

Transmedial Prometheus: from the Greek Myth to Contemporary Interpretations

Prometeo Transmedia: del mito griego a las interpretaciones contemporáneas

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Abstract

The myth of Prometheus is well known for its rich polymorphism, celebrating the Titan's contest with the Olympian gods and its demythisation in the contemporary era. To Ernst Bloch "Faust and Prometheus are the major figures of the Renaissance", while Gilbert Durand describes the relationship between myth and history as a backwards "evhemerism" which enables a messianic reading of the Promethean symbol, especially at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the following. From the Renaissance to the 20th century, the Promethean symbol slides transmedially from the verbalized narrative towards visual arts. With the exhaustion of the Promethean momentum, for Durand as well as Maffesoli, the 20th century assumes the decadent myths of Dionysus and, eventually, a vast Hermetic mythology. This paper highlights several moments and works which marked the dynamic history of the mythical hero, as revealed to us by Aeschylus, Shelley, Goethe, Gide, Ridley Scott etc.

Key Words: Titan(ism) - Myth - Demythisation - Mythème - Intertextuality - Transmedia - Technology - "Will to power" - "Eternal return" - Prometheus - Aeschylus - Goethe - Shelley - Gide - Ridley Scott - Prometheus Bound - Prometheus Misbound.

Resumen

El mito de Prometeo es conocido por el rico polimorfismo de la celebración de la lucha del Titán con los dioses del Olimpo a su desmitificación contemporánea. Para Ernst Bloch, "Faust y Prometeo son las figuras principales del Renacimiento". Gilbert Durand describe la relación entre mito e historia como un "evhemerismo" hacia atrás, que permite una lectura mesiánica del símbolo prometeico a finales del siglo XVIII y principios del siguiente. Simultáneamente, desde el Renacimiento hasta el siglo XX, el símbolo prometeico se desliza transmedialmente de la narración verbalizada hacia las artes visuales. Con el agotamiento del impulso prometeico, tanto para Durand como para Maffesoli, el siglo XX asume los mitos decadentes de Dionisio y, finalmente, una vasta mitología hermética. Este artículo destaca varios momentos y obras que marcaron la dinámica historia del héroe mítico, como nos lo han revelado Esquilo, Shelley, Goethe, Gide, Ridley Scott etc.

Palabras clave: Titanismo - Mito - Desmitificación - Mitema - Intertextualidad - Transmedia - Tecnología - "Voluntad de poder" - "Eterno retorno" - Prometeo - Esquilo - Goethe - Shelley - Gide - Ridley Scott - Prometeo encadenado - "Prometeo mal encadenado".

1. Introduction

A great number of mythological symbols and characters have survived as World literature and other cultural representations for many centuries after the fall of the classical Greco-Roman world. How is it possible for myth to survive and evolve? In relation to this question, Karl Kerényi observed that the meaning of the myths “has to do with existence”, that is: “the important role of mythology, the continuous retelling of the myths” “cannot be explained by mere ‘love of storytelling’”. In fact, if mythical figures “really correspond to existence”, they have “a certain degree of transparency” which allows them to go off the stage and to “extend to existence itself” (Kerényi, 1963: XI – XII).

From the ancient Greeks to contemporary culture, Prometheus particularly embodies an attempt to compensate (the threat of) the fall of humanity through the advance of technology over nature. In the Greek myth, the regression of mankind towards an ontologically marginal and vulnerable condition is the consequence of its divorce from divinity, following the farce that the Titan plays on the gods at Me-kone. A civilizing and philanthropic pioneer of technology, which he inaugurates by stealing the fire from the gods and bringing it to people inside a narthex stalk, Prometheus is also the mythical figure of revolt, emancipation and self-assertion, even at the cost of self-destruction that takes the form of self-sacrifice. “Faust and Prometheus are the major figures of the Renaissance”, writes Ernst Bloch (1974: 10). The relationship between myth and history – a backwards “evhemerism” (Durand, 1998: 29) – enables a “messianic” reading of the Promethean symbol. In Europe, at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the following, “the entire pre-romantic and romantic” period reveals a “certain mythical Messianism,” a “literary and ideological revival of the ancient myth of Prometheus” (Durand, 1998: 29). Moreover, there occurs a “historical incarnation of this myth in Napoleon Bonaparte” (Durand, 1998: 29). The pre-romantics associate the Titan with other mythical-religious figures such as Jesus (Maistre, Shelley), Lucifer (Shelley), Ixion, Tantalus, Sisyphus (Goethe). Throughout the history of Western culture, the refusal of (the effects of) historicity manifests itself in two opposing forms: as the assumption of “demiurgic”, “Promethean” and “Faustian” temporality – defiance of time and death through the creative skills of *homo faber*, *homo artifex* –, re-

spectively, and the recurrent, cyclical temporality, reducible to the mythical *illud tempus* of the beginnings (Bonnardel 2000: 137; Eliade, 1963).

With the exhaustion of the Promethean momentum, the 20th century assumes “the ‘decadent’ myths of Dionysus” and, eventually, “a vast Hermetic mythology” (Durand, 1998: 31; also Maffesoli, 2003) which becomes increasingly transmedial, as shown in a following section of this paper. Here I focus mainly on Ridley Scott’s production *Prometheus* (2012), heir to his *Blade Runner* (1982), *Prometheus’* trans-media campaign, and the forthcoming *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). The story proves, once again, that the relevance of the mythical symbol is not reduced to historical facts in a strict timeline (Durand, 1998: 30). It goes beyond and remains pertinent not only the extension and historical reflection on myth, but especially as an echo of the effects of myth on history (Turrís, 2009: 10; Evola, 2009); namely the understanding of the latter, into the “long” or “short duration” (Braudel, 1949) at the level of trans-historical semantism, by virtue of its multiple transmedial functionalities, since myth “recounts”, “explains” and “reveals” (Brunel, 1988).

2. Methodology

In Genette’s words (1982), myth may be regarded as a “hypotext” and the deriving text as a “hypertext” in relation to the mythical scheme. Boris Tomashevsky (1973: 247 – 285) understands myth as a “system of motifs” (see also Pageaux, 2000: 131 – 132). For Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978), a myth is the totality of “all its variants”. Despite distinctive features, the versions of the same myth display, as a stable core, a number of structural constants (discernible at the narrative, act-antial, figurative or symbolic level) that Lévi-Strauss (1978) calls “*mythème*” and Jean Rousset (1999), “invariants”. The literary myth involves a “mythical scenario”, namely a narrative “scheme” composed of “*mythèmes*”, “invariants”. Thanks to variable elements – that lend specificity to each version –, the general scheme becomes a particular “story” (Pageaux, 2000: 131). Therefore, the analysis of the literary myth aims at two complementary aspects: the perpetuation of a script and its particularization. If myth can be understood as “the set of all its variants” in the manner of Lévi-Strauss (1978), then – as Daniel-Henri Pageaux (2000) sug-

gests – the literary myth also subsumes “all the transformations undergone by a scenario” under the influence of ideology, aesthetics or the specific configuration of the imaginary in different eras and cultures (Pageaux, 2000: 132).

A generation or a writer can rediscover a myth, recontextualizing it. Under the German occupation, French audiences saw, for instance, a symbol of the Resistance in the myth of Antigone (Brunel, 1988; see also Bonnardel, 1993; Kerényi, 1963). Also, the myth of Prometheus is well known for its rich polymorphism, celebrating the Titan’s contest with the Olympian gods and its demythisation in the contemporary era. In this paper, I highlight several moments and works which marked the dynamic history of the mythical hero, as revealed to us by Aeschylus, Shelley, Goethe, Gide, and Ridley Scott, as well as some European painters from the Renaissance until today. Emphasis is placed upon the transmedial transpositions of the myth across the different artistic languages of the visual arts and cinematography.

3. Discussion

3.1. Prometheus, classic variations on the theme of freedom.

From Aeschylus to Shelley

The main sources of the Promethean myth are, for the modern culture, Hesiod, Aeschylus and Plato. Hesiod gave the first version of the myth of Prometheus in *Works and Days*, where Prometheus appears as the “rebellious Titan, responsible for the suffering cast upon men by gods and for the end of the golden age” (Vianu, 1963: 622). Unlike Hesiod, Aeschylus depicts Prometheus in a trilogy of which only one part has been preserved, *Prometheus Bound*. Here he is the civilizing hero, benefactor of mankind (*philanthropos*), who gave men fire, arts, crafts. *Prometheus Bound* is a cosmological drama which explores in symbolic terms the mechanisms of power (Rusu, 1961: 88). The mythological foundation of Aeschylus’s play consists of *Theogony* and *Teomachia*. Aeschylus’s tragedy rests on a mythical etymology of the Titan’s name, coming from the Greek *promanthano* (“to know beforehand, to foresee”): Prometheus knows how the reign of Zeus could end. Aeschylus therefore insists not only on the hero’s philanthropic attribute,

but also on his rebellious spirit¹. In *Protagoras*, Plato also insists on the civilizing role of Prometheus: Zeus gave people spiritual values of moral and political life, while Prometheus made technical progress possible (Vianu, 1963). In the second century, Lucian draws a comparison between the artist and Prometheus, resumed in the 18th-19th centuries. Lucian's analogy relies on the quality of creators of the two (Vianu, 1963: 622): Prometheus forged people, goddess Athena breathed upon them and gave them life.

Since classical Greek drama, Prometheus has embodied the principle of free will and self-affirmation (Rusu, 1961: 94). The titanic force of the Promethean personality will be in accordance with the romantic and pre-romantic spirit (*Sturm und Drang*). Emancipation from external constraints, denial of transcendence, assertion of one's individuality will have affinities with key ideas of modernity, established by Nietzsche: "death" of God and the apology of Superman. Hence, the "rage to be" himself of the Immoralist, the emblematic character of André Gide. In a dramatic poem of his youth, left unfinished, *Prometheus*, Goethe incarnates in the Titan his own condition of writer in a troubled era. Goethe evokes Prometheus in an Aeschylean manner and places him next to Tantalus, Ixion, Sisyphus, whom he calls "my saints", "members of a huge opposition" (Goethe qtd. in Vianu, 1963: 623). This poem is one of the key creations of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. After Goethe, the most important exploitation of the Promethean myth belongs to Percy B. Shelley and his wife Mary Shelly. Percy B. Shelley disagrees with the end of Aeschylus's trilogy and refuses to reconcile the champion of humanity with its oppressor, introducing a new character, Demogorgon, which casts Jupiter into the abyss. Shelley oxymoronically associates Prometheus with both Christ and Satan. Prometheus and Satan are similar in their rebellion; Prometheus and Christ, in their sacrifice. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* offers a reading along her husband's lines, explored in the paper by López-Varela and Saavedra in this thematic issue of *Icono* 14.

3.2. The unpredictable:

Gide's *Prometheus Misbound*

André Gide subtitles his parodic and deheroing version of the myth, *Prometheus Misbound* (*Prométhée mal enchaîné*), as *sotie*, in French. This nonconformist version is part

of a broader trend, supported by the French writers of the first half of the 20th century, one of the demythization of characters, situations and ancient symbols (Mănescu, 1977; Călinescu, 2003). Falling within the deheroing trend, Gide transforms not only the myth of Prometheus, but also the French dramatic species called *sotie*. Originally, the *sotie* was a medieval representation, but Gide turns it into a narrative structure with a dramatic verve and a “buffoon” aspect. However, the buffoonery is only apparent. Gide undertakes a demystification of the myth, perpetrated primarily by historicization and ostentatious “descent” into everyday life of the contemporary city:

When, on the summit of the Caucasus, Prometheus had become fully aware that his chains, fetters, straitwaistcoats, prison-walls and other scruples, taking them all in all, were giving him pins and needles, in order to change his posture he rose on his left side, stretched out his right arm, and, between four and five o'clock on an autumn afternoon, walked down the boulevard which leads from the Madeleine to the Opéra. (Gide, 1953: 105)

Mythical time - undetermined, *illud tempus* (Eliade, 1988) - and the isolation of the punished Titan on the rock at the end of the world, at the boundary between sacred and profane, become a diffuse contingency at Gide (*hic et nunc*): the *chic* “boulevard” in Paris, “ between four and five o'clock on an autumn afternoon”. Despite his use of protagonists with mythological or legendary names (Zeus, Prometheus, Damocles), Gide confers a timelessness and a fabulous geography to his *sotie*, which gives it a profane aspect. The French Prometheus is, no more, no less, than an unauthorized manufacturer of matches (which finally causes his imprisonment). Zeus, the Millionaire, becomes a mysterious banker. The classical Prometheus's eagle, in its turn, takes on unusual, hilarious meanings, in Gide's parodic version. So the clients of the coffee shop apostrophize Prometheus in an irritated manner: “That . . . an eagle! Come, come now!! It's nothing but a conscience, at the very most.” (Gide, 1953: 122)

Recontextualized, the myth of Prometheus becomes historicized and localized. From the first lines of the parody, the Titan's defining gesture is “descent”, denial of the mythical-heroic essence. Like Sartre's Orestes, he knows that he is free, he realizes what “ankyloses” him (Gide, 1967: 105). By his “change of position”

(Gide, 1967: 105) - and correlatively, of his view(point) - followed by leaving the Caucasus, the French Prometheus dethrones his own myth. He abandons the attitudes left to him by tradition and, plunging into the modern metropolis, he tries there to (re)discover his own way of being authentic. Tired of his conventional picture, Gide's Prometheus refuses the inflexible greatness of the revolted Titan and decides to experience another form of rebellion. Like his Greek prototype, the French Prometheus remains aloof from the immortals, while it brings him closer to humankind. The Aeschylean "Bearer of Fire" illuminates, in Gide's piece, the depths of one's personality, where the individual's intimate aspirations clash with external constraints. Gide's Prometheus remains a "civilizer", but in a different way from that of Aeschylus and Shelley. Prometheus denies the classic look of his heroism manifested as a defiance of divinity. Gide's Prometheus no longer defends his creation - humankind - against the Olympian gods, but frees man from himself.

An original fact is that the Titan revolts against the internalization of the constraints that constitute an assumed version of "authority". In Gide's parody, Zeus the Millionaire triggers, by his "gratuitous acts" (Gide, 1967: 107-108), the mechanisms of conscience - the moral principle or even the prejudice as its deviant form. The acute need of external determination is clearly expressed by the two victims of Zeus: "I carry my banknote with me", "[i]t is with me day and night. I depend on it. I used to be commonplace before, but free. Now I belong to it. This event determines me; I used to be nobody, now I am somebody" - Damocles confesses (Gide, 1967: 114). Cocles laments in a similar way (Gide, 1953: 114 - 115).

Zeus-the Millionaire evades all determinations: he has "no sort of eagle". Instead, he imposes a network of determinations on man; hence, the awareness of the human limiting freedom: "I (and Zeus laughs), I give the eagles" (Gide, 1967: 151). Assumed, the transcendent determination may become, finally, "consciousness" (Gide, 1967: 122). The bundle of multiple limitations seem to be in the hands of Zeus-the Millionaire who shares the slapping, the banknotes and the eagles. These three symbolize the very moral dependence of the individual. This ambiguous subordination literally kills Damocles - exhausted by the search for truth and for his benefactor, as mysterious as divinity. It also makes Prometheus, motivated by the end of Damocles, kill his eagle. The eagle is a symbol of everything that devours

and, at the same time, manifests the individual, fuelling his trust in the purpose of his existence. The value with which life identifies may be more important than life itself. It is what ultimately Gide's Prometheus denies, distancing himself from the original valences of the mythological character, which is an icon of sacrifice. To assert himself, Gide's Prometheus refuses compliance with a predetermined pattern which is (self) depriving of life.

The "straitjackets" from which Gide's Prometheus frees himself (Gide, 1967: 105) is a constant feature of the character, in all the mentioned versions: Prometheus is a prototype of those who have the "madness" to be themselves, at any risk, even that of passing for crazy. Crossing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the fool (le *Fou*, le *Niais*) is the one who has the right or the courage to tell the truth, even when this is disturbing. (The "madness" of the Gidean character is a content connoted by the symbol-metaphor of the "straightjackets").

3.3. Nietzsche via Gide.

The French *Prometheus* or the philosophy of the "great style"

Gide reconstructs the myth of Prometheus from Nietzsche's perspective. In the French *Prometheus*, we finally recognize the Nietzschean Immoralist, a follower of the "great style" – which is a personal synthesis of vital "forces" – and the "will to power". To be more precise, the latter is the "will to have will", unbroken by inner conflicts or self-blaming. At the other extreme, the sword (over the head) of Damocles is unbearable. Gide's Damocles dies of a broken heart, exhausted by remorse, since he cannot track down his benefactor, but benefits from his charitable and incomprehensible gesture. This is the source of the ongoing anguish of Damocles that, in Nietzsche's terms, depletes his vital resources. Gide's Prometheus is not amoral, but immoral; finally, his ethics is no longer that of tolerance and utopian ideal – preached by the humanism of the Enlightenment –, but an apology of extreme, egomaniac individualism.

Nietzsche "deconstructs" the humanist tradition, himself naming this deconstruction the "genealogy of morals". By rewriting the classical myth, Gide follows Nietzsche in several fundamental aspects. Nietzsche criticizes the modern human-

ism for imagining an (another) ideal world that is utopian, based on values that are allegedly higher and external to life, “transcendent” values. Prejudicing the real in favour (and in the name) of the ideal means, at Nietzsche, a certain evidence of “nihilism”. For him, there is no transcendence, values and judgments are an emanation of life (see Ferry, 2007). The Promethean “descent” carries, at Gide, this Nietzschean connotation of annihilating transcendence, or rehabilitating the immanent: “from the heights of Caucasus”, “between four and five o’clock on an autumn afternoon”, Prometheus “descended the avenue leading from Madeleine to the Opera” (Gide, 1967: 105). For Nietzsche, there is nothing outside immediate life; the ideals of politics, morality, religion are but “idols”, “fictions” meant to flee life, before turning against it (Ferry, 2007: 166). The purpose of philosophy is to denounce precisely these delusions. The unpredictable evolution of Prometheus “misbound”, from the initial descent – the mythical chronotope in the metropolis time and space –, until the final ingurgitation of the eagle parodically illustrates this declared intention of the philosophies of “suspicion”, from Nietzsche to Marx and Freud. The eagle devoured at the end is a Promethean emblem that the hero finally refuses; it’s a sort of a rescinded Nietzschean “idol”, a personification of the imperative of duty and of the ideal moral order.

Nietzsche is skeptical of the apology of rationalism in which he sees only an illusion, a “projection” through which we imagine that we establish a meaning where the chaotic diversity of reality escapes, in fact, our understanding. Life is but an anarchic weaving of “forces” – “impulses” – “active” and “reactive”, and the “great style” consists in merging them into a successful existential synthesis (see Ferry 2007). The “reactive” forces exercise censorship on the sensitive ignored by virtue of a completely utopian “will of truth”. Nietzsche criticizes the scientific, metaphysical and religious tradition – especially Christianity – the fact of having “despised” the body and sensitivity, considering them inferior to reason. Reason is a “reactive” force to the extent that it “reacts” against sensitive experience, seeking to oppose (and impose) the order of the intelligible; in other words, to the extent that it allows the translation of the empirical phenomenon to principles and categories. The “active” forces mean the assertion of the body and of sensitive experiences. These are expressed through art, but not in science, and they culminate in an “aristocratic” view – as Nietzsche claims – upon the world. So that

in art, it is not the amount of “truth” that matters, but the “magic of sensitive emotions” (Ferry, 2007: 185). Yet Nietzsche does not completely deny the contribution of “reactive” forces to the definition of a particular mode of existence. But, he finds that the clash of the two types of forces – “active” and “reactive” – devitalize the individual, cast *asthenia* upon life, diminish its intensity. Despite some distorting interpretations that were circulated, Nietzsche called, in fact, for an “as mastered a hierarchization as possible of the multiple forces that make up life” (Ferry, 2007: 187). This ranking is precisely what Nietzsche calls the “great style”, which is “beyond good and evil”, beyond the classic categories of traditional morality, that he “deconstructs”. From the “great style” there derives, according to Nietzsche, the “greatness” of a personality. The “great style” – in which rationality has its own share of contribution – derives from a conciliation of the two types of forces, “active” and “reactive”. “Harmonised” as in the movement of a great “dancer” - famous choreographic image of Nietzsche -, the vital forces achieve, together, “intensity” and elegance, naturalness and self-control. For an artist, the “will to power” - Nietzsche explains in a posthumous work - consists of “his great style”, namely the ability to master his internal chaos, to force it to take shape. The “will to power” is precisely the “will to have power” upon the self that would thus be able to manage the internal chaos of life impulses. By synthesizing the vital forces that it determines, the “will to power” aims at intensity and avoidance of the grinding that devitalize, deplete life.

The final gesture of Gide’s Prometheus carries the meaning of the Nietzschean rearrangement of vital forces: a reconfiguration of the relationship between the “active” (intimate self) and “reactive” (job / role / social ego) forces. Emancipated from external constraint – foreign, crippling, unresolved -, Gide’s Prometheus takes control of his own self. His “great style” comes, in the end, from the reconciliation with himself, from the agreement of all the forces that make up a vivid and harmonious personality. In the meaning that Nietzsche lends to it, the “eternal return” is linked to a necessary and individual dissociation - of each of us as one thinks fit – between what is worth living and what is not; namely, between intense and rich in diversity life forms on the one hand and the failed, mediocre ones on the other side (Ferry, 2007: 205). Nietzsche’s motto of the “Eternal Return”, formulated in the *Will to power*, is “Live so that you want to relive”. From this point of view, there

is no difference between present and eternity. This is the meaning of the option of Gide's Prometheus. The present he chooses in the end, the freedom and intensity of an experience *hic et nunc*, in the middle of the contemporary metropolis, is worth all the eternity that he loses and that was given to him by his belonging to another world – that of the myth, gods and transcendent values.

3.4. The pioneer of technology: transmedial translations

From the Renaissance to the 20th century, the Promethean symbol slides trans-medially from the verbalized narrative towards the visual arts, being turned over on all sides, like a leitmotif of the reflection of the West on its relationship with history, with transcendence and with itself: from the “primitive”, “quixotic” Piero di Cosimo (a contemporary of Leonardo and very attached to the world of pagan myths, which he fancifully translates into a personal and willfully obscure language) to the dramatic, Caravaggian Theodor Rombouts, to José de Ribera (with his Prometheus embodying only pain and persistence), to Dirck van Baburen, Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, Gioacchino Assereto, Luca Giordano, Josef Abel, Carl Rahl, Constantin Hansen, Jean-Simon Berthélemy and Jean-Baptiste Mauzaisse, Francesco Foschi. The latter has an *avant la lettre* cinematographic sense, amplifying the Promethean ordeal in the perspective of a phenomenal landscape, infused with the omnipresent will of an invisible god, unwavering like the surrounding massive stone decor.

In this hostile wilderness, the echo of the lonely suffering Titan chained on the rock is gradually lost, as in Munch's *Scream* one century later. At Francesco Foschi, the rock dominates the picture as a sort of *memento* of visual translation of the idea of implacability. In Gustave Moreau's version, the Titan's face is painted in a classically balanced manner, with an expression of concentration decanted by clear, almost calligraphic strokes. Otto Greiner imagines a Prometheus who holds the hand of his clay creature, the size of a Tanagra figurine, and awaits looking into the distance, like a concerned parent, the arrival of Psyche who would breathe life into the inert figure at his feet. In an allegorical interpretation, obviously contaminated by the “spring of the peoples”, by the age of revolutions and the historical experience of Eastern Europe, Horace Vernet's *Polish Prometheus* wears an officer's

uniform and firearm, and is pinned to the ground by a giant eagle, with imperial regalia. Christian Griepenkerl creates, in his turn, a whole Promethean cycle. Also illustrator of an edition of Goethe's dramatic poem *Faust*, Franz Xaver Simm realized, in 1881, a mural painting, *Prometheus*, for the Caucasus Museum in Tbilisi. Unfortunately, the original was destroyed, but was photographed by Hermann Roskoschny and included in *Das asiatische Russland* (Leipzig, 1884).

Two contemporary works, *Prometheus* by Stepan Kovarik (1969) and *Prometeo* by Ricardo Camacho (2010) evoke the myth in opposing colour and stylistic registers. The second work assimilates the Titan with the element of which he is the patron, fire, and disrupts the outline of the Promethean silhouette – barely recognizable –, to the benefit of an allusion of force chromatically insinuated by a splash of living red colour, untamed by drawing constraints. With shades of grey and blue-green, Stepan Kovarik's *Prometheus* is a kind of dialogue of the chained Titan, trapped in rocks, with the ever expanding view of the sea in front of him. Unlike other versions mentioned, the viewer of the painting does not find here the Titan's look, does not establish a direct relationship with it. In front of the stormy sea (a sea tossing like a rebellious blue-green beast), dragging the chains hanging by his wrists, Prometheus stands with his back to the viewer. He focuses on the sea – the lure of denied freedom –, just as the painting itself focuses on the dialogue between the two poles, and not just on one of them. The painting does not propose a Prometheus closed in his clearly defined role of protagonist of an exemplary mythical story, but rather a relational Prometheus: one who remains interrogative, contemplative, open to a horizon that no longer belongs to him – that of sea, of sky and lost freedom.

3.5. ... 2093 *Prometheus* spaceship is looking for God(s): Scott's movie

Beyond the above transpositions of Prometheus's myth in the visual arts, the cinematographic media has brought many movies, some associated to the Frankenstein version of the Promethean myth. In 1982, Ridley Scott presented another version of the myth in his *Blade Runner*. His more recent *Prometheus* (2012) - written by Jon Spaihts and Damon Lindelof, is significant because of the transmedial

branches of the myth, ramifications which, no doubt will continue to grow and extend in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017).

Already at the word-limit for this essay, I can just summarize some aspects briefly. First, the mention of the artistic value of the film as rather controversial, while *Prometheus* Transmedia Campaign is unanimously commended. Moreover, it has been held up as a “benchmark for digital marketing” and recognized as UK Online Campaign of the Year. The campaign is “sophisticated” and “multi-phased”, more precisely conceived as a “mix of social, traditional, and transmedia storytelling” (<https://vimeo.com/52252122>). Thus elaborated, it was meant to appeal to a wider and more diverse audience and to introduce it to 2012 version of Prometheus’s story.

Scott’s “Prometheus” is a spaceship of the late 21st century, following a star map which is the vestige of several ancient earth cultures. Seeking the origins of humankind, the exploratory mission arrives on a distant world and finds something that could cause the end of humanity. Thus, in a dystopian mix of horror, religion and science-fiction, the movie associates the mythical (and scientific) themes of anthropogenesis and eschatology, as well as several others related to them: artificial intelligence, the quest for God(s) and ultimate truth(s), and knowledge about immortality, good and evil and faith. In particular, Scott’s movie transposes some invariants of Greek Prometheus’s myth: the figure of rebellious Titan, the topic of anthropogenesis in the creation of the human-like android (David), humanity’s relationship with the gods and other superior beings, and a possible threat of destruction of mankind by them (in the movie, the Engineers who appear god-like to humans).

The film syncretically interweaves themes and motifs from other mythological, religious and literary traditions: Greek-Latin mythology, Jewish and Christian beliefs on Creation, some Gnostic allusions etc. As the eponymous hero of *Gilgamesh’s Epic*, *Prometheus* crew tries to meet the immortal beings and to gain knowledge about death and immortality. At the crossroads between Christian, Gnostic and technological imagination, an Engineer was sent to Earth to improve the human condition, but was, like Jesus Christ, crucified. As several other heroes from dif-

ferent mythological traditions (Purusha from *Rig-Veda*, the Chinese Pan-ku, Ymer from *Edda*, etc.), the Engineer sacrifices himself and brings “life to a world” (Jager-nauth, 2012). Dr. Shaw, a scientist who believes in God, is responsible for a mistake which could evoke the Greek *hybris*. More precisely, she “wants her religious beliefs affirmed, and believes she is entitled to answers from God”; but “her questions remain unanswered and she is punished for her *hybris*” (Nashawaty 2012; Gilchrist 2012). In any case, *Prometheus* explores whether scientific (re)search and belief in God could co-exist, as Lindelof himself lets us know. *Prometheus* Transmedia Campaign is interactive and as complex as the movie itself. In a very specific manner, it continues the film plot.

Transmedia storytelling (“transmedia narrative or multiplatform storytelling”) is “the technique of telling a single story or story-related experience across multiple platforms and formats using current technologies” (Przegalińska, 2015: 79). “As a whole”, “a transmedia project consists of film, games, books, websites, and social media sites, but also the offline world: urban games, concerts, and even theme parks” (Anna Wróblevska, qtd. in Przegalińska, 2015: 80). Steven Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park* (1993) was the pioneer of transmedia storytelling. Spielberg’s film is the first attempt to “engaging users by not limiting himself to the movie and its promotion, but making the story last and continue on other platforms” (Przegalińska, 2015: 79). The idea of transmedia storytelling was presented by Henry Jenkins, in 2003, in the *MIT Technology Review Magazine* (Przegalińska, 2015: 79). Jenkins (2011) highlights that “transmedia storytelling” and “traditional” cross-platform “transmedia” are different things. The former is “dealing with a continuous circulation of content, which results in the story being repeated through a variety of media”. Thus, the audience can “choose between different forms of the story”, and moreover, “actively participate in the fictional world” (Przegalińska, 2015: 80). From Jenkins’s point of view, “[t]ransmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (Jenkins, 2011).

Definitions of the transmedia storytelling identify its essential particularities (multiplatform, interactivity, subjectivity, non-contradiction), and differences from other media. For instance, transmedia projects “use a variety of media platforms, both in the field of new media and traditional channels of communication”, but “distinguish themselves from the usual interactive projects”. Thus, within a transmedia project, “each new medium contains new content”, and the different stories compose a “non-contradictory whole”. Moreover, transmediality supposes “a lot of subjectivity” due to “storytelling from many points of view” (Wróblevska, qtd. in Przegalińska, 2015: 80; for more information see J. Mora’s paper in this thematic issue of *Icono* 14).

As Aleksandra Przegalińska notes, the Prometheus Campaign integrates transmedially several viral videos, online game, websites, TV through which the lines between the reality and imagination are blurred (see also Arnašiūtė, 2012). In the first video, entitled “TED talk 2023”, the owner of Weyland’s corporation talks about androids during a TED conference. A call to a listed phone number at Weyland leads to a second viral video which announces the release of the newest company’s android, David 8. This video could be also seen on TV and at Mashable. After the company provides all this information, “Prometheus” mission is revealed. The applicants who successfully complete an online game will receive vacancies offered by “Prometheus”. Information on the job can also be found at LinkedIn. Finally, the third viral video presents Dr. Shaw’s “Project Genesis”, who asks fans to help find artefacts that would lead to discovering the Engineers’ planet.

4. Conclusions

How is it possible for myth to survive and evolve? Civilizing and *philanthropos*, the Greek Promethean hero incarnates essential features of the human being in an exemplary way. Its inner creative values and force of personality exemplified in his revolt, emancipation and altruistic self-sacrifice are some possible reasons for the survival of the myth and its ability to change. Prometheus’ avatars, from Aeschylus to Gide, to Spaihts, Lindelof and Scott, arm the creature with the tools of technology and free will, in order to cope with its own becoming. Therefore, it is highly relevant to look not just at the reflection of history upon myth, but also

at the effects of myth upon history, a course that helps us to understand history and imagine the future.

From the Renaissance to modern times, the myth of Prometheus has involved a significant shift: in its preromantic messianic connotations, in its Nietzschean moral reminiscences reinterpreted by Gide in a loss of transcendence; in its multitude of representations in the visual arts, each with its own particularities and, finally, in cinematography and in the contemporary transmedia scenario, where the borderline between creator, creation and interactive users is increasingly blurred.

Notes

- [1] Adriano Tilgher believes that “the loss of the other two parts (Fire-bearing Prometheus and Prometheus Unbound) makes it almost impossible to understand what Aeschylus was thinking regarding his hero”. Moreover, Tilgher considers a certain fact as being “beyond any doubt”: “Aeschylus was very far from celebrating in Prometheus the hero of free thought, fighting against the tyrans of heaven”. As evidence, “this rebel would eventually capitulate and, worse, become the supporter of the one whose throne he wanted to overthrow”. In Tilgher’s view, what the Greek playwright reproaches his hero “is not human civilization as such”, but “rather its claim to emancipate from the tutelage of the gods and cope alone with its powers, namely precisely what we, moderns, admire most about Prometheus” (Tilgher, 1995: 86 – 89).

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