RECONSTRUCTING A FRAGMENTARY TRAGEDY 2: SOPHOCLES' *TEREUS*

David Fitzpatrick

I was pleased to accept the editor's invitation to contribute to this forum on reconstructing fragmentary ancient Greek tragedies. She wanted readers to be able to compare reconstructions of fragmentary tragedies that had rather different target audiences and readers. She also wanted readers to have an insight into the working methods involved in two potentially different approaches, that of the theatre practitioner and the academic, to fragmentary tragedies. David Stuttard discussed how he created a complete play for performance. I will review my contribution to a publication containing a selection of fragmentary Sophoclean tragedies (*Sophocles: Selected Fragmentary Plays*) which appeared in the Aris and Phillips Classical Texts series.[1]

THE CONTEXT OF RECONSTRUCTION

The aim of the series is to accommodate students at school and university, and their teachers, who read the authors either in the original Greek or Latin or in translation, or in a mixture of the two. Each volume comprises the following: an introductory essay, which sets the text in its literary and historical context; the Greek or Latin text with a selective apparatus; a facing translation; and a commentary based on the translation. The selection of fragmentary tragedies reflected this basic format, though there were six individual chapters in the volume with an overall introduction. I contributed *Tereus*.[2] Furthermore, the volume on fragmentary plays of Sophocles followed the format of the two volumes of Euripidean fragmentary tragedies in the same series.[3]

My 'Tereus' had a lengthy gestation period: ten years from initial contact to its appearance the volume. However, I was not concentrating on this lost play for all those years but researching for my PhD thesis which focused on the surviving plays of Sophocles. My supervisor, Alan Sommerstein, advised me to include the fragmentary plays from the outset of my research. As the thesis topic was the prologues or, as it subsequently became, Opening Strategies in Sophoclean Tragedy, I looked at a number of lost tragedies that possibly had surviving prologue fragments. This brought me into contact with *Tereus* because there are several fragments with claims to belong to the prologue. And this, in turn, got me thinking about the plot of this lost play. Although I have spent a great deal of time thinking and writing about *Tereus*, I remain cautious about being able to determine its plot with accuracy.

The outline to the myth which inspired the tragedy is as follows. Tereus, king of Thrace, received Procne in marriage from the Athenian king Pandion. They had a son, Itys. Procne missed her sister, Philomela, and asked Tereus to bring her on a visit from Athens. During the return journey to Thrace, Tereus raped Philomela and cut her tongue out to prevent her from revealing the truth. But Philomela made the truth known through a piece of weaving. When Procne learnt the truth, she exacted a gruesome revenge. Itys was killed, cooked and fed to an unsuspecting Tereus. When he learnt the truth, his attempt to take revenge was frustrated because the gods intervened and turned the sisters and Tereus into birds. The tragedy probably covered the story from the return to Thrace up to the metamorphoses.

RECONSTRUCTING *TEREUS*

The first point of contact is, of course, the fragments themselves. As presented by Radt, there are seventeen fragments.[4] Four are from choral songs and do not assist reconstruction. There are three non-choral fragments of five lines or more, six that consist of one or two lines, and four that comprise only one or two words each. No fragment survives with its known dramatic context. There has been general consensus on where a number of fragments belong, but it

far from certain that such consensus is merited except, perhaps, in the case of those fragments which are thought to belong at the end of the play.

The second step is a close reading of scholarly analyses of *Tereus*. As my initial readings were part of my PhD research, I did a number of presentations on *Tereus* at conferences and had some preliminary ideas published subsequently in *The Classical Quarterly*.[5] That article examined several points of controversy in reconstructing the lost play. It included a discussion of the prologue, the identity of the chorus, the internment of Philomela, the *anagnorisis* or recognition scene and the *deus ex machina*. I will not repeat the arguments here but will outline the reconstruction process for *Tereus* in the 2006 volume.

THE INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

The introductory essay to each chapter in the volume is prefaced by a bibliography which contains the following: a list of editions of the text and testimonia for the play; ancient evidence for, and modern discussions of, the myth on which the play is based; discussions of artistic evidence of the myth; and the main 'scholarly' discussions of the play itself. My introductory essay had three main sections: a discussion of the myth, a discussion of the play and a brief discussion about the possible production date (pp. 142-59). The essay did not discuss any of the fragments in any detail because this is done in the Commentary. It examines aspects of the play in light of arguments about the fragments which are developed in the Commentary.

Myth

The discussion of the myth covered early and later versions of the myth together with both the literary and iconographic versions of the myth (pp. 142-9). The objective of examining the myth is to determine a likely narrative framework for the Sophoclean tragedy. The biggest problem here is how to handle the later literary versions, especially Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 6 and, to a lesser extent, the fragments of plays by Roman dramatists. It is clear that earlier sholarly reconstructions were heavily influenced by these later Roman versions of the myth. My opinion is that the influence of these versions has been a detrimental one. My *Classical Quarterly* piece argued, and the volume maintains, that the reconstruction of the plot should be guided by the prose hypothesis of the play which was published in 1974. [6]

The Play

The discussion of the play has four subsections. The first is a brief examination of the dramatic location and characters (pp. 149-50). This is followed by an outline of what I describe as the 'central interpretative problem' for reconstructing the action of the play (pp. 150-51): did Tereus return to Thrace with Philomela or abandon her in the wilds returning without her?[7] I believe that Tereus returned to Thrace with Philomela and that the tragedy reflects a standard *nostos* or return pattern.[8] This is then followed by an outline of the plot of *Tereus* (pp. 151-3), but I'll examine the plot in the next section. The final and longest subsection is entitled 'The revenge of Procne' (pp. 153-7). The more I worked on and thought about Sophocles' *Tereus*, the more I became convinced that Procne was the central figure in the play. I'll return to this later.

The Date

The introductory essay concludes with an examination of the arguments associated with the production date of the *Tereus* (pp. 157-9). The relationship between *Tereus* and Euripides' *Medea* has become the important element in determining the possible production date. It's impossible to resolve the issue definitively, but the discussion outlines that there is nothing to rule out the view that *Tereus* was (as I think) earlier than *Medea*.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The text and translation of the fragments – preceded by those of the prose hypothesis – are presented in the normal fashion for the series. The Greek text includes critical apparatus which aims to record all the significant documentary evidence for establishing the text.[9] The translation is presented on the facing page. As noted earlier, the fragments are presented in the order in which I think that they may have occurred in the play. They are designated by a letter of the alphabet (excepting i) in sequence, followed by the number they bear in Radt's edition. Those fragments which cannot be located with any confidence are placed at the end. The translation of each fragment is accompanied, where possible, by a brief note indicating what has been inferred about the speaker, addressee and /or context of the fragment. The translation makes no claim for poetic greatness, but is intended to be a faithful and literal translation of the Greek.

COMMENTARY

Although the commentary (pp.174-95) is keyed to the translation, the entry for each fragment has an introductory paragraph or two before dealing with anything specific in the translation. This allowed me to articulate at length some general points about each of the fragments. I repeated, to a large extent, many of the arguments which I had presented in my article in the *Classcial Quarterly*. So, for example, the discussion of fr. 584 repeats my view that the chorus consisted of Thracian maidens and the discussion of fr. 583 reiterates that it does not belong in the prologue.

THE PLOT OF TEREUS

I have outlined the general character of my reconstruction of *Tereus*, but I think I should say something more detailed about my reconstruction of the plot.

The play opens with a speech by a Thracian male character, either a palace servant or, I think, a Herald returning from Athens ahead of Tereus (fr. 582[A]). Procne probably enters at some point during the prologue. She will be a stage presence for a considerable part of the play. The chorus consists of Thracian maidens who are sympathetic to Procne (fr. 584 [B]). Tereus returns from Athens. He will return with Philomela, but he either lies about her muteness or, most likely, claims she is dead but is accompanied by a mute slave who is, of course, Philomela forcibly disguised (fr. 585 [C]).[10] The reconstruction places a choral fragment here (fr. 591 [D]). Procne laments her predicament and isolation in a speech with observations about the social position of women in respect of marriage (fr. 583 [E]). The "shuttle's voice" refers to the weaving by which Philomela reveals the truth (fr. 595 [F]). This *anagnorisis* or recognition scene concerns the revelation of either Tereus' rape and mutilation or both this and Philomela's real identity.[11] This *anagnorisis* must have taken place on stage. It seems unlikely to me that Sophocles would have omitted an opportunity to employ a striking stage prop.[12] Another fragment suggests that a male character confirmed the truth for Procne (fr. 588 [G]). A pair of choral fragments are presented next (fr. 593 [H] and 592.4-6 [J]). A fragment suggests that the play contained an *agon* between Procne and Tereus (fr. 587 [K]). Procne plans and executes her gruesome revenge.[13] Tereus learns the truth about his cannibalism. He attempts to exact revenge on the sisters and pursues them.[14] A messenger returns from Tereus' pursuit of the women (fr. 586 [L]). The audience learns about the metamorphoses of Tereus and the women through a *deus ex machina*; the god is, most likely, Apollo (fr. 581 [M] and fr. 582 [N]). The play concludes with an observation by the chorus which is recognised as a standard closing coda in Greek tragedy (fr. 590 [O]).[15]

Am I confident about the sequence in which I've placed the fragments? Yes and no. This may seem an odd response, but the order of fragments and sequence of actions are almost distinct activities! Do you fit the fragments into dramatic scenes or do you build scenes around the fragments?[16]

Am I confident about the strength of this reconstruction? I think it's a strong one, but I freely admit that reconstruction is a speculative game. The speculation is, of course, informed by a close analysis of the fragments together with close reading of other scholars' opinions. It is also informed by familiarity with conventional scenes in Greek tragedy in general and the types of dramatic situations which Sophocles clearly revelled in presenting. The ubiquitous presence of certain scenes and approaches in his extant plays makes it highly probable that Sophocles employed some of them, at the very least, in *Tereus* too. However, as I've noted in my other pieces on *Tereus*, I am not confident about identifying a definitive and complete list of scenes/episodes together with the correct order of such scenes/episodes from prologue to exodus.

THEMES AND CHARACTERS IN *TEREUS*

Determining anything substantial about the play's themes and characters is, I think, an even more speculative activity than reconstructing the plot. It is difficult to articulate anything significant about reasonably abstract things like themes around the fragments. As you need to try to establish the plot, which will inevitably be sketchy, you are really building something on thin foundations. I am quite cautious when it comes to reconstruction and this remains the same when it comes to an analysis of the themes and characters. It is simply impossible to establish the definitive *dramatis personae*. The only characters which can be established with any certainty are Procne, Philomela and Tereus.[17] Given Philomela's mute status, this only allows potential for debate around the character portrayal of the other two.

The one thing I am sure about is that *Tereus* is essentially a revenge play. Any arguments which can be developed about the themes and characters have to revolve around the revenge element. Although it may appear that the revenge is simply related to Tereus' treatment of Philomela, I argue that this view is simplistic and problematic. While some scholars have found the extreme act of revenge problematic, I believe that it should be interpreted on two levels, both are pretty standard thematic strands in Greek tragedy. The first is the domestic clash between husband and wife, conjugal and natal families. The infanticide avenges Tereus' betrayal of Pandion's trust in him in respect of both of his daughters. The act of revenge itself, rather than the infanticide, would have been seen as justifiable by an Athenian audience (of men). The second is the Athenian and barbarian opposition. The Thracians were established in Athenian consciousness as a stereotypical barbaric race. It is impossible, I think, not to accept that Sophocles was incorporating this stereotype into the tragedy. The *anagnorisis* or recognition scene, "(the) shuttle's voice" of fr. 595 [F], probably complements this theme. Tereus, the illiterate barbarian, believes that the removal of Philomela's tongue will prevent her revealing the truth, but the literate Athenian woman speaks the truth through the domestic art of weaving: the woven artefact may even have included words. Despite the extreme nature of Procne's revenge, I believe that it should be interpreted as an affirmation of Athens' patriarchal society and its imperialism. In championing her natal family over her conjugal one, the loyalty which Procne displays for her father can also be understood in ideological terms of championing Athens over foreign interests.

It is difficult to develop anything about the characters in the plays. I am only too aware that my reconstruction casts Tereus in a negative light. I do think he is the 'villain' of the piece. Does this contrast with a positive Procne? I do not think it is simply black and white. I believe that Procne has much in common with the Sophoclean Electra.[18] The stage presence and the emotional journeys of both characters may have been comparable.[19] Procne's emotional highs and lows probably included concern about returning husband and sister, the return and news of the supposed death of her sister, the revelation of the truth, the sense of powerless and isolation, and the move towards a triumphant revenge. Although both women avenge paternal dishonour, did both plays share an ending in which the revenge is justifiable but unsettling?[20]

CONCLUSION: RECONSTRUCTING FRAGMENTARY TRAGEDIES

My academic background is that of a graduate in Classical Studies who had minimal contact with the ancient Greek language before I my started post-graduate research. This does not mean that issues related to language did not influence my reconstruction of the play, but it does mean that my perspective is not purely philological. My approach to the study of classical civilisation could be categorised as new historicist: I am interested in understanding the ancient world on its own terms. When it comes to tragedy, I want to appreciate its theatricality, its performance and production contexts in the Theatre of Dionysus, and not simply as a literary text for translation and philological analysis. At any rate, the surviving words/fragments can only take you so far in the actual reconstruction process. As none of the fragments of *Tereus* survive with their known dramatic context, I was, to borrow a metaphor from a different art form, working from a blank canvas.

So, to what extent is there an explicit scholarly method in reconstructing fragmentary tragedies? The fundamental approach is to work with the fragments themselves and other scholarly analyses. The objective must be articulate solid, coherent, and, hopefully, persuasive arguments about the lost play which is based on this primary and secondary evidence. Any attempted reconstruction must be informed by this evidence. Similarly, the criteria for judging the success, or otherwise, of the reconstruction must be based on the perceived handling of this evidence. I would add an additional criterion which I've hinted at several times in this piece. The approach to reconstruction must also be informed by, and sensitive to, Sophocles' handling of standard dramatic situations of Greek tragic genre and his own particular approaches to performance in his surviving plays. The surviving tragedies are, in many respects, an important element in the reconstruction process.[21] I firmly believe that the extant plays are an essential element in informing plots lines and scenes in lost plays.

There is an obvious contrast between the objectives of the theatre practitioner and the scholar when it comes to reconstructing lost plays. The former needs to reconstruct the play in its entirety in order to have something coherent to perform. Therefore, the practitioner has freedom to be creative and imaginative. Judgement should be restricted to whether or not it is a good play rather than made on the basis of fidelity to Sophocles. The scholar, on the other hand, ought to be working within the limits posed by the fragmentary nature of the play. The objective must be to establish a possible Sophoclean tragedy based on evidence and argument: the desire to establish the definitive version of the lost play through unfettered speculation must, I think, be resisted.[22]

The fragmentary plays are, of course, worth studying in their own right. It hardly needs restating, but this basic fact remains a salutary marker: only seven plays of Sophocles survive out of a likely 123, as Alan Sommerstein argues in the introduction to the volume (p. xii). My personal objective for *Tereus* was to contribute something which met the aim of the series. I did not set out to definitively reconstruct Sophocles' *Tereus*. I wanted to present something of utility for the academic community, but I also wanted, in particular, to write something for the benefit of students at university who, like me many years ago, engage with Greek tragedy without any knowledge of ancient Greek. As the number of such students increase, it is vital that they have access to material which introduces them to the lost tragedies in a useful way: one which recognises that reconstructions have to take account of the ancient dramatic context.

[1] A.H. Sommerstein, D. Fitzpatrick and T. Talboy (eds.), *Sophocles: Selected Fragmentary Plays, Volume 1* (Oxford, 2006).

[2] Alan Sommerstein contributed four chapters about plays dealing with Achilles or his son Neoptolemus. Tom Talboy contributed *Phaedra* which, like *Tereus*, is based on a myth from Athenian legend.

[3] C. Collard, M.J. Cropp and K.H. Lee, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays, Volume 1* (Warminster, 1995) and C. Collard, M.J. Cropp and J. Gibert, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays, Volume 2* (Warminster, 2004). There are a couple of differences between the Euripides and Sophocles volumes: we included single word fragments and presented the fragments in the sequence in which we believe them to have occurred in the play.

[4] S.L. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta,Volume IV*^{2} (Göttingen, 1999).

[5] David Fitzpatrck, 'Sophocles' *Tereus*', *The Classical Quarterly* 51.1 (2001) 90-101: it concludes with a very sketchy outline of the plot.

[6] P.J. Parsons (ed.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Volume 42* (London, 1974), 46-50.The papyrus itself dates to 2nd/3rd century AD and is similar to dramatic hypotheses of other Greek tragedies. The text declares itself to be a Hypothesis of a *Tereus* and identifying it with the Sophoclean tragedy is irresistible. It is similar to several other summaries of the story such as Tzetzes (on Hesiod *Works* 566) and two Aristophanic scholia (on *Birds* 212). The text of Tzetzes, which is reproduced in Radt (see n. 4 above) 435, concludes with the line 'Sophocles wrote about this in the drama *Tereus*'.

[7] The version of the myth in Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6.519 ff.) is the first that has Tereus shutting Philomela up in a hut in the countryside. This internment lasts for a year before Philomela effects recognition. This period of time poses a serious problem for tragedy's normal handling of time which has a semblance of continuity of action within a day.

[8] The *nostos* pattern, as seen, for example, in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, starts with the wife home alone and the husband due to return: the husband returns, of course, to disaster.

[9] I excluded the first three lines of fr. 592 as presented by Radt because it made up of two distinct book fragments. Lines 1-3 are preserved in Plutarch (*How a Young Man Should Study Poetry*, Mor.21b) who attributes them to Sophocles but, unlike Stobaeus (*Anthology,* 4.34.39*)*for lines 4-6, does not name the particular play.

[10] The presence of a silent woman with a central role in the action occurs in several surviving Sophoclean tragedies: the closest comparison would be Iole in *Trachiniae* (225-334) who does not speak a word in the tragedy.

[11] See J.R. March, 'Vases and Tragic Drama: Euripides' *Medea* and Sophocles' Lost *Tereus*', in N.K. Rutter and B.A. Sparkes (eds.), *Word and Image in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 2000) 123-34. I was not familiar with Jenny March's piece until after my *Classical Quarterly* piece had appeared. This was the first time that I learnt about the version of the story in Antoninus Liberalis' *Metamorphoses*: Tereus returns with Philomela and introduces her into the palace disguised as a slave.

[12] Some notable props in other Sophoclean tragedies are the sword in *Ajax*, the urn in *Electra* and the bow in *Philoctetes*. The fragment is preserved in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1454b 36-37) and his comments indicate that the woven artefact was a dramatic innovation by Sophocles, i.e. it was not an established part of the myth.

[13] I am sure that Itys would have made a silent appearance at some point. Sophocles makes great dramatic use of silent children in other tragedies, e.g. Eurysaces in *Ajax* 545-82 and Oedipus' daughters in *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1471-1523.

[14] The evidence for the possible presence of a pursuit scene is a reference in an Aristophanic comedy (*Lysistrata* 563) and a fragment from a fourth-century BC Italian vase painting which depicts a dramatic scene that is, arguably, this very scene from *Tereus*.

[15] Two single word fragments (594 [P] and 595a [Q]) and a possible reference to *Tereus* in a corrupt papyrus commentary on a comedy (595b [R]) are printed at the end.

[16] My chapter was finalised in conjunction with Alan Sommerstein who had strong views on the placing of a couple of fragments which differed from mine. I deferred to him and altered the positioning. Most importantly, however, these alterations did not change my view on the action sequences in the play just the sequence of the actions! I must add that there were times when he accepted my arguments on other aspects of the fragments and the play.

[17] The fragments, in fact, only confirm two characters: Procne is specifically addressed in fr. 585 [C] and fr. 588 [G] confirms the presence of another unidentified male character.

[18] I first encountered Sophocles' *Electra* as an undergraduate student and it was the Sophoclean tragedy I liked least until I saw a performance of Frank McGuinness' version of the tragedy in Dublin in 2002. Moving from the text to the stage allowed me, despite several shortcomings in the production, to really experience the power, and even the point, of the play.

[19] As well as Electra in *Electra*, two other Sophoclean tragedies have a character with a lengthy stage presence; Creon in *Antigone* and Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

[20] It is important to remember that the myth is an aetiology that explains the nightingale's song which is synonymous with mourning her dead son; Procne's action was deliberate, but it was not taken without regret. Procne was an Athenian who was forced to take extreme measures to defend her own and her father's honour.

[21] Sometimes, there appears to be a wish to discover radically different things among the fragmentary plays. We must be open to this possibility but the evidence must be in the fragments themselves. We must not import or impose our own views on the fragmentary material.

[22] This approach is evident in my discussion of another lost Sophoclean tragedy, *Ajax Locrus*, in A.H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Shards from Colonus: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments* (Bari, 2003) 243-59. Mindful of the diptych structure to the dramatic action in several extant Sophoclean tragedies, I argue for its likely presence in *Ajax Locrus* and admit difficulty in establishing the plot with certainty.