Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Prometheus Unbound [□□□□□□□□□ (Purometeusu no kaihō)] (Appleseed [□□□□□□□, (Appurushīdo)], 2) by Shirow Masamune", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1215. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Shirow Masamune

Prometheus Unbound [□□□□□□□□□ (Purometeusu no kaihō)] (Appleseed [□□□□□□□, (Appurushīdo)], 2)

Japan (1985)

TAGS: Athena Gaia / Gaea Olympus Prometheus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Prometheus Unbound [□□□□□□□□□ (Purometeusu no kaihō)] (Appleseed [□□□□□□□, (Appurushīdo)], 2)
Country of the First Edition	Japan, United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Australia, Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, United States of America
Original Language	Japanese
First Edition Date	1985
First Edition Details	Shirow Masamune, *Appleseed*: *Prometheus Unbound*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985; New York: Eclipse Comics, 1988, 192 pp.
ISBN	9781593076924 (the review and ISBN refers to the 2007 Dark Horse release of the translated manga)
Genre	Graphic novels, Science fiction, Science fiction comics
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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Creators



Shirow Masamune , b. 1961
(Author)

Shirow Masamune is a noted Japanese manga artists. He studied oil painting at Osaka University of Arts. His manga, *Applessed* won the Seiun Award for Best manga in 1986. His most famous manga is *Ghost in the Shell*. Shirow Masamune 's other works include: *Black Magic*, *Dominion*, *Orion*, *Pandora in the Crimson Shell: Ghost Urn* and various art books.

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

In the utopian city of Olympus, built on the ruin of a devastated world after WWIII, tension is rising between humans and Bioroids (enhanced humans). The city's high council of Bioroids develops a new plan, elpis, "a program for the optimization of the human race" (p. 50). This plan aims to regulate the bodies and minds of humans. The council elucidates its radical plan by saying that if they do not take action, "the earth will become an increasingly inhospitable place for mankind" (p. 55). They claim that humankind is weak and obsessed with materiality, that mankind will destroy itself unless they intervene, that they acting for the wellbeing of mankind. They warn that "people have become too materialistic! Their networks are disintegrating-they're forgetting even how to network!" (p. 58).

Athena, Olympus' Administrative Director for the General Management Bureau, forcibly objects to this new plan which is about to become a law. Meanwhile, Athena asks Olympus' super-computer, Gaia, to analyze the definition of "Human." Yet the supercomputer struggles with the data. Gaia then decides to protect the human race at all cost and controls weapons to eliminate any potential danger, including the entire population of Olympus (which is mostly Bioroids). The main protagonists, Duenan Knute and her cyborg partner Briareos (Bri) must find a way to shut down Gaia and save everyone. Duenan is being transported to Athena's special ESWAT (Extra-Special Weapons and Advanced Tactics) unit and must find a way to survive between the rivalling factions. Some compromise must be taken and in the end it is the shutting down of Gaia temporarily. The human race must now defend itself against the Bioroids if needed.

Analysis

This volume raises the question of what it means being human and do human should have free choice Thus, continuing the conflict which was already hinted at in the previous volume. The Bioroid council is worried, based on past human wars, that the human race will destroy itself if left free to its own devices. Athena, however, even though she is a Bioroid as well, objects to this radical move. "Doesn't this concept of yours overstep the boundary between us and the humans? Isn't it a form of rebellion against the human race…humans are different from us." (p. 57).

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In ancient Greek and Roman myth, Athena was the guide and protector of heroes. In the context of this sci-fi manga, she acts as the guardian of the human race. She understands the difference between the two races yet insists that the human race should maintain its freedom, even to err.

Regarding the plan, elpis, there is an added explanation at the bottom of the page (which probably existed in the original Japanese version but, since this reviewer does not possess the original volume, cannot be stated definitively). In the additional note, it is said that "elpis: the personification of hope or expectation in Greek mythology. The last creature left in Pandora's box after all the ills of the world had escaped" (p. 50). The council means that their new program will provide hope for the future and survival of humankind, yet this hope is conditioned with the human race losing its humanity and freedom. In the Hesiodic myth of Pandora, (*Works & Days* 54ff), it is written that Hope remained in the jar – yet its purpose is not specified hence it is unclear whether it was also part of Zeus' plan to further punish humankind by trapping Hope. In the manga, Hope is intended to release humankind from their suffering and potential ruin, but by controlling them. The council, in a way, is assuming the role of gods (in this godless utopian setting) and wish to control and recreate the human race in their own image, i.e., as Bioroids.

The mythological Gaia was highly protective of her offspring and this mechanical Gaia appears similar, although she was programmed not to take sides. Duenan is doubtful whether shutting down Gaia is the right course of action "it's just too damn hard to make it work, this city!" (p. 154). The tension in the city is undeniable and Duenan contemplates what should be done. Yet, in the end, she understands that "relying on machines and logic alone has its faults, too. Is it really Bioroids who are dangerous…or is it actually you we should be worried about, Gaia.?…if we stop Gaia now there'll be no more checks and balances on the Bioroids…but if we don't we'll be back to the pre-war days again" (p. 166). Athena concludes the events by saying, "this will be the age when 'homo sapiens' takes on its true meaning…'man of wisdom'" (p.185). It is up to the next volume to reveal what Athena was implying. However, as the mythological goddess of wisdom, it is only fitting that she will oversee this new age.

Athena Gaia / Gaea Olympus Prometheus

Classical, Mythological,

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Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Death Friendship Future Journeys War
Further Reading	Gideon Nisbet, "Mecha in Olympus: Masamune Shirow's 'Appleseed" in *Son of Classics and Comics*, G. Kovacs and C. Marshall, eds., New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 67–78.

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