

**“THE DRAGON-GREEN, THE LUMINOUS, THE DARK, THE SERPENT-
HAUNTED SEA”: MONSTERS, LANDSCAPE AND GENDER IN *CLASH OF THE
TITANS* (1981 AND 2010)¹**

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The films of Ray Harryhausen generate a powerful evocation of place as captured in his *mise-en-scène*. The films create a world that feels very immediate and real to the viewer, yet remains strangely other – they have one foot in reality and the other in fantasy. That effect arises, in part, from Harryhausen’s ability to manipulate his landscapes to best effect. This article explores the connection that the original *Clash of the Titans* and its 2010 remake create between monsters and the landscapes in which they appear. The 1981 *Clash* creates a strong conceptual link between the sea, the feminine and the monstrous;² in contrast, the 2010 *Clash* associates monsters with the underworld and Hades.³

As Ames notes, “traditionally, landscape has served to convey a sense of locale, creating in turn a meaningful site where individual and social identities are formed” (Ames 2009: 57). The role of landscape in the *Clash* films works to create an environment in which monsters become truly monstrous.⁴ That the monsters occupy an integral space within the film’s world is a vital part of their impact, particularly in comparison to the monsters from Harryhausen’s earlier films. The rhedosaurus of *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), for example, was released from a polar ice cap melted by a nuclear blast, while the octopus of *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955) was disturbed by nuclear tests near its lair. These creatures conform to a trope of 1950s monster films, in that the monsters in question tend to live in places separate from humans until mankind’s meddling unleashes them (Booker 2001: 139-40). In both *Clash* films, by contrast, the monsters form an integral part of the world they occupy, and humans may encounter them at any moment; they are a constant presence in the world that the films build.

This article examines both films’ treatments of three central monsters who illustrate the differing relationships they have with the landscapes they inhabit and the corresponding associations between gender and the monstrous – the Kraken, Calibos and Medusa. I should say a word here about the terminology of monster. As Eleanor OKell has noted in her contribution to this volume, Ray Harryhausen has often insisted upon the humanity of his creations, contending that they are “creatures, always creatures, never monsters” (Harryhausen and Dalton 2009: 133). My use of the word ‘monster’ in this paper draws on the fact that the particular creatures I wish to examine were designed to inspire fear and anxiety in the films’ audience, so that they may experience cathartic relief when the threat is conquered. Equally, while Harryhausen feels humanely towards his creatures, the animation team of *Clash 2010* do not appear to have shared his sentiment. Given this paper’s shift of scope, I have decided to reappropriate the label ‘monster’, and to explore the force of the monstrous within the landscape it occupies.

CLASH OF THE TITANS 1981

The original *Clash of the Titans* is dominated by an associative matrix of the monstrous feminine. The modern connection between the woman and the monster was first established by Freud (1922) and Neumann (1952), who both dwelt upon the figure of Medusa; their observations have offered a fruitful interpretative framework for film studies, particularly those works belonging to the horror genre.⁵ While *Clash 1981* does not engage with the monstrous feminine in the same way as films like *The Hunger* (1983) or *Aliens* (1986), it relies on the assumption that the feminine is the generative principle of the monstrous. This connection is primarily achieved by creating a strong role for Thetis, as the goddess

whose quest for revenge drives the main plot and as the primary creator of the monsters that threaten the protagonists; this implicitly creates a link between the monstrous and the sea.⁶

The choice of filming location further reinforces the connection between danger and the sea. The site of sacrifice where Andromeda is offered up is obviously coastal, with cliffs, pathways and a bay; this *mise-en-scène* bears strong resemblance to the opening scenes of the film where Danae and the infant Perseus were thrown into the sea by her father, King Akrisius. At the scene of sacrifice, the sea is calm, and the impending presence of the Kraken is responsible for the scene's sense of fear; however, when Danae is cast into the waves, the sea itself creates anxiety, since it is stormy and turbulent. This opening scene is thus vital in introducing the sea as a site of danger: the waves discomfort the men throwing the coffin containing Danae and Perseus into the water, and Akrisius is soaked by a wave as he prepares to give his final order. The dousing he receives foreshadows the destruction of the city of Argos by the Kraken, which Zeus orders as a punishment for Akrisius' cruelty and unpaternal behaviour.⁷ Since the scene of Danae being cast into the waves is the first thing the film's audience see after the MGM lion, the sea is immediately presented to the viewer as a dangerous and unrestrained force which is perilous to mankind, and indeed has been selected as the site of Danae's intended death for that reason.

The sea as geographical feature is most closely associated with danger through the Kraken, who provides one of the film's most iconic images. Its antecedents include the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) and Harryhausen's own Ymir from *20 Million Miles to Earth* (1957); the result is a clearly masculine, scaly sea monster which deserves the fear it evokes. However, the Kraken remains subservient to the monstrous feminine. Thetis orders the monster to be unleashed on Joppa unless Andromeda is sacrificed to it after her mother Cassiopeia has uttered blasphemy in Thetis' temple, even though the god Poseidon presides over the mechanics of opening the gate of the Kraken's underwater cave.⁸ Thetis may be a surprising choice for the principal female goddess, given the precedent set by Hera's prominent role in the earlier *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963); however, in *Clash* 1981, Hera remains largely on the sidelines, and Thetis is upgraded from the *Iliad's* sea-nymph mother of Achilles to a powerful goddess of the sea in her own right. Thetis also appears to be Poseidon's official consort – Calibos even refers to him as her “devoted Lord Poseidon” when appealing for her aid. The divine pair share the control of the Kraken, but Thetis' animosity towards Andromeda specifically pushes the plot forward and unleashes the monster.

The film's construction of the Kraken taps into the elemental fear associated with the sea by labelling the monster as the last of the Titans, which takes advantage of the mythical association between the Titans and uncontrolled chaos. However, *Clash* 1981 allows itself a mythological loophole and also identifies Medusa as a Titan – thus allowing the Stygian witches to cackle “a Titan against a Titan!”, and for the film to create pleasing narrative neatness as one monster is defeated by another.⁹ The death of the Kraken symbolises mankind's conquest of the dangerous element of the sea; Pegasus' triumphant flight out of the ocean at the conclusion of the battle underlines that triumphant narrative.

The role of the monstrous feminine as a procreative power in *Clash* 1981 is exemplified in the character of Calibos. Calibos himself appears to the viewer exclusively in his monstrous form, never as a human. We do, however, see the transformation scene in which Zeus changes his shape, via the transmutation of a terracotta figurine, as punishment for killing all of a sacred herd of flying horses except Pegasus. Despite this dramatic incident, it is not Calibos' appearance which is brought to the foreground of the storyline, but his parentage: the relationship between Calibos and his mother, the goddess Thetis, becomes a central focal point for the film's narrative, and the connection between Thetis' role as mother and as sea goddess is developed as a key plot element. The centrality of maternity may provide a reason for Hera's lower profile in the film; as Zeus' faithful wife, she is unable to have mortal children, which is not a limitation that Thetis shares.¹⁰

Many of Thetis' vengeful actions in the film are driven by maternal love.¹¹ Her animosity towards Andromeda arises from Andromeda's refusal to marry Calibos after his transformation; she wishes to inflict equal suffering on her son's ex-fiancée as her son himself is experiencing and vows that if her son cannot marry Andromeda, no man shall. This leads to the ritualistic solving of a riddle which any man seeking Andromeda's hand in marriage must complete, with failure leading to death; only Perseus' intrepid expedition into Calibos' swamp breaks the deadly cycle. Calibos then seeks Thetis'

support in avenging himself against Perseus, who has cut off his hand; he makes the case that by insulting him, Perseus has also insulted the goddess and thus deserves punishment. Thetis ruefully admits that she cannot touch Perseus, who is under the protection of his father Zeus – but that those close to him are still within her sphere of influence. She thus finds a way to harm Perseus indirectly, by punishing Queen Cassiopeia for her unwise words and demanding the sacrifice of Andromeda to the Kraken.

The close connection between Thetis and Calibos adds a layer of rich ambiguity to Thetis' motivation, since her anger arises from maternal affection rather than inexplicable hatred. Her sense of injustice against her son drives her to transfer Perseus from the island of Seriphos to Joppa in the first place, to complicate what she sees as an unfairly easy life. The depiction of Thetis as a concerned mother builds on the most ancient representation we have of her in the *Iliad*, where she petitions Zeus on Achilles' behalf (1.488-530) and agitates for Hephaestus to create mythical armour for him (18.368-467). However, in a development of that theme, Thetis' anger on her son's behalf becomes a driving force in the rationale for her interventionist actions in the lives of those around him.

Calibos' physical location throughout the film reinforces his maternal heritage, since every time that we see him on-screen, he occupies a location connected with water. The very first time he is mentioned, Zeus observes that Thetis gave him the Wells of the Moon to rule; while the context indicates this is the name for an area near Joppa, the connection between his identity and his control over watery areas is already established. Perseus initially encounters Calibos in a swamp, which is clearly coded as a negative location – it is fetid and unpleasant, and occupied by alligators, atmospherically croaking frogs and barbaric pygmies.¹² As a wetland, the swamp is fundamentally liminal, neither sea nor land, just as Calibos himself is neither man nor beast.¹³ Foucault would have categorized it as a heterotopia of deviation, in that it serves as the location for an individual whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the rest of society (Foucault 1967); the swamp signals that what lives there is not in harmony with the rest of civilization, as does the Kraken's underwater cage.¹⁴ Andromeda's spirit travels to the swamp in a cage carried by a giant vulture which functions as a transitional creature between the palace of Joppa and Calibos' realm, and Perseus must capture Pegasus in order to follow her. Once there, he manages to avoid engagement with the occupants through the wearing of a helmet with the power of invisibility, but eventually Calibos spots his mysterious footprints in the sand and tracks him down.

The wrestling match between the two characters, which culminates in Perseus cutting off Calibos' hand, again unites the key elements of space, gender and danger – Calibos has, as it were, inherited his mother's affinity with water, hence his preference for a swamp-based dwelling. It is also fitting that Perseus experiences his first battle in water, given its connection with danger and the monstrous. Even Perseus' final encounter with Calibos takes place next to a lake, where the mechanical owl Bubo has the bad luck to be lassoed into the water during the fight, and walks out spluttering to himself afterwards. This final battle scene is a typical example of how the original *Clash* locates combat encounters: while Perseus and his companions travel through mountainous territory and forests, they never engage in battle with them. The fight scenes take place exclusively in the proximity of water, thus adding to the film's characterisation of such locations as perilous.

The final figure who literally embodies the monstrous feminine is Medusa, whose very presence on film raises some interesting visual issues. As a female object of the cinematic gaze, she also subverts ideas of cinematic visual pleasure, since she does not conform to the conventional norms of appearance, nor does she invite the female viewer to derive pleasure from imagining what it is like to be her.¹⁵ Although as a female character, she is "fixed in the position of icon, spectacle, or image to be looked at", it is she, not the male protagonists, who "commands at once the action and the landscape, and who occupies the position of subject of vision" – for the male protagonist to do so means his death (De Lauretis 1987: 44). Yet the audience has the privilege of seeing her outside the world where her gaze holds power – she is made powerless by her representation, yet remains monstrous.

The representation of Medusa's origin myth in popular culture can be very revealing, since Ovid's description of her rape by Poseidon (*Metamorphoses* 4.794-803) is an uncomfortable myth to retell. The 1981 *Clash* glosses over the details, saying that she was a priestess of Aphrodite who "was

seduced by Poseidon".¹⁶ The couple made love in Aphrodite's temple, and Aphrodite was so jealous that she punished Medusa by transforming her into a monster. However, the sea still maintains responsibility for generating monsters, and the link with the feminine survives by virtue of Medusa's gender. Medusa only appears on-screen in monstrous form, and Harryhausen was clear about the effect he was aiming for: "I designed her to possess a mesmerizing ugliness built on a beautiful bone structure" (Harryhausen and Dalton 2009: 272).¹⁷

Medusa's physical location also reinforces the connection between the monstrous and water. She lives on the Isle of the Dead, in the river Styx on the edge of the Underworld, which is by definition surrounded with water, and must be reached by travelling on a ferry – which in turn is piloted by the Ferryman, who is another monster. Medusa's actual lair is a ruined temple, and there are functional torches and braziers, but there is more water here than one might expect – the soundtrack features dripping water as a prominent aural element of the atmosphere, and the construction of the building includes an *impluvium* as a central feature.¹⁸ It even obligingly bubbles when a soldier falls into it after being shot by one of Medusa's arrows. Like Calibos, who had similar topographical affinities, this monster is surrounded by water, lives within water, and has to be reached by travelling over water – water establishes a vital element of what it is to be monstrous.

The original *Clash's* Medusa most obviously participates in the connection between the monstrous and the feminine because of her gender. In addition, it is the blood from her severed head, which Calibos allows to drip onto the ground, that creates the scorpions which Perseus must fight before finally defeating Calibos himself.¹⁹ That Medusa's blood should generate monsters is in keeping with a long-standing tradition of uneasiness with female bodily fluids of all kinds as well as mythic tradition.²⁰ The creation of the scorpions takes a further step towards the othering and the monstrosity of the feminine by literally giving those fluids the generative properties which they are suspected of having.

CLASH OF THE TITANS 2010

Clash 2010 abandons the principle of the monstrous feminine, and replaces it with a framework which prioritises the masculine and the underworld as the primary generators of the monstrous. These ideas conflate the Greek underworld with Christianised stereotypical visions of hell; they also relocate the locus of the monstrous from a real world to an imaginary safe space, reflecting a shift in social attitudes to monsters and their vanquishers in the epic genre since *Clash* 1981 was conceived.

The Kraken serves as an initial example of this shift in attitude. First and foremost, the monster is on a much larger visual scale than its predecessor, and reflects the changing expectations about what monsters should look like over the intervening thirty years. It shares some similarities with the Rancor monster from *Return of the Jedi* (1983) and the oliphant of the more recent *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, for example, and benefits from the increased range of CGI technology. It also operates on a much larger scale, towering over the city of Argos – Andromeda, offered as a sacrifice, looks more like a light *hors d'oeuvre* than a substantial meal. More importantly, the pedigree of the Kraken as a monster is outlined in the initial voiceover of the film, establishing its monstrous genealogy. *Clash* 2010 makes it explicit that Hades gave birth to the Kraken from his own flesh, thus appropriating the generative function of the feminine in general, and specifically of the feminine and the sea which Thetis possessed in *Clash* 1981. The Kraken is not the only monster which owes its origin to Hades; the peculiar flying monsters which plague characters at key stages in the narrative, most critically pursuing Perseus and Pegasus in an attempt to steal Medusa's head from them in a climatic airborne chase sequence, are created by Hades himself dematerialising and reshaping his essence into the bat-like creatures.²¹

The Kraken's origin from Hades' own flesh underlines the attempts of the 2010 *Clash* to stick to an arguably authentic mythical paradigm in constructing its theological world. For instance, the film establishes that the universe is governed according to a "canonical" tripartite model of divine rule – Zeus rules the land, Poseidon rules the sea and Hades is relegated to the underworld.²² The Garden of Stygia, home of the witches, is introduced as the spot where the Kraken defeated the Titans, providing a riff on the Hesiodic gigantomachy entirely in keeping with the fluid evolving nature of myth

and the film's own elaborately created mythos. The film also includes at least two sweeping shots of the whole pantheon of the Olympians in shimmering statuesque glory, although most of its members are chronically underused and never appear anywhere except the scene-setting panoramic sequences.²³ However, this desire to adhere to a more traditional division of power comes at a price. The film has no place for an upstart Thetis who forgets her Homerically sanctioned place, but it also has no space for the Athena of the original *Clash* who refuses to obey Zeus' order to part with her owl, and certainly no parallel of the scene where Thetis recounts, to the amusement of the other goddesses, how Zeus tried to thrust his amorous advances upon her in the shape of a cuttlefish and she repelled him by turning into a shark. The voices of goddesses are completely silenced; Hades' assumption of the generative role and 2010 *Clash's* attempts to adhere to a more strictly "canonical" mythic model combine to repress the female agency of the original *Clash*.

Calibos originally enters the story of *Clash* 2010 as the human king Acrisius, who was not Danae's father, but rather her husband; instead of death, his transformation into a monster is Zeus' punishment for throwing his wife and the child Perseus into the sea. Unlike his 1981 antecedent, he has no divine lineage or innate connection to water. He remains passive, lurking in his underground den after his transformation, until Hades visits him and invites him to pursue Perseus to extirpate his own shame and help Hades in his fight against Zeus. Indeed, Hades not only unleashes him, but breathes part of his essence into him, thus converting the malformed Acrisius into the monstrous Calibos. His motive arises from hatred without any remnant of the mother-son bond that complicated the character's previous incarnation. His dwelling bears more resemblance to a mini-underworld than to the swamp of his predecessor, and his power is drawn exclusively from the masculine Hades.

Calibos' body also takes on generative qualities; after Perseus has cut off Calibos' hand, the dismembered hand and blood from the wound create the scorpions which, in turn, provide the CGI artists with an opportunity for a massive set piece battle. In the 1981 *Clash*, Medusa's blood creates the scorpions; not only has the creation of monsters moved from female to male blood, but the scorpions are quite clearly the direct result of Hades' influence on Calibos, and thus a further creation of his. They participate in the overall association of the monstrous with the masculine in general, Hades in particular, and the underworld geographically. Indeed, the final encounter that Perseus has with Calibos occurs in the underworld, outside Medusa's lair, rather than by a lake located on the journey back to rescue Andromeda. The separation of Calibos from the sea and the feminine and his connection to the masculine and the underworld is complete.

Both representations of Calibos, who is the most humanoid of all Harryhausen's creations and the only one to have a speaking part in his films, belong to a long lineage of monsters which interrogate "the human/monster boundary" (Booker 2001: 154).²⁴ Such monsters go back to canonical figures of nineteenth-century horror fiction, such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, with the implicit warning that the monstrous is always within us, awaiting release. However, the films diverge as to the source of this potential. The Calibos of the 1981 *Clash*, it is implied, is transformed into a monster because his inner nature is already monstrous; for the 2010 Calibos, there is a clear distinction between disfigurement as punishment for Acrisius and the activation of the Hades-infused Calibos. This makes 2010 *Clash* somewhat more optimistic about human nature, since the seed of monstrosity comes from an external force, not from within the human. Yet this results in a more pessimistic picture of human free will; the 2010 Calibos is ultimately manipulated by a darker power, while the 1981 Calibos is fully autonomous as he performs the actions which lead to his own monstrosity.²⁵

Medusa also reflects *Clash* 2010's shift in the nature of the monstrous, although her depiction becomes both more complex and less sympathetic as a result. Her origin story is told both more honestly and more cruelly. Io, who plays the combined roles of wise guide and love interest through the film, narrates Medusa's rape by Poseidon and Athena's lack of pity in transforming her despite her innocence in the matter; she begs Perseus to show some compassion to this once mortal woman. However, any sense of sympathy that the audience might have fostered is shattered by Perseus' instruction to his men as they enter Medusa's temple to "not look the bitch in the eyes". Given the victim-blaming of the origin story and Perseus' callous attitude, it is brutal that Medusa is depicted with the facial features of an attractive human girl and as otherwise conforming to conventional female beauty norms, until the moment that she attacks.²⁶ The monstrous feminine in this case is prevented from being fully monstrous.

Medusa's representation also reflects a social shift in attitudes towards women in America post-9/11, as Susan Faludi observed. She noticed that American culture generated a number of responses to the tragedy, including "the denigration of capable women, the magnification of manly men, the heightened call for domesticity, the search for and sanctification of helpless girls" (2007: 14). From this angle, Medusa's hyper-beauty and her physical strength become the symbols of her monstrosity; as a self-sufficient female, she must be destroyed in order for the helpless, self-sacrificing Andromeda to be saved and for the myth of invincible masculinity to be preserved. Medusa offers the perfect subject for subjugation, since "feminists have long seen Medusa as an emblem of emancipation, and protestors against patriarchy and "Momism" find Medusa the all-too-perfect emblem of what is wrong with powerful women" (Garber and Vickers 2000: 3). The hyper-attractive Medusa, then, provides an extra shift in misogyny reinforced by the shift in cultural context – even beautiful women can be monsters at their core.

In terms of geographical location, once more Medusa is sited across the Styx, although this time the place is explicitly spoken of as her prison rather than her home, and she must still be reached by the ferry. But other than a token shot of lost souls surfacing and disappearing under the river's surface, Charon's ferry travels over mist, without a visual of water, and thus gives the scene a convincing otherworldly feel. The temple itself is also located explicitly in the underworld rather than on its border – some of Perseus' party leave him after the visit to the Stygian witches for precisely this reason. Walking into the land of monsters is an act of bravery in which some of the characters, fairly enough, will not participate. The transfer of Medusa's location from a hypothetically accessible island over the border into the fantasy of the underworld is made even clearer by the visual representation of her ruined temple dwelling, which is built above a chasm containing a lava river, and where arbitrary plumes of flame spit from hidden cracks in the rock. Fire, rather than water, becomes the dominant element of the location. The emphasis on fire signals a very modern understanding of what an underworld should look like, in particular evoking a Christian conception of the fiery pits of hell;²⁷ while no explicit mention of that vision of the world is made, the Medusa of *Clash 2010* is marked as a creature of the underworld through that associative conceptual link as well as her literal location.

WRATH OF THE TITANS 2012

It would be remiss of me not to offer a few observations on the 2012 sequel to *Clash 2010*. In many ways, *Wrath* preserves the associative matrix created in its predecessor, although it does strengthen its narrative coherence by continuing to explore the familial tensions on Olympus. The plot revolves around the attempt of Kronos, the father of the Olympian governing triad, to escape from Tartarus, whose walls are collapsing now humans have stopped praying to the gods. The film makes great use of interfamilial drama, particularly the need for Hades to forgive Zeus for throwing him into the underworld, and Ares' inability to reconcile himself to Perseus' status as Zeus' 'favourite son'. The interpersonal dynamics stiffen the film's sinews, although without the appearance of a single goddess or indeed Perseus' unnamed wife, whose death is narrated in the opening voice-over – the film is solely interested in exploring the pressures of (single) fatherhood and brotherhood.

Wrath does, however, preserve the link between the monstrous and the underworld. The first threats to appear are fire monsters escaping from Tartarus; Perseus' first battle is with a two-headed chimera breathing fire and threatening to destroy his peaceful fishing village. The underworld threatens to break into the normal world of human existence; only the resolution of familial conflict and the joint forces of Perseus, Zeus and Hades are able to destroy Kronos and prevent the underworld from breaking out of its sanctioned borders. The correlation between monster and landscape is particularly clear in the final battle scene, where the armies of humankind are ranged before a volcano that spits out lava men. When Kronos finally escapes the underworld, the volcano itself stands up; Kronos' body is represented as the landscape literally being possessed by the monstrous. Where previously the horizon was not in and of itself threatening, the presence of Kronos changes its nature. The landscape itself becomes a threat, but only when the generative force of the underworld powers it – and in terms of generative power, grandfather Kronos is pretty potent.

Wrath, then, maintains *Clash 2010*'s narrow focus on masculinity and the dependence of the monstrous on the underworld. However, it creates new plot concerns by allowing the physical boundaries of the underworld itself to become frangible, whereas previously the presence of Hades was sufficient to invoke the underworld's power. The danger that the underworld might engulf the ordinary world and destroy it is sufficiently threatening to resolve familial conflict and bring masculine valour to the forefront of the action. The monstrous enemy here *is* the boundary – since Perseus ensures that boundary remains unbroken, the monstrous remains within its proper place.

CULTURE CLASH

Films dealing with the classical world must be understood in terms of what they tell us “about the receiving culture's view of antiquity *and of itself*” (Paul 2007: 307). What, then, do *Clash 1981* and *2010* tell us about the uses of antiquity, both in their own right and in dialogue with each other?

The first part of an answer should address the nature of films as collective cultural texts, and ask who takes responsibility for the comparative insignificance of women in *Clash 2010*. *Clash 1981* provides a strongly empowering experience for female viewers, since it includes multiple depictions of strong female agency in the characters of the goddesses and active regal women. Cassiopeia appears as a queen without a king, speaking of “my kingdom” when presenting Andromeda for potential suitors;²⁸ while her praise of her daughter's beauty is rash, she otherwise appears to be a wise and responsible ruler. By contrast, the *2010 Clash* inserts a king of Argos into the narrative and kills off the queen at her first appearance; Andromeda has no involvement in the quest narrative for her own salvation; the wise mentor, a role taken by the hammy playwright Ammon in *Clash 1981*, is neutered by Io's transformation into a girlfriend figure as *Clash 2010* progresses. Although Andromeda in *Wrath* takes on the role of general, ultimately she is reinscribed as the romantic interest when the film ends with Agenor egging Perseus on to kiss her. The only other significant woman in *Wrath* is the hapless Korrina, who prays to Ares and thus reveals the party's location to him; she is only dignified with a name after Ares has suggestively run her through with his phallic sword.

The changes in the function of women are the result of the wider context of cultural production, including the cinema industry's shift towards the 19 year old male target viewer in the 1980s, which Maltby describes as “a basic commercial conservatism” (Maltby 2003: 25). Interlinked with this is the rise in commodification of films since 1981, and particularly of tie-in computer games (Maltby 2003: 190); certain scenes in *Clash 2010* do seem to have been produced specifically with the dynamics of gaming in mind.²⁹ This has a knock-on effect on the narrative, since a male hero's goal-driven narrative will inevitably privilege a certain sort of plot structure and place women in the position of a passive reward rather than active players. In this context, Andromeda cannot be part of her own rescue, thus reinforcing the underlying patriarchal narrative of the myth.

The second element at play in both films is the nature of the hero within the epic genre. Perseus' heroism in *Clash 1981* is situated at a chronological tipping point; as Harryhausen himself says, “even though *Clash* had proved itself at the box office, the trend for fantasy had now shifted to the anti-hero with his passion for violence and mayhem” (Harryhausen and Dalton 2009: 280). Neither does the film give an opportunity for heroism by exploring the anxieties about nuclear winter expressed by later films such as *The Day After* (1983) and the British television drama *Threads* (1983), although one might interpret Medusa's head as an all-destructive weapon that must be appropriated and neutralised by a responsible power.³⁰ Perseus' heroism requires him to achieve his destiny, suggesting a divinely ordained path for him that leads to his eventual catastrophe; part of that destiny involves negotiating his relationship between the monsters and the landscape that surround him, and developing a mature, functional *modus operandi* in a world of gods and myth.

By contrast, the Perseus of *Clash 2010* is constantly struggling against his partial divinity, and his narrative is more concerned with his coming to terms with his own identity as demi-god than with his role as a hero.³¹ Courcoux has argued that modern historical epic films “reveal more than ever nostalgia for a transcendental masculinity that has been allegedly dismantled by the decadence of modern civilization” (Courcoux 2009: 38); that is, by presenting the battered male body as spectacle for a heartless mass audience, and by returning to the idea of the “atemporal hero”, these films seek

to redefine what it is to be masculine in a world where technology threatens traditional gender roles. If this reading has any force, Perseus' victory over the CGI-generated Medusa and Kraken becomes a genuine victory of transcendental masculinity over the technological. The world of myth provides a safe space for the reconstruction of a masculine identity within a classical context away from what Courcoux labels the feminizing elements of modern technology.

Finally, the shift of geography from the 'real' world to the underworld also reflects a shift in socio-cultural context. The move to the underworld is more in keeping with the monstrous as theorized through Kristeva's idea of the abject or that which threatens life, where the most abject thing possible is a corpse; monsters such as zombies and vampires participate in this theoretical matrix.³² For *Clash 2010* to locate the monstrous in the underworld, then, in some ways makes more sense theoretically, but there is something more at work in the film's decision to remove the locus of threatening encounter from the real world. In the original *Clash*, danger is associated with an everyday yet dramatic seascape, a space that an audience might actually enter themselves. One of the most powerful elements of Harryhausen's work is his ability to make his creatures move in the real world, to make them engage with physical environments in a way that makes them believable for the audience. The 2010 *Clash*, however, moves the locus of danger into a mythical space, the underworld. The decision to shift space reflects directly upon the film's genesis in a post-9/11 world; moving back into what Courcoux would call the 'safe space' of a pre-technological age, the film goes even further in placing monsters in imaginary spaces, since the idea of encountering the dangerous and the deadly in real spaces has become an all-too-present fear for the film's audience.³³ By foregrounding the underworld, the audience can enjoy the spectacle of the monstrous in the comforting knowledge that there is no chance that they will ever visit that threatening space, and they can suspend their disbelief totally rather than face the fact that they, too, move through a landscape in which they may encounter monsters. *Wrath's* choice to play with the potential escape of the underworld menaces this comfort blanket, but ultimately restores it at the film's conclusion. The choice to emphasise the underworld is partly driven and enabled by the advanced technological opportunities offered by CGI; filmmakers are no longer limited to setting scenes in geographical locations it is possibly to physically visit, and the cinema audience is thus invited to suspend their disbelief to greater and greater extents.

Yet in abandoning the original film's commitment to a world in which monsters and humans co-exist, and where there is a close connection between the monstrous, the feminine and the sea, *Clash 2010* prioritises the emotional comfort of its audience over asking them to engage with the challenge of a dangerous reality. Escapism drives the film's geographical choices, feeding back into Maltby's "basic commercial conservatism". The need to guarantee a profit, and to secure the production of *Wrath*, leads *Clash 2010* to abandon the provocative elements of the world Harryhausen constructed in *Clash 1981*.

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¹ A preliminary version of this paper was first given at *Animating Antiquity - Harryhausen and the Classical Tradition*, a successful conference held in Bradford in November 2011. I would like to thank Steven Green and Penelope Goodman, both of the University of Leeds, for inviting me to take part in the conference and to contribute to the conference proceedings, and for all their hard work in making this happen; the attendees also gave me many helpful ideas about how I might develop the paper. Tony Keen has provided valuable advice and debate throughout the process of producing the paper and the article. Helaine Silverman, Ben Geary, Emma Hopla, Dunstan Lowe and the anonymous reviewer all offered helpful suggestions upon various drafts of the article. As always, I stand indebted to *Kai Ta Loipa* – Caroline Bishop, Lauren Donovan, Isabel Köster and Darcy Krasne – for their help, support and encouragement.

² *Clash of the Titans* is not the only one of Harryhausen's filmic oeuvre to make the connection between the monstrous and the feminine. *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977) features as its chief

villain Zenobia, the stepmother of the Prince Kassim who has turned him into a baboon so that her own son may become caliph instead. Zenobia is highly skilled in the art of witchcraft and transformation, creating the automated Minoton as well as changing herself into, *inter alia*, a seagull and a sabre-toothed tiger.

³ It seems appropriate to provide a brief outline of the plots of both films. *Clash* 1981 follows Perseus' adventures after he is deposited in the city of Joppa, where he overcomes Calibos, Lord of the Marsh, and thus solves the riddle which will allow him to marry Andromeda, daughter of Queen Cassiopeia; when Cassiopeia says Andromeda is more beautiful than the goddess Thetis (who happens to be Calibos' mother), Thetis takes revenge by demanding the sacrifice of Andromeda to the Kraken, or else Joppa will be destroyed. Perseus then goes on a quest to find out how he might defeat the Kraken, leading to Medusa's lair, where he cuts off her head and returns to Joppa just in time to rescue Andromeda. *Clash* 2010 also follows Perseus' quest to rescue Andromeda by capturing the head of Medusa; however, the majority of the film focuses on this quest, there is no romance narrative between Perseus and Andromeda, and the attempts of mankind to overthrow the gods form the motivation for Hades demanding Andromeda's sacrifice to the Kraken, as a punishment for human impiety.

⁴ I use the word 'landscape' to refer to the filming locations selected by *Clash* 1981, which are complemented by the choice of sets; for *Clash* 2010, 'landscape' is more often a feature of CGI generation, but I still use the term to refer to the geographical location within which the film wishes us to believe its characters are located. The role of shots and cuts in forming landscape is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵ Creed (1993) provides the classic analysis of the function of the monstrous feminine in the horror film.

⁶ The connection between the monstrous, the feminine and the sea is also represented in Greek mythology by the Sirens. In the *Odyssey* in particular, they are the archetypal monstrous feminine sea creatures (12.165-200). Harryhausen includes an allusion to the Sirens in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*; see Tony Keen's contribution to this volume.

⁷ Akrisius himself dies from what looks like a heart attack, supposedly caused by Zeus crushing the terracotta figurine which represents the king on Olympus, rather than from any water-based peril; however, the greater fate of the city of Argos is to be destroyed by floodwaters.

⁸ Indeed, one might even go further and apply a Freudian reading to the Kraken's place of residence, which is a narrow tunnel underwater, through which cramped space the Kraken passes in a way arguably reminiscent of the process of birth. For more on the visual theme of the dangerous entrance or passageway as part of the cinematic representation of the monstrous feminine, see Creed 1993: 107-8.

⁹ An article in *American Cinematographer* asserted that the Kraken is "the mutant child born of the union of one of the mighty Titans and a prehistoric reptile" (Anonymous 1981: 568); this idea is repeated in Harryhausen and Dalton 2009: 265.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Lloyd Llewelyn-Jones for making this point.

¹¹ One might again usefully draw a comparison with Zenobia of *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977), whose main motivation is to ensconce her son Rafi as caliph.

¹² It is difficult to address the question of Calibos-as-monster without acknowledging that his depiction participates in a discourse of racial othering prominent in film of this period. Calibos has tight black curls and dark skin – that is, he has some African-American elements to his appearance as well as his tail and horns. Other aspects of his depiction contribute to the monstrosity of the black male; for instance, the swamp visually echoes representations of the Louisiana bayou, and Calibos' continued pursuit of Andromeda taps into cultural fears about the oversexualised, sexually aggressive black male threatening the virtuous white female. In acknowledging that this element feeds into Calibos' identity as monster, I do not wish to argue that it becomes the prominent or singular factor through which we should read the character; rather, that it is one of the many interlocking threads which combine in the film's depiction of monstrosity.

¹³ There is a longstanding resonance between swamps and bogs and a sense of liminality; for instance, the bog bodies of Flag Fen demonstrate the use of wetlands as an interstitial religious space. A literary example occurs in *Lord of the Rings*, where the Dead Marshes also serve as a burial ground and a place of danger.

¹⁴ The cave of the Stygian Witches also observes this paradigm, being dark and infested by creatures; in both locations, Perseus seizes a body part which has or comes with a round jewel (Calibos' hand and ring and the witches' eye). The contents of the witches' cauldron also looks distinctly swampy. I thank Dunstan Lowe for drawing my attention to these similarities.

¹⁵ For more on the nature of the gaze and the female spectator, see Mulvey (1975) and Stacey (1987).

¹⁶ Harryhausen himself sheds some light on the commercially-driven choice to downplay these elements of Greek myth in both *Clash* 1981 and the earlier *Jason and the Argonauts*: "the ancient Greeks obviously relished plenty of gore and sex and we were not in the horror or porn business. Both of the stories therefore had to be judiciously edited so that the heroic themes were retained while the more extreme elements were left out" (2011: 99).

¹⁷ There is, of course, a strong tradition of 'the beautiful Medusa' in Western art; as Harryhausen notes, "I was often surprised to discover that most representations of her had been as a beautiful woman with serpents in her hair" (2009: 272).

¹⁸ A comparable monstrous feminine location occurs in *Alien* (1979); the alien is encountered on a planet where it is constantly raining.

¹⁹ Medusa's blood was said to have similar properties in antiquity. Her blood created snakes in the Libyan desert (Apollonius Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.1515; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.604-20; Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 9.619-733), and gave birth to Pegasus and his twin brother Chrysaor (Hesiod, *Theogony* 270-83; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.786-90).

²⁰ For more on the female relationship with blood and the monstrous, see Creed (1993: 59-72), who uses Kristeva's notion of secretions as symbolically unclean to explain the dangers associated with blood in the horror film genre. In her analysis of *The Portrait of A Lady* (1996), Watkins comments that "the need here is to theorize difference through a sense of fluids, desire, and the sexual specificities of subjectivity, and though a creative process that does not invoke the division or cut that determines the phallic subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis" (2009:199); one might argue that the decapitation of Medusa, through the action of the cut, sanitises blood and reinscribes it into the dominant symbolic order.

²¹ These flying monsters, too, owe their visual debt to Harryhausen; their visual ancestors are the Harpies of *Jason and the Argonauts*. I thank Helen Lovatt for leading me to this conclusion by her consideration of the harpies in her paper at *Animating Antiquity*.

²² I use the term "canonical" in quotation marks to signal the use of the version of myth that has now become dominant, or would be reported as the "accurate" version of the story in popular books on mythology.

²³ The cut scenes on the DVD of *Clash* 2010 make instructive viewing in this regard; they record a whole subplot for the Olympian gods questioning Zeus' wisdom in letting Hades loose and indeed questioning his leadership capabilities *in toto*. Sadly, this material all ended up on the cutting room floor.

²⁴ For more on the technical difficulties of making Calibos in *Clash* 1981 speak, see Harryhausen and Dalton (2011: 119 and 2009: 269).

²⁵ Interestingly, this interpretation goes against Weinstock's argument that modern monster films tend to decouple a character's appearance from his monstrosity, and thus build a sense of "sympathy for the devil" for figures such as the *Twilight* vampires (2012: 275-8).

²⁶ By comparison, the 1981 *Clash* not only gave Medusa scaly facial features, but the model even has a healthy growth of underarm hair.

²⁷ This Christianizing trend is also apparent in the portrayal of Hades, who takes on the role of tempter and destroyer that would have been entirely unfamiliar to the Greeks. A similar reinterpretation of Hades appears in Disney's *Hercules* (1997).

²⁸ In mythical tradition, Cepheus is Cassiopeia's husband and Andromeda's father; however, he is neither represented nor even named in *Clash* 1981. When Andromeda insists on accompanying Perseus to the shrine of the Stygian witches, she says "in the absence of the queen, it is I who command", implying that there is no male authority figure who needs to be taken into account.

²⁹ See Nisbet (2010) for the argument that we are now starting to see a complex network of interlocking reception, where cinema itself is influenced by computer games which were originally influenced by cinema.

³⁰ I thank Juliette Harrison for bringing this point to my attention.

³¹ For more on this theme, see Steven Green's contribution to this volume of *New Voices in Classical Reception*.

³² For more on the abject and the monstrous, see Creed (1993: 9-10).

³³ Of course, films dealing with encountering danger in the real world have continued to be set in contemporary locations, such as *Snakes on a Plane* (2006), *The Taking of Pelham 1,2,3* (2009) and, in classical mode, *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (2010). However, the chronological move back to antiquity in *Clash* 2010 distinguishes it from the concerns of these films.