CARCINUS AND THE TEMPLE: A PROBLEM IN THE ATHENIAN THEATER

JOHN DAVIDSON

At *Poetics* 1455a, Aristotle refers to the failure of a certain Carcinus[1] in the dramatic competition with a play involving the character Amphiaraus. The relevant section of the text,[2] to which I have added my own provisional translation, runs as follows:

> Δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἐναργέστατα [ὁ] ὁρῶν ὥσπερ παρ' αὐτοῖς γιγνόμενος τοῖς πραττομένοις εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον καὶ ἥκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι [τὸ] τὰ ὑπεναντία. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου ὃ ἐπετιμᾶτο Καρκίνῳ. ὁ γὰρ Ἀμφιάραος ἐξ ἱεροῦ ἀνήει, ὃ μὴ ὁρῶντα [τὸν θεατὴν] ἐλάνθανεν, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐξέπεσεν δυσχερανάντων τοῦτο τῶν θεατῶν.
>
> It is necessary [for the dramatist] to construct his plots and elaborate them with language while placing them as far as possible before his very eyes. Seeing them most clearly in this way, as though being present while the actions were in the process of being carried out, he would come up with what is appropriate, and incongruities would be least likely to escape his notice. Evidence of this is provided by the criticism that was levelled at Carcinus. The point is that Amphiaraus came back out of a sanctuary, a fact that escaped his [Carcinus'] notice because he wasn't "seeing" it. On the stage, however, it was a failure, because the spectators took exception to it.

There are many obstacles in the way of finding a satisfactory solution to the question of where Carcinus went wrong. In the first place, although the actual story of Amphiaraus is well known,[3] nothing else is known, from

I would like to thank Rush Rehm in particular, also Eric Csapo, David Rosenbloom, Arthur Pomeroy, and the anonymous *CP* readers for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article, which should not be taken to imply that they necessarily agree with me.

1. It is the assumption of this paper that we are dealing with the tragedian whose *floruit* seems to have been the first quarter of the fourth century B.C.E. For the testimonia and fragments associated with both him and his grandfather of the same name, see B. Snell, *TrGF*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1971), 210–15 and 128–31 respectively (see p. 129 for a family tree).

2. Text as in R. Kassel, ed., *Aristotelis* De Arte Poetica *Liber* (Oxford, 1965), also adopted by D. W. Lucas, ed., *Aristotle* Poetics (Oxford, 1968).

3. No surviving, comprehensive account predates those of the scholiasts and mythographers. However, references in *Od.* 11.326–27 and 15.246–47 show that Homer was already familiar with the tradition that Amphiaraus' death at Thebes stemmed from the corruption of his wife Eriphyle. More details will presumably have been spelt out in the cyclic *Thebais* and Stesichorus' *Eriphyle*. In the fifth century, Pindar mentions Amphiaraus' engulfment by the earth (e.g., *Nem.* 9.24–27) and his ongoing oracular capability (*Pyth.* 8.39–55). It is the frequent treatment of the wider story on the fifth-century Athenian tragic stage, however, that we should assume as the most relevant background to Carcinus' foray into the field. For detailed discussions of the literary and pictorial sources, see, e.g., T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London,

Classical Philology 98 (2003): 109–122
 0009-837X/03/9802-0001$10.00

any other surviving source, about a play by Carcinus involving this hero, let alone about what appears to be the hero's spatial relationship with a ἱερόν ("sanctuary," or perhaps more specifically "temple"). Secondly, it is not certain exactly what Aristotle wrote, nor is the interpretation of any adopted text entirely without question. In the crucial sentence, it makes a big difference whether the verb ἀνῄει means "came back" or "came up."[4] The text given above, which I endorse in this paper, assumes as the object of ἐλάνθανεν ("escaped the notice of") either the dramatist himself, in which case the translation offered above can stand,[5] or a hypothetical "anyone," which would require a translation such as "which was missed by one who failed to visualise it."[6] As will become apparent later, a choice between these alternatives could be crucial for the fine tuning of an interpretation. Scholars who accept as genuine the words τὸν θεατὴν ("the spectator"), which follow μὴ ὁρῶντα ("not seeing") in the transmitted text, have normally taken *this* to be the object of ἐλάνθανεν, the certain illogicality that then results often being addressed through the emendation μὴ ὁρῶντ' ἂν τὸν θεατὴν,[7] so that the translation of the clause as a whole would become "a fact that would (or would have) escaped the notice of the spectator unless he saw (had seen) it." It seems highly likely, however, that τὸν θεατὴν is an erroneous gloss.[8] There are yet further textual readings and/or interpretations, one at least of which does have a direct bearing on the nature of the problem. These will be noted in due course.

Any discussion that aspires to take even the first step towards a solution must take into account at least the following fundamental factors that arise from Aristotle's all too brief reference: (1) Carcinus did not satisfactorily visualize an event that he was creating in his script; (2) the resulting incongruity was one that could be missed, either by Carcinus himself for the very reason that he was not visualizing the event, or by anyone else, perhaps pri-

---

1993), 506–19, 522–23, and 525; and I. Krauskopf, "Amphiaraos," *LIMC* 1:1 (1981): 691–713. Unfortunately, the many illustrations of Amphiaraus in vase-painting cast no light on the Aristotelian passage, since no connection between any given fifth- or fourth-century depiction and a particular Athenian tragedy, let alone a tragedy by Carcinus in the early years of the fourth century, can be proved. This fact emerges clearly from, for example, the discussion of Apulian scenes by H. Lohmann ("Der Mythos von Amphiaraos auf apulischen Vasen," *Boreas* 9 [1986]: 65–82). Lohmann speaks (p. 82) of an "Amphiaraos-Boom" between 350 and 320 B.C.E. He allows for the possibility that those scenes certainly illustrating the death of Opheltes/Archemorus and those probably depicting the departure of Amphiaraus for Thebes may possibly have been influenced by a play, but concludes that this is as far as one may go. In any case, a significant connection between these paintings and a play by Carcinus himself of at least a generation earlier is highly improbable.

4. I am assuming that ἀνῄει is the right reading—ἂν εἴη does not seem to make any sense at all.

5. Cf., e.g., S. Halliwell (*The* Poetics *of Aristotle* [Chapel Hill, 1987], 50), who translates: "but the poet missed the point by not visualising it." This interpretation is viable without the addition to the text of αὐτὸν after μὴ ὁρῶντ' to make the reference to the dramatist specific. Such an emendation is adopted, e.g., by A. Gudeman, ed., *Aristoteles* ΠΕΡΙ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΗΣ (Berlin and Leipzig, 1934), 53 and 304.

6. The subsequent version of S. Halliwell, ed., *Aristotle:* Poetics, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1995), 89.

7. See, e.g., R. Dupont-Roc and J. Lallot, eds., *Aristote:* La Poétique (Paris, 1980), 92–93, with discussion 280–81.

8. M. Heath, *Aristotle:* Poetics (Harmondsworth, 1996), translates: "this would have escaped the notice of anyone who did not see it." This presumably reflects a text in which the ἂν is added but the τὸν θεατὴν is omitted.

marily anyone who might just read the play rather than see it performed in the theater; (3) in the staging of the play, Amphiaraus was made to "come up" or "come back" from (or "out of") a sanctuary (or "temple"), or "the" sanctuary (or "temple"); (4) this constituted a blunder, apparently because (a) Amphiaraus should have "come up" or "come back" from somewhere other than a sanctuary, or because (b) he should not have been in a position to "come up" or "come back" from a sanctuary, or possibly because (c) his general appearance, dress, behavior or speech was inappropriate for someone "coming up" or "coming back" from a sanctuary;[9] (5) the blunder annoyed the spectators so much that it was at least a contributory factor, and probably the main factor, in the failure of the play.[10]

There has, of course, already been much speculation about the issue, so why reexamine it now, especially given the lack of external evidence? The reason is that recent discussions have not, in my opinion, advanced the cause at all. Indeed, if anything, they have taken it a step backwards. In addition, another interesting question about the Athenian theater comes to light, albeit one for which again there is frustratingly little evidence.

Let us begin by considering the most recent discussion to treat the problem in detail, that by J. R. Green.[11] Green in fact follows in the footsteps of the Italian Renaissance scholar Castelvetro in arguing that the verb ἀνῆει is best taken in the sense of "rose up" or "was resurrected."[12] Amphiaraus in his capacity as cult hero, according to Green, must have been raised from his grave to give advice to the living. Carcinus' big mistake, however, was to have him resurrected from a temple rather than a tomb, "an action not only illogical but possibly blasphemous."[13] The Amphiaraus actor, Green continues, must be supposed to have emerged through the central door of the *skene* (stage building), which at this point in the play was intended to represent a tomb. Although the central door of the *skene* regularly indicated the door of a palace or house, it also sometimes marked the entrance to a cave, for example, or a temple, and earlier in this play it must in fact have represented a temple entrance. Unfortunately for Carcinus, he had not made it clear to the audience that at this particular point in the play the door was now supposed to represent the entrance to a tomb. Green further argues that no scenery as such would have been involved and that the audience would have been used to having clues given to them by dramatists in their scripts as to what the central door was supposed to represent in any given play or part of a play. Carcinus simply failed to do this. This, then, is Green's hypothesis.[14]

9. It is more difficult to see how this possibility might work, so I shall not pursue it further.

10. An apt parallel for Carcinus' fate is provided by Dem. 18.265, where the speaker, contrasting himself with his enemy Aeschines, says ἐτριταγωνίστεις, ἐγὼ δ' ἐθεώρουν. ἐξέπιπτες, ἐγὼ δ' ἐσύριττον.

11. J. R. Green, "Carcinus and the Temple: A Lesson in the Staging of Tragedy," *GRBS* 31 (1990): 281–85.

12. Green cites D. S. Margoliouth, *The* Poetics *of Aristotle* (London-New York-Toronto, 1911) and W. Romani, *Lodovico Castelvetro:* Poetica *d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata e Sposta,* vol. 1 (Rome-Bari, 1978) as precedents, but Romani is just the editor of an edition of Castelvetro.

13. Green, "Carcinus" (n. 11 above), 283.

14. Green's suggestion is the only one mentioned by E. Csapo and W. J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 303; Green, however, is not specifically named.

A scenario involving the "resurrection" of the heroized Amphiaraus is not unreasonable in itself. It is also possible that the verb ἀνῄει could refer to resurrection. It certainly has this meaning in other contexts, and it so happens that the form ἀνελθεῖν is actually used at Pausanias 1.34.4 of Amphiaraus rising up from the underworld. Thus although a clear majority of commentators and translators take the meaning of ἀνῄει in the Aristotelian context to be simply "return" or "come back," a meaning it already has in Homer, without any notion of "resurrection" being involved, that in itself does not tell against Green.[15]

There are two problems, however, with Green's hypothesis. Firstly, it is difficult to understand why a tragic dramatist would, in any circumstances, want to make the central door of the *skene* represent the entrance to a tomb. More importantly, even if this could happen, there is a second problem, which is tied up with the big question that Green himself attempts to address.[16] Even if Carcinus, despite being an experienced dramatist who came from a dramatic family, did initially blunder by not visualizing the practicality of stage performance when he was writing his script, how was it that the problem was not picked up in a rehearsal by the producer (whether Carcinus himself or someone else) and/or by the actors? Green can only, in the final sentence of his article, come up with the following: "we can only assume that this was another case of things running to the last minute and perhaps of an over-hasty cut in the script."[17] This seems to be a case of clutching at straws.

Green's case, then, seems open to serious doubt.[18] Before we go any further, however, it may be useful to pursue this point about rehearsal for a moment. We can only assume that there would have been some opportunity for plays to be rehearsed in the theater itself (whether this was the theater of Dionysus or one of the other Athenian theaters), at the very least for the final dress rehearsal. Indeed, although there appears to be no useful evidence on the question, it seems inconceivable that this would not have happened, given the number of performers involved and the entrances and exits through both *parodoi* and doors whose timing needed to be perfected, not to mention other factors associated with some plays, such as the use of theater machinery and chariots. In any case, even if, for some reason, there was in fact no site rehearsal,[19] the dramatists must have been able to use a space that basically replicated the acting space in the theater itself. If,

15. The word does not appear to have a technical theatrical application, as both ἀναβαίνειν and καταβαίνειν may do; see C. P. Gardiner, "Ἀναβαίνειν and καταβαίνειν As Theatrical Terms," *TAPA* 108 (1978): 75–79.

16. He quotes the highly appropriate comment of Snell (*TrGF*, 1:211): "nescio quo pacto ὁ διδάσκαλος haec non notaverit." Snell's suggested explanations, however, are along other lines; see further below.

17. Green, "Carcinus," 285.

18. With regard to the second problem, it would be just possible to argue that, if the issue had been raised at rehearsal, Carcinus might have been able to gloss over it in a way that might satisfy those involved in the production. What he might not have foreseen, however, would have been the objection of the audience, who would not have been "in the know" about what was supposed to be going on. This approach, however, does not work as well as it does for other explanations to be explored later.

19. J. Hutton, *Aristotle's* Poetics (New York-London-Toronto, 1982), p. 99 n. 1, speculates that: "plays may have been rehearsed without a stage setting."

for example, there was felt to be something special about the theater of Dionysus that ruled out rehearsal within its boundaries, and if Carcinus' play was performed there (rather than in one of the other Athenian theaters, as it might in fact have been), the dramatist must at least have had, for rehearsal purposes, access to another theater with the same basic configuration as that of the theater of Dionysus.

What little evidence there is about rehearsal for performances at Athenian festivals relates mainly to rehearsal of the chorus in the earlier "learning" part of the process, which is well discussed by Peter Wilson.[20] There is, for example, the information recorded in a speech of Antiphon (6.11), where we find the defendant saying: "I first built in the most convenient part of my house a training area, which I had also used for training purposes when I was *choregos* for the Dionysia." He is actually talking about his actions as *choregos* for the boys' dithyramb at the Thargelia, but in any case we have evidence here for the *choregos* providing his own private rehearsal space, albeit for a chorus. It appears, then, that a *choregos* would provide rehearsal space in his own house, or hire the suitable space afforded by a gymnasium or palaestra. And again, in explaining terminology connected with the chorus, Pollux 4.106 mentions the word *choregion* as "the place where the preparation of the chorus takes place." In this case, however, there is no guarantee that we are not just dealing with an attempted explanation of the word *choregion*. Moreover, even if Pollux had knowledge of such an actual place, it may not have existed in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.

Wilson can find little clear evidence in general for the use of public sites for the training of choruses.[21] He imagines, as I have already said I do, that a chorus most likely had access to the theater itself near the day of performance, but he can find no hard evidence for this. Nor can he find any evidence for the use of the Odeion for rehearsals of plays to be performed in the adjacent theater of Dionysus, although this again would appear to be a strong possibility.

As far as the actors go, there is even less evidence. Wilson finds that one can only speculate about whether chorus and actors worked together during the whole rehearsal period, or whether they trained separately, perhaps coming together in the final period leading up to the performance.[22] There is perhaps a hint of actor/chorus togetherness in the abuse that Demosthenes (19.200) directs against Aeschines, when he rants that his enemy has recently been happy to live on charity in a *tritagonist's* role in other men's *choregia*. The other evidence is late and so quite possibly unreliable. In the epitome of the *Sophistike Proparaskeue* of Phrynicus the Atticist (second century C.E.), the *choregion* is defined as "the place where the *choregos* brought

20. P. Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the* Khoregia (Cambridge, 2000), especially pp. 71–86 (with the notes on pp. 337–42), 116–20 (with the notes on p. 350), and 130–36.

21. A possible exception is the Stoa Basileios; see the discussion by Wilson, Khoregia (n. 20 above), 72–74, of a picture on a vase dating to c. 475 B.C.E., which has been interpreted as showing a chorus rehearsing here.

22. Wilson, Khoregia, 84–85.

together the choruses and actors and organized/trained/knocked them into shape." And the lexicographers Photius and Hesychius refer to a very large house in the urban deme of Melite that was regularly used for training by *tragoidoi,* a term that could conceivably include actors as well as chorus members. Apart from that, the cupboard is bare, and there is no surviving source at all that speaks of a full-scale dress rehearsal, involving both chorus and actors, in the theater itself. Despite this shattering silence, at least one rehearsal in situ is highly likely, and I am proceeding on this assumption.

Going back to the resurrection idea, Margoliouth,[23] whom Green acknowledges as one of his antecedents or starting points, took a somewhat different approach. Margoliouth cited Pausanias 1.34.2 as stating that the people of Oropus (in Attica) were the first to regard Amphiaraus as a god, but were afterwards followed by others. Margoliouth's argument was that a god has a temple but comes down, not up, whereas a ghost comes up, but out of a tomb. Thus Carcinus' blunder was muddling this up. However, such a mistake could hardly be said in any sense to be one resulting from the poet's failure to visualize an action (which is the point at which Aristotle begins his discussion), but would simply be a basic conceptual error. In any case, Amphiaraus was a chthonic deity who would not be "coming down" to his temple. Margoliouth thus seems even less convincing than Green.

Castelvetro's solution[24] had been even more way out and appears to result from a double misreading of Pausanias. Pausanias (1.34.1–2) says, in discussing Oropus, that there was a sanctuary of Amphiaraus about twelve stades from the city.[25] He then mentions the story of how Amphiaraus was swallowed up in the earth, but adds that it did not happen there, but on the road from Thebes to Chalcis. Later (9.19.4) he specifies Harma as the point on this road where the event occurred, according to the people of Tanagra, whose version differed from that of the Thebans. For their part, as he had already noted (9.8.3), the Thebans said that the disappearance of Amphiaraus occurred at a point on the road from Potniae to Thebes where there was now a small enclosure with pillars. In his original reference to the story, Pausanias had gone on to say (1.34.2–3) that the Oropians had a temple and statue of Amphiaraus, and an altar partly dedicated to him. He had then stated (1.34.4) that near the temple was a spring by which legend had it that Amphiaraus rose up after becoming a god (ἀνελθεῖν τὸν Ἀμφιάραον . . . ἤδη θεόν).[26]

23. Margoliouth, Poetics (n. 12 above), ad loc.

24. See, most conveniently, Romani, *Lodovico Castelvetro* (n. 12 above), ad loc.

25. Herodotus provides the earliest literary evidence for an Amphiareion, whose oracle is said to have been consulted by Croesus (1.46, 49, 52, 92) and by Mys (8.134). A. Schachter (*Cults of Boiotia,* vol. 1, Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin Suppl. 38.1 [London, 1981], 21–25) adopts the view that the sanctuary at Oropus was the original and only Amphiareion. For the more likely view (firmly based on all the available ancient evidence), which distinguishes between a sanctuary at Thebes itself and the one at Oropus that became the most important center of Amphiaraus' cult at least after the fifth century B.C.E., see, e.g., T. K. Hubbard, "Remaking Myth and Rewriting History: Cult Tradition in Pindar's *Ninth Nemean,*" *HSCP* 94 (1992): 77–111, specifically 101–7.

26. For a Classical reference to this spring, see Xen. *Mem.* 3.13.3.

Castelvetro, however, reported Pausanias as saying that there were two different places, one where Amphiaraus was swallowed up and taken to the underworld, the other where he came out and rose "deified to heaven." A temple was built where he was swallowed up,[27] while a spring rose up in the other place. Suggesting that the subject of Carcinus' play was the ascent of Amphiaraus from underworld to heaven, Castelvetro concluded that Carcinus must have made his hero rise to heaven via the temple, that is, via the same opening in the earth through which he descended to the underworld, and not at the place where the spring was. This would then have been contrary to general belief and also contrary to what Carcinus must have implied in another part of the tragedy. All this is, of course, unlikely in the extreme.[28]

Support for the resurrection interpretation of the verb ἀνῄει can also be found in an article by Elizabeth Craik.[29] This article is not mentioned by Green, and Craik herself does not mention Margoliouth and Romani (Castelvetro), whom Green cites as resurrection precedents. However, Craik does acknowledge as a precedent the discussion of J. Hardy,[30] another source that Green does not mention.

Craik writes that "Hardy alone is accurate"[31] (with the translation "surgissait du sanctuaire"). She then, however, criticizes as misleading Hardy's explanatory comment (which is actually similar to Margoliouth's) "ce qui choquait était, semble-t-il, que ce héros divinisé *sortait de terre* (le sanctuaire d'Amphiaraos était une grotte) alors que d'ordinaire les dieux *descendent* sur la terre,"[32] her point being that an Athenian audience would be well aware that Amphiaraus, as we have already noted, was a chthonian deity who would not come down to earth in any case.

In coming to the conclusion that Amphiaraus must have featured in Carcinus' play as a chthonian deity rather than as a human hero, Craik argues that "it is contrary to the natural meaning of the compound verb ἀνιέναι to treat the word of the departure, rather than the ascent, of Amphiaraos from

27. It is, in fact, Strabo who (9.1.22) associates the Amphiareion of the Oropians with the actual site of the hero's disappearance, chariot and all. The Sophoclean fragment that he quotes, however (958 Radt), does not in itself make the connection. Strabo later (9.2.11) mentions a version of Amphiaraus' demise in which he supposedly fell out of his chariot in battle near the site where his sanctuary was later established (presumably the Oropian Amphiareion). The chariot, on the other hand, was drawn empty to the Harma in Tanagran territory, which Pausanias specifies as the place where, according to the Tanagrans, the actual disappearance of Amphiaraus occurred.

28. Castelvetro also wanted to read ὃ μὴ ὁρῶντα ὡς τὸν θεατὴν ἐλάνθανεν ἄν, that is to say that the incongruity would not have been able to escape Carcinus' notice if he had thought of his tragedy not as poet but as spectator.

29. E. M. Craik, "Arist. *Po.* 1455a27: Karkinos' *Amphiaraos*," *Maia* 32 (1980): 167–69.

30. J. Hardy, ed., *Aristote* Poétique (Paris, 1979. First published, 1932).

31. Craik, "Arist. *Po.* 1455a27" (n. 29 above), 167. In fact, Hardy had also been anticipated by, for example, W. Hamilton Fyfe, ed., *Aristotle:* The Poetics, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1927), 65. Hamilton Fyfe (p. 64 n. *a*) mentioned Margoliouth's suggestion, before offering another example of incongruity as follows: "In *The Master of Ballantrae* Mrs. Henry cleans a sword by thrusting it up to the hilt in the ground—which is iron-bound by frost. This would be noticed on the stage: a reader may miss the incongruity." Throughout his further study *Aristotle's* Art of Poetry (Oxford, 1940), Hamilton Fyfe basically works with the translation offered by I. Bywater, *Aristotle:* On the Art of Poetry (Oxford, 1909), which in the passage in question talks of "the return of Amphiaraus from the sanctuary."

32. Hardy, *Aristote* (n. 30 above), 84, notes complémentaires.

a shrine."[33] However, the most obvious alternative to the meaning "ascent" for the verb ἀνιέναι to carry is not "departure," but "return," a point to which we shall come back in a moment.

Craik, like Green, rightly points out that the verb ἀνιέναι does refer to resurrection in other contexts. She is also correct in drawing attention to the fact that the chthonian aspect of Amphiaraus, enshrined in cult, is also reflected in literature, as seen most notably in the reference in Sophocles *Electra* 841. And she notes too that Amphiaraus, like other figures, such as Heracles, Trophonius, and Asclepius, was treated in nontragic as well as tragic plays.[34]

On this last point, she argues that the Carcinus to whom Aristotle is referring is probably not the fourth-century tragedian, as is almost universally assumed, but the earlier Carcinus ridiculed by Aristophanes, who was just possibly a comic poet rather than a tragedian.[35] According to Craik, "The epiphany of a chthonian deity seems more suited to comic than tragic presentation."[36] However, this in itself is highly debatable and, in any case, if there was some incongruous action on the part of the Amphiaraus figure in a comedy, this would surely have heightened the comic effect and been a bonus. The genre of comedy is not after all exactly lacking in incongruous, not to say ridiculous, scenarios.

This, of course, is a side issue. Let us return to Craik's main thesis, namely, that Amphiaraus was represented as being resurrected (and she also wants the imperfect verb to indicate a protracted or more probably a repeated action). How does she explain what went wrong for Carcinus? Like Green, she fails to deliver, though for different reasons. She offers two possibilities. Either the appearance of Amphiaraus from his shrine was staged "as a mundane occurrence," or else the regular procedure for such manifestation, or the actual appearance of the shrine, was inaccurately represented.[37] Neither of these explanations is convincing. If the problem had been the mundane presentation of a spectacular event, it is highly unlikely that Aristotle, in alluding to it, would have simply remarked that Amphiaraus rose from the temple. On the other hand, if the issue had been the inaccurate representation of the event, that would not square with the problem that Aristotle is talking about, namely the failure of a dramatist to visualize the action when he is preparing his script.

Thus, neither of the recent champions of resurrection (Green and Craik) can come up with anything like a convincing explanation of what Carcinus'

33. Craik, "Arist. *Po.*," 167.

34. Comic poets who wrote plays concerned with the Amphiaraus story were Aristophanes, Plato, Apollodorus of Carystus, and Philippides. Cleophon (?) wrote a tragedy on the subject. Sophocles wrote a satyr play, or possibly both a tragedy and satyr play; see S. Radt, *TrGF*, vol. 4 (Göttingen, 1977), 151–52.

35. On this question, see K. S. Rothwell ("Was Carcinus I a Tragic Playwright?," *CP* 89 [1994]: 241–45), who suggests that Carcinus might indeed have been a comic poet; and S. D. Olson ("Was Carcinus I a Tragic Playwright? A Response," *CP* 92 [1997]: 258–60), who argues more convincingly that the traditional view (namely, that he was a tragic poet) is more likely. On the Carcinus family at Athens, see also J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B.C.* (Oxford, 1971), 283–85.

36. Craik, "Arist. *Po.*," 168.

37. Ibid., 169.

problem might have been. It therefore seems more promising to seek an explanation elsewhere.

D. J. Allan tackled the conundrum by means of a different reading of Aristotle's text.[38] He also took ἀνιέναι to mean "come up," though not necessarily in the sense of "be resurrected."[39] What is unusual about his approach, however, and in fact crucial, is that he understood as the antecedent of the relative ὅ, not Amphiaraus' action as such, but ἱεροῦ itself. So he translated: "Amphiaraus was coming up [presumably, on to the stage] from a temple, of which any spectator who could not see it was, and remained, unaware." And he continued: "Some scenery, then, which represented a temple was not recognizable as such, or was quite invisible, from a part of the auditorium, and the meaning of dialogue or action became obscure for many spectators." And this happened because, as Aristotle says, Carcinus had not visualized his production and so had not, if he could not alter the setting, given Amphiaraus some words to indicate where he came from.[40]

Quite apart from Allan's reading and interpretation of the text, this does not seem overly convincing. If the problem was supposed to be the invisibility of the temple on the day of performance, Allan's solution could indeed deal with the rehearsal issue already raised, but the assumption would have to be that a temple was invisible to what would have had to have been a significant proportion of the audience, which is highly unlikely. On the other hand, if the problem was unrecognizability of the temple because of its particular scenic presentation, we are perhaps faced with the rehearsal issue again. More importantly, however, this problem again would not stem from the dramatist's failure to visualize the action when he was writing the script, but from a deficiency on the part of the production team.[41]

At this point in the discussion, then, we are obliged to revert to the other most widely used means of attempting to explain the puzzle, a procedure that once more involves understanding the relative ὅ to refer to Amphiaraus' action and that focuses on actor movement in the theater space.

Gudeman, for example, wrote: "Wir können nur vermuten, daß der Dichter den Amphiaraos aus einem Tempel heraufkommen ließ (ἀνῆει), ohne daß das Publikum ihn vorher hatte hinuntergehen sehen."[42] Gudeman, of course, complicated matters by his choice of verbs (talking in terms of Amphiaraus' "coming up" out of a temple without the audience's having previously seen him "going down" into it). And Else rightly questioned this,

38. D. J. Allan, "Some Passages in Aristotle's *Poetics*," *CQ* 21 (1971): 81–92, specifically 84.

39. Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Aristote* (n. 7 above), 93, translate the verb as "remontait" without making it clear exactly what they have in mind. Their discussion of the passage (pp. 280–81) does not attempt to address the issue of what Carcinus' blunder might have been.

40. This interpretation is cited, as shedding "some light" on the passage, by G. Xanthakis-Karamanos, *Studies in Fourth-Century Tragedy* (Athens, 1980), p. 19, n. 6.

41. Allan's unrecognizability scenario is in a way similar to Green's, but is not exactly the same. Green, as we have seen, posits no actual scenery, in conjunction with a failure in the script to make it clear that the central door of the *skene*, which had previously indicated the entrance to a temple, now indicated the entrance to a tomb. Allan appears to posit not so much a change of significance, though this could be a possible implication of what he says, as a scenic failure to make it clear in the first place that a temple was indicated.

42. Gudeman, *Aristoteles* (n. 5 above), ad loc.

noting that the normal practice was not to go down into Greek temples or come up out of them.[43] However, Gudeman's basic understanding of the problem is what is important. According to this, Amphiaraus must have come from somewhere that by rights he would not have been in a position to come from. Carcinus presumably overlooked this in preparing his script because he was not visualizing the practicalities of movement in the theater and the necessity of maintaining visual logic.

Else's own explanation ran along similar lines. He commented: "If he [i.e., Amphiaraus] came back out of a temple, the anomaly must have been that he had not previously gone into it, so that the audience expected to see him return by one of the πάροδοι."[44] And he continued: "Carcinus' fault, then, was the not unheard-of one among dramatists of mislaying a character, i.e., forgetting where his last exit was made and where he is supposed to have been while offstage."[45]

This line of argument makes good sense in general, but it requires modification in detail, because even more glaringly than some other approaches, it fails to take account of the rehearsal issue. Such a blunder would surely have become obvious in rehearsal and have been rectified.[46]

A "refinement" of Else's scenario that looks even more promising had already been casually suggested by T. B. L. Webster in 1954. Webster wrote: "Evidently Amphiaraos came out of a temple without having entered it. Perhaps Karkinos would have answered that he went in by the backdoor (a technique which is found occasionally in New Comedy), but the audience was not prepared for this."[47] This probably gets around the rehearsal problem, because the producer and cast would know that Amphiaraus had supposedly gone in the back door. Aristotle, in his comment, would then presumably not be drawing attention to a blunder on Carcinus' part that had to do with visual logic as such, but rather with a failure to visualize how the action would come across to a live audience in the theater who were not *au fait* with the possibility that an unseen back door might be involved.[48]

It seems to me, then, that this kind of approach is the most fruitful,[49] and it is an approach that works (albeit in slightly different ways) whether it is

43. G. F. Else, *Aristotle's* Poetics: *The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 488, n. 5.

44. Ibid., 488.

45. And Else notes (p. 488, n. 7): "It is as if Polonius, after we have seen him hide behind the arras, should suddenly enter from offstage right."

46. L. Edmunds ("The Blame of Karkinos: Theorizing Theatrical Space," in *Antike Dramentheorien und ihre Rezeption*, ed. B. Zimmermann, Drama, Band 1 [Stuttgart, 1992], 214–39, specifically p. 224, n. 54) basically assumes the Else-type scenario, quoting the relevant part of Else's note. However, he also refers to Craik "for another interpretation of the anomaly."

47. T. B. L. Webster, "Fourth Century Tragedy and the *Poetics*," *Hermes* 82 (1954): 294–308, specifically p. 300.

48. This is a different kind of blunder from one in which a dramatist might send a character off by a *parodos* and then have him reenter from the stage building (when there was no possibility of a back door being brought into play). As we have seen, this latter kind of glaring inconsistency would surely be obvious in rehearsal.

49. A number of other possible scenarios have been suggested. Hutton, Poetics (n. 19 above), p. 99, n. 1, writes: "It has been suggested that Carcinus forgot to place him in the temple before he brought him out; or he may have appeared before the palace when he was still supposedly in the temple." This is a little unclear

the poet or a hypothetical "anyone" (especially a reader) who is in fact the object of ἐλάνθανεν. It may be, though, that we can find another possible explanation that would satisfy the same criteria as Webster's scenario apparently does, and that ideally would make Carcinus' mistake even more culpable. One such explanation may possibly grow out of the note offered on the passage by the Italian editor Rostagni.[50]

Rostagni commented that, "secondo il ben noto mito," Amphiaraus was staying in hiding so as not to take part in the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, but was betrayed by his wife, Eriphyle. It is in fact slightly misleading of Rostagni to talk about "the well-known myth" in this way. Certainly well known was the scenario by which Amphiaraus knew that he would die if he went on the expedition, advised against it, and was reluctant to go himself, and in which his wife, Eriphyle, was responsible for making him go. Not so well known was the detail that he actually hid to escape being made to join up. However, this detail is found in Hyginus *Fabula* 73 and thus clearly goes back to older sources. Anyway, if we could assume that the hiding motif was known already in the fifth and fourth centuries, then Rostagni's supposition, that in Carcinus' play the temple was Amphiaraus' hiding place, seems quite plausible. Rostagni concluded that, through a scenic error, Carcinus had made his character leave the temple when he should still have been represented as being in hiding.[51]

Else dismissed Rostagni's suggestion on the grounds that though it might certainly point to a "dramatic weakness" in Carcinus' play, it would not constitute "a glaring inconsistency which would outrage the audience." This judgment, however, seems overhasty. The apparently unmotivated and incongruous reappearance of a character who had supposedly gone into hiding[52] could well, in the heat of the moment, arouse the audience's contempt.

---

in detail, although the general idea is plain enough. The first option would seem basically to be the Else scenario. The second would apparently make Amphiaraus come out of a stage building representing a palace when he had made an exit via a *parodos* in the direction of a posited offstage temple. This explanation, of course, runs into the rehearsal difficulty. It is possible, though, that Hutton is visualizing a scenario by which the stage building represented a palace and Amphiaraus exited to an offstage temple only to return the same way. Yet another suggestion appears to be offered by the additional comment of Snell (*TrGF,* 1:211): "aut iam antea Amphiaraus e templo exierat aut alio abierat." The second option here is again basically the Else scenario. The first, however, seems to be that Amphiaraus had already come out of the temple once, and then he came out of it again. For this first possibility, as for the second, the question of why the producer did not spot the problem is aptly asked in Snell's follow-up comment already mentioned: "nescio quo pacto ὁ διδάσκαλος haec non notaverit."

50. A. Rostagni, ed., *Aristotele* Poetica (Turin, 1945), ad loc.

51. For the record, Rostagni also suggested that Aristotle would probably have received his information about the unkind criticism of Carcinus' play from a comedy, specifically Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus,* which, according to the second hypothesis to the *Birds,* was produced at the Lenaea in the archonship of Charias, i.e., 414 B.C.E. It would follow that the Carcinus mentioned would have to be the elder Carcinus, that his play was a tragedy, and that Aristophanes' play was a tragic parody, specifically of Carcinus' handling of the story. Rostagni also wanted to keep the received text ὃ μὴ ὁρῶντα τὸν θεατὴν ἐλάνθανεν and translate "which escaped the poet's notice because he did not keep the spectator in sight," i.e., he did not keep in mind the effect that it would have produced on the spectator.

52. Rostagni merely spoke of Amphiaraus' exit from the temple when he should still have been represented as being in hiding. However, his scenario gains more point if the expression ἐξ ἱεροῦ ἀνῄει has the more specific force of "came back" ("was coming back"?) out of a (the?) temple.

Unmotivated entries of characters in tragedy were certainly a target of Aristotle himself. In a well-known passage at *Poetics* 1461b, he criticizes Euripides for having Aegeus turn up unexpectedly in *Medea*. On the scenario suggested above for Carcinus' Amphiaraus, the problem would be compounded. Not only would Amphiaraus' entry be unmotivated. It would actually clash with his supposed whereabouts.

The hiding hypothesis would appear to work more easily if it were the poet who was the object of ἐλάνθανεν. Amphiaraus could, for example, have come back out of the stage-building temple even though he had gone in there with the express intention of hiding and not coming out.[53] In such a situation, Carcinus could have devised any number of strategies to make him change his mind: because his wife, Eriphyle, enticed him out, for example. The point is that in Carcinus' mind there would have been a sufficient rationale that he could put across to producer and actors and anyone else involved in the production.

However, what he might not have taken into account when he was composing the script, and also when the play was being rehearsed, was the actual reaction of the audience on the day, for whom Amphiaraus' reappearance, for whatever reason, was still ridiculous. Now, as we have already seen, Else dismissed Rostagni's suggestion of a scenario along these lines on the grounds that it would be a dramatic weakness but not a glaring inconsistency. However, Aristotle's language in discussing the issue does not suggest that he necessarily had the kind of inconsistency in mind that might be exemplified by a character's exit via a *parodos* to reenter the acting area later from the stage building. Aristotle says in fact that by visualizing the action in his mind's eye, the dramatist εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον καὶ ἥκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι τὰ ὑπεναντία ("he would construct or invent what is fitting or appropriate and be least likely to overlook incongruities"). The sort of scenario that I have outlined could well be covered by Aristotle's words, and it is the one that I personally favor.[54]

The possible problem with it, however, is that, given Aristotle's use of μὴ with ὁρῶντα, the more natural object of ἐλάνθανεν might be said to be the hypothetical "anyone," primarily someone who just read the play rather than saw it performed. This then leads to the further problem that such a person would notice, just as well as a live audience, that Amphiaraus had come out of a temple in which he was still supposedly hiding. And the problem would surely have surfaced in rehearsal as well.[55]

Despite this, it seems unwise to reject the scenario altogether as a viable possibility. It could be argued that the central door of the stage building might

53. Alternatively, if the stage building in fact represented a palace or house, Amphiaraus might have exited via a *parodos* saying that he was going to hide in an offstage temple, only to reappear via the same *parodos*, for whatever reason. Aristotle's use of ἐξ, however, would rather suggest that it was the temple that the stage building represented, and that it was from here that Amphiaraus appeared.

54. Craik, "Arist. *Po.*," 167, emphasizes that "incongruity" rather than "inconsistency" is the basic underlying concept.

55. It is possible, of course, that he might have come out again only to eavesdrop, an action of which there might be no indication in the script, and that this might have come across as ridiculous to the live audience even if it was tolerated at rehearsal. But this line of speculation seems rather weak.

have represented a temple that served some specific function in the action. At the start of the play, Amphiaraus might, for example, have been said by another character or the chorus to have gone into hiding in some undisclosed location (without the temple's being specifically mentioned). Then, he might have appeared at some subsequent point, coming (back) out of the temple in circumstances that seemed incongruous in view of the temple's function. Carcinus could have overlooked the incongruity in composing his script, and a reader would not know that it was out of the temple specifically that Amphiaraus had appeared. The incongruity, moreover, might not have seemed so glaring at rehearsal because producer and cast would know that it was from the temple that Amphiaraus would come. However, it might have seemed unacceptable to the live audience.

Thus, on the assumption that ἀνῆει does mean "returned,"[56] the hiding hypothesis could work, whatever the object of ἐλάνθανεν is. It connects a temple with an incident from the myth of Amphiaraus that would make a suitable subject for a tragedy.[57] It is consistent with what Aristotle says about the need for the dramatist to visualize events as if he were involved in them, and it satisfies the rehearsal problem. It is slightly different from the Webster scenario, but in fact has an important element in common with it, namely, the idea that Carcinus badly overlooked possible audience response because he did not keep the practicalities of staging in his mind's eye when he wrote his script.

In the end, whether any of these particular explanations or another related one is the correct one is not really important. The argument of this paper is that it is in this general area that the most likely solution to the enigma lies.

I would like to conclude with a story. A while ago I was present at the performance of an opera in a large opera house. During the first act the leading lady appeared to have some slight problem with her voice. After the first interval had ended and the house lights went down, a gentleman in formal dress came out from behind the curtain to make an announcement. He had come to say that the singer did indeed have problems, and that the interval had been spent in earnest discussion with her about whether she was well

56. If the imperfect tense is supposed to indicate a repeated action, it is just possible that Amphiaraus was made to "keep on returning," i.e., popping in and out of the temple, which resulted in the audience's becoming irritated in a way that Carcinus had not anticipated. However, if this were the case, one might have expected Aristotle to give greater emphasis to such a repeated action.

57. A temple could also in theory be a suitable backdrop for a tragedy involving Amphiaraus as a chthonic deity (it is harder to see how a temple would be relevant to an incident concerned with certain other moments in Amphiaraus' mortal career, for example, the hero's involvement with Hypsipyle, the subject of Euripides' play of that name). A possible scenario would be one in which a messenger described the disappearance of Amphiaraus into the earth, subsequent to which the hero would emerge from the stage-building temple with his newly acquired deified status. This would kill two birds with one stone as far as the verb ἀνιέναι is concerned, since Amphiaraus could be said both to have "returned" out of the temple, and also to have been "resurrected" out of the temple. With such a scenario, however, it is not immediately obvious how Carcinus could have made a "mistake" through not visualizing the "realities" of staging. Nor is it clear why the audience would be so outraged. Furthermore, if the object of ἐλάνθανεν is the hypothetical "anyone" (primarily a reader), although Amphiaraus' point of reentry might not be obvious from the script, rehearsal would surely have revealed to producer and cast any problem, perhaps concerned with religious sensibilities, to which an audience might also object.

enough to continue. What he actually opened his announcement with, however, was this: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I've just spent the interval in the leading lady's dressing room."

There was a split second of dead silence, then someone tittered. Others gradually followed suit as the possible implications of what the man had said began to sink in. The titter soon developed into general laughter until finally the entire audience gave the man a standing ovation, to his acute embarrassment.

I tell this story not as a possible parallel to the Carcinus blunder which it obviously is not, since this was an example of an unintentional verbal double entendre. I tell it on account of the audience response. One initial titter set off a chain reaction that left an opera house in an uproar, in this case good-humored. I suggest that something similar might well have occurred on the fateful day when Carcinus' play was performed before a live audience in an Athenian theater. In the cold light of day, the apparent absurdity of Amphiaraus' reappearance from the stage building could well have triggered off a negative response of derision that would have caused Carcinus to fall flat on his face in the dramatic competition.

Victoria University of Wellington