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**Who are “Prometheus’ Heirs”?**

**Cultural Circulations of Prometheus Narratives in Discourses of Literature and Labour**

The cultural transfers of the antique figure of Prometheus are legion. These varying narratives go back to different representations: on the one hand, Prometheus is a trickster who brought toil to mankind and tore them from their primeval paradisiacal state (Hesiod, Diogenes); on the other hand, it is the philanthropist who brought culture and craftsmanship to mankind with fire, enabling them to master nature (Aeschylus). Prometheus can be found as a symbolic figure for civilisation, culture and progress, for science, technology and industry, or for rebellion, emancipation and self – realisation, in many genres and genres and is referred to in literary as well as in political, philosophical and cultural studies texts. As a creator figure, Prometheus is invoked in reflections on literature; as an image for autonomous human agency creating the human world through work, the figure illustrates debates about human labour.

Both “literature” and “work” describe a relationship of human agency and the world, the conception of which is subject to historical change. Both relations are discursively shaped. This paper explores how these relations are elaborated in literary texts with reference to the Prometheus figure. The paper compares fiction and non – fiction – texts that take the Prometheus figure as a starting point to reflect on the relationship between literature and labour. The narrator in Friedrich Schlegel’s novel “Lucinde” (“Idylle über den Müsiggang”), for example, resorts to the Prometheus figure to describe pointless, painful work, which he distinguishes from literature. In a completely different context, Christian Berthold and Jutta Greis refer in “Prometheus’ Heirs” (1996) to the literary reception of Prometheus to describe post – industrial forms of work. The paper proposed discusses the dynamics of the cultural circulation of Prometheus narratives in the context of reflections on concepts of literature and labour and asks for postcolonial and posthumanist perspectives on the topic.