The Promethean Library



What Prometheus Gave Us

A Six-Session Course Reader on Fire, Craft and Defiance

Hesiod · Aeschylus · Plato
Byron · Shelley

Readings for a six-week class, with leader's notes

Course Readers · No. 1

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A Course Reader

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A Six-Session Course Reader on Fire, Craft and Defiance

Readings from Hesiod, Aeschylus, Plato, Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley

With headnotes, discussion questions, exercises, notes and a leader's guide



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Transatlantic Press

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The readings. The readings are reproduced word for word from public domain translations. Each translator, edition and date is listed under Sources of the Texts, with what this edition leaves out.

How this edition was made. The introduction, headnotes, questions, reflections, practices, notes, glossary, chronology and reading list were drafted with the help of artificial intelligence and checked by hand against the readings and against published sources. Every quotation in them matches the readings printed in this book word for word, and every fact was checked against a published source before it was printed. The publisher keeps a record of the source checked for each fact. No quotation, fact or story was invented. The readings themselves are copied unchanged from the translations named under Sources of the Texts.

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I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,
Which is to men a teacher of all arts,
Their chief resource.

Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, translated by
E. H. Plumptre

Contents

Before You Begin 7

Introduction 9

How to Use This Reader 14

Session 1: The Thief of Fire 16

Session 2: The Gifts of the Titan 23

Session 3: Craft Is Not Enough 34

Session 4: Defiance 40

Session 5: The Romantic Rebel 51

Session 6: The Modern Prometheus 59

For the Leader 70

Notes on the Texts 72

Glossary 78

Chronology 81

Further Reading 83

Sources of the Texts 84

Edition Notes 86

Before You Begin

This is a reader for six meetings. Each meeting turns on one old story: a Titan named Prometheus steals fire from the gods and gives it to human beings, and he pays for it. Greek poets told the story first. A Greek philosopher retold it as a lesson about how cities hold together. Two English poets of the early nineteenth century made Prometheus a hero of freedom, and a young woman in their circle wrote a novel she subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*.

You need no Greek and no background in the classics. Every reading is printed here in full, in English, and the introductions, notes and glossary explain what a newcomer needs.

The book is made for adult-education classes and reading groups, but a single reader can use it too. Each session asks for about an hour of reading at home, between roughly 1,300 and 3,000 words, and about ninety minutes together.

The book is laid out in this order:

- an **Introduction** to the story and the writers who told it;
- **How to Use This Reader**, with advice for classes, groups and solitary readers;
- **six sessions**, each with a short headnote, the readings, questions for discussion and one activity;
- **For the Leader**, a timed plan for each meeting and some tips;
- **Notes on the Texts**, keyed to the readings by number;
- a **Glossary**, a **Chronology**, **Further Reading**, and **Sources of the Texts**, which says where every reading comes from.

The readings are numbered from 1 to 13. A reference such as 5.72 means Reading 5, line or paragraph 72. Prose readings are counted by paragraph and verse readings by line, as printed beside each reading.

Introduction

A story about gifts

Most myths about fire ask where it came from. The Greek story asks a sharper question: what did it cost? In every version gathered here, fire is a gift that someone was not supposed to give. Prometheus, a Titan of the older generation of gods, takes it from Zeus, the new king of the gods, and hands it to human beings. With fire come the crafts that depend on it: cooking, pottery, metalwork, and, in some tellings, nearly everything else that makes human life different from animal life. And then comes the punishment.

That pattern of gift, theft and punishment has proved remarkably adaptable. Over more than two thousand years, writers have used it to ask about the gods and justice, about invention and its dangers, about what a free person owes to power, and about what a maker owes to the thing he makes. This reader follows the story through five writers and six sessions, from a Greek farmer-poet to an English novelist.

Hesiod: the trickster and the price of fire

The oldest full account comes from Hesiod, a Greek poet who flourished around 700 BC. He lived at Ascra in Boeotia, in central Greece, near Mount Helicon, and he tells us that the Muses appeared to him while he was tending his sheep. Two of his poems survive whole. The *Theogony* tells the history of the gods, from the first powers of the world through the reign of Cronus to the victory of Zeus. The *Works and Days* is addressed to his brother Perses, who had taken more than his share of their

inheritance, and urges him to honest work; its second half is practical advice for the farming year.

Both poems tell the Prometheus story, and Session 1 reads both. In the *Theogony*, Prometheus is a trickster who tries to outwit Zeus over the division of a sacrificed ox, then steals back the fire Zeus withheld. Zeus answers with a gift of his own, the first woman, crafted by the gods. In the *Works and Days* she has a name, Pandora, and a jar of evils that she opens. Hesiod's moral is blunt and twice repeated: no one escapes the will of Zeus. His Prometheus is clever and kindly, but he is not a hero, and human beings pay for his cleverness.

One detail has changed in retelling. Hesiod's Pandora opens a large storage jar. The familiar "box" goes back to the Dutch humanist Erasmus, who in his *Adagia* of 1508 wrote of a box rather than a jar when he told the story in Latin.

Athens: The Rebel on the Rock

In Athens of the fifth century BC the story moved onto the stage. *Prometheus Bound*, the play read in Sessions 2 and 4, has come down to us under the name of Aeschylus, the first of the three great Athenian tragedians. Aeschylus was born in 525 or 524 BC, fought against the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC, according to later Greek writers, wrote about ninety plays, and died at Gela in Sicily in 456 or 455 BC. Seven of his tragedies survive complete.

Whether *Prometheus Bound* is truly his is one of the long-running puzzles of Greek scholarship. Many scholars have doubted it on grounds of style and stagecraft; some have suggested it was written twenty to thirty years after his death, perhaps by his son Euphorion, who could have staged it as a lost work of his father. Others defend it. No one knows for certain, and its date is uncertain too. The 1901 edition used here dates it to about 470 BC; the later suggestions bring it down toward 430 BC. It is believed to have been part of a group of plays that included a sequel, *Prometheus Unbound*, now lost.

Whoever wrote it, the play is extraordinary. Almost nothing happens: Prometheus is chained to a crag at the edge of the world, visitors come and go, and at the end he is hurled into the depths. But the talk is tremendous. Here Prometheus is no mere trickster. He helped Zeus win his throne, saved humankind when Zeus planned to wipe it out, and taught human beings nearly every art they possess. And he knows a secret: a marriage that would produce a son stronger than his father and bring Zeus down. Later sources identify the bride as the sea goddess Thetis, who was married instead to the mortal Peleus and became the mother of Achilles. The play keeps her name hidden. Its Zeus is a new and harsh ruler, and its Prometheus will not bend.

A philosopher's version: craft is not enough

Session 3 turns to Plato, who was born in Athens in 428 or 427 BC and died there in 348 or 347 BC. His dialogue *Protagoras* is named for Protagoras of Abdera, a famous teacher who lived from about 490 to about 420 BC. Protagoras was a sophist, one of the traveling teachers who charged fees for instruction, and according to Plato he was the first to present himself openly as one. He stayed in Athens at least twice, formed ties with Pericles, the city's leading statesman, and in 444 BC was entrusted by him with drafting the constitution of Thurii, a new colony in southern Italy.

In the dialogue, set in the late 430s BC at the house of the wealthy Callias, Socrates doubts that the art of being a good citizen can be taught at all. Protagoras answers with a story. When the first living creatures were made, Prometheus and his slow-witted brother Epimetheus were told to equip them. Epimetheus used up every gift on the animals, so Prometheus stole fire and the crafts for humans. But craft alone could not keep people from destroying one another. So Zeus sent Hermes with reverence and justice, and ordered that everyone receive a share.

Scholars still argue about how much of this story reflects the real Protagoras, since it survives only in Plato. But its point is clear and still lively. Technical skill can be left to experts. The skill of living together cannot.

The Romantic Prometheus

The story took on new life in the summer of 1816, on the shore of Lake Geneva. Lord Byron, traveling in Europe that year with his personal physician, John William Polidori, had rented the Villa Diodati at Cologny. Nearby were the young poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Godwin, the daughter of the philosopher William Godwin and the writer Mary Wollstonecraft. She and Shelley married later that year.

Byron had loved the Prometheus story since boyhood. According to his editor, his first English exercise at Harrow School was a paraphrase of a chorus from *Prometheus Bound*, and in 1817 he wrote that the play had always been so much in his head that it might have influenced everything he wrote. In July 1816, at Diodati, he wrote his short poem "Prometheus," read in Session 5. It was published that year in *The Prisoner of Chillon, and Other Poems*. Byron's Titan is a figure of silent endurance and of the human will that refuses to be broken.

Shelley went further. Between 1818 and 1819, in Italy, he wrote *Prometheus Unbound*, a "lyrical drama" in four acts, published in 1820. In his preface, read in Session 5, he explains why he refused to end the story as the lost Greek sequel seems to have ended it, with Prometheus reconciled to Zeus. In Shelley's drama Prometheus does not yield, Jupiter (the Roman name for Zeus) is overthrown by the mysterious power Demogorgon, and a liberated world is foretold. A speech by Asia, the goddess who loves Prometheus, retells the gifts of the Titan in the high style of Romantic poetry.

The Modern Prometheus

That same wet summer at Geneva, as Mary Shelley later recalled, the friends were often kept indoors, read ghost stories, and agreed to write ghost stories of their own. Byron proposed it. Polidori's "The Vampyre" came out of the contest, and so did the idea for *Frankenstein*. Mary was eighteen. The novel appeared anonymously in 1818 and was revised for a new edition in 1831, which is the text used here. In her new introduction of 1831 she recalled listening to Byron and Shelley discuss the nature of the principle of life and whether galvanism, the stimulation of the body by electricity, might one day animate a corpse.

Victor Frankenstein, a student at Ingolstadt in Bavaria, gives life to a creature he has built and then abandons it in horror. The creature, left to himself, learns about the world alone, discovers fire, and asks his maker for justice. Mary Shelley never says in these chapters exactly why the book is subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*. Readers have to decide. Is Victor the Titan who brings a stolen spark to clay? Is the creature, a made being who suffers and pleads, closer to humanity in the old myth? Session 6 reads three passages that put those questions sharply.

Reading old translations

All the readings come from editions published before 1929, and three of them are translations from Greek made between 1868 and 1914. Their English can be old-fashioned: "thou" and "thee," "'tis" and "trow," "levin" for lightning. The translators also spelled Greek names in different ways, so that Tartarus appears as "Tartaros" and the Erinyes as "Errinyes." In our own prose we use the common modern spellings. Nothing in the readings has been modernized or corrected. Where a source has a misprint, it is left in place and explained in the Notes. Read the verse aloud when you can. Most of it was written to be heard.

How to Use This Reader

Planning. The six sessions follow the story in time, from Greece around 700 BC to England in 1831, but each session can stand alone. Plan on about ninety minutes a meeting. The readings for each session run from about 1,300 to 3,000 words and take most people under an hour to read. Session 6 is the longest.

For a class. Ask everyone to read the headnote and the readings before the meeting. Begin by reading a short passage aloud, then move to the questions. The leader's plan for each session, near the end of the book, gives a timed outline. You need not use every question. Two or three good ones can fill a whole meeting.

For a reading group. Take turns leading. The leader for the evening chooses the passage to read aloud and the questions to start with. Groups often find that the verse readings (Sessions 2, 4 and 5) come alive when several people read the speaking parts. *Prometheus Bound* has a cast of gods, nymphs and a Titan, and it can be read like a radio play.

For a reader alone. Read the headnote, then the readings, slowly. Mark the lines that surprise you. Write a short answer to one or two of the questions, and try the activity. The notes at the back answer most questions about names, places and old words.

Using the notes. Each note begins with a locator such as 7.91, meaning Reading 7, line 91. Prose readings are numbered by paragraph, verse readings by line. The Glossary gathers names and terms that recur.

A word on disagreement. These writers disagree with one another, sometimes sharply. Hesiod thinks Prometheus was wrong to defy Zeus; Shelley thinks he was the noblest being imaginable. Hesiod's account of women in Reading 1 will strike many readers as harsh. A good

discussion does not need to settle these questions, and it does not need to defend the texts. It needs to read them closely and ask what each writer saw.

Session 1: The Thief of Fire

We begin with the oldest surviving telling, in two poems by Hesiod. Both were composed in Greek verse, and both are given here in the prose translation of Hugh G. Evelyn-White, first published in 1914.

Reading 1 comes from the *Theogony*, Hesiod's account of how the gods came to be and how Zeus came to rule them. The passage begins with the family of the Titan Iapetus: four sons, each with a fate. Then it jumps to the end of Prometheus' story, his binding and the eagle that eats his liver, before telling how it all began. At a place called Mecone, gods and mortals met to settle how a sacrificed ox should be shared. Prometheus divided it with a trick, hiding the good meat in the stomach and dressing the bones in shining fat, and invited Zeus to choose. Zeus, Hesiod insists, saw through the trick and chose the bones anyway, so that he would have a reason to punish human beings. He withheld fire. Prometheus stole it. Zeus then sent "the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing": the first woman, made by the gods.

Reading 2 comes from the *Works and Days*, a poem of advice to Hesiod's brother about work and justice. It tells the same story from the other end. Here the woman has a name, Pandora, and the gods each give her something. Prometheus warned his brother Epimetheus never to accept a gift from Zeus. Epimetheus forgot. The woman lifts the lid of a great jar, and evils scatter through the world. Only Hope stays inside.

As you read, notice what Hesiod is explaining. Why do Greeks burn bones for the gods and eat the meat themselves? Why must people work for a living? Why is there sickness? Notice too that Hesiod tells you twice what the moral is. Ask whether the story he tells fully supports it.

Reading 1. *The trick at Mecone and the first woman. Hesiod, Theogony (lines 507–616), translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White.*

❧

1 Now Iapetus took to wife the neat-ankled mad Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and went up with her into one bed. And she bare him a stout-hearted son, Atlas: also she bare very glorious Menoetius and clever Prometheus, full of various wiles, and scatter-brained Epimetheus who from the first was a mischief to men who eat bread; for it was he who first took of Zeus the woman, the maiden whom he had formed. But Menoetius was outrageous, and far-seeing Zeus struck him with a lurid thunderbolt and sent him down to Erebus because of his mad presumption and exceeding pride. And Atlas through hard constraint upholds the wide heaven with unwearying head and arms, standing at the borders of the earth before the clear-voiced Hesperides; for this lot wise Zeus assigned to him. And ready-witted Prometheus he bound with inextricable bonds, cruel chains, and drove a shaft through his middle, and set on him a long-winged eagle, which used to eat his immortal liver; but by night the liver grew as much again everyway as the long-winged bird devoured in the whole day. That bird Heracles, the valiant son of shapely-ankled Alcmene, slew; and delivered the son of Iapetus from the cruel plague, and released him from his affliction—not without the will of Olympian Zeus who reigns on high, that the glory of Heracles the Theban-born might be yet greater than it was before over the plenteous earth. This, then, he regarded, and honoured his famous son; though he was angry, he ceased from the wrath which he had before because Prometheus matched himself in wit with the almighty son of Cronos. For when the gods and mortal men had a dispute at Mecone, even then Prometheus was forward to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to befool the mind of Zeus. Before the rest he set flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide, covering them with an ox paunch; but for Zeus he put the

white bones dressed up with cunning art and covered with shining fat. Then the father of men and of gods said to him:

2 'Son of Iapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir, how unfairly you have divided the portions!'

3 So said Zeus whose wisdom is everlasting, rebuking him. But wily Prometheus answered him, smiling softly and not forgetting his cunning trick:

4 'Zeus, most glorious and greatest of the eternal gods, take which ever of these portions your heart within you bids.' So he said, thinking trickery. But Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, saw and failed not to perceive the trick, and in his heart he thought mischief against mortal men which also was to be fulfilled. With both hands he took up the white fat and was angry at heart, and wrath came to his spirit when he saw the white ox-bones craftily tricked out: and because of this the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars. But Zeus who drives the clouds was greatly vexed and said to him:

5 'Son of Iapetus, clever above all! So, sir, you have not yet forgotten your cunning arts!'

6 So spake Zeus in anger, whose wisdom is everlasting; and from that time he was always mindful of the trick, and would not give the power of unwearying fire to the Melian race of mortal men who live on the earth. But the noble son of Iapetus outwitted him and stole the far-seen gleam of unwearying fire in a hollow fennel stalk. And Zeus who thunders on high was stung in spirit, and his dear heart was angered when he saw amongst men the far-seen ray of fire. Forthwith he made an evil thing for men as the price of fire; for the very famous Limping God formed of earth the likeness of a shy maiden as the son of Cronos willed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her with silvery raiment, and down from her head she spread with her hands a broidered veil, a wonder to see; and she, Pallas Athene, put about her head lovely garlands, flowers of new-grown herbs. Also she put upon her head a crown of gold which

the very famous Limping God made himself and worked with his own hands as a favour to Zeus his father. On it was much curious work, wonderful to see; for of the many creatures which the land and sea rear up, he put most upon it, wonderful things, like living beings with voices: and great beauty shone out from it.

7 But when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men.

8 For 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. And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief—by day and throughout the day until the sun goes down the bees are busy and lay the white combs, while the drones stay at home in the covered skeps and reap the toil of others into their own bellies—even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, and will not wed, reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years, and though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them. And as for the man who chooses the lot of marriage and takes a good wife suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good; for whoever happens to have mischievous children, lives always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him; and this evil cannot be healed.

9 So it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus; for not even the son of Iapetus, kindly Prometheus, escaped his heavy anger, but of necessity strong bands confined him, although he knew many a wile.

Reading 2. *Pandora and the jar. Hesiod, Works and Days (lines 42–105), translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White.*

❧

1 For the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else you would easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working; soon would you put away your rudder over the smoke, and the fields worked by ox and sturdy mule would run to waste. But Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it, because Prometheus the crafty deceived him; therefore he planned sorrow and mischief against men. He hid fire; but that the noble son of Iapetus stole again for men from Zeus the counsellor in a hollow fennel-stalk, so that Zeus who delights in thunder did not see it. But afterwards Zeus who gathers the clouds said to him in anger:

2 'Son of Iapetus, surpassing all in cunning, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire—a great plague to you yourself and to men that shall be. But I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction.'

3 So said the father of men and gods, and laughed aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face; and 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.

4 So he ordered. And they obeyed the lord Zeus the son of Cronos. Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronos purposed. 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, because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.

5 But when he had finished the sheer, hopeless snare, the Father sent glorious Argos-Slayer, the swift messenger of the gods, to take it to Epimetheus as a gift. And Epimetheus did not think on what Prometheus had said to him, bidding him never take a gift of Olympian Zeus, but to send it back for fear it might prove to be something harmful to men. But he took the gift, and afterwards, when the evil thing was already his, he understood.

6 For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sickness which bring the Fates upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly. But the woman took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men. 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. But the rest, countless plagues, wander amongst men; for earth is full of evils and the sea is full. Of themselves diseases come upon men continually by day and by night, bringing mischief to mortals silently; for wise Zeus took away speech from them. So is there no way to escape the will of Zeus.

For Discussion

1. Hesiod twice states his moral: "So it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus" (1.9), and "So is there no way to escape the will of Zeus" (2.6). Does the story prove it, or does Prometheus' success at stealing fire (1.6) suggest something else?

2. At Mecone, Zeus "saw and failed not to perceive the trick" (1.4) but chose the bones anyway. Why might Hesiod insist that Zeus was not fooled? What would change if he had been?
3. Zeus says the woman will be a gift in which men "may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction" (2.2). What kind of gift is welcome and harmful at once? Can you think of modern examples?
4. Hesiod's view of women in 1.8 is harsh. How do you read a classic that says something you reject? Does the passage tell us more about women or about Hesiod's world?
5. "Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home" (2.6). Is Hope kept for humanity as a comfort, or kept from humanity as one more evil? What in the passage points each way?
6. Prometheus warned Epimetheus never to accept a gift from Zeus (2.5). What do the two brothers' names, Forethinker and Hindsight, suggest about the kinds of thinking the story values?

Try This

Make a two-column list. On the left, write what human beings gained in these two readings; on the right, what they lost. Then decide, alone or as a group, whether Hesiod's ledger balances, and write one sentence that sums up his view of human life.

Session 2: The Gifts of the Titan

Session 2 moves from Hesiod's farm to the theater of Athens. *Prometheus Bound* was probably first staged sometime between about 470 and 430 BC. It has come down under the name of Aeschylus, although many scholars doubt he wrote it. The translation is by E. H. Plumptre, Dean of Wells, first published in 1868 and here taken from the edition of 1901.

The play opens with Prometheus being fettered to a rock at the edge of the world by Hephaestus, the smith god, who does the work unwillingly, watched by two brutal servants of Zeus named Strength and Force. Our first reading begins the moment they leave. Alone, Prometheus calls on the sky, the winds, the sea and the earth to witness what he suffers. Then he hears wings: a chorus of sea nymphs, daughters of the Titan Oceanus, has come to comfort him.

Reading 4 is his answer to their question, "for what offence?" He tells how he sided with Zeus in the war against the old Titans, and how Zeus repaid him. When Zeus planned to destroy the human race, Prometheus alone dared to save it. Then come three short replies that sum up his gifts: he stopped men from foreseeing their death, he gave them blind hopes, and he gave them fire.

Reading 5 comes after a visit from Oceanus himself, who urges Prometheus to submit. Prometheus refuses and describes what human life was like before him: people who saw without seeing, living in caves like ants, without seasons, numbers, letters, tamed animals, ships, medicine or prophecy. Every art, he says, came from him. Yet he cannot free himself, and he hints at a secret that will one day free him.

> This translation is old-fashioned and often compressed. Read it aloud, and do not worry about every word. The Notes and the Glossary explain the names. Listen for the pride and the pain in the voice.

Reading 3. *Alone on the rock. Aeschylus (attributed), Prometheus Bound (the opening monologue), translated by E. H. Plumptre.*

❧

Prometheus

Thou firmament of God, and swift-winged winds,
Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves
That smile innumerous! Mother of us all,
O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,
I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.
    Behold in what foul case
    I for ten thousand years
    Shall struggle in my woe,
    In these unseemly chains.
Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest
    Hath now devised for me.
Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang
    I wail, as I search out
The place and hour when end of all these ills
    Shall dawn on me at last.
What say I? All too clearly I foresee
The things that come, and nought of pain shall be
By me unlooked-for; but I needs must bear
My destiny as best I may, knowing well
The might resistless of Necessity.
And neither may I speak of this my fate,
Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving
Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made
In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk
I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,

Which is to men a teacher of all arts,
Their chief resource. And now this penalty
Of that offence I pay, fast riveted
In chains beneath the open firmament.
Ha! ha! What now?
What sound, what odour floats invisibly?
Is it of God or man, or blending both?
And has one come to the remotest rock
To look upon my woes? Or what wills he?
Behold me bound, a God to evil doomed,
The foe of Zeus, and held
In hatred by all Gods
Who tread the courts of Zeus:
And this for my great love,
Too great, for mortal men.
Ah me! what rustling sounds
Hear I of birds not far?
With the light whirr of wings
The air re-echoeth:
All that draws nigh to me is cause of fear.

Reading 4. *Why Zeus punished him. Aeschylus (attributed), Prometheus Bound (from the first scene with the chorus), translated by E. H. Plumptre.*

❧

Chorus

Hide it not from us, tell us all the tale:
For what offence Zeus, having seized thee thus,
So wantonly and bitterly insults thee:
If the tale hurt thee not, inform thou us.

Prometheus

Painful are these things to me e'en to speak:
Painful is silence; everywhere is woe.

For when the high Gods fell on mood of wrath,
And hot debate of mutual strife was stirred,
Some wishing to hurl Cronos from his throne,
That Zeus, forsooth, might reign; while others strove,
Eager that Zeus might never rule the Gods:
Then I, full strongly seeking to persuade
The Titans, yea, the sons of Heaven and Earth,
Failed of my purpose. Scorning subtle arts,
With counsels violent, they thought that they
By force would gain full easy mastery.
But then not once or twice my mother Themis
And Earth, one form though bearing many names,
Had prophesied the future, how 'twould run,
That not by strength nor yet by violence,
But guile, should those who prospered gain the day.
And when in my words I this counsel gave,
They deigned not e'en to glance at it at all.
And then of all that offered, it seemed best
To join my mother, and of mine own will,
Not against his will, take my side with Zeus,
And by my counsels, mine, the dark deep pit
Of Tartaros the ancient Cronos holds,
Himself and his allies. Thus profiting
By me, the mighty ruler of the Gods
Repays me with these evil penalties:
For somehow this disease in sovereignty
Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends.
And since ye ask me under what pretence
He thus maltreats me, I will show it you:
For soon as He upon his father's throne
Had sat secure, forthwith to divers Gods
He divers gifts distributed, and his realm
Began to order. But of mortal men
He took no heed, but purposed utterly

To crush their race and plant another new;
And, I excepted, none dared cross his will;
But I did dare, and mortal men I freed
From passing on to Hades thunder-stricken;
And therefore am I bound beneath these woes,
Dreadful to suffer, pitiable to see:
And I, who in my pity thought of men
More than myself, have not been worthy deemed
To gain like favour, but all ruthlessly
I thus am chained, foul shame this sight to Zeus.

Chorus

Iron-hearted must he be and made of rock
Who is not moved, Prometheus, by thy woes:
Fain could I wish I ne'er had seen such things,
And, seeing them, am wounded to the heart.

Prometheus

Yea, I am piteous for my friends to see.

Chorus

Did'st thou not go to farther lengths than this?

Prometheus

I made men cease from contemplating death.

Chorus

What medicine did'st thou find for that disease?

Prometheus

Blind hopes I gave to live and dwell with them.

Chorus

Great service that thou did'st for mortal men!

Prometheus

And more than that, I gave them fire, yes I.

Chorus

Do short-lived men the flaming fire possess?

Prometheus

Yea, and full many an art they'll learn from it.

Chorus

And is it then on charges such as these
That Zeus maltreats thee, and no respite gives
Of many woes? And has thy pain no end?

Prometheus

End there is none, except as pleases Him.

Chorus

How shall it please? What hope hast thou? See'st not
That thou hast sinned? Yet to say how thou sinned'st
Gives me no pleasure, and is pain to thee.
Well! let us leave these things, and, if we may,
Seek out some means to 'scape from this thy woe.

Prometheus

'Tis a light thing for one who has his foot
Beyond the reach of evil to exhort
And counsel him who suffers. This to me
Was all well known. Yea, willing, willingly
I sinned, nor will deny it. Helping men,
I for myself found trouble: yet I thought not
That I with such dread penalties as these
Should wither here on these high-towering crags,
Lighting on this lone hill and neighbourless.
Wherefore wail not for these my present woes,
But, drawing nigh, my coming fortunes hear,
That ye may learn the whole tale to the end.
Nay, hearken, hearken; show your sympathy
With him who suffers now. 'Tis thus that woe,

Wandering, now falls on this one, now on that.

Reading 5. *All arts from Prometheus. Aeschylus (attributed), Prometheus Bound (the speeches on the arts), translated by E. H. Plumptre.*

❧

Prometheus

Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will
That I am silent. But my heart is worn,
Self-contemplating, as I see myself
Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine
Gave these young Gods in fulness all their gifts?
But these I speak not of; for I should tell
To you that know them. But those woes of men,
List ye to them,—how they, before as babes,
By me were roused to reason, taught to think;
And this I say, not finding fault with men,
But showing my good-will in all I gave.
For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,
And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms
Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole length
They muddled all at random; did not know
Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,
Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt
In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants,
In sunless depths of caverns; and they had
No certain signs of winter, nor of spring
Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits;
But without counsel fared their whole life long,
Until I showed the risings of the stars,
And settings hard to recognise. And I
Found Number for them, chief device of all,
Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,

And mother of the Muses. And I first
Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made
Or to the collar or men's limbs, that so
They might in man's place bear his greatest toils;
And horses trained to love the rein I yoked
To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state;
Nor was it any one but I that found
Sea-crossing, canvas-wingèd cars of ships:
Such rare designs inventing (wretched me!)
For mortal men, I yet have no device
By which to free myself from this my woe.

Chorus

Foul shame thou sufferest: of thy sense bereaved,
Thou errest greatly: and, like leech unskilled,
Thou losest heart when smitten with disease,
And know'st not how to find the remedies
Wherewith to heal thine own soul's sicknesses.

Prometheus

Hearing what yet remains thou'lt wonder more,
What arts and what resources I devised:
And this the chief: if any one fell ill,
There was no help for him, nor healing food,
Nor unguent, nor yet potion; but for want
Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them
The blendings of all mild medicaments,
Wherewith they ward the attacks of sickness sore.
I gave them many modes of prophecy;
And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove
True visions, and made known the ominous sounds
Full hard to know; and tokens by the way,
And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked,—
Those on the right propitious to mankind,
And those sinister,—and what form of life

They each maintain, and what their enmities
Each with the other, and their loves and friendships;
And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth.
And with what colour they the Gods would please,
And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver:
And with burnt limbs enwrapt in fat, and chine,
I led men on to art full difficult:
And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire,
Till then dim-visioned. So far then for this.
And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,
Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say
That he, ere I did, found them? None, I know,
Unless he fain would babble idle words.
In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed,—
Allarts of mortals from Prometheus spring.

Chorus

Nay, be not thou to men so over-kind,
While thou thyself art in sore evil case;
For I am sanguine that thou too, released
From bonds, shall be as strong as Zeus himself.

Prometheus

It is not thus that Fate's decree is fixed;
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes
And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds;
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

Chorus

Who guides the helm, then, of Necessity?

Prometheus

Fates triple-formed, Errinyes unforgetting.

Chorus

Is Zeus, then, weaker in his might than these?

Prometheus

Not even He can 'scape the thing decreed.

Chorus

What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign?

Prometheus

Thou may'st no further learn, ask thou no more.

Chorus

'Tis doubtless some dread secret which thou hidest.

Prometheus

Of other theme make mention, for the time
Is not yet come to utter this, but still
It must be hidden to the uttermost;
For by thus keeping it it is that I
Escape my bondage foul, and these my pains.

For Discussion

1. Prometheus says he stole fire, "Which is to men a teacher of all arts" (3.26). In what sense can fire teach? What does the phrase suggest about how people learn?
2. In 4.32–33 Prometheus names a "disease in sovereignty": it "Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends." Is he describing Zeus alone, or something true of power in general? Think of examples from history or from ordinary life.
3. Before fire, Prometheus says, he gave mortals "Blind hopes" (4.59) and stopped them from contemplating death (4.57). Why would that come first? Compare Hope in Hesiod's jar (2.6). Is hope a gift or a trick here?

4. Make a list of the arts in Reading 5. Which surprise you? Why would a Greek audience count prophecy (5.51–66) alongside medicine and shipbuilding?
5. "Yea, willing, willingly" he says, "I sinned, nor will deny it" (4.76–77). Does Prometheus think he did wrong? What does he mean by "sinned"?
6. "Art is far weaker than Necessity" (5.80). What limits does Prometheus admit? What is left for skill and invention to do when Necessity rules?

Try This

Prometheus describes life before the arts (5.12–37). Write a similar paragraph about one skill or invention you rely on every day, describing life without it, then life with it. Read your paragraphs aloud and ask which gifts the group would least like to give up.

Session 3: Craft Is Not Enough

Session 3 leaves the theater for the philosopher's conversation. Plato's dialogue *Protagoras* is narrated by Socrates, who tells a friend about a gathering at the house of a wealthy Athenian named Callias, where the famous teacher Protagoras was staying. Several well-known sophists were present, and so were the sons of Pericles, the leading statesman of Athens. The conversation is set in the late 430s BC. The translation is by Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, first published in 1871.

Just before our reading begins, Socrates raises a problem. In the Athenian Assembly, he says, when the question is how to build a ship or a house, the citizens listen only to experts. But when the question is how to govern the city, anyone may stand up and speak, carpenter or smith, rich or poor. And the best statesmen, Pericles among them, seem unable to teach their own sons to be good. So perhaps virtue cannot be taught.

Protagoras offers to answer with a story. In his version, the gods make the mortal creatures inside the earth from earth and fire. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus are told to equip them. Epimetheus, who is not wise, hands out all the good qualities to the animals and leaves human beings naked. Prometheus steals fire and the crafts of Hephaestus and Athena to save them. But the crafts are not enough. People gathered into cities wrong one another, and scatter again. So Zeus sends Hermes with reverence and justice, and orders that everyone have a share.

Then Protagoras draws his moral. This, he says, is why the Athenians let everyone speak about justice, but only experts about carpentry. He adds a curious proof: a man who claims to be a good flute-player when he is not is laughed at, but a man who openly confesses that he is dishonest is thought mad.

> Notice how this Prometheus differs from Aeschylus' rebel. Here he is a helper, but his help falls short, and the decisive gift comes from Zeus.

Reading 6. *The myth of Protagoras. Plato, Protagoras (the myth, from 320c, and the first part of the speech that follows), translated by Benjamin Jowett.*

❧

1 That I will, Socrates, and gladly. But what would you like? Shall I, as an elder, speak to you as younger men in an apologue or myth, or shall I argue out the question?

2 To this several of the company answered that he should choose for himself.

3 Well, then, he said, I think that the myth will be more interesting.

4 Once upon a time there were gods only, and no mortal creatures. But when the time came that these also should be created, the gods fashioned them out of earth and fire and various mixtures of both elements in the interior of the earth; and when they were about to bring them into the light of day, they ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them, and to distribute to them severally their proper qualities. Epimetheus said to Prometheus: 'Let me distribute, and do you inspect.' This was agreed, and Epimetheus made the distribution. There were some to whom he gave strength without swiftness, while he equipped the weaker with swiftness; some he armed, and others he left unarmed; and devised for the latter some other means of preservation, making some large, and having their size as a protection, and others small, whose nature was to fly in the air or burrow in the ground; this was to be their way of escape. Thus did he compensate them with the view of preventing any race from becoming extinct. And when he had provided against their destruction by one another, he contrived also a means of protecting them against the seasons of heaven; clothing them with close hair and thick skins sufficient to defend them against the winter cold and able to resist the summer

heat, so that they might have a natural bed of their own when they wanted to rest; also he furnished them with hoofs and hair and hard and callous skins under their feet. Then he gave them varieties of food,—herb of the soil to some, to others fruits of trees, and to others roots, and to some again he gave other animals as food. And some he made to have few young ones, while those who were their prey were very prolific; and in this manner the race was preserved. Thus did Epimetheus, who, not being very wise, forgot that he had distributed among the brute animals all the qualities which he had to give,—and when he came to man, who was still unprovided, he was terribly perplexed. Now while he was in this perplexity, Prometheus came to inspect the distribution, and he found that the other animals were suitably furnished, but that man alone was naked and shoeless, and had neither bed nor arms of defence. The appointed hour was approaching when man in his turn was to go forth into the light of day; and Prometheus, not knowing how he could devise his salvation, stole the mechanical arts of Hephaestus and Athene, and fire with them (they could neither have been acquired nor used without fire), and gave them to man. Thus man had the wisdom necessary to the support of life, but political wisdom he had not; for that was in the keeping of Zeus, and the power of Prometheus did not extend to entering into the citadel of heaven, where Zeus dwelt, who moreover had terrible sentinels; but he did enter by stealth into the common workshop of Athene and Hephaestus, in which they used to practise their favourite arts, and carried off Hephaestus' art of working by fire, and also the art of Athene, and gave them to man. And in this way man was supplied with the means of life. But Prometheus is said to have been afterwards prosecuted for theft, owing to the blunder of Epimetheus.

5 Now man, having a share of the divine attributes, was at first the only one of the animals who had any gods, because he alone was of their kindred; and he would raise altars and images of them. He was not long in inventing articulate speech and names; and he also constructed houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and drew sustenance from the earth.

Thus provided, mankind at first lived dispersed, and there were no cities. But the consequence was that they were destroyed by the wild beasts, for they were utterly weak in comparison of them, and their art was only sufficient to provide them with the means of life, and did not enable them to carry on war against the animals: food they had, but not as yet the art of government, of which the art of war is a part. After a while the desire of self-preservation gathered them into cities; but when they were gathered together, having no art of government, they evil intreated one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction. Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated, and so he sent Hermes to them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation. Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men:—Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favoured few only, one skilled individual having enough of medicine or of any other art for many unskilled ones? 'Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and reverence among men, or shall I give them to all?' 'To all,' said Zeus; 'I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts. And further, make a law by my order, that he who has no part in reverence and justice shall be put to death, for he is a plague of the state.'

6 And this is the reason, Socrates, why the Athenians and mankind in general, when the question relates to carpentering or any other mechanical art, allow but a few to share in their deliberations; and when any one else interferes, then, as you say, they object, if he be not of the favoured few; which, as I reply, is very natural. But when they meet to deliberate about political virtue, which proceeds only by way of justice and wisdom, they are patient enough of any man who speaks of them, as is also natural, because they think that every man ought to share in this sort of virtue, and that states could not exist if this were otherwise. I have explained to you, Socrates, the reason of this phenomenon.

7 And that you may not suppose yourself to be deceived in thinking that all men regard every man as having a share of justice or honesty and of every other political virtue, let me give you a further proof, which is this. In other cases, as you are aware, if a man says that he is a good flute-player, or skilful in any other art in which he has no skill, people either laugh at him or are angry with him, and his relations think that he is mad and go and admonish him; but when honesty is in question, or some other political virtue, even if they know that he is dishonest, yet, if the man comes publicly forward and tells the truth about his dishonesty, then, what in the other case was held by them to be good sense, they now deem to be madness. They say that all men ought to profess honesty whether they are honest or not, and that a man is out of his mind who says anything else. Their notion is, that a man must have some degree of honesty; and that if he has none at all he ought not to be in the world.

For Discussion

1. Epimetheus gave every animal some protection, but when he came to man, man "alone was naked and shoeless" (6.4). Is human weakness a mistake in this story, or the reason humans need something more than nature gives?
2. Prometheus "stole the mechanical arts of Hephaestus and Athene, and fire with them" (6.4), but political wisdom stayed with Zeus. Why can't the art of living together be stolen like fire?
3. Hermes asks whether justice should be given to a few experts, like medicine, or to everyone (6.5). Zeus says, "I should like them all to have a share." What would a city look like if justice were treated as a specialist's skill?
4. Zeus orders that anyone with no share in reverence and justice be put to death as "a plague of the state" (6.5). How do you react to that law? Is it part of the myth's wisdom, or its harshness?

5. Protagoras says a man who falsely claims to play the flute well is laughed at, but a man who openly admits he is dishonest is thought mad (6.7). Is that still true? What does it say about how we treat honesty?
6. Compare this story with Session 2. In which version do human beings owe more to Prometheus, and in which more to Zeus?

Try This

Protagoras distinguishes skills for a few from virtues for all. As a group, make two lists: things a community can safely leave to experts, and things every member must share in. Argue about the hard cases, such as voting, money, health or raising children, and see where you draw the line.

Session 4: Defiance

Session 4 returns to *Prometheus Bound* for its final scene. Between Session 2 and this one, much has happened on the rock. Io, a young woman whom Zeus loved, has come by, horned like a cow and driven from land to land by a gadfly that the jealous Hera sent, and Prometheus has told her future, including that one of her descendants, thirteen generations on, will set him free. Our reading begins just after the chorus has sung that it hopes never to be loved by a god.

Prometheus now speaks openly of his secret. Zeus, he says, is preparing a marriage that will produce a son mightier than his father, and only Prometheus knows how Zeus can escape it. Later Greek sources tell us that the bride in question was the sea goddess Thetis, but the play never names her.

Then Hermes arrives, the messenger of the gods, sent by Zeus to force the secret out. The scene that follows is a duel of insults. Hermes is a loyal young servant of the new regime; Prometheus is an old Titan who has seen two rulers of heaven fall and expects to see a third. Hermes warns of what is coming: a thunderbolt, burial in the rock, and then the eagle that will feed on his liver. Prometheus answers by daring Zeus to do his worst.

The chorus, which has urged caution all along, has the last surprise. When Hermes tells the nymphs to leave before the storm breaks, they refuse to desert their friend. The play ends as the earth shakes and Prometheus calls on his mother and the sky to witness his wrongs.

The translator divides the last speeches into short lines, closer to song than speech. Read them aloud, and let the storm build. Ask yourself as you read whether Prometheus is admirable here, or whether Hermes and the chorus have a point when they call his stance self-willed.

Reading 7. *Hermes and the storm. Aeschylus (attributed), Prometheus Bound (the closing scenes), translated by E. H. Plumptre.*

❧

Prometheus

Yea, of a truth shall Zeus, though stiff of will,
Be brought full low. Such bed of wedlock now
Is he preparing, one to cast him forth
In darkness from his sovereignty and throne.
And then the curse his father Cronos spake
Shall have its dread completion, even that
He uttered when he left his ancient throne;
And from these troubles no one of the Gods
But me can clearly show the way to 'scape.
I know the time and manner: therefore now
Let him sit fearless, in his peals on high
Putting his trust, and shaking in his hands
His darts fire-breathing. Nought shall they avail
To hinder him from falling shamefully
A fall intolerable. Such a combatant
He arms against himself, a marvel dread,
Who shall a fire discover mightier far
Than the red levin, and a sound more dread
Than roaring of the thunder, and shall shiver
That plague sea-born that causeth earth to quake,
The trident, weapon of Poseidon's strength:
And stumbling on this evil, he shall learn
How far apart a king's lot from a slave's.

Chorus

What thou dost wish thou mutterest against Zeus.

Prometheus

Things that shall be, and things I wish, I speak.

Chorus
And must we look for one to master Zeus?

Prometheus
Yea, troubles harder far than these are his.

Chorus
Art not afraid to vent such words as these?

Prometheus
What can I fear whose fate is not to die?

Chorus
But He may send on thee worse pain than this.

Prometheus
So let Him do: nought finds me unprepared.

Chorus
Wisdom is theirs who Adrasteia worship.

Prometheus
Worship then, praise and flatter him that rules;
My care for Zeus is nought, and less than nought:
Let Him act, let Him rule this little while,
E'en as He will; for long He shall not rule
Over the Gods. But lo! I see at hand
The courier of the Gods, the minister
Of our new sovereign. Doubtless he has come
To bring me tidings of some new device.

Enter HERMES

Hermes
Thee do I speak to,—thee, the teacher wise,
The bitterly o'er-bitter, who 'gainst Gods
Hast sinned in giving gifts to short-lived men—
I speak to thee, the filcher of bright fire.
The Father bids thee say what marriage thou

Dost vaunt, and who shall hurl Him from his might;
And this too not in dark mysterious speech,
But tell each point out clearly. Give me not,
Prometheus, task of double journey. Zeus
Thou see'st, is not with such words appeased.

Prometheus

Stately of utterance, full of haughtiness
Thy speech, as fits a messenger of Gods.
Ye yet are young in your new rule, and think
To dwell in painless towers. Have I not
Seen two great rulers driven forth from thence?
And now the third, who reigneth, I shall see
In basest, quickest fall. Seem I to thee
To shrink and quail before these new-made Gods?
Far, very far from that am I. But thou,
Track once again the path by which thou camest;
Thou shalt learn nought of what thou askest me.

Hermes

It was by such self-will as this before
That thou did'st bring these sufferings on thyself.

Prometheus

I for my part, be sure, would never change
My evil state for that thy bondslave's lot.

Hermes

To be the bondslave of this rock, I trow,
Is better than to be Zeus' trusty herald!

Prometheus

So it is meet the insulter to insult.

Hermes

Thou waxest proud, 'twould seem, of this thy doom.

Prometheus

Wax proud! God grant that I may see my foes
Thus waxing proud, and thee among the rest!

Hermes

Dost blame me then for thy calamities?

Prometheus

In one short sentence—all the Gods I hate,
Who my good turns with evil turns repay.

Hermes

Thy words prove thee with no slight madness plagued.

Prometheus

If to hate foes be madness, mad I am.

Hermes

Not one could bear thee wert thou prosperous.

Prometheus

Ah me!

Hermes

That word is all unknown to Zeus.

Prometheus

Time waxing old can many a lesson teach.

Hermes

Yet thou at least hast not true wisdom learnt.

Prometheus

I had not else addressed a slave like thee.

Hermes

Thou wilt say nought the Father asks, 'twould seem.

Prometheus

Fine debt I owe him, favour to repay.

Hermes

Me as a boy thou scornest then, forsooth.

Prometheus

And art thou not a boy, and sillier far,
If that thou thinkest to learn aught from me?
There is no torture nor device by which
Zeus can impel me to disclose these things
Before these bonds that outrage me be loosed.
Let then the blazing levin-flash be hurled;
With white-winged snow-storm and with earth-born thunders
Let Him disturb and trouble all that is;
Nought of these things shall force me to declare
Whose hand shall drive him from his sovereignty.

Hermes

See if thou findest any help in this.

Prometheus

Long since all this I've seen, and formed my plans.

Hermes

O fool, take heart, take heart at last in time,
To form right thoughts for these thy present woes.

Prometheus

Like one who soothes a wave, thy speech in vain
Vexes my soul. But deem not thou that I,
Fearing the will of Zeus, shall e'er become
As womanised in mind, or shall entreat
Him whom I greatly loathe, with upturned hand,
In woman's fashion, from these bonds of mine
To set me free. Far, far am I from that.

Hermes

It seems that I, saying much, shall speak in vain;
For thou in nought by prayers art pacified,

Or softened in thy heart, but like a colt
Fresh harnessed, thou dost champ thy bit, and strive,
And fight against the reins. Yet thou art stiff
In weak device; for self-will, by itself,
In one who is not wise, is less than nought.
Look to it, if thou disobey my words,
How great a storm and triple wave of ills,
Not to be 'scaped, shall come on thee; for first,
With thunder and the levin's blazing flash
The Father this ravine of rock shall crush,
And shall thy carcase hide, and stern embrace
Of stony arms shall keep thee in thy place.
And having traversed space of time full long,
Thou shalt come back to light, and then his hound,
The wingèd hound of Zeus, the ravening eagle,
Shall greedily make banquet of thy flesh,
Coming all day an uninvited guest,
And glut himself upon thy liver dark.
And of that anguish look not for the end,
Before some God shall come to bear thy woes,
And will to pass to Hades' sunless realm,
And the dark cloudy depths of Tartaros.
Wherefore take heed. No feigned boast is this,
But spoken all too truly; for the lips
Of Zeus know not to speak a lying speech,
But will perform each single word. And thou,
Search well, be wise, nor think that self-willed pride
Shall ever better prove than counsel good.

Chorus

To us doth Hermes seem to utter words
Not out of season; for he bids thee quit
Thy self-willed pride and seek for counsel good.
Hearken thou to him. To the wise of soul

It is foul shame to sin persistently.

Prometheus

To me who knew it all
He hath this message borne;
And that a foe from foes
Should suffer is not strange.
Therefore on me be hurled
The sharp-edged wreath of fire;
And let heaven's vault be stirred
With thunder and the blasts
Of fiercest winds; and Earth
From its foundations strong,
E'en to its deepest roots,
Let storm-wind make to rock;
And let the Ocean wave,
With wild and foaming surge,
Be heaped up to the paths
Where move the stars of heaven;
And to dark Tartaros
Let Him my carcase hurl,
With mighty blasts of force:
Yet me He shall not slay.

Hermes

Such words and thoughts from one
Brain-stricken one may hear.
What space divides his state
From frenzy? What repose
Hath he from maddened rage?
But ye who pitying stand
And share his bitter griefs,
Quickly from hence depart,
Lest the relentless roar

Of thunder stun your soul.

Chorus

With other words attempt
To counsel and persuade,
And I will hear: for now
Thou hast this word thrust in
That we may never bear.
How dost thou bid me train
My soul to baseness vile?
With him I will endure
Whatever is decreed.
Traitors I've learnt to hate,
Nor is there any plague
That more than this I loathe.

Hermes

Nay then, remember ye
What now I say, nor blame
Your fortune: never say
That Zeus hath cast you down
To evil not foreseen.
Not so; ye cast yourselves:
For now with open eyes,
Not taken unawares,
In Atè's endless net
Ye shall entangled be
By folly of your own.

A pause, and then flashes of lightning and peals of thunder

Prometheus

Yea, now in very deed,
No more in word alone,
The earth shakes to and fro,
And the loud thunder's voice

Bellows hard by, and blaze
The flashing levin-fires;
And tempests whirl the dust,
And gusts of all wild winds
On one another leap,
In wild conflicting blasts,
And sky with sea is blent:
Such is the storm from Zeus
That comes as working fear,
In terrors manifest.
O Mother venerable!
O Æther! rolling round
The common light of all,
See'st thou what wrongs I bear?

For Discussion

1. Asked whether he is afraid, Prometheus replies, "What can I fear whose fate is not to die?" (7.29). Is defiance easier for someone who cannot be killed? What would courage look like for a mortal in his place?
2. Prometheus says he has seen "two great rulers driven forth" (7.55) and expects Zeus to fall too. How does knowing the future change the way he behaves? Does it make him braver, or simply sure?
3. Hermes argues that "self-will, by itself," in "one who is not wise, is less than nought" (7.112–113). Is he right in general? Is he right about Prometheus?
4. Prometheus calls Hermes a boy and a slave (7.82–86). Why does the scene make so much of age and service? What kind of loyalty does Hermes represent?
5. The chorus at first agrees with Hermes (7.137–141), then refuses to leave, resolved to stay with him and endure "Whatever is de-

creed" (7.179–180). What changes their minds? What do you make of Hermes' answer that they will have only themselves to blame (7.184–194)?

6. The play ends without a resolution (7.195–212). If you had only this play, and not the lost sequel, what would you think it says about Zeus, about Prometheus, and about justice?

Try This

Stage the scene. Assign the parts of Prometheus, Hermes and the chorus, and read 7.41 to 7.136 aloud twice, once playing Prometheus as a hero and once as a proud and stubborn old man. Afterward, talk about which reading the words support better.

Session 5: The Romantic Rebel

Session 5 jumps more than two thousand years. In the summer of 1816, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley were neighbors on Lake Geneva, along with Mary Godwin, soon to be Mary Shelley. All three were drawn to the Prometheus story, and all three made something of it.

Reading 8 is Byron's poem "Prometheus," written in July 1816 at the Villa Diodati and published later that year. It is short, three stanzas in all, and it addresses the Titan directly. Byron's Prometheus is a figure of endurance: he suffers in silence, he refuses to tell Zeus his secret, and his defiance becomes a lesson for every human being who must face suffering and death. Notice how the poem turns in its third stanza from the Titan to "Man."

Reading 9 comes from the preface Shelley wrote for *Prometheus Unbound*, his "lyrical drama" published in 1820. He explains that the Greek dramatists changed the old stories freely, and that he will do the same. The lost Greek sequel, he says, ended with Prometheus reconciled to Jupiter. Shelley could not accept that ending. He then compares Prometheus with Satan, the rebel angel of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), and finds Prometheus the nobler figure. Shelley uses the Roman names, Jupiter for Zeus and Saturn for Cronus.

Reading 10 comes from the drama itself. Asia, the goddess who loves Prometheus, has gone down to the underworld to question the dark, shapeless power called Demogorgon about who rules the world. In this speech she tells her own version of the old story. It begins with Saturn's reign and with Prometheus giving Jupiter his power, and then it becomes a hymn to the gifts Prometheus gave to humanity: fire, metals, speech, science, music, sculpture, medicine, astronomy, ships, cities. Compare it line by line with Reading 5. Shelley's preface names Aeschylus, and the speech reads as an answer to him.

> These are the most demanding readings in the book. Read Byron's poem aloud twice, slowly. Read Asia's speech for its sweep before you read it for its sense.

Reading 8. *Prometheus. Lord Byron, Prometheus (the complete poem, 1816), from the edition of Ernest Hartley Coleridge.*

❧

Titan! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

II.

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refused thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity

Was thine—and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled,
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

III.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself—an equal to all woes--
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry

Its own concentered recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

Reading 9. *Preface to Prometheus Unbound. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Prometheus Unbound (the first two paragraphs of the Preface), from the edition of Thomas Hutchinson.*

❧

1 The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

2 I have presumed to employ a similar license. The "Prometheus Unbound" of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and

quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of "Paradise Lost", interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

Reading 10. *What Prometheus gave to man. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Prometheus Unbound (Act II, scene iv, lines 32–109), from the edition of Thomas Hutchinson.*

❧

Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus

Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit

Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

For Discussion

1. Byron writes, "Thy Godlike crime was to be kind" (8.37). Can kindness be a crime? Against whom, and by what law?
2. Byron's Titan suffers "The agony they do not show" (8.9) and "is jealous lest the sky" should hear him (8.12–13). Why does silence matter so much in this poem? Is it strength, pride, or both?
3. In the third stanza the poem turns to human beings: "Thou art a symbol and a sign," he tells the Titan, "To Mortals of their fate and force" (8.47–48). What lesson does Byron draw for ordinary people? How does "making Death a Victory" (8.61) sound to you?
4. Shelley refuses "a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind" (9.2). Is reconciliation always weakness? When might it be the braver ending?
5. Why does Shelley find Prometheus a better hero than Satan (9.2)? What does he think spoils Satan as a hero?
6. Compare Asia's list of gifts (10.35–66) with Prometheus' own list in Reading 5. What has Shelley added? What does "He gave man speech, and speech created thought" (10.41) claim about language?
7. Asia says that to be "Omnipotent but friendless is to reign" (10.17). How does that line connect with Prometheus' remark about tyrants in 4.32–33?

Try This

Write a short preface of your own, of one paragraph, explaining how you would end the Prometheus story if you were writing it today. Would he submit, be freed, be forgiven, or never be released? Give a reason, as Shelley does.

Session 6: The Modern Prometheus

The last session reads three passages from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. The idea for the novel came to her in the summer of 1816, during the ghost-story contest at Lake Geneva, when she was eighteen. It was published anonymously in 1818. The text here is her revised edition of 1831.

The story comes to us in layers. An explorer named Robert Walton, sailing in the Arctic, writes letters to his sister. He rescues a dying man from the ice, and that man, Victor Frankenstein, tells him his life. As a student at the university of Ingolstadt in Bavaria, Victor became obsessed with discovering the secret of life, and he spent nearly two years building a body from materials he gathered in secret.

Reading 11 is the night the body comes alive. Victor, who has worked for this moment with feverish devotion, looks at what he has made and runs. Reading 12 takes place much later, high in the Alps near Mont Blanc. Victor has fled, the creature has lived alone, and a child of Victor's family has been murdered. When the creature appears on the glacier, Victor curses him, and the creature answers. He demands to be heard. Reading 13 is the beginning of the story he tells: his first confused days of life in a forest, learning to tell light from dark and birdsong from noise, and the day he found a fire left by wandering beggars.

Mary Shelley never explains the subtitle in these chapters, and readers have argued about it ever since. Victor steals the spark of life and is punished for it; in that sense he is the Prometheus. But the creature, a made being like the first humans whom Prometheus was said in later Greek stories to have shaped from clay, also learns fire for himself, and suffers at the hands of his maker as the human race does in Hesiod. Keep both readings in mind. No-

> tice too how often the creature speaks of justice, duty and compassion, the very gifts Zeus sends in Reading 6.

Reading 11. *The spark of being. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (from Chapter V, 1831 text).*

❧

1 It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

2 How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

3 The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to

sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

4 Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

5 I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my

food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Reading 12. *The creature on the glacier. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (from Chapter X, 1831 text).*

1 "Devil," I exclaimed, "do you dare approach me? and do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! and, oh! that I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!"

2 "I expected this reception," said the daemon. "All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends."

3 "Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! the tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! you reproach me with your creation; come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed."

4 My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another.

5 He easily eluded me, and said—

6 "Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to in-

crease my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

7 "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall."

8 "How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow-beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up in the whirlwinds of its

rage. Let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale: when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man! Yet I ask you not to spare me: listen to me; and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands."

9 "Why do you call to my remembrance," I rejoined, "circumstances, of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you! You have made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you, or not. Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form."

10 "Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; "thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possessed, I demand this from you. Hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to hide itself behind yon snowy precipices, and illuminate another world, you will have heard my story, and can decide. On you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man, and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow-creatures, and the author of your own speedy ruin."

11 As he said this, he led the way across the ice: I followed. My heart was full, and I did not answer him; but, as I proceeded, I weighed the various arguments that he had used, and determined at least to listen to his tale. I

was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand. We crossed the ice, therefore, and ascended the opposite rock. The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend: we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart, and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen; and, seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.

Reading 13. *The creature finds fire. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (from Chapter XI, 1831 text).*

❧

1 "It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me, and troubled me; but hardly had I felt this, when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked, and, I believe, descended; but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid. The light became more and more oppressive to me; and, the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented

by hunger and thirst. This roused me from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

2 "It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened, as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

3 "Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens, and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up, and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path; and I again went out in search of berries. I was still cold, when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rung in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me: the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure.

4 "Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the un-

couth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

5 "The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened form, showed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations had, by this time, become distinct, and my mind received every day additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light, and to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and, by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the sparrow uttered none but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and thrush were sweet and enticing.

6 "One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches; but they were wet, and would not burn. I was pained at this, and sat still watching the operation of the fire. The wet wood which I had placed near the heat dried, and itself became inflamed. I reflected on this; and, by touching the various branches, I discovered the cause, and busied myself in collecting a great quantity of wood, that I might dry it, and have a plentiful supply of fire. When night came on, and brought sleep with it, I was in the greatest fear lest my fire should be extinguished. I covered it carefully with dry wood and leaves, and placed wet branches upon it; and then, spreading my cloak, I lay on the ground, and sunk into sleep.

7 "It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I observed this also, and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again, I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat; and that the

discovery of this element was useful to me in my food; for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.

For Discussion

1. Victor speaks of wanting to "infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing" (11.1). Which earlier reading does that phrase recall? Is Victor's act more like Prometheus' theft or like Zeus' making of Pandora?
2. "Now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (11.3). Why does Victor's horror come only at the moment of success? Have you known a project or achievement to feel that way?
3. The creature says, "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel" (12.6). How does this line connect with Shelley's comparison of Prometheus and Satan in 9.2?
4. "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" (12.6). Do you believe him? What does the novel suggest about where cruelty comes from?
5. After hearing the creature, Victor says that for the first time he "felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were" (12.11). What are those duties? Do they apply to people who make things today, or to parents, teachers and institutions?
6. In 13.6 the creature thrusts his hand into the embers and finds that "the same cause should produce such opposite effects." How does this scene sum up the whole Prometheus story, from Hesiod onward?

7. Looking back over six sessions, who seems to you the truest Prometheus: Hesiod's trickster, Aeschylus' rebel, Protagoras' helper, Byron's sufferer, Shelley's champion, or Victor Frankenstein?

Try This

Choose one modern invention or discovery, and write a short myth about it in the manner of Hesiod or Protagoras. Who gave it, who paid for it, and what gift came with it that no one expected? Read the myths aloud at the end of the session.

For the Leader

General plan. Each session is built for about ninety minutes. A reliable shape is: ten minutes to settle and recall the last session; fifteen minutes reading a passage aloud; fifty minutes of discussion; ten minutes for the activity or a plan to do it at home; five minutes to close and preview the next readings. Adjust freely. If a discussion is going well, let it run and skip the activity.

Session 1 (Hesiod). - 0 to 10 minutes: introductions, and a quick round in which each person names one thing they already know about Prometheus or Pandora. - 10 to 25: read 1.1 (the first half) and 2.5 to 2.6 aloud. - 25 to 75: questions 1, 3, 5 and 4, in that order. Question 4 goes best after the group has warmed up. - 75 to 85: the two-column ledger from Try This. - 85 to 90: preview Session 2 and suggest reading the verse aloud at home.

Session 2 (Prometheus Bound, first part). - 0 to 10: recall Hesiod's moral and ask whether anyone found the play reading hard. - 10 to 25: read Reading 3 aloud with one voice, then 4.55 to 4.67 with two voices, one for Prometheus and one for the chorus. - 25 to 75: questions 1, 3, 4 and 6. Keep a list of the arts on a board as the group names them. - 75 to 85: the life-without-it paragraphs, written in five minutes and read aloud. - 85 to 90: preview Plato's very different version.

Session 3 (Protagoras). - 0 to 10: ask the group to retell Protagoras' story from memory, one sentence each, around the circle. - 10 to 25: read 6.4 to 6.5 aloud. - 25 to 75: questions 2, 3, 5 and 6. Question 4 can be raised if the group is comfortable with a hard turn. - 75 to 85: the two lists from Try This. - 85 to 90: preview the final scene of the play.

Session 4 (Prometheus Bound, ending). - 0 to 15: cast the parts and read 7.41 to 7.136 aloud as a scene. - 15 to 65: questions 1, 3, 5 and 6. - 65 to 85: read the scene a second time in the other style, as Try This suggests, and discuss. - 85 to 90: preview the jump to 1816. If you can, bring a map that shows Geneva.

Session 5 (Byron and Shelley). - 0 to 10: a brief account of the summer of 1816, from the Introduction. - 10 to 25: read Byron's poem aloud, twice, with two different readers. - 25 to 45: questions 1 to 3 on Byron. - 45 to 75: questions 4 and 6 on Shelley. Read 10.35 to 10.66 aloud beside 5.12 to 5.37. - 75 to 85: begin the one-paragraph prefaces; finish at home. - 85 to 90: preview *Frankenstein*. Mention that Session 6 is the longest reading.

Session 6 (Frankenstein). - 0 to 10: share two or three of the prefaces from Session 5. - 10 to 25: read 11.1 to 11.3 aloud, then 12.6. - 25 to 70: questions 1, 3, 5 and 6. - 70 to 85: question 7, as a closing discussion of the whole course. Ask each person to answer in a sentence. - 85 to 90: the myth-writing activity can be assigned for a final, optional gathering.

Tips for leading. - Ask for the line. When someone makes a claim, ask where in the reading they see it. The locators make this easy, and the discussion stays grounded. - Read aloud more than you think you need to. Old translations that look dense on the page often become clear in a voice. - Let the texts disagree. Hesiod, Aeschylus, Plato, Byron, Shelley and Mary Shelley do not tell one story. The richest moments often come when the group notices a writer answering an earlier one. - Watch the clock on the harder sessions. Sessions 4 and 5 can bog down in difficult language. Paraphrase a hard passage yourself and move on. - Hold sensitive topics lightly. Hesiod's view of women, the harsh law in 6.5 and the creature's misery can stir strong feelings. Treat them as texts to be understood, and let people disagree. - End with a question, not a summary. The best sessions send people home still thinking.

Notes on the Texts

1.1 "neat-ankled mad Clymene": so the source reads. The Greek word at this point means "maiden," so "mad" is almost certainly a misprint for "maid." It is left as printed. Clymene is a daughter of Ocean, and Iapetus, her husband, is a Titan, a child of Heaven and Earth.

1.1 Atlas holds up the sky "before the clear-voiced Hesperides." The Hesperides were nymphs of the evening and the west who guarded a tree of golden apples at the far western edge of the world.

1.1 Erebus: the darkness of the underworld, sometimes used as another name for the realm of the dead.

1.1 Heracles, here the "son of shapely-ankled Alcmene," frees Prometheus with Zeus' consent. Hesiod places the release before he tells the crime.

1.1 Mecone: the place where gods and mortals met to settle the division of the sacrifice. Later Greek writers identified it with Sicyon, west of Corinth.

1.4 The trick explains a custom, as Hesiod says: "because of this the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars."

1.6 "the Melian race of mortal men": the translator's note (left out here) cites an ancient commentator who explains the word by the Melian nymphs or by ash trees, from which some believed men had sprung.

1.6 "the very famous Limping God": Hephaestus, the smith god, who was said to have been born lame.

1.6 "Pallas Athene": Athena, goddess of crafts, including the weaving and needlework she teaches the woman in 2.3. Pallas is one of her titles.

1.8 Hesiod's comparison of women to drones in the hive is the poet's own blunt opinion. It is worth discussing rather than explaining away.

2.1 "a hollow fennel-stalk": the giant fennel, called narthex in Greek, whose hollow stalk Prometheus used to carry the fire. Aeschylus repeats the detail at 3.24.

2.3 "Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus": Hermes was called Argeiphontes, "Slayer of Argus," because he killed the hundred-eyed giant Argus, whom Hera had set to guard Io (see Session 4).

2.4 The Graces were goddesses of beauty and adornment; Persuasion (Peitho) and the Graces adorn Pandora with gold. The Hours, or Horae, were daughters of Themis.

2.4 "Pandora": the translator's note (left out here) renders the name as *The All-endowed*. Hesiod explains it himself: all the gods gave her a gift.

2.6 "the jar": Hesiod's word means a large storage jar. The familiar "Pandora's box" goes back to Erasmus, who wrote of a box in his Latin retelling of 1508.

2.6 "Only Hope remained there": interpreters have long disagreed whether Hope is kept in the jar as a blessing for humankind or held back as one more evil. Ancient writers already differed on whether hope is sweet or a curse.

2.6 "Aegis-holding Zeus": the aegis was a leather cloak or breastplate associated with Zeus and worn by his daughter Athena, credited with supernatural power.

3.1–5 Prometheus calls on the elements as witnesses: sky, winds, rivers, sea, Earth, "Mother of us all," and the Sun.

3.10 "the new-made Monarch of the Blest": Zeus, who has only lately taken power by overthrowing his father Cronus and the Titans.

3.20 "Necessity": in Greek, Ananke, the personified force of necessity or fate, whose decrees could not be changed.

3.39–40 This is the play's first plain statement of his motive: love for mortals that is "Too great."

4.9 Cronus: the Titan who ruled before Zeus. He had overthrown his own father, Heaven (Uranus), and was overthrown in turn by his son Zeus after a long war.

4.17–18 In this play Prometheus' mother is Themis, the goddess of divine law and order, here identified with Earth. Hesiod, in 1.1, names his mother Clymene.

4.28 "Tartaros": Tartarus, the lowest region of the universe, a prison below the realm of the dead, where Zeus confined the defeated Titans.

4.57–59 Compare Hope in Hesiod's jar (2.6). Here "Blind hopes" are a medicine against the knowledge of death.

5.25–27 Number and letters. "Memory's handmaid" is writing; Memory, Mnemosyne, was by Zeus the mother of the Muses.

5.39 "leech": an old word for a physician.

5.51–66 The arts of prophecy: dreams, chance sounds, signs met on the road, the flight of birds, and the inspection of the organs of sacrificed animals, especially the liver. Greek seers counted birds on the right as favorable.

5.72 "Allarts": a misprint in the source for "All arts." It is left as printed.

5.82 "Fates triple-formed": the three Moirai, goddesses of fate. "Errinyes" is the translator's spelling of the Erinyes, or Furies, goddesses of vengeance.

5.88–92 The "dread secret" is revealed in Session 4 (7.1–23).

6.1 "apologue": a short fable told to teach a moral. Protagoras is answering Socrates' doubt that virtue can be taught.

6.4 Epimetheus: the brother of Prometheus. His name is glossed as Hindsight, as Prometheus' is Forethinker.

6.4 "prosecuted for theft": Protagoras alludes to the punishment of Prometheus without telling it.

6.5 "reverence and justice": in Greek, aidos and dike.

6.6 In the Athenian Assembly, any adult male citizen could, in principle, speak and vote. Women, slaves and resident foreigners were excluded.

6.7 Protagoras' proof turns on a contrast: to claim a skill one lacks is thought foolish, but to confess dishonesty openly is thought madness, because everyone is expected to profess justice.

7.1–4 The bride is not named in the play. Later sources say that Thetis, a sea goddess, was fated to bear a son greater than his father, so Zeus gave her up and she was married to the mortal Peleus. Her son was Achilles.

7.20–21 The trident is the weapon of Poseidon, god of the sea. In later accounts both Zeus and Poseidon gave up Thetis when they learned the prophecy about her son.

7.32 "Adrasteia": a name of Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, meaning "Inescapable." The chorus means that it is wise to fear her before speaking proudly.

7.55 "two great rulers": Uranus, overthrown by Cronus, and Cronus, overthrown by Zeus.

7.91 "levin-flash": lightning. "Levin" is an old word for lightning, used often by this translator.

7.128–130 Hermes says no end will come until some god agrees to go down to Hades in Prometheus' place. In some later accounts the centaur Chiron gave up his immortality in connection with Prometheus' release; the versions differ.

7.192 "Atè": Ate, the spirit of delusion and blind folly that leads gods and men to ruin.

7.209–210 "O Mother venerable!" and "O Æther! rolling round": his mother Themis, identified with Earth, and Aether, the bright upper air.

8.7 Byron gives Prometheus a vulture, where Hesiod (1.1) and Aeschylus (7.123) give an eagle.

8.15 The edition numbers the poem's three stanzas I, II and III. The numerals II and III are counted as lines here (8.15 and 8.36); the numeral I stands above the first line in the edition.

8.27 "the Thunderer": Zeus, whose weapon is the thunderbolt.

8.56 The editor notes that editions from 1832 on read *and equal to all woes* for *an equal to all woes*.

9.1 "The Agamemnonian story": the murder of King Agamemnon and his son Orestes' revenge, which survives in different versions by all three great tragedians, Aeschylus (*The Libation Bearers*), Sophocles (*Electra*) and Euripides (*Electra*).

9.2 Jupiter is the Roman name of Zeus, and Hercules of Heracles. On Thetis and Peleus see the note on 7.1–4. Satan is the rebel angel of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667.

10.2 Saturn: the Roman god identified with the Greek Cronus.

10.29–30 Elysian: of Elysium, the abode of the blessed after death. Nepenthe was a drink said to banish grief; moly, the magic herb Hermes gives Odysseus in the *Odyssey*; amaranth, a poetic flower that never fades.

10.69 "rains down": the editor notes that a manuscript in the Bodleian Library and the edition of 1839 read "rains," and the first edition of 1820 "reigns."

10.75 "shook Heaven ay, when": so the text reads here, with no comma before "ay" (yes).

10.78 Demogorgon, a dark and shapeless spirit in Shelley's drama, answers Asia's questions. The name probably began as a copyist's error, and Boccaccio made Demogorgon the ancestor of the gods. In the drama Demogorgon overthrows Jupiter.

11.4 "Dante": Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), the Italian poet whose *Divine Comedy* describes a journey through hell, purgatory and paradise.

12.2 "said the daemon": an old spelling of demon. Mary Shelley also calls the creature monster, fiend and wretch. In these chapters he has no name.

12.6 Adam and "the fallen angel" come from *Paradise Lost*. The novel's title page carries an epigraph from that poem, Adam's complaint to his Maker.

13.3 "a radiant form": the moon, as the creature himself says at the end of the paragraph.

Glossary

Adamant: a stone once believed impossible to break or pierce; hence "adamantine," unbreakable.

Adrasteia: a name of Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, meaning "Inescapable."

Aegis: a leather cloak or breastplate associated with Zeus and worn by Athena, thought to have supernatural power.

Aether: the bright upper air of the heavens, also personified as a god; the translators spell it Æther.

Amaranth: in poetry, an imaginary flower that never fades; from a Greek word meaning "unfading."

Apologue: a short fable or allegory told to convey a moral.

Ate: the spirit of delusion and blind folly that leads gods and men to ruin.

Daemon: an older spelling of demon; also a spirit ranking between gods and humans.

Demogorgon: in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the dark, shapeless power that overthrows Jupiter.

Elysium: in classical myth, the abode of the blessed after death; "Elysian" is its adjective.

Epimetheus: brother of Prometheus, whose name is glossed as Hindsight.

Erebus: the darkness of the underworld, and a name for the realm of the dead.

Erinyes: the Furies, three goddesses of vengeance; Plumptre spells them Errinyes.

Fates: the three Moirai, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, goddesses of fate.

Fennel stalk: the hollow stalk of the giant fennel, called narthex, in which Prometheus carried the stolen fire.

Graces: goddesses of grace, beauty and adornment, who help to dress Pandora in Hesiod.

Hephaestus: the god of fire, divine smith and patron of craftsmen, son of Zeus and Hera, said to have been born lame.

Hermes: son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the gods, called Argeiphontes, "Slayer of Argus."

Hesperides: nymphs of the evening and the west who guarded the golden apples.

Iapetus: a Titan, son of Heaven and Earth, father of Atlas, Prometheus, Epimetheus and Menoetius.

Jupiter (Jove): the Roman god identified with Zeus; Shelley uses the Roman names.

Leech: an old word for a physician or surgeon.

Levin: an old word for lightning.

Mecone: the place where gods and mortals met to divide the sacrifice; later identified with Sicyon.

Moly: the magic herb Hermes gives Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* as protection against Circe.

Necessity: in Greek, Ananke, the personified power of what must be, whose decrees could not be changed.

Nepenthe: a drink said to make people forget pain or sorrow.

Pandora: the first woman in Hesiod, made by the gods and given gifts by all of them; the translator renders her name as *The All-endowed*.

Saturn: the Roman god identified with Cronus, father of Zeus.

Sophist: a traveling teacher of the fifth and fourth centuries BC who charged fees for instruction.

Tartarus: the lowest region of the universe, a dark prison below the realm of the dead; the translator spells it Tartaros.

Themis: a Titan goddess of divine law and order, and of prophecy; in *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus' mother.

Thetis: a sea goddess fated to bear a son greater than his father; married to Peleus, she became the mother of Achilles.

Titans: the children of Heaven (Uranus) and Earth (Gaia), the older gods whom Zeus overthrew and imprisoned in Tartarus.

Chronology

c. 700 BC · Hesiod, poet of the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, flourishes in Boeotia.

525/524 BC · Aeschylus is born.

c. 490 BC · Protagoras is born at Abdera.

490 BC · Aeschylus, by later Greek accounts, fights against the Persians at Marathon.

456/455 BC · Aeschylus dies at Gela in Sicily.

c. 470 to c. 430 BC · *Prometheus Bound* is written and staged; its date and authorship are disputed.

444 BC · Pericles entrusts Protagoras with drafting the constitution of the new colony of Thurii.

428/427 BC · Plato is born in Athens.

Late 430s BC · The conversation in Plato's *Protagoras* is set in Athens.

c. 420 BC · Protagoras dies.

348/347 BC · Plato dies.

AD 1508 · Erasmus' *Adagia* turns Pandora's jar into a box.

1667 · John Milton publishes *Paradise Lost*.

1816 · At Lake Geneva, Byron proposes a ghost-story contest; in July he writes "Prometheus," published that year.

1818 · *Frankenstein* is published anonymously.

1820 · Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is published on 14 August.

1822 · Percy Bysshe Shelley dies at sea off Livorno on 8 July.

1824 · Byron dies at Mesolóngion, in Greece, on 19 April.

1831 · Mary Shelley's revised edition of *Frankenstein* appears.

1851 · Mary Shelley dies in London on 1 February.

Further Reading

Edith Hamilton, *Mythology*, 1942. A classic retelling of the Greek myths for general readers.

M. L. West, *Theogony and Works and Days*, 1988. A clear modern translation with an introduction and notes.

Carol Dougherty, *Prometheus*, 2006. A short survey of the myth from Hesiod to the Romantics and beyond.

Carl Kerényi, *Prometheus: Archetypal Image of Human Existence*, translated by Ralph Manheim, Princeton paperback 1997. A classic study of the myth and its meanings.

Mark Griffith, *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound*, 1983. The standard English commentary on the Greek text, for readers who want to go deeper.

C. C. W. Taylor, *Plato: Protagoras*, 1976. A careful translation with philosophical notes.

Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend*, 2002. A full and lively biography.

Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, 1974. A vivid biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley*, 2000. A full biography of the author of *Frankenstein*.

David H. Guston, Ed Finn and Jason Scott Robert, editors, *Frankenstein: Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds*, 2017. The 1818 text with essays on science and responsibility.

Sources of the Texts

- **Hugh G. Evelyn-White (1884–1924):** Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, Loeb Classical Library, London: William Heinemann, 1914, as transcribed by Project Gutenberg (ebook 348), which also takes in a few additions from the translator's revised edition, dated 1919 by the transcriber. Readings 1 and 2. The translator's notes and footnote markers and the bracketed line numbers of the transcription are left out.
- **Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821–1891):** Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, from his translation of Aeschylus first published in 1868, in the edition *Æschylos: Tragedies and Fragments*, Boston: D. C. Heath, 1901 (Project Gutenberg ebook 53174). Readings 3, 4, 5 and 7. The translator's notes and the line numbers of the edition are left out; the stage directions are his.
- **Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893):** Plato, *Protagoras*, from *The Dialogues of Plato*, first published in 1871 and revised in 1875 and in a third edition of 1892, as transcribed by Project Gutenberg (ebook 1591), which does not state which edition it follows. Reading 6. Jowett's introduction and analysis are left out.
- **Lord Byron (1788–1824):** "Prometheus," written in July 1816 and first published in *The Prisoner of Chillon, and Other Poems*, 1816, from *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, volume 4, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London: John Murray, 1901, as transcribed by Project Gutenberg (ebook 20158). Reading 8. The editor's notes, footnote markers, variant markers and line numbers are left out.

- **Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822):** *Prometheus Unbound*, first published in 1820, from *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, volume 1, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford Edition, 1914, as transcribed by Project Gutenberg (ebook 4797). Readings 9 and 10. The editor's textual notes and line numbers are left out.
- **Mary Shelley (1797–1851):** *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the revised text of 1831, from the Standard Ebooks edition, which is based on Project Gutenberg ebook 42324 and on scans from the Internet Archive. Readings 11, 12 and 13. The Standard Ebooks endnotes and their markers are left out.

Edition Notes

The readings: The readings are reproduced word for word from public domain translations. Each translator, edition and date is listed under Sources of the Texts, with what this edition leaves out.

The apparatus: The introduction, headnotes, questions, reflections, practices, notes, glossary, chronology and reading list were drafted with the help of artificial intelligence and checked by hand against the readings and against published sources. Every quotation in them matches the readings printed in this book word for word, and every fact was checked against a published source before it was printed. The publisher keeps a record of the source checked for each fact. No quotation, fact or story was invented. The readings themselves are copied unchanged from the translations named under Sources of the Texts.

Locators: a note marked 3.4 refers to Reading 3, paragraph or line 4, as numbered in the margin.

Corrections: readers who find an error are invited to report it to the publisher. Corrections will appear in later editions.