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Was Carcinus I a Tragic Playwright?

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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

WAS CARCINUS I A TRAGIC PLAYWRIGHT?

The elder Carcinus (*TrGF* 21, Kirchner *PA* 8254) is probably best known for the dance his sons performed at the end of the *Vespae*. He seems to be the same Carcinus who served as στρατηγός in 431 B.C. (Thuc. 2.23.2, cf. Diod. 12.42.7); that he was of the liturgical class and active in public affairs is suggested by inscriptions (*IG* 1³ 365.30–40 [= 2² 296]; 2² 1498.69). If he was a general in 431 and had adult sons by the late 420s, a birth date of ca. 480 might be about right.¹ His son Xenocles was a tragic playwright (*TrGF* 33), as was his grandson Carcinus II (*TrGF* 70), who was active in the 370s, and perhaps also his great-grandson Xenocles II (*TrGF* 268). Our knowledge of the literary career of Carcinus I rests chiefly on four items: (1) his name is restored on *IG* 2² 2318.81 (the “Fasti”) for a tragic victory in 446 B.C.; (2) the words ἰὼ μοί μοι (at *Nub.* 1259) are thought by Strepsiades to be like a lament “of one of the gods of Carcinus”; a scholion on 1261 supposes that it parodies a tragedy of Carcinus; (3) scholia on *Pax* 793 and 795–96 (Σ^{RV}) report that he wrote a drama called Μύες; (4) a scholion on *Pax* 778 (Σ^{RVG}) asserts that he was a tragic poet (τραγωδίας ποιητής).

Although it is reasonable to conclude from the above that Carcinus was a tragic poet, I would like to show that the case for this in fact rests on weak foundations. Moreover, detailed examination of the evidence opens the possibility that Carcinus was actually a comic playwright.²

I

What we actually read today in the Fasti—Κα[ρκίνος ἐδίδασκε]—is a conjecture by J. H. Lipsius from two letters: Κα[. Lipsius forthrightly conceded that this was guesswork (*Muthmassungen*) but reasoned that, if one of Carcinus’ sons had already appeared as a tragic playwright by the late 420s, 446 would be a plausible date for a victory by Carcinus.³ This has been widely accepted, but there is no external evidence whatever to confirm that Carcinus I was a tragic victor in 446. Moreover, because no letters of ἐδίδασκε survive in this line, we do not know how many letters were in the poet’s name and Κα[ρκίνος] is therefore not the only

1. J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 283–85.

2. This conclusion was hinted at, but not developed, by D. M. MacDowell, ed., *Aristophanes: “Wasps”* (Oxford, 1971), p. 326, and M. Platnauer, ed., *Aristophanes: “Peace”* (Oxford, 1964), p. 136.

3. J. H. Lipsius, “Nachtrag zu den Bemerkungen über die dramatische Choregie,” *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der könig. sächs. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, philol.-hist. Classe* 39 (1887): 281. The text can be consulted in H. J. Mette, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Griechenland* (Berlin, 1977), p. 16, 1 col. 6.14; A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2nd ed., rev. by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968), p. 104.

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possible restoration:⁴ we know of a Callistratus who placed second at the Lenaea in 418 (*TrGF* 38; cf. *IG* 2² 2319) and it is feasible to imagine his career running from 446 to 418. Or, alternatively, the victor recorded by the Fasti for 446 could have been a tragic poet about whom we have no other evidence.

II

The words *ἰὼ μοί μοι* may imitate or parody a tragic lament (cf. Aesch. *PV* 742)—though if spoken by a god one can easily imagine a comic context. But even if we assume for the moment that it is tragic, deeper problems emerge. The lament is uttered by the second creditor; Strepsiades responds (*Ar. Nub.* 1260–61):

τίς οὐτοσί ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ θρηνῶν; οὐ τί πού
τῶν Καρκίνου τις δαιμόνων ἐφθέγγετο;

Who's this making a lament? Couldn't it be that
one of the divinities of Carcinus has spoken?

Dover's note on these lines is worth recording:

The natural inference (drawn by the author of a scholion in the edition of Junta [Florence, 1515]) is that Karkinos had composed at least one tragedy in which a god had been portrayed as lamenting. But in *V.* 1501 ff., *Pax* 781 ff. (cf. 864), Ar. refers to the sons (three in *V.*) of Karkinos, one of whom (*V.* 1511) is a tragic poet. Σ^E here names three sons (Σ^R two), and identifies Xenokles (cf. *Th.* 441) as the tragic poet. The joke is complicated; we expect 'one of the sons of Karkinos'; we get δαιμόνων instead, and the creditor utters (1264 f.) lines which are in fact (according to Σ^{RVE}) taken from a tragedy by Xenokles.⁵

Of course there would be nothing wrong *prima facie* with using a reference to a tragedy by Carcinus to introduce a parody of lines from his son, but Σ^{RVE} here stops short of attributing *ἰὼ μοί μοι* to Carcinus: it makes no specific attribution, says that the cry was τραγικῶς, and immediately goes on to explain that of Carcinus' children Xenocles was a tragic poet. What we have in Σ^{RVE} is therefore not inconsistent with an attribution of the lamentation *ἰὼ μοί μοι* to Xenocles: either Xenocles himself made such cries or a character in a play of his did.⁶ Thus what was evidently meant to be a comic joke—the substitution of δαιμόνων for υἱῶν—has been taken literally by the Juntine scholiast and has been transformed into historical data.⁷ In any event the Juntine scholion identifying Carcinus as a tragic poet

4. To judge from the photograph of fragments a, b, and b² printed in P. Ghiron-Bistagne, *Recherches sur les acteurs dans la Grèce antique* (Paris, 1976), fig. 2, there is no trace of a letter after the alpha (contrast the ΚΑΑ[three lines above our ΚΑ]).

5. K. J. Dover, ed., *Aristophanes: "Clouds"* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 242–43. D. M. MacDowell, in *Vesp.* 1501, thinks it more natural to conclude that the words quote Carcinus, though MacDowell also says, "It is not clear what kind of plays he wrote," leaving open the possibility that Carcinus was not a tragic playwright.

6. If a character in a play by Xenocles spoke the words, possibly we are to understand an ellipsis such as "one of the divinities [of one of the sons] of Carcinus . . ." On the omission of υἱός in Greek see H. W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 314. P. Rau, *Paratragodia* (Munich, 1967), p. 191, takes line 1261 to be in anticipation of the parody of Xenocles.

7. On this phenomenon consult M. R. Lefkowitz, "Aristophanes and Other Historians of the Fifth-Century Theater," *Hermes* 112 (1984): 143–53. Another illustration of the confusion between Carcinus and Xenocles occurs in Σ^V *Pax* 794 (*TrGF* 21 T 3e) where the ferret story is associated with Carcinus or Xenocles.

cannot be relied on to provide reports of the *scholia vetera*;⁸ it certainly does not furnish us with evidence that Carcinus I was a tragic playwright.

III

The chorus at *Pax* 793–95 recounts how Carcinus once claimed that “a ferret strangled his play one evening” (τὸ δῖμα γαλῆν τῆς ἐσπέρας ἀπάγξαι). One explanation is that it was an excuse Carcinus offered for his inability to have a play ready in time for a festival.⁹ The scholia, however, see an allusion to a play with the title *Mice*. Snell (in *TrGF*) observes: *nomen tragoediae a scholiasta inventum*. A scholiast may indeed have fabricated the title while trying to explain this obscure passage in *Pax*, yet when scholiasts resort to inventing titles they are usually more literal-minded. The titles of the animal choruses by Magnes that are cited by scholia on *Equites* 520–25 (*Birds* [ὄρνιθες], *Gall-flies* [ψῆνες], and *Frogs* [βάτραχοι]) are a case in point, because they may have been reconstructed almost directly from participles in the *Equites* passage (περυγίζων, ψηγίζων, βαπτόμενος βατραχείοις) and this is one reason to doubt their existence.¹⁰ By contrast, to have contrived the existence of a play with the title *Mice* from *Pax* 793–95 does not seem to me to be an obvious inference from the text and it may just be correct. Moreover, commentators have pointed out that the title certainly sounds more like a comedy with an animal chorus than a tragedy; nor can any close parallels be found in titles of satyr-plays.¹¹ It is curious that this, the only surviving title of Carcinus, should not seem to be from a tragic playwright. In any event *Pax* 795 had referred simply to his δῖμα and was not specific about genre.

IV

Thus the scholion at *Pax* 778 saying that Carcinus was a τραγωδίας ποιητής is the only other explicit testimony we have in the *scholia vetera*. But the *Pax* scholion may also be inferential: poets mentioned a few lines later (Morsimus, 803, and Melanthius, 804) clearly are tragedians; the scholiast may have assumed that the entire choral ode and antode (775–818) dealt with tragic playwrights and lumped Carcinus in with the others.¹²

Another ground for misunderstanding is the danger of confusion in the scholiastic tradition between Carcinus I and Carcinus II. The problem of misattribution of

8. This Juntine scholion on *Clouds* 1261, printed by Dübner, is omitted in D. Holwerda, *Scholia in Aristophanem*, vol. 3.1: *Scholia Vetera in Nubes* (Groningen, 1977), pp. 228–29. Snell (*TrGF* 21 F 2, note) thinks that the Juntine scholion is nothing more than an improvisation (αὐτοσχεδίασμα), lacking independent value.

9. See the note of A. Sommerstein, ed., *Aristophanes: "Peace"* (Warminster, 1985), p. 171, ad 792–96.

10. E. S. Spyropoulos, “Κωμικοὶ ζωόμορφοι χοροὶ” in *Αριστοφάνης. Σάτιρα, θέατρο, ποίηση* (Thessalonika, 1988), pp. 177–216 (= “Μάγνης ὁ κωμικός καὶ ἡ θέση του στὴν ἱστορία τῆς ἀρχαίας ἀττικῆς κωμῳδίας,” *Hellenika* 28 [1975]: 247–74).

11. On satyr play titles consult D. F. Sutton, “A Handlist of Satyr Plays,” *HSCP* 78 (1974): 107–43. There have also been attempts to emend Μύες to Μινύες; J. Nicole, “Le poète tragique Carcinus et ses fils,” *Mélanges Graux* (Paris, 1884), pp. 163–67. Platnauer, on *Pax* 791–95, observes: “We know indeed of no other comedy so called; but in face of such titles as *Birds*, *Frogs*, *Bees*, *Fishes*, *Ants* &c., there seems no need to doubt the scholiast’s *bona fides*.”

12. We might note also that if Carcinus I has a consistent “epithet” in comedy it is θαλάττιος, apparently in light of his naval command in 431 (*Vesp.* 1519, Plato comicus frag. 143 K-A = Σ^{RV} *Pax* 792), and this tells us nothing about his career as a playwright.

fragments between the two men of the same name was raised by Diehl.¹³ Documentation for the career of Carcinus II as a tragic playwright is secure: we have eleven titles and fragments of tragedies. (By contrast, the title *Mice* and the quotation *ὦ μοί μοι*, if it is his, are all we have for Carcinus I.) Curiously, Diogenes Laertius (2.63) says that Polycritus Mendaus thought that Carcinus II was a κωμωδιοποιός. This has been emended to τραγωδιοποιός and Meineke long ago eliminated Carcinus II from consideration as a comic poet.¹⁴ But could it be that Carcinus I was a comic poet? Did Polycritus Mendaus know of a comic poet in the family and mistakenly ascribe to the grandson the calling of the homonymous grandfather? Conversely, the scholiast at *Pax* 778 perhaps knew of a tragic playwright named Carcinus and mistakenly identified Carcinus I as the τραγῳδίας ποιητής.¹⁵ (Even in cases where there were no homonymous tragedians, comic poets could be mistakenly identified as tragic poets: the secondary scholion at *Eq.* 537 misidentifies the comic poet Crates as a τραγικός.)¹⁶ Furthermore, some confusion in the *Suda* (κ.394 and 396) is relevant: the entries mention (1) an Agrigentine Carcinus (*TrGF* 235), (2) Καρκίνος, Θεοδέκτου ἢ Ξενοκλέους, Ἀθηναῖος, τραγικός (*TrGF* 70), and (3) Καρκίνος, ποιητής Ἀττικός. Curiously there is no unambiguous evidence here for Carcinus I as a tragic poet: as far as we know he was not from Agrigentum (this "Agrigentine" Carcinus may simply be a confused allusion to Carcinus II, who spent time in Sicily); #2 is clearly Carcinus II; but if #3 is Carcinus I, the *Suda* has retreated to a non-committal ποιητής.¹⁷ I should point out that in testimonia concerning these playwrights we do not find the careful distinctions between different generations or different playwrights of the same name that ancient scholars occasionally drew about other playwrights: for example, Euripides (*TrGF* 16) is distinguished from the other Euripidai (*TrGF* 17 and 18) as the elder (πρεσβύτερος); cf. Astydamos (*TrGF* 59, πρεσβύτερος) and Astydamos II (*TrGF* 60).

Finally, if it could be established that Carcinus I was a comic poet, we could find room for him in the inscribed lists of victors: in *IG* 2² 2325, a list of comic poets at the Dionysia (= Mette V B 1), Κρατῖ]νος has been restored from]νος in col. i.14.

13. Diehl, "Karkinos," *RE* 10 (1919): 1952. Carcinus I and II would seem not to have been subjected to Hellenistic work on ὁμώνυμοι; see S. Halliwell, "Ancient Interpretations of ὀνομαστί κωμῳδεῖν in Aristophanes," *CQ* 34 (1984): 83–88, esp. 87. An entry in a list of tragedians found on a Tebtunis papyrus includes Ἀττικός ἐκ Θορ[ικοῦ]; see A. Körte, "Literarische Texte mit Ausschluss der christlichen," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 11 (1935): 220–83, esp. 277. Because his family was from the deme Thorikos this would fit Carcinus—but which Carcinus? W. Schmid assumed it was Carcinus I: see *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, vol. 3 (Munich, 1940), p. 843, n. 9; Snell thought it was Carcinus II: *TrGF* Cat A 6.3–4 and 70 Carcinus II T 6.

14. *TrGF* 70 T 3; A. Meineke, *Fragmenta Comicoorum Graecorum*, vol. 1: *Historia Critica Comicoorum Graecorum* (Berlin, 1839; repr. 1970), pp. 505–16, esp. 506; cf. §62a in C. Austin, "Catalogus Comicoorum Graecorum," *ZPE* 14 (1974): 201–25.

15. It could be that Carcinus I wrote both comedies and tragedies, but this is a remote possibility; we have no secure knowledge of a playwright in antiquity who did so: B. Seidensticker, *Palintonos Harmonia. Studien zu komischen Elementen in der griechischen Tragödie* (Göttingen, 1982), pp. 15–16. To further muddy matters: Σ⁹ *Nub.* 1261b says that Xenocles was a ποιητής κωμῳδίας and Σ^A says he was ποιητής κωμῳδίας καὶ τραγῳδίας. But we have the testimony of Σ^{RVE} and other reliable evidence for Xenocles' career as a tragic poet.

16. Furthermore, confusions by scribes between Carcinus and Cratinus are not unknown: see A. M. Desrousseaux, ed., *Athénée de Naucratis: Les "Deipnosophistes," Livres I et II* (Paris, 1956), p. 49 on 22a. Could information about a comic Carcinus have been misunderstood at an early stage in the tradition and "corrected" so as to be credited to Cratinus?

17. On the Agrigentine Carcinus see Meineke, *Hist. Crit.*, pp. 505–8. Note that Diehl, "Karkinos," col. 1952, accepted at face value the notion that Carcinus I came from Agrigentum.

We have no external evidence for a victory by Cratinus in the 450s and Καρκί[ν]ος would fit perfectly well. Alternatively, in col. ii.9 of the same inscription the fragmentary KA[has been restored to read Κά[ν]θαρος, for a victory before 422 B.C., but this too could just as easily be Κα[ρκί]νος.¹⁸ (*IG* 2² 2325 lists each poet only once, so these would be mutually exclusive possibilities. The dates in question—the 450s or 420s—are consistent with what could have been Carcinus' career.)

With so few hard facts and with evidence of marginal credibility I make no claim to certainty. But the case for Carcinus as a tragic poet perches on especially fragile twigs: a conjectural restoration in the *Fasti* and inferences in the scholia. The weakness of the case for his tragic career opens up the possibility that Carcinus was a κωμωδιοποιός who wrote a play titled Μῦες (probably with an animal chorus). Allusions to him in Aristophanes and in some scholia are not inconsistent with this, and with so many tragic playwrights in the succeeding generations, including his grandson of the same name, it is understandable that he was thought to be a tragedian himself.¹⁹

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18. For the restoration of Cantharus see E. Capps, "Epigraphical Problems in the History of Attic Comedy," *AJP* 28 (1907): 199.

19. The author gratefully acknowledges the helpful comments of the two anonymous readers for *CP*.

OF MICE AND MEN IN ARISTOTLE

De Motu Animalium 698b12–18:

ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ δεῖ τι ἀκίνητον εἶναι, εἰ μέλλει κινεῖσθαι, οὕτως ἔτι μᾶλλον ἔξω δεῖ τι εἶναι τοῦ ζώου ἀκίνητον, πρὸς ὃ ἀπερειδόμενον κινεῖται τὸ κινούμενον. εἰ γὰρ ὑποδῶσει ἀεὶ, οἷον τοῖς μυσὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ ἢ τοῖς ἐν τῇ ἄμμῳ πορευομένοις, οὐ πρόεισιν, οὐδ' ἔσται οὔτε πορεία, εἰ μὴ ἡ γῆ μένοι, οὔτε πτῆσις ἢ νεῦσις, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀήρ ἢ ἡ θάλαττα ἀντερείδοι.

16 τοῖς μυσὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ: τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ μυσὶν YV b_1 μυσὶ: ποσὶ E τῇ ante γῇ
om. b_2 πορευομένοις post γῇ b_1 , post γῇ et post ἄμμῳ Y

The οἷον clause in b_{15} –16 has bedeviled editors and interpreters, and the MS variants, which I have taken from Nussbaum's admirable edition (*Aristotle's "De Motu Animalium": Text with Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* [Princeton, 1978]), show clearly that the Byzantines also felt a difficulty here, since, with the exception of the omitted τῇ before γῇ in the b_2 group (doubtless a mechanical lipography), all the variants are deliberate attempts to restore some sense by conjectural intervention.

Aristotle asserts here that, for movement to be possible, not only must the moving animal have within itself some part that remains at rest but, even more importantly,