

THE FRENZIED SWALLOW: PHILOMELA'S VOICE IN SOPHOCLES' *TEREUS**

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates Philomela's metamorphosis into a swallow as inferred from Sophocles' fragmentary Tereus. The first part focusses on the association between the swallow and barbaric language, casting new light on Philomela's characterization in the play. The second investigates the shuttle, the weaving tool which prompts the recognition of Philomela, arguing that the mention of its 'voice' in fr. 595 Radt refers not only to the tapestry which it created, but also to the actual sound of the shuttle, which ancient Greeks associated with the swallow, and thus anticipates Philomela's metamorphosis. The representation of Philomela as a speech-impaired and yet vocal character supports the Dionysiac background of the act of vengeance which she and her sister commit.

Keywords: Sophocles; *Tereus*; Philomela; swallow; shuttle; voice; barbarian

Sophocles' *Tereus* has recently been the object of renewed scholarly interest.¹ Despite its fragmentary state, we are able to reconstruct its main plot thanks to a substantial surviving papyrus fragment (*P.Oxy.* 5292), seventeen quotation fragments preserved in other authors (fr. 581–95b Radt), and a hypothesis in *P.Oxy.* 3013, a prose summary which seems to reflect the content of the play.² *Tereus*, king of Thrace, is married to Procne, the Athenian princess daughter of king Pandion. Feeling alone in a foreign land, Procne asks her husband to fetch her sister Philomela from Athens and bring her to Thrace. *Tereus'* trip, however, does not go as planned: instead of escorting

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¹ P.J. Finglass, 'A new fragment of Sophocles' *Tereus*', *ZPE* 200 (2016), 61–85 has recently published a new interpretation of fr. 583 Radt, in light of the publication by S. Slattery of *P.Oxy.* 5292, which supposedly contains the shepherd's revelation of Philomela's injuries to Procne and overlaps with the text of fr. 583 Radt. This new interpretation has contributed considerably to the reconstruction of the plot. First, it confirmed that the fragment itself would be misplaced in the prologue, contrary to F.G. Welcker, *Die Griechischen Tragödien mit Rücksicht auf den Epischen Cyclus Geordnet* (Bonn, 1839), 1.377–8; W.M. Calder, 'Sophocles, *Tereus*: a Thracian tragedy', *Thracia* 2 (1974), 87–91, at 88; and G.W. Dobrov, 'The tragic and the comic *Tereus*', *AJP* 114 (1993), 189–234, at 201. Second, it would make more probable Philomela's confinement in a rural setting before the recognition. Previously L. Coe, 'A tale of two sisters: studies in Sophocles' *Tereus*', *TAPhA* 143 (2013), 349–84 published a seminal study on the relationship between the Athenian sisters, which would be at the core of the plot. D. Milo, 'Passione, conoscenza e verità: seconde considerazioni sul *Tereo* di Sofocle', *Vichiana* 57 (2020), 95–110 has reconsidered the importance of the shepherd in the play, also in light of *P.Oxy.* 5292 and Finglass's interpretation.

² Fr. 581–95b Radt and *P.Oxy.* 3013, deemed a hypothesis to Sophocles' *Tereus*, and not to the homonymous tragedy of Philocles (Coe [n. 1], 352–3; Finglass [n. 1], 74). For a survey of the mythological account before Sophocles, see D. Fitzpatrick, 'Sophocles' *Tereus*', *CQ* 51 (2001), 90–101, who also provides a reconstruction of the plot of Sophocles' tragedy (which has now been proven incorrect). See also S. Mancuso, 'Anfione–Niobe e Zeto–Aedon: la fondazione di Tebe nel dramma attico', *Gaia* 21 (2018), 1–14.

Philomela to the palace safely, he rapes her and cuts her tongue to prevent her from sharing his ruthless conduct with her sister. Despite her speech impediment, Philomela still manages to inform Procne about the atrocious deeds of Tereus by means of weaving. As a result, the two sisters plot a most horrendous revenge: they kill and cook Itys, Procne and Tereus' son, and serve him to his father, who, unaware, eats the flesh of his own child. When Tereus realises what the appalling banquet consisted of, he leaps towards the women to unleash his fury on them, but the gods stop him and put an end to this cycle of revenge by turning the characters into birds: a hawk and a hoopoe fly from Tereus' body, whereas Procne is turned into a nightingale and Philomela into a swallow.³

The choice to assign a specific type of bird to each character has left readers wondering what the underlying continuity between Tereus, Procne and Philomela, and their metamorphosed alter egos might be. If much has been written on the metamorphosis of Tereus and Sophocles' supposed twist to the myth, according to which the king is turned into two birds instead of one (fr. 581 R.), and on the association of Procne with the nightingale, little to no attention has been paid to Philomela's transformation.⁴ Latin versions of the myth seem to swap the metamorphosed identities of the two sisters, thus assigning the nightingale to Philomela and the swallow to Procne.⁵

In this paper I investigate Philomela's metamorphosis into a swallow as inferred from Sophocles' fragmentary tragedy.⁶ In the first part, I focus on the association between the swallow and barbaric language, with the aim to cast new light on Philomela's characterization in the play; in the second part, I investigate the κερκίς 'shuttle', the weaving tool which prompts Philomela's ὄναργνώρισις. I argue that the mention of its φωνή in fr. 595 Radt refers not only to its tapestry, as scholars have

³ Although the transformation of Philomela into a swallow is not specifically attested in any of the fragments of Sophocles' *Tereus*, contemporaneous sources such as Aesch. *Supp.* 58–67 and *Ag.* 1140–9 unambiguously assign the nightingale to Procne.

⁴ On Tereus' metamorphosis see Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 100, who argues that Tereus' double transformation into a hoopoe and a hawk is supposedly a Sophoclean innovation. More specifically, 'the hoopoe display[s] features of a hawk for part of the year (581.5)' and 'may correspond to the violent nature of Tereus as portrayed in the tragedy'. I agree with Coe (n. 1), 379, who argues that Tereus' transformation into a hawk is 'envisaged as a transformation into his son's avian form, which has emerged ... from his own belly'. See also D. Fitzpatrick and A.H. Sommerstein, '*Tereus*', in D. Fitzpatrick, A.H. Sommerstein and T. Talbot (edd.), *Sophocles: Selected Fragmentary Plays* (Oxford, 2006), 1.141–95, and in particular 192; A. Abbattista and C. Blanco, 'Tereus' illicit penetration(s): a new reading of fragment 581R', in A. Abbattista, C. Blanco, M. Hayley and G. Savani (edd.), *Tereus through the Ages* (Berlin, forthcoming). On Procne's metamorphosis into a nightingale, see A.R. Chandler, 'The nightingale in Greek and Latin poetry', *CJ* 30 (1934), 78–84, especially 79–80; N. Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 57–66; A. Suksi, 'The poet at Colonus: nightingales in Sophocles', *Mnemosyne* 54 (2001), 646–58; K. Zacharia, 'The rock of the nightingale: kingship diplomacy and Sophocles' *Tereus*', in F. Budelmann and P. Michelakis (edd.), *Homer, Tragedy and Beyond: Essays in Greek Literature in Honour of P.E. Easterling* (London, 2001), 91–112; A. Abbattista, 'The tragic nightingale between lament and revenge', *Thersites* 9 (2019), 19–43, in particular 23–7; S. Mancuso, 'La rifunzionalizzazione del mito dell'usignolo nel dramma attico', *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro online* s.n. (2019), 1–19.

⁵ For the myth in Latin literature, see Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 91–2; P. Monella, *Procne e Filomela: dal mito al simbolo letterario* (Bologna, 2005); T. Privitera, *Terei puellae: metamorfosi Latine* (Pisa, 2007) and D. Milo, 'L'usignolo e la rondine nella letteratura latina', *Vichiana* 10 (2008), 261–4. Ovid (*Met.* 6.412–674) is non-committal about which sister turns into which bird, though his obfuscation seems deliberate (6.668–9 *altera ... altera*).

⁶ As Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 100 argues, 'fragment 581 only describes the metamorphosis of Tereus, although it is clear from τούτου δ' that a description of the transformations of Procne and Philomela ... preceded it'.

traditionally maintained, but also to the actual sound of the shuttle, which ancient Greeks associated with the swallow, and thus precludes Philomela's metamorphosis. Finally, I argue that the representation of Philomela as a speech-impeded and yet vocal character supports the Dionysiac background of the crime which the Athenian sisters commit.

1: SOUNDS OF CHANGE IN SOPHOCLES' *TEREUS*

Ancient readers sought to reconstruct the *fil rouge* connecting Tereus, Procne and Philomela to their metamorphic animals respectively. Tzetzēs offered crucial help in the identification of the vocal elements underlying the three metamorphoses.⁷ Of particular interest is the phonological aetiology which is provided in the text. Procne, the nightingale, is said to lament her dead child, by repeating his name: her sound should therefore evoke the repetition of the vocative Ἴτυ Ἴτυ (13); Tereus instead is deemed to ask continuously about the whereabouts of his son's murderers, by repeating the adverb of place ποῦ ποῦ (14). No explanation is put forward for the sound of Philomela, who should supposedly say Τηρεύς με ἐβιάσατο (13–14): a sound which is difficult to reconcile with her avian aetiology. As Coo points out, this aetiology of the birds' cries 'would have fit well into the speech of the *deus ex machina*', where the scholarly consensus has positioned fr. 581 Radt, in which the hoopoe, ἔποψ, is called ἐπόπτης ('viewer'), thus suggesting in turn, as Coo argues, the relationship between Τηρεύς and τηρεῖν ('to watch over'):⁸

τοῦτον δ' ἐπόπτην ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν
 πεποικίλωκε κάποδηλώσας ἔχει
 θρασὺν πετραῖον ὄρνιν ἐν παντευχία·
 ὃς ἦρι μὲν φανέντι διαπαλεῖ πτερὸν
 κίρκου λεπάργου· δύο γὰρ οὖν μορφὰς φανεῖ 5
 παιδὸς τε χαυτοῦ νηδύος μιᾶς ἄπο·
 νέας δ' ὀπώρας ἠνίκ' ἄν ξανθῆ στάχυς,
 στικτὴ νιν αὐθις ἀμφινωμήσει πτέρυξ·
 αἰεὶ δὲ μίσει τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγείεις τόπων
 δρυμοὺς ἐρήμιους καὶ πάγους ἀποικιεῖ 10

Him, the hoopoe who looks upon his own misery, he has adorned with varied colours and has displayed as a bird of the rocks, bold in his full panoply. When spring appears he shall spread the wing of a white-feathered hawk; for he shall show two forms from a single womb, the young one's and his own. And when the harvest is new and the corn is threshed, again a dappled wing will guide him. But ever in hatred he will get clear of these places and will make his home in lonely woods and mountains.⁹

In what follows, I argue that Philomela's metamorphosis, similarly to those of Tereus and Procne, involves an avian aetiology and a linguistic pun as well, which are both directly related to the song of the swallow, and seem to rule out the possibility that her character in the tragedy was not vocal.

⁷ Tzetz. on Hes. *Op.* 566. On the attribution of fr. 581 Radt to Sophocles' *Tereus*, see Coo (n. 1), 378–9. Aristotle (*Hist. An.* 9, 633a18–28) attributes the fragment to Aeschylus.

⁸ Coo (n.1), 353 n. 9; also R.D. Griffith, 'The hoopoe's name (a note on *Birds* 48)', *QUCC* 26 (1987), 59–63.

⁹ Text and translation from H. Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003²).

2: PHILOMELA'S ANIMAL VOICE: THE SOUND OF THE SWALLOW

Philomela's metamorphosis into a swallow, which takes place, we should suppose, at the end of the play, proves particularly useful for gaining new insights on her human characterization in Sophocles' tragedy. Out of the four metamorphosed characters, Philomela is perhaps the one in which the tension between human and animal is more palpable, just as the connection with her metamorphic bird is. As pointed out by Fitzpatrick, Philomela's metamorphosis itself constitutes 'some implicit evidence for the tongue-removal', an episode confirmed by fr. 595 Radt and the reference to the κερκίδος φωνή, analysed below.¹⁰ Philomela's glossectomy and consequent speech impediment allow Sophocles to connect her with her metamorphic animal on a twofold level: on the one hand, by playing with the swallow's association with speech impairment and inarticulate language; on the other hand, by evoking the swallow's correlation with barbaric incomprehensible language, which constituted a well-known topos in Greek literature.¹¹

In ancient Greece the swallow was also, but not exclusively, associated with spring, as we would expect;¹² more importantly, however, its sound was perceived as inarticulate and therefore linked with speech impairment.¹³ In Aristophanes' *Birds*, for instance, Poseidon refers to Triballian's nonsense speech as swallows' twittering (1680–1):

μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐχ οὐτός γε παραδοῦναι λέγει,
εἰ μὴ βαβάζει γ' ὥσπερ αἱ χελιδόνες.

No, by Zeus, he's not saying hand her over; he's just twittering like the swallows.¹⁴

Triballian does not articulate words properly and his speech does not sound logical and coherent.

The association between the sound of the swallow and inarticulate, meaningless speech is also proven by the adjective τραυλός (LSJ), which ancient Greeks used to refer to both people suffering from speech impairment¹⁵ and the twittering of the swallow.¹⁶ A passage from the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On Things Heard* (801b2–8) deals with τραυλοί and highlights how lack of speech articulation is a common trait not only among those who lisp, but also children and old or drunk people, thus establishing a

¹⁰ Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 91 n. 9.

¹¹ As we find in Dobrov (n. 1), 222–3 and n. 74 in particular. As Dobrov discusses, the verb χελιδονίζω 'to chatter like a swallow' is a synonym of βαρβαρίζω, which has, among its meanings, also that of 'speaking as a barbarian' (LSJ). As glossed by Hesychius (χ 325 Cunningham), the barbarians were attributed the ἀσύνητος λαλιά 'uncompounded form of speech'. The paradoxical and subtly ironic effect of associating an Athenian princess in a barbarian land with barbaric sounds has already been highlighted (e.g. Dobrov [n. 1], 207).

¹² For the swallow's association with spring, see Hes. *Op.* 568–9; Ar. *Av.* 714–5; Ael. *VH* 12.20. See E.K. Borthwick, 'Odysseus and the return of the swallow', *G&R* 35 (1988), 14–22, at 14–15, who also argues that the swallow was further associated with marriage and, more broadly, family (e.g. Marcus Argentarius, *Anth. Pal.* 10.4 = 1451–8 *GP*; Theaetetus, *Anth. Pal.* 10.16).

¹³ The association between inarticulate barbaric speech and bird songs is already found in Hom. *Il.* 3.2, where the war cry of the Trojans is compared to the sound of birds (Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῆ τ' ἐνοπή τ' ἴσαν, ὄρνιθες ὤς).

¹⁴ Here and later on in the article, text and translation of Aristophanes from J. Henderson's Loeb volumes.

¹⁵ See Hippoc. *Aph.* 6.32; Callias, fr. 24 K.–A.; Hdt. 4.155.

¹⁶ Both Pamphilus, *Anth. Pal.* 9.57 (= 2843–6 *HE*) and Mnascalces, *Anth. Pal.* 9.70 (= 2655–8 *HE*) also address Philomela directly.

connection between clarity of speech and articulation first, as well as mental lucidity later:

σαφείς δὲ μάλιστα αἱ φωναὶ γίνονται παρὰ τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τὴν τῶν φθόγγων. ἀδύνατον γὰρ μὴ τελέως τούτων διηρθρωμένων τὰς φωνὰς εἶναι σαφείς, καθάπερ καὶ τὰς τῶν δακτυλίων σφραγίδας, ὅταν μὴ διατυπωθῶσιν ἀκριβῶς. διόπερ οὔτε τὰ παιδιά δύναται διαλέγεσθαι σαφῶς, οὔτε οἱ μεθύοντες, οὔτε οἱ γέροντες, οὐθ' ὅσοι φύσει τραυλοὶ τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες, οὐθ' ὅλως ὅσων εἰσὶν αἱ γλῶτται καὶ τὰ στόματα δυσκίνητα.

But voices appear clear in proportion to the accuracy of the articulation. For unless there is perfect articulation the voices cannot be clear, just like the seal on signet-rings, when the die is not accurately cut. This is why small children cannot talk plainly, nor men who are drunk, nor old men, nor those who naturally lisp, nor generally speaking those whose tongues and mouths are naturally difficult to move.¹⁷

The same concept is reiterated at *Pr.* 11.30, 902b17–29, where speech impediment is deemed to be caused by lack of control over the tongue, which does not serve the thought of the speakers (11.30, 902b28 τῇ γὰρ διανοίᾳ οὐχ ὑπηρετεῖ ἢ γλῶττα): weakened rational thinking makes it more difficult to exercise control over one's tongue, as is the case for children and people who are either very old or drunk. The stereotype according to which barbarians twittered like swallows thus fits perfectly within this picture: not only is their language incomprehensible, but also their temper lacks control and self-restraint to the eyes, or rather ears, of the Greeks.¹⁸ Speech impairment was also frequently associated with mental disturbances in antiquity, as testified by Hippocratic treatises. One case in point is provided by *Diseases of Women* 1.2, where the author describes a case of amenorrhoea:

ἀλγέει τε τὴν ῥάχιν καὶ τὸ νῶτον πᾶν, καὶ χαλινοῦται, καὶ γλῶσσα ἀσαφής· καὶ λιποθυμῆ, καὶ ἔστιν ἦσιν ἀφωνίη.

The patient feels pain in her back and along her whole spine, she is tongue-tied, and her speech is unclear; there is loss of consciousness and in some patients speechlessness.¹⁹

As her symptoms worsen, the woman's mental lucidity is also affected, and so is her speech. This in some cases also results in complete speechlessness (ἀφωνίη).²⁰ As Thumiger

¹⁷ Text and translation from W.S. Hett (Cambridge, MA and London, 1936).

¹⁸ D.L. Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language and Civilization* (Oxford, 2003) argues that according to the ancient Greeks, different degrees of civilisation in barbarian people corresponded to different levels of refinement of their language, as we can infer from Herodotus (e.g. 4.23, 183). See also T. Fögen, 'Antike Zeugnisse zu Kommunikationsformen von Tieren', *AdA* 53 (2007), 39–75, in particular 70: language consciousness in antiquity was linked to the anthropological and societal role of the individual. Marginalized groups of people, such as strangers and barbarians, were considered to be devoid of a proper voice, not only figuratively, but also literally, just like most animals. E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford, 1989), 117–33, argues that ancient Greeks projected on their stereotypical imagery of barbarian characters the antithesis of their stereotypically Greek qualities, such as σωφροσύνη, thus conventionally making ἀκολασία a typically barbaric trait. More specifically, Tereus' lack of σωφροσύνη, she argues, is manifested through 'savagery and wildness', instead of 'refinement and luxury', as is the case for other stereotypical barbarian characters. With regard to the Thracians more specifically, see C. Segal, 'Violence and the other: Greek, female, and barbarian in Euripides' *Hecuba*', *TAPhA* 120 (1990), 109–31, at 110: 'the Thracians are notorious for their warlike violence, lack of self-control, unreliability in oaths, and drunkenness'.

¹⁹ Text and translation from P. Potter (Cambridge, MA and London, 2018).

²⁰ See also Hippoc. *Epid.* 3.17; *Prorrh.* 1.25, with C. Thumiger, *A History of the Mind and Mental Health in Classical Greek Medical Thought* (Cambridge, 2017), 115–25, at 117: 'voice, like eye

points out, ‘voice and speech disturbance are partly determined by the condition of the tongue and mouth, and accompany the mental manifestation of the disease.’²¹ Thus, the glossectomy, a supposedly Sophoclean innovation, proves to be functional on a twofold level:²² on the one hand, it prevents Philomela from communicating with others, her sister *in primis*, and therefore sharing with her Tereus’ nefarious deeds; on the other hand, it also allows her to be portrayed as an alienated, estranged character in the play.²³ Furthermore, as scholars have extensively argued, Philomela’s character appears to recall Aeschylus’ Cassandra, for more than one reason.²⁴ Being kept as a concubine in a foreign country, Cassandra is also unable to communicate, thus simultaneously being estranged: in *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra compares her to a χελιδών, ‘swallow’, putting the stress on her incomprehensible language (1050–3):

ἀλλ’ εἴπερ ἐστὶ μὴ χελιδόνος δίκην
ἀγνώτα φωνὴν βάρβαρον κεκτημένη,
εἴσω φρενῶν λέγουσα πείθω νιν λόγῳ.

Well, unless she has some unintelligible barbarian language, like the swallows do, what I say is getting inside her mind and my words are persuading her.²⁵

Further on in the text, Clytemnestra urges Cassandra to resort to gestures to make herself comprehensible (1060–7):

ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ
εἰ δ’ ἀξυνήμων οὐσα μὴ δέχη λόγον,
σὺ δ’ ἀντὶ φωνῆς φράζε καρβάνῳ χερί.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
ἐρμηνέως ἔοικεν ἡ ξένη τοροῦ
δεῖσθαι· τρόπος δὲ θηρὸς ὡς νεαιρέτου.

ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ
ἦ μαίνεται γὰρ καὶ κακῶν κλύει φρενῶν,
ἥτις λιπούσα μὲν πόλιν νεαίρετον
ἥκει, χαλινὸν δ’ οὐκ ἐπίσταται φέρειν
πρὶν αἰματηρὸν ἐξαφρίζεσθαι μένος.

behaviour, can be seen to be located at a crossroad between physiological and mental phenomena’. See also S. Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton, 2000), 228–33.

²¹ Thumiger (n. 20), 120.

²² Among the scholars who support the hypothesis that the glossectomy may be a Sophoclean innovation is A.P. Burnett, *Revenge in Attic and Later Tragedy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1998), 183–7, at 184, who argues that both Philomela’s glossectomy and the cannibalistic banquet, ‘if not Sophoclean inventions, [are] at least floating motifs that a storyteller or dramatist was free to take up or ignore’; so also Dobrov (n. 1), 222, Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 96–7 and Monella (n. 5), 72–3. A. Casanova, ‘Osservazioni sui frammenti del *Tereo*’, in G. Avezzi (ed.), *Il dramma Sofocleo: testo, lingua, interpretazione* (Stuttgart, 2003), 59–68, at 67–8, rules out this possibility: ‘mi sembra importante puntualizzare che il taglio della lingua non è sicuramente un’innovazione sofoclea’.

²³ On Philomela’s estrangement in the play see Milo (n. 1), 98, who argues that Philomela’s muteness corroborates her role as isolated character.

²⁴ Coe (n. 1), 359 claims that ‘disfigured Philomela would act as a parallel role to both Cassandra and Iole’; P.J. Finglass, ‘Suffering in silence: Victims of rape on stage’, in P.J. Finglass and L. Coe (edd.), *Female Characters in Fragmentary Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2020), 87–102, at 100–1 discusses the association between Cassandra, Iole, and Philomela and their inability to communicate. On this point, see also F. Ahl, ‘The art of safe criticism in Greece and Rome’, *AJPh* 105 (1984), 174–208, at 183–4; J. Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales: Gender, Class and Histories* (Sheffield, 1997), at 25–7.

²⁵ Text and translation from A.H. Sommerstein (Cambridge, MA and London, 2008).

Clytemnestra

If you don't understand my words and they're not getting through to you, then instead of speaking, express yourself with gestures in the way foreigners do.

Chorus

The foreign woman seems to be in need of a clear interpreter. She has the manner of a wild beast just trapped.

Clytemnestra

She's mad, that's all, obeying the promptings of an unsound mind. She's come here from a city just captured, and she doesn't yet know how to bear the bridle, not till she's foamed out her rage in blood.

Clytemnestra and the chorus highlight how Cassandra's inability to communicate and her distress at her new condition make her look frenzied, like an uncontrollable wild beast. Cassandra's reaction confirms their impression: she cries and replies with continuous inarticulate lamentations (1072–3, 1076–7).²⁶

Although the fragmentary state of the *Tereus* does not allow us to discuss Philomela's characterization with the same certainty and precision as Cassandra's, her character, I argue, is built around the topos of the young barbarian princess, who is turned into a prisoner and concubine.²⁷ Despite being an Athenian princess Philomela is barbarized by the brutal violence that Tereus perpetrates against her, and which forces her into a barbaric incestuous relationship.²⁸ As a final sign of her barbarization, the mutilation that Tereus inflicts on her makes Philomela what ancient Greeks would have called an ἄγλωσσος, which has the meaning of both 'tongueless' and 'dumb' person (LSJ), and also 'barbarian', used by Sophocles with this last meaning in *Trachiniae*.²⁹

Scholars have argued that the ἀναγνώρισις between the two sisters, which happens through a woven tapestry probably reporting Greek characters, represents the victory and superiority of Greeks over barbarians.³⁰ However, from this point onwards the

²⁶ Cf. Montiglio (n. 20), 215, that 'Cassandra's silence is ... homologous to the sounds and words that break it: both emphasize her belonging to an inaccessible "elsewhere"', while simultaneously 'unveiling ... a truth that in turn cannot be silenced'. Philomela's silence is broken by incomprehensible sounds, which corroborate the tragic isolation of her character, while also being self-evident proof of Tereus' atrocious crimes. See Gera (n. 18), 195–200, who argues that gestures in antiquity were used to overcome language barriers, but also speech-impediment. As Thumiger (n. 20), 151–6 points out, in ancient Greece gesture is important to determine one's sanity; while an appropriate gesticulation is sign of a sound mind, uncontrolled movements are evidence of mental disturbance.

²⁷ See for instance the already discussed case of Aeschylus' Cassandra in *Ag.*, along with Eur. *Andr.*, *Tro.* and *Hec.*

²⁸ Cf. Eur. *Andr.* 173–6, where Hermione reproaches the former wife of Hector and current concubine of her husband Neoptolemus for sleeping with the man who killed part of her family, by remarking that barbarians know no boundaries when it comes to sexual relationships, and they are also prone to incestuous ones (τοιοῦτον πᾶν τὸ βάρβαρον γένος | πατήρ τε θυγατρὶ παῖς τε μητρὶ μείγνυται | κόρη τ' ἀδελφῷ, διὰ φόνου δ' οἱ φίλατοι | χωροῦσι, καὶ τῶνδ' οὐδὲν ἐξείργει νόμος).

²⁹ On the meaning of the adjective ἄγλωσσος as 'barbarian', see Soph. *Trach.* 1060 (οὔθ' Ἑλλάδας, οὔτ' ἄγλωσσος); also Hall (n. 18), 4–5.

³⁰ See Dobrov (n. 1), 222; Gera (n. 18), 203–4.

two sisters choose to act barbarically and commit atrocious deeds towards Itys first and Tereus later.³¹ In what follows, I argue that Philomela's ἀναγνώρισις, which Sophocles builds around the literary device of the 'voice of the shuttle', is based on a pun which confirms that Philomela was a vocal character in the play, and simultaneously strengthens her connection with barbaric languages and attitude.

3: PHILOMELA'S AUDIBLE VOICE: THE SOUND OF THE *KERKIS*

None of the extant fragments of the *Tereus* contains references to direct speeches, words or lamentations supposedly delivered by Philomela. The only mention of a vocal element associated with her character is found in fr. 595 R., encapsulated in a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1454b30–7) which deals with the modality of ἀναγνώρισις in Greek tragedy:

δεύτεραι δὲ αἱ πεποιημένα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, διὸ ἄτεχνοι. οἷον Ὀρέστης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης· ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ἐκεῖνος δὲ αὐτὸς λέγει ἃ βούλεται ὁ ποιητὴς ἄλλ'. οὐχ ὁ μῦθος· διὸ τι ἐγγύς τῆς εἰρημένης ἀμαρτίας ἐστίν, ἐξῆν γὰρ ἂν ἔνια καὶ ἐνεγκεῖν. καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Τηρεῖ ἢ τῆς κερκίδος φωνῇ.

The second kind are those contrived by the poet, and hence inartistic. For example, Orestes in *Iphigenia* causes recognition of his identity; Iphigenia reveals herself by the letter, but Orestes himself says what the poet, not the plot, wants him to: so it is close to the fault I described, as he might even have carried some tokens. Also the voice of the shuttle in Sophocles' *Tereus*.³²

Aristotle's reference to the 'voice of the shuttle' in Sophocles' *Tereus* confirms, according to Scattolin, that the sisters' recognition via the loom was a Sophoclean innovation.³³ The passage has given rise to intense scholarly debate: more specifically, two opposite suppositions have been put forward about the subject represented on the tapestry. Some scholars have argued that Philomela has woven letters, that is, a proper message in Greek to her sister, which the barbarian king Tereus would have not been able to understand, while others hypothesized that woven on the tapestry were pictures describing the aggression.³⁴ What both these hypotheses fail to take into account, however, is

³¹ As Dobrov (n. 1), 213 argues, 'this complex interplay of "natural" and willful savagery is quite clearly the product of Sophokles' dramatic design'.

³² Text and translation are from S. Halliwell (Cambridge, MA and London, 1995).

³³ P. Scattolin, 'Le notizie sul *Tereo* di Sofocle nei papiri', in G. Bastianini and A. Casanova (edd.), *I papiri di Eschilo e di Sofocle* (Florence, 2013), 119–42, at 126: 'il filosofo non avrebbe nessun interesse a citare un elemento già saldamente attestato nel mito'.

³⁴ See Ov. *Met.* 6.582; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.8. Σ Ar. *Av.* 212e Holwerda mentions γράμματα (21), a word whose ambiguous meaning does not resolve this dilemma. I. Cazzaniga, *La saga di Itys nella tradizione letteraria e mitografica greco-romana. Parte prima: la tradizione letteraria e mitografica greco-romana da Omero a Nonno panopolitano* (Milan, 1950), 50; Calder (n. 1), 89; A. Kiso, *The Lost Sophocles* (New York, 1984), 67; Dobrov (n. 1), 202; Fitzpatrick (n. 2), 97–8; Monella (n. 5), 106; and N.W. Slater, 'What language did the shuttle speak? Voice and vision in Sophocles' *Tereus*', in L. Austa (ed.), *Frammenti sulla scena. Volume 1. Studi sul dramma antico frammentario* (Alessandria, 2017), 59–75, support the hypothesis that Philomela wrote letters on the tapestry. V.J. Liapis, 'Achilles Tatus as a reader of Sophocles', *CQ* (2006), 220–38, 235; Casanova (n. 22), 66–7; and S. Dova, 'Procne, Philomela, and the voice of the peplos', *Arethusa* (2020), 69–88, at 75 argue that pictures, not letters, had been woven on the tapestry. Burnett (n. 22), 186, n. 34 abstains from the debate, which she considers unnecessary for the reconstruction of the plot, as does Scattolin (n. 33), 127, who simply concludes that the woven tapestry 'talks' on behalf of Philomela.

the possibility that the κερκίδος φωνή might not only refer to the figurative voice of the shuttle, which compensates for Philomela's loss of vocal communication by means of weaving, but also to its actual sound, and how it relates to her character and metamorphosed identity.³⁵

Generally translated as 'shuttle', the κερκίς is the bobbin which holds the κρόκη 'weft thread' in warp-weighted looms and has the specific function to beat the said weft. As Fanfani points out, 'striking the threads with a κερκίς had a distinctive visual and acoustic dimension and ... seems to have produced a recognizable rhythmic sound'.³⁶ By beating a thread and producing a rhythmic sound, the κερκίς was deemed to operate not differently from a plectrum on a lyre or kithara, both with regard to the τέχνη and their derived sounds. This is also confirmed by the double meaning of the verb κρέκειν, which, as Fanfani explains, was used both in the sense of 'beating the weft-thread with a κερκίς' and also 'playing stringed musical instruments'.³⁷ The association between the κερκίς and stringed instruments was supposedly established already in the seventh century B.C.E., as attested in Alcman fr. 140 *PMGF*, κερκολύρα, where the sound of the κερκίς is associated with that of the lyre.

Broadly speaking, this association was also extended to the act of singing, with particular regard to birds.³⁸ The simile found in Hom. *Od.* 21.410–1 (δεξιτερῇ δ' ἄρα χειρὶ λαβὼν πειρήσατο νευρῆς | ἢ δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄεισε, χελιδόνι εικέλη αὐδῆν) between the strings of Odysseus' bow and the sound of the swallow, for instance, seems to suggest a pre-existing broader link between stringed artifacts and the sound of the swallow.³⁹ Likewise, in Soph. fr. 890 Radt, the κερκίς is said to 'wake up those who sleep' (τοὺς εὐδοντάς ἐγείρει), thus referring to the song of an early bird; indeed, according to Hesychius (κ 2331 Latte–Cunningham), κερκίς was also the name of a bird. Ancient Greeks associated the sound of the κερκίς with the sound of the swallow or, less often, with that of the nightingale. Thus, for instance, in an epigram by Philip of Thessalonica (*Anth. Pal.* 6.247 = 2781–8 *GP*), we read:⁴⁰

Κερκίδας ὀρθρολόοισι χελιδόσιν εἰκελοφώνους,
Παλλάδος ἰστοπόνου λειομίτους κάμακας,

³⁵ Ancient Greek theories of sound mostly used the term φωνή to refer to both musical sounds and human voice, and identified sounds as 'something' which moves from the object to the ear. See A. Barker, 'Greek acoustic theory: Simple and complex sounds', in S. Butler and S. Nooter (edd.), *Sounds and the Ancient Senses* (Abingdon and New York, 2019), 92–108, at 93, and S. Kidd, 'Sound: An Aristotelian perspective', in S. Butler and S. Nooter (this note), 79–91.

³⁶ G. Fanfani, 'Weaving a song. Convergences in Greek poetic imagery between textile and musical terminology. An overview on archaic and classical literature', in S. Gaspa, C. Michel and M.-L. Nosch (edd.), *Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD* (Lincoln, 2017), 421–36, at 422.

³⁷ Fanfani (n. 36), 425–6 has reconstructed the use of the verb and related terminology, showing how 'the image of a *lyra* imitating or echoing the sharp sound of the κερκίς may lie somewhere at the origin of the semantic extension of κρέκειν ... as to include stringed instruments'. According to Hesychius (κ 4044 Latte–Cunningham), κρέκειν was a synonym of κίθοριζεν; see also *Suda* κ 2366, 2637, 2638 Adler. See also D. Restani, 'I suoni del telaio. Appunti sull'universo sonoro dei Greci', in B. Gentili and F. Perusino (edd.), *Mousike. Metrica, ritmica e musica greca in memoria di Giovanni Comotti* (Pisa and Roma, 1995), 93–109. S.B. Pomeroy, 'Supplementary notes on Erinna', *ZPE* 32 (1978), 17–22, at 19 argues that both the lyre and the ancient Greek hand-loom look very similar, and so do the postures of those interacting with them in vase paintings.

³⁸ Fanfani (n. 36), 430.

³⁹ Cf. Borthwick (n. 12), 14–22.

⁴⁰ See also the epigram by Antipater of Sidon (*Anth. Pal.* 6.160 = 182–9 *HE*) for a reference to the alcyon and the swallow. See Fanfani (n. 36), 430, n. 52.

καὶ κτένα κοσμοκόμην καὶ δακτυλότριπτον ἄτρακτον
 σφονδυλοδινήτω νήματι νηχόμενον
 καὶ τάλαρον σχοίνοις ὕφασμένον, ὄν ποτ' ὀδόντι 5
 ἐπλήρου τολύπη πᾶσα καθαιρομένη,
 σοί, φιλέριθε κόρη Παλλαντιάς, ἡ βαθύγηρας
 Αἰσιόνη πενής δῶρον ἀνεκρέμασεν.

Her weaving-shuttles, with voice like early-chattering swallows, loom-labouring Pallas' warp-smoothing shafts, and her tress-arranging comb, and her finger-rubbed spindle swimming with whorl-spun thread, and her reed-plaited basket, which all her tooth-cleansed wool once filled,—these to you, Pallantian maid, lover of wool-workers, Aesionē deep in old age hung up, the offering of her poverty.⁴¹

The κερκίς is said to sing like the early-chattering swallows, thus confirming the association between the two sounds.

Another enticing case in point is found in the *Birds* of Aristophanes. His comic revisit of the myth of Tereus is based on a drastic overturning of the mythic events narrated in Sophocles' tragedy.⁴² For instance, what seems perhaps the most noticeable contradiction is that Tereus, who appears in the comedy as a hoopoe, is supposed to have taught the other birds how to speak (199–200): a clear reference by opposition to the glossectomy perpetrated by the Thracian king on Philomela. Of particular interest is also the character of the nightingale Procne: whereas Philomela is noticeably absent from the episode, Procne seems to encompass traits which belong to both sisters. For instance, Procne is sexually objectified by the other characters on stage, as well as being the receptacle of their predatory gaze and behaviour, in a manner which is reminiscent of Tereus' attitude towards Philomela.⁴³ Perhaps even more remarkably, Procne is a mute character in *Birds*; the chorus still praises her for her sound, by addressing her as follows: ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ' αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς (682–3). The participle κρέκουσα is particularly relevant: it proves the use of the verb κρέκειν with regard to bird songs and to musical instruments, as is shown by the direct object αὐλόν;⁴⁴ and reveals the important role which the κερκίδος φωνή played. The verb κρέκειν is here used with specific reference to its auditory component, thus suggesting not only that the κερκίς compensated for Philomela's lack of voice by means of weaving, but also that the actual sound of the shuttle was relevant in the play.

The Sophoclean stratagem of the κερκίδος φωνή is therefore based on a pun: the voice of the shuttle compensates for Philomela's lack of voice figuratively, by allowing her to communicate with her sister; in doing so, however, it also reproduces the actual voice of the mutilated princess as well as that of her avian alter ego.⁴⁵ For this

⁴¹ Text and translation from A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page (Cambridge, 1968).

⁴² See Dobrov (n. 1), 194, with regard to lines 96–102.

⁴³ In Ovid's account of the myth, Tereus' gaze and sexual desire towards Philomela are particularly stressed (e.g. *Met.* 6.515–8). See Dobrov (n. 1), 217–18. Cf. D. Holmes, 'Re-eroticizing the hoopoe: Tereus in Aristophanes' *Birds*', *SyllClass* 22 (2011), 1–20, who argues against a drastic dissimilarity between the tragic and the comic Tereus.

⁴⁴ On the αὐλός and its connection with Dionysus, see below, n. 54.

⁴⁵ The κερκίς functions as an extension of Philomela: by weaving, and therefore producing its characteristic sound, which is also reminiscent of Philomela's voice after her glossectomy, the shuttle manages to express her thoughts by translating them into woven signs. The κερκίς acts as Philomela's prosthesis, which extends her cognitive powers. On distributed cognition applied to Classical cultures, see D. Cairns, 'Distributed cognition and the Classics', in M. Anderson and D. Cairns (edd.), *Distributed Cognition in Classical Antiquity* (Edinburgh, 2019), 18–36, and in particular 19–20.

association to be clear on stage, the character of Philomela could not have been entirely mute, like Iole in *Trachiniae*; rather, she should have been allowed to utter at least some incomprehensible sounds.⁴⁶ Furthermore, her incapacity to communicate must have contributed to her depiction as a deranged character, who, as discussed above, would have resembled Aeschylus' Cassandra.

4: PHILOMELA'S FRENZIED VOICE: THE SOUND OF THE MAENADS

By raping her and cutting out her tongue, Tereus transfers onto Philomela his own barbaric nature, which is first shown through her impossibility to communicate: the Athenian princess utters incomprehensible sounds, just like a barbarian. While the first effect of Philomela's barbarization is mainly audible, the second is visible, and manifested through the atrocious killing of Itys, which Philomela perpetrates with her sister.⁴⁷ This gruesome murder has been the object of much scholarly attention. More specifically, some scholars have argued that the Dionysiac trieteric festival, which features in Ovid's version of the myth (*Met.* 6.587–91), would offer the ideal setting for Itys' brutal homicide in Sophocles' play as well.⁴⁸ The reference to Bacchus' festival in Ovid, however, does not offer enough grounds for interpreting the murder in Sophocles as Dionysiac, despite the similarity between the dismembering of Itys committed by his mother and aunt, and that of Pentheus, committed by his mother Agave and her sisters.⁴⁹ Scholars such as Welcker, and more recently McHardy, have argued that the ποικίλοι φόρει, the 'dappled robe' which features in fr. 586 Radt, would indicate a typically Dionysiac apparel.⁵⁰

σπεύδουσιν αὐτήν, ἐν δὲ ποικίλῳ φόρει

as she was hurrying herself, and in a dappled robe.

⁴⁶ Philomela's character merges two typically feminine traits of tragic heroines: on the one hand, her nonsensical lamentations are reminiscent of borderline female figures, such as Cassandra; on the other, her forced silence makes her the perfect accomplice for Procne. As Montiglio (n. 20), 253 argues, 'in almost all of the extant plays, it is a woman who asks her fellow women to protect her secret'. Further to that, weaving is also associated with women's plotting and secret deeds: M.L. Nosch, 'Voicing the loom: women, weaving and plotting', in D. Nakassis, J. Gulizio and S.A. James (edd.), *KE-RA-ME-JA. Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine* (Philadelphia, 2014), 91–101, and in particular 96–7. See also Finglass (n. 24), 100, who argues that Philomela, just like Cassandra and Iole, is an example of 'silent female [who] initially seems ... a mere victim', but ends up punishing her male tormentor.

⁴⁷ On Greeks and barbarians 'exchanging places', see C. Dué, *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy* (Austin, 2006), 147, with regard to Eur. *Andr.* 764–5.

⁴⁸ See Hall (n. 18), 105: 'the ingredients of the story—rape, mutilation, infanticide, the eating of human flesh, and possibly a Dionysiac festival—were suggestive of a barbarian context'. Among the scholars who argue in favour of the presence of a Dionysiac festival in Sophocles' tragedy is Dobrov (n. 1), 200: 'Sophokles innovatively exploited the festival context to mitigate the horror of the events and to provide the women an opportunity for revenge'. See also Cazzaniga, (n. 34), 50–1; Calder (n. 1), 89; Kiso (n. 34), 79–80; Zacharia (n. 4), 108; and D. Curley, 'Ovid's *Tereus*: theatre and metatheatre', in A.H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Shards from Kolonos: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments* (Bari, 2003), 163–97, at 176–89.

⁴⁹ See Eur. *Bacch.* 1088–136. See also Coe (n. 1), 358, n. 21, who claims that although 'there is no compelling evidence for the presence of such a festival in Sophocles', the murder itself 'finds an obvious Bacchic resonance in the story of Agaue'.

⁵⁰ Dobrov (n. 1), 205 also goes as far as to suggest that both sisters could be wearing maenadic attire, a supposition endorsed by F. McHardy, 'From treacherous wives to murderous mothers. Filicide in tragic fragments', in F. McHardy, J. Robson and D. Harvey (edd.), *Lost Dramas of Classical Athens* (Exeter, 2005), 129–50.

Although caution is required, considering the scantiness of the evidence available, it is undeniably enticing to suppose that the characterization of Philomela as an estranged and deranged character might be related to the Dionysiac festival as a setting for the murder. This assumption might find support in a passage from Aristophanes' *Frogs*; while talking about Cleophon, an influential Thracian politician who inspired Plato Comicus' homonymous work, Aristophanes uses the image of the swallow to represent his inability to speak properly, followed by an enticing reference to the nightingale as well (674–85):⁵¹

Μοῦσα, χορῶν ἱερῶν ἐπίβηθι καὶ ἔλθ' ἐπὶ τέρψιν ἀοιδᾶς ἐμάς,	675
τὸν πολὺν ὄψομένη λαῶν ὄχλον, οὐ σοφαίαι μυρίαί κάθηνται φιλοτιμότεραι Κλεοφῶντος, ἐφ' οὗ δὴ χεῖλεσιν ἀμφιβάλοις δεινὸν ἐπιβρέμεται τις	680
Θρηκία χελιδὼν ἐπὶ βάρβαρον ἐζομένη πέταλον· κελαδεῖ δ' ἐπίκλαυτον ἀηδόνιον νόμον, ὡς ἀπολεῖται, κἂν ἴσαι γένωνται.	685

Embark, Muse, on the sacred dance, and come to inspire joy in my song, beholding the great multitude of people, where thousands of wits are in session more high-reaching than Cleophon, on whose bilingual lips some Thracian swallow roars terribly, perched on an alien petal, and bellows the nightingale's weepy song, that he's done for, even if the jury's hung.

The mention of Thrace, the barbaric country par excellence, reiterates the connection between the twittering of the swallow and barbaric languages.⁵² However, a fifth-century Athenian could not have failed to spot the connection with Sophocles' *Tereus*, as is also strongly suggested by the reference to the nightingale's lamentation which immediately follows that of the Thracian swallow.⁵³ Of particular interest is the verb ἐπιβρέμω, with which Aristophanes renders the sound of the swallow. The term is found in *Il.* 17.739 with regard to the howling of the wind and in *Eur. Bacch.* 151 to refer to the cry of Dionysus.⁵⁴ The connection with the god is

⁵¹ R.M. Rosen, 'Plato Comicus and the evolution of Greek comedy', in G.W. Dobrov (ed.), *Beyond Aristophanes: Transition and Diversity in Greek Comedy* (Atlanta, 1995), 119–37; O. Imperio, 'Aristophanes' political comedies and (bad?) imitations', in R.M. Rosen and H.P. Foley (edd.), *Aristophanes and Politics* (Leiden, 2020), 90–112.

⁵² On Thrace as the paradigmatic barbarian country, see Hall (n. 18), 101–13; K. Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians* (Cambridge, 2013), 119–28.

⁵³ No explicit mention of Philomela is found in the *Frogs*, or in the *Birds*, where the swallow appears eight times (e.g. 1680–1, for which see above). Just like Procne's silence (R.B. Rutherford, 'Lysistrata and female song', *CQ* 65 [2015], 60–8, at 67), the lack of an explicit mention of Philomela in the *Birds* might be justified by the intention of omitting any reference to Tereus' atrocious deeds, which might also be the reason why she is not explicitly mentioned in the *Frogs* either.

⁵⁴ ἴσμαι δ' ἐπ' εὐάσματος ἐπιβρέμει τοιάδ' ἴ. A few lines below, at 160–5, βρέμω is used to refer to the sound of the god's pipe. βρόμος is a loud noise (LSJ) which can derive from multiple sources: from the crackling of fire (e.g. *Hom. Il.* 14.396) to the roaring of a thunder (e.g. *Pind. Ol.* 2.25); βρόμος can also denote the sound of the αὐλός, an instrument which was traditionally associated with the god Dionysus (P. Wilson, 'The *aulos* in Athens', in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne [edd.], *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* [Cambridge, 1999], 58–96, at 67: 'the art of the *aulos* is ... not simply subservient, but a fellow-worker of Dionysos'). See also the passage from

further strengthened by the use of Βρόμιος, from βρέω, as his alternative name.⁵⁵ Aristophanes' decision to implicitly mention Philomela by also adding a reference to a howling sound with strong Dionysiac connections must have certainly captured the attention of the audience, and the possibility of a fortuitous association between the two can be excluded. Rather, it might support the hypothesis in favour of the Dionysiac setting in Sophocles' play, and therefore that concerning Philomela's vocality as well.

Two questions remain unanswered: what was the sound of the κερκίς like? And are we able to reconstruct it or, at least, to get an idea of what a κερκίς would have sounded like to the ears of ancient Greeks? The answer is provided, yet again, by Aristophanes:

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ	
ἀλκυόνες, αἱ παρ' ἀενάοις θαλάσσης	
κύμασι στωμύλλετε,	1310
τέγγουσαι νοτίοις περῶν	
ράνισι χροά δροσιζόμεναι·	
αἱ θ' ὑπωρόφιοι κατὰ γωνίας	
εἰειεἰεἰεἰεἰίσσετε δακτύλοις φάλαγγες	
ἰστότονα πηνίσματα,	1315
κερκίδος αἰοῖδου μελέτας	

Aeschylus

You halcyons, who chatter by the everflowing waves of the sea, wetting and bedewing the skin of your wings with rainy drops; and you spiders in crannies beneath the roof who with your fingers wi-i-i-i-nd loom-taut spoolings, a recital by the minstrel loom.

In *Ran.* 1309–17, Aeschylus addresses Euripides in a disparaging manner, by making a parody of his *Hypsipyle*.⁵⁶ Aristophanes reproduces the sound of the shuttle by repeating the first syllable of the word εἰλίσσετε, literally 'you wind'.⁵⁷ The mimetic repetition of the syllable εἰ evokes the sound of the shuttle, which, understandably, ancient Greeks associated to the sound of birds, swallows in particular; it also matches Philomela's inarticulate speech, which sounded barbaric or, indeed, swallow-like to ancient Greeks.

The recurrence of such a sound, uttered by an estranged character such as Sophocles' Philomela, would have led the audience to question her mental lucidity, and rather presuppose a state of mental alteration as well, consistently with what discussed above with regard to speech-impaired people. The image of such a character, described in the act of dismembering her own nephew together with her sister, effortlessly recalls a Dionysiac context: even the swallow-like sound of the κερκίς—the only form of communication left to Philomela after Tereus has mutilated her—is reminiscent of the characteristic Bacchic cry which Maenads use to shout in the grip of frenzy, εὐοῖ 'euhoe'.⁵⁸

Ar. *Av.* (676–84) analysed above, in which Procne's character is portrayed as an αὐλός player (G. Compton-Engle, 'Procne's beak in Aristophanes' *Birds*', *SyllClass* 18 [2007], 113–28).

⁵⁵ E.g. Eur. *Bacch.* 115, 141a, 629, 790, 976, 1250; see the *Suda*'s definition (β 547 Adler): Βρόμιος· ὁ Διόνυσος, ὁ γενεσιουργὸς τῶν καρπῶν· παρὰ τὸ βορὰ βρόμιος, καὶ ὑπερθέσει βρόμιος.

⁵⁶ Fr. 752f.9–11 Kannicht. Fanfani (n. 36), 428.

⁵⁷ See Fanfani (n. 36), 429: 'The focus on the sound/noise produced in weaving is mimetically rendered by the repetition of the first syllable of εἰλίσσετε'.

⁵⁸ On the εὐοῖ as Bacchic sound, see Eur. *Bacch.* 141; Soph. *Trach.* 218; Ar. *Thesm.* 994; *Eccl.* 1180–4; *Lys.* 1294; G.A. Xenis (ed.), *Scholia vetera in Sophoclis Trachinias* (Berlin and New York, 2010), 218. See also Ov. *Met.* 6.597, in which Procne (who, in Ovid's version of the

5: CONCLUSION

Philomela's metamorphosis in Sophocles' *Tereus* is therefore built on a double pun: after being violated by the Thracian king, the Athenian princess becomes a barbarian herself, by means of communication first, and behaviour later. Her speech-impediment makes her utter inarticulate sounds, not different from those which characterise barbaric languages, that ancient Greeks associated with the sound of the swallow, Philomela's avian alter ego. Likewise, the κερκίδος φωνή which makes Philomela's ἀναγνώρισις possible is also alluding to a pun: the κερκίς compensates for her loss of speech by means of weaving, but also reproduces the same inarticulate sound which Philomela is only able to give after her mutilation. Her desperate attempt to communicate, which must have relied, at least partially, on inarticulate sounds and gestures, as well as her inability to speak, might have been easily associated with frenzy. Her characterization as a barbarian-speaking, frenzied-looking woman, committing the atrocious crime of killing her sister's child with her own endorsement and assistance, might support the Dionysiac setting of the murder, and simultaneously signals that another metamorphosis has taken place within the play: by violating her, the brutal sovereign has turned the Athenian princess into a female version of himself.

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myth, turns into a swallow) utters clearly Bacchic sounds, which include the *euhoē*: *exululatque euhoēque sonat*.