

# The Myth of Prometheus in Shelley and Goethe/Mit o Prometeju u djelima Shelleya i Goethea

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Benjamin Lovrić

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Boris Berić

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## **Abstract**

The myth of Prometheus is one of the most known myths in Greek mythology. It speaks about a titan Prometheus, who tricked Zeus and stole fire from the Mount Olympus. He gave this fire to the humans and thus saved humanity from Zeus' vengeance. For this he was punished and was chained to Caucasus, where an eagle would come each day and consume his liver. The first chapter of this paper focuses on the myth of Prometheus itself, describing it in detail and explicating its significance. The second chapter focuses on the work *Prometheus* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who managed to tie this myth with the social issues of his own time. The third chapter focuses on Percy Bysshe Shelley's drama *Prometheus Unbound* as a political comment on the French Revolution.

**Key words:** mythology, Prometheus, Goethe, Shelley, influence

## Introduction

In Greek mythology, Prometheus is one of the Titans, the second generation of divine beings, descending from the primordial deities. Prometheus was a son of Iapetus, the son of Gaia and Uranus. The first mention of the Prometheus myth is in Hesiod's *Theogony* of the late eighth century BCE. In the "Trick at Mecone", Prometheus tricked Zeus for mankind's benefit and thus induced his rage. In retribution, Zeus hid fire from humans so that they could not sacrifice bones wrapped in fat as a sacrifice to the gods. Prometheus decided to act, and he stole the fire from Zeus in a giant fennel stalk. In retribution, Zeus sent Pandora to live with humanity. "From her is the race of women and female kind," Hesiod writes; "[for the race and tribes of women are destructive,] a great pain for mortals, living with men, companions not of destructive Poverty but of Plenty" (Hesiod, *Theogony* 590-93). Furthermore, Hesiod writes:

there is no deceiving Zeus's mind nor getting by it.

For not even the son of Iapetos, akakêta Prometheus

escaped his heavy bile, but beneath necessity him,

although very clever, a great bond restrained. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 612-15).

Sending Pandora to live with humanity was not enough for Zeus. He decided to punish Prometheus by chaining him to Mount Caucasus. There he would be forever, and every day an eagle would come and eat his liver, which would regenerate over night because Prometheus was immortal. Eventually, Heracles frees Prometheus from this curse by slaying the eagle.

This myth has been an inspiration for many authors, most notable of them being Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Percy Bysshe Shelley. The works *Prometheus* and *Prometheus Unbound* are considered to be one of the best works of each of the authors. The two authors gave their own interpretation of the myth and incorporated their view on the political and social situation of their own times.



# 1. The Myth of Prometheus

## 1.1. Prometheus

Prometheus is a character from the Greek mythology and he was first mentioned in the work by Hesiod called *Theogony*. According to this work, Prometheus was the son of Iapetus, and he had three siblings; Menoetius, Atlas, and Epimetheus. During the Titanomachy, the struggle between the Greek gods and the titans, he sided with Zeus and therefore he was not banished to Tartarus by Zeus. After the Titanomachy, some of his siblings had to endure a punishment, the most known one is Atlas. According to Hesiod, “Atlas holds wide Heaven beneath powerful necessity” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 517). Atlas was made to hold the sky on his shoulders forever. Prometheus was not very fond of the gods and he is in some stories credited with the creation of humans. He also preferred humans over gods and used his wisdom to ensure the survival of the human race. The name Prometheus translates to “forethought”, and the name Epimetheus translated to “afterthought”. This is significant because Prometheus could foresee the future, and in one occasion he warned his brother, Epimetheus to not accept any gifts from the gods. Epimetheus ignored the warning when he was offered Pandora, and only after he accepted her, he realized what he had done.

## 1.2. The Trick at Mecone

Mankind, because they are not equal to gods, had to sacrifice animals to gods, but they were allowed to keep a part of the animal for themselves. At the “Trick at Mecone” it was to be decided which part of the animal would be sacrificed to the gods, and which the human race was allowed to keep. Representing mankind was Prometheus, who in this saw a chance to trick Zeus. Prometheus made two different piles and presented them to Zeus.

Hesiod writes:

For him, Prometheus covered flesh and innards rich in fat  
with the ox's stomach and set them down wrapped in the hide.

For them, he covered the ox's white bones with shining fat

and, well arranging them for his cunning trick, set them down. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 538-41).

In one pile Prometheus set the meat and most of the fat of the ox and hid it skillfully inside the stomach of the same ox, making this pile look unappetizing. In the other pile he set the bones and covered them with shining fat, making them look as if they were the better option to choose. Prometheus then says to Zeus: “Very noble Zeus, greatest of the gods who are for always, choose whichever of these the spirit in your breast bids you” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 548-49). Prometheus gives Zeus the option to choose between the two piles, knowing that Zeus would pick the better-looking bones covered in fat, rather than to choose the stomach of the ox. “With both hands, he took the white fat, and grew angry around his breast, and bitter bile entered his mind when he saw the ox's white bones in a cunning trick” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 553-55). Zeus indeed chooses the bones and thus decides that the mankind will sacrifice bones to the gods and not the meat, which they can keep for themselves. Zeus was very angry because he was fooled by Prometheus, and in retribution he hides fire from the mankind. Prometheus was very fond of mankind and decides to steal the fire from Zeus in a giant fennel-stalk and gives it to the mankind. This “stung anew Zeus high thunderer in his spirit, and he raged in his heart when he saw among men the far-seen beam of fire” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 567-69). In his rage, Zeus orders Hephaestus and Athena to create a woman, who would be sent to earth. Hesiod writes, "From her is the race of women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth" (Hesiod, *Theogony* 590-94).

### **1.3. Pandora**

The woman created was later known by the name of Pandora. She was made by Hephaestus and dressed by Athena, who “girded and dressed her in a silvery white garment. Down from her head, she drew with her hands a veil skillfully wrought, a wonder to behold” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 573-75). According to this myth, Pandora was the first woman to be sent among men on earth. Hesiod elaborates further:

For from her is the descent of female women

[for the race and tribes of women are destructive,]

a great pain for mortals, living with men,

companions not of destructive Poverty but of Plenty. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 590-93).

Even though Hesiod did not use the name Pandora in *Theogony*, in *Works and Days*, he elaborates further how and why Pandora was created and sent to earth to live amongst mankind. In this work, Hesiod informs the reader that Zeus asked the other gods for help, saying:

Athene to teach her needlework and the weaving of the varied web; and golden Aphrodite to shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs. And he charged Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus, to put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature. (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 63-68).

Furthermore, Hesiod writes:

And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her, and the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion put necklaces of gold upon her, and the rich-haired Hours crowned her head with spring flowers. And Pallas Athene bedecked her form with all manners of finery. Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora. (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 73-80).

Each one of the gods obeyed Zeus's command and gave her a gift, ranging from her looks and manners to her actions. Because she was sent as a punishment to the mankind, each of the gods also gave her a gift, which is actually "a plague to men who eat bread" (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 82). Zeus then sends Pandora as a gift to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Even though Prometheus, who had the gift of foresight, warned Epimetheus not to accept any gifts from gods, Epimetheus accepts the gift. Pandora brought with her a jar in which all the plagues were kept, and she opened the jar. Due to this, plagues and illnesses were released into the world, but the only thing that was left in the jar was Hope. Hesiod writes:

Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds. (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 96-99)

After the jar was closed, only hope was left in the jar, and everything else managed to escape. This is important because it signifies that, even though all sorts of evils were scattered throughout the world, hope remained, and as long as there is hope, there is still a chance for humans.

#### **1.4 Prometheus' punishment**

Even though Zeus decides to punish mankind by sending Pandora down to earth, he decided that he needs to punish Prometheus as well for his actions. Hesiod writes:

. . . He bound  
the changeful-planning Prometheus with unbreakable fetters,  
painful bonds, and drove them through the middle of a pillar.  
And he sent a long-winged eagle upon him. Further, it ate  
his deathless liver, but there grew back all over during the night  
as much as the bird of long wings had eaten during the whole  
whole day. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 520-26).

According to this, Zeus chained Prometheus to a mountain, this later being revealed to be Caucasus, and he sent a giant eagle to eat his liver every day. Because Prometheus was a titan, his liver regenerated over night and he had to endure the same punishment and pain all over again. The Eagle is thought to be a representation of Zeus himself having revenge on Prometheus repeatedly. Even though Prometheus was cursed for eternity, he was saved and his chains were broken. Hesiod elaborates, that “The stout son of Alkmene of the beautiful ankles, Heracles, slew it, and warded off the evil sickness for Iapetos' son and released him from troubles” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 527-29). Hercules was a divine hero in Greek mythology, who is known for the “Twelve Labours of Hercules”. While performing these labours, he

rescues Prometheus by slaying the eagle with a volley of arrows. After he slays the eagle, he frees Prometheus by breaking his chains and releasing him from his eternal punishment.

## **1.5 The significance of the myth**

The myth of Prometheus tells a story of how Prometheus tricked Zeus, and afterwards stole fire from the Olympians. Even though Hesiod writes that Prometheus stole fire, it can be interpreted that Prometheus helped make a difference between mankind and animals. When Zeus hid fire from humans, he made them equal to animals. Humans did not have fire to cook their meat, having to eat it raw, just like animals. They also did not have a source of heat and had to rely on finding shelter to stay warm, a behavior seen in animals. Because Prometheus was very fond of humans, and in some stories, also accredited with creating the human race, him stealing the fire from Zeus and giving it to humans, separated them from the animals and made it possible for them to develop further and rise above animals. For this, Prometheus had to endure a severe punishment. He sacrificed himself for the humans and rose above other titans, because of the sacrifice he took, just because he preferred humans over the gods. In a way, he, as a representative of humans, rebelled against gods and won twice using his wisdom. Due to this he was a hero of people. On the other hand, one must not forget that, because of Prometheus, the humans would never have to endure Pandora's punishment. Humans already had fire and were using it, and only after Prometheus tricks Zeus, does Zeus hide the fire from humans. In retribution, he also sends Pandora to earth, and infests the earth with diseases and plagues. Humans were living their lives to the fullest even before Prometheus decided to anger Zeus. This just comes to show that acting in the manner of Prometheus, is not always the right thing to do, because, even though Prometheus succeeded, he cursed humans forever with Pandora's "gifts". The myth of Prometheus did not only influence the Greek mythology, it also had influence on other authors who drew inspiration from the myth, most known ones being Aeschylus, Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, Goethe and others.

## 2. Goethe's *Prometheus*

### 2.1 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a German writer, whose works include novels, drama, poetry and prose. He was a participant of the “Sturm and Drang” literary movement, but is most known for being a part of the “Weimar Classicism”. He is most famous for his works *Goetz von Berlichingen* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Goethe was influenced by mythology and he presented his view on the myth of Prometheus by writing the poem titled *Prometheus* between 1772 and 1774.

### 2.2 *Prometheus*

The poem *Prometheus* by Goethe is an example of a work from the literary movement “Sturm and Drang”. Goethe found inspiration in Greek mythology, and while in the whole poem, Prometheus addresses Zeus directly, a lot of correlation can be found with Goethe's times. In these times, citizens had to pay a third of their income to the church and the clergy, who collected these taxes and used them for their own needs, completely ignoring the needs of the people who had to pay the taxes. He often compares Zeus's behavior with how the church and clergy act, and compares Prometheus and the human race with the society of his time. The poem was written originally in German, and it took Goethe about two years to finish it, which only comes to show that Goethe made sure to use the right words which would portray his emotions and indirectly show his opinion on the society which he lived in. Throughout the poem Prometheus shuns Zeus and his actions, and yet Zeus does not respond, just like the clergy and the church failed to respond when they were called out by the society of Goethe's times.

As a literary form, *Prometheus* is a poem consisting of seven stanzas of varying lengths, totaling in 63 lines, which do not rhyme. It was first published anonymously in 1785. This poem was a part of the “Sturm and Drang” movement. In this movement, the protagonist is usually driven to action by revenge or greed, making the titan Prometheus a perfect example of a protagonist from this literary movement.

## 2.3 The poem as a political comment

The poem starts with Prometheus as a protagonist, directly addressing Zeus in a way that it seems as if Prometheus was standing on the earth talking to the sky where Zeus dwells. Prometheus orders Zeus what to do, saying:

You still must leave me

My Earth standing

And my hut which You did not build,

And my hearth, home's glowing

Fire which You begrudge me. (Goethe, *Prometheus* 6-10)

Prometheus is telling Zeus to leave him and earth alone. When using the word “My” in the seventh line of the poem, he claims the Earth as his own creation, and informs Zeus that he has nothing to look for here and that he wants to be left at peace. This is in accordance to some of the Greek myths in which Prometheus and Epimetheus are credited with the creation of the human race. In the lines 9 and 10, he accuses Zeus of envying his hearth, which correlates with the fact that Prometheus stole the fire from Olympus and gave it to the humans. In the next lines, Prometheus, in a way, mocks gods, saying:

I know of nothing poorer

Under the sun than You gods!

Indigently You feed

Your majesty

On proffered sacrifice

And breathfuls of prayer.

You would starve to naught

If children and beggars

Were not such fools full of hope. (Goethe, *Prometheus* 7-15)

He insults the gods directly, telling them that he does not know of anything poorer than the gods because only children and beggars turn to them when they are in need, calling these also fools for their effort because the gods will not answer. With these lines Goethe also reflects on the situation in his days, because more and more irreligious groups exist, which focus more on their intellect and understanding of the world rather than on the supernatural. These lines are also very important because they signify that gods would starve if poor people were not praying to them. This makes the gods actually inferior to humans, because they need prayers in order to survive, while humans can thrive alone, without anyone caring about them. Consequently, Prometheus also puts himself above the gods.

In the third stanza Prometheus recalls his youth, saying:

When I was a child

That knew not its way in the world

I would lift my deluded eyes

To the sun as though out beyond it

There were an ear to hear my complaints

A heart like mine

That would take pity on my oppression. (Goethe, *Prometheus* 16-22)

These lines are an additional accusation of the gods, because Prometheus believes that they were not there for him when he needed them. He identifies himself with the humans who look for the help of gods, who sit idle and do nothing. Prometheus continues addressing Zeus, saying:

I should honor You? For what?

Did You ever gentle

The ache of my burden?

Did You ever dry

The tears of tribulation?



Was I not forged to manhood

By Time Almighty

And Eternal Destiny,

My masters and Yours? (Goethe, *Prometheus* 32-40)

Prometheus, and with him the whole human race, feels no gratitude towards Zeus; he does not feel that he needs to thank him and pray for him, because Zeus never did anything to aid him. Prometheus yet again puts gods and humans on the same level saying that they were both educated by time. Zeus had no influence on development of Prometheus, and also earth because Prometheus credits himself with the creation of the earth.

While writing this poem, Goethe was living in a society which was similar to the position in which Prometheus was. People were made to pay a third of their income to the church and clergy. Even though people were doing their part, paying their taxes, the church and the clergy did nothing, just like Zeus does nothing. In the fifth stanza, Prometheus asks Zeus:

Perhaps You believed

I should find life hateful,

And flee to the wilderness

Because not all my blossom-dreams

Reached ripeness? (Goethe, *Prometheus* 41-46)

By asking this rhetorical question, Prometheus finds a way to provoke Zeus again, because everything that he does he does is in spite of Zeus. He signifies again how prepared the human race is to succeed and that they will never stop until they succeed. In the spirit of "Sturm und Drang", Goethe signifies again that the humanity has evolved to such a state that they do not pray anymore for a better world; they think how their life can be improved and using their knowledge they improve their life. In the last stanza, Prometheus comes to his conclusion, stating:

Behold

Here I sit, fashioning men  
In my own image,  
A race after my likeness,  
A race that will suffer and weep,  
And rejoice and delight with heads held high  
And heed Your will no more  
Than I! (Goethe, *Prometheus* 47-54)

After taunting Zeus, in the last stanza Prometheus finishes his monologue by claiming that he has been creating humans, thus removing Zeus' authority over mankind. He shapes them to his own image, not to Zeus's image; he gives them traits which he chooses. In the last two lines, he completely removes any power and influence from Zeus and proclaims that he has created humans who will not follow Zeus anymore, they are now free minded and has a will of their own.

### ***3. Prometheus Unbound by Percy Bysshe Shelley***

#### **3.1 Percy Bysshe Shelley**

Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of the major English romantic poets. He was considered a radical, and thus he was not famous for his works during his lifetime, because publishers did not publish his works in fear of blasphemy or sedition. Some of his most known works are *Ozymandias*, *To a Skylark*, *The Cenci*, *Queen Mab* and many others. His masterpiece is considered to be the drama *Prometheus Unbound*, which he wrote during his stay in Italy. During his education at Eton college he used a frictional electric machine to charge his doorknob and thus shocked his tutor. In 1810 Shelley enrolled to Oxford and during his study he anonymously published a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism*, which led to him being expelled from Oxford. Due to his actions, Percy Shelley can be regarded as a Promethean figure.

#### ***3.2 Prometheus Unbound***

*Prometheus Unbound* is a lyrical drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley, published in 1820. It is a four-act lyrical drama, more precisely a closet drama, meaning that it was not supposed to be played on stage. The drama focuses on Prometheus, a titan from the Greek mythology, being released from his torments. In the original myth Prometheus is released by Hercules and Zeus approves this act, while in Shelley's drama Prometheus is released after Zeus, or in this drama Jupiter, loses power and has no control over Prometheus anymore. Just like Goethe, Shelley sent a political message when he wrote this drama. It was his comment on the French Revolution and how it changed one tyrant with another. He showed in his work that a tyrant can be removed from power and then the people will be able to live their life to the fullest.

#### **3.2 The drama as a comment on the French Revolution**

##### **3.2.1 Act I**

The first act of the drama starts in the Caucasus, where the Titan Prometheus is bound to a rock. His heart is daily eaten by an eagle sent by Jupiter. Prometheus is surrounded by Panthea and Ione, the two daughters of Ocean. Prometheus decides that he wants to hear his curse against Jupiter again, and with the help of Earth, his mother, he calls upon the Phantasm of Jupiter and orders him to repeat his curse. The Phantasm of Jupiter says:

I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse

Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;

Till thine Infinity shall be

A robe of envenomed agony;

And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,

To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain! (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 1. 286-91)

After hearing how he cursed Jupiter, he repents claiming, "I wish no living thing to suffer pain" (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 1. 306).

From the start of the drama Shelley connects *Prometheus Unbound* with the French Revolution. Jupiter represents tyranny and Prometheus represents the people in France. Prometheus's punishment correlates with the people in France because for years they had to pay high taxes, while receiving nothing in return. Shelley believes that the only way how to help the people again would be to remove the tyrant, and that happens in *Prometheus Unbound*.

Afterwards, Mercury (Hermes) appears with a group of Furies, who wish to torture Prometheus. Mercury proclaims:

... there is a secret known

To thee, and to none else of living things,

Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,

The fear of which perplexes the Supreme. (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 1. 371-74)

Mercury, who was sent by Jupiter, demands that Prometheus tells him the secret which only he knows. According to the myth, Prometheus knows who will overthrow Jupiter, but has not told Jupiter who that will be. Prometheus refuses to tell him this secret, even though Mercury offers him release from his chains. After Mercury leaves, Prometheus is tortured by the Furies, but he endures and when the Furies leave, he claims the fact that he did not succumb as a victory over Jupiter. The act ends with Prometheus recalling his love for the Oceanid Asia.

Shelley uses Prometheus's defiance as a way to show that people, just like Prometheus, must resist the tyrants, they should not accept the easier path, because if they do, they will partake in the tyranny and nothing will change. Prometheus did not succumb, and therefore also the people must rebel against the tyranny.

### 3.2.2 Act II

In the second act Prometheus does not appear. The first scene of the second act starts with the Oceanid Panthea complaining to Asia how her life has changed since the downfall of Prometheus and how she found out about Prometheus' love in a dream. Asia says to Panthea to "Lift up thine eyes, And let me read thy dream" (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 2. 1. 55-56). Panthea agrees and Asia sees the dream, but she also sees a second dream. This dream is followed by a repetition of the words "Follow! Follow!" (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 2.1. 132) in their heads. Echoes appear and persuade them to follow them, which the two Oceanids end up doing.

The second scene of the second act is only a few lines long. It describes the journey of Asia and Panthea. The scene ends with the prophecy of Prometheus' release:

And Love and the chained Titan's woful doom,

And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth

One brotherhood; delightful strains which cheer

Our solitary twilights, and which charm

To silence the unenvying nightingales. (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 2.2. 93-97)

The third scene of the second act takes place in the mountains, where the two Oceanids reach the realm of Demogorgon. Asia and Panthea admire the scenery, and are called by a Song of Spirits, telling them to go “To the deep, to the deep, Down down!” (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 2.3. 54-55). The scene ends with them obeying the Song of Spirits and descending.

The fourth scene of the second act starts with the Oceanids in the Cave of Demogorgon. Panthea describes it:

I see a mighty darkness  
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom  
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,  
Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,  
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is

A living Spirit. (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 2.4. 3-8)

Asia questions Demogorgon about the creator of the world, and he claims that God created the world but refuses to tell them his name. Asia criticizes Jupiter for his actions, all the while praising Prometheus for his. Asia then asks Demogorgon when Prometheus will be freed. Demogorgon opens a mountain and through this opening enters a chariot being driven by the Hours. The scene ends with Asia, Panthea and Demogorgon all climbing into the chariot and ascending.

The fifth scene of the second act takes place on a mountaintop where the chariot stops. Panthea realizes that Asia has changed, and she is now beautiful. The scene and the act end with Asia seeing the future of love.

Even though in the second act Prometheus does not appear, he acts through Asia and Panthea. Because of Prometheus’s defiance, they take action and look for a way to end the punishment. Shelley suggests that this is the way how to overthrow tyrants, the oppressed must not stand idle, they need to take action and fight for their rights.

### 3.2.3 Act III

The first scene of the third act starts in heaven, with Jupiter before gods telling them to rejoice over his omnipotence. While he was telling about his successes to the gods, before him appears Demogorgon and proclaims:

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;

Mightier than thee; and we must dwell together

Henceforth in darkness. (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 3.1. 54-56)

Jupiter pleads for mercy, but after Demogorgon ignores him, Jupiter decides to attack Demogorgon, but as he does that the elements stand idle and Demogorgon overthrows Jupiter.

This correlates directly with the French Revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy. Jupiter was not overthrown by other gods; he was overthrown by his own son. The French Revolution was instigated by the middle class, and when the monarchy was finally overthrown they declared a republic. In *Prometheus Unbound* Jupiter falls, and after the French Revolution, Louis XVI was executed, which is another parallel between the drama and the Revolution.

The second scene of the third act takes place in Atlantis, where Ocean and Apollo are discussing Jupiters fall. They both agree that earth will be reformed, there will be no wars or slavery.

The third scene of the third act returns to Caucasus, where Hercules frees Prometheus from his chains. Prometheus thanks Hercules and then describes to Asia a cave where they could live. After he addresses Earth, she informs him that she feels life and joy. The scene ends with Earth calling upon a spirit, who leads them all to a temple which was once dedicated to Prometheus.

Prometheus being released from his chains signifies the oppressed people finally, after years of torment, being released from the tyranny.

The fourth and the final scene of the third act starts near the cave where the spirit lead them. Spirit of the Earth approaches them and starts speaking with Asia. The spirit reports

that the world has changed for the better and the humans are starting to be true to themselves. The spirit reports that he has visited the humans and reports what he saw there by saying:

And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked

One with the other even as spirits do--

None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,

Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows. (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 3.4.

131-134)

He informs them that the mankind has changed, there are no more kings and that everyone is equal. The humans no longer fear Jupiter and are living their life as they were intended to live it.

### 3.2.4 Act IV

The fourth act is situated near the cave of Prometheus. Panthea and Ione are awakened by the song of the spirits who sing of dark spirits. The spirits identify as Hours, who describe their history. They are then visited by the spirits of the human mind, who, together with the Hours, decide to go across the world and share love through their song. Panthea and Asia are visited by the Earth and the Moon, who describe music and light. They start describing how the mankind has changed and how everyone is beautiful now. Demogorgon appears and addresses the Earth, the Moon, “Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods” (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 4. 529), “Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse” (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 4. 534), and all others with his final speech, which he concludes by saying “This is alone Life; Joy, Empire, and Victory!” (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 4. 578)

The third and the fourth act differ from the French Revolution because, in these acts, Shelley presents his opinion on how the world should be after tyranny had been abolished. The French Revolution did abolish slavery, did expel religious leaders, but it was also a time of wars. Many civilians were executed because they were considered against the revolution. In his work Shelley does not reinstate a new leader; he removes the rulers completely; he



creates an anarchist's paradise. Even though the French Revolution did help the oppressed people, Shelley, through his work, shows the mistake of the French Revolution because he thinks that it just replaced one tyrant with another.

## Conclusion

Even though the myth of Prometheus dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, it had a big influence on other authors, especially in the Post-Renaissance. The myth speaks of a trickster figure, who has no respect for the authority and does anything in their power to achieve even the slightest victory. Exactly that has inspired many authors, most notable of which are Goethe and Shelley, who in their works took inspiration from the myth, or in this case even from Prometheus.

Goethe's *Prometheus* is a poem in which Prometheus addresses Zeus directly, verbally taking all power from him and calling him out for his lack of actions. *Prometheus Unbound* by Shelley talks about Prometheus being freed and of his life after he was released from his chains, but it has the same motif like Goethe; Zeus, in this case Jupiter, is stripped from him power over mankind.

Both authors presented their takes on the myth in their poem or drama, respectively, while including their own political opinion on the society in which they lived. Just like how Prometheus was a trickster figure, both authors represented their true message in their works.

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