

“Aeschylus” Restored? (Sophocles *Tereus* fr. 581 Radt and *Prometheus Unbound*)

A fragment of a tragic speech (fr. 581 Radt) preserved in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* (633a18-27) predicts the transformation of Tereus into the hoopoe bird (ἔποψ). The speaker of the fragment goes on to report a striking arrangement of bio-doubling. The hoopoe and the hawk are two guises of the same bird, with one turning into the other at the change of the seasons. This fragment is likely the first attestation of Tereus as hoopoe; our earliest literary sources suggest that the dominant version of the myth before the late 5th century had Tereus transformed only into the hawk (for the myth and its attestations, see especially Fitzpatrick 2001). Though Aristotle attributes fr. 581 to Aeschylus, scholars since Welcker have placed the lines in Sophocles' lost play *Tereus* (where Tereus is most certainly turned hoopoe, as Aristophanes' depiction of Tereus in *Birds* attests). There is wide consensus that these lines are part of a speech delivered by a god at the end of the play (for recent bibliography, see Sommerstein et al. 2006). There is much to commend this Sophoclean reconstruction. But even those scholars who accept the attribution still note unease with how the lines stand as a specimen of Sophoclean style. I propose and detail in this paper an alternative possibility, namely that fr. 581 may not come from Sophocles' *Tereus* but rather is a “digression” (for lack of a better term) in the lost Aeschylean play *Prometheus Unbound*.

This paper begins with a brief negative argument before turning to the central positive argument and reconstruction. I first confront the problems with the positive case linking fr. 581 to Sophocles' *Tereus*. Among other objections, the ancient hypothesis for *Tereus* is problematic evidence for reconstructing the end of the play, the current consensus positing a *deus ex machina* speaker in the play is unfounded, and most assessments of the fragment's linguistic features neglect to consider the *Prometheus* plays precisely because of doubts about those plays'

Aeschylean authenticity. Next, I turn to the positive case in support of identifying this fragment as predictions by Prometheus in *Prometheus Unbound*. In both the extant and, so far as we can tell, the lost *Prometheus* play, Prometheus delivers etiological information, akin to the prediction of Tereus into a bird, more frequently than any other figure in the tragic corpus save Athena. Further, key terms in the fragment are prominent too in Aeschylus' *Prometheus* plays. I argue that our fragment is part of a series of examples of Aeschylean imagery which equate the Danaids' flight with that of the flight of Procne and Philomela from Tereus. In support of these connections, I show how acoustic effects in fr. 581 recall and extend Aeschylean practice in previous plays and, most importantly, in the *Prometheus* plays. Finally, I articulate how fr. 581 might fit logically and thematically as part of the catalog of predictions about Heracles' journeys which we have partially preserved in the fragments of *Prometheus Unbound*.

#### Works Cited

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