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EDITED BY  
H. RACKHAM, M.A.

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1957

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107619975](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107619975)

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First edition 1899  
First published 1899  
Reprinted 1903, 1927, 1940, 1957  
First paperback edition 2013

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-107-61997-5 Paperback

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## PREFACE.

THIS edition was undertaken at the suggestion of the Syndics of the University Press, and is intended to conform with the general plan of the Series in which it appears.

In preparing it I have drawn largely on the stores of material for the study of Aeschylus collected by Wecklein. The extent of my indebtedness to his textual edition (Berlin, 1885) is indicated at the beginning of the Critical Notes; while the Introduction and Explanatory Notes owe much to his commentaries in German (Leipzig, 1893) and in Greek (Athens, 1896). Among other editions of Aeschylus from which I have derived assistance, I must mention Dindorf's, Hermann's and Paley's; among translations, those of Mrs Browning and Miss Swanwick. Shortly before going to press I had the advantage of consulting a new edition of the *Prometheus* by Messrs Sikes and Willson, who have made a fresh collation of the Medicean MS., correcting that of Vitelli in

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## PREFACE.

one or two passages: my debts to these editors are acknowledged in several of the Critical Notes. So also are my obligations to Mr Walter G. Headlam, of King's College, who has kindly communicated to me some unpublished suggestions\* to supplement his notes in the *Journal of Philology* and the *Classical Review*.

I have commented somewhat fully on grammatical points, adding references throughout to the sections of Goodwin's *Greek Grammar* (London, 1895), which I have denoted by G.

My thanks are due to my friend Mr E. Seymer Thompson, of Christ's College, for his kindness in reading through the Notes in proof.

H. R.

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
July, 1899.

I have made a few corrections in the text and notes of this edition on its being reprinted for the second time.

H. R.

October, 1926.

\* Since published in the *Classical Review*, XIV. p. 106 and *J. Phil.* XXX. p. 291 (where at l. 118 Headlam would read *τερμόνιον ἐπὶ πάγον πόνων ἐμῶν θεωρὸς ἕκετ', ἢ ...*).



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## INTRODUCTION.

### *The Prometheus Myth and Attic Ritual.*

THERE is a tendency among primitive races to assign the discovery of the arts of life to some mythical individual, a personification of the inventive spirit of man. Such a 'culture-hero' among the ancient Greeks was Prometheus.

His chief title to fame was as the bringer of fire to men. As a fire-god he was worshipped at Athens in close connexion with Athena and Hephaestus. Prometheus and Hephaestus had a common altar in the suburb of the Academy, which was especially sacred to Athena. This altar was the starting-point of the torch-race that formed part of the annual festival in honour of Prometheus, as also of the Hephaestean and Panathenaic festivals. Lighting their torches at this altar, the racers ran to an altar in the city, the winner being he who reached it first with his torch alight and kindled a fire upon it.

Such torch-races were not uncommon. The ceremony is explained<sup>1</sup> as originating in a belief that fire becomes polluted by use or accident, and must from time to time be renewed. A new and pure fire would be kindled on some special altar, and thence conveyed to the other altars or hearths of the people where the old fires had been extinguished in readiness. To preserve its purity the new fire would be carried as rapidly as

<sup>1</sup> Wecklein in *Hermes* VII. p. 437; also Frazer's *Pausanias* II. p. 392.

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possible, either by a single runner or (if the distance were great) by relays of runners who passed it on from hand to hand. This custom would easily develop into a race between competing runners, or as was sometimes the case between teams of runners.

The use of fire being one of the first elements of civilization, Prometheus, like Athena and Hephaestus, was associated with the arts and crafts, many of which he first taught to man; and like Athena he was regarded as specially gifted with wisdom and foresight, as his name implied<sup>1</sup>.

Various popular stories clustered round his name. He originally made men out of clay<sup>2</sup> (the remains of which were to be seen near Panopeus in Phocis<sup>3</sup>), and equipped them with attributes obtained from different animals<sup>4</sup>. When Zeus swallowed his wife, Prometheus<sup>5</sup> broke open his head to let out Athena. He stole fire from Zeus and conveyed it to men in a fennel-stalk<sup>6</sup>; and was punished by Zeus by being chained

<sup>1</sup> The connexion of Προμηθεύς with Skt. *pramantha*, the fire-stick used by savages for kindling fire by friction with another piece of wood, is now generally abandoned (Gardner and Jevons, *Manual of Greek Antiquities*, p. 79). Whatever its origin, the name was certainly associated in the Greek mind with προμήθεια: cf. P. V. 86, and the contrasted Ἐπιμηθεύς, 'after-thought.'

<sup>2</sup> Apollod. 1. 7. 1, Ov. Met. 1. 82; cf. Anth. Pal. 6. 352, an epigram of Erinna on a life-like picture, λῶστέ Προμαθεῦ, ἐντι καὶ ἀνθρωποὶ τινὸς ὄμαλοι σοφίαν.

<sup>3</sup> Paus. 10. 4. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Hor. Od. 1. 16. 13. According to Plato Protag. c. xi, the gods modelled men and animals of clay, and commissioned Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them. Epimetheus having used up all the available attributes for the animals, there was nothing left for men, till Prometheus stole for them τὴν ἐντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρὶ from the workshop of Hephaestus and Athena.

<sup>5</sup> Or according to others [e.g. Pind. Ol. 7. 35] Hephaestus: Apollod. 1. 3. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ignem ferulis optime seruari certum est, Plin. N. H. 13. 22. A fennel-stalk is still used in the Greek islands as a means of carrying a light (A. Lang in *Encycl. Brit.*, Art. *Prometheus*).

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on a desolate mountain, whence he was at last released by Heracles.

The connexion of the origin of fire with a theft is found in the legends of many different lands. It has been suggested that the idea arose from the difficulty of producing fire artificially in primitive times. Every early community kept a common fire constantly burning, from which a light could be obtained when needed: this was the origin of the sacred fires in the Prytanea of Greek cities and the Temple of Vesta at Rome. Supposing the common fire were allowed to go out, the tribe would have to borrow, or if at war, to steal fire from its neighbours. 'Men accustomed to such a precarious condition might readily believe that the first possessors of fire, whoever they were, set a high value on it and refused to communicate it to others. Hence the belief that fire was originally stolen<sup>1</sup>.'

The Prometheus legends further embody the primitive idea of the essential impiety of human progress<sup>2</sup>. Early man tended to regard the established order as divinely ordained, and innovation however useful as an offence against the gods. Religion is notoriously conservative; and the inventive and progressive spirit is apt to be lacking in humility and reverence. This aspect of Prometheus was brought into prominence when the popular tales were woven into a connected story by the poets.

*Prometheus in Hesiod.*

Hesiod tells the story as follows (Theog. 521): The wise Prometheus was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the Ocean-nymph Clymene, and had a foolish brother named Epimetheus. Prometheus came to trouble by vying with Zeus in wisdom. Once when there was a dispute between gods and men [about their respective shares in sacrifices], Prometheus sacrificed an ox, and set the flesh wrapped in the hide on one side and the bones covered with fat on the other, inviting Zeus to choose his share. Though aware of the trick [this looks like a pious

<sup>1</sup> A. Lang, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hor. Od. 1. 3. 27, *Audax Iapeti genus...*, and the context.

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perversion of the story], Zeus chose the bones,—and hence ever since men have burnt only the bones of sacrifices,—but was angry and withheld fire from men. But the beneficent Prometheus stole it and gave it to them. Then Zeus bound him with chains, and sent his eagle to devour his liver all the day, while it was made whole again every night. At last however Zeus relented, and allowed Heracles to win glory by slaying the eagle and releasing Prometheus.—Meanwhile, to punish men, Zeus caused Hephaestus to model a woman out of clay and Athena to adorn her, and sent this *καλὸν κακόν* to plague them. The foolish Epimetheus accepted the gift, and ever since women have been the bane of men's lives.—So impossible it is to cheat the mind of Zeus.

The story is repeated in the *Works and Days* 47—105. Here the woman is endowed by all the gods, and called Pandora. Before her coming men had lived free from all evils, but she took the lid off the jar and let them go abroad among men; hope alone was left in the jar, as she clapped the lid on again before it could fly away.

Hesiod has blended myth with allegory and made it a vehicle for moralizing and for satire. His Prometheus has the characteristics of cunning, benevolence towards men, and antagonism to the gods. He presides over the sacrifice in virtue of being the god of fire: this part of the legend is a mythological explanation of the Greek ritual, in which the whole burnt-offering of primitive times had dwindled down into burning for the gods only the fat and bones of the victim, while the worshippers feasted on the meat<sup>1</sup>. It is curious that the story contains the modelling out of clay and equipping of a human being, but gives no part in this to Prometheus. The allegory of the jar of evils is an awkward addition to the original account, in which the woman herself is the evil with which men are punished. The meaning of the allegory is obscure: it is not apparent whether hope is a good or an ill, and whether it is denied to men or kept back for them.—Nothing perhaps shows

<sup>1</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture* II. p. 400.

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more strikingly the poetic genius of Aeschylus than a comparison of the noble tragedy created by him from the Prometheus legend with this crude, archaic story in Hesiod.

*Aeschylus: The Prometheus Trilogy.*

The treatment of the legend by Aeschylus is not before us in its entirety. Besides the *Προμηθεὺς Δεσμώτης*, the catalogue of his plays in the Codex Mediceus includes a *Προμηθεὺς Πυρφόρος* and a *Προμηθεὺς Διόμεινος*. Of the former two lines, of the latter considerable fragments alone survive<sup>1</sup>; there is however little doubt that the three plays formed a connected trilogy, presenting the Prometheus myth in three successive parts<sup>2</sup>. The *Prometheus Vincitus* contains the punishment of Prometheus. The fragments of the *Prometheus Solutus* show that its subject was his release by Heracles; and its connexion with the former play is proved by references in the scholia<sup>3</sup>. The connexion of the *Pyrphoros* is a strong presumption, but its contents and its position in the trilogy are left to conjecture. The obvious suggestion that it stood first, and exhibited the theft of fire, breaks down on examination: for the events leading to Prometheus' punishment are told so fully in the *Prometheus Vincitus* that they can hardly have formed the plot of a preceding

<sup>1</sup> Aesch. fr. 190 ff. Weckl. (187 ff. Dind.).

<sup>2</sup> Aeschylus also wrote a satyric drama on the Prometheus legend: see fr. 205—7 Weckl. (189, 190, 195 Dind.). (i) The hypothesis of the Persae states that he was victorious with the Phineus, Persae, Glaucus and Prometheus. (ii) Pollux twice mentions a *Προμηθεὺς πυρκαεὺς* of Aeschylus, quoting a line *λιῶ τε πίσσα κάμολινου μακροί τόνοι*, where the anapaest in the 4th foot proves the play was not a tragedy.—Perhaps this satyric drama was entitled simply *Προμηθεὺς, πυρκαεὺς* being added by the Alexandrian grammarians to distinguish it from the Prometheus trilogy produced later.

<sup>3</sup> Ad P. V. 527, *οὔπω μοι λυθῆναι μεμοίραται· ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἐξῆς δράματι λύεται*: ad 538 *τῷ ἐξῆς δράματι φυλάττει τοὺς λόγους*, 'the poet keeps the narrative for the following play.'

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drama. We are forced to suppose that it concluded the trilogy<sup>1</sup>. It may have represented the institution of the worship of Prometheus at Athens ; reasons for this conjecture will appear when we have sketched the outline of the other two plays.

According to Aeschylus, Prometheus was the son of the prophetic goddess Themis. When Zeus made war upon Cronus, Themis warned Prometheus that craft and not force should gain the day : so since the Titans rejected his counsels, he went over to the side of Zeus, who by his aid defeated Cronus. Established on the throne, Zeus allotted the gods their various offices, and then proposed to destroy the human race and create a fresh one in its stead. Prometheus opposed the design, and saved mankind, raising them out of savagery by giving them fire and by teaching them the arts of civilization, although he knew he would suffer for thwarting Zeus's will. As a punishment, Zeus sent him in the custody of his henchmen, Power and Might, to a lonely mountain-gorge in Scythia [here the play begins], where Hephaestus reluctantly fetters him to the rock. Left alone, Prometheus is visited by the Ocean-nymphs, who vainly urge him to submission, and by Oceanus, whose offers of intercession with Zeus he rejects with contempt. The frenzied Io comes wandering to the spot. Her story is another instance of Zeus's tyranny, and kindles Prometheus' wrath afresh. He imparts to her a secret learnt from Themis, that Zeus will cause his own downfall by marrying a woman destined to bear a son stronger than his father : this danger Prometheus will only reveal at the price of his own release, which shall be wrought by a descendant of Io. Hermes next appears, sent by Zeus to demand the meaning of the threatened danger. Prometheus refusing to disclose it, Hermes warns him of the penalty for his contumacy : the earth should be cleft, and the rock with Prometheus upon it be engulfed ; after a long imprisonment beneath the ground he

<sup>1</sup> Schol. ad P. V. 94, ἐν γὰρ τῷ Πυρφόρω τρεῖς μυριάδας φησὶ δεδέσθαι αὐτόν, seems to show that in the *Pyrrhōros* the punishment of Prometheus was over.

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should rise again to the light, still hanging in chains, and the eagle of Zeus should be sent to prey upon his vitals : nor should this torture cease, until a god should take his sufferings on himself and descend into Hades in his stead. Prometheus defies Zeus to do his worst, and his doom comes upon him. A storm breaks over him, and he sinks below the ground, the Ocean-nymphs staying by him to share his fate.

The drama thus outlined obviously postulates a sequel to complete it. A plot is laid down but not worked out. It turns on the mysterious danger threatening Zeus and known to Prometheus alone. His punishment for stealing fire is only the starting-point : the catastrophe is the further penalty of his refusal to disclose the secret. This he will only do in return for his release : and it is abundantly indicated that this release is to form the dénouement. The unconscious prophecies of others are confirmed by the hints and later by the declarations of Prometheus himself, to whom the future is revealed by Themis<sup>1</sup>. He cannot end his sufferings by death ; he can only be released with the consent of Zeus ; yet Prometheus will not yield, the reconciliation will be mutual ; Zeus will relent when a god is found to suffer in Prometheus' stead, and then Prometheus will be set free by Heracles<sup>2</sup>.

How were these threads taken up in the remainder of the trilogy ?

The fragments of the *Prometheus Solutus* show that at the opening of the play Prometheus had returned to light again and was hanging in chains on the mountain as before, but now tortured by the eagle. To him enter the Chorus of Titans [who have been released, together with Cronus, by Zeus and lodged in the Elysian plains] ; they have come from the Red Sea and Aethiopia, across the Phasis into Europe, to comfort Prometheus. He recounts to them his sufferings, and his longing for death which is denied him ; and he recapitulates his services to man. Heracles arrives, and invoking Apollo's aid shoots the eagle

<sup>1</sup> 27, 525 ; 180, 206, 274, 529, 779, 898, 939 ; 101 n.

<sup>2</sup> 779, 965 ; 274 ; 206, 1023, 1034 ; 1058, 898.

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*PROMETHEUS BOUND.*

and liberates Prometheus. Prometheus foretells to Heracles his wanderings and labours.

Further circumstances agreeing with the hints of the *Prometheus Vincitus* can be derived from the references of later writers. The reconciliation foretold was brought about: Prometheus disclosed the secret, and Heracles was sent by Zeus to release him<sup>1</sup>. The substitute was found in Chiron the centaur; accidentally shot by Heracles, he longed for death to relieve his incurable wound, but being immortal could not die, till he was offered to Zeus as an atonement for Prometheus<sup>2</sup>. The liberated Prometheus assumed a wreath of withes<sup>3</sup> as a memorial of his bonds.

How the reconciliation was brought about we do not know. Wecklein plausibly conjectures that the mediator was Ge, who is named with Heracles among the *dramatis personae* of the *Prometheus Vincitus* in the Medicean MS., and may have belonged like Heracles to the *Solutus*.

*The Myth in Aeschylus.*

We notice here several fresh elements in the story. (i) The plan of Zeus to destroy mankind is not in Hesiod, though there Zeus is no friend to man: *κακὰ δ' ὄσσετο θυμῷ θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισι*, Theog. 551. It is a primitive legend paralleled in the mythologies of other lands. (ii) Prometheus is now the son of Themis, no father being mentioned. Themis was identified 225n. with Ge in Attic worship; so that this may have been the version of his parentage accepted at Athens: it serves the poet to account for his prophetic powers. (iii) The story of the danger of marriage with Thetis appears in another form in Pindar<sup>4</sup>: there her hand is desired by Poseidon as well as

<sup>1</sup> Hygin. fab. 54, obviously from Aeschylus, v. Wecklein's Aeschylus (1896), II. p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Apollod. 2. 5. 4 and II.

<sup>3</sup> *λύγου στέφανος*, Athen. 672 E, 674 D: cf. fr. 202 Weckl. (204 Dind.). Withes were used as bonds, Athen. 671 F.

<sup>4</sup> Isthm. 7. 27 ff.



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Zeus ; Themis warns the suitors of the oracle that Thetis shall bear a son stronger than his sire ; they relinquish her to Peleus, and the prophecy is fulfilled in Achilles. The adaptation of this legend to the story of Prometheus may be due to Aeschylus himself, whose version seems to be indebted to that of Pindar<sup>1</sup>. (iv) Chiron's vicarious atonement is remarkable. It formed an integral part of the plot, but how precisely it was worked in is not easy to see : since the disclosure of the secret by Prometheus would appear sufficient in itself to make Zeus relent.

The rebellion and reconciliation of Prometheus are treated by Aeschylus as part of the great myth of the revolution in heaven, the overthrow of Cronus and the Titans and the establishment of the new dynasty of Zeus and the gods who hold their offices from him. Stress is laid throughout the *Prometheus Vinculus* on the novelty of Zeus's rule : his cruelty to Prometheus is but a part of the insolence of the usurper towards the older gods<sup>2</sup>. So in the *Solutus* Prometheus is associated with the Titans in his reconciliation to the new order. In the Titanomachia we are probably to see a mythological embodiment of a struggle between an old religion and a new. The Titans represent the supreme deities of an aboriginal race, ousted by the Olympian hierarchy of the Hellenic invaders, but still lingering on in popular imagination. Prometheus in the legends was the foe of Zeus ; Zeus was supreme in Attic worship, but Prometheus still retained his honours as the most ancient deity of fire. Aeschylus dramatizes a mythological explanation of the situation. If we accept the conjecture that the *Pyrphoros* presented the installation of Prometheus at his altar in the Academy and the institution of the festival and torch-race in his honour, we have a close parallel in the *Eumenides* : there too Aeschylus has shown archaic deities 'overridden by the younger gods<sup>3</sup>,' but finally reconciled to the new order and established in Attic worship as the guardians of retributive justice.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. note on 954 ff.—Prometheus appears at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in Catullus 64, 294, so his connexion with that legend was well established.

<sup>2</sup> 35, 95, 156, 160, 175, 420.

<sup>3</sup> Eum. 734, 781 (731, 778).

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*PROMETHEUS BOUND.**Ethical meaning.*

We are not however content to find in the Prometheus trilogy a mythological spectacle and nothing more. While constructing a dramatic presentation of legend and ritual, Aeschylus cannot but have had the further object of conveying some moral or religious teaching. Yet what exact teaching was intended, with only one of the three plays before us, is extremely hard to say. The question has been the subject of much controversy, the difficulty being to understand the poet's conception of Zeus. Elsewhere in Aeschylus Zeus is the embodiment not only of power but also of right. In the *Prometheus Vincetus* he seems to be shown as a tyrant and an oppressor: he cares nothing for men; he cruelly persecutes their self-sacrificing benefactor, his former ally; he abandons Io, the hapless victim of his passions, to unmerited suffering. What theory of morality or religion can be intended by such a picture?

The view has been held that Aeschylus has here departed from his usual standpoint; that he has accepted the darker side of the old legends as he found them, and for once has made Zeus the villain of the piece. For this reading of the play it is enough to refer to Shelley, who saw in Prometheus the personification of the human spirit, benevolent and progressive, indomitably struggling with the tyranny of superstition. But that this was not the conception of Aeschylus is shown by the fact that in his own *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley has felt compelled to depart from the Aeschylean myth: 'averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind<sup>1</sup>, he has supplied an ideal conclusion in which Jupiter is overthrown and Prometheus triumphs.

It is in fact impossible to credit Aeschylus with a conception so subversive, so at variance with his usual attitude of reverence towards the Hellenic religion. To do so is not merely to ignore the evidence for his development of the story in the later plays,

<sup>1</sup> Preface to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.

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but to overlook the hints to be gleaned from the *Prometheus Vinc-tus* itself. In this play the figure of Prometheus dominates the scene ; the story is presented entirely from his point of view. But there are still indications of another aspect in the back-ground. The new ruler is charged by Prometheus and his friends with all the vices of autocracy<sup>1</sup>: he is arbitrary, cruel, and ungrateful. But these charges are not borne out by the facts. Zeus's accession was no lawless usurpation, but the replacement of the rule of force by the rule of wisdom. It was

228. fated that wisdom ('craft,' says Prometheus bitterly) should prevail over might ; nor was Zeus supported by Prometheus or Forethought only, but by Themis, the embodiment of Justice. The overthrow of Cronus fulfilled the will of Destiny ; Zeus

942. came under his father's curse, but the wrong was repaired by the release of Cronus : *πίδας μὲν ἄν λύσειεν, ἔστι τοῦδ' ἄκος*<sup>2</sup>. His harshness was shown only to his foes. The Titans opposed his sway and were punished, but had been forgiven before the opening of the *Prometheus Solutus*. Prometheus for all his former services only met with the punishment that his self-will

247 ff. deserved. He states that Zeus in his contempt for man would have destroyed the race and begotten another in its stead, had not he prevented this design by the gifts of hope, of fire, and of

458 ff. the arts, whereby he raised men from their former savagery. It would seem that the purpose of Zeus was but to let nature take its course, and allow the degraded race to perish of its own feebleness ; he intended then to replace it by another, created in his own image. If so, Prometheus' philanthropy was mis-guided : in saving the race he perpetuated human imperfection, and was justly punished for frustrating the divine wisdom. Even

30. his friend Hephaestus admits he was in error. Io again appears at first sight as the unhappy victim of a tyrant's caprice : but her sufferings, though arising from the love of Zeus, were directly

<sup>1</sup> 35, 158, 202, 237, 418. In spite of his own connexion with Hiero, Aeschylus under cover of dramatic requirements has given forcible expression to the hatred of tyrants that was so strongly felt by the Athenians.

<sup>2</sup> Eum. 648 (645).

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## PROMETHEUS BOUND.

617. caused by the jealousy of Hera. Zeus's true purpose with her is confessed by the prophecy of Prometheus: restored to human form, she was to become the mother of a royal race, from which should spring the deliverer of Prometheus and the benefactor of mankind. This aspect of her story was doubtless emphasized in the *Prometheus Solutus*, as it is in the *Supplices*<sup>1</sup>:

Zeus, lord of ceaseless ages, thine,  
Oh thine was that unharmed might!  
The breathing of thy love divine  
Arrests at length her toilsome flight,  
And gently with the mournful tide  
Of modest tears, her woes subside.

Then, as Fame truly tells, receiving there  
Thy germ divine, her blameless child she bare,

From age to age supremely blest.  
Hence the whole world proclaims, this seed,  
Life teeming, springs in very deed  
From Zeus, for who but he the pest  
Could stay, devised by Hera's spite?

In the *Prometheus Solutus*, we know, the Titans have been forgiven and released, and Prometheus, reconciled with Zeus, confesses his moral defeat by donning the wreath of withes as a memorial of his bondage.

If something like this was the intention of the poet, the moral of the whole trilogy is the short-sightedness of human wisdom, misjudging the plans of omnipotence, 'the harmony of Zeus' (as even in the *Prometheus Vincetus* the Chorus recognize), 'that mortal counsels shall never overpass'; rebellion, justified for a time to outward seeming, is proved in error at the last.

It must however be admitted that this interpretation is hardly at one with the first impression produced by the play before us. As we read it, we are carried away by the heroic grandeur of Prometheus. His benevolence, his self-sacrifice, his indomitable courage, form a character that takes possession of

<sup>1</sup> *Supp.* 582 (574) ff., Miss Swanwick's Translation.

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our sympathies : we are compelled to be on his side, and to regard Zeus as an unjust oppressor. Possibly the succeeding dramas, though correcting, would be powerless to obliterate this impression. Perhaps we must say that in throwing all his powers into this sublime creation, Aeschylus was betrayed into an inconsistency, and created a difficulty that he was unable to solve. The parallel of Milton has been well suggested. 'The republican poet, urged on by his dramatic sympathies and by his love of freedom and independence, has drawn the 'unconquerable will' of Satan, and his 'courage never to submit or yield,' with so much force and enthusiasm, as to disturb the ethical balance of his general scheme ; and there is some justification for Shelley's criticism, that Satan is the real hero of *Paradise Lost*<sup>1</sup>.'

*Characters and Structure.*

The *Prometheus Vincitus* may be called a one-part play. The minor characters are subordinated to the central figure, which occupies the stage throughout, impressive in silence as in speech.

The warders CRATOS and BIA (of whom the former only is made to speak) appear in Hesiod (Theog. 385) as the constant attendants of Zeus. Aeschylus draws them as the brutal satellites of a tyrant, as hard of heart as they are ferocious of aspect. 42,78. They contrast with the good-natured HEPHAESTUS, who is 45. disgusted with the task that his craft imposes on him. In his 11 n. matter-of-fact way he sees that Prometheus is in the wrong, but 30. he is loth to punish a kinsman and fellow-craftsman. Yet as 39. the work must be done, he feels a workmanlike satisfaction in 60,63. doing it well.

The CHORUS of Ocean-nymphs is happily conceived to lighten the gloom of the play, their fairy-like forms contrasting with the gigantic figures of the male characters. Their part is treated as a study in feminine sympathy. Curiosity has pre- 139. vailed over modesty to bring them to the scene, and is largely

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, *Tragic Drama of the Greeks*, p. 112.

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blended with their compassion for Prometheus and for Io. Towards Prometheus they waver between pity for his cruel punishment and horror at the wilfulness that brought it upon him. Revolt has failed, and they counsel submission: piety and humility alone can lead to happiness. Yet compassion is their strongest feeling, and they nobly refuse to desert Prometheus in his extremity.

275. 542 ff. The pompous OCEANUS lends a touch of comedy, like the Watchman in the Agamemnon and the Nurse in the Choephoroi. He is a foil to the unyielding pride of Prometheus: a time-server, boasting his influence with the tyrant. His sympathy is only half sincere, and when his proffered mediation is rejected, he retires with alacrity.

The pathetic figure of IO speaks for itself: her frenzy, her calm despair, her romantic story are alike drawn with unsurpassed grace. She is connected with the plot through her descendant Heracles, the destined deliverer of Prometheus. Her unmerited sufferings serve to heighten the captive's indignation; while the prophecy of her restoration by Zeus, revealing the true meaning of his dealings with her, prepares the way for some justification of his treatment of Prometheus. Much of the episode however is frankly pictorial: the marvellous recital of Io's wanderings would not be felt to be unduly discursive by an audience that delighted in the travellers' tales of Herodotus and the wonders of the distant lands just opening to the knowledge of the Greeks<sup>1</sup>.

HERMES is the complacent servant of the new ruler. The insolence of 'Zeus's lackey' is sobered by the rising fury of the

<sup>1</sup> For the Io myth see notes on ll. 581, 875: for her wanderings, the footnote on p. 75.—Io is represented in the play as a cow-horned maiden (613), perhaps because she could not appear on the stage completely transformed into a cow. In the Supplices, where she does not appear, she is generally spoken of as *βοῦς, πόρτις*, but at 577 (568) as *βοτῶν μεξέμβροτον, τὰν μὲν βοός, τὰν δ' αὖ γυναικός*. In early art she was figured as a cow, but in the 5th c. as a maid with cow's horns—possibly owing to the influence of the stage (Roscher's *Lexikon*, s. v. *Io*).

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captive. He passes into a tone of admonition, and finally, despairing of such a madman, departs with a last warning to the Ocean-nymphs.

The early Greek drama, with its chorus and single actor, was necessarily lyric and epic in style: it consisted mainly of long choral odes and narrative speeches. The introduction of a second actor by Aeschylus permitted the growth of the dramatic element; with three interlocutors the story could be evolved in action and dialogue instead of being narrated and sung. This change has not proceeded very far in the *Suppliques*, *Persae* and *Septem*. The *Prometheus*, though retaining something of the early manner, shows a great advance. The choral odes are small<sup>1</sup>, and detached from the rest of the play<sup>2</sup>. The Chorus has little connexion with the plot, and is falling into the position of a spectator<sup>3</sup>, though still more prominent and more individualized in character than with Sophocles and Euripides. The story is acted on the stage, though the action is arrested by long narratives instead of developing continuously as in the *Oresteia*.

The structure of the play is not elaborate. A kind of plot is furnished by Prometheus' secret, but the thread is twice introduced and dropped again aimlessly, before being finally taken up to lead to the catastrophe<sup>4</sup>. The episodes of Oceanus and Io each serve a dramatic object, but their introduction is naively abrupt. Oceanus interrupts the narrative promised by Prometheus to the Chorus. Io's entry is quite casual and unexplained. 864 n. It is hard to see a reason for the order in which her wanderings are told. Elsewhere<sup>5</sup> abrupt transitions are noticeable. Small

<sup>1</sup> Lyrics : dialogue as 1 : 7, as against 1 : 2 in the three early plays, and 1 : 3 even in the *Oresteia*. The peculiar situation may partly account for this brevity of the lyrics: Prometheus never leaving the stage, his silence while the Chorus sings is felt to be undramatic: at 451 he is actually made to apologize for it.

<sup>2</sup> Prometheus' account of Atlas is followed by an unconnected ode on the same theme, 441 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Oceanus takes no notice of his daughters' presence.

<sup>4</sup> 183 ff., 530 ff., 782, 939.

<sup>5</sup> 363, 452, 939.

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inconsistencies may be detected: Zeus already intends to marry Thetis, yet cannot guess what Prometheus' threats refer to; the Ocean-stream is near enough for the Oceanides to hear the sound of the hammering, but Oceanus magnifies his kindness by speaking of the length of his journey. It is however absurd to demand realism from a drama professedly supernatural<sup>1</sup>: in its primeval wonderland the limitations of time and space are  
 328. ignored. Zeus overhears Prometheus from his throne on high; and knows the rejection of his final command as soon as it is  
 1114. uttered, for the storm bursts as Hermes quits the stage.

*Scene<sup>2</sup>.*

The scene is laid on a desolate mountain in Scythia<sup>3</sup>. It is in sight of the sea; and near to the coast, since Io comes along the shore. The coast seems to be that of the earth-encircling Ocean-stream, for the mountain is on the confines of the earth, and within hearing of the caves of the Ocean-nymphs.

Aeschylus therefore vaguely conceived the place of Prometheus' punishment as in the extreme north of the world. It is not specified by Hesiod. A later account, first found in Apollonius Rhodius, placed it in the Caucasus. The Caucasus is mentioned as the scene of the play by the Hypothesis, which is probably to be ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium; this is however corrected by a footnote in the Medicean MS.: *ιστέον ὅτι οὐ κατὰ τὸν κοινὸν λόγον ἐν Κανκάσῳ φησὶ δεδέσθαι τὸν Προμηθεΐα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοῖς Εὐρωπαϊαῖς τέρμασι τοῦ Ὀκεανοῦ, ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν πρὸς τὴν Ἰῶ λεγομένων ἔστι συμβαλεῖν*—a reference to l. 745, where Io is to reach the Caucasus after a long journey. Also at l. 438 the Caucasus is referred to as having people dwelling near it, whereas the scene of the play is

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Poet.* 1456 a 2, quotes the *Prometheus* as an instance of τὸ τερατῶδες.

<sup>2</sup> See Allen in the *American Journal of Philology* xiii; also Foss, *De Loco in quo Prometheus apud Aeschylum vincitus sit*, Bonn 1862.

<sup>3</sup> 2. 20; 89, 1122; 594; 118; 136.



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a desert. It is true that both Cicero (Tusc. 2. 23) and Strabo (4. 182) place the scene of the *Prometheus Solutus* in the Caucasus, but it is most unlikely to have been other than that of the *Prometheus Vincitus*. Probably both Cicero and Strabo, like the writer of the Hypothesis, were misled by the account current in their days. Cicero's translation from the *Solutus* (*ibid.*) contains the words *saxa Caucasi*, but this may represent merely *πέτραι* in the original<sup>1</sup>.

*Representation.*

The early plays of Aeschylus required only two actors to perform them. A third actor was first employed by Sophocles, whose first play appeared in 468 B.C.; and the innovation was adopted by Aeschylus in the *Oresteia*. Whether he used a third actor in the *Prometheus* is uncertain. There are never more than two characters on the stage together except in the first scene, and there Prometheus remains silent till the others have departed. It was suggested by Welcker that the form of Prometheus was represented by a lay-figure, from behind which the actor spoke the part. If this were so, the protagonist would be able to double the parts of Hephaestus and Prometheus; Cratos, Oceanus, Io and Hermes being all sustained by the deuteragonist. *Bia* is a *κωφὸν πρόσωπον*, and would be played by a supernumerary.

Welcker's suggestion may be thought far-fetched<sup>2</sup>, but there are several considerations in its favour. Prometheus never quits the stage throughout the play, and speaks nearly one-half of the entire number of lines: to support this onerous part while standing fastened to a rock, even if the arms were left loose enough to allow a certain amount of action, would tax an actor's endurance very severely. The long silence of Prometheus, impressive and dramatic as it is, may well have been suggested by necessity. Elsewhere the play is constructed for two actors only. At l. 81 Hephaestus exits before Cratos, so that the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Haigh rejects it as very improbable, *Attic Theatre*, edn. 2, p. 251.

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protagonist would be able to take his place behind the lay-figure before l. 88. Between the scenes of Cratos, Oceanus, Io and Hermes are intervals filled by Prometheus and the Chorus, giving the deuteragonist time to rest and change his dress. If a lay-figure were employed, it may have been discovered in position at the beginning of the play, or drawn on, as Wecklein supposes, by Cratos and Bia. L. 74 appears to imply that Prometheus is represented as a figure of gigantic stature, and that Cratos and Bia have climbed up the rock to fetter his arms. The business of the wedge at 64 could be more easily managed with a lay-figure. Little weight, however, attaches to the latter considerations in the absence of conclusive evidence to show how far realism was aimed at in the staging of the Aeschylean drama: perhaps we may infer that circumstances fully described by the poet were left to the imagination of the spectators<sup>1</sup>.

This uncertainty precludes our discussing how, if at all, the car of the Oceanides and the flying-horse of Oceanus were actually represented. As for the storm with which the play concludes, we may well believe that the poet's description was not supplemented by any attempt at realistic presentation. A *βροντήϊον* or thunder-machine and a *κεραυνοσκοπέϊον*, 'lightning-tower,' are mentioned among stage-accessories by Pollux, but can hardly have been used in the primitive Attic theatre. The play evidently ends with the fulfilment of the threat of Zeus: the earth opens and swallows up the rock with Prometheus on it; the Chorus, as Hermes has warned them and they themselves have promised, remain and share his fate. Accepting Doerpfeld's well-known theory that in the early Attic theatre there was no stage but only the orchestra, we should be forced to suppose that this catastrophe was left entirely to the imagination: there being no curtain, actor and chorus must have tamely walked off, or if a lay-figure of Prometheus was used, it was left in position for the *Prometheus Solutus*. But it is hard to see why Aeschylus introduced the engulfing of Prometheus at all, if it could not be exhibited. On the contrary, it

<sup>1</sup> See Gardner and Jevons, *Greek Antiquities*, pp. 685 ff.

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has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that he invented the incident as the only possible way of getting the fettered actor or figure off the stage. And now that the balance of archaeological opinion seems to favour the view that in the time of Aeschylus there was a wooden stage raised above the orchestra, in which a trap-door would be practicable, we may believe that Prometheus on his rock, with the Chorus grouped about him, did actually sink out of sight<sup>2</sup>.

*Date.*

When the play was first produced we do not know. The 383 ff. allusion to the eruption of Etna fixes a superior limit at 479 B.C., or 5 or 6 years later if the passage be copied from Pindar's First 367 n. Pythian, which celebrates a victory won in 474. We have the further evidence of dramatic style (see p. xxiii.), which would place the *Prometheus* later than the *Supplices*, *Persae* (472 B.C.), and *Septem* (467 B.C.), but earlier than the *Oresteia* (458 B.C.). Aeschylus died in 456.

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Buehne des Aischylos*, in *Hermes* xxi.