

SOPHOCLES, SEDUCTION AND SHRIVELLING: *ICHNEUTAI* FR. 316 RADT*

Sophocles fr. 316 comprises matching entries in Photius *Lex.* p.489 Porson and Suda p166, which are thought to derive from Pausanias the Atticist's dictionary.¹ Erbse presents the following text (p5):²

ῥικνοῦσθαι: τὸ διέλκεσθαι καὶ παντοδαπῶς διαστρέφεσθαι κατ' εἶδος. λέγεται δὲ καὶ τὸ καμπύλον γίγνεσθαι ἀσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ συνουσίαν καὶ ὄρχησιν, κάμπτοντα τὴν ὄσφυν. Σοφοκλῆς Ἰχνευταῖς. 'ῥικνοῦσθαι': being twisted and variously skewed in appearance; it is also used for lewdly making oneself curved, during sex or dancing, by curling the lower spine (Sophocles in the *Ichneutai*).

How the verb fitted in to the *Ichneutai* has gone unanswered. Radt *ad loc.* merely comments 'vix ad F 314.302 referendum'.³ I agree: the lexicographers cannot be trying to gloss that description, also from *Ichneutai*, of the tortoise from which Hermes has fashioned a lyre:

βραχύς, χυτροῖδης, ποικίληι δορᾷ κατερρικνωμένος.
It is short, pot-shaped, and shrivelled up with a spotted skin.

Nevertheless, when the tragedians use a rare stem twice in the same play, the recurrence often forms an intratext to which one can attach some interpretative weight. Can one conjecture a significance-bearing reason why Sophocles might have used the extremely rare ῥικνόομαι and καταρικνόομαι in very different senses within the same play?⁴

I believe we can. The key is the remarkable 'coincidence' that the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* – a text with much the same plot as *Ichneutai* and widely regarded as a source for Sophocles – also employs a phrase for 'to sway the lower spine sexily'.⁵

* My thanks to Lyndsay Coe and CQ's reader for advice, and to George Kazantzidis for interesting me in the uses of ῥικνός.

¹ Pausanias' entry had earlier been paraphrased by Moeris p2 (ῥικνοῦσθαι: τὸ ἀσχημόνως κινεῖσθαι. Ἄττικοί) and abbreviated by Hesychius p319. A similar sense is attributed by Pausanias (δ13) to διαρικνοῦσθαι: τὸ τὴν ὄσφυν φορτικῶς περιάγειν. Κρατῖνος Τροφώνιου (= PCG fr. 234). Both Cratinus's fragment and the similar phrasing at Pollux 4.99 refer to dance. The only other non-lexicographical use of infinitive ῥικνοῦσθαι is Oppian *Hal.* 5.593, of the apparent shrivelling-up of marine molluscs with the waning moon.

² H. Erbse, *Untersuchungen zu den Attizistischen Lexika* (Berlin, 1950), 206.

³ Similarly e.g. A.C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1917), 1.269; E.V. Maltese, *Sofocle: Ichneutai* (Florence, 1982), 65.

⁴ Taking Gregory of Nyssa, who uses both verbs, as a cut-off, and excluding lexicographers, TLG finds seven uses of ῥικνόομαι and only Sophocles' use of καταρικνόομαι.

⁵ The relationship of *H.Herm.* and *Ichn.* is argued for by L. Koettgen, *Quae ratio intercedat inter Indagatores fabulam Sophocleam et Hymnum in Mercurium qui fertur Homericus* (Bonn 1914); Pearson (n.3), 1.225-8; J.A. Fernández Delgado, 'La lucha entre Hermes y Apolo del Epos al teatro: el Himno a Hermes como hipotexto de los Sabuesos de Sófocles', in J.V. Bañuls, F. de Martino and C. Morenilla (edd.), *El teatro clásico en el*

As Hermes first leaves his cave the narrator, giving Hermes' focalisation, describes a tortoise σαῦλα ποσὶν βαίνουσα (28). Aristophanes' use of σαυλοπροκτιάω (*Vesp.* 1171-3) and διασαυλόομαι (*PCG* fr. 635) shows what motion is intended – swaying the bottom from side to side, as tortoises indeed do as they walk. This swaying can imply vanity (as in e.g. Semonides *IEG*² fr. 18 and the Aristophanes passages), but also sensuality. The satyrs, according to Euripides *Cyclops* 39-40, once approached Althaea's house drunk, σαυλούμενοι, and prepared to serenade her with a barbitos. Anacreon used the word similarly, according to Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3.11.69):

αἱ δὲ γυναικεῖοι κινήσεις καὶ θρύψεις καὶ χλιδαὶ κολουστέαι παντελῶς· τὸ γὰρ ἀβροδίατον τῆς περὶ τὸν περίπατον κινήσεως καὶ τὸ 'σαυλὰ βαίνειν', ὡς φησιν Ἀνακρέων [*PMG* fr. 113], κομιδῆι ἑταιρικά, ὡς γέ μοι φαίνεται.

'Feminine movements and airs and luxuries must be completely curtailed: for pampered practices in one's gait and 'σαῦλα βαίνειν', in Anacreon's words, are utterly meretricious, in my humble opinion.'

That σαῦλα connotes sensuality in the *Hymn to Hermes* is confirmed just a few lines later, with Hermes' remarkable greeting (31):

χαῖρε φυῆν ἐρόεσσα, χοροῖτύπε, δαιτὸς ἑταίρη.⁶

Be kindly, you gorgeous-bodied girl, who stamps in the chorus, who is a companion of the feast.

The *Hymn to Hermes* poses us a puzzle: how can Hermes see a sexy strut in the lumbering gait of a tortoise? This is not the place to discuss how that puzzle is gradually resolved.⁷ For our purposes, it is enough that the hymnist took an apparently unalluring specimen, and redescribed its walk in such terms.

Putting the lexicographers' entries together with σαῦλα βαίνειν in the *Hymn to Hermes* produces a plausible account of fr. 316 and its relationship to *Ichn.* 302. ῥικνοῦσθαι could describe the 'sexy dance' of the tortoise – or, perhaps, of the satyrs imitating a tortoise as they come to terms with its delightful music in the latter portion of the play.⁸ But the verb would also recall the preceding, accurate description of the tortoise as κατερρικνωμένος 'shrivelled'. This leaves us with an interesting new case of how satyr-plays pick up on and rework themes from epic, visible most obviously in Euripides' use of *Odyssey* 9 in his *Cyclops*.⁹ I submit that

marco de la cultura griega y su pervivencia en la cultura occidental (Bari, 2007), 113-56, at 121-55; A. Vergados, *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (Berlin, 2013), 79-86.

⁶ Sophocles' only use of φυῆ, in the discussion of the tortoise's form at *Ichn.* 307, may owe something to this very line.

⁷ See my forthcoming 'Sparring Partners: Fraternal Relations in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*', in L-G. Canevaro, P. Bassino and B. Graziosi (edd.), *Conflict and Consensus in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry*.

⁸ In 93-128 they imitate hunting-dogs. Possibly at 118-22, while describing the impossible prints of the cows, they try to clarify their report by enacting what the infer to have been the cows' stance. In any case, Silenus is astonished by their all-fours posture at 124.

⁹ See most recently P. O'Sullivan and C. Collard, *Euripides' Cyclops and Major Fragments of Greek Satyric Drama* (Oxford, 2013).

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Sophocles not only took over the *Hymn to Hermes*' paradoxically sexy tortoise, but gave her a further 'twist in the tail', by encapsulating both sexiness and unsexiness intratextually into a single verb.

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