

«le Rane»

Collana di Studi e Testi

a cura di

Francesco De Martino

con: Marco Fantuzzi, Françoise Létoublon, Enrico V. Maltese, Enrico Renna,
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SHARDS FROM KOLONOS: STUDIES IN SOPHOCLEAN FRAGMENTS

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Ovid's *Tereus*: theater and metatheater

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For many decades now, if not centuries, the *modus operandi* in reconstructing the lost *Tereus* of Sophocles has been to rely heavily on Ovid, whose version of the Tereus-Procne-Philomela legend in book 6 of the *Metamorphoses* has become canonical in the absence of the Attic drama. In recent surveys of the fragments, however, critics have doubted the value of Ovid's narrative. Describing the process of reconstruction, Anne Pippin Burnett notes that 'one's first task is...to try to forget the gorgeous horrors attached to the tale' in the Latin epic¹. Similarly, David Fitzpatrick remarks that '[t]he exiguous nature of the fragments has made scholars over-reliant on the Roman material...and greater sensitivity is needed to the possibility of variations and innovations in later authors. It is wrong to impose every scene from later authors on the Sophoclean tragedy.'² While Ovid's autonomy as an author should be recognized, and

Citations from Ovid, apart from minor changes in punctuation, are taken from W. S. Anderson's Teubner edition of the *Metamorphoses* (Leipzig 1993). Citations of the *Tereus* (fragments and hypothesis) are from *TrGF* vol. 4., ed. S. Radt (Göttingen 1977). Citations of Accius are from *The Remains of Old Latin*, vol. 2, ed. E. H. Warmington (Harvard 1936). All translations are my own.

¹ Burnett (1998) 180.

² Fitzpatrick (2001) 92, in reference to Livius Andronicus, Accius, as well as Ovid.

while care is warranted in looking for reflections of the *Tereus* in *Metamorphoses* 6, care is also warranted before divorcing Ovid from the process altogether.

This essay will examine the remains of the Sophoclean play from an Ovidian perspective, assessing how much the Latin epic owes to its tragic predecessor. In keeping with this perspective, my primary focus will be upon Ovid's narrative. My approach differs from traditional analyses in two major respects. First, I will work backward from Ovid in order to avoid the teleological pratfalls that have plagued so many discussions, which unwittingly say more about the *Metamorphoses* than the *Tereus*. Second, I will enumerate not only the similarities between both authors but also the differences, whether by accounting for conventions of genre or by considering Ovid's own poetic tendencies. I will of course refer to the fragments, and offer an outline of the drama, although not a full episode-by-episode reconstruction. My exploration of the Tereus narrative will serve as a case study of how the poet adapted tragedy for epic; perhaps the theory outlined herein will serve those who wish to reconstruct other lost plays from the *Metamorphoses*.

In the course of this essay I will have to make certain assumptions — an inevitable consequence of dealing with fragments. My underlying assumption is that Sophocles' *Tereus* gave canonical form to the legend³, and was therefore Ovid's primary model. Traces of other authors and texts are evident in the narrative, not least the *Tereus* of the Roman dramatist, Accius, as well as the *Aeneid*, to which there are frequent allusions⁴. Yet I will privilege the connection to Sophocles both in the short run (reconstructing the Attic drama) and in the long run (theorizing about the *Metamorphoses* and tragedy). My larger purpose is to offer insight into the reception of the tragic dialectic — the exchanges between playwrights and their plays — in an era when tragedy was an outmoded art form.

Finally, a word on my usage of the term *metatheater*. The term conventionally refers to the effect created when a drama calls attention to its own theatricality, whether through a play-within-a-play, or through

characters who realize that they are characters in a drama, or through related devices. Metatheater as I employ it is shorthand for Ovid's strategy in rewriting Greek tragedies — the *meta-* stands for both the *Metamorphoses* and the radical sense of the prefix ('change')⁵. My specialized application of the term overlaps with the conventional in one respect. The success of any metatheatrical gesture rests with the audience, without whose participation the fourth wall cannot be broken. Ovid's adaptation of the *Tereus* and other plays requires similar participation. The reader is expected to remember the poet's tragic models and to recognize how they have been transformed.

1. Decoding Ovid

I will begin by examining the respective genres of Sophocles and Ovid. A summary of the epic version, which occupies verses 424-674 (roughly one-third) of *Metamorphoses* 6, is an appropriate preface. After saving Athens from an invasion, the Thracian king, Tereus, is given Pandion's daughter, Procne, in an ill-omened marriage. A son, Itys, is born soon thereafter. Five years pass, after which Procne wishes to see her younger sister, Philomela. Tereus sails to Athens and is stricken with lust for Philomela, whom he rapes upon returning to Thrace. Philomela reproves him; in anger he cuts out her tongue and rapes her again. Tereus, returning home, pretends to Procne that her sister is dead. After another year, Philomela, who has been held captive, weaves her story into a web; this she sends to Procne, who deciphers it. Under the cover of a festival of Bacchus, Procne dresses as a maenad and sweeps Philomela off to the palace, where she decides to punish Tereus by killing and cooking Itys. The child's remains are served to Tereus as a sacred ancestral meal, after which he asks to see his son. Procne taunts him ('*intus habes, quem poscis*,' 655), but he misunderstands her riddle. Philomela appears, brandishing the head of Itys. In disgust Tereus overturns the table and invokes the Furies. He pursues the sisters, who are transformed into birds:

³ This assumption is now standard: see Dobrov (1993) 198-200.

⁴ See Bömer (1976) *passim*.

⁵ *LSJ* s.v. μετά G.VIII.

one flies to the woods (i.e. as a nightingale), the other to the roof (as a swallow), their feathers red as if blood-stained. Tereus himself is changed into a hoopoe, whose bellicose appearance recalls his former nature.

Although this summary accurately lists the contents of Ovid's narrative, it does not indicate how the contents are emphasized — that is, which events are highlighted or accentuated, and which are obscured or abbreviated. One example of highlighting consists in many verses devoted to the lust (*libido*) of Tereus, such as when he sees Philomela for the first time:

ecce venit magno dives Philomela paratu,
divitior forma, quales audire solemus
naidas et dryadas mediis incedere silvis,
si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus.
non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus,
quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristis
aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas.
digna quidem facies, sed et hunc innata libido
exstimulat, proumque genus regionibus illis
in venerem est: flagrat vitio gentisque suoque.

Behold, Philomela enters, richly dressed but richer in beauty. We are accustomed to hear that naiads and dryads look just the same way when roaming the dense forests — if only one could give them similar style and dress. Tereus burned with passion at the sight of the maiden, just as ripe grain is kindled, or leaves, or hay stored up in the loft. Her appearance, naturally, was worthy of desire, but in addition his innate lust goaded him on — the peoples of those regions are prone to lust. It was both his race's vice and his own, and it inflamed him.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.451-460)

The similes in this passage, which is already precise in its elucidation of Thracian sexuality, encourage the reader to visualize both Philomela's entrance and Tereus' response. Ovid further describes how Tereus considers any and all means to win Philomela (461-6); how he envies Pandion for the affection his daughter lavishes upon him (475-482); how Tereus fantasizes about Philomela the night before their departure (490-3); and how he gloats once they are out to sea, which reaction is compared

to that of an eagle observing a captive hare (511-8)⁶. Other examples of highlighting in the narrative include the graphic rape and mutilation of Philomela (519-562), and the vacillation of Procne over whether or not to spare Itys (609-635).

As one might expect, Ovid emphasizes the violent and psychological aspects of the story. Yet the poet also de-emphasizes certain elements that one might have assumed would be prominently featured. For instance, Philomela's weaving, which could have prompted an elaborate *ekphrasis*, is described in the briefest of terms (576-8)⁷. Likewise the metamorphoses of Tereus and the sisters:

corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares:
pendebant pennis. quarum petit altera silvas,
altera tecta subit; neque adhuc de pectore caedis
excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est.
ille dolore suo poenaeque cupidine velox
vertitur in volucrem, cui stant in vertice cristae,
prominet inmodicum pro longa cuspidē rostrum:
nomen epopos volucris, facies armata videtur.

One might have thought the bodies of the daughters of Cecrops poised on plumage: so they were. The one seeks the forest, the other flies to the roof. And even now the markings of murder have remained on their breasts, their feathers stained with blood. He, in turn, hastening because of grief and the desire for revenge, is transformed into a swift bird. On his forehead stands a crest, and a large beak juts out in place of his long spear. Its name is the hoopoe, its very look seemingly armed for battle.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.667-674)

In a poem replete with animal (and especially avian) transformations, the reader perhaps anticipates a metamorphosis as detailed as that of Cynus, who in book 2 becomes a swan (2.367-380). Such is not the case:

⁶ By portraying Tereus as an intense watcher, Ovid connects to the etymological word play between ἐπόπτην and ἔποπα featured in Sophocles (fr. 581.1), to say nothing of the play between the name Tereus and the verb τηρεῖν.

⁷ I discuss the web at length below, pp. 193-5.

although the transformation of Tereus is the most fully realized, the entire trio are metamorphosed in a matter of eight verses — and elliptical verses at that, for Ovid glosses over which sister becomes the nightingale, and which the swallow⁸.

These questions of emphasis and de-emphasis are a cautionary preface to reading Sophocles in light of Ovid. Without even so much as a glance at the remains of the *Tereus*, it is obvious that Ovid's narrative departs from its Sophoclean model. Perhaps the most obvious departure is the direct presentation of the assault of Philomela. In the original play, this event would have taken place offstage⁹. In the Ovidian version, however, the rape and mutilation are 'onstage'; that is, they happen within the chronology of the story, occurring after Tereus and Philomela arrive in Thrace, but before Tereus returns to Procne. Here one sees both genres at work, with epic presenting violence paratactically, and tragedy favoring hypotactic presentation. The Sophoclean audience must have learned of the assault after the fact, as opposed to the Ovidian audience, who witness it as it happens. The psychological aspects of Ovid's narrative, the lust of Tereus and the dilemma of Procne, are departures of a different sort. It is certainly possible — if not probable — that Procne's divided self was revealed on the Athenian stage. However, the third-person perspective of the Latin epic allows the reader to enter the mind of Procne, or of Tereus, with greater facility than the largely first-person perspective of tragedy.

None of this is to claim that epic is a superior mode of storytelling, or even that tragedy cannot be violent or psychological. Rather, the point is to stress from the start that each work, Sophoclean or Ovidian, is beholden to the conventions of its genre. These conventions encompass a wide range of technical, operational, and thematic parameters — from the subject matter itself to the format in which it is presented. For each genre, tragedy or epic, the parameters coalesce into a system, a *code*, which implicitly or explicitly dictates how a work within that genre should be

crafted¹⁰. It is not possible, let alone practical, to define either the tragic or the epic code in full. Each is extremely complex and resists classification, while classification risks reducing art to formula. Nevertheless, it is possible to unravel several threads within either code. One of these is the *narrative code*, which prescribes that both tragedy and epic have a mythical (or a mythicized) subject matter, and even determines to a certain extent the shape of the plot through conventional story patterns. There is considerable overlap between the narrative codes that drive Sophocles' play and Ovid's epic. The myth of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela is equally suited to both works¹¹.

Another thread common to the codes of tragedy and epic is the *formal code*, which is concerned with the material and narratorial realities — the form — of either genre. Unlike the narrative code, the tragic formal code is rather different from that of epic. The Theater of Dionysus was a venue of relative simplicity: the tragedies produced within were subject to constraints of time, resources, and especially of space, with typically one setting per play. The setting of the *Tereus* was presumably Thrace, outside the palace of the king. The theater of epic, however, is a purely verbal medium, in which no time or place is out of reach. The setting of Ovid's narrative changes as needed, whether it be Thrace or Athens, inside the palace or in the forest far beyond it. My statement that the Sophoclean audience would not have witnessed the rape of Philomela assumes that the tragic formal code precluded this event, either because it was too difficult to stage or because it lay outside the time-frame of the drama. The epic formal code, however, readily included the rape in Ovid's text. Note that these considerations of form only partially explain the preclusion or inclusion of violence. There are no doubt other codes at work. For instance, one might posit a *cultural code*, which in the refined plays of Sophocles emphasized human response to catastrophe over catastrophe itself — not only on technical grounds but also as a matter of custom. The cultural code of epic, in contrast, encouraged Ovid to indulge the Roman

⁸ It was something of a Roman poetic tradition to reverse the Greek arrangement and make Philomela the nightingale and Procne the swallow. See further Thompson (1937) s.v. 'ΑΗΔΩΝ and Forbes Irving (1990) 248-9.

⁹ ...if it happened during the drama at all: see below, p. 175.

¹⁰ On the concept of generic codes see now Hinds (1998) 41-47 and Keith (2002), whose studies look back to Conte (1986).

¹¹ The narrative code of tragedy receives further consideration below, pp. 195-6.

appetite for brutal spectacles. Regardless of how many codes are isolable within a given genre, one must never discount the will of the artist, who is the final negotiator of all codes¹².

Given the hazards, actual or potential, of reconstructing tragedy through epic, it is surprising to find many aspects of *Metamorphoses* 6 in the surviving fragments of the *Tereus*. Fr. 582, an invocation to Helios as the ‘much-honored light of the horse-loving Thracians’ (‘Ἡλιε, φιλίπποισι Θρηξὶ πρέσβιστον céλας), certifies that the play, like the later narrative was set in Thrace¹³.

Fr. 584, if attributed to Procne, recalls the nostalgic heroine familiar from Ovid:

πολλά σε ζηλῶ βίου,
μάλιστα δ’ εἰ γῆς μὴ πεπεύραται ξένης.

Many things in your life I envy, but especially that you have never experienced a foreign land.

(*Tereus* fr. 584)

Fr. 583, a lament on the miseries of married women, has a similar theme but conveys a more foreboding sense of isolation:

νῦν δ’ οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς. ἀλλὰ πολλάκις
ἔβλεψα ταύτη τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν,
ὥς οὐδέν ἐσμεν. αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς
ἡδιστον, οἶμαι, ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·
τερπνῶς γὰρ αἰεὶ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει.
ὅταν δ’ ἐς ἡβὴν ἐξικώμεθ’ ἔμφρονες,
ὠθούμεθ’ ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεῶν πατρῶν τῶν τε φυτάντων ἅπο,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἀνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,

¹² I should add that a genre’s codes are hardly discrete, overlapping in any number of ways. Just as no genre operates in a total vacuum, no aspect of a genre operates independently of any other aspect.

¹³ Fitzpatrick (2001) 93 has placed the question of whether this is the first line of the play on a new footing. I depart from Radt (1977) in reading céλας for céβας.

αἱ δ’ εἰς ἀγηθῇ δώμαθ’, αἱ δ’ ἐπίρροθα.
καὶ ταῦτ’, ἐπειδὴν εὐφρόνη ζεύξῃ μία,
χρεῶν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

Now, however, I am nothing by myself. Yet this is how I have often considered women’s nature: we are nothing. I think that as children in our father’s house we out of all humankind enjoy the most pleasant lives, for ignorance always raises children in bliss. But when we have come of age, with all our faculties, we are forced out and put up for sale, far from our ancestral gods and our parents. Some of us are sold to foreign men, others to barbarians, some to happy homes, still others to abusive ones. And, after that one ‘tender night’ has harnessed us, we must be grateful and pretend all is well.

(*Tereus* fr. 583)

These are doubtless the words of Procne herself. The fragment is generally imagined as being part of a prologue in which Procne was expecting Tereus and Philomela to arrive from Athens — a situation analogous to that of another Sophoclean heroine, Deianira, who at the beginning of the *Trachiniae* awaits the return of Heracles¹⁴. Although it is tempting to elucidate parallels between the two plays, and while the prologue of the *Tereus* may well have featured an expectant Procne, fr. 583 must have a different context. Fitzpatrick calls attention to the pathetic tone of the passage. The first verse in particular is profoundly desperate: ‘Now I am nothing by myself’ is hardly the sentiment of a hopeful wife and sister, but of a woman utterly lost and alone. The fragment is better suited to a later, more disastrous context¹⁵. νῦν δ’ (1) suggests a contrast between the present misery and past happiness, while the adverb χωρίς implies a forceful separation: perhaps, as in Ovid, Procne believes that Philomela has died.

Fr. 585 may be read as a consolation to Procne in her loss:

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick (2001) 92 n. 16 notes the persistence of the comparison from Welcker onward.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick (2001) 92-3. Fitzpatrick, excluding the fiction of Philomela’s death, assigns fr. 583 to a scene in which Tereus’ crime has already been revealed.

ἀλγεινά, Πρόκνη, δηλοῖν· ἀλλ' ὅμως χρεῶν
τὰ θεῖα θνητοῖς ὄντας εὐπετῶς φέρειν.

These things are clearly painful, Procne. But all the same we mere mortals must readily endure the trials imposed by gods.

(Tereus fr. 585)

A gentle reminder of human mortality (θνητοῖς ὄντας, 2) would have been appropriate in the context of Philomela's supposed death.

Fr. 595 confirms the web as the device by which Procne learned about the rape. Tyrwhitt was the first to recognize that the 'voice of the shuttle,' κερκίδος φωνή, was a Sophoclean phrase quoted by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1454b30)¹⁶.

In the wake of these five attributions four others become feasible. Fr. 588 might belong to the episode in which the death of Philomela was announced:

θάρσει· λέγων τάληθές οὐ σφαλῇ ποτε.

Take heart! If you speak the truth you will never fail.

(Tereus fr. 588)

Perhaps the speaker was Procne, offering encouragement to a reticent messenger.

Fr. 589, often taken as the observations of a *deus ex machina*¹⁷, compares the actions of Tereus to those of the sisters:

ἄνους ἐκεῖνος· αἱ δ' ἀνουστέρωσ' ἔτι
ἐκεῖνον ἡμύναντο <πρὸς τὸ> καρτερόν.
ὅστις γὰρ ἐν κακοῖσι θυμωθεὶς βροτῶν
μείζον προσάπτει τῆς νόσου τὸ φάρμακον,
ἱατρός ἐστιν οὐκ ἐπιστήμων κακῶν.

¹⁶ Radt (1977) *ad loc.*

¹⁷ The deity has been presumed to be Hermes, Athena, or Ares. See now Fitzpatrick (2001) 99, who adds Helios/Apollo to the list of candidates. For the possibility of Dionysus see below, p. 188 n. 44.

He (i.e. Tereus) lost his mind. But they (i.e. Procne and Philomela) punished him more mindlessly still with violence. For a mortal in the midst of troubles, who becomes so enraged as to administer a cure deadlier than the illness, is a doctor that cannot diagnose the symptoms.

(Tereus fr. 589)

The 'cure deadlier than the illness' in verse 4 must refer to the killing and cooking of Itys¹⁸.

Fr. 581, also part of a divine *rhexis*, indicates that the transformations of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela were somehow part of the drama:

τοῦτον δ' ἐπόπτην ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν
πεποικίλωκε ἀποδηλώσας ἔχει
θρασὺν πετραῖον ὄρνιν ἐν παντευχία·...
ἀεὶ δὲ μίσει τῶνδ' ἴαπ' ἄλλον εἰς τόπον
δρυμοὺς ἐρήμους καὶ πάγους ἀποικιεῖ.

This hoopoe, the watcher of his own woes — he (i.e. Zeus) has dappled its feathers and revealed as a bird, bold in full armor and inhabiting rocky ground.... And he, in eternal hatred of these (i.e. sisters?) to ?another? place, will dwell apart in the lonely forests and mountain peaks.

(Tereus fr. 581.1-3, 9-10)

Textual problems aside, it is clear from the first three lines that Tereus has been metamorphosed. The *deus* speaks in the perfect tense (πεποικίλωκε, 2), describing what has already happened as opposed to what will happen (cf. Polymestor in the *Hecabe* of Euripides). Moreover the demonstrative τοῦτον (3), coupled with the idea of displaying (ἀποδηλώσας, 2), suggests that the god is gesturing directly at Tereus in his hoopoe form — and (if τῶνδ' <ε> in verse 9 refers to the sisters) at the transformed Procne and Philomela as well¹⁹. Even if the gestures were

¹⁸ Pace Burnett (1998) 182 n. 19, who finds the sentiments of fr. 589 too general to refer directly to the murder of Itys.

¹⁹ Dobrov (1993) 202 and 210 proposes that the *ekkyklema* was used to present a tableau containing 'tokens of the metamorphosis.' Fitzpatrick (2001) 101 n. 76 disapproves of Dobrov's particulars (the *ekkyklema* represents the *skene* interior, but the trio have already fled out of the *skene*, into the *orchestra*, and offstage), but does not

verbal rather than physical, and there was no visible evidence of the transformations onstage, the audience would have been able to visualize these events from the reports that followed.

Fr. 590 is a fitting *exodos*:

ΧΟ. θνητὴν δὲ φύειν χρὴ θνητὰ φρονεῖν,
τοῦτο κατειδόμενός οὐκ ἔστιν
πλὴν Διὸς οὐδεὶς τῶν μελλόντων
ταμίας ὅ τι χρὴ τετελέσθαι.

Humankind must think accordingly, knowing only this fact: there is no master of the things to be, whatever must come to pass, except Zeus.

(*Tereus* fr. 590)

Critics have noted the similarities between this choral passage and those at the end of the *Ajax* or the *Trachiniae*²⁰.

Taken together, these nine fragments — 581-5, 588-590, and 595 — make possible a reconstruction of the *Tereus* that closely resembles Ovid's version. Tereus, prompted by the nostalgia of Procne (584), sailed from Thrace (582) to Athens for Philomela. He raped Philomela and cut out her tongue (581), the loss of which necessitated communication through weaving (595). Prior to discovering the truth, Procne was convinced that her sister had died (588), and was reduced to a state of utter despair (583, 585). The assault on Philomela revealed, the sisters punished Tereus by serving him his own son (589). The outrage of Tereus precipitated the triple metamorphosis (581). The Chorus, generalizing about human nature, had the last word (590). This reconstruction interprets the play's remains with a minimum of speculation. Although this essay seeks to illustrate the value of Ovid as a witness in recovering lost plays, it might be objected at this point that the preceding outline is too dependent on the *Metamorphoses*. How can one know whether an Ovidian reading of the

discredit the concept. Burnett (1998) 183 locates the transformation of the sisters offstage, and relegates the metamorphosis of Tereus to a point in the future, adding (n. 23) that 'Sophocles will not...have brought a bird-man onstage.' Perhaps not, but the deictic language of fr. 581 deserves consideration.

²⁰ Fitzpatrick (2001) 94 and n. 32.

fragments is accurate, or is merely circling back onto itself? In the case of the *Tereus*, *P.Oxy.* 3013 preserves what may be the actual hypothesis of the play²¹. The overlap between the hypothesis and the reconstruction validates the process thus far.

The reconstruction is still very general, with certain areas needing embellishment. One area is the opening of the play: at what point did it begin? Certainly not with the marriage of Procne to Tereus, nor with the birth of Itys; these events are too far removed from the main plot — perhaps by as much as five or six years, to judge from Ovid. It is also unlikely that Tereus would have departed for Athens and returned to Thrace within a single drama²². In accordance with the deeply encoded framework of one 'tragic day,' all events from the marriage to the departure of Tereus would have been placed outside this framework and explained in the prologue. The next area for embellishment is the prologue: who delivered it? Tereus himself is the least likely candidate; Fitzpatrick observes that he should have made his entrance some time after the start of the play, and assigns the opening speech to a herald or a household servant²³. It is also possible that Procne, on the analogy of Deianira in the *Trachiniae*, uttered the prologue (fr. 583 excluded). Although any one of these three scenarios is feasible, having either a servant or Procne as the speaker presents the fewest difficulties. After an opening speech by a servant, Tereus could have entered, greeted by Procne soon afterward; after a speech by Procne, a herald could have entered, followed in due course by Tereus. Whatever the case, the purpose of the prologue was to set the stage for the return of Tereus, who, having already raped Philomela, appeared with the false story of her death.

What is emerging from this discussion is a sense of the similarities and differences between the tragic and epic versions of the Tereus legend — similarities and differences mandated by the codes of both genres. The narrative codes, which favor a mythical subject matter, allow both poets to focus not only on the same legend, but also on many of the same

²¹ On the hypothesis see now Dobrov (1993) 198 and n. 21, and Burnett (1998) 180 and n. 12.

²² So Burnett (1998) 180 n. 11.

²³ Fitzpatrick (2001) 94.

aspects. The formal codes, however, dictate to a considerable degree which aspects are included in the presentation, and which are excluded. The formal code of epic is generally more inclusive, while that of tragedy is more exclusive. Ovid incorporates events that in the *Tereus* happened offstage, such as the murder of Itys and the ensuing feast, or that happened beyond the dramatic time-frame, such as the voyage of Tereus and the violation of Philomela. Yet generic coding goes only so far: elements that the formal code should logically have excluded are included, and vice versa. The final metamorphosis is a prime example. It seems to have received much attention in the tragedy, described fully by a *deus ex machina* and perhaps even depicted on the stage. The brief synopsis of Ovid, in contrast, is less a climax than an afterthought. Sometimes there is little accounting for the will of the poet. Nevertheless, understanding where the codes of tragedy and epic converge and where they diverge is the first step toward reconstructing lost plays from the narratives of the *Metamorphoses*.

2. Nothing to do with Dionysus?

An aspect of the *Tereus* not yet discussed is the recognition scene, in which Procne learns of Philomela's ordeal from the web. Remember that in Ovid's version Tereus imprisons Philomela far from the palace, so that she must send the web to Procne (571-9). Furthermore, Procne disguises herself as a bacchant, travels to the prison, and rescues her sister (587-600). How all of this can be related back to Sophocles requires careful consideration. One common critical view is that the tragic version proceeds along the same lines as the epic, with certain changes to accommodate the dramatic format. The web was brought to Procne, who after reading it donned her disguise and left the stage to free Philomela. She soon returned, following a choral ode, sister in tow²⁴. Fr. 586 is usually attributed to this putative sequence of events:

σπεύδουσιν αὐτήν, ἐν δὲ ποικίλῳ φάρει

...a woman hurrying, and in a dappled cloak...

(*Tereus* fr. 586)

The 'dappled cloak' (ποικίλῳ φάρει) ostensibly describes the Bacchic fawnskin, while the 'woman hurrying' (σπεύδουσιν) is taken to refer to either Procne or Philomela²⁵. A reconstruction such as this superimposes the formal code of tragedy over that of epic. Yet, as one learns by comparing how each poet handled the metamorphoses of Tereus and the sisters, all codes are subject to the artist's interpretation. In this section of my essay I will discuss the imprisonment of Philomela and the Dionysiac festival with respect to the *Tereus*. My discussion will draw upon the code theory of the previous section. Yet it will also consider Ovid's standard practices when telling tragic stories, practices in which it is possible to account for the will of the poet.

To judge solely on the basis of code, it is apparent that the imprisonment of Philomela is an innovation on Ovid's part. First, the prison itself is located in the Thracian forest at a considerable distance from the royal house, for Procne reaches it after a long journey: 'venit ad stabula avia tandem' (596). Second, and more telling, Philomela is detained there for an entire year: 'signa deus bis sex acto lustraverat anno' (571). So long an interval, encapsulated by a single verse, demonstrates the capacity of epic to compress time as needed. Furthermore, the verse recalls traditional epic formulae for marking transitions, from the Homeric ἦμος δ' ἡριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως onward. Both the wording and the function of this line are unmistakably, if not self-consciously, epic, and signal a departure from the *Tereus* — even if what is being departed from is not entirely clear. There is no direct evidence for a captive Philomela before Ovid. Apart from fr. 586, whose testimony is

²⁵ For the standard interpretations, see Radt (1977) *ad loc.* I wonder whether the 'dappled cloak' refers to the Procne or Philomela not in any rescue scenario but after the metamorphoses. Ovid reports that their feathers are blood-stained (*de pectore caedis l' excessere notae*, 669-670), and the *deus ex machina* draws attention to the dappled feathers of Tereus in his hoopoe form (πεποικίλωκε, fr. 581.2).

²⁴ So Calder (1974) 89, Kiso (1984) 67, and Dobrov (1993) 208.

subjective, the remains of the play contain nothing applicable. The same is true of the hypothesis, in which the event directly following the arrival in Thrace is the weaving of the web: παραγενάμενος [δὲ εἰς τὴν] | Θράκην καὶ Φιλομήλας οὐ | δυναμένης [ἐκλαλεῖν τὴν] | συνφορὰν, δι' ὕφλους ἐμήνυσε]. Despite the vacuum in the primary sources, and heedless of Ovid's patent manipulation of the epic formal code, scholars have persisted in incorporating the imprisonment as written into reconstructions of the *Tereus*. Even if one accepts Procne leaving the stage returning after a long journey, the duration of Philomela's confinement ought to meet with more skepticism than it sometimes receives. William Calder, for example, contends that during the stasimon separating the return of Tereus and the arrival of the web, 'one year of dramatic time passes.'²⁶ While time in tragedy is elastic, a twelve-month interlude stretches the chronology too far.

In Ovid the imprisonment of Philomela is linked to the biennial rites of Bacchus, commonly called the *trieterica*, which provide cover for the rescue. The arrival of the festival stands in resounding contrast to Procne's silent fury after receiving the web:

tempus erat, quo sacra solent trieterica Bacchi
Sithoniae celebrare nurus: nox conscia sacris,
nocte sonat Rhodope tinnitibus aeris acuti.

It was the time when the Sithonian wives customarily observe the sacred *trieterica* of Bacchus. The night shares in their secrets, by night Rhodope resounds with the harsh clanging of bronze cymbals.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.587-9)

Within the context of the narrative, the *trieterica* become the means to ending Philomela's incarceration:

nocte sua est egressa domo regina deique
ritibus instruitur furialiaque accipit arma:
vite caput tegitur, lateri cervina sinistro
vellera dependent, umero levis incubat hasta.

²⁶ Calder (1974) 89.

concita per silvas comitante turba suarum
terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris,
Bacche, tuas simulat. venit ad stabula avia tandem
exululatque "euhoe" que sonat portasque refringit
germanamque rapit raptaeque insignia Bacchi
induit et vultus hederarum frondibus abdit
attonitamque trahens intra sua moenia ducit.

By night the queen leaves her house and adorns herself for the rites of the god, putting on the panoply of fury: ivy wreathes her head, the fawnskin hangs from her left side, a light spear upon her shoulder. Swiftly through the forest, a crowd of attendants around her, Procne, breathing terror and spurred on by the madness of her sorrow, simulates your madness, Bacchus. At last she comes to the secluded hut. She screams and shouts, 'Euhoe!' Smashing down the doors, she takes her sister and clothes her in the Bacchic dress. Hiding her face in fronds of ivy, pulling her along in a state of shock, Procne leads Philomela within the house.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.590-600)

This is a spectacular end to Philomela's ordeal, appropriate for an epic version of the myth — like the ordeal itself.

If caution is warranted with regard to the imprisonment, it is likewise warranted in the case of a Bacchic ritual. Nevertheless, this Ovidian feature also finds its way into putative summaries of the play. Arguments as to why the rites of Dionysus would have belonged in the *Tereus* are well established, and there is no need to review them here²⁷. However, the fragments and the hypothesis offer no direct evidence, which means that critics must read between the surviving lines. Fr. 591, a choral passage, has been interpreted in a Dionysiac light:

«ΧΟ.» ἐν φύλον ἀνθρώπων, μί' ἔδειξε πατρὸς
καὶ ματρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀμέρα τοὺς πάντας· οὐδεὶς
ἔξοχος ἄλλος ἔβλασεν ἄλλου.
βόσκει δὲ τοὺς μὲν μοῖρα δυσμερίας,
τοὺς δ' ὄλβος ἡμῶν, τοὺς δὲ δουλεί-
ας ζυγὸν ἔσχει ἀνάγκας.

²⁷ See Dobrov (1993) 200 and n. 29, and 205-8 for the argument in support of the *trieterica* and Burnett (1998) 182 n. 16 for the argument against.

There is one tribe of human beings, a single day produced us all from a father and a mother. No one was born superior to another. But a share of disaster nourishes some of us, while prosperity nourishes others. Others still are bound by the enslaving yoke of necessity.

(*Tereus* fr. 591)

Gregory Dobrov cites Welcker among those who have regarded these lines as 'reflecting a basic principle of Dionysiac cult.'²⁸ Such an interpretation, although possible, is unconvincing in the absence of concrete references in the other remains — the 'dappled cloak' of fr. 586 notwithstanding.

Proponents of Bacchism in the Sophoclean drama find their strongest evidence not in Ovid, but in the Latin playwright Accius, whose own *Tereus* is only partially extant. That Ovid was familiar with Accius' play is shown in fr. 639-642:

Tereus indomito more atque animo barbaro
conspexit in eam; amore vecors flammeo,
depositus, facinus pessimum ex dementia
configit.

Tereus, with indomitable character and barbarian mind, caught sight of her. Driven mad by love's flame, desperate, he conceived in his madness the worst of all crimes.

(Accius, *Tereus* fr. 639-642)

A comparison of these fragments with *Metamorphoses* 6.451-460 (quoted above) reveals similarities in theme and expression. As H. MacL. Currie observes, 'The whole picture in Ovid is one of blazing, uncontrollable passion, and this was doubtless what he found in large measure in the original Accian context.'²⁹ Fr. 647 of Accius' *Tereus* specifically mentions Dionysus/Bacchus:

deum Cadmogena natum Semela adfare et
famulanter pete.

Address the god born of Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, and pray in servile fashion.

(Accius, *Tereus* fr. 647)

Warmington, anticipating Ovid, reads this passage as a suggestion that inspires Procne to adopt a Bacchic disguise³⁰. Other contexts are nevertheless conceivable³¹. However one reads the fragment, only two conclusions may be drawn with certainty. The first is that Accius' *Tereus* had a Dionysiac element, although the specifics are not clear. The second is that this element may not have derived from Sophocles' *Tereus*. Accian criticism has moved beyond the notion that the Latin tragedies are translations of Greek originals. The issues of adaptation and contamination that arise in reconstructing Greek New Comedy via Plautus and Terence also apply to Accius and his peers with regard to Greek tragedy³². It is possible that Ovid inherited the maenad motif from Accius, who either invented it himself or borrowed it from a source other than the Sophoclean drama.

Despite the possibility that the *trieterica* are an Accian invention, my own view is that the festival was originally part of Sophocles' play, and that Ovid used it as the basis for the Bacchic rescue of Philomela. My position is predicated on Ovid's general approach to tragedy, and to myth at large, in the *Metamorphoses*. To begin with, the poem is largely concerned with renovating the Greek literary past. Granted, this is a concern of all Latin poets, who were very conscious of the traditions handed down by their eastern neighbors, and who strove to articulate their works vis-à-vis those traditions. Yet Ovid's concern is especially palpable, for the *Metamorphoses* encompasses a vast corpus of myth, some well known, some obscure, most of it Greek. A Hellenic emphasis is to be

²⁸ Dobrov (1993) 206, after Welcker (1939).

²⁹ Currie (1981) 2725, whose article demonstrates Ovid's familiarity with the Roman stage chiefly through verbal reminiscences.

³⁰ Warmington (1936) *ad loc.*, endorsed by Dobrov (1993) 206.

³¹ Calder (1974) 90 attributes this fragment to the Chorus, dissuading Procne from leading Tereus to the meal within.

³² See now Conte (1994) 104-9.

expected from a *carmen* that ranges ‘from the initial origins of the world to my own times’ (‘prima...ab origine mundi | ad mea...tempora,’ 1.3-4). Before turning to the legends of Rome, the poet must first negotiate those of Greece, from a Hesiodic creation story through the Trojan War and the fall of Troy³³. This negotiation occupies more than twelve of the fifteen books in the *Metamorphoses*; the Roman world comes into focus with the wanderings of Aeneas in book 13. It is therefore legitimate to privilege a Greek work as Ovid’s model for the Tereus narrative, to attribute its larger movements to Sophocles, even though passages with Accian color are in evidence.

This idea can be tested by comparing extant Greek tragedies with their epic counterparts in the *Metamorphoses*. The Hecuba narrative³⁴ of book 13, for instance, adheres to the major plot points of the surviving Euripidean drama (13.429-575). Following the death of Polyxena, who is sacrificed to the shade of Achilles, Hecuba learns that Polymestor, the Thracian king, has murdered her son, Polydorus. Gaining Polymestor’s confidence with the promise of treasure, Hecuba and her attendants attack and blind him. Ovid retains the double disaster of the *Hecabe* — the deaths of Polydorus and Polyxena — which had become the canonical version of the myth³⁵. More germane to the present discussion is the Deianira-Heracles narrative of book 9, which illustrates how faithfully the poet might adapt a Sophoclean drama (9.134-272). As in the *Trachiniae*, Ovid’s Deianira becomes convinced that Hercules loves Iole, the daughter of Eurytus. In distress Deianira sends Hercules a robe steeped in the blood of Nessus, which she believes will revive the passion of her husband. The robe instead burns the hero’s flesh, reducing him to a state of agony, for which the only remedy is the funeral pyre. Once again, Ovid preserves the innovations of the tragic poet — the death of Nessus via a poisoned arrow, the source of the so-called love-charm — which had become standard

³³ It should be noted, however, that the poem’s chronological path meanders here and there through the Greek world. See now Wheeler (1999) chapter 5, “Discourse and time,” for a full discussion of continuity in the *Metamorphoses*.

³⁴ I refer to Ovid’s heroine as ‘Hecuba’ despite the fact that ‘Hecube’ is the name attested in the best manuscripts.

³⁵ So Collard (1991) 34-35.

features of the legend³⁶. If the *Metamorphoses* upholds the plots of extant tragedies, especially those which forever changed their respective myths, it is reasonable to expect the same treatment of innovative lost tragedies like the *Tereus*.

This is not to say that Ovid changes nothing — after all, his narratives are adaptations, not translations. Some of the changes are minor, and expedite the story. Hecuba herself discovers the body of Polydorus (13.536), whereas the corpse is brought onstage to her Euripidean counterpart (681-3). Likewise, Deianira receives an entire garment from Nessus (9.132-3), while in the *Trachiniae* she receives only the mixture of blood and poison (572-4), which she later applies to a robe. Other changes are made under the auspices of the formal code of epic. For instance, the metamorphosis of Hecuba into a dog occurs immediately after the blinding of Polymestor (13.565-9), who in Euripides prophesies that her transformation will occur en route to Greece (1261-5). Similarly, the apotheosis of Hercules, which was beyond the scope of the *Trachiniae*, is an integral part of Ovid’s narrative (9.262-272)³⁷. Furthermore, certain events that lay in the background of the Sophoclean play, namely the wrestling match with Achelous and the death of Nessus, are brought to the fore in *Metamorphoses* 9. Each event is related in full (9.1-88 and 101-133, respectively), with the result that Deianira’s story may be said to begin not with verse 134 but with the first line of the book. These augmentations of the *Hecabe* and the *Trachiniae* are analogous to the ones already observed in the Tereus narrative — the marriage of Procne and Tereus, the voyage to Athens, and the rape of Philomela.

As I have discussed, not every retelling of a tragedy in the *Metamorphoses* is a matter of recodification. Ovid’s Pentheus narrative in book 3 is a reminder of this fact (3.511-733). As in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Pentheus resists a Dionysiac invasion of Thebes, clashing with the stranger who serves the god and scoffing at his miracles. Yet when he

³⁶ March (1987) 48-77.

³⁷ Both March (1987) 71-72 and Halleran (1997) 157-8 observe that audience of the *Trachiniae* would have anticipated the hero’s deification on Oeta. But anticipation and presentation are two very different things.

visits Cithaeron to witness the revels of the women, the epic Pentheus goes undisguised:

perstat Echionides nec iam iubet ire, sed ipse
vadit, ubi electus facienda ad sacra Cithaeron
cantibus et clara bacchantum voce sonabat.

But the son of Echion persists, no longer ordering others to go forth, but goes forth himself, where Cithaeron, chosen for performing the sacred rites, was resounding with the songs and loud cries of the bacchants.

(*Metamorphoses* 3.701-3)

Unlike his tragic namesake, he does not wear the costume of a maenad (although he is still torn apart by his mother and her sisters). In passing over the Euripidean innovation, Ovid seems to point to an older tradition — an epic tradition, perhaps³⁸? Epic certainly looms large in the Pentheus narrative: the stranger recounts his life story with a speech highly reminiscent of the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*. Even more curious is that the stranger has a name, Acoetes. In this detail Ovid seems once more to have taken a cue from the Roman stage, for Acoetes was the name of the stranger in the *Pentheus* of Pacuvius. But for the most part the poet is concerned with transforming Euripides' *Bacchae* into Latin epic by way of the Homeric tradition³⁹.

The principle taking shape is that Ovid is generally faithful to the plots of his tragic models. Changes are generally of two kinds: minor departures and innovations, none so great as to render the model unrecognizable; and augmentations easily explained under the epic formal code. The poet rarely deletes a component altogether (Pentheus' Bacchic disguise is a notable exception) and rarely invents a new element on a grand scale (the history of Acoetes is another exception, although its

³⁸ The tradition before Euripides, and the playwright's innovations, are recounted by March (1989).

³⁹ Currie (1981) 2717 claims that Ovid's primary source for the Pentheus narrative was Pacuvius. Keith (2002) 264-6 sees Pacuvius as an intermediary between Euripides and Ovid.

easily traceable Homeric origins hardly qualify it as a true invention). According to this principle, then, the *Tereus* should have had *something* to do with Dionysus, for it would have been uncharacteristic of Ovid to pull the *trieterica* out of thin air.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to posit that there was a Dionysiac festival in the *Tereus*, and quite another to insist that the festival manifested itself in exactly the same way as in *Metamorphoses* 6. Despite the principle of general faithfulness articulated above, I do not believe that Procne's histrionics — the costume, ululations, and superheroism — are Sophoclean (or even Accian). The lack of evidence in the fragments and the hypothesis is a factor. One should expect a festival that precipitates such a bold rescue, a rescue that ostensibly brings Philomela to the stage for the first time, to have been mentioned in a source earlier than Ovid. Even the hypothesis to the *Bacchae* notes that Pentheus went to Cithaeron dressed as a woman (λαμβάνοντα γυναικὸς ἐσθήτα). My belief is also founded on a second principle, which applies specifically to the poet's tragic narratives. If the first principle was an intertextual one, describing the relationship between Ovid and his Greek models, the dynamic of the second principle is *intratextual*. Whenever a text can be read in light of another — whether through allusion, appropriation, or any one of countless avenues of reference (conscious or unconscious) — this condition is called intertextuality. Intratextuality is essentially the same condition, except that it applies to avenues of reference *within* a single work. My second principle, therefore, takes stock of how Ovid balances and counterbalances his tragic narratives against one another.

Ovid's predilection for telling similar stories within similar contexts in the *Metamorphoses* is well documented⁴⁰. Especially prominent are likenesses between tragic narratives. The Tereus narrative, for example, is linked to the Hecuba narrative of book 13 in the reactions of both Procne and Hecuba to the violence they discover. Procne is stricken dumb with outrage after reading Philomela's web:

⁴⁰ The three most influential critics have been Otis (1970), Larmour (1990), and Newlands (1997).

dolor ora repressit,
verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae
defuerunt, nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque
confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est.

Grief weighed down her lips, and sufficiently indignant words failed her tongue, try as it might to find them. Nor is there time to weep, but she rushes off to confuse right and wrong, wholly absorbed by the thought of revenge.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.583-6)

Very similar is the reaction of Hecuba upon finding the corpse of Polydorus:

obmutuit illa dolore,
et pariter vocem lacrimasque introrsus obtortas
devorat ipse dolor.

She was stricken dumb with grief, grief itself consumed both her voice and her tears welling up from inside.

(*Metamorphoses* 13.538-540)

Her silence likewise culminates in an obsessive pursuit of vengeance:

ulcisci statuit poenaeque in imagine tota est.

She decided to vindicate herself, wholly absorbed by the thought of revenge.

(*Metamorphoses* 13.546)

The passages are mutually allusive, creating an intratextual network against which each heroine's response to Thracian brutality is thrown into sharp relief.

The connection between the Tereus and Hecuba narratives is atypical, because both tales are of substantial length and can be read independently of one another. Ovid frequently makes tragic narratives interdependent by abbreviating one or more well known features of one story and expanding them in another. The most widely acknowledged example of abbreviation appears in the Medea narrative of *Metamorphoses* 7, which has the following structure: the taking of the golden fleece (7.1 - 158); the

rejuvenation of Aeson (159 - 296); and the murder of Pelias (297 - 390). Each episode is roughly 100 to 150 verses long. A fourth episode follows, namely the events that were immortalized by Euripides: Medea's revenge against Jason, realized by the poisoning of Glauce and Creon, and ultimately the murder of her own children. After full treatments of the first three episodes, the reader will be surprised to find the fourth — the ostensible climax of the Medea narrative — handled in a scant four verses:

sed postquam Colchis arsit nova nupta venenis
flagrantemque domum regis mare vidit utrumque,
sanguine natorum perfunditur inpius ensis,
ultraque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma.

But after the new bride was burned with the Colchian poisons, and the two seas saw the king's palace burning, her impious sword is stained with the blood of her sons, and the mother flees Jason's sword after seeking revenge in this evil fashion.

(*Metamorphoses* 7.394-7)

Critics agree that many of the Euripidean elements in this cursory passage are to be found in the Tereus narrative, which provided the poet with the opportunity to tell the most famous Medea story without actually telling it⁴¹. From a sequential perspective, a tragic tale of infanticide committed by a woman in a foreign land in retaliation against her husband is told in book 6; there is no need for another in book 7⁴².

To return to the issue of the *trieterica*, and to apply the intratextual principle outlined above, it appears that Ovid's version of the Tereus myth incorporates the Bacchic disguise eliminated from the Pentheus narrative of book 3. If the Tereus story were read independently, without reference

⁴¹ Newlands (1997) 192-5 is the most recent discussion. Newlands also locates aspects of the Medea legend in the stories of Scylla (book 8), Procris (book 7), and Orithyia (book 6).

⁴² Furthermore, there may have been no need for another Medea in Ovid's career: he had already devoted *Heroides* 12 to her story, as well as a tragedy, now lost, named after the heroine.

to any other part of the *Metamorphoses*, it would be proper to speak of Procne's maenadism intertextually, with the poet engaging in a kind of tragic *contaminatio* by borrowing a distinctive feature from Euripides' *Bacchae* — a Dionysiac change of identity — for his adaptation of Sophocles⁴³. Yet the suppression of this feature in the Pentheus story establishes an intratextual connection to book 6. These connections arise from similarities between the model texts. What enables Ovid to link the Hecuba and Medea narratives with the Tereus narrative are the situations of these heroines in the original plays, which are analogous to that of Procne (who is both the victim of a Thracian king and a child-killer). The analogy between the *Tereus* and the *Bacchae* consists of a shared Dionysiac context, the worship of the god, whether mandated by the *trieterica* or by the god himself⁴⁴. Ovid exploited this context, expanding his intratextual network by allowing Procne to play the bacchant instead of Pentheus.

Taking into account both the intratextual dynamic of the *Metamorphoses*, which is founded upon common ground between the works of the Greek tragedians, and Ovid's general faithfulness to his tragic models, I concur that the *trieterica* originated with the *Tereus* of Sophocles. Although the particulars may never be known, I suspect that the festival was a thematic backdrop for the savage and inexplicable actions of the play. It may even have served as a pretext for the sacred ancestral meal featured in Ovid (647-660)⁴⁵. However, the lack of evidence in the fragments and other pre-Ovidian *testimonia* indicates that the Sophoclean *trieterica* were less prominent than in the epic version. They were prominent enough for Ovid to use them as the basis for Procne's transformation into a maenad, a transformation deferred from the Pentheus narrative in accordance with the poet's intratextual approach. The presentation of Procne as a bacchant was a departure from Sophocles, and with it there came another, the imprisonment of Philomela. Rescuing

⁴³ The term 'tragic *contaminatio*' was coined by Larmour (1990).

⁴⁴ Given a Dionysiac rite in the *Tereus*, it is not too much to imagine Dionysus himself as the *deus ex machina*.

⁴⁵ So Burnett (1998) 182, although in Burnett's reconstruction a Dionysiac meal stems not from the *trieterica*, but from Procne's own ingenuity.

her sister gives *terribilis Procne* (6.595) something to do, an obstacle to overcome. The length of Philomela's incarceration, the remote location of the prison, the fantastic rescue — all of these aspects are at home within an epic format, but are out of place within a tragic format.

It is impossible to determine exactly how Sophocles brought Philomela and Procne together; even to theorize would require a more thorough examination of the external evidence, which is beyond the scope of this essay. Yet it is clear that the recognition in the tragedy was less complicated. Jennifer March offers a plausible scenario in this collection, especially in light of an Ovidian reading of the fragments. On the one hand, a face-to-face encounter between the sisters is suited to the formal and cultural codes of tragedy, which privilege human interaction above all else. On the other hand, Tereus' disguising of Philomela allows the fiction of her death to be retained⁴⁶. Ovid's response to this scenario was to separate the sisters, demonstrating through their reunion the capacity of epic narrative for handling the extraordinary.

3. Ovid as a tragic poet

The challenges Ovid faced in constructing his narrative are apparent. Given a play that had defined the Tereus-Procne-Philomela myth, it was imperative to go where Sophocles had not. Even the triple metamorphosis, which might have provided a final *tour de force*, had been handled in the *Tereus*. Hence the Latin narrative has a rather perfunctory tragic kernel: out of nearly 250 verses, only 100 or so are devoted to events that can be comfortably located within the scope of the original drama. The remaining 150 lines encompass events beyond the dramatic scope, events that could not be, would not be, or never were presented on the Sophoclean stage. Within his many new landscapes Ovid stages scenes as cathartic as anything in the *Tereus*. It is impossible, for example, to deny the power of the episode in which Philomela is raped and mutilated, wherein Ovid's program of transforming tragedy into epic is

⁴⁶ March (this volume) 157-161.

most fully realized. In particular, the poet maintains an unflinching focus on the removal of the girl's tongue, as if defying the reader to look away:

ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem
luctantemque loqui comprehensam forcipe linguam
abstulit ense fero. radix micat ultima linguae,
ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae,
utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit.

With pincers he took hold of her indignant tongue as it continually called the name of father and tried to speak, and he sheared it with his merciless sword. The tip of the root quivers, the tongue itself lies there and, trembling, palpitates on the black earth, just as the shorn off tail of a snake twitches, and as it dies it seeks the feet of its mistress.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.555-560)

As was the case for Philomela's grand entrance, the narrator employs a simile to help the reader visualize the assault: her tongue crawls, snake-like, upon the ground. All of this amounts to a verbal spectacle — an image of brute violence aimed squarely at Roman sensibilities. In Ovid's theater of epic it is possible to witness what the audience in the Theater of Dionysus never saw.

It is also possible to hear what the original audience never heard, namely the voice of Philomela. Her rebuke of Tereus following the rape is a striking counterpoint to the Sophoclean drama, for on the stage Philomela could only have appeared *in persona muta*. The Philomela of the *Metamorphoses* has full command of her ability to speak, with which she threatens Tereus⁴⁷:

“quandocumque mihi poenas dabis. ipsa pudore
proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur,
in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,
inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo.
audiet haec aether, et si deus ullus in illo est.”

⁴⁷ For Greek notions regarding the dangers of a woman's tongue see Burnett (1998) 185.

‘Someday, I know, you’ll pay the price. I myself — modesty be damned — shall say what you have done. If I have the chance, I shall proclaim it in public. If held captive in the forest, I shall fill it with my voice and call the stones to witness. The very heavens will hear of these things, and whatever god there is as well.’

(*Metamorphoses* 6.544-8)

In giving speech to a character who had been speechless, Ovid stakes his claim within the mythographic tradition. What is more, the speech of Philomela stands in direct contrast with the stunned silence of Procne as she reads her sister's web (6.583-86). How Procne reacted in the *Tereus* is uncertain, but the ominous silence assumed, as per Ovid, in some reconstructions of the drama seems doubtful⁴⁸. Tragic characters tend to react to strange information with interjections of the οἶμολοι variety, which in turn tend to prompt questions or comments from the Chorus or from other onlookers. This is the situation in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, when Theseus discovers the letter written by Phaedra (856-880). A similar situation in the *Tereus* is feasible, especially if Philomela were standing nearby in silence, waiting for her sister's reaction. Just as Sophocles canonized Philomela as forever mute, so he portrayed Procne as a dynamic speaker, who was able to articulate her sorrows (fr. 583), as well as her plan of vengeance against Tereus later on. Ovid, in turn, reversed the established roles, consigning Procne to silence and giving Philomela a voice of her own⁴⁹.

Throughout this essay I have contrasted the genres of epic and tragedy, highlighting their essential differences in the service of defining Ovid's program in the Tereus narrative. While it is true that the narrative diverges from the Sophoclean play in many aspects, there are nevertheless several areas in which the two works converge. I have already mentioned one area, a mythical subject matter, which the narrative code of either genre specifies. That the same legend could be showcased in a tragedy and an epic suggests a similar mythographic process for both. As Peter

⁴⁸ Calder (1974) 89, Kiso (1984) 67.

⁴⁹ Following March's reconstruction (this volume, pp. 157-161), Ovid also achieved a visual reversal by disguising Procne instead of Philomela.

Burian has shown, tragedies often conform to patterns that dictate plot. One common pattern is the ‘retribution pattern,’ which involves characters being punished through either divine or human agency. This pattern informed the *Agamemnon*, the *Hecuba*, the *Trachiniae*, the *Medea*, and, presumably, the play under discussion⁵⁰. Burian’s patterns, in their capacity to prescribe tragic storylines, and in the facility with which they combine with one another, are nothing less than narrative codifications. In adapting the *Tereus*, Ovid inherited not only Sophocles’ plot, but also the underlying retribution pattern.

Another convergence consists in a code of tragedy that I have not yet defined. This is the *functional code*, which is concerned with elements or devices, *functions*, so intrinsic to tragedy as to invoke an automatic association with the genre. Just as a simile may be considered primarily a function of epic, even though other genres like tragedy also make use of it, so irony, which obtains when the audience knows more than the characters, may be said to have a dramatic — and especially tragic — function. Ovid’s *Tereus* narrative is ironic: the reader knows that Philomela is alive, while Procne is left to mourn (563-570). This irony is not necessarily dependent upon Sophocles, whose spectators probably discovered the truth about Philomela only when Procne did. Ovid was employing the functional code of tragedy directly. Other functional codifications include Philomela’s first appearance, which is marked like a tragic entrance (*ecce venit...Philomela*, 451)⁵¹, or Procne’s Dionysiac masquerade, which is inherently theatrical (*Bacche*, [*furias*] *tuas simulat*, 596). In instances like these the reader perceives the narrative functioning more as a tragedy than as an epic.

A larger instance of a tragic function is the speech of Philomela, which prior to this point I have regarded as emblematic of Ovid’s epic retelling of the *Tereus*. Yet her speech can be read tragically, not in the sense that it derives from the play (it cannot), but in the sense that it is highly

⁵⁰ Burian (1997) 187-8. Other patterns include the ‘sacrifice pattern,’ the ‘rescue pattern,’ and the ‘return-recognition pattern.’ Burian notes that the patterns easily combine with one another, and are easily altered to challenge the expectations of the audience (189-190).

⁵¹ Anderson (1982) *ad loc.* comments on the ‘dramatic entrance of Philomela.’

dramatic in and of itself. As striking as it is to have anything from Philomela’s lips, more striking is her rhetorical prowess. Her words are pointed and polished, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

“nec te mandata parentis
cum lacrimis movere piis nec cura sororis
nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura?
omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis,
tu geminus coniunx!”

‘Nothing held you back, not even my father’s orders, his loving tears, not even my sister’s anxiety, my virginity, or your wedding vows! You have confounded everything. I am forced to become my sister’s rival; you, a husband to the both of us!’

(*Metamorphoses* 6.534-8)

Her speech is tantamount to a dramatic *rhexis*, the opening gambit in what could have become an *agon*, had *Tereus* responded with words instead of violence. Philomela’s *rhexis* enables her, however briefly, to become a bona fide tragic heroine — to shed her supporting role as an Ismene or a Chrysothemis, and to take center stage as an Antigone or an Electra, to say nothing of Procne herself.

The last convergence with the functional code of tragedy that I will examine involves the web of Philomela. In the *Tereus* she weaves the story of her violation (fr. 595), but it is not known what form her weaving takes. It is commonly assumed to be a robe or cloak on the bases of fr. 586 and a Lucanian bell crater (Louvre CA 2193) that seems to depict Philomela holding an embroidered *peplos*. Furthermore, there is no definitive information on whether the story was told through letters or pictures (or both). Burnett claims that the question is moot⁵². Fitzpatrick, however, observes that a web of words is safer in a barbarian, and likely unlettered, land: ‘The illiterate *Tereus* believes the removal of Philomela’s tongue is sufficient to prevent the revelation of his actions.’⁵³ Ovid’s depiction of the web supports the proposition of writing in Sophocles. The

⁵² Burnett (1998) 186 n. 34.

⁵³ Fitzpatrick (2001) 98.

actual message is described very briefly (*purpureas...notas*, 577), but most likely consists of letters: a *nota* is generally a mark or character of some kind⁵⁴, while the uniform color of the marks suggests written words rather than pictures. There are other indications of literacy in the narrative. First, there is the barbarous nature of Tereus, whose only answer to Philomela's brilliant *rhexis* is to cut out her tongue, and who achieves eloquence only when goaded by love (*facundum faciebat amor*, 469; Tereus is asking Pandion's consent to bring Philomela to Thrace). A man who is not much for speaking is probably not much for reading, either. A second, and more telling indication, is the manner in which Procne handles the web: she unrolls it like a scroll (*evolvit vestes*, 581) and reads a song that rouses pity (*carmen miserabile legit*, 582). The epic Philomela becomes a poet, her text a tragedy in its own right.

Ovid encourages a literate (and literary) interpretation of the web. Yet exactly what Philomela writes is obscure. Here is the weaving scene in full:

stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela
purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis,
indiciū sceleris.

She suspended a clever warp from a barbarian loom, and wove crimson letters among white threads, a sign of harm done.

(*Metamorphoses* 6.576-78)

Given Ovid's penchant for *ekphrasis* in the *Metamorphoses*, the reader perhaps expects Philomela's message to be spelled out more explicitly. Book 6 is home to one of the most elaborate *ekphrases* in the poem — the description of the tapestries woven by Arachne and Minerva (70-128). Furthermore, Ovid has eschewed another favorite practice, the full disclosure of female sufferings by means of writing. He perfected this mode of discourse in his *Heroides*, and continued it in *Metamorphoses* 9, in which Byblis writes to her brother, Caunus, to reveal her love for him (9.530-563). One might argue that to describe one more piece of weaving or writing would have been too much; or that there is a world of difference

between the amatory *pathos* of the *Heroides* and the atrocities endured by Philomela; or even that it was not necessary for the girl to recapitulate what the reader had witnessed firsthand less than twenty verses earlier. However, excessiveness is also one of the poet's best known traits. Had there been a second account of the rape and mutilation, critics would label it most Ovidian.

As it stands, Philomela's web is legible in two ways. One reading obtains within the *Metamorphoses* at large. The juxtaposition of crimson and white carries many contingent associations: king and maiden, impurity and purity, bruises and unblemished skin. Elsewhere in the poem Ovid combines these colors to symbolize sexual release, most notably in the Pyramus and Thisbe narrative in book 4, in which the blood of Pyramus dyes the white fruit of the mulberry tree (4.121-7)⁵⁵. The message in the hues of the web is clear, even if the words themselves are not. Another reading concerns the web's nondescript appearance, which cannot be far from the original Sophoclean artifact. Whatever form is ascribed to the 'voice of the shuttle' in the *Tereus*, be it a *peplos* or something else, it is unlikely that its letters were recognizable to anyone in the audience, save perhaps those seated in the first few rows. Ovid's reader sees what most of the spectators in the Theater of Dionysus would have seen: markings on cloth. In a narrative full of bold, violent spectacles, Ovid preferred a simple spectacle, an essential function of Greek stagecraft.

I conclude with four observations. First, it is possible to derive the general plot of the Sophoclean play from *Metamorphoses* 6, provided that one observes the essential differences between the codes of tragedy and epic — particularly the formal codes, which are the most responsible for demarcating 'offstage' and 'onstage' action. Although Ovid preserves the broad outlines of the tragedies he adapts, not everything in his narratives occurred in full view of the original audiences. Events like the marriage of Procne and Tereus and the voyage of Tereus to Athens lie outside the

⁵⁴ OLD s.v. 'nota' 3-9.

⁵⁵ The classic discussion of crimson and white in the *Metamorphoses* is Rohrer (1980). See also Larmour (1990) 140.

dramatic timeframe, while the rape of Philomela and the murder of Itys are too violent to have been presented directly. (A Greek cultural code is also perceptible in the exclusion of these latter events.) Yet the *Metamorphoses* encompasses all of this and more, due to the ability of the external narrator to describe any time or place (and to tailor the descriptions to the culture of the reader).

Second, the Dionysiac *trieterica* were somehow part of the *Tereus*, but Procne's maenadic histrionics were not. Generic coding can be brought to bear here, for a spectacular transformation such as this, so effortlessly incorporated into an epic narrative, takes the Sophoclean festival further. It is nonetheless important to consider the Bacchic masquerade from an intratextual viewpoint — how Ovid's adaptations of tragedies throughout the *Metamorphoses* compare to one another. Often the poet suppresses a prominent aspect of one play and highlights it elsewhere. Procne is given the dress of a bacchant instead of Pentheus, who in Ovid's retelling of the *Bacchae* ventures to Cithaeron without his canonical, Euripidean disguise. The transference is predicated on a preexisting connection between the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, i.e. the worship of Dionysus.

Third, the Ovidian version of the *Tereus* is a self-conscious demonstration of what is possible in a theater of epic. Implicit in this demonstration is the reader's awareness of the story and scope of the dramatic mode. In this regard, Ovid's first audience was better informed than his modern audience, to whom the Sophoclean play is lost, replaced by the now canonical story of *Metamorphoses* 6. As this essay has shown, it is still possible to recover the ancient perspective in many respects. To do so is to bring to fulfillment Ovid's program of singing 'shapes changed into new bodies' ('in nova...mutatas...formas | corpora,' 1.1-2), for appreciating a metamorphosis, whether of human beings into birds or of tragedy into epic, requires an understanding of both the original and the renovated form.

Finally, Ovid was interested in the *Tereus* less as source material for a transformation story (recall again the rather anticlimactic metamorphoses of Tereus and the sisters) than as an actual tragedy. For all its epic trappings, the poet's story conforms to the tragic functional code, most notably in the *rhexis* of Philomela and in the straightforward spectacle of

the web. In crafting a narrative that functions like a tragedy, Ovid entered himself in that seminal contest of tragic poets, in which the appropriation of myth was *sine qua non*. This notion is implicit in the intratextual network of the *Metamorphoses*, whose reallocation of distinctive tragic moments is analogous to how the tragedians must have crafted their plays — not in a vacuum but in dialogue with their competitors, past and present. It is hardly coincidental, for example, that Ovid's Procne plays the part of a Medea, especially given the likelihood that the latter heroine in her Euripidean incarnation inspired Sophocles in creating the former heroine⁵⁶. In a tradition consisting mostly of grievous losses, the loss of the *Tereus* is arguably the most grievous of all. Nevertheless, the *Metamorphoses* enables the recovery of Sophocles' play, both its substance and its significance, in the transition from theater to metatheater⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ March (this volume) pp. 151-4.

⁵⁷ I wish to acknowledge the audience at the *Fragments of Sophocles* conference for its warm reception of my thesis. Special thanks are due to David Fitzpatrick, Jennifer March, and Alan Sommerstein for their helpful observations; also to Stephen Hinds, the supervisor of my doctoral dissertation, from which this essay derives. Any errors or omissions are naturally my responsibility.