CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN ANCIENT AND MODERN MYTHS: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

By
REBECCA JAEGER
Advisor
THERESA ANTES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN LINGUISTICS WITH HONORS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

April 2021
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SEMIOTIC THEORY</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Metaphor</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientational Metaphors</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological Metaphors</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification Metaphors</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Myth</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor and Myth</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRIMARY SOURCES AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percy Jackson</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gods of Percy Jackson</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heroes of Percy Jackson</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Civilization</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Themes and Myths of the Series</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodologies for Examining the Myths and Metaphors of Percy Jackson</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological Metaphors in Percy Jackson</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Metaphor of Mist</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Metaphor</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor for the Underworld</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientational Metaphors in Percy Jackson</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor for the World</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labyrinth Metaphor</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope as a Metaphor</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification metaphors in Percy Jackson</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeus and Poseidon</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollo</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Mist is a veil metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>Music is a weapon metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Music is medicine metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>The Underworld is a highway / airport metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Good is up and bad is down metaphors in Percy Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>The world is a house with orientational metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>Labyrinth leads to the center metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>The sea and the sky are people metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>The sea is a person metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>The sea is genetic metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-11</td>
<td>The sun is a person metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12</td>
<td>The wild is / belongs to a person metaphor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Hector is saved by Apollo</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>A “prayer” labyrinth in a church</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN ANCIENT AND MODERN MYTHS: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

By

Rebecca Jaeger

April 2021

Advisor: Theresa Antes
Major: Linguistics

The linguistic idea of metaphor has gained increasing attention as it applies to other fields of study. This paper will bring metaphor into conversation with myths, specifically the Greek myths, both ancient and modern. While there is a wealth of Greek myths as they appear in contemporary fiction, I intend to focus on the modern renditions of these ancient myths from Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson Series. The metaphors found in Riordan’s modernized myths will be sorted into categories of ontological, orientational, and personification metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson’s definition of conceptual metaphors. From these categorizations, I will explore whether Riordan’s metaphors can be found in the ancient myths or if they result from modern conceptualizations. It will become evident that the way humans experience the world structures the subsequent views humans have of the same world, both metaphorically and mythologically.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, metaphor has gained an increased focus in the field of linguistics. The publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s preliminary book, *Metaphors We Live By*, initiated the popularity of a linguistic analysis of metaphor as extending beyond purely rhetorical terms. Lakoff and Johnson’s discussion of metaphor provides clear evidence as to how everyday linguistic metaphors surrounding such abstract concepts as love and time influence not only the way people think about love and time, but also the way people behave as they think about love and time (1980). Their definition of metaphor calls for a structuring of a conceptual system within the mind that builds up abstract concepts as entire systems of metaphors, revealing that everyday metaphorical expressions may be a way to examine how humans view the world around them (1980). Subsequent researchers have indeed expanded upon Lakoff and Johnson’s discussion of metaphor in order to conduct their own analyses of how metaphors shape the way humans interact with the world, especially in consideration of other fields within and around linguistics. One such researcher, Marcel Danesi, discusses Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor as a linguistic sign within the field of semiotics (1980). Semiotics is the study of signs as vehicles of meaning, and such signs may be physical, visual, linguistic, etc. (1980). Danesi not only discusses metaphor as a linguistic sign but also myth as a cultural sign, demonstrating how myths can similarly shape the conceptual systems of human thought that influence the way people interact with the world (1980). This point would provide ample grounding for a connection to be drawn between metaphor and myth, but the research that has been done thus far has left this connection largely unexplored.

It has been well established that modern metaphors and symbolism are deeply intertwined within the histories of ancient cultures and their myths or religions. For example, several
researchers have been quick to point out the symbolism of the Apple Computer Company’s logo, as tied to the Christian story of Adam and Eve (Danesi 2004, p. 264). Metaphors have certainly been examined within the context of ancient myths, but the research that has been done has focused only on the way that ancient cultures have influenced modern metaphors, not on how they have systematically structured those metaphors based upon the human conceptual systems of thought that Lakoff and Johnson describe. Eve Sweetser has paved the way in initial exploration of this connection, extending Lakoff and Johnson’s definition of metaphor to show how ancient Greek myths have indeed shaped the conceptual systems to result in some of the metaphors that have been used throughout history (1995). For example, Sweetser points out a metaphorical conception surrounding the distinction of women as subordinate to men based upon the myth of the sun god and moon goddess, Apollo and Artemis, respectively, since humans viewed the moon as subordinate to the sun (1995, p. 589-590). Sweetser then uses these oppositions between men and women to show how metaphorical concepts can diminish through time, as do myths. The moon has almost no effectual importance for women in today’s culture as compared to its relation to women in the myths but there are still metaphorical concepts grounded in the human experience of the moon, such as describing people as “luminaries of a scholarly field” (Sweetser 1995, p. 589). Sweetser effectively demonstrates, then, how myths shape the conceptual systems that structure modern metaphors. Sweetser also explores other metaphors that do not result from but instead result in the myths, such as LIFE IS A DAY/LIFE IS A YEAR structuring the myth of Demeter and her daughter creating the seasons, which in turn influences how humans live in accordance with the changing seasons (1995, p. 587). However, while Sweetser examines the metaphorical structuring of myths in order to reflect on the origins of metaphors present today, she does not examine the possibility of how these current metaphors,
with traces of ancient myths, structure the mythologies of today. Sweetser herself acknowledges her research as part of the crucial beginnings of the study of the connections between metaphor and myth (1995, p. 592). This current paper, then, will seek to further the discussion between linguistic usages of metaphor as they appear in ancient and modern myths.

The mythical focus of this conversation will be on Greek myths, as the myths and epics of Greek gods and heroes have perhaps a larger influence on modern metaphors and contemporary literature than those of other ancient myths. In fact, in the early-2000s, novelist Rick Riordan published the Percy Jackson series, a series targeted towards middle school-aged students that places the gods of the Greek myths into the setting of the modern world, in present-day America. This series provides ample evidence for the application of metaphors that have been structured by the ancient myths but that also structure Riordan’s modifications of those myths in order to fit them into contemporary culture and best reflect the world in terms of modern concepts that young students would understand.

This thesis concentrates on the Greek myths as they appear in Riordan’s initial series and picks out the metaphorical strategies that Riordan uses to bring the elements of those ancient myths into the modern world. The subsequent analysis of Riordan’s chosen metaphors will then reveal whether they were present in the ancient myths or if they have emerged over time and will enable further discussion as to what these myths and metaphors reveal about humanity’s views of the world. Overall, the aim of this paper is to bring metaphor and myth into a conversation with one another, under a semiotic analysis that will solidify the idea that conceptual systems structure both linguistic and mythical signs in tandem.
CHAPTER 2
SEMIOTIC THEORY

The field of semiotics—from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning “sign”—functionally studies, as Marcel Danesi words it, the “science of the sign,” where the sign is anything that stands for something else, thereby attributing meaning to that “something else” (2004, p. 9). Therefore, semiotics studies signs in virtually every domain, from language to television to cuisine, examining every aspect of individual culture that has accrued meaning over time. Other fields of linguistics that study meaning in language include semantics and pragmatics, the former applying logic to study basic word meanings and the latter studying how words are used in ways that might alter their meaning beyond the established semantics. Danesi claims that these two fields of study are subdomains of semiotics (2004). What might be the benefit, then, in applying a broader view of semiotic theory to examine metaphors rather than applying semantics and/or pragmatics to obtain a narrower view of meaning? Metaphorical meaning may be arrived at through a pragmatic analysis, but more extensive and satisfactory research has been done under the title of semiotics. The idea of the semiotic metaphor has been one of the most widely studied signs, receiving prioritized attention in semiotic textbooks and scholarly journals. Danesi even attributes metaphor as a “semiotic strategy” to understand abstract concepts (2004, p. 115).

Similarly, since the purpose of the current research is to examine the use of metaphor in conjunction with myth, semantics and pragmatics do not justify any relation between these two sign systems. The language surrounding modern myths may be systematically picked apart and studied, but the myths themselves, and what they signify, are better examined under the lens of semiotics. Furthermore, since ancient myths originated as oral stories, there are no tangible data that may be analyzed using any system of semantic logic or pragmatic implicature. Semiotics best lends itself to offer comparative views between the signs of distinct cultures, within
language and outside of language, thereby offering a satisfactory mode for examining ancient
and modern myths alongside metaphors.

**Semiotic Metaphor**

While semioticians study signs in a myriad of domains, as stated above, metaphor has
been perhaps the most extensively studied sign. Metaphor, within the field of literature, is
defined as figurative language that compares two dissimilar things to one another. Danesi calls
for an expansion of this definition through his claim that metaphor “can no longer be viewed as a
purely rhetorical device” (2004, p. 115). Lakoff and Johnson effectively extend the idea of
metaphor into linguistics, stating that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and
experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980, p. 5). This definition of metaphor has
become the standard throughout the field of semiotics. It is important to note the word
*experiencing* in this given definition. Lakoff and Johnson assert that human conceptual systems
determine the realities in which people live, thereby determining how people think about, talk
about, and interact with those realities (1980). According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors
structure these conceptual systems of thought, thereby revealing that humans indeed “live by”
metaphors (1980).

In effect, the metaphors that are used to talk about certain concepts are “grounded” in
human experience, “[conceptualizing] the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical” (Lakoff and
Johnson 1980, p. 59). In order to conceptualize abstract ideas in terms of physical experiences,
the most important aspects of those experiences are picked out and applied to the abstract
concept. Consider the example Lakoff and Johnson use repeatedly to illustrate their claims
concerning metaphor: **ARGUMENT IS WAR** (1980, p. 4). In this metaphor, the abstract concept of
argument is grounded by the human physical experience of war. This metaphor would never be
explicitly stated in conversation but rather it is reflected in the expressions used in the context of arguments:

- Your claims are *indefensible*.
- He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
- His criticisms were *right on target*.
- I *demolished* his argument.
- I’ve never *won* an argument with him.
- You disagree? Okay, *shoot*!
- If you use that *strategy*, he’ll *wipe you out*.
- He *shot down* all of my arguments (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 4).

With each expression, a different aspect of war is highlighted and mapped onto the concept of argument. These expressions are so conventional in daily speech that native speakers would not easily recognize their metaphorical qualities. The sentence containing the word *won*, for example, would be taken quite literally by a native speaker and the metaphorical concept of war would be overlooked. However, Lakoff and Johnson use these conventional expressions to effectively illustrate how speakers comprehend entering an argument as engaging in a war, claiming “we talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things” (1980, p. 5). As a result, when one enters into an argument, she or he will undoubtedly perform their role in the conversation as a participant of war, without being aware that the mere action of aspiring to “win” the argument reflects the metaphorical concept of war. These same metaphorical concepts of structuring and grounding may be applied to every metaphor that semioticians have examined over the years; just as arguments may be thought of, talked about, and performed in terms of war, so might ideas be talked about in terms of fashion, people in terms of animals, love in terms of magic, and so on.

Following the metaphorical structuring of conceptual systems, Danesi exemplifies how one concept may be mapped onto another. Danesi describes this in terms of the “domains” of metaphor: the “target” domain is the concept that is being talked about, while the “source”
domain is the “source” of the metaphor, the concept that gives the target its metaphorical qualities (2004, p. 121). In the case of ARGUMENT IS WAR, “argument” is the target domain and “war” is the source domain or the physical experience that is applied to the target domain.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Danesi (2004) each argue that metaphors not only structure conceptual systems, but that metaphors themselves are systematic. For example, Lakoff and Johnson not only use the source domain of WAR to conceptualize ARGUMENT, but they also point out source domains of JOURNEY and CONTAINER (1980, pp. 90-94). Each of these metaphorical concepts highlights and focuses on various aspects of argument based upon the aspects of the distinct source domains. However, these metaphorical concepts are not fully independent. No single metaphor provides a satisfactory idea of the overall concept of ARGUMENT in the mind of an English speaker (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 95). These metaphorical concepts work together, in language, to shape the general concept understood to be ARGUMENT. The cooperation between metaphorical concepts is, in fact, the full realization of the systematicity of metaphor that Lakoff and Johnson describe.

This coherent system can reveal the values held by different cultures, as the metaphors that are commonly used by one group of people are not the same metaphors that are used across cultural domains. Each culture might ground their metaphors differently based on how that group of people experiences the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 146). Therefore, the metaphors used in various cultures differ based on the experiential aspects those cultures focus on. Lakoff and Johnson provide the basis for examining cultural values by demonstrating how the experiential aspects that a culture focuses on are directly correlated with the values prioritized by that particular culture (1980, p. 23). For example, Danesi discusses his findings that the Italian language contains more metaphorical concepts that may be used to describe love than the
English language (2004, p. 127). This could be expected because Italian is commonly spoken of as a “language of love,” to use a metaphor, suggesting that speakers of Italian prioritize the value of love more than speakers of English do. Lakoff and Johnson continue, suggesting that even within one culture, several different metaphors may be conceptualized by the same physical experience and these metaphors will receive different prioritizations in language based on the values that culture prioritizes (1980, p. 23). These values reinforce the idea of a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and are explored below in the examination of some metaphor types: orientational, ontological, and personification metaphors, as defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). These metaphors not only exemplify how values are prioritized through metaphor but also are perhaps the best examples to illustrate how metaphors are grounded in physical experiences.

**Oriental Metaphors**

Oriental metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson, “give a concept a spatial orientation” (1980, p. 14). In other words, orientational metaphors are grounded by the physical experiences concerning space in the environment in which humans live. Lakoff and Johnson name some of these universal spatial orientations: “up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral [and future-past]” (1980, p. 14). Focusing on this up-down orientation, Lakoff and Johnson describe several different concepts pertaining to this metaphorical structuring in the English language, revealing how people generally think of GOOD as being UP and BAD as being DOWN; this is reflected through numerous orientational metaphors such as HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN, HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP/SICKNESS AND DEATH ARE DOWN, and HIGH STATUS IS UP/LOW STATUS IS DOWN (1980, pp. 15-17). These spatial orientations are not only seen in the language people use, but also in the physical way humans interact with their
environment, seeking to move up, or straightening up in higher spirits, etc. Physically, objects can literally be up or down, so it is only natural for humans to conceive of abstract ideas as being up or down. However, while these spatial orientations are universal, distinct cultures may describe the same concepts as belonging to different orientations (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 24). For example, in the English language, there exists an orientational metaphor, ACTIVE IS UP/PASSIVE IS DOWN, while other cultures might value passivity over activity and would therefore conceptualize the metaphor as PASSIVE IS UP/ACTIVE IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 24).

Even within English, the multiple notions that are conceptualized as being UP conflict with each other. Lakoff and Johnson use the example of MORE IS up versus GOOD IS UP. More, in the relevant culture, is usually associated as good but in some cases, such as “the crime rate is going up,” more would not be considered good (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 23). This example illustrates how the values that are considered most important in a culture may be pinpointed through the metaphors that culture uses. In the case of MORE IS up versus GOOD IS UP, Lakoff and Johnson argue that MORE IS UP can be witnessed to have priority over GOOD IS UP since more does not always mean good (1980, p. 23). Therefore, orientational metaphors are shown to be grounded in natural human experience and structure conceptual systems based upon spatial and temporal experience.

**Ontological Metaphors**

Ontological metaphors, or metaphors that characterize concepts as entities or substances, like orientational metaphors, arise from clear physical experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 25). People generally impose boundaries upon concepts that do not have natural boundaries, and Lakoff and Johnson suggest that this is because of people’s general physical experience with objects and substances as having certain bounds (1980, p. 25). This tendency to impose
boundaries on concepts that do not have natural limits results in a far more exhaustive list of ontological metaphors than orientational metaphors. Conceptualizing things as entities, substances, or containers allows people to metaphorically speak about such abstract concepts as the mind, the visual field, and the broad category of events, actions, activities, and states (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, pp. 27-31). Lakoff and Johnson provide a list of possible purposes that ontological metaphors might satisfy: “referring, quantifying, and understanding” concepts and then “identifying aspects and causes” of those concepts (1980, p. 26). The fulfillment of these purposes allows people to extensively comprehend concepts that seem to be infinitely mysterious simply by imposing limits on those concepts, like the human mind itself. Ontological and orientational metaphors, then, are perhaps the least metaphorically noticed in language. They pass by virtually undetected in conversation simply because people are not conscious of their experiential knowledge of limits and spatial orientations.

**Personification Metaphors**

The last note about metaphor that is important for the purposes of the current research is that of personification. Lakoff and Johnson state that personification is an “extension of ontological metaphors” (1980, p. 34). Students learn about personification at a young age, attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects. Lakoff and Johnson expand upon this definition and reveal that human characteristics not only encompass human actions, but also human thought, motivations, goals, and emotions (1980, p. 34). Any time objects or concepts are personified, because they are characterized by ontological metaphorical concepts, they focus on certain aspects of humans, thereby enabling people to blame nonhuman objects or concepts as the causes of pain, loss, and destruction, or even crediting nonhuman objects or concepts as the reason for human gain, happiness, and so on.
After establishing this preliminary research on the semiotic metaphor, so also must the semiotic myth be analyzed before bringing the two into conversation.

**Semiotic Myth**

Danesi defines myths as “the founding narratives of a culture,” (2004, p. 141). People inherently speak in “narratives,” stories that describe human experiences, “[giving] sense and purpose to human existence” (2004, p. 141). There are three general types under which all ancient myths may be categorized: cosmogonic, eschatological, and explanatory (Danesi 2004, pp. 145-146). The cosmogonic myth tells the story of the beginning of the world while the eschatological myth prophesies the end of the world. Explanatory myths attempt to explain naturally occurring events in the world between the beginning and end. Studying the history of ancient civilizations has made it clear that no culture exists without its own versions of these myths. However, because each culture told the stories of the world’s beginning, end, and middle events according to different causes, there is no agreed upon truth that tells the story of the world. Therefore, Danesi claims that societies structure their myths upon the values of their culture, which allows historians today to examine myths in order to find out how past peoples lived, how they viewed their place in the world and acted accordingly (Danesi 2004, p. 145). For example, it is well known that very early civilizations viewed themselves as directly affected by the gods’ whims; if a god desired to make it rain upon the earth, the peoples viewed themselves as blessed and in that god’s favor, whereas if the opposite occurred, the people would view themselves as cursed by that god. As a result, civilizations would act in ways that they perceived would be pleasing to the gods in order to compel rain and bring blessings upon themselves.

Even today, examples of how ancient myths still reveal cultural values are evident in their influence on western culture. For example, ancient myths are told to children today in order
to “[impart] knowledge of values and morals” to them (Danesi 2004, p. 145). One specific myth that children hear today is that of Narcissus. Children learn not to be so involved in themselves, but to value the lives of others, too. If they do not live by the lesson of this myth, they will be labeled a narcissist, which is a negative term in today’s culture. These values are structured in myths through “binary oppositions” like good vs. evil, female vs. male, day vs. night, heaven vs. hell, and others (Danesi 2004, p. 148). Danesi mentions these binary oppositions in support of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ claim that ancient myths jumpstarted the “development of conceptual thinking” (2004, p. 148). Myths are structured around these natural oppositions, creating stories that explain the world’s events in terms of the opposite events that might possibly occur or that have occurred. One concept would not exist in a myth without the other; for example, good does not occur in the world without evil, and this is because humans conceive of good and evil as being opposites but occurring together.

Danesi also discusses ancient myths as the “sources of early symbolism” (2004, p. 147). The gods of early cultures were depicted as and with different symbols, based on what those cultures viewed as important and of intrinsic value. Some cultures idolized gods of beauty and art over war while other cultures idolized gods of physical nature over abstract human qualities. The symbols of some gods, like Hermes’s caduceus, are still used today, not to symbolize the gods themselves, but to symbolize what those gods embodied.

**Metaphor and Myth**

After exploring the attributes of the semiotic myth above, it should be clear that several of these attributes seem familiar. The ideas that myths influence how people live, reveal the values of cultures, and structure the conceptual systems of the mind all echo the voices of Lakoff and Johnson in their discussion of metaphor. In fact, Danesi even speaks about metaphorical
symbolism as creating stories in order to “impart morals” to children, the same vocabulary that he uses for the myths people tell children (2004, p. 134). Danesi never explicitly draws a connection between myth and metaphor, but through examining the existing semiotic theories of these two concepts, it is evident that a connection must be drawn.

However, despite the ripe conditions for exploration into the theory, very few materials exist that explore the relation between metaphor and myth. Antonio Fernández-Cano, Manuel Torralbo, Mónica Vallejo, and Inés M. Fernández-Guerrero (2012) use Greek myths “as interpretive metaphors” to explore the recent mythology of education, but their research lacks any sort of structuring between semiotic metaphor and semiotic myth. Fernández-Cano et al. do use the Greek myths to create metaphors related to education, but there is no exploration of metaphorical systematicity, much less a relation between the structure of metaphor and the structure of myth that might reveal the values towards education that society holds today.

Similarly, Miranda Aldhouse Green’s research in the culture of Gaul and Britain during the Iron Age resulted in the discussion of myths creating metaphors about monsters (2001). While Green’s discussion of metaphor more closely resembles the ideas offered by Lakoff and Johnson by considering boundary metaphors, she does not take advantage of the opportunity to extend the metaphors found to the mythologies of today’s culture (2001, p. 209). Overall, the current research connecting metaphor and myth lacks a motivation for this connection and lacks a system of structuring the connection. However, the research put forth by Lakoff and Johnson as well as Danesi calls for a structure to be found. As established in the introduction, Eve Sweetser offers perhaps the closest analysis that brings the structure of metaphor into conversation with the structure of myth, even citing Lakoff in her article (1995). Sweetser discusses the ontological boundaries between the domains of the gods, resulting in such metaphorical concepts as
CAUSATION IS PROGENERATION (1995, pp. 585-586). As stated, Sweetser also reveals how ancient metaphors can structure ancient myths and how some myths can structure modern metaphors. In fact, through all of the metaphors Sweetser explores, in conjunction with the myths they structure/possibly result from, she also points out examples of their modern metaphors that can be witnessed in conversation, today. However, as previously stated, Sweetser’s initial analysis of metaphor and myth acts only as a pioneering study, and there is a call for more research and analysis to be done. The culmination of the theories and ideas presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Danesi (2004), and Sweetser (1995), that begin this conversation of semiotic metaphor and myth, will be applied in my examination of the structuring of myths and ancient metaphors and how they have evolved together to create the structured mythologies and metaphors of today.

CHAPTER 3
PRIMARY SOURCES AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

There is no drought of information when it comes to examining modern renditions of ancient Greek myths. The myths themselves often appear as plot devices in fiction. Other occurrences, if not the main plot, consist of established tropes and archetypes of ancient characters being applied to modern characters or heroes. The richest example of the modern Greek myths, and the one explored in depth in this thesis, is that of Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson series, which revolves around the plots of the myths themselves as well as tying in well-known tropes and archetypes. Before any metaphorical and mythological analysis may be made to compare Riordan’s series to the ancient myths, it is imperative to understand how Riordan uses the myths to create a contemporary story that gained international popularity. Riordan’s approach to the myths will reveal how they are able to reflect the way humanity thinks about the world in the 21st century, metaphorically and mythologically, and will provide a myriad of
evidence to examine how these semiotic concepts have changed since the time of the ancient Greeks.

**Percy Jackson**

Rick Riordan had taught Greek myths in middle school for several years before eventually leaving the profession to focus on writing. He has stated that his inspiration for the Percy Jackson series came from his son (2020). When his son would ask for stories about the Greek myths before bed, but Riordan ran out of myths to use, Riordan began to tell the story about a modern-day Greek hero, creating the character and story of Percy Jackson (2020).

Percy Jackson is an adolescent boy who struggles in school, supposedly because of his attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. However, at the end of his sixth-grade year, he learns that his father is Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, thereby revealing that he is only half human, his other half being god. Percy is also told that his ADHD and dyslexia are a direct result of his godly blood; his ADHD is reflective of his inborn battlefield reflexes and his dyslexia is evidence that his brain is “hardwired” for Ancient Greek rather than English (Riordan 2005, p. 88). Riordan chose to create a character with these struggles because, at the time he was writing out the story of Percy Jackson, his son was being tested for dyslexia and ADHD (2020). Being a teacher, Riordan had also instructed numerous kids with ADHD and dyslexia and knew that students with these diagnoses often faced several difficulties in school but are highly creative and have just as much potential, if not more, as other students (2020). Therefore, Percy Jackson exists as a character that young students and readers can relate to. Even if Percy is half god, he embodies several of the obstacles that children face in schools today, such as learning difficulties, bullies, unconventional families, and finding one’s place in the world. Students flocked to the series to read about a young hero who faced the same issues that they did.
The Gods of Percy Jackson

In order to understand Percy Jackson’s story, a general foundation must be laid to understand the mythological world that Percy operates under. Riordan writes about the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses, or the major gods, from Greek mythology: Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Hermes, Hephaestus, Dionysus, Demeter, Athena, Artemis, Apollo, Ares, and Aphrodite. These twelve Olympians make up the council of Mount Olympus, the council of gods and goddesses that make important decisions for the world. In the ancient myths, the goddess of the hearth, Hestia, is sometimes also included in the list of major gods. Riordan adapts this apparent contradiction of the myths to his novels and explains that Hestia gave up her throne so Dionysus could become a god of the council (2009). Five of the Olympian gods and goddesses are the children of the Titans Kronos and Rhea, whose era of reign over the earth is often called the “Golden Age.” These children are Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Demeter, and Hestia. Hades is another child of these two Titans, but in Riordan’s novels, as well as the Greek myths, he is not listed as one of the twelve major gods since he spends most of his time in the Underworld, apart from the rest of the earth (Riordan 2005; Atsma 2019). The remaining twelve Olympians are children of these first six gods. The minor gods and goddesses of Riordan’s novels and the Greek myths are children of the major gods, Titans, or other godly beings (Atsma 2019).

Riordan establishes his series on the well-known myth of the Olympian gods and their eventual triumph over the Titans as rulers of the world. Riordan’s readers are first introduced to Percy just as he is being quizzed on this particular myth (2005, pp. 5-6). The Titan Kronos had used his scythe to murder his father, Ouranos, and take over the world, thus establishing the Golden Age. However, out of fear that his children would do the same, he ate them. Eventually, Rhea tricked Kronos into eating a rock instead of their youngest son, Zeus. When Zeus entered
adulthood, he fed his father a mixture of mustard and wine that forced him to “disgorge” Zeus’s siblings (Riordan 2005, p. 6). The Olympian children then entered into a war with the Titans, eventually claiming victory by using Kronos’s own scythe to murder him. The Olympians imprisoned Kronos and the other Titans, either with severe punishments on earth, or with banishment to Tartarus, the darkest and most removed place from earth. The war between the gods and the Titans is often referred to as the Titanomachy (Atsma 2019). Some of the myths reveal that the Titans and their allies were eventually released from their prisons and made subject to the rule of the Olympians, but Riordan hinges his series on the idea that the Titans are still imprisoned (Atsma 2019). After the imprisonment of the Titans, the three Olympian brothers, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, drew lots to divide up the kingdoms of the world. Zeus received the domain of the sky, Poseidon the sea, and Hades the Underworld (Atsma 2019; Riordan 2005). Thus began the age of the Olympian gods, the age that Riordan indicates the modern world is still existing in.

**The Heroes of Percy Jackson**

The heroes of the Greek legends and myths were often children of the Olympian gods. For example, Perseus, of the Greek myths, whom Percy Jackson is named after, is a son of Zeus (Atsma 2019). Riordan creates his series around the idea that the gods are still having children today. These demigods, or half-bloods, like Percy, often attract monsters and other evil creatures from the mythological world. Therefore, Camp Half-Blood exists as a place for demigods to train and learn necessary skills for survival, under the instruction of the centaur Chiron, which is also the name of the mentor who taught several of the heroes from the Greek legends. There are twelve cabins at camp Half-Blood, one for each of the major gods (excluding Hestia, Hades, and the minor gods and goddesses), but not every cabin hosts campers. A couple of the goddesses do
not have children, so their cabins at the camp are “honorary” (Riordan 2005, p. 113). More importantly, though, the cabins of Zeus and Poseidon, according to the fictional world Riordan builds, are supposed to remain empty. Since Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades are the three sons of Kronos, the first of the Olympian gods, and the rulers of the greatest domains of the world, their demigod children are more powerful and more dangerous than the demigod children of other gods and goddesses. In the series, Riordan blames World War II on the sons of these three gods (2005, p. 114). Therefore, the three brothers made an oath not to have any more demigod children (Riordan 2005, p. 114). The gods and goddesses that do have children leave them with their mortal parents on earth, until they reach middle school age and start attracting monsters, at which point they are often found by satyrs. Riordan attributes satyrs with the role of “protector” or “seeker,” characters whose jobs are to find half-bloods and guide them to the camp, where the half-bloods train all summer and either return to school or reside at the camp as “year-rounders” (2005, p. 60).

Through training, the demigods sometimes receive prophecies from “The Oracle,” the mummy that hosts the “Spirit of Delphi” (Riordan 2005, p. 140). These prophecies send the demigods on various quests. This is the same “Delphic Oracle” that sent the heroes from the Greek legends and myths on their quests and trials, namely the hero Hercules (Atsma 2019). Some of the quests Riordan creates for Percy and his friends are repetitions of the quests the ancient heroes completed, such as Odysseus’ journey to the Cyclopes’ Island and Theseus’ journey through the Labyrinth (Riordan 2006-2007). Percy and his friends are aware of this historical repetition and use their knowledge of the ancient myths as a tool to successfully complete their quests.
In the ancient myths, the gods are often depicted as directly influencing the world and actions of humanity (Kline 2009). Athena especially interfered with the quests of heroes (Atsma 2019). However, Riordan’s conceptualization of the gods limits their interaction with the human world. In the Percy Jackson series, certain laws prevent the gods from directly interfering with human lives, especially the lives of their demigod children (Riordan 2005-2009). In order to influence the events of the world, then, the gods must indirectly work through their children, and they do so by offering certain quests or by offering aid on quests. However, the gods are bound by the ancient laws to offer aid in a way that does not directly influence the actions of the humans. This also suggests that the gods rely on their children in order to have an impact on the world. In all, this separation of the gods from their children plays an integral role in the plot of the series.

**Western Civilization**

Riordan hinges the success of the mixing between the mortal and immortal world on the idea of “Western Civilization.” In order to “bring the gods alive” and logically illustrate how the modern world still operates under the influence of personified deities without consciously worshiping such deities, Riordan created a metaphor surrounding the concept of western civilization. As humanity advanced through history, knowledge of the world around them expanded and in turn, humanity expanded into the surrounding world, discovering other lands, and building new lives upon those lands. Throughout history, power consistently changed hands and the kingdoms that ruled over the world moved progressively toward the west. The discovery of the Americas as the “New World” resulted in an age of exploration that eventually brought up the rise of the United States as one of the dominant powers in the world. Riordan conceptualizes this western movement of power as a fire, spreading across the world and leaving evidence
wherever it burns. The gods are also tied to this fire, their forces move wherever the flame burns brightest. Therefore, Riordan effectively builds his world on this idea that the gods shape and are embedded in the modern world of today but also are shaped by the world. Riordan continually applies consumer culture and capitalist ideals to the gods and creatures Percy interacts with. For example, several of the monsters Percy encounters manage stores or farms, such as Medusa’s Garden Gnome Emporium, where she turns people into stone and sells them as statues (Riordan 2005). Other creatures and gods are motivated by money, such as Charon the ferryman to the Underworld (Riordan 2005). The most prominent example is that of Hermes, the messenger god whose mail service hinges on customer service, an ideal that would not have been present in Ancient Greece (Riordan 2006). I will be taking specific examples of modernized myths from the Percy Jackson series to analyze how Riordan alters the myths to reflect the conceptual systems prevalent in culture today.

**Important Themes and Myths of the Series**

The overall plot of the entire series follows Percy Jackson and his friends as they journey on different quests (usually repetitions of the quests that the heroes of the Greek epics went on) fighting against the evil Titan Kronos’ exploits, eventually leading up to the second Titan war in the last book. The Percy Jackson series consists of five novels, so it is not possible to provide a thorough overview for each of them, nor is it necessary for the purposes of this thesis. For this reason, the focus of this section will be on the myths and themes of the series that are important to understand the conceptual metaphors that Riordan employs.

The most important theme in the series revolves around the binary opposition between good and evil. The Titan, Kronos, represents the force of evil that Percy and his friends face and must overcome. Throughout the series, Kronos twists the minds of various characters to enlist
their devotion to him. This good/evil binary is an important aspect of several of the Greek myths that Riordan writes into his series.

An important element of Riordan’s Greek myths is that of mist. While the concept of mist does not necessarily trace back to a specific Greek myth, Riordan emphasizes mist as essential to the mythological world of the gods, as it hides the immortal world from the mortal. In Riordan’s series, only demigods can see through the mist and perceive the mythical gods, creatures, and events of the mythological world, while the minds of mortals would recognize the same gods, creatures, and events as if they would fit in “normal” perceptions of what the world should be. This mist is what allows Percy and his friends to fight against Kronos without alarming mortals.

Music is another important element within Riordan’s series. Riordan features this mythical element through several different Greek myths. For example, Percy and Annabeth, the daughter of Athena, apply their knowledge of the myth of Hercules against the Stymphalian (man-eating) birds in order to fight against the birds when they terrorize Camp Half-Blood. Percy and Annabeth resort to playing loud music in order to shoo the birds away from the camp long enough for the other campers to shoot them down (Riordan 2006, p. 83). While this is a specific myth by which Riordan portrays music, he also includes music in mythical elements that were not as prevalent in the ancient myths. The satyrs in the Percy Jackson series often played on panpipes to create music that could charm the natural world around them, making plants grow and produce fruit. The magic of music became an important tool Riordan gave to his characters, especially Grover, who often used music to help Percy on their quests together. Therefore, music is both a positive and negative aspect of Riordan’s myths.

As stated above, the gods separated the worlds into different domains, the sky, the sea, and the Underworld. The earth and Tartarus are two other domains that were not ruled by a
specific god. Each domain within the myths exists as a physical place that can be visited; the city of Olympus resides in the sky, the sea has a physical domain on the earth, and the Underworld exists as the place where all people go when they die (Atsma 2019). Within Riordan’s series, Olympus resides over the Empire State Building, Poseidon’s palace exists in the depths of the sea, and Hades continuously builds his kingdom in the Underworld, which can be accessed underneath the city of Los Angeles (2005). However, while Percy could easily access the sea, the Underworld and Olympus could only be accessed by other means, and Riordan establishes modern technology as the connection between the earth and each of these domains. Percy accesses both the Underworld and Olympus by using elevators; one elevator sends him down from Los Angeles into the Underworld and another elevator, in the Empire State Building, sends him to a secret six hundredth floor, where Olympus may be found (Riordan 2005).

The most interesting myth Riordan adapts into the modern world is that of the Labyrinth, which is the setting of the fourth novel. The Labyrinth, in the ancient myths, was an intricate maze built by Daedalus and used by King Minos to imprison the Minotaur (Riordan 2008; Atsma 2019). However, in Riordan’s series, the Labyrinth takes on a further mythical component. While Daedalus was a human, and therefore mortal, Riordan writes that Daedalus, who was a great inventor and architect, found a way to create new bodies for his soul, so that he could effectively live forever (2008). He created these new bodies and hid himself in his Labyrinth, escaping death for centuries. The Labyrinth, then, was tied to his life force and grew over the years, becoming as tied to Western Civilization as Olympus itself, existing and constantly growing under America (Riordan 2008). Percy and his friends could enter the Labyrinth in New York and exit on the other side of the country within the same day (Riordan 2008). Clearly, this
myth has been modified the most of all the myths Riordan chooses to include in his series, but this will provide for a rich discussion of metaphors surrounding labyrinths.

Another myth that Riordan incorporates into his series is that of Pandora. The Titan Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gifted it to humans as a great advancement of civilization, was punished by the gods through Pandora (Riordan 2009; Atsma 2019). Pandora was Prometheus’ sister-in-law, and the gods gifted her a jar as a wedding gift, which they told her not to open. However, her curiosity got the best of her and she opened the jar, supposedly releasing all of the evil spirits that plague humanity today, except for the spirit of hope, which stayed behind (Riordan 2009; Atsma 2019). Riordan brings this myth into the end of his series just as Percy and the other campers are in the midst of the Titan war, keeping Kronos from reaching Olympus. Prometheus approaches Percy under a temporary flag of truce in order to gift him Pandora’s jar, with hope still inside it, stating that if he chose to surrender, all he had to do was open the jar (Riordan 2009, p. 230). Percy certainly experiences temptation, wanting to give up hope, but he eventually decides to offer the jar to Hestia up on Olympus, saying that “hope survives best at the hearth” (Riordan 2009, p. 308). Hope, then, becomes not only an important myth to the Percy Jackson series, but also an important theme.

The last myth to be mentioned is that of the gods themselves, as deities over certain realms or emotions. As stated, Zeus is the god of the sky and Poseidon is the god of the sea. Another god deserves mention here, Apollo, the god of the sun, music, medicine, and prophecies. These three gods comprise significant personification metaphors that will be examined in the next chapter. However, the most interesting myth to mention for the case of personification is that of the god Pan. In the ancient myths, Pan was the god of shepherds, hunters, and wild animals, but in the Percy Jackson series, Riordan dubs Pan as the god of the entire realm of the
wild (Atsma 2019; Riordan 2005, p. 189). Riordan creates an entire myth around the god Pan that did not exist in ancient Greek culture, just as he did with Daedalus. According to Riordan’s myth, this god of the wild supposedly died centuries before the modern era, resulting in the gradual death of the god’s realm on the earth, thereby explaining the slow destruction of the planet (Riordan 2005, p. 189). It is imperative to note that Pan, being a god, was by definition immortal. Therefore, his death should be a contradiction. However, Pan himself said:

[The gods] can fade… when everything they stood for is gone. When they cease to have power, and their sacred places disappear. The wild, my dear Grover, is so small now, so shattered, that no god can save it. My realm is gone (Riordan 2008, p. 314).

Therefore, Riordan effectively creates a new god as an explanatory myth for the environmental problems that exist today but would not have been an issue in ancient Greek culture.

In all, these themes and mythical elements deepen the narrative of Percy Jackson into the roots of the Greek myths, which serve as the origins of these themes.

**Methodologies for Examining the Myths and Metaphors of Percy Jackson**

Understanding the mythological foundation of Riordan’s series provides the groundwork for analyzing how Riordan effectively altered the myths in concordance with the metaphorical structuring of modern conceptual thought systems. This analysis will reveal whether the metaphors Riordan uses have been consistent through time or if they are a result/catalyst of the myths that have been altered to fit a modern setting (whether the myths structure modern metaphors or vice versa). The end result will provide an understanding of how ancient myths and their modern renditions shape the human conceptual systems today. Such a study will of course yield more qualitative than quantitative results, and it is important to note the diachronic nature of this study, comparing human conceptual thought systems through time. However, the approach used for this diachronic study begins with the semiotic analysis of the myths and
metaphors of the Percy Jackson series and moves backwards through time to analyze the original ancient myths in comparison.

In order to obtain a sufficient number of metaphors and myths to dissect semiotically, four important questions guided my reading and examination through the Percy Jackson series:

(1) Which aspects of the Greek myths are repeated in Riordan’s novels?
(2) What metaphorical strategies does Riordan employ to map these ancient mythic concepts onto modern life?
(3) Are these metaphors present in the original myths or have they been altered through time?
(4) What do these metaphors, whether new or rooted in ancient thought systems, reveal about humanity’s views of the world?

The answers to these questions generated a list of potential metaphorical concepts, the most prominent of which fuel my discussion below. These metaphors have been categorized into Lakoff and George’s distinction of ontological, orientational, and personification metaphors.

CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

The discussion provided in this chapter will examine the conceptual metaphors found in Riordan’s modern version of ancient myths, as outlined above. These metaphors will be analyzed according to the categories established by Lakoff and Johnson, starting with ontological metaphors, which conceptualize abstract notions as entities or concepts.

**Ontological Metaphors in Percy Jackson**

The following section examines Riordan’s use of ontological metaphors to map aspects of myth onto the modern world.
The Metaphor of Mist

The first metaphor to be examined is that of mist. As stated above, Riordan creates this idea of mist in order to illustrate how the mythological world can exist and operate alongside the modern world and yet still remain separated from mortals. Riordan’s entire creation and use of this concept of mist easily lends itself to the metaphor MIST IS A VEIL, with Riordan even explicitly defining his concept of mist in terms of this metaphor: “it’s like this veil that hides the way things really are” (2008, p. 8). The network of Riordan’s mist metaphor is given below in table 4-1.

| Table 4-1. Mist is a veil metaphor. |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Book | Appearance of the metaphor | Page |
| 1 | “We put Mist over the humans’ eyes” | 45 |
|  | “I did have a fuzzy memory” | 65 |
|  | “Mist, which obscures the vision of humans” | 154 |
|  | “Their brains can only process what they see through the Mist” | 162 |
|  | “A magical force called the Mist obscures the true appearance of monsters and gods from their vision” | 17 |
|  | “The Mist had distorted his face again” | 114 |
| 2 | “Shrouded in fog” | 71 |
|  | “Mist is really thick there” | 153 |
| 3 | “This veil that hides the way things really are” | 8 |
|  | “As if there were a thick veil between me and the lower half of the mountain” | 299 |
| 4 | “There was magic going on here—really powerful Mist” | 299 |
| 5 | “The Mist would keep the humans from seeing it clearly” | 59 |

The gods do not create or use mist in the Percy Jackson novels, but Percy and his friends can use it as a tool to manipulate what the mortals see, such as in the case of the first example in the table above, in which the satyr, Grover, and Percy’s mentor, Chiron, put mist over Percy’s classmates to veil the monstrous teacher, Mrs. Dodds, from their eyes (Riordan 2005). The mist not only distorts mortal vision, but it can also affect memories. The mist that Grover and Chiron put over the mortals’ eyes did not change what they saw about Mrs. Dodds, but rather erased her from their memories altogether (Riordan 2005). However, demigods can also be on the other side of
the veil, not noticing the mythological world around them. A mortal character, Rachel, guides
Percy and Annabeth through the Labyrinth just by her eyes, which see past the veil and toward
their desired destination, but Percy and Annabeth can only see what is right in front of them
(Riordan 2008). These examples illustrate Riordan’s ontological conceptualization of mist as an
object, specifically as an object that separates reality from nonreality. Looking at the table above,
Riordan also uses language that reinforces the modern conceptual metaphor, SEEING IS
UNDERSTANDING (Danesi 2004, p. 124). In the Percy Jackson series, seeing through the veil is
understanding how the mythological world affects the real world.

Mist can be seen as an element in the ancient myths, although it does not play a
particularly important role, as opposed to the mist in Riordan’s series. Rather, mist in the ancient
myths is described as a tool used by the gods in their direct intervention in human affairs.
Riordan alters this idea of the gods’ ability to directly interfere with human events and instead
imposes laws on the gods that force them to operate through their sons and daughters. However,
no such laws exist in the myths and the gods are often depicted as directly involving themselves
in the lives of humans, especially in the case of war. Consider, for example, figure 4-1, which
depicts the story of Apollo saving Hector from Achilles, as described in Homer’s The Iliad. A.S.
Kline’s translation of The Iliad describes the events of the photo below as “Apollo shrouded
Hector in dense mist, and snatched him away, as a god can easily do” (2009). This is a clear
example of the gods directly interfering with human lives in the Greek myths. Therefore, mist
may be a tool for the gods to use to assist heroes, but in the Percy Jackson series, mist is its own
force, the result of the mixing between the “real” world and the mythological (Riordan 2005, p.
154).
The ancient concept of mist is depicted as a cloud, or fog, cast by the gods, that temporarily obscures the vision of humans. This very clearly captures the tendency of Ancient Greeks to impose some mythological explanation onto natural phenomena, such as that of fog. Meanwhile, the mist in Percy Jackson exists as its own force, which not only obscures vision but also separates entire worlds, and that operates continuously, not temporarily. Therefore, the metaphorical structuring of mist as a veil can be shown to have some symbolic grounding in the ancient myths but the concept must have evolved over time.

This metaphor of mist is also shaped by the Christian idea of the veil that separated the church members from the presence of Jesus in the temple. In Christian religion, when Jesus rose
from the dead, the veil in the temple was torn, symbolizing Jesus’ presence no longer being separated from the people (New American Standard Bible, 2002, Mark 15:38). Therefore, veils separate worlds, and the metaphor mist/fog as a veil takes on this attribute of separating worlds in the Percy Jackson series. These metaphors can be found in the language used today; even though they are not related to a division between the mythological/spiritual and real worlds, they can conceptualize a division between a person’s reality and their current sight, or their memory. Such metaphorical expressions may be delivered as in the following examples:

FOG IS A VEIL

The car’s headlights cut through the fog.

She tore through the fog.

Sheets of fog covered the area.

I have a foggy memory of last night.

A blanket of fog rolled over the hills.

These occurrences of this metaphor would not have been present in ancient culture, so the modern conceptualization of mist and fog can be illustrated to have mythological symbolism, but the metaphorical concept has been added over time.

Music Metaphor

Music in the Greek myths is seen as an art. Apollo is the god of music, and Pan is the creator of panpipes. However, the application of music in the Greek myths would reveal the metaphor MUSIC IS A WEAPON. This metaphor can be seen best through the myth of the sirens, who lure sailors to their deaths by using their beautiful voices. This metaphor is kept alive in Riordan’s novels, as can be seen in the examples provided in table 4-2.
Table 4-2. Music is a weapon metaphor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I pressed play and started up Chiron’s favorite—the All-Time Greatest Hits of Dean Martin. Suddenly the air was filled with violins and a bunch of guys moaning in Italian. The demon pigeons went nuts. They started flying in circles, running into each other like they wanted to bash their own brains out” “We’ll be in range of their singing soon” “How could music cause so many lives to veer off course?” “That was my last sonic arrow… Loud music can be bad for you. Unfortunately, it doesn’t always kill”</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Riordan’s examples of this metaphor find their grounding in the ancient myth of the sirens.

Another metaphor has emerged through time that conceptualizes music as medicine.

Since Apollo is also the god of medicine, this makes sense. Fewer concrete examples from the ancient myths conceptualize music as medicine, but it can be seen linguistically in Riordan’s series in table 4-3.

Table 4-3. Music is medicine metaphor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Satyrs brought their reed pipes and played nature magic songs, and for a while, the pine needles seemed to grow fuller. The flowers on the hill smelled a little sweeter and the grass looked greener. But as soon as the music stopped, the sickness crept back into the air”</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“She began singing, and my pain dissolved. She was working magic. I could feel her music sinking into my skin, healing and repairing my burns” “I was vaguely aware of Grover playing his reed pipes. The sound filled me with warmth and courage—thoughts of sunlight and a blue sky and a calm meadow, somewhere far away from the war”</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the tables above, Riordan utilizes both metaphors of music as essential elements in his novels. However, only the metaphor of music as a weapon can be pinpointed to tie directly to ancient myths. The MUSIC IS MEDICINE metaphor can still be connected through the idea that both medicine and music are personified by the same god, but there are no other examples that would suggest the existence of this conceptual metaphor in ancient culture.

The metaphor MUSIC IS A WEAPON has less influence in today’s culture, although this is not to say it does not have any influence. For example, some parents might discourage certain
genres as being “of the devil.” The metaphor MUSIC IS MEDICINE holds more influence, however. This metaphor may be conceptualized in the following phrases:

**MUSIC IS MEDICINE**

The music *rejuvenated* my soul.

The lively music *filled me with energy*.

That song was *a balm* to my soul.

Music *heals wounds*.

Riordan uses this ontological metaphor to describe music as a substance, namely medicine, that reflects the positive modern view of music over the older view of music as a weapon. This is not to suggest that the Ancient Greeks viewed music as only negative, but rather that their myths involving music must have been strongly grounded by a conceptual metaphor **MUSIC IS A WEAPON**. Meanwhile, just as with the mist metaphor above, the **MUSIC IS MEDICINE** metaphor must have emerged through time. Riordan uses both metaphors to bring the ancient culture into the same realm as the modern, and both metaphors reflect conceptual thought surrounding music today; music is both positive and negative. However, the contemporary phrases given above illustrate how the medicine metaphor is given a higher priority in culture today, over the weapon metaphor, reflecting current ideals of music.

**Metaphor for the Underworld**

As discussed in chapter three, the world was split into different domains in the ancient myths, one of these domains being the Underworld. The other two domains, the sky and the sea, are natural, physical places or spaces that humans interact with. However, the Underworld, the realm of death, was not a physical place that the Ancient Greeks interacted with. Therefore, their conceptualization of the Underworld, the place where people go when they die, must have been
ontologically structured. In other words, the Greeks must have imposed boundaries on such a place based on the physical boundaries they experienced with other domains. Atsma (2009) reveals that the Greeks did in fact view the Underworld as a sort of “lower world” far beneath the earth. My previous discussion of the Underworld as it appears in Riordan’s novels maintains that this metaphorical view of THE UNDERWORLD IS A PLACE is still present in today’s culture. People today talk about the Underworld, or Hell, or Hades, as a place that they might see once they die.

Riordan’s descriptions of the Underworld drive this metaphor further, suggesting not only that the Underworld is a place, but also that it is a specific place, a highway, or even an airport. Riordan’s metaphorical descriptions of the Underworld have been gathered in table 4-4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearances</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The entrance to the underworld looked like a cross between airport security and the Jersey Turnpike... Each entrance had a pass-through metal detector with security cameras mounted on top. Beyond this were tollbooths manned by black-robed ghouls like Charon”</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Have you any idea how much my kingdom has swollen in this past century alone, how many subdivisions I’ve had to open? … More security ghouls... Traffic problems at the judgement pavilion”</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The commute time alone from the palace to the gates is enough to drive me insane!”</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table provides concrete examples of Riordan’s ontological depiction of THE UNDERWORLD IS A HIGHWAY/AIRPORT. This metaphor clearly could not have played a role in the ancient myths, as the ancient Greeks would have had no physical experience with airports or highways in order to impose those boundaries onto the Underworld. However, Riordan’s decision to overlay a highway system onto the Underworld reflects the ontological structuring that Lakoff and Johnson theorized. Riordan’s conceptualization of the Underworld as a place imposes physical boundaries on the idea of death that helps people come to terms with death.
Unlike other religions that believe in two or more places after death, the Underworld, in Greek mythology, is the place where every person goes when they die. Therefore, people may be comforted to know that they will be able to reunite with their loved ones in death, with no worry of their loved ones being in another place. This metaphor DEATH IS A PLACE, then, unlike the other two metaphors discussed thus far, can be demonstrated as the structuring for this myth and the grounding for Riordan’s modern conceptualization of both the metaphor itself and the myth of the Underworld.

Furthermore, Riordan’s conceptualization of the Underworld as a highway/airport provides even further comfort to people in modern culture today. Humanity is constantly searching for ways to lessen the fear of death, and more specifically, what happens after death. Since religious and mythological views of death often culminate in a conversation about eternity, the Underworld is conceptualized as a place of eternal destination. It is hard for people to wrap their minds around a concept of eternity, especially of dwelling in one place for all time after death, where it is unknown whether the whole physical person or just the soul lives on. Therefore, Riordan’s use of familiar boundaries as the structuring for his metaphor allows people to conceptualize the Underworld in modern terms, as a modern place. People can think about entering death as entering familiar territory. In today’s culture, it is not familiar enough to view the Underworld as the kingdom of Hades, since American society is not one that is governed by a king. Riordan still describes Hades as the king of the Underworld in his novels, but his metaphorical conceptualization of the Underworld also reveals a view of Hades as the overseer of the development of the Underworld, in effect bringing death and the god of death into the culture of modern life.
Riordan’s new metaphorical conceptualization of death adds to the metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY (Spillner 2012, p. 132). Phrases such as “our dearly departed” and “permanent vacation” already conceptualized death as a journey, but this new metaphor adds another layer of meaning to these metaphorical expressions. Not only does Riordan conceptualize the Underworld as a highway/airport, then, but he also conceptualizes death as a journey on a highway/airplane. This conceptualization is evident in culture today with such modern phrases as:

**DEATH IS A JOURNEY ON A HIGHWAY/AIRPLANE**

He’s on the *highway to hell.*

He’s got himself a *first-class ticket* to hell.

The *road to hell is paved* with good intentions.

Her *long ride* is finally over.

His life *took a detour* that ultimately *led him to his untimely death.*

These phrases conceptualize death as a journey that all people embark on before they even die. Since highways and air travel are the fastest paths of travel to any place, this metaphor highlights the aspect of fast approaching death, and therefore solidifies the modern culture’s mindset that people must move through life quickly in order to accomplish all their dreams before they die.

**Overall, THE UNDERWORLD IS A HIGHWAY/AIRPORT** metaphor that Riordan employs can be shown to have evolved from the ancient metaphor THE UNDERWORLD IS A PLACE, which is the metaphor that structures the ancient myths surrounding the Underworld. The analysis of Riordan’s novels reveals how he alters both the myth and the metaphor to reflect modern metaphorical conceptions surrounding death.
Orientational Metaphors in Percy Jackson

The next metaphors that Riordan employs in his novels also arise from the mappings of boundaries onto abstract concepts. However, these boundaries, rather than being physical, are spatial and temporal, according to Lakoff and Johnson’s definition of orientational metaphors.

Metaphor for the World

Much like Riordan made use of an ontological metaphor for the Underworld in his novels, he also incorporates an orientational metaphor for the entire world as it is split into its different levels, encompassing the land of the Underworld. Throughout time and across cultures, the spatial orientations up and down have continuously been attributed to good and bad, respectively. If GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 16), it makes sense that this would be reflected in ancient civilizations’ mythical organizations of the world. The ancient Greeks viewed Olympus, the kingdom of the gods, as being hoisted in the sky on top of a mountain while the Underworld was viewed as below the earth, with the worst place of Tartarus even farther below that in some of the myths. While there are several Greek myths that describe the gods of Olympus in a negative light and indicate that the gods often sent curses down on humans from Olympus, the city was still revered and the gods that supposedly dwelled in the city were still highly respected. Not only did the gods send curses from Olympus, but they also sent blessings. The peoples of ancient cultures often relied on their gods to provide healthy rains and plentiful harvests. So, as long as the people behaved and pleased the gods, they could expect those good blessings to come from the sky. Meanwhile, blessings would not have come from the Underworld and certainly not from Tartarus. Similarly, in Christianity, heaven is conceptualized as being above and hell is conceptualized as being below, with heaven being the desired place to
spend eternity with God and hell being the place of eternal punishment. These ancient myths, then, must be grounded by orientational metaphorical structuring, GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN.

Riordan maintains this orientational metaphor in his series through his descriptions of the different domains and kingdoms of the gods. In his series, just as in the myths, the world is split into levels from Olympus to Tartarus, top to bottom. Olympus is the city of the gods, the place of power from which Percy’s father and the other gods operate. Tartarus, on the other hand, is the pit from which all evil monsters and creatures, including the main villain Kronos, arise to terrorize the earth. Percy also views the Underworld—since it is below the earth—and, in association, Hades, as having a more negative energy than Olympus, but not as evil as Kronos in Tartarus. The language Riordan uses to deliver these metaphors and reveal this orientational structuring, is given below in table 4-5.

Table 4-5. Good is up and bad is down metaphors in Percy Jackson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“He sort of does his own thing down in the Underworld”</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Hades let the worst monsters out of Tartarus to torment Thalia”</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Laughter came from somewhere under the earth, and a voice so deep and evil it turned my blood to ice. ‘Come down, little hero’”</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Underground air always smells like monsters”</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The sound was getting louder, a muttering, evil voice from far, far below us. Coming from the pit… ‘Tartarus. The entrance to Tartarus’”</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Persephone would be above in the world of light with her mother”</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I will open the earth and have the dead pour back into the world. I will make your lands a nightmare”</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Zeus cast Kronos’s remains into the darkest pit of Tartarus”</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“They are reborn from the chaos and barbarism that is always bubbling underneath civilization, the very stuff that makes Kronos stronger”</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“High above the Empire State Building, Olympus was its own island of light, a floating mountain ablaze with torches and braziers, white marble palaces gleaming in the early morning air”</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Within a week, Olympus might fall. If the Age of the Gods really did end, the world as we knew it would dissolve into chaos”</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If Olympus falls, not only will the gods fade, but everything that is connected to our legacy will also begin to unravel. The very fabric of your puny little civilization…”</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is through this orientational structuring that the binary opposition between good and evil is best supported. The war Percy fights at the end of the series is between the Olympian gods, demigods, and creatures of earth on one side, and Kronos and his monstrous allies from Tartarus on the other. Percy and his friends ultimately win the day, and Kronos and his evil forces are defeated and sent back down to Tartarus, with the “good” side, the gods, maintaining their kingdom above the earth. The binary opposition between light and dark also enters into this orientational structuring, with Olympus being described as a kingdom of light, and both the Underworld and Tartarus being described as dark, as shown in the table above. Therefore, not only does Riordan employ the GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN metaphors, but he also adheres to the entire conceptual system of spatial metaphors by including GOOD IS LIGHT and BAD IS DARK. As a result, Riordan’s metaphors can be summarized as GOOD/LIGHT IS UP and BAD/DARK IS DOWN. It is these metaphors that provide the best example for systematic metaphorical structuring throughout time.

However, Riordan also modernizes these metaphors, just as he has the others, by adapting the myths to fit current conceptualizations of the world. The levels that the ancient Greeks thought made up the world comprised one spherical egg (Atsma 2019). People today do not generally view the world as an egg, as the Greeks did, but Riordan’s language instead conceptualizes the world as a modern house, made up of different levels connected by stairs or even an elevator. This ontological metaphor, THE WORLD IS A HOUSE, works hand in hand with the orientational metaphors GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN. Tartarus, being the basement, is the worst level of the house, while the sky, which hosts Olympus, is the ceiling. Riordan’s delivery of these metaphors is shown below in table 4-6.
Table 4-6. The world is a house with orientational metaphors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“‘Well, Hade—’ Grover cleared his throat. ‘We’re in a public place…. You mean, <em>our friend downstairs</em>?’ ‘Um, right… our friend <em>way downstairs</em>’”</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“He put a key card into a slot in the <em>elevator panel</em> and we started to <em>descend</em>”</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The throne room shook with a tremor so strong, they probably felt it <em>upstairs in Los Angeles</em>”</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My eyes followed the <em>stairway to its end</em>… From the top of the clouds rose the decapitated peak of a mountain, its summits covered with snow”</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To my left, Zeus spoke, ‘Should you not address the <em>master of this house</em> first, boy?’”</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[the] monstrous allies [of the Titan army were] driven to the <em>farthest corners of the earth</em>”</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“It hadn’t been a cavern roof that Artemis was forced to hold. It was the <em>roof of the world</em>”</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“No, if Kronos wants Olympus, he’ll have to march through the entire city with his army and <em>take the elevators!</em>”</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned, this metaphorical concept better reflects humanity’s current view of the world.

Common knowledge dictates that the earth is not flat, but rather spherical. Conceptualizing the world as having corners, then, would not logically make sense. However, with a conceptual metaphor *THE WORLD IS A HOUSE*, it would indeed make sense for the earth, one level of that house, to have corners. This specific metaphor would not have been present within the ancient myths, knowing that the Greeks viewed the world as an egg, not a house. The Greeks certainly did not conceptualize the Underworld and Olympus as being accessible by elevators. Therefore, Riordan embedded this metaphor within his modified myths in order to reflect modern cultural views of the world today. But this modern metaphor clearly derives its structuring from the *GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN* metaphors that also grounded the ancient myths.

As stated, Riordan’s use of these orientational metaphors reflect modern views of the world and illustrate how people live by these metaphors today. Common expressions that employ all of these metaphors discussed in this section are listed below:
GOOD/LIGHT IS UP

Stairway to Heaven.

Keep your eyes on things above.

I’d like to think she’s looking down at us, keeping watch from above.

The man upstairs is on our side.

Her smile lit up the room.

BAD/DARK IS DOWN

The fallen gods abused their power too much.

I’ve hit rock bottom.

Her mood brought the whole party down.

“We seemed to be angling down, heading deeper underground” (Riordan 2008, p. 252).

The expressions given above reveal the entire conceptual metaphorical system built upon the orientational structuring of good and bad as up and down, and this system has been present since the origins of the Greek myths. Therefore, this orientational metaphor, even though it has evolved through time to incorporate modern ideals, reveals that humanity’s views of the world, as it relates to their familiarity with spatial relations, has remained consistent.

Labyrinth Metaphor

The labyrinth myth, as discussed, has obviously been modified by Riordan to apply to the Percy Jackson series. Percy and his friends view the labyrinth as a negative force, a possible source of danger that others could use to invade the camp. This reinforces the BAD IS DOWN metaphor analyzed above since Riordan claims that the Labyrinth exists between the Underworld and the Earth. However, Riordan relates the Labyrinth to its own orientational metaphor, imposing onto it the spatial orientation of center/peripheral. This results in the metaphorical
concept LABYRINTH LEADS TO THE CENTER. This may seem like a controversial concept, since people usually use phrases like “through the maze/labyrinth,” suggesting that labyrinths lead to an exit out of the maze rather than to a point in the center of the maze, but it is important to remember that mazes and labyrinths do not have one straight path through to the exit. Rather, the point of mazes is that they meander and connect different paths, often leading to dead ends. Labyrinths and mazes can even have multiple exits, but this is not the same in every case.

Labyrinths are often synonymous with mazes, a slight difference being that Labyrinths are more often conceptualized as being circular, which is where this orientational metaphor finds its grounding. Riordan reveals this concept in his modernized myth of the Labyrinth, seen in table 4-7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“If the legends are true, his workshop is in the center of the Labyrinth”</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We have to get deeper into the maze. There has to be a way to the center”</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It twisted and turned, but there were no more side tunnels. We seemed to be angling down, heading deeper underground”</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The workshop is that way. The heart of the maze”</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point of entering a maze is not to figure out where the end is but rather to figure out how to get to that exit. In fact, in most cases, people know where the end goal is, especially when the maze is printed on a coloring book or a children’s menu. To solve a maze is to figure out which path leads to the exit, to find a way to navigate the different possible paths. In the case of Percy Jackson and his friends, they must find the center of the Labyrinth before they can find their way to the exit with any hopes of accomplishing their goals. Therefore, mazes turn out to be about the journey rather than the end. Often, travelers through a maze are only made aware of the correct path to take once they start exploring. This is exactly what happens to Percy. Percy does not necessarily learn which literal path he has to take in the maze, but instead he eventually comes to
understand how to navigate the maze to reach his goal. He enlists the help of his mortal friend, Rachel, who can see through the mist and see the correct path to take to reach the center of the maze.

Often, in fiction, as characters journey through a maze, they learn about some deeper meaning or power from within themselves. Percy Jackson is no exception to this case. In fact, Riordan imparts several important lessons to Percy (and thus his readers) in this book, including knowledge about his godly powers over water. Percy learns that his powers originate within himself, when a water nymph tells him “You’re not so different from me, demigod. Even when I’m out of the water, the water is within me. It is my life source” (emphasis added to reveal the metaphorical language) (Riordan 2008, p. 152). Percy puts this lesson into practice when he uses his powers to complete a task for a farmer:

There was a tugging sensation in my gut, and the waterspouts exploded like the world’s largest carwash. Salt water shot twenty feet into the air… The tugging sensation became more intense, painful even, but there was something exhilarating about seeing all that salt water. I had made this. I had brought the ocean to this hillside (Riordan 2008, p. 154, emphasis added).

Percy learns that the power of the ocean not only resides within him, but also in the center of his physical body, in his gut. Therefore, Riordan not only conceptualizes that LABYRINTH LEADS TO THE CENTER but also that POWER IS THE CENTER. He then relates this back to the Labyrinth in his revelation that the camp’s new sword trainer, Quintus, is Daedalus himself, the architect of the Labyrinth, and that the Labyrinth is connected to his life. When Daedalus sacrifices himself, the Labyrinth loses its center of power and crumbles. However, Percy and his friends only realize these truths once they have completed their journey through the Labyrinth, thereby reinforcing the idea that labyrinths are about the journey itself rather than the end goal.
This can also be seen in modern applications of labyrinths. Spiritual labyrinths are two-dimensional labyrinths that are put on the ground to be used as tools of meditation and are often seen in churches, but they can also be found in parks (The Labyrinth Society 2021). An example of such a Labyrinth is shown in image 4-2 below.

Figure 4-2. A “prayer” labyrinth in a church (The Labyrinth Society 2021).

These labyrinths are meant to be walked in a circular pattern, with one path that winds to the center, and once someone reaches the center, she or he turns around and travels the same path back out through the labyrinth (The Labyrinth Society 2021). The walk through this labyrinth is not a mindless task. The idea is that someone will learn something about themselves or learn something spiritually once they have completed their journey through the labyrinth (The Labyrinth Society 2021). If these modern labyrinths are circular, then, this reinforces the idea of labyrinths leading to a physical center.

These ideas and conceptual metaphors all work together to reveal the modern conceptual metaphor MEANING IS CENTRAL. Similarly, table 4-7 above also includes examples of how the truths that Percy and his friends learn may only be realized as they journey deeper into the maze,
suggesting that MEANING is also DEEP. These conceptual metaphors are revealed in such modern phrases as those given below:

**MEANING IS CENTRAL/DEEP**

Don’t beat *around* the bush.

Our friendship is very *surface level*, so I don’t *know* much about her.

Let’s get to the *center* of the problem.

You guys are *circling it*, but you’ll eventually get the answer.

There must be a *deeper meaning* here.

She’s a very *deep thinker*, so she often has *better insights* than I do.

These metaphors form the conceptual system surrounding labyrinths. If MEANING IS CENTRAL/DEEP and LABYRINTH LEADS TO THE CENTER, then it must be the case that LABYRINTH LEADS TO A CENTRAL/DEEPER MEANING. This is certainly the case in the Percy Jackson series, where the Labyrinth is not a simple maze but rather a complex system of tunnels connected by the power of one man’s life, and this truth must be realized through Percy’s journey in the maze.

Overall, these metaphors are not as linguistically obvious in Riordan’s novels as the others discussed throughout the rest of this chapter, but this systematic orientational thinking can instead be found in the way Riordan has modified this specific myth in order to enhance his plot.

Since this myth has perhaps changed the most since the ancient Greeks, it can be argued that the orientations imposed on labyrinths and mazes were not present in the ancient myths. The Cretans sent youths into the Labyrinth to be sacrificed to the Minotaur (Atsma 2019). Since they were sent in with no possibility of escape, the Labyrinth could not have held any conceptual relation to central orientation or journey and meaning. Only Theseus made it through, with the guidance of the golden string, and defeated the Minotaur, but he had been given a way through
the Labyrinth before ever entering (Atsma 2019). In other words, the orientational metaphor must have been tied to labyrinths and mazes over time, thereby structuring Riordan’s modern myth but not the ancient myth.

Lastly, this orientational metaphor is particularly interesting, not only because it does not reveal any structural grounding in the ancient myth, but also because Riordan’s use of this conceptual metaphor provides grounding for the metaphorical system of new possible ontological metaphors. Common metaphors surrounding the concept MAZE/LABYRINTH LEADS TO A CENTRAL/DEEPER MEANING have already been in use before the publication of Percy Jackson. Such metaphors include THE MIND IS A MAZE, WORDS ARE A MAZE, DATING IS A MAZE, and LIFE IS A MAZE. To navigate each of these mazes is to find the center of reasoning or some deeper meaning behind each of them. Riordan’s use of this orientational structuring to write about this myth, then, not only reflects the modern views and attitudes people have for labyrinths and journeys but also provides promising grounds for future possible metaphors.

**Hope as a Metaphor**

Unlike the last two orientational metaphors, the metaphor surrounding hope is a temporal one, not a spatial one. The concept of hope appears in Riordan’s last novel when Prometheus offers Percy Pandora’s jar. The myth of Pandora’s jar, as it appears in the Percy Jackson series, gives rise to both an ontological metaphor and an orientational metaphor of hope. Since hope is conceptualized as a Spirit in both the Greek myths and in Riordan’s novels, this supports the ontological metaphorical structuring of this myth throughout time and can be seen in the following phrases:

- **HOPE IS A RESOURCE**
- Don’t give up hope.
Don’t lose hope.

We still have hope.

HOPE IS A BIRD

“Hope is the thing with feathers” (Dickinson 1891).

Hope flutters through my heart.

HOPE IS A LIVING THING

Hope hasn’t abandoned us yet.

Keep hope alive.

Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.

However, more discussion for the purposes of this research, as it relates to Riordan’s conceptualization of hope, can arise out of its orientational structuring. When Prometheus offers Percy the jar, he tells Percy that

[he] will give mankind a new gift—a new revelation that will move you as far forward as fire did. You can’t make that kind of advance under the gods. They would never allow it. But this could be a new golden age for you (Riordan 2009, p. 221).

The emphasis added in the above excerpt reveals a metaphorical structuring between time and hope that Riordan uses as a device of temptation for Percy. Prometheus offers hope as if it will be a great advancement to humanity, just as fire was, and he conceptualizes this advancement as a step into the future. Riordan relies on the orientational metaphor FUTURE IS FORWARD to deliver this conceptualization of hope as HOPE IS THE FUTURE. Riordan specifically relates this metaphor to Percy when Chiron reminds Percy why he is special:

But you, Percy—you are part god, part human. You live in both worlds. You can be harmed by both, and you can affect both. That’s what makes heroes so special. You carry the hopes of humanity into the realm of the eternal. Monsters never die. They are reborn from the chaos and barbarism that is always bubbling underneath civilization, the very stuff that makes Kronos stronger (Riordan 2006, p. 252, emphasis added).
As can be seen in the excerpt, Riordan utilizes Percy, and all heroes, for that matter, as a vehicle for the positioning of hope onto a temporal orientation. These examples clearly illustrate how Riordan takes modern conceptual metaphors, such as thinking of hope not just as ontological but also as orientational, and structures his modified myths based upon these metaphors.

**Personification metaphors in Percy Jackson**

These last metaphors to be examined are those of personification. Recall from chapter two that personification is an extension of ontological metaphors. In the Greek myths, the personification of abstract ideas as gods would seem to be a promising case of exploration in Riordan’s series. Indeed, the deities discussed below provide evidence for modern conceptual thinking based on ancient conceptual systems.

**Zeus and Poseidon**

Zeus and Poseidon provide clear linguistic examples of personification in Riordan’s novels. With these two gods being the personified deities of the sky and the sea, the Greeks often viewed them as being in control of the weather. Zeus was not only the god of the sky, but also the god of lightning and thunder (Atsma 2019). Poseidon was the god of the sea but also sometimes called the storm bringer and earthshaker (Atsma 2019). This perception has not changed in Riordan’s novels, especially since he calls both gods by these names repeatedly throughout the series. In fact, there are several occurrences, within the first book, where the arguments between Poseidon and Zeus directly affect the weather. These personification metaphors are given below in table 4-8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The weather got weird, as if the gods had started fighting”</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percy watches these events happen as a side effect of Zeus and Poseidon’s argument up in Olympus. They were not intentionally causing a storm on earth because they were angry, but the storm was a direct result of their fight. Cultures throughout time have often conceptualized the weather as being a result of the gods’ actions or moods. Some of the common personification metaphors that are developed from this conceptualization are given below:

**THE SKY IS A PERSON/GROUP OF PERSONS**

God is *crying* (=rain).

The angels are *crying*.

Lightning *danced* across the sky.

If it’s thundering, *God/Zeus must be angry*.

If it’s thundering, the *gods must be bowling*.

These phrases support Riordan’s conceptualization of the weather, specifically thunder and rain, as the result of gods’ actions, a conceptualization that has been consistent through time. The myths structured the personification metaphors of the gods and Riordan expanded those metaphors to fit his novels. The weather was not only affected by gods in the sky, but also by the gods of other domains, whether they were interacting with the gods in the sky or not. This supports the rise of personification metaphors that may not have been present in ancient cultures:

**THE SKY AND THE SUN ARE PEOPLE**

The sun *beat against* the sky.
The sun chases the clouds away.

THE OCEAN AND THE EARTH ARE PEOPLE

The waves pounded against the shore.

The sea was angry that day.

Therefore, Riordan’s characters of Poseidon and Zeus reflect ancient metaphorical ideas of the sun and sea as well as modern metaphorical ideas.

The gods personify their particular domains in other ways besides the weather, as well. The focus in this discussion will be solely on Poseidon, since he is Percy’s father and therefore Percy interacts with him more. Riordan’s personifications of the sea as the god, Poseidon, as well as an entity that can be controlled by Percy, are given below in table 4-9.

Table 4-9. The sea is a person metaphor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Long Island never sees hurricanes this early in the summer. But the ocean seemed to have forgotten”</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Wait for it, I told the sea”</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The sea does not like to be restrained”</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I closed my eyes and tried to calm the sea”</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I grabbed her around the waist and ordered the waves to push us down… I imagined all the bubbles in the sea—always churning, rising. I imagined them coming together, being pulled toward me. The sea obeyed”</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These metaphors are consistent with the modern conceptual personification metaphors surrounding the sea. Poseidon himself is described as a mature god, but Riordan attributes characteristics of the sea to him, thereby altering the perception that the god controls the sea and rather dictating that the sea controls the god. This characterization of the sea as a person may be seen in similar contemporary metaphors:

THE SEA IS A PERSON

The ocean listens to no one.

He was swept out to the belly of the ocean.
The tide *retreated*.

The waves *slapped* my face as we sailed.

Furthermore, since Poseidon is the personified sea, Riordan also attributes the characteristics associated with the sea to Percy, suggesting that Poseidon passed down these attributes from father to son. This results in the metaphorical language of these examples in table 4-10 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I can smell the <em>sea in his blood</em>”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Fire was engulfing me. Strangely, it only felt warm at first, but it was getting hotter by the instant. ‘Your father’s nature protects you… Makes you hard to burn. But not impossible’”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The water is <em>within me</em>”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Being the <em>son of Poseidon</em> and all, I have perfect bearings at sea”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“For the moment I felt the <em>power of the ocean in my arms</em>”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note Riordan’s choice to make Percy a son of the sea god rather than the son of the king of the gods, Zeus. While Riordan’s character is a literal son of the sea, the language above is reflective of the way people conceptualize the ocean today, not as having literal children, but as being a genetic attribute. For example, consider these common metaphorical phrases:

**THE SEA IS GENETIC**

The sea is *in her blood*, she’s been surfing since she was young.

The sea is *calling to me*, I have to *go home*.

We are all *made of water*.

These phrases would not be applied to the sky, and therefore Riordan’s choices when he modified the myths must have been heavily influenced by modern conceptual metaphors.
To summarize, Riordan’s personification of the sea as a person finds grounding in the ancient myths but also his expansions of these metaphors to apply to his modified myths find their grounding in modern conceptual metaphors.

**Apollo**

Related to the discussion of weather above, Apollo is the personified sun, driving a chariot across the sky. Riordan himself describes the metaphorical nature of this personification:

> You want to talk astronomy? Bah, what fun is that? You want to talk about how humans think about the sun? Ah, now that’s more interesting. They’ve got a lot riding on the sun… er, so to speak. It keeps them warm, grows their crops, powers engines, makes everything look, well, sunnier. This chariot is built out of human dreams about the sun, kid. It’s as old as Western Civilization. Every day, it drives across the sky from east to west, lighting up all those puny little mortal lives. The chariot is a manifestation of the sun’s power, the way mortals perceive it (Riordan 2007, pp. 50-51).

Modern knowledge rules out the possibility of the sun being an actual god, since the exploration of space has increased humanity’s knowledge about the sun, stars, and other planets, but Riordan still successfully applies the metaphorical concept of the sun as a teenage boy. Apollo is described as an attractive, lazy, youthful god in the series, and this is consistent with his depiction as a youthful god in the ancient myths (Atsma 2019). Riordan’s metaphorical language surrounding Apollo is given below in table 4-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-11. The sun is a person metaphor.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sun is described as having many different facets, as reflective of the way humans experience the sun. The sun not only gives light to the world, but also warmth, energy, and power. The sun, therefore, is conceptualized as a god with many different abilities, as can be seen with Apollo, who is not only the god of the sun but also the god of prophecy, music, medicine, and archery (Riordan 2007; Atsma 2019). Just as Riordan’s portrayal of Apollo is consistent with the appearance of the sun god in ancient myths, Riordan’s linguistic metaphors above are consistent with contemporary metaphors involving the sun. Such metaphors may be exemplified below:

THE SUN IS A PERSON

The sun hid behind the clouds.

The sun smiled down on us.

The sun looked down upon us and watched over us.

Riordan uses each of these specific metaphors to shape the character of Apollo. Just as the sun hides behind clouds, Apollo hides behind a disguise of the mist, as a homeless man, in order to indiscreetly help Percy and his friends rescue Apollo’s sister, Artemis, without breaking the ancient rules that forbid godly interference (Riordan 2007, pp. 151-155). Riordan also depicts Apollo as a lighthearted, cheery, and friendly god, who is more than happy to help Percy and his friends. Riordan always describes Apollo as smiling, even when he is in disguise. Similarly, Apollo being the sun god and having such a lighthearted personality is consistent with the GOOD/LIGHT IS UP metaphor discussed above, and this metaphor can be seen in the last example of table 4-11, when Apollo tells his sister, the moon goddess, to “lighten up” (Riordan 2008, p. 290). Most importantly, the last contemporary metaphor given for THE SUN IS A PERSON above personifies the sun as someone keeping watch over the earth. Riordan applies this metaphor to Apollo, who sees everything as he drives his chariot across the sky. This may also be connected
to the contemporary metaphorical expression “there is nothing new under the sun,” as adopted from the Christian Bible (New American Standard Bible, 2002, Ecc. 1:9). This enables Riordan to draw a clear connection between Apollo being the sun god as well as the god of prophecies. In the Greek myths, there does not seem to be a logical correlation between the sun and prophecies, but Riordan’s modification of the myths indicates a clear rationale for this god’s abilities. Since Apollo sees everything under the sun, it would make sense that he could predict future events. These examples illustrate how Riordan does not just modify metaphors alongside the myths, but he also modifies his myths to fit the current metaphors. Besides the two previously mentioned personification metaphors alongside the sky, other common personification phrases for the sun, in contemporary language include:

**THE SUN IS A PERSON**

The sun *greeted* us in the morning.

The sun *mocking* me.

The sun *tickles* my skin.

The sun *went to sleep*.

“Sunshine on the water *looks so lovely*” (Denver 1973).

These phrases further solidify a personification of the positive aspects of the sun, as humans have experienced it throughout time.

**Pan**

A final, very interesting case of personification in Riordan’s series is that of the wild being personified as the god Pan. As Riordan’s myth of Pan was examined in chapter three, Pan was not a personified realm like the sky or the sea in the ancient myths. Instead, he was the god of shepherds, hunters, and wild animals (Atsma 2019). The personification of this god as the god
of the entire realm of the wild, then, was created by Riordan and used to alter his myths. The language that reflects this personification is given in table 4-12 below.

Table 4-12. The wild is / belongs to a person metaphor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Appearance of the metaphor</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“They’ve been pillaging <em>Pan’s kingdom</em> ever since… They search the earth, exploring all the wildest places, hoping to find where <em>he is hidden</em>, and <em>wake him from his sleep</em>”</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“The forest <em>looked sickly</em>”</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4    | “The world is dying, Percy. Every day it gets worse. The wild….I can just feel it fading. I have to find *Pan*”  
|      | “It is one of the last wild places. *My realm above is gone*, I’m afraid. Only pockets remain. Tiny pieces of life. This one shall stay *undisturbed*.…for a little longer” | 176  |

The tendency to think about the wild as a dying person reflects humanity’s changing experiences and interactions with the wild. Ancient cultures were not faced with issues of pollution, deforestation, and other consequences of the development of civilizations. These problems are relatively new when considering the whole of human history. Therefore, this metaphorical language in Riordan’s novels presents the clearest case for a modern metaphor that was not present in the ancient myths nor finds any grounding in the ancient myths but instead finds grounding in modern culture and shapes the contemporary retellings of the myths. Riordan’s chosen language illustrates how this metaphor shapes the way people conceptualize and behave toward the wild today. For example, consider these phrases:

We must *protect* the wild.

Nature *relies* on us.

We are *killing* the planet.

The earth is *sick*.

We’re *poisoning* the oceans.

We have been *disappointing* Mother Earth for a long time.

You’re going to *hurt the environment* if you keep doing that.
Not only were ancient cultures not threatened by the consequences of their own actions towards nature, but they also viewed all the facets of nature as mysterious phenomena that impacted humans more than the other way around. The natural trends of weather and geographical events still impact the lives of humans today, but just as strong is the influence that humans have on nature.

Since the publication of Riordan’s novels, conservation movements have continued to gain momentum. This cannot be credited to Riordan’s novels alone, but Riordan’s novels did contribute to the increasing focus, in literary works, on the environment and the importance of preserving the environment. This therefore provides further support that some of Riordan’s myths are not only structured by humanity’s modern understandings of the surrounding world, but also shape the way humans continue to interact with the world.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Through the extensive list of metaphors and modern myths gathered from Riordan’s series, it is evident that Riordan employed a metaphorical strategy reliant on the physical experiences that humans have had with the world throughout time in order to relay his modified myths. The analysis of Riordan’s myths reveals that as the changes between humanity’s experiences of the world became farther removed from the experiences that the ancient Greek’s had, so also Riordan’s myths became farther removed from the original myths. This functioned as a result of the modern conceptual metaphors that would have been outlandish within the ancient culture. Riordan altered these myths in order to bring them into the modern world in terms that his audience would understand and relate to. Each metaphor examined revealed at least one small connection back to the ancient myths, even if they were not all grounded in the ancient myths. These connections create a foundation for the structuring systems of metaphors.
and myths together rather than separate. The mapping of these modern metaphors onto the ancient myths reveals that myths themselves are structured by ontological and orientational experiences with the world, suggesting that such experiences have constantly been shaping the way humans interact with the world and continue to impose those boundaries not only on new ideas, but old ideas as well. I have attempted to show that the views of the modern world do not mirror the views of the ancient world, but that the same basic ontological and orientational experiences do structure those views. Therefore, not only do humans live by metaphors, but they also live by myths.
REFERENCES


