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Workshop – Lyon, November 22, 2019
École Normale Supérieure de Lyon

**Rebels, mutineers, innovators:
emblematic figures of the Transgression in ancient times**

Organized by the members of the junior laboratory TANTALE

Call for papers

Open to PhD students and researchers
Deadline: May 27, 2019

« You will arrive on the banks of the Hybristes river whose name does not lie:
hold back from crossing it, for crossing is not safe. »

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 717-718

Prometheus' warning to Io clearly shows that transgression is an act: according to its etymological meaning, *transgredi* means punctually crossing a frontier, a limit, or figuratively, a norm. Now, such a gesture is laden with consequences for those who venture on the other side. However, the name of the river (the "Rough") associates the very river with the *hybris*. To transgress, then becomes the evidence of an immoderation, the distinguishing feature of he who pays no heed to dangers or warnings and disobeys what has been decreed, the characteristic of he who does not conform to the established order. The advice is therefore particularly relevant in the mouth of the bound hero, for is not Prometheus the ultimate transgressor who has been punished for stealing the fire from the gods and who has threatened the divine order by handing it over to men?

History, literature and mythology are full of figures of rebels, dissenters and outcasts, whose presence persists in today's societies : « les mythologies, les religions, les tragédies regorgent de figures devenues les archétypes de l'infraction absolue, et leurs fantômes ne cessent de hanter les mémoires occidentales »¹. These

¹ HASTINGS Michel, NICOLAS Loïc et PASSARD Cédric, « L'épreuve de la transgression » dans HASTINGS Michel, NICOLAS Loïc et PASSARD Cédric (eds.) *Paradoxes de la transgression*, Paris, France, CNRS éd., 2012, p. 11.

figures are recognizable through their accomplishing an act, or adopting a behaviour which challenges the established order, whether divine, social or political. Prometheus, Tantalus, Niobe and Icarus are guilty of having transgressed a divine dictate; as for Antigone, she becomes a threat to the laws of her city by revealing how absurd they are; his interlocutors see in Socrates an *atopos* (odd) individual because of the deviation of his philosophy, whereas the Hellenistic philosophers, such as Diogenes the Cynic, go as far as to question the social norms ; the extraordinary political power of the *imperatores*, Pompey and then Caesar, is based on the questioning of the standards of the *mos maiorum* ; as for Seneca and Ovid, they commit politico-literary recklessness. Exile, death, or damnation are the frequent punishments of these transgressions, so the dangers mentioned by Prometheus are patently concrete. The sanction, however, is not sterility, for, in spite of the punishment, the questioning of an ancient order can sometimes lead to the foundation of a new one, then contributing to pushing the original limit back or redefining it.

The idea of transgression has been profoundly renewed by the pioneering Michel Foucault's works that have led to a reconsideration of the notion in its relation to norms or authority in general. It has become the staple of many contemporary reflections elaborated in several fields of the Social Sciences, being considered as part of the sociology of deviance. However, the notion remains little used in classical studies even though the abundance and multiplicity of emblematic figures mentioned above gives evidence of its importance in ancient societies. Thus, while investigations devoted to transgression or related notions (margin, limit, frontier, boundary, gap...) multiply, a typology of the ancient transgressive act is still to be produced.

After a first day devoted to the definition of the concept of transgression and the examination of how it can be applied to societies, cultures and literatures of Mediterranean Antiquity, the junior laboratory TAntALE organizes a second day gathering studies dedicated to some of these characters that embody the act of questioning an established order, as well as to the forms that the transgressive act assumes in situations of rebellion, protest, refusal, disobedience, revolt, or, in the specific cases when the transgression leads to the establishment of a renewed order, situations of innovation. Ranging from the figure of speech which deviates from the normative, ordinary use of language to provide it with a quality of expression, in relation with its context, to the great figures (great men), including the figurative representation (the image) whose status is being questioned, the polysemy of the word "figure" reflects the polyphony of the transgressive voices. This workshop therefore aims to study the ways in which these emblematic figures are elaborated in a given socio-political context, to define the transgressive act through the examination of the conditions of its realization, and to propose a typology based, for instance, on invoked motivations and purposes. Who transgresses? What, why and how one transgresses? What are the risks? The punishments? It is thus possible to question the relation between transgression and the common good, especially in connection with the notion of sacrifice, or, on the contrary, between transgression and self-interest, by examining whether the transgressive act is voluntary or not, conscious or not, assumed or not.

The papers are expected to propose a reflection on an emblematic figure of transgression, a type of ancient transgressive character, or a category of transgressive acts, and to expound its characteristics, in a synchronic or diachronic approach, as well as the links between these characters or acts and the society in which they emerge in the form of representations or historical facts. All types and meanings of transgression (social, political, philosophical, religious, literary, linguistic, etc.) can be addressed. The documentary sources of the analysis can be textual, epigraphic, iconographic or historical. The participants who have been accepted will present papers up to a maximum length of thirty minutes, followed by a discussion.

Proposals for a paper, including title, abstract of 300 words maximum (in French or English), as well as a presentation of the mobilized sources and a brief indicative bibliography, shall be sent to tantalens@gmail.com, before May 27, 2019. Notification of acceptance will be given on June 24, 2019.

ORGANIZERS:

Juliette GAILLEMAIN-MEEUS – TAntALE, ENS de Lyon, HiSoMA (UMR 5189)

Simon CAHANIER – TAntALE, Univ. Jean Moulin Lyon 3, HiSoMA (UMR 5189)

JUNIOR LABORATORY TANTALE:

BLOG : <https://tantale.hypotheses.org/>

FACEBOOK : <https://www.facebook.com/laboratoirejuniorTantale/>

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