

A Puzzling Threat by Silenos: On Sophocles' *Ichneutai* 168

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IN SOPHOCLES' *ICHNEUTAI*,¹ at some point after line 123, the Satyrs suddenly quit tracking Apollo's stolen cattle, become silent, and fall down with their heads close to the ground. Seeing this, Silenos (who is apparently some distance away) intervenes and repeatedly asks them to explain their strange behaviour. When the Satyrs eventually reveal that they have been overwhelmed by *a sound which no mortal has ever heard* (144: apparently the sound of the newly invented lyre), Silenos becomes very angry and delivers an extensive rhesis-appeal to his sons, in which he tries to convince them to overcome their fear and resume the tracking (145–168). He starts by heavily reproaching them for being afraid of a mere sound, pouring out an impressive list of insults and accusations against them (145–152). He then contrasts their cowardice to his own alleged bravery in youth (153–160). He goes on to remind the Satyrs of the double reward promised by Apollo should they find his cattle (gold plus release from servitude), which they are now abandoning through their cowardice (161–165). Finally, he concludes his appeal to the Satyrs with a threat if they do not return to tracking down the cattle and the thief (166–168):

εἰ μὴ ἴναοστῆσαντες ἐξιχνεύσε[τε]
τὰς βοῦς ὅπη βεβᾶσι καὶ τὸν βουκόλο[v],
κλαίοντες αὐτῇ δειλία ψοφή[σ]ετε.

¹ The papyrus (dated 2nd cent. A.D.) was first edited by A. S. Hunt, *P.Oxy.* IX (1912) 1174. This article follows the line-numbering of the latest edition, S. Radt, *TrGF IV*² (Göttingen 1999) fr.314 (with addenda at pp.747–753). The text cited here is from my doctoral thesis, A. P. Antonopoulos, *Sophocles' Ichneutai 1–220, edited with Introduction and Commentary* (diss. Exeter 2010).

The interpretation of line 168 and hence the content of Silenos' threat have caused controversy. These suggestions have been made:

a) Maas² took ψοφή[σ]ετε to mean *you will croak*, i.e. *you will die*.³ Nevertheless, as he himself acknowledged, such use of ψοφεῖν is common in Byzantine and Modern Greek, but is not attested in earlier Greek.⁴

b) Lloyd-Jones⁵ argued that ψοφή[σ]ετε here is equivalent to *you will fart*, comparing Machon fr.11.158 Gow ἀπεψόφησε, and also several comic passages where people are said to excrete out of terror (e.g. Ar. *Eq.* 1057, *Vesp.* 627, *Pax* 241).⁶ Bain (183–184) adduced further examples for ἀποψοφεῖν = *to fart* (see esp. Phot. α 2732 ἀποψοφεῖν· τὸ πέρδεσθαι, εὐσχήμως λέγων. εὐσχημονέστερον δὲ διαπνεῖν καὶ ἀποπνεῖν), as well as passages from comedy referring to farting *per se* as an indication

² P. Maas, "Zu den Neuen Klassikertexten der Oxyrhynchos Papyri (vol. IX)," *BPhW* 32 (1912) 1076 (repr. *Keine Schriften* [Munich 1973] 45).

³ Both this interpretation and also that of Lloyd-Jones (see below) have received support from D. Bain, "Farting or Croaking or just Noise? Sophocles, *Ichneutai* F314. 168," *SIt* 88 (1995) 182–189, who on the whole finds the view of Maas to be more appealing.

⁴ Wilamowitz (ap. Maas) compared the synonym διαφωνεῖν, which is found with the meaning *to die* already in the 3rd cent. B.C. (*Syll.*³ 521.25 from Amorgos, recorded by LSJ s.v.). But the earliest occurrence of ψοφεῖν with this meaning, quoted by Maas, is from the 6th century A.D. (Malalas 10.34).

⁵ H. Lloyd-Jones, "Notes on Fragments of Sophocles," *SIt* 12 (1994) 129–148, at 140.

⁶ For another mention of farting in satyr play, Lloyd-Jones compared [Soph]. *Oineus*(?) fr.1130.15–16 ἔστι τῶν κάτω λάλησις. The phrase is likely to be ambiguous, meaning on one hand *we are able to chatter about the things below the earth*, and at the same time *our low parts are able to chatter* (see R. J. D. Carden, *The Papyrus Fragments of Sophocles* [Berlin/New York 1974] 145–146). Bain (183 n.6) and others have also adduced *Ichn.* 128 [ἦ] τις πίθηκος (sc. ὡς) κύβδ' ἀποθυμαίνεις τινί, and Eur. *Cyc.* 327–328 ἐπεκπιῶν γάλακτος ἀμφορέα, πέπλον / κρούω, Διὸς βρονταῖσιν εἰς ἔριν κτυπῶν, but any allusion to farting in these passages is quite doubtful; see respectively Antonopoulos, *Sophocles' Ichneutai* pp.222–224, and D. Kovacs, *Euripidea* (Leiden 1994) 152–154.

of fear: Ar. *Plut.* 693 (sc. ἡ γραῦς) ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους βδέουσα δριμύτερον γαλῆς, *Vesp.* 1177 πρῶτον μὲν ὡς ἡ Λάμι' ἀλοῦσ' ἐπέρδετο. As evidence for such behaviour he recorded the information of [Arist.] *Pr.* 948b26 that ἀποφοροῦσιν οἱ φοβούμενοι.

Later Lloyd-Jones, in his translation of the Sophoclean fragments,⁷ translated the line *you'll be sorry—you shall make a noise out of pure*⁸ *cowardice!* and explained “i.e., they will excrete out of mere terror.”

First of all, although excretion and farting are related bodily functions, they are obviously different and Lloyd-Jones' equation of the two in his translation is problematic. The meaning *you will excrete* is simply not possible for ψοφή[σ]ετε. But even if one translates *you will fart* (which is lexically possible), there are still two significant problems with Lloyd-Jones' interpretation of the passage: (i) There is hardly any point in threatening to inspire terror in someone who is already overcome by this feeling. The Satyrs here are already terrified because of the strange noise (143–144 ἑκ[λ]αγέτες ... ψόφῳ), for which fact Silenos has repeatedly reproached them in the present rhesis (at 145, 148, 156–158, 161). Most important (ii) our text has the word *cowardice* (δειλία), not *terror*, and again Lloyd-Jones' equation of the two is very questionable; one could theoretically threaten someone else *I will make you fart out of terror*, but it does not make sense to say *I will make you fart out of cowardice*.

c) Page⁹ took κλαίοντες ... ψοφή[σ]ετε as an instance of the idiom κλαίω + verb = *regret doing*,¹⁰ and rendered the line *you shall pay for making such a noise out of mere cowardice*. But such an interpretation is out of context here. The line is the apodosis of εἰ μὴ ἄνοστησαντες ἐξιχνεύσε[τε] τὰς βοῦς ... καὶ τὸν βου-

⁷ H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles III* (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 2003) 157.

⁸ Like most editors, Lloyd-Jones accepted the papyrus reading αὐτῆ (see below on αὐτοῖ).

⁹ D. L. Page, *Select Papyri III* (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 1941) 39.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. *Ichn.* 369–370 τὰ μῶρα καὶ γέλοια ... [χ]ανόντα κλαίειν, *to regret uttering silly and ridiculous things*.

κόλο[v], *if you do not come back and track down the cows ... and the herdsman*. Silenos is threatening the Satyrs in case they do not resume the tracking; he is not threatening them for making a noise because of their cowardice.

d) The only possible interpretation, much simpler, is the one already adopted by Hunt in the ed. pr.:¹¹ to take κλαίοντες and ψοφή[σ]ετε with their customary meanings and translate *you will make a noise by crying*.

For κλαίοντες and ψοφή[σ]ετε both denote sound, and in my view there can hardly be any doubt that the former supplements the latter's sense as a participle of manner, namely providing the type of noise that the Satyrs are going to make. Most important, there is an obvious joke here, which the interpretations of Maas and Lloyd-Jones, and to a lesser extent that of Page, have ignored. Silenos is using ψοφή[σ]ετε exactly so as to make a word-play with ψόφος (cf. 144, 145, 157, 160) and mock the Satyrs.¹² All this time the Satyrs are afraid of a mere ψόφος, and one that Silenos cannot even hear. It is as though he is saying to them: *You are not tracking the cows, still being afraid of a ψόφος? It is you who will make a ψόφος by crying!*

With this in mind, and unlike most editors, I prefer to print Wecklein's¹³ correction αὐτοῖ referring to the Satyrs,¹⁴ rather than the papyrus αὐτῆ with δειλία, as I find it to offer a much better meaning.

δειλία is a causal dative with κλαίοντες and sufficient on its

¹¹ *P. Oxy.* IX p.74. Among others, he has been followed by C. Spoelder, *De Sophoclis Indagatorum fragmentis papyraceis* (Haarlem 1918) 28; D. Ferrante, *Sofocle, I braccatori* (Naples 1958) 53; E. V. Maltese, *Sofocle, Ichneutai* (Papyrol. Flor. 10 [1982]) 79 (Lloyd-Jones, *StIt* 12 [1994] 140, mistakenly reports him as favouring the interpretation of Maas); S. Scheurer and R. Bielfeldt, "Sophokles, *Ichneutai*," in R. Krumeich et al. (eds.), *Das griechische Satyrspiel* (Darmstadt 1999) 280–312, at 300 n.37.

¹² So also Scheurer and Bielfeldt, and Maltese 80.

¹³ N. Wecklein, "Zu den *Ichneutai* des Sophokles," *Bayr. Gymnasium* 48 (1912) 437.

¹⁴ So far as I know, the only other scholar who prefers Wecklein's correction is Spoelder.

own: *you will cry because of your cowardice*. αὐτῇ does not really add anything to the sense—in fact its point is vague: *you will cry because of mere cowardice(?) / because of your very cowardice(?)*. Pearson¹⁵ attempted to explain αὐτῇ δειλία as *so far from escaping pain by your cowardice, it will be the cause of your chastisement*. But such a sense, even if it could be conveyed by the Greek, is weak and in my view would have been hard for the audience to perceive. On the other hand, αὐτοὶ has an obvious and clear point (*yourselves*), and helps to bring out the humorous contrast between the noise that has scared the Satyrs (ψόφος) and the noise that the Satyrs are going to produce (ψοφή[σ]ετε), when Silenos makes them cry (κλαίοντες). Therefore I urge (with Wecklein)

κλαίοντες αὐτοὶ δειλία ψοφή[σ]ετε.

you yourselves will make a noise, crying because of your cowardice.

With regard to κλαίοντες in particular, what Silenos is saying is in effect equivalent to *you will be beaten*. The Satyrs are threatened with physical punishment in a similar way at Eur. *Cyc.* 210–211 τάχα τις ὑμῶν τῷ ξύλῳ / δάκρυα μεθήσει (by Polyphemos), and Aesch. *Isthm.* fr.78c.41 ταῦτ' οὖν δακρύσεις (by Dionysos?), and several vase-paintings show them being threatened, or actually being beaten.¹⁶

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¹⁵ A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles I* (Cambridge 1917) 248.

¹⁶ See F. Brommer, *Satyrspiele, Bilder Griechischer Vasen*² (Berlin 1959) nos. 83 (= *ABL* 270.4), 155 with fig. 33 (Berlin, private collection), 156 (= *ARV*² 286.9), 157 with fig. 37 (= *ARV*² 451.1).

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