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DE CEPHISOPHONTE VERNA, UT PERHIBENT, EURIPIDIS

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In the biographical tradition about Euripides (Satyrus, the Genos and other Lives prefixed to the mss. of Euripides, and the scholia to Aristophanes) three things are said by most sources about Cephisophon: (1) He was a home-born slave, who (2) helped the poet write his plays and also (3) seduced his wife. Items (2) and (3) go back to the allegations of Old Comedy. This paper will argue, first, that item (1) is Old Comedy *misunderstood*, and that another tradition in Thomas Magister that makes him Euripides' actor has a better chance of being correct; and, second, that the story in Satyrus, which seems to make Euripides swap wives with Cephisophon, has also been misunderstood, this time by modern interpreters.

The relevant texts are following: (a) Mentions in extant Aristophanes: Frogs 944, 1407-9, 1451-53, passing references which suggest artistic collaboration but say nothing about Cephisophon's status. (b) Scholia to Frogs 944: ἐδόκει δοῦλος ὢν ὁ Κηφισοφῶν συμποιεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ μάλιστα τὰ μέλη, ὃν καὶ συνεῖναι τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ κωμωδοῦσιν. (Cf. Σ Acharn. 395ff., which calls the Servant of Euripides Cephisophon.) (c) The Genos, which asserts, p. 5, ll. 12-14 Schwartz, that malicious gossip made Cephisophon Euripides' co-author and, p. 6, ll. 1-7, tells the following further tale: ἔκωπτε δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας διὰ τῶν ποιημάτων δι' αἰτίαν τοιάνδε. εἶχεν οἰκογενὲς μειράκιον ὄνοματι Κηφισοφῶντα· πρὸς τοῦτον ἐφόρασε τὴν οἰκείαν γυναῖκα ἀτακτοῦσαν. τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον ἀπέτρεπεν ἀμαρτάνειν. ἐπεὶ δ' οὐκ ἔπειθε, κατέλιπεν αὐτῷ τὴν γυναῖκα, βουλομένου αὐτὴν ἔχειν τοῦ Κηφισοφῶντος. λέγει οὖν καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης (fr. 596 K.-A.).

Κηφισοφῶν ἄριστε καὶ μελάντατε,
 σὺ γὰρ συνέζης ὡς τὰ πόλλ' Εὐριπίδῃ
 καὶ συνεποίησ, ὡς φασι, τὴν μελωιδίαν.

(d) Satyrus' Life of Euripides, P.Oxy. 1176, ed. Arrighetti, fr. 39 XII and XIII: ἦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, π[α]ρ' αὐτῷ μειρακίσκος οἰκογενὴς ὄνομα Κηφισοφῶν. [πρ]ὸς τοῦτον οὖν [ἐ]φόρασε τ[ῆ]ν γυναικ[α] τ[ῆ]ν ἰδίαν [αὐτο]ῦ [ἀ]τακ[το]ῦ[σαν]... τὰ δίκημ' ἐν[ε]γκῶν, ὡς μ[νη]μονεύου[σι], τ[ῆ]ν μὲν ἄ[ν]θρωπον ἐκ[έ]λ[ευ]σεν τῷ[ι] νεανίσκ[ω]ι συνοικεῖν, ἐπειδήπερ [αὐ]τὴ προ[εἶλε]το "ἵνα μ[ὴ] τὴν] ἐμὴν ο[ἴ]τιο[ς] ἔχη, φησὶν, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν τοῦτου· δίκαιον γάρ, ἄνπερ βούλωμα[ι]". (e) Thomas Magister, Life of Euripides, p. 12, lines 16-19 Dindorf: φωράσας δὲ τὸν αὐτοῦ ὑποκριτὴν Κηφισοφῶντα ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν οὐ φέρων αἰσχύνην, σκωπτόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν κωμωδοποιῶν, ἀφείκε τὴν Ἀθήνησι διατριβὴν εἰς Μακεδονίαν ἀπῆρε παρὰ τὸν βασιλέα Ἀρχέλαον.

¹ I would like to thank Mary Lefkowitz and Hugh Lloyd-Jones for helpful comments.

I. It is clear that the story of Cephisophon's adultery with Euripides' wife comes from comedy (cf. κωμωιδούειν in the scholium to Frogs 944). Comic also is the charge of literary collaboration, for Aristophanes, fr. 596, preserved in the Genos (c), is explicit on this point, and Cephisophon was one of several people Old Comedy accused of ghost-writing parts of Euripides' plays. What seems unlikely is that he was, or was represented in comedy to be, Euripides' slave. The ascription of the Acharnians lines to Cephisophon can safely be set aside. Mentions of him in the text of Aristophanes (Frogs 944, 1408, 1452-53) show that Cephisophon's name is known to the theatre public. It seems a priori unlikely that a poet would presume familiarity with the name of the slave of any person, however famous. It is not surprising, therefore, that a search of Holden's *Onomasticon*² fails to reveal any parallel, and that no one simply named in the text is described by the scholia as a slave of any historical person, the sole exception being our Cephisophon. It might be argued that Cephisophon suddenly became a household word owing to the notoriety of his affair with Euripides' wife. But it looks as if his name is known to the audience quite apart from the connection with Euripides' wife.

His name too is suspicious, too high-sounding to be conferred on a slave born in one's own house: cf. the aristocratic names Cephisodorus, Cephisodotus, etc., Xenophon, Antiphon, etc., and the four Athenian politicians of the fifth and fourth century named Cephisophon mentioned in W.Kroll's P.-W. article. But there is one piece of evidence that makes it virtually certain that the biographers have misread the comic poets, Aristophanes fragment 596 quoted in the Genos. Only to someone you would not expect as a matter of course to find in Euripides' house could one say 'you used to live a *great deal of the time* with Euripides and you used to help him write the lyrics'. From this fragment it seems clear that Cephisophon was not presented as Euripides' slave but rather as close friend, living on intimate terms with him.

Now Thomas Magister (e), writing in the thirteenth to fourteenth century calls him Euripides' actor. Admittedly, we do not know how Thomas could have gotten information unavailable to the other biographers, and his Life shows no clear signs of independence from the others.³ Still, what he says makes sense of the evidence. We can understand why Cephisophon's name is familiar to the Athenian public. The comic charge that someone else, e.g. Timocrates of Argos, wrote parts of his plays for Euripides makes better sense when the

² H.A.Holden, *Onomasticon Aristophaneum*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1902).

³ Thomas offers the following differences from the Genos where independence may be reasonably suspected. He gets correct the name of the archon (Calliades instead of Callias) in 480/79, the alleged year of Euripides' birth. He corrects the age of Euripides at the time of his first performance from 26 to the 25 one would get by comparing the birth-year he gives with the date (455) of Euripides' first competition. Neither of these would have cost him any greater effort than consulting a list of archons. Still, it is not impossible that a Byzantine scholar might come upon material unavailable to us and to earlier writers. Cf. the second Prooemion De Comoedia of Tzetzes (Proleg. de com. XIa 11) 59-71 pp. 35-36 Koster, where he notes that he now knows more about satyr-plays than before and seems to have read some plays hitherto unavailable to him or detailed summaries of them. (I am grateful to Professor Richard Kannicht for this reference.)

person so named might be expected to contribute something, as an actor would be and a slave would not.⁴ Note that a different tradition, making Cephisophon Euripides' friend, is presupposed by the author of Letter 5 in the spurious Letters of Euripides.

Where then did the notion arise that he was a slave? The same fragment of Aristophanes that makes it virtually certain that he was not Euripides' slave provides a plausible explanation for why the biographical tradition thought he was. The speaker addresses Cephisophon as 'most excellent and black'. The second adjective, as a parallel at Thesmo. 31 shows, means something like 'brave, manly'. (For the semantics of this and similar words, see Kassel and Austin on Aristophanes fr. 596; J.Henderson on Lysistrata 801-4; R.Hunter on Eubulus, fr. 61; and Fraenkel on Agamemnon 115.) The biographers took it in its ordinary sense and assumed, since most blacks the Greeks encountered were slaves, that Cephisophon was one.⁵ It would seem that they cited the fragment chiefly to show that Cephisophon was a slave.

Several earlier scholars doubted that Cephisophon was a *verna* and some have been receptive to the idea that he was an actor.⁶ More recently a credulous trend has set in, even among *homines emunctae naris*.⁷ Scepticism about the biographical tradition is clearly called for.⁸

II. It is sometimes maintained that in Satyrus' version Euripides is represented as trading wives with Cephisophon. That, however, is a mis-reading of the phrase ἵνα μὴ τὴν ἐμὴν οὗτος ἔχη ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν τούτου· δίκαιον γάρ, ἄνπερ βούλωμαι. The translation of

⁴ We are told by Hesychius ε 1438 Latte that the comic poet Ecphantides had a slave named Choerilus who helped him write his plays. When we try to confirm this statement, however, the other evidence discussed briefly by Kassel and Austin on Cratinus fr. 502 suggests a different relationship.

⁵ See Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 186: 'A large, undoubtedly the largest, portion of the Ethiopians in Greece and Italy arrived as prisoners of war or slaves.'

⁶ Cf. Elmsley, *Aristophanis Comoedia Acharnenses* (Oxford, 1809), pp. 123-24: 'Cephisophontem Euripidis servum non fuisse vel ex ejus nomine satis constat. Quis enim Atheniensium Ἀττικώτατον nomen servulo imposuisset? Nulla, quantum scio, auctoritate nititur ea opinio, praeter Schol. ad hunc locum et Ran. 944...Scriptor epistolarum quae sub Euripidis nomine circumferuntur, Cephisophontem tanquam poetae ἐπιτρον καὶ ἐπιτήδειον alloquitur Epistola quinta'. Elmsley could not have known of the *Genos*, first published by Rossignol in the *Journal des Savans* for 1832. But it seems unlikely that it would have weighed heavily with him. Neither should it with us. W.Ribbeck, *Die Acharner des Aristophanes* (Leipzig, 1864), p. 218, calls him an actor. F.Voelker, *De Graecorum Fabularum Actoribus*, diss. Halle 1880, pp. 18-19 is uncertain 'quamne professus sit artem'. van Leeuwen on *Frogs* 944 agrees with Elmsley that he was no slave, and Stanford and Coulon-Daele at the same place keep a judicious distance from Cephisophon *verna*. V.Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes* (Oxford, 1951), p. 284, n.6, says, 'Cephisophon, who lived under Euripides' roof, was thought to be his collaborator'.

⁷ Holden's *Onomasticon*, after discussing the possibility that Cephisophon was an actor, is inclined to think he was a slave, citing Choerilus' relation to Ecphantides (see above n.3). Gilbert Murray, *Euripides and his Age*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1946), p. 16 calls him 'his servant or secretary'. D.Barrett's *Penguin*, p. 224, n.137, says 'A member of Euripides' household, possibly a slave or a lodger'.

⁸ Mary Lefkowitz, 'The Euripides Vita', *GRBS* 20 (1979) 187-210, and *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London/Baltimore, 1981), sets us once more back on the trail blazed by Wilamowitz' *Einleitung in die attische Tragödie*.

these words implicit in the wife-swapping view moves the negative several degrees to the west and renders '*not* in order that he may have my wife but in order that I may have his', whereas the Greek says 'in order that he may *not* have my wife but rather I his'. In view of this negative purpose we cannot take 'have' in the sense 'be married to', for 'in order that he may not be married to my wife' makes no sense here. The simplest translation is 'so that he may not enjoy my wife but rather I his. For that is fair if I wish it thus'. Euripides does not want to be cuckolded but proposes to cuckold instead, with himself as *μοιχός* and Cephisophon as the wronged husband. And this is only just (*δίκαιον*) since turn about is fair play. The wife-trading translation also cuts out a motif we see elsewhere in the biographical tradition, Euripides as *μοιχός*: cf. the story of the poet and the wife of Nicodocus of Arethusa in the Souda s.v. *Εὐριπίδης*. Gerstinger, Frey, and Arrighetti were influential in interpreting Satyrus to mean a trade of wives.⁹ Stephanie West, *Gnomon* 38 (1966), 550, corrects Arrighetti but too telegraphically to carry everyone with her.¹⁰

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⁹ H.Gerstinger, *WS* 38 (1916), 68, n.3; H.Frey, 'Der ΒΙΟΣ ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΟΥ des Satyros und seine literaturgeschichtliche Bedeutung', diss. Zürich 1922, p. 19; G.Arrighetti, *Satiro: Vita di Euripide*, *Studi classici e orientali* 13 (1964), 131.

¹⁰ Lefkowitz, *Lives*, p. 100, reproduces Arrighetti's view.