Joel Gordon, "Entry on: Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S05E01–22) by Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert, Christian Williams ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1023. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Sam Raimi , Robert Tapert , Christian Williams

Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S05E01–22)

United States of America/New Zealand (1998)

TAGS: Caesar Gilgamesh Gods Hera Heracles Hercules Hero(es) Iolaus Katabasis Norse Mythology





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General information	
Title of the work	Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S05E01–22)
Studio/Production Company	MCA Television, Renaissance Pictures
Country of the First Edition	New Zealand, United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, New Zealand, Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1998
First Edition Details	S05E01. *Faith*. Directed by Michael Hurst; Written by Alex Kurtzman & Roberto Orci. USA, Syndicated (MCA); September 28, 1998. 44 min. – S05E22. *Revelations*. Directed by Bruce Campbell; Written by Tom O'Neill & George Strayton. USA, Syndicated (MCA); May 17, 1999. 44 min.
Running time	44 min each episode
Format	TV; subsequently DVD and digital streaming
Date of the First DVD or VHS	DVD January 11, 2005
Awards	1999 – *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (Joseph LoDuca) won *Top TV Series* in *ASCAP Film and Television Music Awards*; 1999 – *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*. Season 5, Episode 2 *Descent* won *Film Originated Television Series – Audio Post Production* in "International Monitor Awards".

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Genre	Action and adventure fiction, B films, Mythological fiction, Television series
Target Audience	Crossover (teens and older audiences)
Author of the Entry	Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Sam Raimi by Gage Skidmore. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CCBY-SA 2.0 (accessed: December 30, 2021).

Sam Raimi , b. 1959
(Producer)

Sam Raimi is an American filmmaker, actor and producer. He was born in Michigan (USA), to a conservative Jewish family, and attended Michigan State University. His career has been closely linked with that of Robert Tapert. Although Raimi intended to major in English, he chose to put his studies on hold in order to work on the feature film *The Evil Dead* (1981), after the success of his first co-operative production with Robert Tapert, *The Happy Valley Kid* (1977). Raimi is a co-founder of both Renaissance Pictures and Ghost House Pictures (see above). His solo-directorial work (distinct from productions with Tapert) include the original *Spider-man* trilogy (2002–2007) starring Tobey Macquire, and, most recently, *Oz the Great and Powerful* (2013). His most recent solo-producer role was for the crime-thriller, *Don't Breathe* (2016). As an actor, Raimi has appeared in many of his own films as minor characters – such as his cameo appearances in *The Evil Dead* and its sequels. Raimi turned to television during the 1990's, working together with Tapert as a producer for the franchises *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Young Hercules* and *Spartacus.*

Bio prepared by Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz



Robert Tapert by Cooltv. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed

Robert Tapert , b. 1955
(Author, Producer)

Robert Tapert is an American actor, producer and writer. Born in Royal Oak, Michigan (USA), he attended Michigan State University where he first began experimenting with filmmaking under the influence of Sam Raimi. During this time, they both worked on the film *The Happy Valley Kid* (1977) in which Tapert also starred in the

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leading role. Following the success of this venture, the pair began work on their first feature film, *The Evil Dead* (1981) – directed by Sam Raimi and starring Bruce Campbell – and, in order to assist with its production, Tapert, Raimi and Campbell (along with Irvin Shapiro) co-founded Renaissance Pictures in 1979. This trio have since worked together on numerous successful films – particularly in the horror genre – including: *Crimewave* (1985), *Easy Wheels* (1989), *Darkman* (1990), *Lunatics: A Love Story* (1991), *Timecop (*1994), *30 Days of Night* (2007) and *The Gift* (2015). In 2002 Tapert and Raimi co-founded Ghost House Pictures known for, among others, the film franchises *The Grudge* (2004, 2006, 2009) and *Bogeyman* (2005, 2007, 2008). Tapert's involvement in television began during the 1990's with his most notable productions being the franchises of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995-1999), *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) and *Young Hercules* (1998–1999) – all of which included both direct-to-television movies and television serials spanning several seasons. It was during this period – in 1998 – that Tapert married New Zealand actress Lucy Lawless (the star of *Xena*), with whom he has since had two children. More recently, his interest in antiquity and television has returned with the serials *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010), *Spartacus: Gods of the Arena* (2011), *Spartacus: Vengeance* (2012) and *Spartacus: War of the Damned* (2013) and plans for a Xena reboot for NBC. (see further, his official website, accessed: August 16, 2019).

Bio prepared by Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz



Christian Williams by Pacunagonz. Retrieved

Christian Williams , b. 1943
(Author, Producer)

Christian Williams is an American journalist and television writer from Brooklyn, New York. His career in the news industry began in 1972 as an assistant editor (Style Section) for *The Washington Post.* It was during his early years at the *Post* that Williams was given a unique insight into the film/television industry, serving as the editor on a behind-the-scenes exclusive when Robert Redford used the *Post*'s

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newsroom to research his film *All the President's Men* (1976). In 1984 Williams became a reporter in Bob Woodward's investigative team which led to his second interaction with the film/television industry: in 1986 Woodward's team (Woodward, Williams and co-journalist Richard Harwood) wrote and featured in an ABC movie, *Under Siege*, which was based upon the group's reporting on domestic terrorism. Williams then continued to dabble in the television industry, co-writing (alongside Woodward) an episode of the television drama series *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987), before formally leaving journalism for a career as a television writer – specializing in one-hour drama television shows. He went on to co-create (alongside David Milch) the drama *Capital News* (1990) before assisting in the creation of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* franchise (which began with the five direct-to-television films). Unlike Tapert and Raimi, however, Williams was not directly involved in the production of the *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* serial beyond the pilot films. Williams went on to continue writing for television, for example as the co-executive producer of the drama *Six Feet Under* (2001–2005), until he retired in 2010. He has since turned his interests to authoring books and sailing.

Bio prepared by Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz

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Additional information

Casting

Main Cast:

Hercules: Kevin Sorbo,

Iolaus (and Dahok, Iolaus II): Michael Hurst.

Supporting/Recurrent Cast:

Aphrodite: Alexandra Tydings,

Archangel Michael: Charles Mesure,

Ares: Kevin Smith,

Autolycus: Bruce Campbell,

Balder: Rupert Cox,

Bronagh: Alistair Browning,

Deimos: Joel Tobeck,

Discord: Meighan Desmond,

Gilgamesh: Tony Todd,

Imuru: Ross Duncan,

Jason: Jeffrey Thomas,

Julius Caesar: Karl Urban,

King Arthur: Neill Rea,

Loki: Ian Hughes,

Merlin: Tim Faville,

Morrigan: Tamara Gorski,

Nautica: Angela Dotchin,

Nebula: Gina Torres,

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Odin: Peter McCauley,

Salmoneus: Robert Trebor,

Thor: Ben Reed,

Zarathustra: George Henare.

Adaptations

See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1".

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1".

Summary

The fifth and penultimate season of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* maintains the same structure as the earlier seasons with 22 stand-alone episodes depicting Hercules' battle against 'evil' (in all of its various guises) and, in his role as champion of the people, his righting of the wrongs performed against the innocent. Certain tropes established in seasons three and four are now cemented as recurrent features: in particular, the modern, metatheatrical take on the clip show format with E9 (*For Those of You Just Joining Us*) depicting the production crew on a writing retreat (cf. S4E15); and the inclusion of the science fiction elements of alternative universes (e. 13, *Stranger and Stranger*), time travel (E19, *Once Upon a Future King*), and the problems that can be created by the interaction of multiple timelines (E21, *My Best Girl's Wedding*).

However, unlike previous seasons, season five has Hercules interact with heroes, villains and mythological figures from other ancient cultures and with which he had no association during antiquity. These non-Greco-Roman cultures include: Sumerian (i.e., Gilgamesh; E1–2 *Faith*, *Descent*), Celtic (i.e., druids; E3 *Resurrection*), Arabic (i.e., genies [Djinn]; E4 *Genies and Grecians and Geeks, Oh My*), Nordic (i.e., Balder, Loki, Ragnarok, Thor etc.; E6–7 *Norse by Norsevest*, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow Bridge*), Persian/Zoroastrian (i.e., Zarathustra; E10, *Let There Be Light*), Judeo-Christian (i.e., Archangel Michael and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse; E22 *Revelations*),

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and even medieval Europe (i.e., Merlin, Arthur, Camelot etc.; E19, *Once Upon a Future King*). This is not to suggest that Hercules is removed entirely from his Greco-Roman heritage for he also meets the fictionalized figure of Julius Caesar (E5 *Render Unto Caesar*) and maintains his interactions with the Greco-Roman pantheon throughout the season. It is clear, however, that Greco-Roman material has a much lesser influence on the narrative than in previous seasons. This is evident in that the primary antagonist of this season is the figure of Dahak (also known as 'the darkness'), whose evil influence has spread across the various 'realms' that Hercules travels to and thus unites the otherwise disjointed adventures. The in-show explanation for the muted influence of the Greco-Roman pantheon (and thus the generally lesser presence of Greco-Roman mythological material) is that the gods were severely weakened by the power of Dahak's "darkness" and so had fled or had been slain for resisting him.

Analysis

At this point in the shows production, the *HTLJ* franchise had taken on a much darker tone than when it first started (case in point being the death, possession and exorcism of Iolaus, see also below on deicide). Both this darker tone and the more disjointed, episodic nature of season five (i.e., with Hercules changing locale/culture every few episodes) was a clear attempt by the show's creators/writers to reinvigorate the now waning popularity of the show – even at the expense of younger viewers. The darker tone can be traced to the influence of the more popular spin-off of the *HTLJ* franchise, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, which had embraced exploring more mature material (such as Xena's sexuality) and, less unencumbered by the clear affiliation of Hercules with Greco-Roman culture, had more freely explored alternate mythological influences and possibilities (e.g., see below on deicide). The disjointed nature of *HTLJ* s. 5, in turn, finds parallels in other popular shows contemporary to this later period of *HTLJ*'s development such as *The Adventures of Sinbad* (2 seasons, 1996-1998) and *Jack of All Trades* (2 seasons, 2000).

It is interesting to note that it was in this season that the *HTLJ* serial first presented deicide (i.e., the death of Olympians) as a recurring narrative pillar. Deicide is a concept foreign to ancient Greek mythology – for divine nature required the gods to be *athanatoi* (literally, 'undying') and, until now, this approach to the gods' immortality had maintained with the exception of only minor

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	immortal figures (e.g., Chiron in *HTLJ* S0E3: *Hercules and the Circle of Fire*), rather than gods per se (note that Hera had been imprisoned in Tartarus – rather than put to death – as punishment for her crimes at the end of season 3). This said, the phenomenon of (violently) slaying the Greco-Roman pantheon became an established trope of visual mass media from the mid-90's onwards (culminating in blockbusters such as *Immortals*, 2011, and *Wrath of the Titans*, 2012), first appearing on television in the *HTLJ* spin off, *XWP*, with Xena killing Bacchus in the episode "Girls just wanna have fun" (*XWP S*2E4) – demonstrating again, the influence of this more popular serial on its predecessor. The origins of such deicide, however, do not lie with *XWP* but can be traced back to the particular styling of contemporary heroism found in comic books during the latter half of the 20th century. The adoption of this kind of hero was a natural outworking of *HTLJ*'s framing of Hercules as a fantastical, heroic figure and is not surprising given that writers such as Gerry Conway (who worked on e.s 6, 7, 13, 20 and 21) had previously written for both Marvel and DC comics, working on the characters of Thor and Hercules in this medium.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Caesar Gilgamesh Gods Hera Heracles Hercules Hero(es) Iolaus Katabasis Norse Mythology
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Character traits Conflict Death Desires Diaspora Emotions Fairy tale references Family Freedom Friendship Future Good vs evil Heroism Historical figures History Identity Initiation Journeys Justice Life Loss Love Magic Magic powers Multiculturalism Names Oppression Other literary figures, texts and writers Past Pop culture references Religious beliefs Revenge Sacrifice Superheroes Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Violence War
Further Reading	See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1". On the concept of deicide (in particular, in *XWP* and *HTLJ*): Gordon, J., "When Superman smote Zeus: Analysing violent deicide in

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popular culture", *Classical Receptions Journal* 9.2 (2017): 211–236, doi.org (accessed: May 07, 2020);

Gordon, J., ""I am Hercules" in 2014: Rebooting and rationalizing a modern hero", in A. J. L. Blanshard & E. J. Stafford, eds., *The Modern Hercules, Part II: From Image to Screen*, Brill: Metaforms series (forthcoming);

Maurice, Lisa, *Screening Divinity,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, 185–199 ("Blurring the Boundaries: Apotheoses and Deicides");

Tomasso, V., "The Twilight of Olympus: Deicide and the End of the Greek Gods", in M. Cyrino and M. Safran, eds., *Classical Myth on Screen,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 147–57.

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