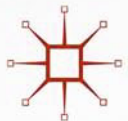


EDITED BY MONICA S. CYRINO & MEREDITH E. SAFRAN

# CLASSICAL MYTH ON SCREEN



# The Twilight of Olympus: Deicide and the End of the Greek Gods

*Vincent Tomasso*

The divinities of ancient Greece have been a staple of cinema from at least as early as Aphrodite's appearance in the Italian silent short film *La Caduta di Troia* (1911), and they have continued to appear regularly in films based on ancient Greek myths.<sup>1</sup> Other screen texts have reinforced the importance of the Greek gods in modern popular culture, from the *God of War* video game series (2005–), to the *Percy Jackson* film franchise (*The Lightning Thief*, 2010; *Sea of Monsters*, 2013), to the television series *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995–1999) and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001). But the Greek gods are also part of antiquity's "radical alterity";<sup>2</sup> that is, screen texts use the gods to mark out how different ancient Greece was from the modern West through their arrogance and fickleness. This vision of divinity is problematic for modern Western audiences whose cultures are heavily influenced by Christian ideas, and so some screen texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries foretell Olympus' demise.<sup>3</sup> This chapter analyzes inflections of the "twilight of the Greek gods" motif in films and television programs, to make sense of what they communicate about how the West wants to view the legacy of classical antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

## The Paradox of the Dying God

Although the idea of a god leaving permanently or dying is paradoxical to Western audiences familiar with the narratives of the Abrahamic religions, there are abundant examples of this phenomenon in the mythologies of

cultures from around the world, from ancient Egypt to Hawai'i.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the gods of ancient Greece are described in our earliest extant texts as “deathless and ageless for all their days,” starting with the eighth-century BC poet Homer.<sup>6</sup> As Jenny Strauss Clay and others have argued, the Greek gods are defined by their difference from typical mortal categories. They are born but never grow old.<sup>7</sup> They eat and drink only ambrosia and nectar, items that are not normally available to mortals. The very words “ambrosia” and “nectar” are negations of mortality. The root of “ambrosia” is related to the ancient Greek word for “mortal,” *brotos*, and negated by an alpha privative prefix. “Nectar” is composed of the root NEK- (as in *nekros*, “corpse”) and the suffix -TAR (related to “not” in Sanskrit). On the battlefield these gods can be injured and experience pain, though they cannot die from their wounds.<sup>8</sup>

The closest state to death for Greek gods is immobility: Hesiod describes how perjured gods are punished with a coma in which they are unable to breathe or speak (*Theogony* 793–98); similarly, in Homer’s *Iliad* the goddess Dione reports that Ares “would have died” (*Iliad* 5.388) had Hermes not freed him from his imprisonment in a bronze jar.<sup>9</sup> In a handful of instances, gods actually die in ancient Greek texts: a Cretan tradition held that there was a grave of Zeus, and the religious sect of Orphism taught that Dionysus, the god of wine, was dismembered, cannibalized, and then resurrected.<sup>10</sup> But the authors of these texts are philosophers and non-mainstream religious groups, so their depictions did not become part of the tradition that inspired modern storytellers such as Hamilton (1942), the d’Aulaires (1962), and Evslin (1966), whose popular retellings of Greek myth have greatly influenced screenwriters and producers.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the “twilight” motif is an emphatically modern addition to received ancient Greek myths.<sup>12</sup> Like countless adapters before them, modern artists add, subtract, and change various elements of the ancient Greek myths to accord with their own aims, historical contexts, and so on. This has been a defining aspect of ancient Greek myths throughout Western history; these narratives are capable of supporting a multiplicity of meanings that allow different societies to adapt them to suit their own needs. As Joanna Paul notes, “Since the stuff of ancient myth and literature is continually recast and reshaped by ancient authors too, we cannot dismiss filmmakers who display a similar attitude to the ancient material.”<sup>13</sup> Thus Roger Ebert misses the point when he criticizes *Wrath of the Titans* (2012) for its seeming ignorance of Greek myth: “It lacks a comprehensible story, and you won’t need your Cliff Notes on the Greek myths.”<sup>14</sup> Modern screen texts use the framework of Greek myth for their own purposes; through the invented idea of Olympus’ fall, audiences are encouraged to reflect on the relationship between the present world and the classical past.

In modern screen texts, the Greek gods' demise is attributed to their moral failure as characters. They are depicted as fickle and cruel through their manipulations of and behavior toward mortals and one another. But the ancient Greeks themselves usually did not understand their gods in this way. By mainstream ancient Greek standards, the gods are not cruel and have their reasons for acting as they do; mortals must respect the power of Olympus and accept their lots. Mortals are often depicted as resigned to the Olympians, as when Achilles declares that Zeus gives mortals both good and evil (*Iliad* 24.527–34) and when Odysseus says that Zeus destroyed his ship “because, I suppose, he wanted to” (*Odyssey* 17.424).<sup>15</sup>

Some ancient thinkers did pass negative judgments on the gods. As early as the sixth century BC, intellectuals like Xenophanes were railing against portrayals of the gods in myth, alleging that beings who lied, stole, and committed adultery were unworthy of worship.<sup>16</sup> In the late fifth century BC, the Athenian playwright Euripides had the hero Bellerophon proclaim that the Olympians did not exist.<sup>17</sup> In the next century, Plato asserted that poets lied when they depicted the gods as shape-shifters and that the true gods were perfect (*Republic* 381c–e).<sup>18</sup> Yet these writers do not reflect mainstream thinking, as eminent scholar of Greek religion Walter Burkert notes: “That criticism had touched only the surface, not the roots.”<sup>19</sup> These pagan criticisms of myth were then taken up by Christian thinkers of the second century AD and from there entered the mainstream Western tradition and its modern screen texts.<sup>20</sup>

The screen texts discussed in this chapter fall into two major groups based on how they inflect the twilight motif. In the first group, comprising the films *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and *Clash of the Titans* (1981) as well as an episode of the television series *Star Trek* titled “Who Mourns for Adonais?” (1967), the Greek gods vanish when humanity has progressed beyond them, although their essential role in developing and supporting humanity is acknowledged. In the second group, comprising the television series *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995–1999) and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) as well as the film *Clash of the Titans* (2010) and its sequel *Wrath of the Titans* (2012), the gods die violently on screen, which indicates how these texts radically reconfigure antiquity. The film *Immortals* (2011) combines elements from both groups in an entirely different way of conceptualizing the relationship between antiquity and the present moment.

### **The God Vanishes: Predicting Olympian Obsolescence**

The gods of the 1963 film *Jason and the Argonauts* have important roles in the narrative, both as aids to Jason during his search for the Golden Fleece and as frivolous game-players. On the one hand, when Jason first despairs

of ascertaining the location of the Fleece, he is transported to Olympus by Hermes and receives help from Hera, who advises him to go to Colchis. On the other hand, Jason appears as a diminutive piece on a game board as the imperious Olympians peer curiously at him, in a scene that drives home the point that the mortal world is strategically but self-interestedly manipulated by Olympus. We later see this game being played by Zeus and Hera, who do not view it as a matter of life and death (as it surely is to the mortals being manipulated) but instead as congenial entertainment to pass the time on Olympus. According to Ray Harryhausen, the visual effects creator for the production, the game—which does not appear in ancient Greek myths—was meant to depict the Olympians as “vulnerable and fickle.”<sup>21</sup>

The dual nature of the gods reinforces Jason’s lack of faith in them, and this distrust reaches a crescendo when his ship the *Argo* comes to the Clashing Rocks, which threaten to sink the ship with tumbling boulders. His companion Argus tells Jason to pray to the gods, but Jason cries out in frustration, “The gods of Greece are cruel! In time all men shall learn to do without them!” As if to emphasize this cruelty, the scene cuts to Zeus and Hera playing the game on Olympus. Hera responds to the *Argo*’s predicament by sending a fish-tailed sea god to help the ship through the narrow channel, an action that neutralizes Jason’s charge against the gods.

Yet Jason’s outburst provokes a fascinating comment from Hera to Zeus: “You are the god of many men, yet when those men no longer believe in you, then you will return to nothing.” Hera’s prophecy is a distant memory at the end of the film; in the last shot, Zeus and Hera are still very much in power as they watch a successful Jason sailing back to Greece, and Zeus remarks, “For Jason, there are other adventures.” *Jason and the Argonauts*, then, depicts the Greek gods both as morally compromised beings that humanity is about to outgrow and as instigators of mortal heroism. The gods, and the classical tradition that they represent, will soon ebb away, but for the moment they allow the protagonist, the central source of identification for the modern audience, to be successful in his adventures.

Desmond Davis’ 1981 *Clash of the Titans*, another film that Harryhausen worked on, also negatively depicts the Olympians as resentful, petty, and domineering. Zeus, for instance, punishes mortals harshly, and Thetis is jealously protective of her arrogant and brutish son. The gods conspire to oppress humanity, which becomes fearful of Olympus. In a scene near the end of the film, Hera reveals the rationale behind this behavior. The goddess voices her concerns about the victory of the hero Perseus over his monstrous foes, as well as his rescue of the princess Andromeda: “What if courage and imagination were to become everyday mortal qualities? What would become of us?” Zeus replies, “We would no longer be needed,” his words channeling *Jason*’s Hera. Once again the eclipse of Olympus is

predicted, but this will happen only once humans have evolved the right moral qualities.

The 1967 *Star Trek* episode “Who Mourns for Adonais?” (2.2) takes place five thousand years after classical antiquity, and it realizes *Jason’s* and *Clash’s* projections of Olympus’ fall. At the start of the episode, the crew of the *Enterprise* encounters a being who claims to be the Greek god Apollo and demands worship from them. Captain Kirk surmises that “Apollo” is an alien from an advanced civilization. The crew destroys the source of his power, and the alien “returns to the cosmos,” leaving for parts unknown like the other Greek gods before it. The idea that the gods of humanity are in fact aliens who visited Earth in the distant past, dubbed the “ancient astronaut theory,” is not unique to *Star Trek* and was popularized as a pseudoscientific theory in 1968 by Danish scholar Erich von Däniken’s book *Chariots of the Gods?* While Jason Colavito argues that the ancient astronaut theory is pseudoscience, an irrationalist doctrine in which “modern UFO cults . . . simply replace God and angels with aliens and extraterrestrials,” *Star Trek* transforms the theory into a rationalist tale of human progress.<sup>22</sup> The narrative of “Who Mourns for Adonais?” takes the theory to its logical conclusion; if the Greek gods were only ever technologically advanced aliens, they are no longer worthy of obeisance in the eyes of their erstwhile human subjects because those subjects have become just as advanced in the meantime. This realization is not shared by the controlling “Apollo,” who does not go into retirement gracefully but forces Kirk and crew to stay on his planet while he vociferously proclaims his divinity.

Despite this negative view of the Greek gods, the episode is not a secular criticism of religion. Kirk firmly rejects “Apollo,” but not all deities: “Mankind has no need for gods. We find the One quite adequate.” This view is never fully explained, though the 1967 audience probably would have interpreted this as a reference to monotheism.<sup>23</sup> “Who Mourns for Adonais?” intimates that humanity has progressed from false, cruel gods to a true, benevolent one, from paganism to Christianity. At the same time as the Greek gods are rejected as impediments to modernity, the cultural legacy of ancient Greece is praised by Kirk: “They gave us so much, the Greek civilization. Much of our culture and philosophy came from a worship of those beings.” Humanity’s advancement, including the progressive future of *Star Trek* itself, would not have been possible without Olympus.

### The End of Olympus: Deicide and Modernity

The television series *Xena: Warrior Princess* (hereafter *XWP*) and its parent series *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (hereafter *HLLJ*) are different from the previous set of texts in that they radically reframe what antiquity,

via the gods, means to the present. In the fifth season of *XWP*, the eponymous heroine kills a number of the Greek gods in a standoff over Xena's newborn daughter Eve, who the Fates have prophesied will be the end of Olympus. In the episode titled "Motherhood" (5.22), Xena kills Poseidon, Discord, Hephaestus, Hades, Deimos, Artemis, and Athena, and in "God Fearing Child" (5.12) Hercules kills his father Zeus. Deicide had also occurred earlier in both series: Xena slays a demonic Bacchus in "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" (2.4), and in *HTLJ* Callisto kills Strife ("Armageddon Now, Part 1," 4.13). This hostility toward Olympus is encoded in both series from the beginning, as the introductory sequences explicitly position their protagonists in opposition to the gods. The narrator of *HTLJ*'s introductory sequence proclaims, "The ancient gods were petty and cruel, and they plagued mankind with suffering," while one of the first images in *XWP*'s introductory sequence is Xena stabbing her sword skyward as Poseidon's giant figure looms over her menacingly.<sup>24</sup>

The gods are a source of conflict in the Hercules-Xena universe not just because they are morally reprehensible (for, among many other offenses, seeking to kill an innocent baby) but also because they represent patriarchy and conservative, traditional views.<sup>25</sup> The Olympians do not want the



**Figure 12.1** Xena challenges Poseidon in the introductory sequence of *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001). Renaissance Pictures/MCA Television.

status quo to change, a change that is represented by the values of the feminist protagonist Xena and of the humanist Hercules. Classical antiquity, as represented by the Greek gods, is a stifling and disabling force of the past whose constituents seek to prevent change at all costs. At the same time, the classical past becomes part of the audience's present through the figure of Xena, a warrior from the ancient world who espouses modern values and who reconfigures the divine past to suit present circumstances.

Xena is granted the power to kill gods through Eli, a representative of a mysterious divine force known as "the Light." A number of clues hint that "the Light" is to be interpreted as some form of the Judeo-Christian god: its followers are pacifists whose central teaching is love, its servant is the archangel Michael, and the name of its prophet Eli has a Hebrew origin. Thus Xena helps enact the movement from worship of the Greek gods to worship of the Judeo-Christian god, an event parallel to *Star Trek's* symbolic re-enactment of the movement from paganism to Christianity. Yet while *XWP* acknowledges this teleology as one of historical inevitability, it also deconstructs its morality, since both Hercules and Xena are at odds with Michael at various points.<sup>26</sup> As such, "the Light" and its servants are not presented as the "solution" to the problem of antiquity; in the end, the only forces worthy of veneration are love and relationships between human beings. Moreover, the only gods to survive Xena's purging of Olympus are Aphrodite and Ares, who are spared because of their relationships with the warrior princess and her friends. These Olympians are also important because, as the episode "The God You Know" (6.12) reveals, Aphrodite and Ares are necessary for the universe's continued balance as they embody the eternal concepts of Love and War.

"Damn the gods," a tagline for Louis Leterrier's film *Clash of the Titans* (2010), echoes the sentiments of *XWP* and *HTLJ* in its rejection of the Olympians. Many of the gods, including Zeus, are depicted as arrogant and misguided when faced with declining worship from mortals. But the film's true antagonist is Hades, the god of the Underworld, who manipulates Zeus into releasing a sea monster to punish the city of Argos and secretly plots to depose Zeus by channeling mortal prayers to himself and away from the other gods.<sup>27</sup> Caught in the middle is Perseus, a demigod son of Zeus who rejects his divine heritage but still manages to banish Hades back to the Underworld. In the conclusion, Zeus thanks his son for saving Olympus and offers him a place among the gods—which Perseus refuses, as he wants to live as an ordinary human.<sup>28</sup>

In the sequel *Wrath of the Titans* (2012), humans by and large no longer worship the gods, which results in the release of Kronos, a Titan from the previous divine generation. Kronos kills Zeus in battle; Ares, who conspires with Hades to free Kronos, kills Poseidon and Hephaestus; Perseus



kills Ares; and the surviving deities are stripped of their powers. Despite their arrogant and at times downright bad behavior, the gods of *Clash* and *Wrath* are more sympathetic than their counterparts in the screen texts considered above. With the exception of Ares, by the end of *Wrath* the Olympians have redeemed themselves by sacrificing their lives to defeat a threat to humanity's continued existence. Yet the release of Kronos is primarily the gods' fault, and so the impact of their sacrifice is to a large degree muted. Like *XWP*'s cynical take on the relationship between gods and mortals, *Wrath* depicts the deaths of the gods as necessary for the continued existence of humanity and the universe, although it reframes antiquity even more radically than *XWP*.

The Titans rear their ugly heads again in Tarsem Singh's 2011 film *Immortals*. In the climax of the film they kill several Olympians, after the mortal Hyperion releases them from their Olympian-imposed prison in order to get revenge on the gods because he blames them (wrongly) for the death of his family.<sup>29</sup> In the final battle, the hero Theseus kills Hyperion but is mortally wounded himself. He is brought to Olympus to become a god, for, as Zeus explains, "All men's souls are immortal. But the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine." This quote also appears at the beginning of the film on a title card that attributes it to Socrates; indeed, a version of the first sentence appears in Plato's *Phaedrus* (245c): "Every soul is immortal."<sup>30</sup> The second sentence, however, is invented and encourages a crypto-Christian interpretation of Theseus as a Christ-figure who suffers for humanity and is immortalized as a result.<sup>31</sup> In the final scene, Zeus describes how Theseus and the other gods wage "the fight against evil [that] never ends"—a sentiment that generalizes the classical tradition and makes it easily transferable to the Judeo-Christian context of the modern audience.

Theseus' deification is a direct reply to the rejection of godhood by Perseus at the end of Leterrier's *Clash* and so is a fundamentally different way of understanding the relationship between the classical past and the present moment.<sup>32</sup> Perseus refuses to become part of the corrupt classical tradition, while Theseus is assimilated into it, thus legitimizing it. Furthermore, the deaths of Athena, Herakles, and Apollo in *Immortals* effect a recalibration of tradition, much as Xena's culling of the Olympians does. *Immortals* produces a radical solution to the fissure between past and present by remolding antiquity to fit the Christian interpretation of the soul, as well as integrating humanity into Olympus.

### Conclusion

Greek myths are pervasive in Western cultures, particularly in screen texts, with the Olympians being one of the most prominent and recognizable

elements of many films and television programs. These screen texts often portray the gods as flighty and arrogant beings who manipulate mortals for their own ends, which contrasts with mainstream ancient Greek thought and instead parallels Christian ideas. Beginning in the ancient world, Christians criticized what they perceived as the immoral behavior of the classical gods, and this attitude filtered into Western tradition. As a result, some modern screen texts partake of the “twilight of the Greek gods” motif, in which the eventual passing of Olympus is foretold or the gods are violently killed on screen.

The motif has been inflected in two major ways. In the first, the gods’ influence on antiquity and their support of humanity’s progress is emphasized; in the second, the protagonists reframe the gods, sometimes thinning their ranks and in other cases eliminating them altogether. At first glance, the twilight motif might imply that these texts are advocating that the modern world be completely severed from antiquity. As the preceding analysis has demonstrated, however, the twilight motif should be interpreted not as the passing of the classical tradition but rather as a strategy for reflecting on and reconstituting classical antiquity’s meaning for the present moment.

### Notes

1. I would like to thank the editors for their extensive comments on an earlier draft that clarified my thinking considerably. William Duffy and Philip Horky, as well as the audiences of earlier iterations of this paper at the 2012 Film and History Conference and the 2013 Classical Association of Atlantic States Conference, also made helpful comments and criticisms.
2. Gamel and Blondell (2005) 120.
3. While myth and ritual are interrelated phenomena in the ancient Greek world (see Burkert [1985] 8–9), this chapter focuses on the tendency of screen texts to engage with myth, possibly the heritage of Christian apologists attacking pagan culture; see Graf (2011) 320. By contrast, screen texts tend to depict the ancient ritual system as more or less analogous with the Christian system, and therefore as less problematic—a topic that deserves its own study.
4. Since film and television are closely connected with modernity, the values of their texts can be analyzed together profitably. Paul (2010) 141 notes, “Television ought not to be seen as a mere component, or sub-theme, of the study of cinematic receptions, but it is a medium with an obvious relationship to cinema.”
5. De Rose and Garry (2005) 17–19; see also Frazer (1935) 3–12.
6. This poetic formula occurs four times in the Homeric corpus (*Iliad* 8.539 and *Odyssey* 5.136, 7.257, 23.336). *Odyssey* 7.94 is a variation on it, and the words “deathless” and “ageless” describe the condition of godhood at *Iliad* 2.447,

- 12.323 and *Odyssey* 5.218. See Clay (1981/82) 112 and Garcia Jr. (2013) 162 n.8. All translations of the Greek in this chapter are my own.
7. Clay (1981/82). See also Sissa and Detienne (2000) 77–81 and Garcia Jr. (2013) 177–78.
  8. For example, the Greek hero Diomedes spears Ares in the stomach, but Zeus orders his wound to be healed “because he was not at all mortal” (*Iliad* 5.901). See Purves (2006), who argues that the Homeric gods’ bodies experience mortality when they fall through space; see also Garcia Jr. (2013) 159, and more generally Llewellyn-Jones (2007).
  9. For the text of *Theogony*, see West (1966); for the text of the *Iliad*, see Allen (1931). Slatkin (1991) 68 notes, “Binding is the ultimate penalty in the divine realm, where by definition there is no death. It serves not to deprive an opponent of existence, but to render him impotent.” See also Garcia Jr. (2013) 222, who argues that “we cannot dismiss that Homer posits the god’s death as an actual possibility” and further that for a god death is the experience of mortal attributes like grief and pain.
  10. See Burkert (1985) 127, 296–98.
  11. Meckler (2006) 10, 176 cites Hamilton, the d’Aulaires, and Evslin as the most popular retellings of Greek myths read in pre-college education.
  12. See Phillips (1990) for an analysis of a version of the twilight motif in modernist literature, which he links in part to Sir James Frazer’s popularization of the “dead and rising god” in *The Golden Bough* (1935).
  13. Paul (2010) 147. There are countless examples of this process in ancient Greek and Roman cultures. See also Morales (2007) 23–26 and Winkler (2009) 247.
  14. Ebert (2012).
  15. For text of the *Odyssey*, see von der Mühl (1962).
  16. For text of Xenophanes, see West (1972).
  17. A relevant fragment of Euripides’ play *Bellerophon* is translated into English in Trzaskoma et al. (2004) 107–8. For more about the complex question of Euripides’ relationship with mainstream Greek religion, see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 294–97.
  18. For the text of Plato’s *Republic*, see Burnet (1931).
  19. Burkert (1985) 246.
  20. On Christian views of Greek mythology, see Young (1979) 48–50, Lanzillotta (2010) 448–57, and more generally Graf (2011). Lanzillotta points out that ancient Christian criticisms of pagan gods are connected to Jewish ideas, and so we should understand the roots of the twilight motif to be Judeo-Christian rather than just Christian.
  21. Quoted in Harryhausen and Dalton (2004) 155. Harryhausen also says that the film shows how “the gods are seen to *play* with the fates of mankind” (emphasis mine).
  22. Colavito (2005) 331. The “rationalizing approach” is another strategy, like the twilight motif, that asks the audience to interpret the relationship between antiquity and the present moment; see Paul (2013a) 108.
  23. Asa (1999) 45–52 dismisses the implications of Kirk’s statement and links the episode (and *Star Trek* as a whole) to secularism, while Winkler (2009) 89–90

argues that Kirk's words are an "affirmation of religion" in spite of the rest of the episode's atmosphere. "The One" is probably a direct reference to, or at least would have been understood as, Christ's title in the Nicene Creed: "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ."

24. This scene was made especially for the introductory sequence and does not appear in any episode of the first season, according to visual effects supervisor Kevin O'Neill (Scapperotti (1996) 47). Xena's conflict with Poseidon does eventually appear in the second season episode "Ulysses" (2.19), which demonstrates that, at least initially, producers wanted to establish the idea that Xena was opposed to the gods, independent of any narrative continuity.
25. See Futrell (2003) 13: "XWP reworks notions of heroism and history, destabilizing antiquity and our assumptions about its unchanging aspect." See also Kennedy (2003) 45–47.
26. Hercules fights to stop Michael from unleashing the apocalypse in "Revelations" (*HTLJ* 5.21), and Xena refuses the archangel's order to kill Aphrodite in "The God You Know" (*XWP* 6.21); on the latter, see Kennedy (2003) 46–47.
27. When Hades is the antagonist, he often has characteristics of Satan, as Solomon (2008) 38 notes of his appearance in Disney's *Hercules* (1997).
28. The rejection of immortality by human protagonists also occurs in ancient Greek texts: for example, Odysseus rejects offers of marriage and immortality from the goddesses Calypso and Circe (*Odyssey* Books 5 and 10).
29. The release of the Titans and the threat of their conquest of the world is a theme in screen texts about ancient Greece; see further description and analysis by Gellar-Goad (2013).
30. For the text of Plato's *Phaedrus*, see Burnet (1901).
31. On the characteristics of the Christ-figure in film, see Kozlovic (2004). Compare Theseus' apotheosis to "Hercules," Episode 3 of the *Clash of the Gods* television series on the History Channel (2009), in which the narrator parallels Hercules' labors, death, and apotheosis to those of Christ.
32. Kratos, the mortal protagonist of the *God of War* video game series (2005–), has some parallels to Theseus and Xena, since he kills the corrupt Olympians and eventually replaces them. Like Theseus, the player in the present world changes the classical tradition and becomes part of it.

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