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Theory and Musical Performance of the Chorus in Sixteenth-Century Italy. A Case Study: Vicenza 1585

Per Giulio Cattin (Vicenza, 1929-2014)

Abstract

On 3 March 1585 Sophocle's *Oedipus Tyrannus* was staged at Vicenza on the opening night of the Olympic Theatre. Orsatto Giustiniani translated the tragedy into Italian and Andrea Gabrieli composed the music for the choruses. Individual parts were published in 1588 (Venezia, Angelo Gardano), but other interesting material regarding *Oedipus'* choruses is also available; this includes the staging designs created by the artistic manager Angelo Ingegneri and by the famous scholar Sperone Speroni, various kinds of comments, as well as a number of reviews by Ingegneri himself and other spectators, such as Giacomo Dolfin, Antonio Riccoboni and Filippo Pigafetta. We even have a review written by Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, who had actually not seen the play. This article concentrates on the analysis of these documents by contextualizing them within the current ideas on the chorus which derived from the contemporary reception of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Olympic Academy. The Academicians knew Alessandro Pazzi's Latin translation (1536) as well as Bernardo Segni's vernacularisation (1549) of the *Poetics* and some of them were also well acquainted with Robortello's (1548), Vettori's (1560), and Castelvetro's commentaries (1570) on it. Being the first modern *mise en scène* of an ancient tragedy and because of its wide cultural implications, the Vicenza 1585 *Oedipus* proves therefore an interesting case study in order to investigate of the sixteenth-century transmission, translation, and interpretation of ancient Greek and Latin treatises on poetry, rhetoric, and music. Their rediscovery triggered new critical considerations and brought about musical experiments with special regard to the chorus, whose echo (maybe) even reached foreign travellers.

The first Italian language edition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as well as *Politics*, translated by Bernardo Segni, were published in Florence in 1549 by the Dutch-Italian printer Lorenzo Torrentino. Three years later, in 1551, they also appeared in Venice under the imprint of the so-called 'l'Imperador' Bartholomeo. Segni divided the text of *Poetics* into twenty-four chapters and,

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in addition to a clear Italian translation, he provided a brief explanatory introduction and a series of commentaries on each of the individual sections. This was certainly an improvement over Pazzi's 1536 Latin version and Robortello's 1548 edition, which was divided into 270 *particulae*; indeed, not only did Segni give the unlettered public the opportunity to read the *Poetics* in the Italian vernacular, but also provided scholars with a much more systematic idea of the general order of Aristotle's disposition of the text (Weinberg 1961: vol. 1, 405).

The description of the chorus is contained in the eighth chapter, entitled "Divisione della Tragedia in parti quantitative" ["Division of Tragedy in quantitative parts"]. Segni divides it into "prologo, episodio, esito, corico" (1551a: 179) ["prologue, episode, exode, *chorikon*"], and later defines these four "quantitative" parts as "those that give magnitude" to tragedy itself (ibid.: 180). With regard to the chorus, he refers his readers to Robortello's comments:

> Ma il uoler dire particularmente di loro e massimamente le cose appartenenti ai chori sarebbe impresa troppo lunga, e chi ne uuole una sì fatta notitia la può cauare dal dotto commento del Rubertello. (ibid.)

> [It would be too long an enterprise to discuss the choruses and what concerns them in detail, and whoever wishes to know about that material can derive it from Robortello's learned commentary.][1]

In chapter fifteen, entitled "The Division of the Tragedy", Segni identifies two ways in which the chorus should act on stage: speaking, as actors do, or singing. When singing, it is important – he says – that the lyrics are attuned to the subject of the tragedy or at least that they sound like digressions. In order to confirm this idea, he quotes Horace's *Ars Poetica*:

> Mostra che il choro si debba diuidere in due maniere. In una, com'è quando ei fauella a uso d'uno solo istrione in scena. Et ne l'altra, com'è quando tutti cantano in musica. Nel qual caso ammonisce quello, che stia bene da dirsi del choro; cioè ch'e' debba dir cose annesse a la tragedia, o poco dissimili: o uero, ch'e' debba far qualche digressione. Ne' quali tre modi mostra esser differenza, e il primo è più da lui approuato. Una simil cosa conferma Horatio ne la Poetica, parlando medesimamente del Choro, oue e' dice:
>
> > Authoris[2] partes chorus, officiumque uirile
> > Defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus,
> > Quod non proposito conducat, et haereat apte.
> > (ibid.: 191)

> [He shows that the chorus must act in two ways, either speaking as a single actor on the stage or singing as a whole group. As for the latter, he prescribes what the chorus

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1. All translations are the author's except where otherwise noted.
2. Segni follows the *lectio deterior* "authoris", attested in some prints, and not the correct and widely accepted "auctoris", although he does clearly mean "auctoris".

ought to say: they should speak of topics related to tragedy or slightly different from it, that is, they should make some digression. He shows how these three ways diverge, and especially commends the first one. Horace confirms Aristotle's view in his *Ars Poetica*, when he talks about the chorus:

> An actor's part the chorus should sustain
> And do their best to get the plot in train:
> And whatsoe'er between the acts they chant
> Should all be apt, appropriate, relevant.
> (Horace, trans. by J. Conington)]

Commenting upon the reception of both Aristotle's and Horace's poetics, Weinberg brilliantly points out: "As a result, Horace ceased to be Horace and Aristotle never became Aristotle; each grew, instead, into a vast monument containing all the multiform remains of the literary past" (1961: vol. 1, 47). In a subsequent contribution, Tarán completes the picture:

> … the interpretations of the *Poetics* from a literary point of view during these centuries was largely unhistorical … That the *Ars Poetica* was interpreted there in the light of problems and assumptions quite different from those Horace himself addressed did not bode well for the historical interpretation of the *Poetics*… Unfortunately the *Poetics* was then viewed in the same light as that of the *Ars Poetica* and as a welcome supplement and complement to the latter … There was little awareness of the essential differences between the two works, and none at all of the historical context of each and of the different purposes of the two authors. (Tarán and Gutas 2012: 38-40)

In fact, Segni had no idea of how the ancient Greek music sounded like, as he made clear in his final explanatory comment on *Politics* 8, 7:

> Ma questo basti per l'espositione del testo, et per l'espositione del testo et per la fine di questo libro nel quale hauendo ei cominciato a formare uno da fanciullo et condottolo infine alla età da imparar musica, si ferma assai in tal ragionamento, discorrendo di lei inuero non molto chiaramente per essersi perdute le notitie delle musiche antiche. (1549b: 417)

> [But this is enough for the explanation of the text; and for the explanation of the text and the end of this book, in which he started educating a child and finally led it to the age when music may be learnt, he long dwells on that argument, talking about it not very clearly, indeed, since all knowledge of ancient music has been lost.]

In 1585, thirty-six years after Segni's vernacularization, the first modern performance of a Greek tragedy, choral scores included, was mounted at the Olympic Academy (Accademia Olimpica) at Vicenza. Such an experiment can be studied in the light of the widespread intellectual curiosity for the classical world that different courts, universities, and academies in the Venetian territorial state had been demonstrating since the late thirteenth century. Padua, Venice, and Vicenza were the capitals of this kind of scholarly renaissance. The interest for and imitation of Greek and Roman antiquities dealt with, on

the one hand, figurative arts and architecture, and on the other, poetry, historiography, and music (Gallo 1981, 1989, 1990; Meriani 2015). The main reason for this admiration for antiquity lay in the relationship between the present and the past. As Vidal-Naquet correctly underlines, "all this was entirely in harmony with a humanistic ethic which imitates antiquity while being fully conscious that it is not antiquity" (1996: 20). The effort to build theatres and scenes, to recreate the costumes, the gestures and the styles of singers and musicians, as well as musical instruments was carried out to reproduce (what was thought to be) the atmosphere and the feeling of the antiquity. However, scholars, scientists, and learned people in general were aware that "pieces of information about ancient music" ("le notitie delle musiche antiche", Segni 1551: 417) got irremediably lost, and that what they were reproducing was just an idea of ancient music rather than its actual sound. Still, they liked it and they also liked to try and arouse the legendary *effetti* [effects] in the players' and listeners' minds and bodies. Reviving ancient music meant to explore the possibility of reproducing and giving new life to the whole musical practice, which included voice intonation, melody, and rhythm, as well as the sequences of movements and gestures by recreating ancient dance *schemata* [patterns]. The endeavour to revitalise the chorus, combining voice, rhythm, melody, and gesture is a good example of such an attitude; and yet, musicians were latecomers in this respect.

For all these reasons, the first modern performance of an ancient tragedy may prove an interesting case study in order to investigate how Italian sixteenth-century transmission, translation, and interpretation of ancient Greek and Latin treatises on poetry, rhetoric, and music shaped new musical theorizations and experiments. This essay will especially focus on documents referring to spectacles mounted within the territories of the Venetian Republic. In the last fifty years, this topic has been widely explored by both musicologists and theatre historians, from the pioneering studies by Schrade (1960), Gallo (1973, 1976, 1981), and Palisca (1985), to the more recent essays by Gallo (1989, 1990, 1993), Cattin (1990), Magagnato (1992), Mazzoni (1998), and later on Restani (2012) and again Mazzoni (2013).

The first modern reprise of an ancient Greek chorus in a tragedy took place at Vicenza on the inauguration of the Olympic Theatre, designed by Andrea Palladio according to the Vitruvian theatrical model and completed, after Palladio's death (August 1580), by architect and set designer Vincenzo Scamozzi in February 1585. The opening of the new theatre on Sunday 3 March 1585 coincided with the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Olympic Academy. Both the rich cultural atmosphere inspired by the place itself and the Academicians' interest in classical antiquity and its revival tinged the occasion with a symbolical hue, and also had social and political implications. It is

therefore no surprise that the Academy's choice[3] eventually fell on Sophocles's *Oedipus*, which Aristotle had defined as the epitome of tragedy in his *Poetics*. At the time, many Italian translations were available: from the unpublished version by Alessandro Pazzi, to the one by Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara. Indeed, dell'Anguillara's *Oedipus Tyrannus* had been performed at the Olympic Academy in 1560 (Schrade 1960: 23-35), and was praised by Giustiniani in his 1585 *Prefazione* [Preface]: "[W]idely considered the most beautiful of all tragedies, it was the base of Aristotle's *Poetics*" (Schrade 1960: 87) ("stimata da ogn'uno bellissima sopra tutte l'altre; et della quale Aristotile istesso in quella parte, ou'egli ragiona della Tragedia, si valse per essempio nel formar la sua Poetica", qtd in Gallo 1973: xxxi). However, none of these translations were adopted, and the choice fell on the new version that Orsatto Giustiniani (1538-1603) had realized "in villa" for "pleasure and simple exercise" ("trastullo and semplice essercizio", Sophocles 1585: 3-4; qtd in Mazzoni 1998: 104).

It should be noted that the statute of the Olympic Academy did not privilege high-class provenance for its members and, even though things changed in the following years, among its founders there were both noblemen and commoners, all well versed in the liberal arts, sciences, and the humanities (Cattin 1990). The fame and success of the Academy were mainly related to the theatrical celebration of Carnival. The first decade of the Academy's life saw the representation of at least five dramas based on ancient subjects, but unfortunately very little information about the music and only one record about the presence of a chorus survive (Gallo 1977: 106). Two members of the audience reported that Gian Giorgio Trissino's tragedy, *Sofonisba*, was performed "with such magnificent, rich and proportioned scenes, with such beautiful and elegant costumes, and with such a big concert of actors, music and choruses, that its fame flies all over Italy" ("con tanto splendore di scena artificiosa, ricca e proporzionata, con tanta vaghezza, e pompa de abiti, e con tanto concerto de' Recitanti, di Musica, e di Chori, che vola la Fama con ogni maniera di lode di già per tutte le parti d'Italia", Gallo 1977: 108; Cattin 1990: 169, n. 6).

The choruses of *Oedipus Tyrannus* are better documented and individual parts were published in Venice in 1588 by Angelo Gardano.[4] We can still refer to the projects regarding the performance set out by the Academicians (Mazzoni 1998: 225-46), by the production's artistic manager or, following the Greek use, 'Corago', Angelo Ingegneri (ibid.: 113-6), and the contemporary scholar

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3. About the four sessions during which the Olympic academicians lively debated whether a pastoral drama or a tragedy were more appropriate to be staged at the opening of their theatre see Mazzoni 1998: 94-105.

4. See Schrade 1960: 64-77, 81-2, 157-246; Pirrotta 1987, 1995. About the Gardano as music printing family in sixteenth-century Venice, see Bernstein 2001.

Sperone Speroni. In additon to this material, we have a few commentaries and reviews not only by Ingegneri but also by people who sat in the audience, like Giacomo Dolfin, Antonio Riccoboni and Filippo Pigafetta, and even by some scholars who did not see the performance but knew about it, like Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (Gallo 1973).

The choice of Sophocles's drama earned wide consensus, especially because of its symbolic import: Vicenza was transfigured into Thebes, and Thebes was not only Thebes but also Vicenza (Mazzoni 1998: 155-66). Viewers and listeners were deeply involved in the plot and identified with the characters. Giacomo Dolfin wrote: "[H]anno mostrato giuditio in fare scelta di questa attione, per la prima volta, che ui si hauess'a recitar dentro, acciò che in quel loco, di cui il più bello non è stato edificato dal tempo degli antichi in poi, fosse anco recitata la più bella, et più famosa Tragedia, che da gli antichi in qua fosse stata composta" (qtd in Gallo 1973: 37) ["they were right in making this decision, as it is highly appropriate that the first work to be performed in the best theatre ever built since the antiquity should be the best tragedy ever composed"]; and Pigafetta added: "[N]el più famoso Teatro del mondo, è primieramente stata la più eccellente Tragedia del mondo rappresentata" (qtd in ibid.: 54) ["in the world's most famous theatre, the world's most famous tragedy was peformed for the first time"].

Maybe there was another reason for this tragedy to be chosen: its chorus. From a cultural and especially literary point of view, a few examples concerning the contemporary reception of Aristotle's *Poetics* – often ridden with misunderstandings – may help understand the ideas on the chorus that circulated in the Olympic Academy from the late 1540s to 1585. All members were no stranger to Latin translations (Schrier 1998: 281) of the *Poetics*; they were possibly not very familiar with Giorgio Valla's translation (1498), published in his *De expetendis, et fugiendis rebus opus* (1501), nor too well acquainted with the Aldine *editio princeps* of the Greek text (1508) but they certainly knew the more successful Latin version by Alessandro Pazzi (1536) and of course Segni's vernacularisation (1549). Some Academicians also knew the commentaries very well: Ingegneri quoted Robortello's and Vettori's Latin ones, as well as Castelvetro's Italian work. But we will return to this point later.

As we said before, Segni referred his readers to the first of the great printed commentaries, that is, Francesco Robortello's *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes* (1548, 1555), based on the Latin translation by Alessandro Pazzi (1536). As Weinberg clarifies:

> For the history of literary criticism in the Renaissance, however, Robortello's great importance lies in his commentary, the first extensive to be printed. It not only was an epitome of the earlier scattered interpretations of the *Poetics*; it also in many ways

made new suggestions which determined the future tendencies in the reading of the text. (1961: vol. 1, 388)

He also adds: "Robortello conceived of poetry as written for the purpose of producing certain effects of pleasure and of utility on a given audience" (ibid.: 389); however, Weinberg warns about some misinterpretations of Aristotle's text on Robortello's part: "[W]hen he proceeds to read Aristotle as if it were Aristotle's theory, too, he completely deforms the meaning of his basic text" (ibid.: 66-7). In his commentary on the quantitative sections of tragedy, Robortello refers to the four choruses of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a model, and analyses them from the point of view of the dramatic action (Robortello 1548: 122-5). In particular, he focuses on the presence of the chorus at the opening and at the end of the play, pointing out that in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, from the very beginning of the *parodos*, the Chorus do not speak, but sing a long prayer to Apollo (ll. 51-215). On this he also says:

> Obseruaui tamen apud Sophoclem in Oedipode Tyranno rem aliter se habere, ac adnotauit hoc loco Aristoteles, nam in prima parodo statim Chorus, non loquitur quidem, sed cantat; versus hi sunt... [Soph. *OT* 151-215] (ibid.: 122-3)

> [Yet I perceived that in Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus* things stand differently from what Aristotle maintained: indeed, at the very beginning of the *parodos* the chorus do not speak, but sing. These are his lines... Soph. *OT* 151-215]

However – Robortello argues – it was not the Chorus of the Elders who move away from the altar with the priest of Apollo, but a chorus of children:

> Nam longa est precatio, cum cantu, ut opinor, prolata. Sed aut dicendum, hoc uno tantum in loco legem praetergressum fuisse Parodi Sophoclem, cum in aliis sanctissime semper seruet, ut chorum faciat in prima parodo loquentem. Aut, quod omnino uerissimum est, Chorus ille non est Chorus proprius eius tragoediae, sed puerorum Chorus, qui una cum sacerdote, iussu Oedipodis, recedunt ab aris. (ibid.: 123)

> [In fact, this prayer is long, and I believe it is sung. Yet we may affirm that Sophocles either once infringed the model of the parodos that he had always followed very closely, or that this is not the real chorus of this tragedy, but a chorus of children who, by order of Oedipus, leave the altar together with the Priest – and this is absolutely true.]

He meticulously analyses their gestures, as if he were giving stage directions, perhaps following the ancient manuscript *scholia* on ll. 144-7:

> Sacerdos igitur obtemperans Oedipodi, consurgit discessurus, et abducit simul puerorum chorum ... [Soph. *OT* 147-50]
> Chorus igitur puerorum discessurus et ipse una cum sacerdote consurgit: se priusquam discedat, ita cantans precatur: ... [Soph. *OT* 151ff.] et quae sequuntur. (ibid.)

[Then the Priest obeys Oedipus, rises to go out, leading the chorus of children … Soph. *OT* 147-50]
Consequently the chorus of children also rise together with the Priest and, while going out, sing and pray: … Soph. *OT* 151ff.]

The priest who carries out (*obtemperans*) Oedipus's order rises to go out (*consurgit discessurus*) together with the chorus of children, and leads them away (*abducit*). At the same time, the leaving (*discessurus*) chorus rise (*consurgit*) together with the priest, and before going out (*priusquam discedat*) sing a prayer (*cantans precatur*). The commentator knew very well that:

> Cum igitur Chorus ille puerorum decedat, non est peculiaris Chorus tragoediae, neque enim in tragoediis unquam ex pueris constituuntur chori, quia propter aetatis imbecillitatem, et nondum firmam rationem in rebus aut agendis, aut cognoscendis, non possunt συναγωνίζεσθαι, quod proprium est munus Chori, ut postea dicemus, Peculiaris igitur Chorus alius est Tragoediae illius Sophocleae, qui constat ex senioribus. (ibid.)

> [The chorus of children was not the usual chorus in a tragedy, as children are never part of the chorus, because their age makes them frail and incapable of making balanced decisions, they cannot perform like actors, as choreuts should. The proper chorus of Sophocles' tragedy is the chorus of the Elders.]

Robortello's explanation was later considered unacceptable by Ingegneri, who suggested that the group of children should remain silent, since the only speaking chorus should be the one composed of the Theban Elders.
Another highly debated issue was how the tragedy should be divided and where the chorus should be placed and act. According to Robortello, the prologue ends before Oedipus's execration and the *parodos* begins with the chorus's address to the King himself. Indeed, he calls into cause Aristotle's opinion in order to strengthen his own:

> Ante hos uersus igitur, ubi finem loquendi facit Oedipus horribilem illam pronuncians execrationem, prologo finis est statuendus. Parodi uero principium statuendum in iis uersibus a me paulo ante recitatis, in quibus chorus alloquitur Oedipodem. Atque haec cum ita sese habeant, uerissimum est, sine ulla exceptione, quod scribit Aristoteles, parodum, finemque prologi esse, ubi primum loqui incipit Chorus. (ibid.)

> [Therefore we have to put the prologue's end before these lines, in which Oedipus stops with that terrible curse (ll. 139 ff.). The prologue begins with the lines that I have just quoted by which the chorus address Oedipus. So this confirms with no possible exception what Aristotle writes: that the parodos is both the prologue's end and where the chorus start speaking.]

The chorus also speak, rather than singing, after the exodus:

> Loquebatur etiam Chorus post exodum, declarat hoc Aristoteles in contextu, cum ait: ἔξοδος δὲ μέρος ὅλον τραγῳδίας, μεθ' ὃ οὐκ ἔστι χοροῦ μέλος. (ibid.)

[Chorus also spoke after the exodus, so Aristotle explains when he says that 'exodos is that complete part of the tragedy, after which there is no choral song']

In addition to that, Robortello noticed another peculiarity regarding the chorus at the conclusion of *Oedipus Tyrannus*: Oedipus is crushed and overcome by his sufferings and the chorus cry with him, thus offering no comfort to his aching:

Apud Sophoclem certe uideas chori luctum communem hunc, in Oedipode Tyranno. Nam Chorum illic inducit Sophocles; qui Oedipodem, cum delapsus esset in maximam calamitatem, non solatur, sed una cum eo luget, illiusque, lugendo, luctum auget. (ibid.: 124)

[If you will consider Sophocles, you will surely notice this communal mourning in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where not only do the chorus fail to comfort Oedipus after his most heavy misfortune, but also grieve with him, and, by their own grieving, increase his grief.]

And again:

Non fungitur quidem chorus in his erga Oedipum proprio munere; debet enim officium uirile (ut Horatius ait) tueri chorus, solarique miseros. At non sine magno artificio aliquando, praetermisso peculiari officio suo, chorus inducitur lugens in maximis malis, et calamitatibus alienis, quae tantae sunt, ut consolatione leniri non possint; et eorum, qui solari cupiunt, animos frangant, ad luctumque simul impellant. (ibid.)

[When pronouncing those words in front of Oedipus, the chorus do not fulfill their task: the chorus should provide (as Horace said) mainly comfort to miserable people. However, by resorting to some kind of artifice, the chorus forget their task and emphasize pain and suffering in such an extreme way that no further comfort can be provided, thus causing new anguish to those they should console.]

When discussing the duties of the chorus, who participate, if passively, in the action and merely show their benevolence towards those who are on stage, and the expression *apo skenes* [on stage], Robortello (ibid.: 124-5) refers to the Aristotelian *Problemata* XIX 48 and 15. This shows Robortello's good knowledge of this Aristotelian text, which had been published in Venice in 1501 together with the Medieval Latin translation by Bartholomew of Messina, Pietro d'Abano's commentary, and a new rendition by Theodore Gaza. His double reference to the *Problemata* seemingly gets off the main point as it deals with the theory of musical *ethos* and the antistrophic structure of the chorus. Yet, while Robortello did not include any kind of technical musical advice in his commentary, other Academicians, who read his stage directions to *Oedipus Tyrannus* – reprinted seven years later at Basel (1555: 107-9) –, may have been interested in setting to music the lines spoken by the choruses.

Angelo Ingegneri and Antonio Riccoboni were among them, as we will see shortly.

The Vicenza poet, playwright and member of the Olympic Academy, Gian Giorgio Trissino (Pompeo's grandfather) showed a special interest in Greek musical treatises and in their transmission. This is what he wrote to Pope Paul III, introducing the Latin translation of Ptolemy's *Harmonica* by Nicolò Leoniceno:

> Quantum autem musicae huius nostri temporis desit, non modo tibi omnium doctissimo notum esse arbitror, sed cuiuis etiam mediocris eruditionis non ignotum esse censeo. Nam praeter enharmonium, et chromaticum, quae duo genera haec aetas non nouit, ipsum quoque diatonicum, quo solo genere utitur, non ita exquisitum et perfectum habet, ut antiqui habuere. Boetius enim a quo Guitto Arretinus, et nostri deinde omnes hanc scientiam acceperunt, cum tetrachorda, in quibus ratio totius musica continetur, Archita, et Aristoxeni exposuisset, ac ea uerbis Ptolemei reprehendisset, deinde tetrachordorum diuisionem, quemadmodum Ptolemeus fieri dicat oportere, se explicaturum pollicetur, quae tamen malignitate temporum, ut ipse arbitror, non extant. Quare necessario ab ipso Ptolemeo, aut a Briennio, qui eadem graece a Ptolemeo acceperat, petenda sunt: nunc uero latini musici, et graecarum litterarum ignari, ea omnia cum laboribus Leoniceni, tum consilio meo, et benignitate sanctitatis tuae facile sibi poterunt comparare. (Vatican, MS Lat. 3744; qtd in Gallo 1976: 70-1)

> [How much is lacking in the music of our present time, I think is known not only to you, who are the most learned of all men, but is also, I consider, not unknown to anyone of moderate erudition. For, apart from the enharmonic and chromatic – two genera that our age does not know – it does not even possess in so exquisite a form as had the ancients even the diatonic, the sole genus of which it makes use. Boethius [from whom Guido Aretinus and all our (writers) received this science], when he had set forth the tetrachords – in which the logic of all music is contained – of Archytas and Aristoxenus and rejected them with the words of Ptolemy, promised to explain how Ptolemy said the division of the tetrachords ought to be done. But because of the ravages of time, as I judge, they do not survive. For this reason, it is necessary to resort to Ptolemy himself or to Bryennius, who received the same in Greek from Ptolemy. Latin musicians and those unacquainted with Greek letters will now be able easily to compare all the tetrachords for themselves through the work of Leoniceno, with my advice and the blessing of your Holiness. (Palisca 1985: 119-20)]

The poet's letter is dated 20 July 1541. In his original project, Leoniceno's translation was to be offered to Pope Leo X, to whom Trissino had also dedicated his *Sofonisba*, written in 1514-15, published in 1524, and staged twelve years after the playwright's death at the Vicenza moveable wooden theatre, designed by Palladio to be located inside the Basilica. In the same year (1562) Trissino's *La quinta e la sesta divisione della poetica* were also published in Venice. Here is what he wrote on the principle of imitation:

> Ma perché il ballare et il cantare sono anch'esse imitazioni che tallora si introducono nei teatri, delle quali il ballare si fa col ritmo solo et il cantare con ritmo et armonia, noi, per non essere tal cose pertinenti al poeta, di esse altrimenti non diremo e solamente

tratteremo di quelle che fanno la imitazione con tutt'e tre le sopra dette cose, cioè in sermone, rime ed armonia, come sono ballate, canzoni e mandriali, e comedie e tragedie se hanno il coro, e simili. (qtd in Trissino 1562: 2, 11)

[But because dancing and singing are also imitations that at times are introduced in the theatre, of which dancing is done with rhythm alone and singing with rhythm and harmony, these things not being pertinent to the poet, we shall not speak of them otherwise and treat only of those that make imitation with all three of these things, that is, the language, verse, and harmony, such as ballate, canzoni, and mandriali, and commedie and tragedies if they have a chorus. (Palisca 1985: 398)]

As Palisca points out:

Trissino develops Aristotle's ideas on imitation in directions that are musically of interest. [...] He believed that dancing, and singing with rhythm of dance, were introduced from time to time into the theater as auxiliary species of imitation, and that comedies and tragedies, if they had a chorus, also utilized verse and harmony together but without rhythm of dance. One may gather from this that Trissino recognized three kinds of music in the theater: instrumental music for dancing, dance-songs, and choral chanting. The first two were incidental to the play, the third essential if the play had a chorus. (ibid.: 398, 408-9)

Another fundamental contribution to the analysis of the issue of rhythm and harmony can be found by looking at the second of the great commentaries to Aristotle's *Poetics*, compiled by Bartolomeo Lombardi and Vincenzo Maggi. Published under the title of *In Aristotelis librum de poetica communes explanationes* in 1550, it derived from a lecture Lombardi had given in Padua 1541. Commenting on *Poetics* 1, 1447b, Maggi specified: "In the prologue only speech is used, in the first chorus verse, melody, and rhythm together, in the other choruses only verse and melody" (Palisca 1985: 410-11 n. 8) ("siquidem in prologo sermone tantum, in primo autem ingressu chori rhythmo, harmonia, et metro: in stasimo uero non est rhythmus", 1550: 59)

From 1554 to 1559 Girolamo Mei participated in the lively debate on the *Poetics* which took place at the University of Padua by focusing on the chorus in Greek tragedy. Pier Vettori also added his own contribution and in 1560 he published his *Commentarii in primum librum Aristotelis de arte poetarum*. In his rendition, *hedusmenoi logoi* [embellished speech] from *Poetics* 6, 1449b 25 became *condita oratio* [seasoned language]: quite a different choice from Pazzi's *suauis oratio* [sweet language]. Also at variance with Maggi, he highlighted the role of musical elements in tragedy, that is, rhythm, harmony as *melos/cantus*, and metre (Vettori 1560: 57).[5] He called into cause the presence and function of the chorus even in his interpretation of *mimesis* as a key element of tragedy, which, he claimed, was almost entirely performed by the chorus.[6]

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5. On Vettori's opinions on the presence and role of music in tragedy see Restani 2001: 85-9.
6. "However, the ancient tragedy was almost entirely performed by the chorus" ("Priscam autem tragediam fere totam a choro actam fuisse", Vettori 1560: 41).

Two years later, Orazio Toscanella published his *Precetti necessari et altre cose utilissime*: "a handbook on grammar, rhetoric, poetics, history, logic, and related disciplines", which "leans toward the view that singing pervaded the tragic and comic performances of the Greeks" (Palisca 1985: 410-11). Toscanella agreed with Pazzi on the understanding of *melos* as a part of the "embellished speech" ("discorso ornato"), which he translated as "sweetness" ("dolcezza"). But he also seemed to imply the presence of song: "Meaning that which the chorus sings all together, but also that manner, beyond ordinary speech, that actors use in reciting plays" (Palisca 1985: 410-11) ("Intende non solamente quello, che il choro canta tutto insieme, quanto tutto quel modo che fuor del parlare ordinario usano gl'histrioni recitando le favole", Toscanella 1562: 82v).

In his Italian 1570 commentary on the *Poetics* (*Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta*), Ludovico Castelvetro considered the role of the chorus and, in particular, its ethical function as well as the fact that its interventions actually divided the performance into "atti" ["acts"] from the Latin word *actus*:

> Poiché il coro rappresenta il giudicio e 'l ragionamento del popolo che fa o tiene dell'azzione de' suoi signori in parte o in tutto, e 'l popolo communemente è di costumi buoni, e spezialmente in apparenza e in publico, seguita che egli nel suo canto loderà le cose ben fatte e biasimerà le mal fatte, e pregherà Dio che dea buona ventura a' buoni e la debita pena a' rei, e avrà compassione degli afflitti e gli consolerà e non s'attristerà punto del mal de' rei, e simili cose che sono agevoli ad imaginarsi. (Castelvetro 1978-79: vol. 1, 122)

> [Now, since the chorus represents the judgements and comments made by actual people on the whole or certain parts of an action involving its lords, and the morals of the people are generally good, especially in public, it follows that in its songs the chorus will praise virtuous deeds and condemn depravities and will pray to God that he may reward the good, punish the wicked, and grant mercy and comfort to the afflicted. On the other hand it will not be saddened by the sufferings of the wicked or by other similar matters that can be easily imagined (Bongiorno 1984: 208)]

Moreover, he specified that:

> Ultimamente si prende ἐπεισόδιον per quella parte di quantità di tragedia che è posta tra il canto intero di due cori; e perché in ciascuna tragedia il coro canta quattro fiate, conviene che questa parte, nominata episodio, si divida in tre e sieno tre episodi; e perché il canto intero del coro è il termine di quella parte che i latini hanno nominata 'atto', conviene che l'episodio posto tra il primo e 'l secondo coro sia il secondo atto, e che l'episodio posto tra il secondo e 'l terzo coro sia il terzo atto, e che l'episodio posto tra il terzo e 'l quarto coro sia il quarto atto. (Castelvetro 1978-79: vol. 1, 343)

> [Finally *epeisodion* is applied to the quantitative part of a tragedy that falls between two choral songs. Since the chorus makes four appearances each tragedy contains three episodes of this last kind; and since a whole choral song marks the end of what the Romans call an act, the episode between the first and second choruses corresponds to the second act, the one between the second and third choruses to the third, and the one between the third and fourth choruses to the fourth. (Bongiorno 1984: 62)]

Castelvetro also suggested that the *chorikon*, the fourth of Segni's "quantitative parts" of tragedy, should be accompanied by *melos* when the chorus enter the stage to sing:

> E non compare il coro in palco per cantare se non quattro volte. E il coro vegnente in palco per cantare si divide in due maniere, delle quali l'una è detta πάροδος, e l'altra στάσιμον: πάροδος è il canto del coro intero quando il coro compare la prima volta in palco, e στάσιμον è il canto del coro intero quando il coro ritorna a cantare la seconda, la terza e la quarta volta. (Castelvetro 1978-79: vol. 1, 345)

> [The chorus appears on stage in order to sing only four times. And the appearance of the chorus on stage can be of two kinds, one is called *parodos*, and the other is called *stasimon*. *Parodos* is the song of the whole chorus appearing on stage for the first time; *stasimon* is the song of the whole chorus when it comes back and sings for the second, third, and fourth time.]

With regard to the songs performed by the chorus, Castelvetro's opinion was quite radical:

> Sono, come abbiamo detto, due materie del canto del coro: l'una lodevole, che è confacevole con la favola o con la tragedia e si può domandare propria di quella tragedia, l'altra è sconvenevole alla favola o alla tragedia, e si può domandare strana. (ibid: vol. 1, 522).

> [There are two kinds of subjects for the song of the chorus: a proper one, which is appropriate to the plot or the tragedy and pertains to the tragedy, and another one, which is not appropriate to the plot or the tragedy, and which can be considered weird.]

As Claude Calame has recently pointed out:

> Tragedy as ritual and musical performance, the songs of tragedy as dramatized melic and choral performances: the recent interest in ancient theatre as a performative art has focused the attention of a few scholars in Classics on the pragmatics of Greek tragedy. Tragedy no longer seen as a (literary) text, then, but as theatrical performance; choral parts not only read as poems, but as songs with their melody and their metrical rhythm corresponding to a choreography. We have to consider in this light the performative aspects of choral songs in tragedy along the three functions of mediation … : dramatic, spatial and religious. This 'intermedial' function of the tragic choral songs refers us to the mode of their enunciation, the positions of the choral *I/we* speaker in space and time in relationship with the voice of the singers *hic et nunc*. (2013: 36)

The choice of the Olympic Academicians (Leonardo Valmarana and Pompeo Trissino in particular) to have *Oedipus Tyrannus* staged at their theatre apparently revitalized the 'intermedial' function of the chorus, and also stressed the imperial leanings and aristocratic stance of the Academy itself (Mazzoni 1998: 155-66). When he served as artistic director in 1585, Angelo Ingegneri

seemed to have been completely involved in the pragmatic aspects of the project, as documented by the scanty, if punctual notes he had published (Ambrosiana, MS R 123 sup., ff. 282-328):

> La musica nella tragedia è parte rimota dalla favola e che aita il coro; solea constare di tibie e d'altri instromenti da fiato; ma di questa ancora si parlerà a sua luogo, cioè quando si favellarà del coro. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 9)

> [Music in tragedy is separated from the plot and helps the chorus. It once consisted of wind instruments like the tibia; but we shall talk about this later, when we deal with the chorus.]

> Il Coro di vecchi incontinente uscirà dalla porta da mano manca e si distenderà nella scena facendosi un mezzo ovato, e quivi canterà la sua canzone. (qtd in ibid.: 22)

> [The chorus of the Elders will forcefully emerge from the left door and will form a semicircle and thence sing its song.]

> Per la disposizione del secondo atto egli è primieramente da avvertire che il re cominci ad uscir dal suo palagio in quel punto che il detto coro rivolgerà le sue preghiere a Bacco, e ch'egli cerchi di spender tanto tempo in arrivar a parlar con lui che sia venuto il fine del suo cantare. Allora, accostandosegli Edippo, il coro riverente il riceverà in mezzo, avendosi però prima disposto in guisa che il capo di esso coro, cioè quello che farà la parte parlante, gli resti a canto dal lato manco. (qtd in ibid.: 23)

> [In act two, it is important that the king exits his palace when the chorus start their prayers to Bacchus and takes his time to reach the chorus waiting for their singing to end. As regards the second act, in the first place, the king should be warned to exit his palace when the chorus start singing their prayers to Bacchus, and to start talking to them as soon as the song is over. Seeing Oedipus approching, the chorus will receive him respectfully, having first made sure that the Chorus leader – who will talk to him – stand on his (the King's) left.]

> Il coro rimane e canta e, se vi si potesse trovar buon modo, saria ben ch'ei sedesse. (qtd in ibid.: 24)

> [The chorus stand and sing, but if the opportunity arises, they should sit down.]

> Circa la disposizione del terzo atto, … Il coro rimane e canta una canzone stando a seder overo in piede, come averà fatto l'altre volte. (qtd in ibid.: 25)

> [As regards the organisation of act three … the chorus remain on stage and sing a song standing or sitting as before.]

Interestingly enough, more than a decade after the Vicenza staging of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Ingegneri deeply examined the function of the chorus in his *Della poesia rappresentativa et del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche*

(1598).[7] This study was especially devoted to a general discussion of the function and purpose of the chorus as it was described in Aristotle's *Poetics* (17-20), with special regard to the four choruses which Ingegneri considered to be a model of musical performance:

> Così fatta considerazione più che in altro affare mi pare necessaria nei chori; dei quali ad alcuni Poeti tra gli antichi e tra i moderni di non lieve estimazione è bastato nella fine dell'Atto scriver questa parola, Choro, e cacciarvi una canzona da esser cantata (come si suol dire) per l'amor di Dio, nel rimanente poco pensando all'occasione che possa essere opportuna per menare in scena le persone che l'hanno a cantare. Non fa così Sofocle nel suo Edipo Tiranno, ov'egli induce il re, quando è per fornirsi il primo atto, a dare commissione che sia convocato il popolo, perch'egli oda ... le determinazioni della città. (Ingegneri 1598: 18)

> [More than in other cases this consideration seems to me necessary with regard to the choruses; some of the most celebrated ancient and modern poets simply wrote this word, Choro, at the end of the Act and stuck in a song to be sung (as they say) for God's sake, not paying attention to whether the occasion of having people sing on stage was suitable. Sophocles in his *Oedipus Tyrannus* does not do so, when he has the king, at the end of the first act, gather the people to hear ... the decisions of the city].

Ingegneri (1598: 26, 81, 82) quoted Castelvetro and Vettori, as well as Robortello, and purported his view as being different from Vettori's by using expressions such as: "it seems to me" ("parmi"), "even though this is only my opinion" ("io son nondimeno di parere"), "it does not matter whether he [Pier Vettori] is right or wrong, I would like anyway ..." ("ma o vera o falsa che sia la sua [di Pier Vettori] opinione, io vorrei in ogni modo ...". His judgement was based on his direct experience of the Vicenza 1585 performance: "[A]s we have seen was done in the Vicenza tragedy" ("[S]ì come s'è di sopra veduto che fu fatto nella tragedia di Vicenza", qtd in Marotti 1974: 307). Back then, he had greatly appreciated that the chorus was assigned a proper role and sang proper music:

> Quando egli [il Choro] rimarrà solo nella scena, allora ei cantarà sempre, e verrà ad essere un mero ma grave, nobile, e bene accommodato intermedio della Tragedia. (Ingegneri 1598: 82).

> [When the Chorus are alone on stage, they will always sing and will be a mere interlude in the tragedy, although a serious, noble, and proper one.]

Ingegneri definitely rejected Robortello's opinion on the role of the chorus in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and especially in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. He denied that the first chorus was composed of children and claimed that the chorus of the Elders

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7. [*Of representative poetry and the way to represent scenic fables*]. This study was published in Ferrara in 1598 under the imprint of Vittorio Baldini.

sang four songs. In ancient times, the chorus's voices were accompanied by the *tibia*, a wind instrument, and played in the Mixolydian mode (Palisca 1985: 65), which moved the listener's soul. However, here is what Ingegneri suggested in this regard:

> A me pare … che i cori delle tragedie debbano constare di voci umane solamente, ma ben rare et elette, procurandosi che il canto sia formato da musico perfettissimo, il quale lo faccia placido, grave, flebile et inuguale. Intendo di quella inugualità che di sua natura induce tristezza, e s'accommoda alla grandezza della calamità. (1598: 84)

> [It seems to me … that the choruses of tragedies should consist of human voices only, but uncommon and well-selected, and the song should be composed by a most perfect musician, who can make it slow, serious, soothing, and unequal; and I mean unequal in the sense that by its very nature it induces sadness and is attuned with great adversity.]

But the most important thing is that all the words must be perfectly understood by everyone in the playhouse:

> Et sopratutto che le parole sieno così chiaramente esplicate ch'il teatro le intenda tutte, senza perderne una minima sillaba; sì che ricevend'egli nell'animo la sentenza loro che deve essere horribile e miserabile, ei si vada disponendo a quegli affetti che sono propri del tragico; et alla fine, per mezzo loro, ne riceva la purgazione ch'il poeta s'è proposto di conseguire. (ibid.)

> [And above all words are spoken so clearly that the audience can understand them all, without losing the smallest syllable; so that they may perceive in their souls the chorus's judgment, which must be horrible and pitiful, and open their minds to those affects which are proper of tragedy, and through them eventually attain the purgation at which the poet aimed.]

Six members of the Academy were in charge of the music in order to determine whether it is better to insert vocal and instrumental music concerts in each chorus, to act as intermedij (interludes), or to leave the chorus as it is, introducing no interruptions in the tragedy and incorporating the music in some other way" ("determinare se sia meglio inserir concerti di musica vocale et strumentale in ciascun de' cori, a fine che servano per *intermedij*, o pur lasciare i cori intieri, et la Tragedia continuata, introducendovi in altro modo la musica", qtd in Gallo 1973: lii). Another group of six[8] took care of the "musical things and the choruses of the tragedy, having the music composed with suitable imitation, calling in foreign musicians if necessary" ("cose di musica, et sopra i cori della tragedia, facendo comporre la musica sopra li cori con accomodata imitazione, con autorità di condor musici forastieri", qtd

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8. Geronimo Porto or da Porto/Porti, Teodoro Thiene, Geronimo Caldogno, Geronimo Bosio, Giovan Battista Ghellino, and Pietro Porto.

in ibid.: liii). Indeed, they first asked Filippo da Monte to set the choruses to music, but he refused, so they turned to Andrea Gabrieli, who accepted (Gallo 1973).

The reviews of the 1585 *Oedipus* were mostly positive. Among the others, Giacomo Dolfin wrote in his letter to Battista Guarini:

> Il coro era di quindici, l'uno dei quali con due compagni appresso faceva l'ufficio del coro interlocutore, gli altri dodici cantavano i cori nel fine di ciascun atto, la musica dei quali è stata fatta da messer Andrea Gabrieli organista di San Marco, conveniente assai al soggetto e in maniera tale che per quanto si poteva nel concorso di tante voci s'intendevano distintamente quasi tutte le parole. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 35).

> [The chorus was composed of fifteen people. One of them, together with two of his fellows, had the task of the coryphaeus, and the other twelve sung the choral parts at the end of each act on the music written by Andrea Gabrieli, organist at St Mark's; the music suited the subject very well and allowed every single word to be perceived even in the midst of so many combined voices.]

Antonio Riccoboni, who in 1571 had Robortello's chair of Humanities and Rhetoric at the Studium in Padua, appreciated the noble-minded patronage of the Olympic Academicians:

> Sono stati i signori Academici aiutati molto in materia di queste due parti [melopeia e apparato] e con molto lor spesa sì dall'opera del Palladio eccellentissimo architetto che fece il teatro degno veramente d'esser laudato e ammirato, come anco da musici famosi, e in questo certo meritano grandissima laude avendo fatto quello che a penna un re averebbe potuto fare e avendo dimostrato un animo generosissimo. (qtd in ibid.: 46)

> [The gentlemen of the Academy have been greatly helped in the matter of these two parts [songs and spectacle], and at their great expense, both by the work of the excellent architect Palladio, who made the theatre truly worthy of praise and admiration, and also by the famous musicians; and in this they certainly merit the greatest praise, having done what a king could barely have done and having shown a most generous spirit. (Dawe 1996: 7)]

Despite these words of appraisal, Riccoboni was not happy with the overall impression of the music. In the same year Riccoboni published a paraphrasis of the *Poetics* in which he rejected many of Castelvetro's hypotheses and especially focused on the chorus (chap. 15, *Quae partes quantitatis habeat fabula tragica*, 60-3; chap. 29, *De choro*, 101-2). Here is what he wrote with regard to the first chorus of *Oedipus* in his *Letter describing the Performance of Oedipus Rex at Vicenza in 1585*:

> Ma può essere che alcune cose siano state malamente intese, delle quali andrò discorrendo brevemente. E prima porrò in considerazione le parti della quantità numerate da Aristotele: prologo, episodio, essodo corico che è overo parodo overo stasimo in

cui si considera anco il commo; le quali parti vanno così ordinate: prologo, parodo, episodio primo, stasimo primo, episodio secondo, stasimo secondo, episodio terzo, stasimo terzo, essodo. Or contenendo l'apparato tutte queste cose e significando tutte quelle che si mettano dinanzi agli occhi: scena, persone, vestimenti, andrò di parte in parte proponendo alcune dubitazioni. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 46).

[But perhaps some things have been misunderstood, which I shall discuss briefly. And first I will offer for consideration the parts of the whole enumerated by Aristotle: prologue, episode, exodus, choral part, which is either parodos or stasimon, in which is considered also the commos; these parts are ordered thus: prologue, parodos, first episode, first stasimon, second episode, second stasimon, third episode, third stasimon, exodos. Now since the theatrical resources contain all these things and embrace all those that are put before our eyes: scene, people, clothes, I will put forward some reservations one by one. (Dawe 1996: 7-8)].

Referring to his own translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* (1584: 15), Riccoboni stressed two kinds of mistakes in the performance of the chorus. The first was the lack of a danced piece:

La seconda parte della tragedia è la parodo, che si distingue appo Aristotele in questo modo: 'Chorici autem parodus prima dictio integri chori, stasimum vero cantus chori sine anapesto et trocheo'; questi piedi erano accomodati al ballo. Onde si comprende che la parodo era col ballo, ma lo stasimo senza il ballo. E qui si deve avvertire che essendo tre stromenti dell'imitazione: il numero del ballo, l'armonia del suono e canto, e il parlare. Sofocle instituì tre maniere di istrioni nel coro, come scrive Aristotele nella *Poetica* e Diogene Laerzio nella *Vita di Platone*, sì che alcuni suonavano, altri cantavano, certi ballavano. E queste tre sorte di istrioni si usavano principalmente nella parodo ch'aveva il moto per lo comparir in scena, essendo gli altri corici stasimi e stabili senza moto alcuno, e col solo canto e suono. Nondimeno si ha rappresentato la parodo di questa tragedia con una sola sorte di istrioni che hanno solamente cantato, e così è stato defraudato Sofocle del ballo e del suono. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 47-8)

[The second part of the tragedy is the parodos, which is defined by Aristotle in the following way: 'Of the choral element, a parodos is the first utterance of the whole chorus, a stasimon a choral song without anapaests or trochaics'; these feet were suitable for dance. From this it is understood that the parodos had dancing but the stasimon did not. Here one must note that, there being three instruments of imitation: the tempo of the dance, the harmony of the music and singing, and the speaking. Sophocles instituted three types of actors in the chorus, as Aristotle writes in the *Poetics* and Diogene Laerzio in the *Life of Plato*, so that some played, other sang and certain others danced. These three sorts of actors were used principally in the parodos which had movement for its appearance on stage, other choruses being stasima and stationary without any movement and with only singing and music. Nevertheless the parodos in this tragedy was represented with only one type of actor, who only sang: thus Sophocles was denied dance and music. (Dawe 1996: 9)].

The second one concerns the singing:

Oltraché anticamente il coro in modo cantava e sonava che s'intendeva quello che egli cantasse, e quello coro faceva udir solo l'armonia delle voci senza che s'intendessero

le parole. Il che torna a gran pregiudizio della tragedia che non s'intendea quello che dice il coro. Non lascerò di dire che grecamente si legge χορὸς ἐκ Θηβαίων γερόντων nondimeno in questo erano dei putti e delle donne giovani … Il primo stasimo non parve stabile perché avendosi acconci quelli del *coro in forma di una luna*, finito il canto, per dar luoco agli interlocutori si allargavano assai bruttamente e poi si mettevano insieme oltra quella persona che si discostava dagli altri … sì che non era veramente stabile; e il medesimo si può dire del secondo e terzo stasimo; e vi era il canto solo e non il suono, e un canto sempre uniforme, che non lasciava intender le parole, che rasembrava frati o preti che cantassero le lamentazioni di Ieremia. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 48-9; my emphasis)

[Furthermore, in ancient times the chorus sang and made music in such a way that what it sang was understood, whereas the chorus only made heard the harmony with the voices alone without the words being understood. It greatly prejudices the tragedy not understanding what the chorus says. I will not omit to say that in Greek one reads χορὸς ἐκ Θηβαίων γερόντων [Chorus of Theban old men] nevertheless in this there were the figures of little children and young women … The first stasimon did not seem stationary because the chorus, after positioning themselves *in the form of a moon*, and with the song finished, as to give space to interlocutors spaced themselves out in a quite ugly fashion, and then came together past that person who separated himself from the others, as I said above. In this way it was not truly stationary; and one can say the same of the second and third stasimon; and there was only singing and no music, and a constantly uniform singing which did not let the words be understood, and which resembled brothers or priests singing the lamentations of Jeremiah. (Dawe 1996: 9-10; my emphasis)]

Riccoboni's remark concerning the chorus's positioning "in the form of a moon" is revealing of how one's appreciation of a spectacle can be influenced by literary culture even when intentionally limited to its performative aspects. As a scholar of poetics and rhetoric Riccoboni could not refrain from introducing literary echoes in the description of the chorus's position on stage; Ingegneri himself had prescribed it (and possibly even sketched it; see Mazzoni 1998: figure 41) as being in the form of a "mezzo ovato" (see above 88) [a "semicircle", literally meaning "half-egg shape"]. This position reminded Riccoboni of the analogy between the movements of the chorus and the ones of the celestial bodies as described in a few Greek and Latin Neo-Platonic treatises (probably Ptolemy's and certainly Macrobius's, CSS 2, 3, 5).[9] These same movements were also mentioned in a letter Girolamo Mei wrote to Vincenzo Galilei in 1581 (Mei 1960: 168) and by Francesco Patrizi in his *Deca istoriale* (1586: 220 ff.).

On that same night the explorer Filippo Pigafetta was sitting in the audience (Gallo 2007: 176-7). In his travel narrative *Viaggio da Creta in Egitto ed al Sinai 1576-1577* and in his translation of the *Relazione del Reame del Congo*, written by the Portuguese priest Duarte Lopes (Pigafetta 1978; Gallo 2007:

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9. See Montanari 1989: 158.

186-96), Pigafetta combined his great technical knowledge of music with his curiosity for every kind of musical event that he had the chance to listen to during his travels to the remotest regions of the world. In a letter he wrote the day afterwards (4 March 1585), he enthusiastically reviewed the *Oedipus* performance, which, in his opinion, celebrated the country's liberal attitude especially towards foreigners with whom he had often come into contact during his many travels to faraway lands:

> [N]on s'intende dagli antichi in qua essere stata più magnificamente recitata alcuna tragedia né con più fissa maestria d'architettura né con miglior ordine nei cori e nei recitanti, della *Soffonisba* e di questo *Edippo*; tale è il privilegio della nostra patria fra le altre sue doti di splendore, di liberalità e di cortesia inverso i stranieri. (qtd in Gallo 1973: 58)

> [Since the ancient times, no tragedy has been better acted or mounted with higher architectural competence or more orderly performed by the choruses and actors than [Trissino's] *Sophonisba* and this *Oedipus*. Such is the privilege of our country, in addition to its other talents which derive from its splendour, liberality, and civility towards foreigners.]

In the same years, another Portuguese priest, the Jesuit Luís Fróis (1532-1597), a "veteran of some twenty-two years' sojourn in Japan" (Gunn 2003: 202) who authored a number of the *Lettere Annali* [*Yearly Letters*] reporting on local events and traditions to the Italian headquarters (Gunji 1985: 53), extensively wrote on the different European and Japanese traditions, ways of life, and culture, music included. This was also the subject of his *Tratado em que se contem muito susinta e abreviadamente algumas contradignoes e diferencas de customes antre a gente de Europa e esta provincia de Japao* [*Treatise on some differences between European and Japanese customs*], which a modern editor has described as one of the first works of "comparative cultural anthropology" (Garcia 1993: 38). The aim of the *Tratado*, "[p]enned in 1585 at Katoura, a missionary center and Portuguese trading port in Arima on the Japanese island of Kyushu" (ibid.), was to produce "a pedagogical tool to explain Japanese customs to European Jesuits recently arrived in Japan" (Reff, Danford and Gill 2012: 3). Among other cultural issues, Fróis described European music for drama as he knew it from twenty years before, prior to his departure for Japan:

> 7. Our autos are performed through speaking; theirs are nearly always sung – or danced ... 10. Our comedies or tragedies feature gentle musical instruments; in Japan they use small kettledrums shaped like goblets, a larger kettledrum played with two sticks, and a bamboo flute. (qtd in Reff, Danford and Gill 2012: 231-2)

The spreading and advancement of European culture in the Far East was also one of the objectives pursued by Alessandro Valignano, the Superior General of the Jesuits in Japan. Among the first books published by the Jesuits

for the Japanese, there was the report of the first Japanese embassy to the Pope in Rome, *De missione legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam curiam* (published in Macao in 1590). In 1582 Valignano had sent four young Japanese converts to Rome: when they arrived, on Friday 22 March 1585 three years after they had left, they were eighteen years old. Upon their arrival, they were welcomed and honoured first by Pope Gregory XIII, shortly afterwards by his successor Sixtus V, and later on by the kings, princes, and noblemen they met during the continuation of their journey through Italy (Keevak 2011: 148, n. 17). On their way from Rome to Genoa, they visited Venice, Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, where they were welcomed at the Olympic Academy. In fact 1585 proved to be an extraordinary year for the Academicians: in early Spring they had managed to revive on stage the ancient Greek choruses and at the beginning of the Summer they had the chance to play their music in front of the first Japanese people who had ever appeared in town (Gualtieri 1586: 127; Leydi 1991: 248-50). This is the envoys' report in the *De missione*:

> We left Padua on 10 July and headed for Vicenza, another town not far away belonging to the jurisdiction of Venice, and there too we had a great welcome from the citizens and appreciated their friendly attitude towards us… There is no time to tell everything in the detail which our due gratitude requires, but I cannot let pass without mention the singular delight which we felt at the assembling and the appearance of almost all the nobility, men and women, who came together to a certain theatre where is the custom for certain learned men, known as academicians, to put on tragedies, comedies, and other dramas of that kind, sumptuous and ornate, for the people to see. We were received with honour in that place and heard a most pleasing and varied concert, delightful to our spirits, and from what we saw here and in other places we were deeply impressed by the excellence, the variety, and the remarkable harmony of the instruments belonging to the art of music, which are widely used among the Europeans; and this is to say nothing of the elegant public oration which one of those academicians gave, in Italian, in celebration of our coming and in praise of the things of Japan. (qtd in Massarella 2012: 363-4)

We do not know what kind of music (perhaps Gabrieli's choruses?) was actually performed, nor do we know how the Japanese young men, who had been taught European music by the Jesuits, reacted to it. What we do know is that upon that occasion, Giacomo Pagello gave a public oration and its text (Accademia Olimpica, MS 171, 46v-47r) surely deserves further study in the future.

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