

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE *PROMETHEUS VINCTUS*¹

I

When Io, transformed into a cow, comes to Prometheus who is chained, contrary to the common tradition, near the Ocean at the far north-west limits of the inhabited world, he explains to her in two successive monologues what route she must take to her eventual destination in the Egyptian Delta. First she should go east

1) The account of Greek geography given here is strongly influenced by J. O. Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography* (Cambridge 1948). Other important discussions are those of J. D. P. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (Oxford 1962) 46–70; M. Griffith (ed.), *Aeschylus. Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1983); M. L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart 1990) 304–309. Henceforth, these works will be cited by the author's name alone.

along the coast, passing by the inhospitable Scythes and Chalybes, until she reaches the river Hybristes (705–717); she must not cross the river until she arrives at its sources in the heights of “Caucasus,” “the highest of the mountains” (718–721). After crossing the ridge to the south, she will meet the Amazons who will show her the way to Lake Maeotis (721–731). She should then cross the straits dividing Europe from Asia, which from now on will be called the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus (732–735). On entering Asia, she will proceed to the east and cross a sea (791–792); on her way further east she will meet first the Phorcides and the Gorgons inhabiting the plain of Cisthene (792–801), and then the griffins and the one-eyed Arimaspians dwelling near the sources of the river Pluto “flowing with gold” (802–806). After this, she will arrive in a remote land “near the sources of the Sun,” which is inhabited by people of the black race, and where she will find the river Aethiops (807–809); following this river, she will come to the sources of the Nile in the Bybline mountains; from there on, she will go down the Nile until she reaches the Delta, her future home (810–815).

It is generally agreed that this geography does not make sense, and it is not hard to see why. The first and the main difficulty is the location of the Caucasus to the north of the Black Sea instead of in its proper place to the east of it. The river Hybristes is a mystery, and it is not entirely clear what is meant by the sea to the east of the Pontus (the Caspian?). The rest seems too fanciful to be taken seriously: the Phorcides, the Gorgons, the griffins, the one-eyed Arimaspians properly belong to the world of legend, and it is obvious that the passage from the “river Aethiops” of Asia to the Nile of Africa cannot correspond to any geographical reality whatsoever. It is not surprising, then, that both current accounts of ancient geography and commentaries on the P.V. usually treat the picture of Io’s journey through Europe, Asia and Africa as sheer poetic liberty on the part of a poet careless of geographical accuracy².

Is it however plausible that Aeschylus, or whoever was responsible for the *Prometheus Vincetus*, did not realize where the Caucasus really was? A general idea at least of the direction in which that range should be looked for must have been present in Greek popular knowledge from the remotest times, for the simple

2) Thomson 59–60, 82; E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography*, I (New York 21959) 149–51; Griffith 79–80, 213–14; West 305.

reason that this is exactly the area in which the main events of the Argonautic legend took place. Moreover, the Black Sea, including its eastern coasts, must have been familiar not only from legend: Greeks began to settle in the Pontus area from the eighth century B.C.³, and in the subsequent centuries the number of Greek colonies along the coasts of the Black Sea increased substantially⁴. All these made the Pontus region, with the Caucasus range to its east, one of the best known in the Greek world.

Consider also the following. The Caucasus is the place where Prometheus' punishment is usually located in Greek tradition. Yet, of all the treatments of the Prometheus legend, it is the one that is ostensibly ignorant of the real location of the Caucasus that transfers Prometheus' punishment to the far north-west end of Europe. Hence, not only the Caucasus but Prometheus himself are misplaced in this version. And this is not all: the Chalybes, traditionally represented as living south of the Black Sea, are now north of it (714–15), and the same is true of the Amazons, who are placed just below the "Caucasus," that is, again, north-west of the Black Sea, and not in their traditional habitat along its southern coast (724–26).

Note, however, that in his description of the Amazons the poet does not forget to mention that in the future they will move to Themiscyra by the river Thermodon, that is, to their traditional home:

... ἀστρογαίτονας δὲ χρὴ
 κορυφὰς ὑπερβαλοῦσαν ἐς μεσημβρινήν
 βῆναι κέλευθον, ἔνθ' Ἀμαζόνων στρατόν
 ἦξις στυγάνορ', αἱ Θεμίσκυράν ποτε
 κατοικιοῦσιν ἀμφὶ Θερμῶδονθ', ἵνα
 τραχεῖα πόντου Σαλμυδησία γνάθος
 ἐχθροῦξενος ναύτησι, μητροιὰ νεῶν.

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3) So according to the literary foundation dates of Sinope and Trapezus on the south coast. The earliest archaeological material discovered thus far is of the last third of the seventh century; for the discussion see A.J. Graham in CAH III 3 (21982) 123.

4) In the seventh century Ister and Olbia were founded on the estuaries of the Danube and the Bug, respectively; in the sixth Panticapeum and Theodosia in the Crimea, and Phasis and Dioscurias on the east coast, see Graham (n. 3 above) 160–62; N.G.L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.* (Oxford 31986) 114–116 and 657–58.

These lines leave no room for doubt that he who wrote them was fully aware of the fact that the region he assigned to the Amazons was not the conventional one. It is not out of the question, then, that this awareness also spread to other ostensible inaccuracies of the play's geography, including the site of the Caucasus.

It is worth remembering in this connection that, rather than being exclusively associated with the specific ridge situated between the Black Sea and the Caspian, "Caucasus" was also used by the Greeks as an inclusive term. Thus, when Alexander and his army met a great mountain range on their march east, they transferred to it the name "Caucasus", or "Indian Caucasus", together with Prometheus⁵. Note also that the fabulous Rhipaeian mountains were sometimes regarded as part of the same range as the traditional Caucasus⁶. In view of this, it is possible that our poet's referring to his Caucasus as "Caucasus proper" (αὐτὸν Καύκασσον, 719) indicates that he was well aware of the fact that the Caucasus he was speaking of was not the conventional one. With this in view, let us try to locate his Caucasus on the map.

Note that Prometheus' instructions to Io clearly imply that when she leaves the extreme north-west of Europe she should proceed in an easterly direction until she reaches the river Hybristes, and then follow the west bank of this river up to its sources in the "Caucasus:"

πρῶτον μὲν ἐνθένδ' ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολάς
στρέψασα σαυτὴν στεῖχ' ἀνηρότους γύας·
Σκύθας δ' ἀφίξιμι νομάδας, οἱ πλεκτὰς στέγας
πεδάροιοι ναίουσ' κτλ. 710

...
ἤξιεις δ' Ὑβριστὴν ποταμὸν οὐ ψευδώνυμον·
ὄν μὴ περάσις, οὐ γὰρ εὐβάτος περᾶν,
πρὶν ἂν πρὸς αὐτὸν Καύκασσον μόλις, ὄρων
ὑψιστον, ἔνθα ποταμὸς ἐκφυσαῖ μένος 720
κροτάφων ἀπ' αὐτῶν κτλ.

Since immediately after crossing the ridge Io is supposed to arrive at Lake Maeotis, it follows that the Hybristes is seen as flowing south to north, and the "Caucasus" and the sources of the river as

5) Erat. ap. Arr. Anab. 5.3.2, cf. 5.5.3; Strabo 11.5.5 pp.505–506C.; cf. 11.7.4 pp. 509–510C.

6) Dionys. Perieg. 663ff., Mela 1.109; Pliny, N.H. 5.98, 6.15, cf. Bolton 52–53 and n. 15.

located in the south of the European continent⁷. Let us suppose now that the picture of Europe given in the P.V. was set out as a real description of the continent's geography rather than as a wild fantasy. With this in view, let us try to answer the following question: what mountain range of great height lies in the south of Europe, and what river flowing into the northern ocean takes its origins in this range? One can hardly avoid the conclusion that the mountain range would be the Alps and the river the Rhine.

As far as I can see, this conclusion goes well with Bolton's identification of the "Caucasus" of the P.V. with the fabulous Rhipaeian mountains, the seat of the northern wind⁸. Note that the Rhipaeian mountains are the traditional location of the sources of the Ister⁹, and the sources of the Ister (the Danube) do in fact lie in the Alps. The blessed folk of the Hyperboreans to whom Apollo paid regular visits were usually represented as living nearby¹⁰. This seems to have been the reason why, as actual knowledge of Europe to the north of the Mediterranean increased, the Rhipaeian mountains together with the Hyperboreans dwelling in them began to move in a northerly direction, towards still unknown parts of the world, until eventually they were located near the north pole itself. However, the sources of the Ister could not be moved as easily as the Hyperboreans, and the traditional position of these sources in the Rhipaeian mountains is the best proof that the location of the range in the south of Europe is the original one. It is significant in this connection that not only are the Rhipaeian mountains sometimes explicitly identified with the Alps¹¹, but they can also be regarded as part of the same range as the traditional Caucasus (see n. 6 above).

As for the river Hybristes, its identification with the Rhine

7) And not in its extreme north as in Bolton's reconstruction, see Bolton 52–53. In general outline, my reconstruction of Io's European route agrees with that of Griffith, see his map in Griffith vi, and his criticism of Bolton *ibid.* 217–218 (ad 719–21). Cf. also Thomson 59–60: "The poet Aeschylus takes the wildest liberties with geography, even putting the Chalybes and the Caucasus vaguely north-west of the Kerch strait."

8) Bolton 52–53.

9) See Aesch. fr. 197 Radt ap. schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.284; Ap. Rhod. 4.282–87; cf. Pind. Ol. 3.13 ff., 8.46 ff. and Bolton 52–53.

10) See esp. Pind. Ol. 3.13 ff.: γλανκόχροα κόσμον ἐλαίας, τάν ποτε / Ἴστρου ἀπὸ σιαρῶν / παγῶν ἔνεικεν Ἀμφιτροωνιάδας, / μνάμα τῶν Οὐλύμπιαι κάλλιστον ἀέθλων, / δᾶμον Ὑπερβορέων πείσαις Ἀπόλλωνος θεράποντα λόγ-
ωι; cf. Aesch. fr. 197 Radt; Ap. Rhod. 4.282–87; schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.284.

11) Posidonius, FGrHist 87 F 103 (= schol. Ap. Rhod. 2.675); Steph. Byz. s.v. Ὑπερβόρειοι, see further Bolton 157 and n. 19.

can further be supported by the following description of Strabo: “As for the country that is on the Rhine, the first of all the peoples who live there are the Elvetii, in whose territory, on Mount Adula, are the sources of the river. Mount Adula is a part of the Alps . . . For not only is it [the Rhine] swift (ὄξυς), and on this account also hard to bridge (δυσγεφύρωτος), but after its descent from the mountains runs the rest of the way with even slope through the plains (διὰ πεδίων ὑπτιος φέρεται τὸ λοιπὸν καταβάς ἀπὸ τῶν ὄρων), . . . swift and violent (ὄξυν καὶ βίαιον).”¹² Although Strabo does not describe the Rhine in the Aeschylean terms “insolent” (ὑβριστήης) and “impossible to cross” (οὐ . . . εὐβατος περᾶν), his “swift” (ὄξυς), “violent” (βίαιος) and “hard to bridge” (δυσγεφύρωτος) amount to much the same.

As Bolton pointed out, “Aeschylus’ sketch of Io’s route is the earliest account of any length that we possess concerning the Greek geography of the northerly parts of the world.”¹³ We can see now that it is not out of the question that this sketch is also a correct one, at least in general outline. This is not to say, however, that the tragedy’s picture of Europe was necessarily based on first-hand knowledge of the continent’s geography. Note indeed that after crossing the “Caucasus” Io is supposed to find herself in close proximity to Lake Maeotis (the Sea of Azov): if the “Caucasus” is the Alps, this would suggest a very inaccurate idea indeed of the distance between the Adriatic and the Pontus¹⁴. What is important here is however not the geographical mistake as such but the fact that we can actually be sure that this mistake was not of our poet’s making. The view that the Adriatic forms an isthmus (συνισθμίζουσα) with the Pontus and that the two seas are in close proximity to each other was expressed by the fourth-century historian Theopompus, while in the pseudo-Aristotelian *On Marvellous Things Heard* we read about a mountain near the Adriatic from which one can discern the ships sailing into the Pontus¹⁵. This evidence not only shows that the proximity of the “Caucasus” to Lake Maeotis does not prevent it from being identified with the Alps, but also proves that at least in his description of the passage

12) Strabo 4.3.3 pp. 192–193C. (trans. H. L. Jones).

13) Bolton 46.

14) This conclusion is further corroborated by the fact that, as was argued in Bolton 50–52, the Amazons whom Io will meet upon crossing the ridge can be identified with the Maeotian Amazons described by Herodotus and Ephorus.

15) Theopompus ap. Ps.-Scymn. 371, 381 (= FGtHist 115 F 130); Ps.-Arist. Mir. 839a34ff.; cf. Mela 2.17. Cf. also Thomson 49, 88.

from the Alps to the Sea of Azov the poet of the P.V. was following some already established geographical conception. As it happens, the earliest source in which this conception is explicitly attested belongs to the fourth century B.C.

II

It seems to me that many problems in the geography of the P.V. can be solved if we abandon the presumption that the map of the world as found in Prometheus' instructions to Io reflects the geographical knowledge and theory of the fifth-century B.C. or even of a some earlier period¹⁶. Consider, for example, its idea of Scythia as spreading up to the far north-west of Europe (709ff.). This idea is in sharp contrast to the archaic and classical one as represented, for example, in Herodotus, who unambiguously defines Scythia as lying between the Don and the Danube, that is, to the north of Lake Maeotis. As for the regions to the north-west, both the early historians and the poetic tradition that preceded them seem to have been hardly aware of their existence¹⁷.

Let us consider now Diodorus' account of an unorthodox version of the Argonauts' journey back from the Pontus as given by Timaeus of Tauromenium (second half of the fourth – first half of the third century B.C.): "Not a few both of the ancient [historians] and of the later ones as well, one of whom is Timaeus, say that the Argonauts . . . sailed . . . up the Tanais river as far as its sources, and at a certain place they hauled the ship overland, and following in turn another river which flowed into the ocean they sailed down it to the sea; then they made their course from the north to the west, keeping the land on the left, and when they arrived near Gadeira they sailed into our sea."¹⁸ It can be seen

16) The latter view was advocated by Bolton 63–64, who sought to reduce the map of the world suggested by the P.V. to the Arimaspea of Aristeas of Proconnesus, that is, to the seventh century B.C.; this bias made him deny, contrary to historical evidence (cf. nn. 3–4 above), any Greek knowledge of the Pontus prior to Aristeas and even cast doubt on the traditional version of the Argonautic legend which, as pointed out above, presupposes such knowledge from the earliest times of Greek history.

17) See Hdt. 4.17–20; 47–58; 99–117; cf. Thomson 60–61. Note that the barbarian peoples that lived beyond the Scythians are described by Herodotus as spreading directly to their north and not to the north-west as in later sources.

18) Diod. Sic. 4.56.3 (= FGrHist 566 F 85); trans. by C.H. Oldfather. Cf. Scymnus ap. schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.282–91.

from this account that the route of the Argonauts as represented in this version is essentially that proposed to Io in the P.V. The only difference is that of direction: Io starts from the ocean at the extreme north-west of Europe, proceeds east along the coast until she reaches a great river, goes up this river southwards as far as its sources, and eventually arrives at Lake Maeotis, whereas the Argonauts start from Lake Maeotis, sail up the Tanais as far as its sources, pass overland to a river which flows into the ocean and eventually find themselves in the ocean at the extreme north-west of Europe¹⁹.

At the same time, it is actually out of the question that Timaeus' picture of West Europe can be an independent one, and not only because Diodorus explicitly remarks that Timaeus was not the first to introduce it. As is well known, this historian was notorious for not being in the habit of basing his geographical accounts on the firsthand knowledge of his own²⁰, and it goes without saying that his geography of Europe, not founded as it is on any established literary tradition, must have included a considerable element of firsthand knowledge of the continent. It is indeed reasonable to suppose that updating of the map of Europe went hand-in-hand with the expansion of practical knowledge of the continent's geography. Note that Timaeus introduced his version of the return of the Argonauts through Central and Northern Europe only to disqualify the alternative one, according to which they returned to the Mediterranean through an additional, non-existent, branch of the Ister, which was supposed to empty into the Adriatic. Diodorus comments on this view: "For time has refuted those who assumed that the Ister which empties by several mouths into the Pontus and the Ister which issues into the Adriatic flow from the same regions. As a matter of fact, when the Romans subdued the nations of the Istrians it was discovered that the latter river has its sources only forty stades from the sea."²¹ In view of this, it is reasonable to suggest that Timaeus' alternative solution to the problem of the Argonauts' return was also based on some new information deriving from firsthand knowledge of the geography

19) If we take into account the tradition placing the sources of the Tanais in the Rhipaean mountains (Mela 1.115; Pliny, N.H. 4.78; Lucan 3.272f.; Orosius 1.2.4; Dion. Periegetes 663ff.; cf. Bolton 52-53), it would be plausible to suggest that this was the place where the Argonauts were supposed to have hauled their ship overland.

20) See Polyb. Book 12 passim, esp. fr. 25e.7, 25h.1, 27.1-3, 28.6, 28a.7.

21) Diod. Sic. 4.56.8; cf. Strabo 1.3.15 p. 57C.

of Europe. Our next question, therefore, is as follows: who could ultimately have possessed this information?

The only ancient authority prior to Timaeus who may be credited with firsthand knowledge of the European continent north of the Mediterranean was the traveller and geographer Pytheas of Massalia who lived in the second half of the fourth century B.C. Although Pytheas was treated (unjustly, as it appears now) as a liar by many ancient Greek authorities, notably Polybius and Strabo, his work, titled *Περὶ Ὠκεανοῦ* according to some sources and *Περίοδος Γῆς* according to others, was respected and used by Timaeus and Eratosthenes²². Pytheas claimed to have gone into the outer ocean, visited Britain, and proceeded along the northern parts of the European continent, meeting on his way some previously unknown “Scythic” (presumably Germanic) tribes dwelling around the estuary of a great river (presumably the Rhine) – this is at least what seems to follow from Strabo’s words that Pytheas claimed to have reached τὰ πέραν τοῦ Ῥήνου τὰ μέγρι Σκυθῶν²³. According to Pytheas, his voyage took him as far as the Tanais.

Note now that Pytheas’ journey follows essentially the same pattern as the Argonauts’ return in Timaeus and, what is even more important, as Io’s European route in the P.V.: both Pytheas and Io started from the far north-west of the continent, passed through “Scythic” tribes (cf. l. 709: Σκύθας δ’ ἀφίξιμι νομάδας κτλ.) near the estuary of a great river flowing into the ocean, and eventually arrived at the boundary of Europe and Asia, for both the Tanais (the Don) and Lake Maeotis (the Sea of Azov) into which it falls were generally considered in antiquity as constituting this boundary²⁴. Another feature that Pytheas’ geography and that of the P.V. have in common is that, contrary to what one might expect, both are silent on the matter of the Ister which, after all, is the other great European river having its sources in the Alps. This can be explained by the influence of an alternative theory as to the origins of the Ister, attested in Herodotus, Ephorus and Aristotle, according to which this river rises in the Pyrenees and runs across

22) On Pytheas see H. J. Mette, *Pytheas von Massalia* (Berlin 1952); Thomson 143–51.

23) Strabo 1.4.3 p. 63C. = F 6a Mette. It is thus possible that Pytheas was among the first to extend the name of “Scythia” to cover large parts of north-west Europe, the reason being, as Thomson 146, put it, that “the name Germans had not yet been heard.”

24) This does not mean that Pytheas actually reached the Tanais: he could have borrowed this part of his geography from some already existing source, for example, from Herodotus.

the European continent from west to east²⁵. At the same time, it is quite certain that the tragedy's picture of Europe cannot be traced further back than Pytheas. Indeed, what is known to us of the *Εὐρώπη* of Ephorus (first half of the fourth century B.C.) allows us to infer that he followed Herodotus in the idea of Scythia as lying strictly to the north of Lake Maeotis (cf. n. 17 above) which, as we saw, is in sharp contrast to the geography of the P.V.²⁶. With this in view, let us turn to Io's journey to the east.

The main difficulty of the tragedy's eastern geography seems to be Io's passage by land from the remotest parts of Asia to the sources of the Nile:

τήλουρον δὲ γῆν
ἤξειεις, κελαινὸν φύλον, οἱ πρὸς ἡλίου
ναίουσι πηγαῖς, ἔνθα ποταμὸς Αἰθίοψ·
τούτου παρ' ὄχθας ἔρφ', ἕως ἂν ἐξίκημι
καταβασμόν, ἔνθα Βυβλίνων ὀρῶν ἄπο
ἦσι σεπτὸν Νεῖλος εὐποτον ῥέος.

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“It is almost incredible,” Thomson writes, “but seriously attested, that Alexander, before going down the Indus, could still imagine that it might flow through vast deserts to Ethiopia, and the same theory of a land-bridge is ascribed to a Persian king Ochus a little before;” Thomson also recognizes that this is the same view that “underlies the delirious poetic geography of Aeschylus.”²⁷ Delirious or not, this part of the geography of the P.V. proves, again, to be based on a well-established theory, the one that served Alexander and his army as a working hypothesis on their march down the Indus. Two mutually connected notions can be discerned within this theory: that there was a land-bridge between India and Africa and that the Indus was identical with the upper Nile. Since the latter coincides with what the tragedy says of the river Aethiops, it is reasonable to suppose that what is meant here by this river is none other than the Indus. In that case, the people of the black race

25) See Hdt. 2.33; 4.49; Ephorus ap. Ps.-Scym. 188–95; Arist. Meteor. 1.13. 350b1–3.

26) Ephorus ap. Ps.-Scymn. 835–85 (= FGrHist 70 F 158–160) almost literally follows Hdt. 4.17–18, the only difference being that Ephorus counts as Scythian some barbarian peoples which were not identified with the Scythians by Herodotus.

27) Thomson 82. See Ps.-Arist. Inundatio Nili (fr. 695. 749a23 ff. Gigon); Arr. Anab. 6.1,2; cf. Ind. 6.8, 20.2; Strabo 15.1.25 p. 696C.

dwelling by that river must be the so-called “Aethiopians of Asia,” or “the eastern Aethiopians,” described by Herodotus; these names were most probably cast to designate the native population of India²⁸.

At the end of the sixth century, Hecataeus made the Argonauts sail through the river Phasis, which he believed to be connected with the eastern ocean, to the south of Libya and thus enter the Nile (see n. 31 below). The view of the Nile as flowing from the ocean was rejected by Herodotus as “unscientific” and “marvellous;” yet, as follows from his description of Scylax’ journey (about 515 B.C.) down the Indus into the sea and from there to Libya, he envisaged no land-bridge between India and Africa and did not think that the Indus could be the upper Nile²⁹. Who, then, might have been the source of the tragedy’s eastern geography? Certainly not the Persian king Artaxerxes Ochus (first half of the fourth century B.C.) who, according to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Inundatio Nili* (see n. 27), preceded Alexander in his attempt to reach the Nile through the Indus and is thus the first who can be credited with knowledge of the land-bridge theory. It seems to me that another part of the eastern geography of the P.V., that describing Io’s passage from the Cimmerian Bosphorus into the depths of Asia, can throw some light on the problem:

ὅταν περάσῃς ῥεῖθρον ἠπειρῶν ὄρον, 790
 πρὸς ἀντολὰς φλογῶπας ἡλίου στίβει,
 πόντον παρὰ ζάφλοισβον³⁰, ἔστ’ ἂν ἐξίκηι
 πρὸς Γοργόνεια πεδία Κισθίηνης κτλ.

If the geography of the P.V. is a real one, the sea to the east of the Pontus can only be the Caspian. Now, the very definition of it as a “sea” which can be “crossed” contains an important geographical statement, for the simple reason that there existed a persistent theory that the Caspian is in fact a gulf of the ocean. This theory is peculiar in that we can define the chronological limits of its influence with absolute precision. While it was most probably supported by Hecataeus³¹, Herodotus in the fifth century gives a

28) See Hdt. 3.94 Αἰθίοπες οἱ ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας; 7.70 οἱ ἀπὸ ἡλίου Αἰθίοπες; cf. Strabo 15.1.13 p. 690C.

29) Hdt. 2.21; 4.44.

30) πόντον παρὰ ζάφλοισβον West; πόντον περῶσ’ ἄφλοισβον Girard, Griffith. On the discussion see Griffith 228–29; West 308.

31) Cf. Thomson 64. According to schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.269 (= FGGrHist 1

correct description of the Caspian as an inland sea, and the same holds good for Ctesias at the beginning and Aristotle in the middle of the fourth century B.C. Yet, toward the end of this century Alexander's companions already preferred the notion of the Caspian as a gulf of the ocean. Eventually this theory prevailed, and it can be found in later geographers, including Eratosthenes, until Ptolemy finally restored the Caspian to its true position of an inland sea³². Since Herodotus, Ctesias and Aristotle are the only ancient authorities before Ptolemy who can be credited with the idea of the Caspian as an inland sea, anyone of them could have been ultimately responsible for this part of the geography of the P.V. Yet, Herodotus' conception of the boundaries of Scythia, his scepticism concerning the existence of the northern ocean, and, above all, his apparent ignorance of the land-bridge theory³³ preclude us from seeing in him the source of the geography of the P.V. As for Aristotle, it is well known that his treatment of Asia substantially depended on Ctesias' work. Accordingly, this leaves us with Ctesias as the most likely source of the play's eastern geography.

Ctesias of Cnidus spent years at the Persian court as the physician of the king Artaxerxes Mnemon, and is known to have treated the king's wound at the battle of Cunaxa (401 B.C.)³⁴. After returning home he devoted himself to the task of giving his own version of the history and geography of the east; his writings, which made a deep impression on his contemporaries, included *Περσικά* in twenty-three books, *Ἰνδικά*, and *Περίοδος*, which dealt not only with Asia but also with Egypt³⁵. Ctesias professed to have studied Persian history "from royal parchments" (*ἐκ τῶν*

F 18a.1–8), Hecataeus made the Argonauts leave Colchis through the river Phasis which, however, led them not to the Pontus into which it actually falls, but to the eastern ocean; as was pointed out by Artemidorus, Hecataeus did not realize that the Phasis was not connected with the ocean. Since Hecataeus' *Periegesis* clearly shows that he was well aware of the existence of the Asian continent to the east of the Caspian (fr. 289–299), he could not possibly entertain the idea that the ocean began directly after Colchis. Hence, the only way to make sense of his statement that the Argonauts "went through the Phasis to the Ocean" is to assume that he made them sail through the Phasis to the Caspian and from there to the ocean.

32) Hdt. 1.203; Ctesias ap. Arist. Meteor. 1.13. 351a9–12; 2.1. 354a1–6; Arr. Anab. 5.26; cf. Thomson 127–29, 163.

33) On Scythia see n. 17, on the northern ocean Hdt. 3.115; 4.45, on the land-bridge theory n. 29.

34) Xen. Anab. 1.8.26.

35) See FGrHist 688.

βασιλικῶν διφθερῶν)³⁶; it can thus be conjectured that his information on the east to a considerable degree derived from Persian sources. The fact that the land-bridge theory was known, as we saw, to the Persian king Artaxerxes Ochus at the same period, although not sufficient in itself for crediting Ctesias with the knowledge of this theory, is worth mentioning in this connection. However this may be, an additional feature of the play's geography makes its connection with Ctesias virtually certain. On her journey through the east Io is supposed to pass by griffins and one-eyed Arimaspians:

ὄξυστόμους γὰρ Ζηνὸς ἀκραγεῖς κύνας
 γρῦπας φύλαξι, τὸν τε μουνῶπα στρατόν
 Ἄριμασπὸν ἵπποβάμον', οἱ χρυσόρρυτον
 οἰκοῦσιν ἀμφὶ νᾶμα Πλούτωνος πόρου. 805

It is generally agreed that all the stories about the griffins and the Arimaspians eventually stem from the *Arimaspea* by Aristaeus of Proconnesus³⁷. Yet, as M. Griffith pointed out, the version found in the P.V. differs from other presentations of this theme, including that of Herodotus. While all other versions placed griffins the guardians of gold in the far north, in the P.V. they are described as dwelling in the far east; as far as our evidence goes, the only other source in which this version occurs is Ctesias³⁸.

Thus, while the European geography of the tragedy points to Pytheas of Massalia, its geography of Asia seems to be mainly derived from another fourth-century authority, Ctesias of Cnidus. The common denominator among the two is that both made available new sources of information, and thus considerably enlarged the geographical horizons of the Greek world. In this respect, Io's journey presents a summary of the new geographical knowledge concerning the west and the east, a sort of a new *περίοδος*, which came to supersede the older ones. Considering that the usual direction of a Greek *περίοδος* is west to

36) Diod. Sic. 2.32.

37) See Hdt. 3.116; 4.13; Pliny, NH 7.1.10, and Bolton 62–67.

38) Ctesias FGrHist 688 F 45 h τὸν γρῦπα τὸ ζῶιον τὸ Ἰνδικόν (= Aelian, NA 4.27), see Griffith 230–231. It is also possible that the tragedy's reference to the “sources of Sun” where the river Aethiops flows relates to Ctesias' report that the sun in India seemed ten times larger than in other lands, see Ctesias FGrHist 688 F 45,12 and Thomson 102 and n. 2.

east, we can suggest this as the reason why Prometheus was transferred from his usual location in the east to the far north-west of the world³⁹.

At the same time, these horizons were short-lived. The picture of the world as found in the P.V. was soon superseded by a new bulk of geographical information which began to be accumulated from the end of the fourth century. In the east, Alexander's expeditions proved some of the earlier suppositions unwarranted, notably that of a land-bridge between India and Libya; in the west, increasing contacts with Rome led to a much more accurate knowledge of the European continent to the north of the Mediterranean⁴⁰. This is why both Ctesias and especially Pytheas ceased to be regarded as serious geographers in later generations. It should not be forgotten, however, that Pytheas' was the geography with which Timaeus worked, and that Aristotle leaned heavily on the information found in Ctesias. We can see now that the same can be said of the author of the geographical sketch of the P.V.

III

As far as I can see, it is unlikely that the above arguments in favour of a fourth-century date for Prometheus' instructions to Io have any bearing on the much-vexed question of the authenticity of the P.V. Even when the *Prometheus Vincitus* is not recognized as belonging to Aeschylus, scholars unequivocally place it in the fifth

39) It seems that Prometheus' position was generally regarded as symbolic of the end of the earth, cf. his removal to the Indian Caucasus after the latter had become known to the Greeks (see n. 5 above). As far as the Prometheus of the P.V. is concerned, it is possible that the steep rock above the northern ocean to which he is chained can be traced to "some northern column at the end of the world" (τις ἐσχάτη στήλη βόρειος) described in Ps.-Scymn. 188–95; cf. its further description at ll. 189–90: ἔστι δ' ὑψηλὴ πᾶντι εἰς κυματῶδες πέλαγος ἀνατείνουσ' ἄκραν. (According to Thomson 89, this is a borrowing from the account of Europe given by the fourth-century historian Ephorus.) This column seems to have marked the northern boundary of the earth, see further C. Müller's commentary ad locum in *Geographi Graeci minores* i 211–212. It is not out of the question that *Herculis columnae* whose existence at approximately the same place is reported by Tacitus in *Germany* 34 may also be relevant in this connection.

40) Cf. Strabo 1.2.1 p. 14C.: "For Alexander opened up for us geographers a great part of Asia and all the northern part of Europe as far as the Ister River; the Romans have made known all the western part of Europe as far as the river Albis [Elbe] (which divides Germany into two parts), and the regions beyond the Ister as far as the Tyras [Dniester] River . . ." Cf. also Polyb. 3.59.

century B.C.⁴¹. As the geographical sketch of the P.V. evidently proceeds from much wider geographical horizons than those known to fifth-century Athenians, casting doubt on its fifth-century authorship can neither prove nor disprove the authenticity of the tragedy as a whole, especially because it can be shown that in many respects this sketch stands apart in Aeschylus' work in general, in the Prometheus trilogy, and in the P.V. itself.

To begin with, Io's Asian route is sharply at variance with the traditional version of her journey as outlined in Aeschylus' *Supplices*, one that took her to the Delta through the Thracian Bosphorus, Asia Minor and Syria:

ἰάπτει δ' Ἀσίδος δι' αἶας
 μηλοβότου Φρυγίας διαμπάξ·
 περᾶι δὲ Τεύθραντος ἄστῃ Μυσῶν
 Λύδια τε γύαλα, 550
 καὶ δι' ὄρων Κιλικῶν
 Παμφύλων τε {γένη} διοργανυμένα κτλ.

It is of course possible that, as Griffith put it, "in *Prom.*, we have perhaps a deliberate revision of this account for exotic effect, with the rival (Cimmerian) Bosphorus employed in the *aition*."⁴² This, however, would not solve the problems arising from comparison of the geographical sketch of the P.V. with the geography of the *Prometheus Lyomenos*, another play of the Prometheus trilogy.

As follows from Cicero and Strabo, who quote large excerpts from this lost tragedy, (a) Prometheus was represented there as chained to the Caucasus and not, as in the P.V., to a precipitous rock overhanging the northern ocean, and (b) this Caucasus was indisputably the conventional one⁴³. Thus, on the face of it, we have an extremely odd trilogy, which begins with its principal hero being chained at one place, and ends (or continues) with the same hero being released at another. And this is not all. The P.V. unambiguously gives the Cimmerian Bosphorus as the boundary between

41) Griffith 31–35; for a fuller account see M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of "Prometheus Bound"* (Cambridge 1977) 225–54; West 51–72.

42) Griffith 214.

43) Cicero gives a direct (translated) quotation (the name "Caucasus" emerges at l. 28), whereas Strabo introduces his quotation with the following words: φησὶ γοῦν Π. παρ' αὐτῷ (sc. Αἰσχύλῳ), κατηγούμενος Ἡρακλεῖ τῶν ὁδῶν τῶν ἀπὸ Κανκάσου πρὸς τὰς Ἑσπερίδας, see Cic. Tusc. Disp. 2.23–25 (fr. 193 Radt); Strabo 4.1.7 p. 183C. (fr. 199 Radt) = Griffith, fr. viii, xiv, a, with commentary.

Europe and Asia: λιποῦσα δ' Εὐρώπης πέδον / ἠπειρον ἤξεις Ἀσιάδ' (734–35); ὅταν περάσῃς ῥεῖθρον ἠπείρων ὄρον (790). In the *Lyomenos*, however, the river Phasis is explicitly taken as constituting Εὐρώπης . . . ἠδ' Ἀσίας τέμονα (fr. 191 Radt). As Griffith put it, “either the two passages contradict each other, or the two rivers [sc. the Phasis and the Tanais] have been combined or confused.”⁴⁴

In the *Lyomenos*, Prometheus was represented as instructing Heracles how to reach Geryon and the Hesperides, that is, the traditional far west of the world. Since it is clear from the extant fragments that on his way to what would become after this journey “the Pillars of Heracles” the hero was supposed to meet the Hyperboreans and the inhabitants of Liguria, there is reason to infer that his journey was envisaged as confined to the western parts of the world⁴⁵. In view of the obvious parallelism between the Prometheus-Heracles scene and the Prometheus-Io scene of the P.V., there can be little room for doubt that the geographies of the two tragedies were designed to be mutually complementary. In view of this, it would be reasonable to expect that, just as Prometheus’ instructions to Heracles deal with the western parts of the world, so his instructions to Io should be confined to its eastern parts, the more so as this would only have been in conformity with her traditional route. This is not, however, what happens in reality: the geographical sketch of the P.V. comprises both the east and the west, thus unbalancing the symmetry between the two plays and making the parallel sketch of the *Lyomenos* artistically redundant.

Let us turn now to the P.V. itself. In fact, Prometheus’ instructions to Io is not the only piece of geographical information in this tragedy. In the first stasimon, the chorus of the daughters of Ocean describe how the inhabitants of Asia react to Prometheus’ punishment. It contains, inter alia, the following stanzas:

Κολχίδος τε γὰς ἔνοικοι
παρθένοι μάχας ἄτρεστοι
καὶ Σκύθης ὄμιλος, οἳ γὰς
ἔσχατον τόπον ἀμφὶ Μαι-
ῶτιν ἔχουσι λίμαν.

416

44) Griffith 219 (on 734–35).

45) Griffith fr. ix–xiv (pp. 295–300). On Heracles among the Hyperboreans see e.g. Pind. Ol. 3.13–18; Liguria already in Hecataeus, see FGrHist 1 F 53–58.

Ἄραβίαις τ' ἄρειον ἄνθος
 ὑψίκοιμητον οἱ πόλισμα 421
 Καυκάσου πέλας νέμουσιν,
 δάιος στρατὸς, δῆξυρῶν-
 ροιοι βρέμων ἐν αἰχμαῖς.

It can be seen that there are some significant discrepancies between this picture of the world and that in Prometheus' instructions to Io. First, the Amazons, here placed in Colchis, are much closer to their traditional location along the southern shores of the Pontus; second, the Scythians remain in their traditional location to the north of Lake Maeotis; third, whether or not it is the conventional Caucasus that is meant here⁴⁶, it is certainly not the same as the Caucasus of Prometheus' speech.

The mistake of the hypothesis, setting the action of the play "in Scythia by the Caucasus mountain," that is, in the traditional site of Prometheus' punishment, may also be of some significance here. This mistake is corrected in a marginal note, which reminds the reader that the tragedy's actual setting is πρὸς τοῖς Εὐρωπαϊοῖς τέμασιν τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ. Characteristically, the author of this note bases his correction on the evidence of the Prometheus-Io scene alone: ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν πρὸς τὴν Ἰὼ λεγομένων ἐστὶν συμβαλεῖν. Examination of the rest of the tragedy from this particular point of view produces rather remarkable results: nowhere else in the play is there a clear indication that its action is envisaged as taking place at the far north-west of the inhabited world⁴⁷! It is true of course that at the very beginning of the tragedy Cratos declares that Prometheus and his executioners have just arrived Σκύθην ἐξ οἴμον, ἄβροτον εἰς ἐρημίαν (2), but there is nothing in this that could prevent the Scythia meant here from being construed, as in ll. 417–419, as the conventional one.

Moreover, it can be said with a considerable degree of certainty that in so far as there are geographical indications in the rest of the tragedy they rather point in the direction of the traditional location of Prometheus' punishment. Thus, at ll. 301–302 Prometheus, instead of specifying the name of the land in which he is chained, simply defines it as "the mother of iron" (τὴν σιδηρομήτορα . . . αἴαν). It goes without saying that the region evoked by such

46) For the discussion see Bolton 53–54; Griffith 160–61.

47) This is probably why the location of Prometheus' punishment in the north-west has been rejected by some commentators, notably by West 304.

an unspecified definition would almost certainly be the land of the Chalybes, the proverbial workers of steel, and the Chalybes are usually located in the south-east corner of the Black Sea, that is, in close proximity to the traditional place of Prometheus' punishment. If the poet meant otherwise, he would have had to make an additional effort to show his audience what he was about. Likewise, in the choral ode quoted above, the entire population of Asia is described as participating in Prometheus' sufferings:

ὅποσοι τ' ἔποικον ἄγνᾶς
Ἰασίας ἔδος νέμονται
μεγαλοστόνοισι σοῖς πῆ-
μασι συγκάμνουσι θνατοί. 411

Further on, the Chorus specify the inhabitants of Colchis, of Scythia, of Arabia, and of the Caucasus. Why, if Prometheus is supposed to be chained in Europe, is it the inhabitants of the Asian rather than of the European continent who are described as sympathizing with him?

As was pointed out by Griffith, "the narrative passages 707–35, 790–869, contain a higher rate of resolution than the rest of the play."⁴⁸ Actually, three passages can be isolated on this basis: (a) Prometheus' account of Io's wanderings in Europe (707–735); (b) his account of Io's wanderings in Asia (788–815); and (c) his description of her arrival in Egypt (845–69), whereas his account of Io's past wanderings (824–841) is actually free of resolution⁴⁹. Of the three passages in question (a) contains seven resolutions in 28 trimeters (709 νομάδας, 715 Χάλυβες, 717 ποταμόν, 720 ποταμός, 729 στενοπόροις, 730 Κιμμερικόν, 735 Ἰασιάδ'); (b) contains three resolutions in 27 trimeters (788 πολύδονον, 793 πεδία, 809 ποταμός); and (c) contains three resolutions in 22 trimeters (847 στόματι, 851 Ἑπαφον, 869 βασιλικόν) – a surprisingly high figure for a tragedy whose rate of resolved trimeters is 4.8%, the more so as only a few of the occurrences in question are proper names. However, this goes well with the fact that six of the thirteen first-foot anapaests in the P.V.⁵⁰ are concentrated in the passages in question: (a) contains two (721 κροτάφων, 722 κορυφάς); (b) contains three (796 μονόδοντες, 805 Ἀρμασπόν, 811 καταβασι-

48) Griffith 217. Cf. also Griffith 26 n. 77.

49) With the exception of 840 Ἰόνιος.

50) M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982) 82; cf. Griffith 25–26.

μόν); and (c) contains one first-foot anapaest (849 ἐπαφῶν), only one of all these cases being a proper name. In addition, these are the very passages that include such metrical anomalies as the highly irregular prosody (short before initial ῶ) in χορίμπουσα ῥαχίαισιν (713), resolution of the second long in Χάλυβες (715), which is unique in the P.V., and resolution in the first metron after long anceps (— ∪ ∪ —) in Κιμμερικόν (730), which is also not found again in the play⁵¹. Finally, the use of the perfect participle ἐκτημέναι (795) instead of the normal Attic and Aeschylean form κεκτημένα also seems to be relevant in this connection⁵².

The third episodion, to which the Prometheus-Io encounter belongs, is not only the longest in the tragedy but also the least consistent. Indeed, as against 203 verses of the first episodion (of which the Oceanus-Prometheus encounter covers only 112), and 94 of the second, the third episodion contains 325 verses, and it changes course from Io's account of her past troubles, to Prometheus' account of her future wanderings, itself divided into two parts by Io-Prometheus stichomythia, and then goes on to Prometheus' account of Io's past wanderings and the future events up to the birth of Heracles. It is a little wonder, then, that "the loss of coherence and unity" has been put forward by Griffith as a characteristic feature of this episodion⁵³.

Significantly, the only thing Io asks Prometheus to tell her upon her arrival is her final destination: καὶ πρὸς γε τούτοις τέρμα τῆς ἐμῆς πλάνης / δεῖξον, τίς ἔσται τῆι ταλαιπώρῳ χρόνος (622–23). Prometheus' answer is postponed because of the Chorus' wish to learn of Io's past troubles and her ensuing account of these (631–86). When Io's account is over, Prometheus returns to her original request: σύ τ', Ἰνάχειον σπέρμα, τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους / θυμῶι βάλ', ὡς ἂν τέρματ' ἐκμάθῃς ὁδοῦ (705–706). Instead, however, he gives her a detailed account of her future wanderings in Europe (706–36), which can hardly be regarded as responding to Io's request or carrying out his own promise. Only when this account is over and after an additional stichomythia (743–81) does Prometheus embark on the story of Io's wanderings in Asia (790–815), which ends with the description of her arrival in the Egyptian Delta, her final destination.

On the face of it, the motivation of Prometheus' account of

51) Griffith 216 (on 712–713), 217 (on 714–15) and 219 (on 729–30).

52) Griffith 229 (on 795).

53) Griffith 188.

Asia is given at the end of the stichomythia which precedes it (743–81). Here, Prometheus poses an alternative to Io: he will either tell her of the rest of her wanderings or reveal the identity of his future deliverer (780–81), and he agrees to tell of both only because of the Chorus' request: καὶ τῆιδε μὲν γέγωνε τὴν λοιπὴν πλάνην, / ἔμοι δὲ τὸν λύσοντα (784–85). Accordingly, his account of Io's wanderings in Asia bringing her finally to Egypt ostensibly functions as fulfilment of the first part of the request, and this is how it is accepted by the Chorus (819–822). Yet Prometheus' concluding speech, which is supposed to reveal the name of his deliverer, begins with his description of Io's past wanderings (824–843), proposed as proof of the reliability of his other stories. Only after finishing this does he approach his real subject – the identity of his deliverer. The words introducing this last account are significant: τὰ λοιπὰ δ' ὑμῖν τῆιδέ τ' ἐξ κοινὸν φράσω, "I shall tell the rest for both you and her together" (844). And indeed, what follows (845–873) answers both Io's request and that of the Chorus: Prometheus begins with Io's arrival in Egypt and her giving birth to Epaphus, and ends by following the line of her descendants up to Heracles, his future deliverer.

Obviously, the second account of Egypt, leading directly to the prophecy about Io's descendants, is much more appropriate from the inner standpoint of the tragedy and thus makes the first one, included in Prometheus' description of Io's Asian route and containing only a vague allusion to her progeny⁵⁴, functionally redundant. Above all, however, in that they clearly indicate that the forthcoming account is supposed to answer both Io's request and that of the Chorus, the words introducing Prometheus' last speech show that his account of Io's wanderings in Asia was not originally designed to constitute part of this context. As we saw, the same is also true of Prometheus' account of Io's wanderings in Europe, introduced immediately after his promise to reveal to Io her final destination.

Accordingly, the following sequence seems likely. Upon her reaching the place of Prometheus' punishment and after her lyric monody (561–608), in the stichomythia which follows Io asks Prometheus to reveal her final destination (609–630). In the narrative manner characteristic of this tragedy, Prometheus' answer is

54) See ll. 813–815: οὗτός (sc. Νεῖλος ῥέος) σ' ὀδώσει τὴν τρίγωνον εἰς χθόνα / Νειλῶτιν, οὗ δὴ τὴν μακρὰν ἀποικίαν, / Ἰοῖ, πέπρωται σοὶ τε καὶ τέκνοις κτίσαι.

delayed by Io's reminiscence of her past history up to her leaving Argos, and by a brief lyric song expressing the Chorus' sympathy with Io's sufferings (631–695). When this digression is over, Prometheus sets out to deliver the story of the end of Io's troubles as requested (696–706); in order to prove the reliability of his account, he begins with the description of Io's past wanderings from the moment she left Argos (the point at which her narrative stopped) and up to her arrival beside the Ionic Sea (824–843). The stichomythia that follows (743–787) skillfully blends Io's fate with that of Prometheus: Prometheus will be delivered from his sufferings by one of Io's descendants. In conclusion, in an account which not only answers both Io's request and that of the Chorus but is also important in the general perspective of the Prometheus trilogy (844–876), Prometheus tells about Io's future arrival in Egypt, about her giving birth to Epaphus, and about Epaphus' descendants up to Heracles, his future deliverer.

Prometheus' accounts of Io's future wanderings in Europe (707–741) and Asia (788–818) drop out of this sequence. We saw indeed that the first of them is inappropriate in that it is introduced after Prometheus' promise to tell Io about the end of her journey, and the second in that it is redundant as regards Prometheus' concluding narrative of Io's future in Egypt. It seems to be more than a mere coincidence that these are precisely the passages conspicuous by the high rate of resolution and first-foot anapaests and by such metrical and other anomalies as I enumerated above. As distinct from this, the two accounts of Io's past, by Io herself (640–686) and by Prometheus (824–843), are free from resolution and the other metrical peculiarities characterizing Prometheus' descriptions of Europe and Asia (with the sole exception of resolution occurring in a geographical name at l. 840, see n. 49). The same, however, cannot be said of Prometheus' second account of Egypt, which ends with his revealing the identity of his deliverer (844–74): although it seems to be firmly rooted within the original sequence of the Prometheus-Io scene as suggested above, this passage contains the same rate of resolution as Prometheus' description of Asia in ll. 788–818 (see above).

Note now that there are passages in Prometheus' instructions to Io which can be interpreted to the effect that their author worked with an earlier and a more traditional version of the story. It is likely indeed that the Chalybes, the Amazons, Themiscyra and the Thermodon, whose proper place is to the south of the Black Sea, were more or less mechanically transferred from this earlier ver-

sion into the present one. The misplacing of Salmydessus at ll. 725–27 seems to be especially symptomatic. Indeed, the poet's mentioning of this town, located in Europe not far from the Thracian Bosphorus, as being in the same area as Themiscyra strongly suggests that the original version of the P.V. took Io to the Caucasus through the Thracian Bosphorus and the southern shore of the Black Sea. Furthermore, whether it was the Thracian or the Cimmerian Bosphorus that Io was supposed to cross in the original version (Apollodorus 2.1.3 makes her cross both), in so far as Prometheus was represented as chained to the conventional Caucasus she should have been able to do this only before and not after her meeting with him. In other words, it is likely that Io's crossing of the Bosphorus was evoked in Prometheus' account of her past wanderings, maybe the very one that is found in P.V. 829–41. There, Prometheus' enumeration of the earlier stages of Io's journey ends with the aition for the Ionian Sea. It is not out of the question, then, that it was continued by Io's crossing of the Bosphorus and yet another aition. In that case, Prometheus' prophecies about Io's future should have concerned mainly her traditional route from Colchis to Egypt and the destiny of her descendants; in view of the aforesaid, it can be suggested that it was supplanted by 844–74 in order to bring it into correspondence with the tragedy's new concept of Io's Asian route.

To sum up, the disagreement between *Prometheus Vincitus* and *Prometheus Lyomenos* as to the place of Prometheus' punishment, the tragedy's two alternative geographies, its failure to make the unconventional place of Prometheus' punishment an organic part of the play, and the lack of unity by which its third epeisodion is characterized seem to be the main reasons which make it difficult, if not impossible, to draw a coherent picture of the tragedy and of the Prometheus trilogy in general. In the last analysis, all the difficulties in question reside in that part of the tragedy that deals with Prometheus' instructions to Io: if we remove these instructions, there would be no discrepancy between the two Prometheus plays, no difficulties in the tragedy's first stasimon, no mistake in the hypothesis, no "loss of coherence and unity" in the Io scene. This seems to justify the conclusion that the geographical sketch of the P.V. is a late interpolation purporting to bring the original geography of the tragedy up to date.

We saw that the geographical sketch of the P.V. is peculiarly consistent both where it does make sense (first of all, in the geography of Europe) and where it does not (in the geography of Asia).

In order to place it in time, we have to construe a period in which the mythological geography of western Europe began to be supplanted by the real one, whereas the geography of Asia still remained fabulous. It seems that the span of time in which the journey of Pytheas had already become a matter of common knowledge while the campaigns of Alexander had not, was exactly such a period. Since the theory of a land-bridge and the view of the Caspian as an inland sea became obsolete by the beginning of the third century, and since Pytheas' account of West Europe is tentatively situated around 320 B.C.⁵⁵, we can assume the end of the fourth century B.C. as a likely date of the geographical sketch of the P.V.⁵⁶.

Tel-Aviv

Margalit Finkelberg

55) See Thomson 127–29 (the Caspian), 82 (the land-bridge), 143 (Pytheas). On Pytheas' date see also F. Lasserre, *Pytheas* (4), *KlPauly IV* (1972) 1272–1274.

56) On a similar case of geographical interpolation in Euripides see A. Dihle, *Der Prolog der "Bacchen" und die antike Überlieferungsphase des Euripides-Textes* (Heidelberg 1981).