth circle of Hell, known as the Malebolge, precisely in the first bolgia reserved for deceivers and seducers in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. In Dante's portrayal, Jason is seen as a charismatic and deceitful character who suffers penance for seducing and then abandoning Hypsipyle and Medea. He deceived both of them to further his own personal gain and ambition.

Within Dante's narrative, Jason serves as a figure for the repercussions of deception and the ethical shortcomings linked to the pursuit of personal ambition at the cost of others. The presence of the individual in the realm of Hell serves to emphasize the recurring themes of betrayal and the deliberate exploitation of trust. Jason's punishment exemplifies the concept of

divine retribution, in which individuals are held responsible for their actions, specifically those that entail betrayal and exploitation of others for self-centered reasons. The protagonist's personality is a warning illustration of the dangers associated with employing charisma and manipulation to accomplish one's objectives.

Jason Grace is first introduced in the *Percy Jackson* series, specifically in *The Heroes of Olympus*, as a contemporary demigod who is the son of Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus. Jason Grace is depicted as a valiant and honorable commander, displaying attributes of bravery, faithfulness, and integrity. He engages in activities such as leading expeditions, forging partnerships, and attempting to unite the Greek and Roman demigods in the face of shared dangers. Moreover, Jason's character development is significantly influenced by his relationship with Piper McLean, a demigod and offspring of Aphrodite. Their partnership underscores the concepts of love, trust, and mutual support while emphasizing Jason's strengths.

In Riordan's series, Jason embodies the principles of leadership, courage, and the reconciliation of fragmented groups. In contrast to Jason's deceitful character in *The Divine Comedy*, Jason Grace is portrayed as an exemplary embodiment of moral excellence and accountability. The character exemplifies concepts of identification, collaboration, and the amalgamation of diverse cultures and traditions for a more significant benefit. Riordan underscores the significance of honor, integrity, and the ability of demigods to overcome their inherent problems and conflicts by depicting Jason as a noble hero.

Jason personifies the adverse repercussions of dishonesty and treachery in *The Divine Comedy*. The character's function in the poem strengthens the motifs of wrongdoing, punishment, and the ethical intricacies of human behavior. In Dante's work, the character of Jason serves as a cautionary example, demonstrating the harsh consequences that arise from employing deception for one's own benefit.

Conversely, in the *Percy Jackson* series, Jason embodies the qualities of heroism and leadership. His character exemplifies the ideals of bravery, collaboration, and honesty, serving as a role model for the younger demigods. Jason Grace's path is characterized by his triumph over individual and shared obstacles, emphasizing the capacity for personal development and solidarity. The inclusion of Piper McLean in his life enhances the complexity of his character, highlighting the significance of emotional connections and mutual support in the protagonist's quest.

5.2.7 Minos

Minos, portrayed as a formidable judge of the damned, appears in the second circle of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*. This circle serves as a punishment for those who have succumbed to lust. Dante portrays Minos as possessing a repulsive and horrifying appearance, characterized by a tail that wraps around his physique. The main purpose of his role is to assess the souls who come before him, coiling his tail a specific number of times to signify the particular circle of Hell the soul is bound for. This technique of assessment exemplifies his position as the arbitrator of celestial justice.

Within Dante's narrative, Minos serves as a representation of the unbiased and inevitable quality of divine justice. The repulsive aspect of his looks and the mechanized approach to his judgments emphasize Hell's retributions' methodical and infallible character. The function of Minos as the arbiter of the damned emphasizes the themes of guilt, vengeance, and the moral framework that controls the afterlife. The individual's existence strengthens the notion that every deed carries repercussions, which are dispensed with unyielding impartiality in accordance with celestial legislation.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, a book in the *Percy Jackson* series, Minos is predominantly depicted as a spectral being rather than a conventional judge. He is portrayed as a shrewd and deceptive being who strives to restore his authority and sway in the contemporary world. Minos engages in providing counsel and deceiving demigods, like Nico di Angelo, while pretending to offer assistance. This depiction of Minos emphasizes his cunning and ambition, which drastically contrasts with his representation in Dante's writings.

Minos in Riordan's work represents the perils of uncontrolled ambition and the corrupting impact of authority. The ghostly manifestation and cunning maneuvers of the individual in question effectively exemplify the concept of deceit and the dangers associated with the relentless pursuit of authority, regardless of the consequences. Riordan emphasizes the significance of integrity and the dangers of succumbing to the allure of power and revenge by depicting Minos as a character who manipulates people for his own benefit. This depiction is consistent with the series' overarching themes of heroism, morality, and the fight against corruption.

Minos in *The Divine Comedy* symbolizes the fair implementation of divine justice, strengthening the poem's ideas on moral structure and punishment. He serves as an unwavering

arbiter who guarantees that every soul is given its rightful punishment. Conversely, within the *Percy Jackson* series, Minos symbolizes ambition and dishonesty, serving as a warning figure that epitomizes the corruptive influence of authority. The activities he takes while pretending to guide others highlight the significance of being able to judge and make good decisions, as well as the ethical difficulties the heroes face.

6 Conclusion

With special regard for the mythological legacy of Greek religion, this thesis set out to investigate the mythological interactions in the writings of Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri. Through thorough investigation and comparison, the study has revealed how each author individually interacts with and alters old myths, entwining them into their narratives to fulfill diverse cultural, educational, and philosophical objectives.

The theoretical part provided a broad summary of a few chosen gods, monsters, and heroes as portrayed in classical mythology. This base is crucial for understanding the mythical references and adaptations found in Riordan's and Alighieri's writings. The thorough presentation underlined the richness and complexity of Greek mythology, which still inspires and shapes modern literature and ideas.

Valuable background came from the chapter devoted to the life and works of Rick Riordan and Dante Alighieri. Examining their histories, motivations, and literary works helps us to understand better why and how these writers chose to include mythical components in their works. While Dante's Renaissance epic employs mythology to probe great theological and moral concerns, Riordan's modern approach introduces ancient tales to a contemporary audience by stressing relatability and educational value.

The practical part looked closely at particular mythical encounters seen in the works of both writers. Particularly in the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series, Riordan's works clearly modernize mythological figures and ideas, therefore making them appealing and interesting for readers today. Conversely, Dante's *The Divine Comedy* incorporates mythological characters into a sophisticated allegorical framework to explore difficult philosophical and spiritual ideas.

The last comparative study revealed similarities and differences in how Alighieri and Riordan approach mythological encounters. Although both writers build on the rich tapestry of Greek mythology, their approaches and goals are very different. While Dante's work greatly examines human nature and the divine, Riordan's stories are marked by their educational goals and young appeal.

Finally, this thesis has shown how insightfully mythical interactions in Rick Riordan's and Dante Alighieri's works reveal classical myths' continuing force and adaptability. Both writers add to the continuous dialog between the past and the present by reimagining these old tales, demonstrating how mythology may change to reflect modern values, questions, and goals. This

comparative analysis clarifies the literary successes of Riordan and Alighieri and emphasizes the ageless importance of legendary stories for human civilization.

The development of this thesis comprised several painstaking stages, starting with a thorough analysis of classical mythology and its portrayal in modern and medieval literature. The first research concentrated on building a thorough knowledge of Greek mythology, which guided the analysis of Alighieri and Riordan's writings.

Later phases involved closely reading both authors' lives and literary careers. This biographical research helped to clarify their intentions and the settings in which they produced their works, therefore guiding the study of their mythological adaptations.

Finding relevant and complementary materials during the theoretical section of this essay proved to be challenging. Establishing a strong basis in classical mythology needed not only locating texts that offered thorough summaries of many gods, monsters, and heroes but also those that examined the subtleties and complexity of these mythological characters. Finding materials that combined thorough scholarly research with accessibility and relevance for the goals of the article was difficult. Moreover, thorough review and cross-referencing—time-consuming but necessary for a strong theoretical framework—ensuring that the chosen sources complimented one another gave a well-rounded knowledge of the mythology concerned. The practical study needed a close reading of a few chosen works by both writers, spotting and deciphering particular mythological references and their narrative purposes. The different and common strategies of Riordan and Alighieri in their interaction with mythology were then clarified by comparative study.

Throughout the thesis development, much attention was paid to a balanced and comprehensive comparison supported by relevant theoretical frameworks and literary criticism. The last writing phase combined these discoveries into a coherent analysis that stressed the ongoing importance of mythology in literature.

7 Resumé

Se zvláštním ohledem na mytologický odkaz řeckého náboženství si tato práce klade za cíl prozkoumat mytologické interakce v dílech Ricka Riordana a Danta Alighieriho. Prostřednictvím důkladného zkoumání a srovnávání práce odhalila, jak každý z autorů individuálně zachází se starými mýty a pozměňuje je, vplétá je do svých vyprávění, aby naplnil různé kulturní, vzdělávací a filozofické cíle.

Teoretická část poskytla široký přehled několika vybraných bohů, nestvůr a hrdinů, jak jsou zobrazeni v klasické mytologii. Tento základ je klíčový pro pochopení mýtických odkazů a adaptací, které lze nalézt v Riordanových a Alighieriho dílech. Důkladná prezentace zdůraznila bohatost a složitost řecké mytologie, která dodnes inspiruje a formuje moderní literaturu a myšlenky.

Cenné podklady přinesla kapitola věnovaná životu a dílu Ricka Riordana a Danta Alighieriho. Zkoumání jejich historie, motivací a literárních děl nám pomáhá lépe pochopit, proč a jak se tyto spisovatelé rozhodli zahrnout do svých děl mýtické prvky. Zatímco renesanční epos využívá mytologii k prozkoumání velkých teologických a morálních problémů, Riordanův moderní přístup představuje starověké příběhy současnému publiku tím, že klade důraz na vztahovost a výchovnou hodnotu.

Praktická část se blíže zabývala konkrétními mýtickými setkáními, která se objevují v dílech obou spisovatelů. Zejména Riordan v sérii *Percy Jackson a Olympané* zřetelně modernizuje mytologické postavy a myšlenky, které jsou proto pro dnešní čtenáře přitažlivé a zajímavé. *Božská komedie* naopak začleňuje mytologické postavy do propracovaného alegorického rámce, aby prozkoumala obtížné filozofické a duchovní myšlenky.

Poslední část práce odhalila podobnosti a rozdíly v tom, jak Alighieri a Riordan přistupují k mytologickým setkáním. Ačkoli oba spisovatelé vycházejí z bohaté tapiserie řecké mytologie, jejich přístupy a cíle jsou velmi odlišné. Zatímco Dantovo dílo výrazně zkoumá lidskou přirozenost a božství, Riordanovy příběhy se vyznačují promyšlenými výchovnými cíli a přitažlivostí pro mládež.

Závěrem tato práce ukázala, jak pronikavě mýtické interakce v dílech Ricka Riordana a Danta Alighieriho odhalují trvalou sílu a přizpůsobivost klasických mýtů. Oba spisovatelé přispívají k nepřetržitému dialogu mezi minulostí a současností tím, že se vracejí ke starým příběhům a ukazují, jak mytologie může odrážet moderní hodnoty, otázky a cíle. Tato srovnávací analýza

objasňuje literární úspěchy Riordana a Alighieriho a zdůrazňuje nestárnoucí význam legendárních příběhů pro lidskou civilizaci.

Vypracování této práce se skládalo z několika pečlivých etap, počínaje důkladnou analýzou klasické mytologie a jejího ztvárnění v moderní a středověké literatuře. Počáteční výzkum vycházel z podrobného studia řecké mytologie, která byla vodítkem pro analýzu Alighieriho a Riordanových děl.

Pozdější fáze zahrnovala podrobnější seznámení se životem a literární kariérou obou autorů. Tento biografický výzkum pomohl objasnit jejich záměry a prostředí, v němž svá díla tvořili, a byl tedy vodítkem pro studium jejich mytologických adaptací.

Hledání relevantních a komplementárních materiálů se během teoretické části ukázalo jako velmi náročné. Vytvoření pevného základu v přiblížení klasické mytologie vyžadovalo nejen vyhledání textů, které nabízely důkladné shrnutí mnoha bohů, nestvůr a hrdinů, ale také těch, které zkoumaly složitost těchto mytologických postav. Nalezení materiálů, které by kombinovaly důkladný vědecký výzkum s přístupností a relevancí pro cíle článku, bylo obtížné. Navíc důkladné procházení a vzájemné odkazování, které bylo časově náročné, ale nezbytné pro silný teoretický rámec – zajištění toho, aby se vybrané prameny vzájemně doplňovaly, poskytlo ucelené znalosti o dané mytologii.

Praktické studium vyžadovalo pečlivou četbu několika vybraných děl obou spisovatelů, vypořádání a dešifrování konkrétních mytologických odkazů a jejich vyprávěcích účelů. Rozdílné a společné strategie Riordana a Alighieriho v jejich využití mytologie pak byly objasněny srovnávací studií.

Velká pozornost byla v průběhu zpracování práce věnována vyváženému a komplexnímu srovnání, podpořenému relevantními teoretickými rámci a literární kritikou. Poslední fáze výzkumu spojila tato zjištění do ucelené analýzy, která objasnila dynamickou interakci mezi starými mýty a moderními příběhy a zdůraznila trvalý význam mytologie ve světové literatuře.

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