PROMETHEUS BOUND

and

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Two Verse Dramas

Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 February 2011

Lecture Theatre, Queen’s Building

Emmanuel College
Special thanks are due to the following, without whose support the production could never have taken place:

*************

The Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College granted the use of the theatre, and Sarah Banbery, Colin White and Mike Akerman were hugely supportive on the ground.

Gillian Jondorf composed the surtitles for *Prometheus Bound*.

Sam Motherwell contributed all the original drawings for *Prometheus Bound* and took over the editing of the Powerpoint Presentation.

Dorothy Thompson took charge of the reservation of seats by email.

Anthony Snodgrass gave his usual help in suggesting appropriate images from classical art.

Mark Harrison gave valuable assistance and advice concerning technical aspects of the visual display.

Renaud Gagné and Reeve Parker contributed the two programme notes.

Dhananjay Jagannathan found images, revised the Presentation, and gave secretarial help with the texts.

The incidental music for both plays was arranged and adapted by Julian Gregory from themes in Carl Nielsen’s Symphony no. 4 (*The Inextinguishable*).
"I suffer": the last word of *Prometheus Bound* is *paschô*.

As Prometheus plunges down from the Caucasus to Hades, the elements have been unleashed and the sea leaps to the heavens. This is happening here, right now, in the theatre, not only "in myth" (*muthôi*). Sky and Earth clash in utter confusion. A thunderbolt is shattering the cosmos. Zeus rends the whole world asunder to punish Prometheus and bend him through fear.

"Look on me", shouts the fettered Titan, as he looks at the audience (1093). And right at the beginning of the play, after he has been fettered and nailed to the Caucasian cliff he says "Look on me, a god, how the gods make me suffer" (92). Then he had called on Earth and Sky -- his parents -- to be witnesses to his pain; and now he invokes them again as they are thrust into each other once more.

Prometheus calls on men to look at their benefactor *hic et nunc*. The boundaries of the world are locked in his pain. Primeval convulsion returns and breaks the uncertain truce of the new Olympian rule. Will the war in heaven have an end? Will a new ruler topple his father again? Will chaos always rule in the end? A secret prophecy that Prometheus heard from Themis holds the key.

The spectacle of agony that engulfs all those who see it raises the question of justice, *dikè*. The penultimate word of the play is *ekdika* (‘unjustly’). Earth, the mother of all, *is* Themis. Prometheus, a god, is made to suffer by the cruelty of other gods before the audience of a democratic and imperial city that is questioning its past and its knowledge. There is no justice in the suffering of Prometheus, the great benefactor of man. The suffering of Io is unjust. The supreme god stands accused.

*Prometheus Bound* deals with tyranny and hope. Opinions are divided. The chorus and the older gods are ambivalent about the new order. Without justice, there is no order, no cosmos. Can there be justice without preserving human dignity? (After all, it will be through the marriage of Thetis and the mortal Peleus that Olympian order will be saved. A man will release Prometheus from his bonds.) In what spirit, then, is absolute authority being exercised on the weak? Will poor Io roam the world for ever? In what way will the immortal gods exercise their new rule over the ephemeral race of humankind?

These questions would have been pursued in the lost sequel(s) (which almost certainly included the *Prometheus Luomenos*) towards which the whole action of our play is driving. The public theology of this first play does not offer answers. But its Aeschylean *didaskalos*, whatever his name might have been, left his audience with few certainties.

Renaud Gagné
THE PERFORMERS

A. BOUND

PROMETHEUS       Patrick Boyde
KRATOS            David Conlon
HEPHAISTOS        Martin Worthington
OCEAN             Anthony Bowen
CHORUS (Oceanides) Giulia Cantarini
                  Anastasia Christophilopilou
IO                Gail Trimble
HERMES            Christos Tsirogiannis

Violinists        Julian Gregory
                  Josie Robertson

Projection synchroniser  Michael Carroll
THE PERFORMERS (continued)

B. UNBOUND

PROMETHEUS
DAVID FROST

EARTH
CAROLINE MARTIN

ASIA
MARIA FLOOD
IONE
MEERA JUNCU
PANTHEA
GAIL TRIMBLE

THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER
ANTHONY BOWEN

MERCURY
TOM NOLAN

DEMOGORGON
DAVID CONLON

FIRST SPIRIT (& ECHO)
PATRICK BOYDE
SECOND SPIRIT (& ECHO)
MEERA JUNCU

JUPITER
ANTHONY BOWEN
HERCULES
TOM NOLAN

THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR
JAMIE CASTELL
| Violinists                          | Julian Gregory          |
|                                   | Josie Robertson         |
| Projection synchroniser           | Michael Carroll         |
Prometheus Unbound
in its context

Tonight’s slimmed down version of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts* preserves much of what he imagined in 1818-1819 as a text for his times that would replace Aeschylus’s own lost sequel to *Prometheus Bound*. As radical Shelley put it in his 1820 *Preface*, he was “averse from a catastrophe so feeble as 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 his as unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary”.

As many scholars have argued, political reform and the abolition of tyranny in public and personal affairs is at the heart of various other writings in prose and verse by Shelley. In this, his hero’s resistance chimes with that of Aeschylus’s Prometheus, who—though bound in suffering—is unswerving as the benefactor of mankind.

Perhaps the most remarkable moment in this drama comes early in the first act after Prometheus, shackled and hanging in agony from the precipice, having summoned a phantasm of his oppressor Jupiter, hears it rehearse his forgotten curse (“I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse / Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse”), then crucially *repents* his “quick and vain words,” proclaiming “I wish no living thing to suffer pain.”

For Shelley in 1818-1819, however, that repentance was hardly surrender, and it is tempting to read Prometheus’s ultimate release by Hercules and his ultimate union with his long-lost beloved, the faithful Asia, as Shelley’s-symbolic vision of spiritual rebirth in a Republican England. The gift of fire and the union with Asia augur a prosperous, skillful, and self-sufficient humanity.

A question for pondering: how much does Shelley’s presentation of the love between Prometheus and Asia reflect his passionate relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*? Perhaps Asia’s song at the end of Act II, in response to the Voice in the Air, is Percy’s way of celebrating his own lyric muse:

> By thee most beautiful of pilots,
> Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
> The boat of my desire is guided . . .

Reeve Parker
Who’s who?

Anthony Bowen is late Orator of the University and Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College. He has been busy with Greek plays since his schooldays.

Patrick Boyde, Emeritus Professor of Italian, has had the pleasure of directing (in this theatre) six plays in Ancient Greek from 2005 to 2010.

Giulia Cantarini is a graduate in Film Studies of La Sapienza, Rome, and is studying for a Ph.D at St. John’s, specialising in Italian and British comic cinema.

Michael Carroll took his BA in Classics at TCD, his MSt in Ancient Philosophy at Oxford, and is now doing a PhD on Aeschylus at St John’s.

Jamie Castell is in the third year of his doctoral research at St John's. He is working on Wordsworth and animal life.

Anastasia Christophiropoulou took her Ph. D in Archaeology at St John’s and is Outreach Officer (Greece and Rome) at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

David Conlon is a mathematician from Ireland and is currently a Royal Society university research fellow. Until recently he was a JRF at St John’s.

David Frost formerly Fellow of St John’s and then Professor of English at Newcastle, NSW, is now Principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies.

Maria Flood is a graduate student at St. John's doing a Ph.D in French and Algerian cinema within MML. She hails from the village of Kells near Dublin.

Julian Gregory is reading Music at St John's where he also sings in the Chapel Choir. He is an Instrumental Award holder and currently plays with the CUCO.

Gillian Jondorf is a modern linguist but has composed the surtitles for all the recent Ancient Greek productions in this theatre.

Meera Juncu (née Frost) is a graduate of the universities of Sydney and Cambridge. Some previous theatrical roles include Hecuba and Medea.

Caroline Martin has come to St John’s from Dublin to read for a PhD in Earth Sciences and is thus delighted to have the chance of reading the part of Earth.

Sam Motherwell drew the images for Oedipus Coloneus in 2010. He is past President of Cambridge Drawing Society and still active as crystallographer.

Tom Nolan is a Johnian poet who has just submitted his doctoral thesis on the novels of Thomas Mann.

Josie Robertson is a third year Biological Natural Sciences student at Emmanuel College. She leads CUCO and is an Instrumental Award Holder.

Gail Trimble took her BA and D. Phil in Classics at Oxford and is now a JRF at Trinity pursuing her research on Catullus.

Christos Tsirogiannis, currently a Ph.D student at Hughes Hall, is a Greek archaeologist specialising in the repatriation of looted antiquities.

James Willetts used to be Principal Teacher of Classics at Ardrossan Academy and is now a documentary film maker. He will be filming the performances.
Martin WORTHINGTON used to be a Research Fellow in Assyriology at St John's College and is now a post-doc at SOAS in London.