



Olympos

Dan Simmons

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Librarian's Note: Alternate Edition with same isbn & isbn 13: January 2011

THE EXTRAORDINARY AND MAGNIFICENT EPIC CONCLUSION TO THE HUGO AWARD-NOMINATED ILIUM

Beneath the gaze of the gods, the mighty armies of Greece and Troy met in fierce and glorious combat, scrupulously following the text set forth in Homer's timeless narrative, but that was before twenty-first century scholar Thomas Hockenberry stirred the bloody brew, causing an enraged Achilles to join forces with his archenemy Hector and turn his murderous wrath on Zeus and the entire pantheon of divine manipulators; before the swift and terrible mechanical creatures that catered for centuries to the pitiful idle remnants of Earth's human race began massing in the millions, to exterminate rather than serve.

And now all bets are off.

Olympos Details

Date : Published July 25th 2006 by Harper Voyager (first published 2005)

ISBN : 9780380817931

Author : Dan Simmons

Format : Mass Market Paperback 891 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review Olympos for online ebook

Michael says

What a complete disappointment!! Ilium was amazing, beautiful, epic story-telling, but Olympos was just a complete boring mess. I kept thinking it would get back on track, but it didn't. NOTHING was explained. Don't read this if you are looking for answers from the questions in Ilium, you won't get them. There are even two characters in the story that actually do know what's going on and can answer questions, but they refuse to and just wink at each other knowingly. Kind of insulting to your reader if you ask me.

The only redeeming thing about Olympos was the moravecs, who are the only characters through these two books with a clear story line to them.

The annoying thing about Dan Simmons is that he changes the style of his writing from book to book. Which is fine in itself, but not in the middle of a series when you've already spent 800+ pages getting used to a particular narrative style, format and flow to the story, and then to change it so dramatically is jarring and took me completely out of the story. He did this with the Hyperion books too, but not to this dramatic extent.

SPOILERS BELOW!!!

Then there are the overlong battle scenes. Then there are the overlong debates with the Greek generals. I know he was paying homage to Homer, but good lord! And then a new character introduced 100 pages from the end, but never explained and just sails off into space. And there was the ridiculous-looking Big Bad that just disappears (???) And the promised ultimate Big Bad looming in the aether that never shows up (???) And the chapter with of two teenagers having sex in a car in 1950-whatever (???)

Corytregoart says

(Contains spoilers towards the end)

This is my least favorite book.

It's not the worst book I've ever read. "Manos: The Hands of Fate" is perhaps the worst movie I've ever seen, but it's not my least favorite. It takes more than simple technical ineptness to rise (or sink) to the rank of my least favorite. A least favorite work needs to commit some special crime. Olympos' crime is that it took the plot threads of Ilium, one of the top two or three most creative and ambitious science fiction books I've yet encountered, and bungled them to an astonishing, almost insulting degree.

Ilium, as I've just said, is an incredible book. It's perhaps Simmons' most imaginative work so far, and that's saying something. In what other single book can you find posthumans posing as Greek gods on Mars, intelligent machines discussing literature on the moons of Jupiter, a legendary Greek hero hunting prehistoric mammals on the pampas of South America, and a society of pampered partiers to whom getting devoured by an Allosaurus causes scarcely more of an inconvenience than a bad hangover? And that's just the tip of that book's iceberg of wonderful and unlikely inventions. All of these unusual and fascinating things are packaged into three more or less distinct storylines, each of them exciting, purposeful, and compelling. I found the Caliban sequence towards the end to be a somewhat abrupt and strange change of pace, but I could

live with it. When I put the book down, I could not wait to dive into the sequel.

It was bad.

Hockenberry's tale in *Ilium* was exhilarating. Hockenberry, a seemingly rather weak character, through deception, desperation, and pure ballsiness managed the manipulate the Greeks and Trojans into turning their war against the cruel posthuman Gods. He's not given anything nearly as interesting or compelling to do here. In fact, besides flying halfway to Earth with the Moravecs and then deciding to teleport back, I don't remember him doing much of anything notable. As I found his story in *Ilium* to be especially compelling, this was a real let down. Simmons instead chose to spend much of his time on the Greek side of things with Achilles and his campaign against the gods. Which is unfortunate, because Achilles really does not have the depth to carry such storyline weight. *Olympos* should have stuck with the continuing story arcs from *Ilium* rather than focusing so much time and energy on this.

But, it turns out, that's what *Olympos* does. It sidetracks. It goes on tangents, abandoning the story arcs that made *Ilium* so compelling. Take Harman's storyline, for example. For the most part, it is rather interesting, and actually does contribute to the story and our knowledge of the mythos of this world. However, near the end of his journey his story arc veers wildly off course to focus on a wrecked submarine containing black hole bombs. Where did that come from? How did that contribute in any way to the plot? What mysteries did that solve? With so many interesting possibilities in this wonderful setting, why did Dan Simmons choose this non-sequiter as the climactic moment for one of his main characters? It makes me want to tear my hair out!

That is another thing *Olympos* does: introduce things at the last minute. We finally meet Syxorax/Circe well towards the end of the book, after hearing so much about her. Her scenes do nothing to explain things, and in fact only serve to make it less clear exactly how the Odysseus of the Trojan war became the Odysseus that Harman and company encounter on Earth. Introducing an important character like that with only a small fraction of pages left makes things feel very cramped towards the end. In fact, the entire last section of the book felt very rushed and crammed; I was reading the half-hearted and generic epilogue almost before I even realized it.

I'm just getting started with the laundry list of things that frustrate me to no end about *Olympos*, but by now I'm getting tired of typing and you may well be tired of reading, so I'll keep the rest brief. Major conflicts peter out to nothing. Setebos, who seems to be the ultimate evil of this story, flees and vanishes without a fight. In the final showdown between Caliban and Daemen, nothing more climactic happens than Caliban uttering a few more of his inscrutable verses. Even Zeus' demise felt meaningless and disappointing. Childishly gross as well, honestly. And finally, most of the major mysteries put forth by *Ilium* never get solved. I still don't know how or why the Posts of Earth became the Gods of *Olympos*. I still don't know how Odysseus ended up on Earth. An explanation is put forth as to where the alternate ancient Greek Earth came from, but I found it extremely weak and unsatisfying. An afterthought. Dan Simmons throwing up his hands and admitting that he doesn't know.

So yeah, this is a rather long review. But, my frustration and contempt for this book has been stewing in me for years, and I needed the catharsis of getting it all out in a place where others could perhaps commiserate with me. Thanks for reading, and may all sequels you read be better than this one.

Kiri says

Mind-blowing, adrenaline-pumping, world-expanding science fiction at its very best. Dan Simmons has big ideas and grand schemes, and he is never content to simply tell a story; no, he must weave it into our own reality in a seamless fashion, reaching backward and forward in time and literature. In this story (I'm grouping the previous book, *Ilium*, into the "story"), he brings together Shakespeare, Homer, Proust, quantum teleportation, terraforming, robots, and so much more. Each new bit that unfolds reveals new amazements, filled with both horror and wonder. I definitely recommend both *Ilium* and *Olympos* to any fan of science fiction. Or Greek/Trojan history. Or Shakespeare. Or ignore all of the connections and enjoy it for its own sake!

Mitchell says

Even though I really enjoyed the first book of this duo-logy, the comments in the review section at Amazon.com were less than stellar. However, I couldn't pass up the chance to follow all the characters I had rapidly come to know in *Ilium*. I'm glad that I disregarded all of those comments. While this rating is more a 4.5 (I thought the sex scenes were over the top and unnecessary) I still thought the book was really good. Some of the reviews I read complained about things not being explained fully, and while I found that to be somewhat true, I thought that enough was explained to leave me satisfied. Further, I thought there was enough information given that inferences can be made about everything else (*Odysseus* possibly excepted). I blew through both *Ilium* and *Olympos* in about a week and a half of reading; a testament to the powerful story telling of Dan Simmons.

Du4 says

Welllll... I just can't get excited about this book now that it's over. After wading through 900 dense pages of literary influenced sci-fi, I feel a little cheated by where we ended up. Harman's journey into what was supposed to be the Earth's past (our future, I guess) was pretty dull considering the tantalizing hints Simmons drops. I love the idea, for example, that a Global Caliphate arose sometime in the 22nd Century, developed time travel and quantum spacetime science, and destroyed the bulk of civilization with a virus targeted at killing non-Muslims. That's comedy GOLD right there.

What's missing is the "so what?" Ultimately where our Earthen characters end up is so arbitrarily decided that it robs you of any real satisfaction for the closure. It seems that Simmons abandons his literary template for quick resolutions... and by page 800, you crave them anyway. It's ultimately unsatisfying if not for the allegorical comparisons between Shakespeare, Homer, Virgil, and other classic epic poets and those poets' effects on a future full of quantum teleportation, moravecs, and black holes. But as fun as that can be, it doesn't help move a plot anywhere.

Sadly, there was a ton of potential in this story. The fates of so many characters could have been much better handled to much more satisfying ends (WTF was up with that shit between Odysseus and Sycorax???). Oh well.

James says

and then there were none... no one writes like Simmons, and even when he has split open your skull, taken out your brains, juiced them with some Reyka vodka, chocolate sauce, coffee beans, and butter pecan ice cream (it's known in Hugo and Nebula and Arthur C. Clarke winning circles as a Medulla Mudslide, which is why you'll never have one, non-award-winner types hahahahaha- OK, that's just me being silly) and then sluiced them back in and stuck a bendystraw in your mouth so you can sample the goodness, even after all that he still writes this book and makes you wish he'd just stopped after Hyperion and at least let some other authors do their thing and not feel too bad that their books may be darned good, but they're just not made of the same stuff as the books Dan Simmons writes... i read he penned this while he was getting facial reconstructive surgery so he would stop being swooned after by Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Greg Bear, and Arthur C. Clarke... i read it on the internet, so... just read this, EVERYONE. it's OK to be jealous and stab your eyes out with anger, there is an audiobook version too! there are plenty of kneelers at the Altar of Dan Simmons...

Susie says

Sometimes, life gets in the way of reading, and it takes a month to read a 900 page book. It can be frustrating to not have the time to absorb long sections, and there is the possibility of forgetting what was happening, resulting in feeling completely lost. But other times, dragging out consumption of a novel can make a reader (or me, anyway) actually feel even more immersed in the story. Over the course of reading *Ilium* and *Olympos*, I've spent a fair amount of real time in the world Dan Simmons created. Now, it's going to be hard to move on.

These novels won't be for everyone (what book is?), yet they reached a special place for me. There is SO MUCH happening, and it's hard to follow some of it, but that's part of the brilliance, in watching it all come together. Time and again I wondered where the author came up with all of his ideas, because even the most outlandish were fascinating. The combination of quality literature, classic literature appreciation, science fiction, and mythology present here is wholly unique, and I loved it.

I'm not sure the ending was the best, but it would be nearly impossible to tie up all of the loose ends in a completely satisfactory way. I'll take it.

Noah Goats says

The first book in this two volume series, *Ilium*, was great. One of my favorite science fiction novels ever. It's the tale of gods and heroes recreating the story of the Iliad (the whole Trojan War, actually) on Mars, while ancient robots fly from their homes on Jupiter's moons to investigate a growing danger to the solar system and an infantilized group of humans, pampered and menaced by robot servants, takes its first step toward regaining humanity. It's an epic space opera of the best kind.

Much of the fun of a first novel in a science fiction series is in the world building. Sequels generally aren't quite as good because they lack that element. *Olympos* is good, and has a lot of the things I loved about *Ilium*, it may not be quite as good as the first book, but it's still very, very good and provides a satisfying conclusion to the series.

I should mention that there's a chapter in this novel where one of the good guys has to rape an unconscious woman in order to wake her, like Sleeping Beauty, from a long technology induced hibernation. This scene is so stupid, so awful, and in such poor taste that it throws a pall over the entire novel. What was Dan Simmons thinking when he wrote that fantastically misguided chapter? It's a shame, because the rest of *Olympos* is very good.

Ian says

Oh, frack it. I've started and deleted and restarted this review too many times already. Dan Simmons' *Ilium* and *Olympos* have left me speechless. (If you ask my wife, you'll discover that's a rare occurrence indeed.) I don't think I can put together an entirely coherent review, much less something with any significant insight on the author's ideas. So I'll just share what I'm able to get out in a little solitary brainstorming session.

First of all, you have to realize that *Olympos* isn't merely the sequel to *Ilium*; neither book is complete without the other and I must review them together. That bugs me insofar as I like the idea of a book standing on its own. Prequels and sequels and subsequequels (that should be a word, yes?) are fine and dandy—indeed I encourage them so long as the author doesn't screw it all up with some lazy cop-out—but each book, or at least the first book, should be able to stand on its own. Ian Tregillis' *Bitter Seeds* is a good example of a book that clearly leaves the door open to be part of a larger series but stands on its own as a satisfying story. I can see how Dan Simmons wanted *Ilium* to stand on its own, how he left the story at a good place to pause, but that's all it was: a good place to pause. *Ilium* by itself simply is not a satisfying read. And it's too bad, really, because *Ilium* is fucking brilliant—I was stunned by the breadth of imagination and creativity expressed while maintaining depth and quality of character—you'll read nothing like it, I guarantee. But I give it four stars because it doesn't stand on its own. *Olympos* gets three stars because it also doesn't stand on its own and because it's just not as good as *Ilium*, which seems to be the near-universal consensus if GR reviews are to be trusted.

(Admittedly, I gave five stars to Dan Simmons' other epic work, *Hyperion*, despite the fact that it doesn't stand on its own. *Hyperion*, however, is different, and someday when I review *Hyperion* properly I'll explain why.)

Second thing you have to realize is that *Ilium* and *Olympos* are long, grueling, complex, at times tedious ... oh, did I mention they're long? Put together they are 1,664 pages in paperback or 1,296 in hardback. I read both books on the iPhone Kindle app and, let me tell you, it was A LOT of page turning. Still, I don't have a problem with length if it's needed and if the story is worth it. In this case, the main story arc is complex enough to justify a great deal of length by itself, but the author threw in sub-plots and side-plots that, although interesting, when all was said and done, served to *lengthen* the books without adding significantly *adding* to the books.

Now, having said all that, *Ilium* and *Olympos* were fascinating, original, creative, challenging, and, in the end, rewarding. I put a lot of time, and expended a good deal of mental energy, into reading and understanding these books and I'm glad I did. The author's central idea around which he crafted the Ilium Universe is intriguing, to say the least, and presents some awesome opportunities for original world-building.

(view spoiler)

So doesn't that mean they're good books? Isn't that why we read books? To be challenged and rewarded? To

learn new ideas? And if we're glad we read something, then what's the problem?

I'll tell you the problem: I'm stuck in Dan Simmons' goddamn self-indulgent head-trip of a universe. That's the fucking problem. The books were so loooong and so complex that, now that I'm done, I don't know what to do with myself. I was roommates with the main characters, whether they be ancient human, old-style human, post-human, moravec, or god (it's hard to explain ... you just have to read it) and, now that I've moved out, I'm finding it difficult to make new friends. I need a literary pallet cleanser. I need a new best friend. I need to move on. Any recommendations?

Daniel (Attack of the Books!) Burton says

Fascinating, creative, and epic. Got a bit racy at parts, and I found myself skipping pages...however, it was well worth the read. Long, drawn out, and complex, I enjoyed this novel.

Randy says

Ilium was promising, but this book stank. Simmons has been uneven before, but this book finished it for me. Sorry, no more from this author.

roger says

I enjoyed the beginning of this book as it picks up where Ilium left off. Leading up to about the middle of the book the story line is interesting and exciting. And then wham! Stinky turds from there on out. The rest of the story is a classic example of everything I can't stand about bad science fiction.

No or very little insight into the science... The author just assumes you know what the *+!?! he is talking about.

So many people and characters interacting in blurry loops of potential meaning that go nowhere. For example about 5/8 the way through you are introduced to a "historical" character named Ahman Ferdinand Mark Alonzo Khan Ho Tep! (Say that three times fast) I'm sorry but as a reader I'm so tired of being brutalized by authors with names like this. Crap like this even makes skimming irritating.

Characters reintroduced/reincarnated after having their heads bitten off - the only difference is now their boobs don't sag.

Chapter 91: You get to enjoy the back seat activities of two teenage characters you've never even been introduced to. Oh come on! If I wanted to read this kind of shit it's all over the internet or TV.

I LOVED Hyperion. This "series" isn't worth the paper it's printed on and unfortunately you'd give yourself a paper cut on your bunhole if you used this book properly.

David says

This sequel to *Ilium* follows a pattern I've noticed with Dan Simmons, now that I've read his entire Hyperion Cantos - his first books in a series are really, really good, while the follow-ups are still good, but seem to lose a bit of the brilliance of the original and wind up going in strange places.

Olympos, the second book of this fat duology, continues the saga of a classics professor from 21st century Earth resurrected 3000 years later to witness a recreation of the Trojan War on a terraformed Mars. Although it's not really accurate to call this Hockenberry's saga; he is just the unifying character flitting between the subplots and separate groups of characters, but being a middle-aged temporally displaced academic with a few technological artifacts and his modest wits, he's hardly as epic a figure as vainglorious, undefeatable Achilles, tricky, crafty Odysseus, beautiful and scheming Helen, or the entire Greek pantheon, the two "gods" who created the gods, and the ever-escalating series of gods above them that these various figures meet in what turns out to be a multipart, often disconnected quest not only to unravel the mystery of this futuristic Trojan War, but save the world.

Hockenberry is the only first-person narrator, and he remains a rather milquetoast protagonist, though it's hardly his fault that he got yanked from a Midwestern university 3000 years into the future where suddenly the gods themselves want him dead.

The more interesting chapters are those describing the continuing adventures of the Greek and Trojan heroes, now that recreated plot of the *Iliad* has gone completely off the rails and Achilles and Hector have teamed up to go to war with the gods. The gods are really masters of magic-like nanotechnology, though their true nature and where they came from is finally revealed in this book. As *Olympos* opens, the sentient robots from the moons of Jupiter who'd come to investigate a big mess of quantum shenanigans taking place in the inner systems, where Mars was thought to be uninhabited and humans on Earth thought to be long extinct, are helping defend Troy from siege by the gods. Meanwhile, the remaining humans on Earth, whose miraculous ancient technology has fallen, forcing an Eloi-like civilization to learn how to actually survive the hard way, even as long-dormant mechanical beings have awoken and begun seeking to exterminate them, are also forced to contend with Caliban, the cannibalistic genetically engineered monstrosity who was one of the chief villains in the previous volume.

There are a lot of characters and subplots here, and Simmons as usual loads this science-fantasy space opera with references from Proust, Homer, Shakespeare, Blake, and numerous others. He layers subplot over subplot, multiple layers of villainous schemes, each villain being the pawn of a greater one, and then starts shoving all sorts of reality-bending weirdness into the story, involving actual divine beings, quantum reality, the last remnants of an apocalyptic war, all still while having Shakespearean and Homeric figures running around doing battle.

Simmons definitely captures the barbaric nobility of the Greeks (and sheer assholishness of the Greek gods). And while at times I really had no idea where the story was going, it was never boring. In the end, I think it got a bit bloated and meandering and it seemed that Simmons was willing to throw any weird idea that came to him into the mix, which is why this was a huge doorstopper of a novel following a previous huge doorstopper of a novel.

An epic SF saga, which I recommend, but in my opinion slightly inferior to the first book.

Terran says

I was disappointed in this book. It's sad, because *Ilium* was so promising. But I found this a real let-down conclusion to a probably over-ambitious beginning. Perhaps I had too high of hopes, because if anybody could have pulled off a conclusion to such an ambitious start, it would have been Simmons.

This novel seemed like a jumble of cool ideas thrown in together and stirred. They were all individually fascinating, but they didn't come together into anything... Well, "story shaped" (to steal Neil Gaiman's turn of phrase). The disparate plot threads diverged into even more disparateness, the backplot was hinted at but not drawn into anything coherent, the characters didn't come to satisfactory conclusions, plot lines initiated in the first book were discarded, entities were multiplied without cause, and things that seemed like fascinating mysteries in the first book turned out to be merely blenders on legs. Subtlety gave way to bloodbaths.

That said, Simmons is a master, and even his off days are better than many people's best efforts. So I enjoyed it on a page to page basis. It's just the whole that left me feeling unfulfilled. A bit like dining exclusively on fois gras and creme mints. Lovely individually, but a bit discordant together. And definitely not a wholesome meal.

Chris says

A very ambitious science fiction duology (*Olympos* being the direct sequel to *Ilium*). (MILD SPOILERS AHEAD:) This is a multi-universe far-future epic involving Greek gods and Homeric heroes, Artificial Intelligences obsessed with Proust, nanotech-enhanced posthumans, a resurrected Professor of Classics from the 20th century that attempts to seduce Helen of Troy, anti-semitic killer robots, characters from Shakespeare that have come to life due to Quantum-wave parallel universe framistatwhatsits (apparently Quantum=Magic), bloody battles, and evil telepathic brain-monsters.

While fascinating and stimulating as a whole, the ending of this novel seems very hurried, with some rather anti-climactic climaxes, and is lacking in some promised explanations of certain phenomena, and has several characters act oddly with only some vague explanation.

I also want to repeat here an observation made by another reviewer whose name I cannot remember: almost all the female characters in the book are described primarily through the size, shape, and consistency of their breasts. Simmons has written books with excellent, strong female characters. But he's rather gotten into the spirit of the Heroic Age of Achilles, though there are a couple of female characters in the story that are three-dimensional, including, in my opinion, Helen of Troy.

I honestly wonder if Simmons went a bit mad during the writing of this book, as plot threads were incoherently unresolved, characters suddenly leave the story, foreshadowed entities never appear, and his politics suddenly enter the story out of nowhere, seemingly only so he can point out that Islamic Jihadists are evil. What does this have to do with posthumans, quantum gods, and Shakespeare? Nothing really. A disappointing mess. Perhaps it could be rescued if Simmons were to write a third book, but that doesn't seem likely.

David says

Dan Simmons' *Olympos* consists mainly in two threads. In the one, most of our various characters (Harman and Daeman, the moravecs, Odysseus, Achilles, et al) undertake long journeys in time and space, bringing them at an unbearably slow pace towards the future Earth. On these journeys, they endure various ordeals of little consequence, and a great deal of nothing occurs and is described at great length and in extraordinary detail by Simmons. In the other thread, we are treated to pages and pages of expository monologues from Prospero, Moira, Harman and others as Simmons attempts to explain *just what the fuck is going on* and unload the enormous backstory omitted from the largely-incomprehensible *Ilium*. This exposition is heavy-handed and clumsy. Explanations proffered for the events we have followed and wondered about for over a thousand pages vary from merely stupid to jaw-droppingly, cringe-inducingly idiotic. Simmons repeatedly "solves" mysteries he has been building since the first page of *Ilium* in a single tossed-off sentence or paragraph. His explanation of the voynix (complete with unnecessary and unconvincing connection to the Voynich Manuscript) in particular is not just unsatisfying but infuriating, while I actually had to put the book down and walk away after he tried to explain Setebos through World As Myth bullshit stolen from Robert Heinlein and mixed with New Agey quantum mysticism.

A word on mechanics. Simmons's prose is by and large effective, and deserves no special praise or blame. Where the story falls is in the construction of the plot, which in addition to its overall incoherence proceeds in fits and starts, with long stretches of inaction punctuated by world-changing events treated in brief. Both gods and machines regularly serve as *dei ex machinae*, with characters brought together on the thinnest of pretexts to haul one another out of intractable jams. The novel's conclusion is full of these convenient escapes, plot holes and simple omissions, and several major threads are left unresolved.

Simmons' fascination with juvenilia is a distraction and regularly breaks the flow of the narrative, ranging from fart jokes and locker-room obscenities in the mouths of Greek gods to pervasive, explicit descriptions of sex (including rape and thousand-year-old entities in 16-year-old bodies) and of nude bodies, done throughout in a register not just clinical but often creepy.

Simmons' literary approach to science fiction does deserve praise and is something I would like to see more of. He has a strong familiarity with Homer, Shakespeare and Proust, although I was annoyed by many egregious errors in his use of Greek. Unfortunately, Simmons' sometimes-delightful festival of allusion is hamstrung by his failure to convincingly integrate the use of literary connections by his characters and in his backstory into the plot. Both literary allusion and descriptions of sexuality carry the sense that the author feels he is getting away with something, delivered with a smirk and a self-congratulatory chuckle. While his audaciously-literate story occasionally soars, it never reaches the joyful madness it could have had in the hands of a writer like Roger Zelazny (of whom more below) or Umberto Eco, someone who understood and reveled in its absurdity. Simmons takes himself far too seriously.

I mention Roger Zelazny because *Ilium* and *Olympos* really demand comparison to his classic, Hugo-winning *Lord of Light*. There are so many similarities between the novels — the post-human, nanotech-infused gods recreating mythology, the elaborate literary allusions, the domed/forcefield-protected citadel on an inhospitable mountaintop, the oppressed, preindustrial populace reincarnating through "divine" machines, the war between gods and men, the final injection of Christianity into the conflict — that I cannot help but think Simmons is straight-up lifting from Zelazny.

So how do the two stories stack up? On my reading, *Lord of Light* wins on virtually every dimension. It is much, much shorter, at about 300 pages against close to 1800 for *Ilium* and *Olympos* together. It is tightly plotted. Although like Simmons' epic the story is convoluted in time, it ultimately makes more sense and is far better structured. It is funnier and spends more time enjoying its own audacity. Zelazny's use of mythology (Hindu and Buddhist, in this case) and literature is woven more effectively into the structure of the novel than Simmons' bizarre combination of Homer, Shakespeare and nonsense. Zelazny is happy to handwave most of the science behind his creation, avoiding Simmons' ad-nauseum repetition of the words "quantum" and "Calabi-Yau", well-defined scientific terms whose meanings I don't believe Simmons understands. Above all, Zelazny embraced the lunacy he created. *Lord of Light* is joyful, funny, occasionally insightful and always mad, with none of the cringing, self-conscious titillation of *Olympos*. It's simply a better novel and a more enjoyable read.

Derek says

This was too long, but so worth the long hours.

bobby says

MAJOR SPOILERS AHEAD

I have tremendous problems with this book, not the least of which is that I wanted to enjoy it so badly. Simmons has a talent for writing good scenes and decent characters, but the overall structure of this book is so sloppy and disappointing that I can't help but feel cheated. I felt this way at the end of *Rise of Endymion* as well, and I'm starting to think that it's systemic to all of his epic sci-fi narratives. He comes up with a neat idea, creates hint that he's going to explain everything at the end, and after thousands of pages arbitrarily ends things without any sense of resolution.

What was this book about? What was the conflict? You begin thinking that it's about the gods of *Olympos* and the quantum disturbances they're creating that threaten the very existence of the solar system. Okay. But then it turns out that the Olympian gods are pawns of larger gods or Gods, including Setebos and Prospero. At this point I'm enjoying the direction of the book, thinking that events will hinge on what these larger gods are planning. But then, with a little more than 200 pages left in the combined 1700 pages of *Ilium/Olympos*, a heretofore unmentioned 2500-year-old Islamic submarine carrying 700 mini black holes becomes the focus. While the submarine is being taken care of, Setebos just... goes away. Zeus' out-of-nowhere desire to become the One God of the Universe is foiled by Achilles and Hephaestus begins his reign on *Olympos*, clearing up those pesky quantum disturbances from way back in the book as an afterthought.

There were so many unnecessary elements. Where was Simmons' editor in all of this? You could have cut out anything to do with Sycorax and Odysseus, and the narrative wouldn't have changed. You could have deleted almost everything going on with the Trojans and Achaens and the only thing that would have been affected would have been Achilles killing Zeus at the end. But that didn't matter either, because there's no reason for the gods' storyline either. They were post-humans, now they're gods, maybe there are larger forces at play. That's the sum total of the gods in the course of the story.

If I may, a partial list of things that are set up but never resolved:

- Why did Prospero want to elevate the post-humans to god status?
- If each universe is created by "singular genius," wouldn't the Greek gods already exist in the universe the Trojans and Achaens come from? In fact, why did the post-humans choose the Iliad to recreate at all?
- What the hell was the point of the Titan war at the end?
- Why did Zeus all of a sudden want to become the One God? There's no mention of this desire anywhere in the book.
- Who was the Quiet? It's mentioned for 1000+ pages, and then without showing up, everything is resolved when Setebos senses it coming and runs away.
- Why didn't Daeman and Caliban get to fight when they meet at the end?
- Why did Hephaestus put all of the humans into a blue tachyon beam on Ilium-Earth?
- Why were the voynix afraid of the Setebos egg?

I could go on. It seems like Simmons is okay with the explanation for any of these events being "for some reason." I guess it's deeper and more ambiguous than that way. I don't think I'd be nearly this upset if the promise of Ilium/Olympos hadn't been so great. I gave the first book 5 stars, and I stand by that. The setup was incredible. The individual parts are amazing. But the whole is so utterly disappointing as to make me angry.

alireza says

didn't answer anything.
the quite one didn't show up.
setebos just left.
islamophobia left a bad taste in my mind.

Aaron Logan says

I almost couldn't believe this book was written by the same author as Hyperion and Ilium. The various plots meandered while none of the big mysteries were answered. And where did all the misogyny come from? Simmons has always written such strong female characters. Suddenly Helen of Troy is calling herself a cunt and the formerly powerful/strong modern-day human female characters are suddenly crying and moody all of the time, while the men take front-seat on the adventures. And the Goddesses all become slutty, contemptible temptresses. The term "bitch" gets thrown around way too often by Achilles and the gods. Oh, and worst of all, there's a male character that is forced by a wizard to rape a sleeping female character in chryo-sleep because his ejaculate is the only way to wake her. And it's critical to the survival of the Earth for her to be awakened. So the dude wretches and forces himself to do the horrible deed. And hundreds of pages later at the end of the book the awakened female character has literally made no contribution to the plot. She pops into the picture and just walks around with an invisibility cloak on occasionally. What happened to her being the most important piece to human survival?

Then there are anti-Islam and anti-gay slurs in the last 1/3 of the book. Not to mention his absurd over-use of the term "interdict." I didn't count, but I bet it was in the hundreds. This book really disappointed me on a number of levels. I'll be very cautious before picking up anything new he writes.
