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METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS
ON THE TEXT AND ACTION OF SOPHOCLES'
TEREUS (S. FR. 583 + *POXY.* 5292)



ABSTRACT: *POxy.* 5292, portions of which overlap with S. fr. 583, offers precious new information about Sophocles' fragmentary *Tereus*. The implications of the papyrus for our understanding of this tragedy have recently been considered at length by Patrick Finglass. Finglass' larger interests have to do with matters of methodology, although he is rarely explicit about his own working methods or what he believes can be learned from consideration of earlier scholarly conjectures about the *Tereus* — many of them now seemingly proven false. This article considers Finglass' handling of the papyrus with an eye to a number of simultaneously practical and theoretical questions about problems posed by literary fragments generally.

OUR KNOWLEDGE of Sophocles' fragmentary *Tereus* has now been enriched by the publication of *POxy.* 5292,¹ portions of which overlap with S. fr. 583 (preserved by Stobaeus). *Inter alia*, the new material appears to confirm that the speaker of fr. 583 is Tereus' wife Procne and to establish that she is onstage with the chorus, ruling out the possibility that the lines belong to the prologue. It also shows that the speech to which fr. 583 belongs was followed by the arrival of a Shepherd, seemingly bearing news for the queen. The implications of the papyrus for our understanding of Sophocles' play have been considered at length by Patrick Finglass in a recent article.² One of Finglass' larger interests, however, is methodology,

* Thanks are due an anonymous reader for thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. S. Slattery, "Sophocles, *Tereus*", in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* LXXXII (2016) 8–14.
2. Patrick Finglass, "A New Fragment of Sophocles' *Tereus*", *ZPE* 200 (2016) 61–85. Various comments and suggestions on the new text by Finglass are also embedded in the original publication of the papyrus by Slattery. What follows in this article is a detailed critique of Finglass' arguments in his study of Sophocles' lost play, and of the methodo-

and he closes his main discussion by expressing the hope that “sober reflection on what previous scholars have got wrong — and right — should assist future research on fragmentary drama” (p. 81). Finglass’ purposes thus go well beyond this individual lost Sophoclean tragedy; the larger point is to illustrate how such material can and should be read. At the same time, Finglass is rarely explicit about either his own working methods or what he believes can be learned from earlier scholarly conjectures — many of which now appear to be erroneous — regarding the text and action of the *Tereus*. My goal in this paper is to articulate some significant aspects of Finglass’ treatment of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292, and to treat these as a basis for a series of more explicit remarks regarding the handling of fragmentary literary material. Put another way, in what follows I take seriously Finglass’ claim to be offering not just a study of an individual papyrus, but a larger meditation on how we do our work and what kind of conclusions we can reasonably expect it to produce. As Finglass offers a comprehensive review of earlier scholarship on Sophocles’ play, I confine myself to discussing his own analysis, which represents the first synthetic study of the implications of the new text. I do not treat all of Finglass’ arguments at equal length, but I generally follow the order of the points he makes, and my goal has been to represent his approach to the play, and to the larger process of working with the fragments of lost ancient drama, as clearly and carefully as possible. As will become clear, we disagree on a number of basic points, and many of the methodological conclusions I draw are different from those for which Finglass appears to be arguing.

The text of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 printed below is taken direct from Finglass’ article, which is itself dependent on Radt’s edition of the fragment as Stobaeus transmits it, on the one hand, and on Slattery’s edition of the papyrus, on the other.³

logy implicit in them. The issues treated are of considerable complexity and importance, and the differences between us are substantial. But these differences are of an intellectual and professional nature, and the reader should not confuse them with an *ad hominem* attack of any sort or with a general disparagement of Finglass’ enormous contributions to our understanding of Sophoclean poetry in particular.

3. For the purposes of this paper, I retain Finglass’ line-numbering, which omits the 20 partially preserved lines (only 13 of them containing decipherable letters) in Col. i of the papyrus.

	<p> <i>νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς. ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ἔβλεψα ταύτη τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν, ὡς οὐδέν ἐς μεν. 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 πατρώων τῶν τε φρυγάντων ἄπο, αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους, αἱ δ' εἰς ἀθήη δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπίροθα. καὶ ταῦτ', ἐπειδὰν εὐφρόνη ζεύξη μία, χρεῶν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν. νόμῳ μὲν [εἰ δ' ἐκ τοιου[ἴδοιμι και[τὸ γὰρ ποθ[ἀλλ' εἴ τελέ[χρηστὴν φ[δέσποια[.] [</i> </p>	5
(ΧΟ(ΡΟΣ)		15
(ΠΟΙΜ(ΗΝ)	<p> <i>θέλων τι[οὔκουν δ[λόγων με[ὄρκον γαρ[φράσειν α[λέξασα [25 κοινων[εἶρπον μ[ἀλλ' ἐξ ἄγρα[ὄς ἦμιν ερ[στείχων δ[ἐνθεν χοαί[ἔστην ὑπό[τεράμν' ὑπ[].. παρ[</i> </p>	20
(ΠΡΟΚΝΗ)		25
(ΠΟΙΜΗΝ)		30

I. *Attribution*

Finglass begins his discussion of the new material from the *Tereus* with the question — raised long ago by Schmidt — of whether fr. 583 ought actually to be assigned to Sophocles, as Stobaeus maintains, or be given to Euripides instead. He responds to this concern by noting (pp. 63–4) that line 29 of the text (preserved only in the papyrus) offers $\tilde{\eta}\mu\nu$ with short *iota*, which is attested in Sophocles at e.g. *Ai.* 733; *El.* 17; *OC* 1201, but is absent from Euripides, while also observing that the Shepherd's speech opens without a “prefatory ‘declaration of intention to narrate’”, which is always present in Sophoclean messenger speeches, but not in Euripidean messenger speeches. Finglass takes the first point to prove Sophoclean authorship (“Now we can be sure that [Schmidt's hypothesis] is incorrect”): had Euripides been willing to use the metrically convenient $\tilde{\eta}\mu\nu$, we would surely have it somewhere in the preserved plays and fragments, and its presence in line 29 thus rules out assigning him the fragment. At the same time, Finglass dismisses the problem of the way the Shepherd's speech begins on the ground that “we have nowhere near enough messenger speeches by Sophocles to exclude the possibility that some of them ... began in what can seem to be a Euripidean manner, without any prefatory statement”. The issue thus “does not harm the case for Sophoclean authorship” and instead amounts to a “warning against overconfident attributions on the basis of a single stylistic feature of restricted attestation” (p. 64).

Finglass' hedging (“of restricted attestation”), however, brings out a separate methodological issue, which is that the absence of a “prefatory ‘declaration of intention to narrate’” does in fact damage the case for Sophoclean authorship of the fragment, even if it does not determine the case. Indeed, as Finglass himself observes (p. 64), had only lines 25–8 of the Shepherd's speech survived, we might reasonably have concluded that the author was Euripides rather than Sophocles. Nor is the argument regarding $\tilde{\eta}\mu\nu$ vs. $\tilde{\eta}\mu\tilde{\iota}\nu$ watertight, for one could respond in the same way Finglass has to the problem of the beginning of the messenger speech, by arguing that if we had just a bit more evidence, we might find $\tilde{\eta}\mu\nu$ in Euripides as well. Finglass' treatment of this aspect of the new text thus obscures its methodologically most interesting aspect, which is that we are confronted here with two bodies of evidence that point in diametrically opposite directions, one in favor of Sophoclean authorship, the other in favor of Euripidean authorship. This is a common dilemma — the presence of recalcitrant evidence

— and what one should not do in such situations is treat one point as probative, while dismissing the other as insignificant. Instead, what is called for is the articulation of a principle that allows a decision to be reached as to which body of evidence is to be judged more telling. In this case — as implicitly in Finglass’ handling of the question — one obvious working rule might be that minor stylistic choices are less likely to be under an author’s deliberate control than gross structural features of dialogue, meaning that consistency of the former can be judged more significant than variation in the latter. Sample-size might also be taken to be significant, as seems again to be hinted at in Finglass’ “of restricted attestation”. This is arguably an easy case, which is to say that Finglass is likely right to treat the suggestion of Euripidean authorship as unpersuasive. But the evidence cuts both ways, and effective evaluation of it requires that the question be approached with a clear general working methodology in mind.

II. ἀήθη in line 10

ἀγνηθῆ (“joyless”) in Radt’s version of line 10 of S. fr. 583+POxy. 5292 is Scaliger’s emendation of Stobaeus’ obviously incorrect ἀληθῆ (“true”). One manuscript of Stobaeus offers ἀήθη instead, and the same reading (partially restored) is found in the papyrus (ἀήθ[η]). The question then becomes what to print. Finglass uses the papyrus to defend the minority reading in Stobaeus, asserting (p. 65) that “the fact that ἀήθη is an ancient reading is significant — no longer can we regard it as the product of a chance error by a single mediaeval scribe”, and raising doubts about Scaliger’s ἀγνηθῆ on the basis of a number of essentially literary considerations discussed below. This conclusion thus (p. 66) “reminds us that readings weakly attested in mediaeval manuscripts should not be automatically condemned, since they may nevertheless contain the truth”. This once again is an articulation of a general critical principle, with implications that go well beyond the Tereus fragment. But both of Finglass’ points are methodologically problematic, and the decision between ἀήθη and ἀγνηθῆ must be made on a different basis.

If all manuscripts but one of Stobaeus offer ἀληθῆ, while the outlier has ἀήθη, the outlier might theoretically be better than the others overall and preserve the correct reading. If this cannot be shown, it is *prima facie* more likely that ἀήθη represents a clumsy error or a scribe’s independent

attempt to fix an obvious difficulty in the text he was copying than that the variant is legitimate. This is particularly the case here, since the manuscript in question is B, which Wachsmuth dates to the 16th century (thus hardly “mediaeval”) and describes as “ab homine docto audacter interpolatus”. To argue that the papyrus’ ἀήθη supports a minority reading in Stobaeus is thus — speaking in very general terms — most likely to get the relationship of the various witnesses to one another wrong. *POxy.* 5292 (the earliest witness to the text) has ἀήθη; the manuscripts of Stobaeus (himself several centuries later than the papyrus, with the texts of the authors he preserves almost inevitably corrupted in various ways by copyists even before they got to him) has the nonsensical ἀληθη̃; and the variant in Stobaeus has nothing to do with the reading in the papyrus. This analysis in itself argues for ἀήθη, with Stobaeus’ ἀληθη̃ being either an easy majuscule error (*AA* for *A*), a case of a common word driving out a much rarer one, or both. Nonetheless, as Finglass (citing Barrett) notes, the presence of ἀήθη in *POxy.* 5292 does not prove that this is what Sophocles wrote, but only shows that this reading was found in some manuscripts in Egypt in the 2nd century CE. Sophocles might therefore have written Scaliger’s ἀγηθη̃ instead, with ἀήθη (*POxy.* 5292) and ἀληθη̃ (Stobaeus) both representing errors.

Finglass constructs an elaborate case in favor of ἀήθη over ἀγηθη̃, arguing that the rhetorical structure of lines 9–10 requires the former: just as βαρβάρους intensifies ξένους in 9, so too ἐπίροθα ought to intensify the preceding adjective in 10, “and ἀήθη, a milder word of dislike than ἐπίροθα, fulfils that requirement admirably” (p. 65). Following the papyrus also allows the sense of 9 to align with that of 10: “foreigners and barbarians, strange homes and hostile homes” (p. 65). This approach again amounts to an implicit statement of how such problems can be solved. But the first argument does not actually favor ἀήθη over ἀγηθη̃ (since “joyless” would also be effectively intensified by “abusive”), while the second is circular (since only if one assumes that the lines are “nicely align[ed]” does the case hold). Finglass’ method here can thus be characterized as essentially aesthetic and as such subjective, in that it depends on an impression of Sophocles’ style generally and of how consistently and carefully he wrote. Indeed, Finglass ultimately confirms this, by stating explicitly that “sense must be our guide” (p. 65) in such matters. Editorial decisions must indeed be made this way on occasion, when no other criterion for a decision is available. Practically speaking, however, “sense” is not obviously anything more than a shorthand way of referring to the individual editor’s judgment as to what to print, with that judgment inevitably colored by his or her personal sensibilities

and interests (including e.g. convictions as to Sophocles' ability to forgo or overlook an opportunity to produce a perfectly balanced rhetorical structure). "Sense" thus cannot be excluded as a criterion for making a choice of this sort. But it is a problematic one, and ought accordingly to be treated as something like a last resort.

Were the choice in line 10 between equally represented manuscript readings ἀήθη and ἀγηθη, therefore, a commentator might be forced to throw up his hands and concede that either might be right. An editor, meanwhile, would have no choice but to print one word or the other, depending on his or her convictions about Sophoclean poetics, albeit not necessarily with much conviction. But this is not the case, for ἀγηθη is merely Scaliger's conjecture and is rendered unnecessary by the fact that *POxy.* 5292 now offers the entirely acceptable ἀήθη, which might easily have been corrupted into Stobaeus' ἀληθη. Equally important, ἀγηθη is not attested as a Greek word, although some editors have also chosen to print it at *S. Tr.* 869, and it ought accordingly not to be adopted unless no other choice presents itself. ἀήθη can thus reasonably be regarded as right in 10, just as Finglass says, although for different reasons.

III. *Deductions on the basis of analogy*

Finglass' discussion of the likely place of *S. fr.* 583+*POxy.* 5292 within the *Tereus* as a whole begins with a series of deductions all based in one way or another on the principle of analogy. The first four deductions are that (1) the scene cannot be from the prologue, because the chorus is already present onstage; (2) the speaker must be Procne, given the Shepherd's δέσποινα (presumably vocative) in 19; (3) the chorus is made up of women (since Procne "could not have uttered the intimate sentiments that she does before a group of males" (p. 66)); and (4) no other characters are onstage (since only a close friend would be present for a speech of this sort, "and it would be a callous confidante indeed who made no reaction whatsoever to Procne's passionate lament" (p. 66)).

(1) and (2) are likely true, but — in line with the general spirit of this project — the basis on which the argument is made deserves to be articulated. It seems to be universally accepted that 5th-century Athenian tragedy had a standard poetic and internal social structure; thus the chorus does not normally come onstage at the very beginning of the play, and if there

is a mistress/queen in the action, there is only one. These conclusions are mostly consistent with the evidence we have and make our lives as critics easier. It must nonetheless be conceded that our rules do not apply universally, for Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Supplikes* and (early in the 4th century) Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* violate the dictum regarding the appearance of the chorus. Nor can we know anything about the staging of the hundreds of other plays put on in Athens in the classical period of which we have no trace, which might similarly have violated our perceived norms. These are thus best conceived of less as objective rules than as a set of consensus parameters within which we agree to operate in our handling of obscure ancient material. Should other critics choose to disregard our parameters in their interpretations of material such as S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 (e.g. by claiming that Procne is speaking to at least a subset of the chorus at the very beginning of the play, or by suggesting that the *δέσποινα* is not Procne but another royal woman such as Tereus' mother), we would be unable to prove them wrong, although we might collectively choose to ignore their contributions to the discussion as violating generally accepted guidelines of argumentative procedure.

(3) and (4) are arguments of a different sort, in that they rely not on specific textual evidence but on a combination of a limited set of comparanda — Finglass notes that Sophocles' *Deinaneira* and Euripides' *Medea* in particular open their hearts to choruses of women, so by analogy Procne ought to do so as well — and judgments having to do with psychological and social probability lodged partially in the ancient world and partially in the modern one. The probative value of such judgments, however, is reduced by our lack of knowledge of Procne's character in Sophocles' play, on the one hand, and of what has gone on onstage immediately before this, on the other. Perhaps this Procne is a relatively bold person, for example, and quite comfortable speaking to men (like Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*); or perhaps this is some sort of deception speech, designed to play cynically on a barbarian male chorus' sympathy for a woman and a foreigner (like Medea's manipulative speech to the chorus of Corinthian women in Euripides); or perhaps Procne and another character (e.g. a nurse) have in fact had an extended, heartfelt exchange over the course of the previous 50 lines or so and have talked themselves out, and what is preserved for us is the despairing tail-end of their discussion (which accordingly requires no sympathetic response, especially given the abrupt and seemingly unexpected arrival of a stranger). None of these suggestions need represent Sophocles' own telling of his story, and most likely none of them do.

The vital point, however, is that we cannot know, and that arguments based on analogy thus carry little conviction.

Similar issues arise in regard to Finglass' next deduction, (5) that "the papyrus rules out the possibility" (p. 66) that Procne is already aware of Tereus' crimes against her sister because under those circumstances it would be "extraordinary" (p. 66) that her speech ends as it does (with a reference to the general situation of women rather than her own) and that the chorus responds without reference to such horrible events. Here Finglass relies once again expressly on analogy, comparing the Euripidean Medea's speech to the Corinthian women, at the end of which she declares her desire to take revenge on Jason. But this is a different poet (making analogy an especially suspect tool for the reconstruction of argument and action), and perhaps the situation *is* extraordinary for a now-undetectable reason; or perhaps e.g. Procne is deliberately deceiving the chorus (as Medea is certainly doing) and has chosen to conceal the vital fact that, despite remaining publicly unexpressed, drives her speech. Or perhaps the speech is rhetorically ill-designed (in which case the fault lies with the poet, who drafted it poorly) or is simply not what we would anticipate (in which case the problem is our own lack of information and/or imagination). None of this means that the substance of the deduction is wrong; Finglass may thus be right about what Procne is up to here. But there is simultaneously no way of knowing that he *is* right, which is to say that the argument cannot be framed as if this were a straightforward matter of logical proof, in which our own — actually quite limited and fallible — sense of what is "extraordinary" and what is not in a late 5th-century tragedy can serve as the determining factor.

Finglass builds on this argument regarding what Procne does and does not know ("it follows" (p. 66)) to place her speech not only early in Sophocles' play but "almost certainly [in] the first episode". Similar language is repeated throughout the paper (e.g. pp. 75 "Now that we know that Procne's speech comes from early in the play"; 77 "almost certainly ... early in the first episode"; 78 "almost certainly"), despite the fact that there is no substantial basis for the claim. To put the matter as straightforwardly as possible: Given how vanishingly little we know about the specific action in *Tereus*, why should we not assume that S. fr. 583+POxy. 5292 comes from somewhere in the *second* episode instead? There is no proof either way, and Finglass appears to have placed Procne's speech in the first episode primarily because that is where similar speeches by Medea and Deianaira are located. The point is not that this is arbitrary, because — as noted above — analogy can reasonably be employed as an argumentative tool in

low-information situations. But it is also not much more than simple assertion based on a number of additional assumptions, none of them necessarily valid.

So too with the argument regarding the original length of Procne's speech. Here some simple mathematical calculations are required. We know that the speech must be at least the preserved 16 lines long, and it is almost certainly somewhat longer than that, since $\nu\tilde{\nu}\nu\delta'$ in 1 seems unlikely to represent its opening words. The opening words of lines 10–16 of Procne's speech are located at the top of the right-hand column in *POxy.* 5292, with the ends of what might perhaps be additional iambic trimeter lines preserved in the remains of another column to the left. Lines 1–9 of the speech (from Stobaeus) must thus have stood at the bottom of this same left-hand column in the papyrus and (because there seems to be insufficient room for a choral song in the middle of that column) are presumably part of the same scene. How much room there was between line 1 of the speech (extending nine lines up from the now-lost bottom of the page) and the preserved bottom of the left-hand column in the papyrus (extending nineteen lines down) cannot be said, except to the extent that we know how many lines are generally found in papyrus texts. All these lines, however many they are, might be part of Procne's speech (which could indeed have extended into further columns to the left), and Finglass compares first-episode speeches by Medea (51 lines), Deianeira (37 lines) and Sophocles' *Electra* (56 lines) and suggests that this shows that Procne's speech "almost certainly was much longer" than what is preserved for us. The methodological difficulty here is in the claim to something approaching certainty. This might be a speech like Medea's in the first episode of Euripides' play. But just as likely it is not, and this is in any case once again an argument from analogy, and a weak one at that. All we can say with real confidence is that Procne's speech was at least 16 lines long and might have been longer; everything beyond this is a matter of roughly informed guesswork based on a series of more or less problematic assumptions (discussed above).⁴ Arguments by analogy are guesses designed to take us from the known to the unknown. As noted now repeatedly, they are potentially useful tools, and we may accordingly choose

4. Finglass echoes a suggestion by Nikolai Kazansky that $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$ at the end of the eighteenth line of the left-hand column of *POxy.* 5292 might echo $\nu\delta\mu\phi$ in line 13 of Procne's speech, and suggests that this "would strengthen the notion that both lines are spoken by Procne" (p. 67). But if there is any significance to the supposed echo of an extraordinarily common word (or morpheme), it might just as easily be that a previous speaker used it and Procne takes it over from him or her.

to assign them some probative force, if only for our own convenience. But by their nature they tell us nothing about the object of inquiry, but merely allow us to impose our understanding of other “knowns” upon it, with all the uncertainties that process entails.

IV. *A House of Cards*

With his discussion of Procne’s speech complete, Finglass turns to the Shepherd, in an attempt to deduce what the man is doing onstage and in particular what sort of news he has for the queen. Although he concedes that “only ten words of the eight-line preparatory exchange between Procne and the Shepherd can be recovered for sure”, he also maintains that “discerning the general direction of their content is nonetheless relatively straightforward” (p. 69). What Finglass offers here, however, might alternatively be described as a series of largely arbitrary judgments and assertions, each of which relies on the others, a fact that weakens the overall argument rather than strengthening it. Among the most significant of these assumptions and assertions are the following:

— That *χοητῆν* in line 18 “can hardly qualify anything other than the message that [the Shepherd] is bringing” (p. 68).⁵ In fact, this is merely a guess, and the parallels Finglass supplies (E. *Hec.* 1189 *χοήτ’ ἔδει λέγειν*; Ar. *Av.* 453 *χοητὸν ἐξειπών*; Ar. *Ra.* 1056 *χοητὰ λέγειν*) are weak and noticeably non-Sophoclean.

— That *τι* in line 20 “is unlikely to be anything other than the particle *τι*” (p. 69). This too is a guess, as is the psychologizing claim (see III above) that follows that “such a qualification is more likely to be neutral or negative than positive, since unambiguously good news will probably have been presented in a more forthright manner”.

— That the “inevitable inference” from *φράσειν* in line 24 is that “Procne’s response [*sc.* to the Shepherd’s initial words in lines 19–20] leads the Shepherd to swear, or say that he will swear . . . an oath that what he will say is true” (p. 69); that “Procne has to some degree questioned his reliability” (p. 69); and that “his swift recourse to an oath to guarantee his message

5. Finglass’ comment in n. 47 that “*χοηστή* qualifying *φάτις* seems not to be otherwise attested” is irrelevant to the text of Sophocles, and appears instead to be a reference to Henry’s daring reconstruction of it (p. 81); see n. 6.

implies that he ... will be communicating something out of the ordinary" (p. 70). Although an oath is mentioned in line 21 (*ῥοκον γαρ* []), the syntactic relationship between the words is obscure, and no "inevitable" conclusions present themselves as to the general point of the lines.

— That if the Shepherd is offering to swear an oath, it cannot have to do with Tereus' return from Athens, because "Such a message would not require the Shepherd to swear an oath, nor indeed to delay revealing the burden of his message for so long" (p. 70). Since we know nothing about either the circumstances of Tereus' homeward journey in Sophocles' play or what information Procne has regarding it, there is no basis for the former claim. Nor do we have any idea what anxieties or misperceptions the Shepherd might be laboring under (causing him e.g. to seek reassurances — perhaps an oath guaranteeing his own safety — before he goes much further?).

— That *ἐξ ἄγρᾱ*[c in line 28 appears to mean that the Shepherd "has come from a hunt", which would in turn "require him to travel outside his regular field of operations, giving him the opportunity to stumble across an isolated building not previously within his ken" (p. 70). But even assuming that line 28 is properly restored — and e.g. *ἐξ ἄγρᾱ*[vλ would do just as well — this is a peculiar explanation of the situation, for surely the point of using a shepherd as a discoverer-figure is that such a man has by his very profession an obligation to wander the local hills. A reference to a hunt would thus be superfluous, making this reading of the evidence unlikely on a principle akin to Occam's Razor. And whose hunt could this be in any case except for Tereus'? And why would Tereus organize a hunt in precisely the one place where (on Finglass' reading of the evidence; see below) he ought to have done his best to see that everyone avoided? There are many possible answers to such questions. But they serve to make it clear the nature of the action in Sophocles' play is actually very far from self-evident.

— That if line 33, which Slattery prints in the form] . . . *αμν*', is restored to Henry's *τετραμν*', referring "to a dwelling where Philomela had been confined", this "lends powerful support" (p. 70) to the notion that what the Shepherd is reporting is that he has found Philomela held captive by Tereus somewhere in the countryside.

Near the end of his article, Finglass notes the danger of "outrunning the evidence" for fragmentary tragedies, observing in connection with one particular treatment of the *Tereus* that "The very fulness of the reconstruction ... should have worried us" (p. 80) and expressing concern

that non-specialist readers may be tempted to place credence in such work simply because it has been published in a prestigious academic journal (p. 80 n. 106). This is a valid and important methodological observation. But it applies here as well, in that Finglass has arguably done something very similar with his reading of the Shepherd's speech in the new fragment of Sophocles' play, by constructing a long and elaborate chain of hunches, assertions and conjectures.⁶ Finglass' comment on the final point above, that Henry's *τεροαμν* in line 33 "lends powerful support" to his own theory regarding the content of the Shepherd's message, is telling in this regard. Hypotheses can be mutually dependent (as these two are), and a collection of hypotheses can be carefully balanced against one another to build a larger structure (as Finglass has done). But each additional claim does not increase the likelihood of the overall hypothesis, but instead diminishes it. If two conjectures each have e.g. a 50% chance of being correct (which would be generous in regard to most such hypotheses), the likelihood that both are correct is only 25%, and every additional such conjecture added to the chain decreases the possibility that the scheme has hit upon historical truth exponentially yet again.

The fundamental methodological problem with elaborate arguments such as Finglass' in connection with the Shepherd's speech is accordingly not that they can be shown to be wrong, for they cannot. Instead, the problem is that their very ingenuity means that the naïve reader is likely to find them appealing, even if they are almost certainly incorrect. Indeed, in a perverse fashion, the more sophisticated and comprehensive such an argument is, the *less* likely it is to be right. As Finglass himself observes later on in his article, "All kinds of scenarios are available" to explain what followed this scene in Sophocles' play, and there is no profit in attempting to articulate all of them, for we are shooting blindly in the dark. Although we cannot say much about the specific content of the Shepherd's speech in *Tereus*, therefore, one thing we can say with reasonable confidence is that the proposed reconstruction of it is likely to be wrong on multiple points.

6. Comparison to W. B. Henry's massively restored text of S. fr. 583+POxy. 5292 on pp. 81–2 of Finglass' article suggests that Henry's hypotheses have significantly affected Finglass' reading of what we have of the text (cf. n. 3). This underlines the danger of creative writing of this sort, which can have the unwanted effect of facilitating the locking in of interpretations that lack a solid basis in the primary evidence.

V. *The Hypothesis*

As Finglass notes, *POxy.* 3013 is today “generally, and probably rightly, regarded as a hypothesis to Sophocles’ *Tereus*” (p. 74). The text is as follows:

Τηρεύς· [. . . ὅ]πόθεσις·

Π]ανδίων ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων δυν(άκτ)ης
 ἔ]χων θυγατέρας Πρ[όκ(ν)η]ν καὶ Φιλο-
 μ]ήλαν τὴν πρεσβυτέρ[ω]τερ[αν]
 Πρ[όκ(ν)η]ν Τηρεὶ γάμωι ἔ]ευξεν [τ]ῶι
 τῶ]ν Θραικῶν βασιλεῖ, ὃς ἔ]χεν ἐξ
 αὐ]τῆς υἱὸν προσαγορεύσας
 ἴ]ττον· χρόνον δὲ διελθόντος καὶ
 βουλομένης τῆς Πρ[όκ]νης θεά-
 σασθαι τὴν ἀδελφῆν, ἠξίωσε τὸν
 Τηρέα πορεύσασθαι εἰς Ἀθήνας
 ἄ]ξιον ὁ δὲ παραγενόμενος εἰς
 Ἀθήνας καὶ ἐπ[.....]θεὶς ὑπὸ
 τοῦ Πανδίου [τὴν πα]ρθένον καὶ
 μεσοπορήσας [ἠ]ράσθ[η]ι τῆς παι-
 δός· ὁ δὲ τὰ πικ[τά] οὐ φ]υλάξας
 διεπαρθένευ[σεν]· εὐλ]αβούμε-
 νος δὲ μὴ τῆι ἀ[δελφῆ]ι
 ἐ]γλωσσοτόμη[σε]
 παραγενόμενος [δὲ εἰς τὴν
 Θρ[ά]ικην καὶ τῆς Φ[ι]λομήλας οὐ
 δυναμένης [..... τὴν
 κυμφορὰν δι’ ὕ]φο[υ]ς ἐμήνυσε·
 ἐπιγνοῦσα δὲ ἡ Πρ[ό]κνη τὴν ἀλῆ-
 θειαν ζηλοτυπ[ί]αι
 οἰ]κτροθεῖσα καὶ [.....
 νη]ν ερεινοῖς λα[..... τὸν
 ἴ]ττον ἐσφαγίασε [καὶ καθεψήσα-
 σα παρέθηκε [τῶι Τηρεῖ· ὁ δὲ τὴν
 βορὰν ἀγνοῶν [ἔ]φαγεν· αἱ δὲ φρυγα-
 δευθεῖσαι ἐγέ[ροντο] ἢ μὲν
 ἀ]ηδῶν ἢ δε χε[λιδῶν], ἔ]ποψ
 δὲ ὁ Τηρεύς [

As noted in IV above, Finglass invests considerable effort in arguing that the Shepherd's speech in *POxy.* 5292 contains an account of his discovery of Philomela imprisoned in the countryside. Although this argument is based on a series of questionable assertions (see IV above), it cannot in the nature of things be proven wrong; the question is instead how likely it is to be right, or at least right in part. Here the Oxyrhynchus hypothesis plays a crucial role and offers a concrete demonstration of the general problem with such arguments. In the immediately preceding section of his article, Finglass maintains that "There is no reason why both [the severing of Philomela's tongue and her imprisonment in the countryside] should not have occurred in Sophocles' play" (p. 71), as they do in Ovid. This seems at first glance a curious assertion, for the practical function of the two details is identical. Philomela is raped by Tereus, who wants to keep the story of what he has done from Procne. He can do so by imprisoning Philomela far from her sister or by cutting out her tongue; either action will accomplish his goal, and there is no need for him to resort to both. The hypothesis informs us specifically that Tereus cut out Philomela's tongue, and that after he came to Thrace (*sc.* with her), because Philomela was unable [to tell Procne what had happened], she did so through her weaving.

Finglass is at pains to distance the hypothesis from the action in Sophocles' play — it "sheds relatively little light on the drama, offering as it does a fairly standard account of the myth without, it seems, much engagement with Sophocles' particular retelling" (p. 74) — and to undermine its authority generally — one ought not to place "excessive weight on the testimony of a tragic hypothesis, which in general 'retells the play's myth but handles matters of the play's actual contents rather freely'" (p. 74, citing Van Rossum-Steenbeek). But there is no authority for the former claim in particular, since we have no way to determine how closely the hypothesis hews to Sophocles' text and thus no reason to reject its summary of the action. Instead, these arguments are offered because the hypothesis not only ignores Philomela's imprisonment, which Finglass takes to be central to the plot of Sophocles' play, but patently describes a different version of the story, in which Philomela's tongue is cut out but she is not imprisoned and is indeed seemingly brought straight to her sister. Finglass concludes: "We ... cannot invoke the authority of the *Tereus* hypothesis over the text offered by the fragments themselves and over inferences reasonably derived from them" (p. 74). But this misrepresents the evidence and thus the methodological principle at stake.

If S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 told us that Philomela was imprisoned to keep her from informing Procne of what Tereus had done, we would have little choice but to conclude that the hypothesis was wrong or irrelevant (which roughly represents Finglass' explanation of the matter) or alternatively that it described a *Tereus* by a poet other than Sophocles. But S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 itself tells us nothing of the sort, and the only reason to believe that in Sophocles' version of the story Philomela was confined in the countryside away from Procne, rather than being given over direct to her sister but without her tongue, is Finglass' reading of the minimally preserved lines 19–34. To put the situation in a larger context, there are occasionally situations in which modern scholars must reject the authority of an ancient witness, either because the witness directly contradicts information provided by another source or because what the witness asserts is for one reason or another judged impossible. These are desperate cases, and some convincing explanation of how the rejected witness came to be in error is generally (and appropriately) expected in such circumstances. What we cannot do, on basic methodological grounds, is reject the only ancient evidence we have merely because it contradicts our preferred interpretation of a text or situation. Instead, the more appropriate approach in such a situation is to reject the modern interpretation and look for one that better fits the evidence we have.

Conclusions

Finglass' treatment of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 thus brings out a number of important methodological points in the handling of fragmentary literary texts, although in an occasionally unexpected manner. As he notes, “sober reflection on what previous scholars have got wrong — and right — should assist future research on fragmentary drama” (p. 81). This ought indeed to be our goal, and in that spirit, I suggest that among the specific methodological points that emerge from closer consideration of the new evidence for the text and action of Sophocles' *Tereus* are the following:

— When contradictory evidence presents itself — as in the conflict between the seemingly non-Euripidean use of $\tilde{\eta}\mu\nu$ in line 29 of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 and the seemingly non-Sophoclean absence of a “prefatory ‘declaration of intention to narrate’” in the Shepherd's speech — neither point can be rejected as irrelevant out of hand. Instead, some *ad hoc* principle must be discovered that takes account of the inevitable inadequacy of our data,

while also providing a basis on which to decide which body of evidence is more convincing than the other. This generally occurs implicitly, as in Fin-
glass' handling of the question of the authorship of *Tereus*. Making matters
of this sort explicit would clarify, and thus perhaps improve, such editorial
decision-making.

— Care must be taken in describing isolated individual manuscript
readings (e.g. ἀήθη in manuscript B of Stobaeus' quotation of line 10 of
S. fr. 583+POxy. 5292) as "confirmed" by papyri when no apparent stem-
matic connection exists between the witnesses. Even when the papyrus ap-
pears to be right in such circumstances (as it does here), the manuscript
reading may be a simple error with no more authority than a modern
conjecture.

— Except in extraordinary circumstances, emendation to an un-
attested word, such as Scaliger's ἀγηθη for Stobaeus' ἀληθη in line 10 of
S. fr. 583+POxy. 5292, is ill-advised if better alternatives can be found.
When the choice between a comprehensible ancient reading (such as the
papyrus' ἀήθη) and such a conjecture presents itself, the ancient reading is
to be preferred, both because of its own authority and because the word
itself is attested elsewhere. The situation is somewhat different when the
transmitted text is patently defective, as was true of the text of S. fr. 583
before POxy. 5292 was known. The minority reading ἀήθη then lacked any
authority, but ought nonetheless to have been preferred (as equivalent to a
conjecture, whether intended or not) over Scaliger's ἀγηθη on the principle
of attestation articulated above.

— Analogy is a potentially useful form of argument when other, better
evidence is lacking, but has significant limits due to the fact that it serves
to seek commonalities between different objects. Put another way, analogy
functions until it does not, and identifying the point at which "same"
turns into "different" is a fundamentally subjective enterprise. Arguments
that depend on a mix of literary analogy and psychological plausibility —
what a character "might do" or "should do" in a particular situation — are
particularly treacherous, because they are easily influenced by the modern
reader's own sense of what is right and possible. This issue becomes par-
ticularly troubling in the case of fragmentary texts, for which context must
be reconstructed (generally on the basis of a mix of analogy and other, even
more subjective factors).

— Elaborate "house-of-cards" arguments are inherently dubious, and
the more elaborate they become, the less likely they are to be correct. They
are accordingly to be avoided on principle, the practical methodological

difficulty here being that individual scholars may have a different sense of how many “cards” is one too many. As a corollary to this rule, further hypotheses based on such constructions by another scholar are even less likely to be correct than the original hypothesis.

— Ancient evidence must be carefully distinguished from modern constructions based on it. The former takes priority when the two come into conflict, and arguments that reject original sources in favor of modern hypotheses should be viewed with deep suspicion.

In light of the above, it is worth considering on a more general level the extent to which we can understand fragmentary ancient dramas, the amount of effort that ought to be invested in attempting to do so, and the nature of such projects. Logically, we are in an impossible situation with such material, for the object of our inquiry is lost, making it impossible to determine the truth of any particular assertion about it that goes beyond the specific concrete information we have in hand. If nothing further can be verified (or falsified) about such texts, we are free to talk about them and to use them as we will. Within the scholarly community, this implies adherence to a set of implicit procedural rules like those partially articulated above. Beyond this, we can only hope that our modeling of good practices will cause them to be taken over by others who do not work closely or professionally with our material; it is in this context that Finglass' handling of the *Tereus*, and this response to it, ought to be set.

One might object that the situation is not as dire or subjective as this, given the possibility that e.g. another new papyrus find might clarify whatever points about a fragmentary text are in dispute. But this is to get the situation backward, for we cannot claim potential authority for our interpretations today on the basis of a hoped-for verification of them from some imaginary future source. Instead, when such information surfaces (as it has in the case of Sophocles' *Tereus* in the form of *POxy.* 5292), it merely marks older guesses about it as lucky or unlucky and then resets the scholarly game-clock, leaving us with a fresh set of puzzles. Finglass at several points calls out scholars from earlier generations who in his estimation misjudged issues such as whether the chorus of the *Tereus* was made up of men or of women. But the situation is more like firing a gun at a supposed target in the night: in the morning one may be able to demonstrate that someone hit the bulls-eye, but these results prove nothing about marksmanship and can only sensibly be evaluated as a matter of luck. To offer judgments on such matters in advance — to try to successfully guess what scene in the *Tereus* Procne's speech occurred in, for example, or where the Shepherd has been

and what he is up to — is thus to participate in a game of divine lottery. Differently put, the study of lost texts functions most effectively as a tool with which to discuss matters that interest us today, in the case of Finglass' reading of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 seemingly the issue of women and marriage in Greek tragedy (at pp. 76–80, the extended climax of his argument). But to the extent we wish to engage in this activity as a scholarly community, it is incumbent upon us to think as clearly as we can about what we are doing with our texts before we do it. Despite the enormous inherent interest of the new fragment of the *Tereus*, and the intriguing light it sheds on one small portion of play, these are perhaps the most significant conclusions that can be drawn from it.

A careless reader might be tempted to characterize much of the argument of this paper as negative in nature. But that would be a misunderstanding of its purposes and content, even if I have made a systematic effort to walk back, temper or clarify a number of assertions put forward previously about the implications of S. fr. 583+*POxy.* 5292 for our understanding of Sophocles' lost tragedy, including by one of the most outstanding modern editors of ancient Greek tragedy. The questions taken up here are central to our handling of what survives of ancient literature. That is Finglass' point, and it is mine as well: these are not just a few broken lines of verse on a papyrus scrap from the sands of Oxyrhynchus, but an ideal opportunity to discuss how scholarship works and ought to work.

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