The Chorus in Drama
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Contents

Editors' Preface

The Editors are happy to present the first issue of *Skenè. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies* dedicated to an exploration of the multifarious guises that the ancient dramatic device of the chorus has assumed across time, from ancient Greece to the twentieth century international milieu. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary cast of this issue reflects an awareness of the complexity of contemporary research on wide-ranging topics, including reflection upon questions of appropriation, interpretation, adaptation, transformation, and interprets the overall *SKENÈ – Theatre and Drama Studies* project in hosting a vivacious debate on crucial aspects of drama and theatre texts from antiquity to the present (http://www.skenejournal.it). The Journal also wishes to stimulate discussions on critical approaches and welcomes a whole range of methodologies: from philological to linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic perspectives, to translation studies, as well as literary and philosophical hermeneutics, reception studies, theatre sociology, and performance studies. This first issue offers the possibility to move from textual to performative questions to musical and inter-medial issues while prompting reflection upon the nature of theatre itself in its manifold forms.

The Editors are grateful to all the editorial staff for their indefatigable commitment to the project and are especially thankful to Lisanna Calvi, Carlo Vareschi and Ivan Valbusa for their constant support and absolute dedication.

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Introduction

> For my part is the chorus, and the chorus
> Is more or less a borderline between
> The you and the me and the it of it.
>   Between
> The gods' and human beings' sense of things.
> And that's the borderline that poetry
> Operates on too, always in between
> What you would like to happen and what will –
> Whether you like it or not.
>
> Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy*

The chorus is possibly the theatrical device most deeply grounded in the European tradition: not only "[was its] predramatic (from a modern point of view) nature rooted in the tradition of archaic [Greek] choral lyric" (Bierl 2009: Introduction; Bierl 2001: 14), but also its centrality was directly mirrored by the civic structure of the Athenian Dionysian festivals. On those occasions, the actions of 'requesting, giving, obtaining the chorus' (χορὸν αἰτεῖν, διδόναι, λαβεῖν) corresponded to the poet's request to take part in the theatrical contest and to be admitted to it. Likewise, the *tragodoi* (τραγῳδοί) and the *komodoi* (κωμῳδοί), before being generically perceived as 'performers of tragedy' and 'of comedy', were more specifically identified as components of the tragic and comic choruses, respectively, precisely because they were singers (ἀοιδοί). As is well known, in the second half of the fifth century BC Herodotus mentioned the "tragic choruses" formerly devoted by the Sikyonians to "celebrate the fate" of their mythical king Adrastus, and then "given back" to the god Dionysus by the Sikyon tyrant Cleisthenes (in power between 600 and 570) within a ritual celebration of Melanippus, a mythical hero enemy to Adrastus. The expression "given back" suggests that these choruses were originally devoted to Dionysus and that they were again dedicated to him at a later stage.[1]

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1. Herodotus 5.67 ("Κλεισθένης ... [τραγικοὺς] χοροὺς ... τῷ Διονύσῳ ἀπέδωκε", trans. Godley 1938), see Golder 1938: 72-5.

According to Zimmermann, Herodotus's expression "tragic choruses" should be read in the light of the performative practices of the fifth century as "choral performances, which we can compare with our tragic choruses" (1992: 30-1; my translation). The "tragic choruses" of Sikyon are linked to Epigenes, the "first tragedian" according to *Suda*'s entry on Thespis (*Suda* θ 282 = *TrGF* 1T1). To Epigenes himself we owe the famous saying "nothing to do with Dionysus" (*TrGF* 1T18: οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον), which possibly alluded to the dithyrambic chorus's progressive move away from its Dionysian origin. Even more famous is Aristotle's, so to speak, incidental statement that tragedy originated "from the starters (*exarchontes*) of the dithyrambs",[2] namely of the choruses devoted to narrating the deeds of Dionysus. Despite its being a quintessentially diegetic lyric genre,[3] the dithyramb unveils its mimetic potential in the dialogue between an individual – likely the same chorus-leader – and the chorus who respond collectively as in an antiphony. Therefore, as regards both the genesis of the theatrical genres and the changeable mutual relations between the narrative and mimetic aspects of drama, these somehow enigmatic historical witnesses suggest that choral tradition and drama were closely related.

Although present in the tragedies and comedies of fifth-century Athens alike, the chorus is nowadays immediately and almost spontaneously linked to the tragic genre. This is true whether we deal with scholarly criticism (a case in point is Swift's remark that "[w]e must read *tragedy* not only as drama, but also as choral song", 2010: 1, my emphasis) or with philosophical perspectives, with which also popular culture aligns itself: a contemporary comic example is Woody Allen's onscreen collective narrator – and vicarious psychoanalyst – of *Mighty Aphrodite*, an overtly tragic chorus singing and dancing in a Broadway music-hall style while retaining an ancient Greek-like guise.[4] But to return to the Attic dramatic chorus, as early as the late fifth century BC it was converted into an interlude (ἐμβόλιμον, *embolimon*).[5] If originally it was to "be

2. Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a11. Archilochus (first half of the seventh century BC) provides the earliest report on the dithyramb and his own role as *exarchon* (fr. 120 West). As regards the *exarchontes* and the 'dramatic' dithyramb, see Zimmermann (1992: 19-23) and Ieranò (1997: 175-85). "In ancient texts *exarchein* seems to be an activity involving an individual facing an assembly (silent or otherwise)" (Ieranò 1997: 177). Heraclides of Cuma (fourth century BC) describes the *exarchon* as a (female) performer addressing a chorus (*FGrH* 689F2).

3. Plato *Resp.* 394c: "there is one kind of poetry and tale-telling which works wholly through imitation (ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστίν), as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital of the poet himself (ἡ δὲ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ), best exemplified, I presume, in the dithyramb", trans. Paul Shorey 1969).

4. Baelo Aullé 1999: 397. And also: "the chorus … looks like a tragic chorus of a Greek tragedy … but [it is] under the influence of metafictional jumps [: … its] being in 'defamiliarised' contexts produces the comedy" (ibid.: 399).

5. This evolution is recorded by Aristotle *Poetics* 1456a28-32.

regarded as one of the actors", and, according to Aristotle, was to "be part of the whole and share in the action" in both tragedy and comedy, at that point it displayed new performative features, including sundry forms of recitation and revelling, whose documentation, however, is to date fairly poor. It should be recalled that traditional forms of music and dance started to change at the end of the fifth century under the influence of the 'New Music'.[6] Therefore, these interludes may have included virtuoso singing, and, in a comic context, stylizations of festive drunken revelries. In any case, they supplied a distinct type of performance from the rest of the play, aimed at gaining the favour of the audience, with little or no connection with the staged action.[7] Memory of these interludes, whose librettos and music scores are now lost, is inscribed within the play texts' blank spaces separating the acts. Unlike the majority of the Hellenistic papyri which have handed down to us the choral parts of fifth-century dramas, those containing Menander's comedies do not provide the choral librettos but only the direction "chorus song" (in short: χοροῦ, *scil.* μέλος), without distinguishing between the presence of a dancing and singing *choros* or, as in comedies, of a *komos* (κῶμος: a 'band of revellers', *LSJ*; see Lape 2006). This process is also documented in the Byzantine codices containing Aristophanes's two last surviving comedies – *The Assemblywomen* and *Wealth* (datable to the first fifteen years of the fourth century) –, and in a papyrus fragment of *Wealth* 957-70.[8] A synthetic overview is provided by Csapo and Slater:

> A primary cause of the decline [of the chorus] is the growth of professionalization in the theater and the development of new standards in acting, music, and dances, rather than changes in the constitution of the chorus itself. The chorus continued to be drafted from citizen amateurs until the abolition of the *khoregia*[9] in the late 4th c. BC, while music tended to ever-greater rhythmic and melodic complexity, better suited to a single voice. In contrast with highly trained actors, the amateurishness of the chorus became an embarrassment. In addition, the growing taste for realism and more complex plots tended to favor actors over the chorus. (1995: 351)[10]

The use of the term "decline" by Csapo and Slater, in a strictly Aristotelian

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6. On the 'New Music' in late fifth and in fourth centuries, see the synthesis in West (1992: 356-72) and D'Angour (2006).
7. Plato *Laws* 700d-701a complained that "with the progress of time, there arose as leaders of unmusical illegality (ἄμουσος παρανομία) poets who, though by nature poetical, were ignorant of what was just and lawful in music…. Hence the theater-goers became noisy instead of silent, as though they knew the difference between good and bad music, and in place of an aristocracy in music there sprang up a kind of base theatrocracy (θεατροκρατία τις πονηρά)", trans. R.G. Bury.
8. *P. Oxy.* 66.4521, second century AD.
9. That is, the "office … of a *choregos*, defraying of the cost of the public choruses" (*LSJ*). It was reformed or abolished by Demetrius of Phaleron, in charge between 317 and 307.
10. For the growing social standing of the actors, see Easterling 2002.

perspective, does not lessen the fact that "[a]lthough the chorus lost its identity as an actor, it gained a new functional significance in underlining comedy's five-act structure" (Lape 2006: 90). This consideration can be extended also to tragedy: the interludes mark its five-act structure and contribute to Horace's normative description in *Ars poetica* 189-90 ("The play must not fall short of the fifth act, nor go beyond it"; "Neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu / fabula") which will condition the modern reception of the ancient models and even playwriting creativity.

In the age of the European theatrical renaissance the chorus was eventually rejected as 'unnatural', and yet, even when absent, it paradoxically continued to have an influence on spectacular forms at large. Like the remains of a building whose architecture and destination eventually appear unintelligible or, worse, alien to modern taste, the chorus occupied a privileged position within a monumental rather than historically documental conception of antiquity. Thus, although discarded for nearly two centuries for the sake of *simplicité*,[11] it continued to prompt surrogate experimentations on collective actions aimed at making up for its absence and gradually shaping a taste for choral 'greatness' and 'multitude' that was firmly to establish itself in the early nineteenth century.[12]

At that time, a re-interpretation of the chorus based upon a theoretical, when not overtly philosophical, stance was carried out with an anti-naturalistic purpose and, as will be seen, hardly, if ever, realized on stage (see below, Schiller: 135-66). In a different, yet complementary, perspective it has to be noticed that nowadays the chorus, especially if tragic, still causes some trouble to directors and audiences alike, despite its acknowledged prestige,[13] because of its flair for mythological digressions and all-too-frequent self-referential comments – to which I will return later. Both aspects may contribute to a perception of the chorus as an alien partition in respect to the dramatic action as well as to the play's tragic focus.[14] As Bierl remarks, "it must be admitted that the many choral songs of Attic drama remain peculiarly strange to today's recipients",

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11. Not to be confused with the demand for realism of contemporary audiences: see Foley 2007 and below.
12. On monumentality, see below Schiller: 154. Also according to Leopardi the "multitude" brings on to the stage "the beautiful and the *great*", and the combination of music and singing in chorus, although "[condemnable] as implausible", produce "[an] impression … that was altogether *great*, beautiful, poetic" (Leopardi 2013: 2804-5; my emphasis), see below, Bissoli: 173. On the experimentations (silent choruses, processions, etc.) see Dudoyt 2013: 206-8, 221-3, 215-6.
13. On this particular aspect, see Foley (2007).
14. It is the case, for instance, of the suppression of the fourth song of the Chorus in the *orchestra* (*stasimon*) of Sophocles's *Antigone* (ll. 944-87); this happens quite frequently in Italy and with special regard to this *stasimon* (see Nicolai 2003-2005: 80-99; Nicolai 2011: 1-10). Keeping to Italian experience, in a recent production of *Oedipus Tyrannus* a *stasimon* was chanted by an

even if, "[o]nly in (post)modern staging practice ... the performative potential of the ancient chorus [is] being recognized" and "[t]he interruption of the action of the play is here no longer felt as a disturbance, rather the emergence of ritual traces is now placed in the context of an overall ritualization of the theater" (2009: Introduction; 2001: 12).

Critical studies of classical drama as well as translations and adaptations of Greek plays have invariably considered the tragic chorus either as an "idealized spectator", as in August Wilhelm Schlegel's famous and often quoted definition,[15] or as "a living wall which tragedy draws around itself" (see below, Schiller: 149, and later Nietzsche 2000: 58). On account of its formal structure, that shows traditional communicative and performative features, it has often been explicitly or implicitly regarded as the privileged bearer of communal values. All together, these traditional traits, which long antedate the reorganization of the Dionysian festival in the context of the democratic polis, authorize an interpretation of the tragic chorus as a "particular collective experience", voicing "the sense of a social group, which roots in a wider community" by drawing "on the inherited stories and the inherited, gnomic wisdom of social memory and of oral tradition to 'contextualize' the tragic" (Gould 1996: 233). In perhaps oversimplified terms, they seem to favour a reading of the chorus as the privileged presenter of a kind of "running commentary on [the] *nomos* and [the] *ethos* [of the community]" (Havelock 1985: 715f.).[16] Given the collocation of the dramatic event in a ritual context, the semantic potentiality of both tragic and comic choruses actually seems to arise from the interaction between traditional cultic and performative elements and the strictly civic issues inspiring the complex organization of dramatic festivals. As Goldhill observes in his "Response to Gould", "'[r]itual' cannot be used as a category to explain away the representative function of the chorus: the festival both democratizes the ritual of choral singing, and requires that the tragic chorus is construed in the light of the culture of choral performance in Athens" (1996: 250). This statement applies to both the tragic and the comic choruses. The tragic choruses have specific gender, age, social, and functional connotations derived from the *mythos* (for instance a Theban female or male chorus in stories located at Thebes). They may also derive from specific dramatic traditions or from a precise authorial intention diverging from the *mythos*, as in the case of Euripides's *Phoenissae*, which, despite its Theban setting, has a chorus of Asian

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offstage voice in ancient Greek; although acoustically suggestive, this solution merely alluded to an irreducible extraneousness of the choral element.

15. Schlegel 1996: 65.

16. I intentionally refrain from comparing the very different perspectives descending from these two formulations. Much remains to be said on the reception of Eric A. Havelock in Italy.

Maidens "[who] are only in Thebes by chance and for a brief period".[17] The comic choruses, instead, are constituted by the protagonists of the contemporary civic life, such as the Elders from the borough of Acharne or the Peasants, in Aristophanes's *Acharnenses* and *Peace*, respectively, or by 'animals', as in his *Wasps* and *Birds*, where they appear with different degrees of animality and social representativeness.[18] In either case, the chorus establishes a dual relationship. On the one hand, it associates itself with the "enduring human social drama … the drama that has its *direct* source in social structural conflict" (Turner 1982: 112), in whose respect "theatre … generally take[s] stock of [a community's] situation in the known 'world'" (ibid.: 11); on the other hand, it relates itself with the community who attend the spectacle within the ritual frame and are capable of both grasping the chorus's stylization of other cultic and 'pre-dramatic' performances and appreciating the peculiar semiosis derived from their being re-used within a different context.

Unfortunately, contemporary staging practices which tend to highlight the cultic or, in a broad sense, anthropological value of the chorus, may be no less simplistic than readings which consider it as a depositary of ethic directions *tout court*. This is particularly apparent when directors stress its cultic features, thus contrasting the artificiality of danced and sung parts and the discursiveness of spoken ones: as a result, the chorus becomes the stylized emblem of an 'absolute' rituality and is therefore denied the possibility of performing its function of "link between the cultic reality … and the imaginary religious world of the tragedies", as appropriately underlined by Henrichs (1995: 59). In other words, when examining Athenian dramaturgy we cannot separate 'civic' representativeness from cultic traditions and dramaturgical innovations. In this respect, one of the most problematic issues is the tragic chorus's self-referentiality, which surfaces when it refers to its own singing and dancing performance. This may occur in a recitative preceding the song proper, as in Aeschylus's *Eumenides* 307-11:

> ἄγε δὴ καὶ χορὸν ἅψωμεν, ἐπεὶ μοῦσαν στυγερὰν
> ἀποφαίνεσθαι δεδόκηκεν
> λέξαι τε λάχη τὰ κατ' ἀνθρώπους   310
> ὡς ἐπινωμᾷ στάσις ἁμή.

> [Come let us join in the dance (*choros*), for we are ready to perform our grisly song and to tell how our ensemble (*stasis*) apportions lots among mortals. (trans. by Henrichs 1995: 61f.)].

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17. This "highly unusual" choice of "a detached Chorus provides certain dramatic benefits", while "emphasizing the racial links between Thebes and Phoenicia" and "highlight[ing] the contrast between [the Chorus's] own experience and the chaotic situation [of Thebes]" (Swift 2009: 79-82).

18. On the animal choruses in Aristophanes see below, Imperio: 57-74.

It may also occur in individual stanzas within the choral song, yet separate from the responsional strophe-antistrophe structure, as in the two identical *ephymnia* ("refrains") following the recitative at ll. 328-33 = 341-6 of *Eumenides*:

> ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τεθυμένῳ
> τόδε μέλος, παρακοπά,
> παραφορά, φρενοδαλής   330=343
> ὕμνος ἐξ Ἐρινύων,
> δέσμιος φρενῶν, ἀφόρ-
>   μικτος, αὐονὰ βροτοῖς.

[Over our victim this is the chant (*melos*), striking him mad, out of his mind, harming his brain, a hymn (*hymnos*) from the Erinyes, binding the brain, lacking the lyre, withering to mortals. (trans. by Henrichs 1995: 63)].

However, it is sometimes placed within the core-part of the song itself or even occupies the larger part of the lyric-choreutic performance, as in the "little song"[19] in Sophocles's *Women of Trachis* (ll. 205-24):

> ἀνολολυξάτω δόμος   205
> ἐφεστίοισιν ἀλαλαῖς
> ὁ μελλόνυμφος· ἐν δὲ κοινὸς ἀρσένων
> ἴτω κλαγγὰ τὸν εὐφαρέτραν
> Ἀπόλλω προστάταν,
> ὁμοῦ δὲ παιᾶνα παιᾶν' ἀνάγετ', ὦ παρθένοι,   210
> βοᾶτε τὰν ὁμόσπορον
> Ἄρτεμιν Ὀρτυγίαν ἐλαφαβόλον ἀμφίπυρον
> γείτονάς τε Νύμφας.   215
> ἀείρομαι οὐδ' ἀπώσομαι
> τὸν αὐλόν, ὦ τύραννε τᾶς ἐμᾶς φρενός.
> ἰδού μ' ἀναταράσσει,
> εὐοῖ,
> ὁ κισσὸς ἄρτι Βακχίαν
> ὑποστρέφων ἅμιλλαν.   220
> ἰὼ ἰὼ Παιάν·
> ἴδε ἴδ', ὦ φίλα γύναι·
> τάδ' ἀντίπρῳρα δή σοι
> βλέπειν πάρεστ' ἐναργῆ.[20]

[Let the house raise a cry of exultation with shouts of *alalai* by the hearth, the house soon to be united in wedlock. And therein let the collective shout of the men go up to the one of the fair quiver, Apollo the protector, while you, maidens, raise the *paian*, the *paian*-cry and call upon his twin sister Artemis the Ortygian, deer-shooter, carrier of the doubletorch, and upon the neighboring Nymphs. [215] I am uplifted, I will not spurn the flute — O you master of my heart! Behold, his ivy stirs me! Euoe! Quickly it wheels me round in Bacchus's race! Oh, oh, Paean! Look, dear lady! All is taking shape, plain to see, before your gaze. (205-15 trans. by Henrichs 1995: 79f.; 216-24 trans. by Jebb 1892)].

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19. See the ancient *scholium* (μελιδάριον, *melidarion*) on l. 216 (Xenis 2010: 99).
20. I follow the text edited by Easterling 1982.

As Henrichs himself remarks, when the chorus self-referentially focus on "their own performance … not only in their capacity as characters in the drama but also as performers" they "temporarily [expand] their role as dramatic characters" (1995: 59).[21] This 'expansion' turns into an authentic *mise en abîme* foregrounding the chorus's enunciation and performance. In such cases it simultaneously involves the role of the tragic author and the function of the collective voice. This collective voice asserts its own authority, which is both linked to the traditional forms of the poetic performance, and dependent upon the assertion of a new authorial role. This is the case of the chorus of the Elders in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*: after the anapaestic recitative the ensemble intone a dactylic song, clearly alluding to the epic tradition, in which they assert their being "[entitled] to tell of the auspicious command ruling the expedition [to Troy], the command of men in authority – for still from the gods the age that has grown with me breathes down upon me persuasiveness of song to be my warlike strength" (104-6: κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν / ἐντελέων· ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνείει / πειθὼ μολπᾶν ἀλκὰν σύμφυτος αἰών).[22] The Chorus will later accredit themselves with "a chant unbidden, unhired" (979: ἄμισθος … ἀκέλευστος) and "self-taught": "but still my soul within me chants, self-taught, the lyreless dirge of the Erinys" (990-3: τὸνδ' ἄνευ λύρας ὅμως / ὑμνῳδεῖ / θρῆνον Ἐρινύος αὐτοδίδακτος / ἔσωθεν / θυμός). This is stated in full accord with the autonomous way of thinking they have already avowed when they sang "but I differ from others and am alone in my thought" (757: δίχα δ' ἄλλων μονόφρων εἰμί), which goes along with their own independence from the conventions regulating the relationship between client and author/performer. Mention of the *lyra* here "recall[s] the many festal occasions on which [chant] is the delight of gods and men", but "[a] professional singer sings neither unbidden nor unrewarded" (Fraenkel 1950: vol. 2, 444). The "ritual atmosphere" – to use a current critical expression (see n. 21) – is evoked in order to be re-formulated from the perspective of a civic rituality stirred by a new authorial awareness. The pronominal and deictic markers of the tragico-choral performance as well as the allusion – either implicit or explicit, by affinity or contrast – to prior lyrical-choreutic genres define the chorus as a character endowed with

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21. As regards the Chorus's self-reference in Sophocles's *Ajax*, Rodighiero argues that "Sophocles usually draws upon [his choruses'] self-reference as a counterpoint to dramatic crisis and tragic catastrophe, in order to stress the divide between their tragic incapability to understand [the events] and the manifestation of their joy, as in the *Ajax*" even though "the action depicted [by the Chorus] confirms the ritual atmosphere of the *stasimon*" (2012: 48-9; my translation). Albeit fascinating, the dramatic connection between the constellation of ritual references and the chorus's own interaction with the characters needs further elucidation based on convincing evidence.

22. Here and below text and trans. Fraenkel 1950.

peculiar performative features, regardless of its participation in the action with an autonomous design (as for instance will happen at the end of the century with Sophocles's *Philoctetes*).[23] At the same time, the fictitious dimension of the performance is not contradicted by the breaking of the 'fourth wall', as it happens with the comic chorus's and chorus-leader's allusions to the socio-political life through the *parabasis*,[24] in which "the spectators of the audience are explicitly made into spectacle [… and] the audience-spectators [are transformed] into a comic spectacle" (Hubbard 1991: 14).

However, the aim of the essays contained in this issue is neither to target the function of the chorus in the ancient Greek communities, nor to reconsider the transformations of the choral lyric tradition in relation to the origin of dramatic performances; a discussion of the relationship between theatrical and civic institutions is also beyond their scope. Their purpose is instead to highlight some distinctive moments in the development of the chorus from classical antiquity to the twentieth century that prove especially revealing of new focalizations or even reversals of the original concept of the chorus as a structural element of a dramatic performance. In fifth-century tragedy the choral element, which Aristotle would consider both as a "form" (*eidos*) composed of music and song, and as a "separable part" (*meros*),[25] drew a path which was at the same time distinct from and complementary to the one of the dramatic action from the point of view of both performance and plot. The entrance of the chorus (*parodos*), especially after a dialogic or monologic prologue, at least since Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BC), and then their presence on stage in a space (*orchestra*) especially devoted to their dancing and singing (*stasimon*) between the acts (*epeisodia*),[26] were strictly codified and related to a system of expectations shared by the audience. Given these expectations, the audience could perceive the originality of some authorial choices: for instance, the chorus's leaving the stage during the action and then

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23. In *Philoctetes* the chorus "do not provide a 'choral' voice with which the audience can associate themselves … They too participate in the intrigue" (Schein 2013: 19).

24. The *parabasis* is an extended and elaborate section of the Old Attic comedy in which the chorus and/or the *koryphaios* directly address the audience acting as the mouthpiece of the author. The grammarian Julius Pollux (second century AD) mentions a "tragic *parabasis*". Needless to say, his testimony is much disputed: "Generally, it is employed by the comic playwrights and is not to be found in tragedies; yet Euripides employed it in many dramas: in the *Danae*, for instance, he makes the Chorus address the audience on his own behalf, but he absent-mindedly designs the women composing the chorus to speak as if they were men. Sophocles instead shows his superiority by moderately using it, for instance in the *Hipponous*" (Bethe 1998: 4.111).

25. Aristotle *Poetics*, 1452b14-16.

26. Aristotle *Poetics* 1452b16ff., where a distinction is made between "parts" (*mere*) "common" (*koina*), that is typical of the fully developed drama, and "peculiar" (*idia*), belonging to definite sylistic and performative typologies, and employed following various authorial intents.

re-entering (*epiparodos*),[27] or the introduction of choral songs within each 'act', or of sung (or recited and sung) antiphonal sequences by the chorus, the chorus-leader (*koryphaios*) and one or more characters.[28] *Epiparodoi*, choral songs and antiphonal sequences – whether they were lamentations (*kommoi*), *epirrhemata* (sequences of verse recited and sung by the chorus and one actor), or 'operatic' dialogues – achieved both a thematic and a spectacular prominence, while exploring the whole range of dramatic potential of the chorus in their distancing from the ritual tradition: it is certainly not accidental that Aristotle, who read the dramatic texts of the 'tragic age' when the chorus had lost its intrinsic link with stage action, referred to the *kommos* (κομμός, originally "beating of the head and breast in lamentation" and consequently "dirge, lament", *LSJ*), without mentioning its ritual origin at all.

Before proceeding any further, it may be helpful to recall that, originally, *choros* (χορός) meant both "dance" and "place for dancing",[29] and that the latter was a circumscribed, typically circular space drawn by the movements of the chorus in a dedicated space as well as in the *orchestra*.[30] Yet *choros* also stands for a social and cultic practice, in which the dance is part of a "public religious ceremony" devoted to a divinity. It could be enacted by chosen performers, selected by age or gender, as the maidens of the *partheneia* or the male adults and boys from the ten Attic tribes in the Athenian *dithyrambs*; it could also be conceived of as a mimetic representation of the events which the choral performance had to commemorate.[31] As Peponi points out:

> [d]espite its uncertain etymology, the Greek word for chorus … appears to have quite clear semantics. In some of its earliest attested usages, especially in Homeric poetry,

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27. For instance in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, in Sophocles's *Ajax*, and in Euripides's *Alcestis*.

28. As the Chorus sang in Aristophanes's *Frogs*, "the audience [of the tragedians] … understands the clever stuff": "εἰ δὲ τοῦτο καταφοβεῖσθον, μή τις ἀμαθία προσῇ / τοῖς θεωμένοισιν, ὡς τὰ λεπτὰ μὴ γνῶναι λεγόντοιν, / μηδὲν ὀρρωδεῖτε τοῦθ', ὡς οὐκέθ' οὕτω ταῦτ' ἔχει. / ἐστρατευμένοι γάρ εἰσι, / βιβλίον τ' ἔχων ἕκαστος μανθάνει τὰ δεξιά" (Wilson 2007: ll. 1109-14) ["but if you're both afraid that our spectators lack a certain amount of knowledge, so as not to appreciate the fine points of what you say, don't worry about that, since that is no longer the case. For they are seasoned veterans and each one has a book and understands the clever stuff" (trans. Matthew Dillon for the *Perseus Digital Library*, Tufts University)].

29. As in Achilles's shield: "Therein furthermore the famed god … cunningly wrought a χορός / *dancing-floor*" (Homer, *Iliad* 18.590; trans. Murray). See *LSJ* χορός II.3.

30. The circularity of this performative space is clearly alluded to by the description of youths and maidens dancing "holding their hands upon the wrists one of the other" (*Ilias* 18.593f.); and see Hesychius, *Lexicon* χ 645: *choros* = 'circle', 'crown' (Hansen 2009). See also the recitative prelude to the first *stasimon* of the Erinyes, Aesch. *Eum.* 307 (quoted at p. 10): "the dance is to be a circular one with joining of hands" (Sommerstein 1989: 137; cf. Rodighiero 2012: 80 n61); and Euripides's frequent use of ἑλίσσω or εἰ- ('turn round') for 'dancing'.

31. As, for example, the maidens and children choruses established at Samos in remembrance of the rescue of the young hostages from Corcyra, at the end of the seventh century BC (Herodotus 3.48).

the word denotes either public areas designated for dance or the dancing activity itself, the latter usually performed by a group. In some cases the two meanings are hard to distinguish, the communal space for dance and the dance itself appearing to be culturally, and thus notionally, interdependent. (2013: 15)

The term *choros*, however, has also other semantic nuances which prove particularly relevant in the history of the dramatic chorus and its, at time radical, transformations:

(a) it defines a "band of dancers and singers" (*LSJ*) indistinguishable from one another, *de facto* actors without being characters (this ambiguity allows for a swarm of bees to be called *choros*).[32] It is worth remembering that, according to Foley, the idea of an "undifferentiated collectivity on stage" is responsible for the disappearance of the chorus from many modern adaptations of ancient tragedies, as it seems to run "counter to modern ideas about the individual's complex and ambivalent relation to social groups and the representation of this relation in performance" (2007: 353-4).

(b) In the practice of tragedy this round "communal space" (Peponi), defined by the chorus's dance and separate from the part of the stage where the characters faced the audience, had a specific, privileged spatial orientation towards the characters, not only during the iambic dialogue between the chorus-leader and one or more characters, or the sung exchanges between the choral ensemble (or the chorus-leader) and the characters, but also when the chorus commented on the dramatic action in the presence of one or more characters on stage. All these functions are paradigmatically summarized by Horace when he gives the following directions to a chorus who, in line with Aristotle's precepts (*Po.* 1456a25-7), participates in the action:

> [a]ctoris partis chorus officiumque virile
> defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus,
> quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte.   195
> Ille bonis faveatque et consilietur amice
> et regat iratos et amet pacare tumentis,
> ille dapes laudet mensae brevis, ille salubrem
> iusttitiam legesque et apertis otia portis,
> ille tegat conmissa Deosque precetur et oret,   200
> ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.
> (*Ars poetica*, 193-201)

[Let the chorus sustain the part and manly character of an actor: nor let them sing any thing between the acts which is not conducive to, and fitly coherent with, the main design. Let them both patronize the good, and give them friendly advice, and regulate the passionate, and love to appease thou who swell [with rage]: let them

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32. See *LSJ* χορός II.2. This same idea of indistinctness is to be found in the "stars' heavenly *choroi*" (Euripides, *Electra* 467) and, with a more evident choreutic nuance in Sophocles, Fr. 762: "[a] *choros* of speechless fishes [that] made a din, wagging their tails [for their mistress]".

praise the repast of a short meal, the salutary effects of justice, laws, and peace with her open gates; let them conceal what is told to them in confidence, and supplicate and implore the gods that prosperity may return to the wretched, and abandon the haughty. (trans. by Buckley 1863)].

(c) Finally, this ensemble, which has a central role in an institutionalized ceremony evidently endowed with a pronounced civic function, is entrusted with the execution of dances and songs showing metrical and rhythmical patterns different from those typical of the spoken sections or of the recitatives. These performances were carried out with the accompaniment of music, whose scores, however, are almost completely unknown to us. Besides, their language is not only connoted by a high register, but also bears nuances of the Doric dialect. As efficaciously expressed by Wiles:

> [c]horal song, dance and music were, according to the traditions of the fifth century, a *Gestalt*, and none existed in isolation. The dance, we are told, should not stray beyond the metre of the words, whilst the words should contain nothing that is not expressed in dance. In respect of the acoustical component, Dale argues that verse is merely "the incomplete record of a single creation, Song. (1997: 90)

The linguistic Dorisms, which give a distinctly non-Attic quality to the choral songs of the tragedy, enhance the performative otherness of the ensemble situated between the characters and the audience: the chorus-leader dialogues with the characters in the language familiar to the Athenian audience, yet a limited number of Doric dialectal terms punctuate the collective songs. Interpreted as a homage to the Doric tradition of the choral lyrical genre, this linguistic feature must be considered not only within the song/speech opposition contrasting a variety of sung metres as well as Doric dialectalisms with iambic and non-Attic lines, but also in relation to the semiosis produced by the "chorus singer [who] abandon[s] the song (in 'Doric') to recite *iamboi*" (Adrados 2005: 145). It is "[a] great innovation" (ibid.), whether the speaker expresses the opinion of the choral group or interacts as an actor/character with the other characters. This is particularly apparent in multi-voiced and, so to speak, 'operatic' sequences featuring a plurality of metres and the coexistence of speech and song: an example of an increasingly complex interaction is the four-voiced *kommos* between Antigone, Ismene, *koryphaios* and Chorus in Sophocles's last tragedy (*Oedipus Coloneus*, 1670-750). Defining the tragic chorus as depositary and agent of a specific semiosis connected with its own most peculiar communicative modes assumes a special relevance when contrasted with the problematic question of its social, political and ideological dimension. From a dramaturgical point of view, this question goes along, and intermingles, with other binary oppositions: between "song-composition"

(*melopoea*) and "speech-composition" (*lexis*),[33] which has already been dealt with; between mask usage, typical of the dramatic chorus, and unmasked performances in the same context of the Dyonisian festival, when the citizens performing the dithyrambic chorus are recognizable and awarded prizes precisely for being representatives of their tribes;[34] and also between an "audience overwhelmingly of adult male citizens" and "so many choruses … comprised of women – often not even free women" (Taplin 1996: 193-4).[35]

The above sketched out features of the chorus – from (a) to (c) – as fundamental performative expressions of the ancient Greek tragic theatre, draw the course it would take over time, highlighting the crucial aspects which would undergo radical change in the chorus's controversial modern revival. These changes took place also when the approach to the ancient models was one of sincere admiration. From the end of the fifteenth century, in a time span of little more than twenty years, Euripides's, Sophocles's, and Aeschylus's[36] original play texts were printed, thus implementing, and counterpoising, a classical heritage which until then had mostly pivoted on Seneca's legacy. At the same time, however, they appeared as hardly decipherable 'objects', construed according to rules upon which even Aristotle's *Poetics* (translated into Latin as early as 1498) could not shed light. As regards the chorus, the Renaissance intellectuals were coping with pieces written in a language affected by Doric dialectalisms; they did not grasp the rationale behind lyric versification, even if they could perceive the difference with the recited parts; and its pattern – mostly based on couples of stanzas in a responsional form – at first escaped them completely.[37] Even Aristotle's *Poetics* did not help. Rather than in the academic efforts of philologists and critics whose aim was to decipher Aristotle's text, this difficulty can be clearly detected in the creative work of the authors who aimed at reviving Greek tragedy, from Gian Giorgio Trissino

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33. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b33-6, 1450a9ff.; reference is to Else's translation (1963: 233), according to whom "*lexis* is the composition of the *spoken* verses, the dialogue" (236). See also 1449b30-1: "I mean that some sections of the play are carried by verses alone (διὰ μέτρων … μόνον) and some the other way round, by song (διὰ μέλους)" (Else: 221).

34. This does not contradict Goldhill's position (1996: 250) as regard the authority and representativeness of the chorus, both masked and unmasked, but it simply puts the stress on the perception of stage dynamics by the audience.

35. In the surviving plays of the three major tragedians we have a high frequency of female choruses (often stranger to the main character, and/or servants): Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes*, *Supplices*, *Choephori*, *Eumenides*, *Prometheus* (5/7); Sophocles's *Electra*, *Trachiniae* (2/7); Euripides's *Medea*, *Andromacha*, *Hecuba*, *Supplices*, *Electra*, *Troades*, *Iphigenia Taurica*, *Ion*, *Helen*, *Phoenissae*, *Orestes*, *Bacchae*, *Iphigenia Aulidensis* (13/19).

36. Ca. 1494: Euripides's *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, and *Andromacha*; 1502 and 1503: all the extant tragedies by Sophocles and the remaining by Euripides, except *Electra*, published for the first time in 1545; 1518: all the extant tragedies of Aeschylus.

37. See the seminal works by A. Tessier (1999, 2003).

and Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio to Sperone Speroni and Ludovico Dolce.[38] Their experiments were often quite interesting, yet not because they resulted in 'archaeological' replicas, but because they reflected a peculiar interaction between the ancient models and the modern sensibility. For instance, the monumentality of Sophocles's plots was often infused with a flair for emotional expression typical of the Euripidean model. All this was cast in a variegated language meant to reproduce, to various degrees, the "adorned language" suggested by Aristotle (ἡδυσμένος λόγος: *Poetics* 1449b25 and 28), a concept which provided the battlefield upon which the translators of *Poetics* and theorists of the Italian language, such as Bembo and Trissino, crossed swords. Italian translators and imitators of the Greek tragedy adopted an undifferentiated Petrarchan *koiné*, showing little insight into the stylistic differences and the dramaturgical peculiarities of the recited parts, and the lyric and choral ones, respectively.[39] An understanding of the stylistic and performative potential of the choric sections would be made possible only by the paratexts supplied by the erudite comments, of Hellenistic or Byzantine origin, annotated in the margins of Byzantine manuscripts (*scholia*), as well as other annotations and subsidiary texts accompanying the main text in the same manuscripts. The *scholia* to Sophocles's tragedies were printed for the first time in 1518, those to Euripides's in 1534, those to Aeschylus's in 1552, and the *De metris* by Pseudo-Hephaestion in 1553. The outcome would shortly be evident: in the second half of the sixteenth century the Attic tragedies finally became comprehensible also in their lyric and choral parts thanks to the already mentioned 1553 Paris edition of *Sophocles* and to the Antwerp editions of *Euripides* and *Aeschylus*, published in 1571 and 1580, respectively. It is worth mentioning that sometimes the ancient paratexts included stage directions which allowed to grasp the theatrical specifics of the tragic text. The conscious re-appropriation of this knowledge and an understanding of the role played by music in the lyric parts notoriously favoured new experimentations. These culminated in Orsatto Giustiniani's *Edipo Tiranno*, an adaptation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, staged in 1585 at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza with music by

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38. The following list, extremely reduced when matched with the abundance and variety of the tragic Italian production of the first half of the sixteenth century, is purely exemplificative. G.G. Trissino (1478-1550), author of a *Poetica* (1529, published in 1562), writes the first modern tragedy following Aristotle's *Poetics*: *Sofonisba* (1514-1515: published in 1524 and staged for the first time in Italy in 1562); G.B. Giraldi Cinzio (1504-1573): *Orbecche* (staged in 1541 and published in 1543); S. Speroni (1500-1588): *Canace* (1546); L. Dolce (1508/1510-1568): *Hecuba* (1543), *Thyeste/Thieste* (1543, 1547), *Giocasta* (1549, vulgarisation of Euripides' *Phoenissai* after a Latin translation, see Montorfani 2006), *Medea* (1557).

39. This is a field yet to be explored, especially as regards the 'implicit' dramaturgy and inspired by the recent performance studies.

Andrea Gabrieli.[40] Yet, far more productively, these recoveries would lead to an innovative merging of "all the components of the [tragic] spectacle", as well as to Claudio Monteverdi's auroral experiment in *Orfeo* (1609), where he achieved the "free circulation of generic models, no longer segregated within mutually incommunicable grammatical and methodological fields" (Gallico 1979: 67), which provided the premise for the new operatic chorality.

Yet, the history of dramatic chorality has followed other paths and recorded other experiments. This is not the place to offer a comprehensive overview of this history; my purpose is rather to draw a succinct analysis of some significant aspects of the individual issues mentioned above. To this end, it should be recalled that both in the Italian Renaissance culture, imbued with Aristotelianism, and in the other European cultures, where direct acquaintance with Aristotle's *Poetics* was sometimes considerably delayed, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* were normally conflated into a single syncretic influence, or, alternatively it was the latter that prevailed.[41] The normative strength of Horace's precepts was so pronounced as to drive even such a bright scholar as Castelvetro to misinterpret Aristotle's definitions and sometimes the tragic texts themselves. After observing that "in the past poets" introduced the chorus "with no respect of the division into acts" ("[i] poeti passati [introducevano il coro] senza haver rispetto alla distinzione de gli atti", Romani 1978: 120) Castelvetro focused on the *stasima*, that is, when the chorus is "introduced … to speak as chorus[42] … and this introduction allows to distinguish the division of the acts and where they end" ("introdotto … a ragionare come choro … per la quale introdottione si riconosce la distintione, e 'l termino degli atti", ibid.: 120). The mistake is even more manifest when he later affirmed that "the chorus enter on stage only four times in order to sing … *Parodos* is the song of the whole chorus, and *stasimon* is the song of the whole chorus when they return to sing the second, the third, and the fourth time" ("non compare il choro in palco per cantare, se non quattro volte… Πάροδος è il canto del choro intero, quando il choro compare la prima volta in palco, et στάσιμον è il canto del choro intero, quando il choro ritorna a cantare la seconda, la terza, et la quarta volta", ibid.: 345). The argument to advocate the division of the play into five acts is here clearly stretched to breaking point.

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40. See in this issue the contribution by Donatella Restani at p. 75-99.
41. Weinberg (1961: 1, 47): "As a result, Horace ceased to be Horace and Aristotle never became Aristotle". See also Tarán (2012: 38-40): "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". See below, Restani: 77.
42. That is, to sing and dance as a group.

As regards the evolution of the dramatic chorus, it was either reduced to a solo voice, or, contrariwise, multiplied into a plurality of minor characters such as common citizens, soldiers etc. – in other words, simply the people ("das 'einfache' Volk", Baur 1999: 38). If these several characters was identified only by their names and never achieved the status of acting individuals, the chorus 'contracted' into a solo voice only indirectly assumed some of the 'parabatic' functions of the Aristophanic chorus, "ask[ing] for the spectator's approval, or at least tolerance" (Schneider 2011: 13). In this way the chorus combined a diegetic function with an authorial voice, like the prologue/character of Roman comedy;[43] sometimes it could also retain a 'lyric' quality and accompany the exhibition of a group of mimes. In early modern English drama this transformation produced various outcomes, sometimes dependent on the translators'/adaptators' faulty interpretation of Seneca's drama following unclear indications about its dramaturgy.[44] As regards both the individualization of the chorus and its becoming the author's mouthpiece, the influence of Horace's *Ars* would be decisive (see ll. 193-201, cited above at p. 15). The main consequence was its contraction into the single figure of a confidant (Schiller would reprove the French Neoclassical theatre and its imitators for reducing the chorus to a *Vertraute*),[45] or into other figures who, like the Shakespearean fools, did not conform to moralistic commonsense, while siding with the main character.[46] Horace is also explicit about the chorus' evolution into the author's representative. This is apparent if one accepts the *lectio deterior* "actoris" (widely adopted in some of the earliest printed editions) instead of the correct reading "auctoris". As regards the chorus's fragmentation into a plurality of characters, one may turn to a famous page of Richard Wagner's *Oper und Drama*, where he describes the Shakespearean example as follows:

> Bei Shakespeare ist der Chor in lauter an der Handlung persönlich betheiligte Individuen aufgelöst, welche für sich ganz nach derselben individuellen Nothwendigkeit ihrer Meinung und Stellung handeln, wie der Hauptheld, und selbst ihre scheinbare Unterordnung im künstlerischen Rahmen ergiebt sich nur aus den ferneren Berührungspunkten, in denen sie mit dem Haupthelden stehen, keineswegs aber aus einer etwa prinzipiellen technischen Verachtung der Nebenpersonen; denn überall da, wo die selbst untergeordneste Person zur Theilnahme an der Haupthandlung

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43. On this see Slater 1992 and Slater 2010.
44. See the contribution by Silvia Bigliazzi (101-33)
45. This interpretation, widespread on both sides of the Channel, seems to descend from the translation of *defendat* in "actoris partis chorus officiumque virile / defendat" (193-4) as "must defende" (Drant 1567, see below, Bigliazzi: 107), as well as from a reading of *actoris* instead of *auctoris*, which in the 1545 French rendition becomes "protecteur" (Peletier 1545: "Le Chore soit du parti de l'acteur, / Et de uertu uirile protecteur", "The chorus should belong to the actor's party and be the manly protector of virtue").
46. As the Fool in *King Lear*, commonly interpreted as "a sort of chorus" or a choric commentator at least since Draper 1937: 180.

zu gelangen hat, äussert sie sich ganz nach persönlich charakteristischem, freiem Ermessen.[47] (Wagner 1869: 52f.)

[With Shakespeare, the Chorus is resolved into divers individuals directly interested in the Action, and whose doings are governed by precisely the same promptings of individual Necessity as are those of the chief Hero himself. Even their apparent subordination in the artistic framework is merely a result of the scantier points of contact they have in common with the chief Hero, and nowise of any technical undervaluing of these lesser personages; for wherever the veriest subordinate has to take a share in the main plot, he delivers himself entirely according to his personal characteristics, his own free fancy (Wagner 1995: 60f.)]

Well in advance of Wagner, the diffraction of the choral collective had been promoted in his own practice by one of the protagonists of the reappraisal of the Greek chorus 'under German eyes': Schiller.[48] In his *The Bride of Messina* (1803), he purposely re-introduced the ancient chorus after discussing its function in the preface appended to the play, entitled *On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy* (see below 136-66). Yet, while in his brief essay he defined the chorus as a unitary entity, in his own tragedy he dissolved it into a polyphony of characters, endowing some of them with something resembling an identity. At all events, this was not his first experiment in choral plurality since in the first part of his *Wallenstein* trilogy (*Wallenstein Lager* [*Wallenstein's Camp*], 1796) he had already split the chorus into the manifold voices of "lesser personages".[49]

Both outcomes deprived the chorus of its framing function, previously codified by its transformation into an *embolimon*, or interlude, interposed between the *epeisodia* (see above 13): the division into acts was already firmly established even without those choric interludes. Of these two lines of development, the one leading to "an individual interpretative or narrative 'voice-over' … lifting the veil of fiction with new tools" (see below, Bigliazzi: 103) conceives the chorus not only as expression of authorial intentions and preoccupations, but also as the privileged holder of the *fabula*, endowed with a reminiscing role. This competence allowed for a reliable narrative anticipation of the entire plot exactly as it happened with the ancient *mythos*, which, at least in its outline, was familiar to all Athenian, and potentially Panhellenic, audience. It is possible to surmise that also this function, exerted in an exemplary way by the

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47. On the tragic chorus in the nineteenth century see Silk 1998.
48. See Goldhill 2013, Güthenke 2013.
49. Similarly, some years before Wagner, the intention to re-introduce "*das wahrhaft Volksthümliche* [the true folk element]" (Wagner 1869: 50; 1995: 58) by means of a diffracted chorality modelled after Schiller's *Wallenstein's Camp*, had lead Giuseppe Verdi to alter the structure of Act 3 of *La forza del destino* [*The Force of Destiny*] in order to follow Schiller's example, see Mossa 2001: 99-102 (letter from Verdi to Cammarano of 24 March 1849), Brumana 2011: 321, and the article by Francesco Bissoli (166-89).

prologic chorus in Q1 and Q2[50] of *Romeo and Juliet*, was somehow inscribed in the model of the ancient chorus addressing the audience and the characters alike with the narration of paradigmatic myths. These stories belonged to a time past in respect to the characters of the tragic plots, and, together with these plots, composed a commonly shared repertoire,[51] albeit with a different performative and narrative status. This diegetic function, therefore, was central to ancient drama precisely as it would be to later drama, and in the Renaissance it was only awaiting to be re-activated not as a purely narrative resource, but as the response to a more or less conscious thematization of the relationship between collective knowledge and the destinies lived and acted on stage by the various characters. If, on the one hand, the fragmentation of the chorus into a polyphony of voices endowed with an embryonic identity, that turned them into types rather than characters, points in the direction of naturalism, on the other hand, its dissolution into a single prologic figure is probably the most striking mutation it underwent. The tragic chorus was originally oriented towards the characters on stage, in both their lyrical comments and iambic dialogues. It thus well-deserved the name of "wall", as Schiller called it with a proxemic conception of theatre in mind. Yet it also deserved to be qualified as a "borderline" device, situated between "the you and the me and the it of it", as Seamus Heaney aptly suggested (see his quotation *in exergo*). It combined the traditional performative functions of commenting, narrating, and dialoguing with the 'parabatic' functions typically belonging to the comic Athenian chorus and inherited by the Latin comic Prologue.[52]

As already mentioned, the articles here collected wish to offer individual explorations of the transformation of the chorus over time by focusing upon significant instances from ancient Greece to the twentieth-century international milieu. It is not our aim to examine all the relevant reinterpretations of the chorus in the various periods of European (and non-European) theatre; nor would this be possible. Such an enterprise would entail not only a critical analysis of dramatic chorality from the sixteenth-century onwards – a task which has not been carried out even by the most recent and thorough contribution on this topic to date (Billings, Budelmann and Macintosh 2013). It would also examine to define how "an *idea* of the Greek chorus … is itself

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50. Bigliazzi, this issue, 101-33.

51. Think, for instance, of the vertiginous *mise en abîme* in the already mentioned fourth *stasimon* of Sophocles's *Antigone*: the Elders, far from appraising the punishment inflicted by Creon, who is present, on his niece, comment on Antigone's exit referring to three famous mythical cases of live 'burial' (944-87; see 8 n14).

52. For the similarities and the necessary distinctions between "the self-referential parabasis [of the] Attic Old Comedy [and its] various analogues of European comic drama" see Hubbard 1991: 1-2, 231-40, 246-51.

mediated by the choruses of Roman drama, by liturgical choruses, by the *corps of ballet*, and by the visual arts (to name just a few)" (Billings, Budelmann, and Macintosh in their "Introduction": 2). Reciprocally, it would be essential to clarify to what extent the modern ideas of chorality, and its actual performance, depend on 'archaeological' and 'philological' interpretations, and if these ideas are conditioned by pre-set theoretical, or markedly ideological, perspectives. On the contrary, this Journal issue wishes to focus upon individual aspects of that dramatic chorality. In particular, it examines how the chorus's diffraction into a plurality of popular voices, typical of modern theatre, was already anticipated, and presupposed, in some Renaissance interpretations of the prologue of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Conversely, It also investigates how the originally plural chorus has been gradually reduced to an individual extra-dramatic character entrusted with a narrative and commenting function. The essays explore how the classical models ended up being contaminated with medieval liturgical and dramatic forms, polyphonic structures, as well as with deliberate avantgarde appropriations of the Aristophanic model; finally, the Journal considers a peculiar instance of how the choral function was eventually absorbed by modern theatre and translated into the immateriality of contemporary media.

The issue starts off with two articles which concentrate upon some crucial aspects of the chorus in both the Attic tragedy and comedy; then it moves on to an exploration of the Italian and English Renaissance re-interpretations of dramatic chorality. Friedrich Schiller's famous *On the Use of Chorus in Tragedy*, positioned between these first contributions and the following ones, marks a neat divide between the controversial early modern revisions of the ancient chorus – often opposed in the name of an increasingly non-choral naturalism – and its later modern reappraisal with an anti-naturalistic focus. As regards the 'modern' chorus, it will be considered from a plurality of perspectives: from Italian melodrama to the choral experimentalisms carried out in Spain by the *Generación del '27*, by T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and by Delmore Schwartz's creative use of the radio and other media.

The first two articles are concerned with Attic drama. In "Lyric Genre Interactions in the Choruses of Attic Tragedy" Andreas Bagordo draws a typology of the ways in which Greek tragedy "echo[es] the pre-existent conventions of choral lyric genres". To this end, Bagordo provides instances of the imagery typical of different choral lyric genres, by discussing the formal aspects (lexical, stylistic, metrical, etc.) of the tragic choruses and the various dramatic situations that include the choral group as commentator, interlocutor, and propeller of the action. The *paian*, *epinikion*, *partheneion*, *hymenaios*, and *threnos* of the lyric tradition are considered also in their interactions as they are activated by the choral lyrics of drama: for instance between the *hymenaios* (the

song accompanying the procession of the bride to the groom's house) and the *partheneion* (the 'maiden-song') in Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1143-52. This allows to verify that the chorus's performance frequently hybridizes different cultual practices. Yet, at the same time, a univocal "generative relationship" involving both a formal and a ritual filiation is at least in part denied. Thus, "denaturalized and deprived of the context for which they had been conceived", the traditional lyric elements are subject to the uncanny ambiguity of tragedy.

In "Men or animals? Metamorphoses and Regressions of Comic Attic Choruses: the Case of Aristophanes's *Wealth*", Olimpia Imperio starts from an analysis of the different theories on the origins of the animal choruses disseminated in the comic Attic production of the fifth and fourth centuries BC in order to concentrate upon the metamorphic potential shown by a comic chorus in the age of transition from the 'ancient' to the 'middle' Attic comedy. The focus of her investigation is the *parodos* chanted by the Chorus of the Elder Peasants in Aristophanes's last surviving comedy staged in 388 BC. Its lyric portion is extremely reduced: only forty-six out of 1209 lines. This "'minor' chorus … expresses an unexpected and unsuspected animality" – a stylized swine metamorphosis, realized "if not by actual camouflaging, by means of words, gestures, and mimetic dancing". It is modelled upon Odysseus's meeting with Circe, and has precedents in earlier instances of Attic comedy, as well as parallels with other Doric and Attic comedies of the fifth and fourth centuries (to cite the same Aristophanes: *Wasps*, 422; *Birds*, 414, and the 'secondary chorus' of the *Frogs*, 405 BC). Therefore, this animality, showing predictable consonances with the satyr genre, "confers on [*Wealth's* elder peasants] a both archaizing and atypically avant-garde patina". This experimentation stands out (especially) when compared with the part Aristophanes assigned to the Chorus in his *Assemblywomen*, a play staged only few years earlier. However minor the Chorus's part may be, especially if compared to the space allowed to the interludes, in *Wealth* Chorus and chorus-leader are often alluded to by the characters, so as to produce a peculiar "equilibrium", or rather a "formula … inspired by a daring experimentalism aimed at the future developments of the comic genre".

The following two articles shift to focus upon early modern choruses. More specifically, they deal with the experimental performance of *Oedipus Tyrannus* in Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico, on 3 March 1585, on the one hand, and, on the other, the multifarious forms of chorality and their various dramatic functions in early modern English drama. In "Theory and Musical Perform-ance of the Chorus in Sixteenth-Century Italy. A Case Study: Vicenza 1585", Donatella Restani moves from the first vernacularization of Aristotle's *Poetics* by Bernardo Segni (1549) to examine the first modern performance of a Greek tragedy, choral scores included, mounted on stage at Vicenza, as "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 theorisations and experiments". The theoretical and interpretative ground in which this experiment is rooted are the Renaissance commentaries to Aristotle's *Poetics*, from Francesco Robortello's (1548) to Lodovico Castelvetro's 'exposition' of the Aristotelian text (1576). As regards the tragic chorus's function and the dramaturgical role it played in alternative to, or in combination with, the presence of other collective characters on stage, as in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, these commentators reflected the cultural milieu of the Vicenza's Olympic Academy. They were also, and more generally, influenced by the Italian cultural and intellectual panorama, which counted humanists interested in musical theories (for instance Gian Giorgio Trissino, reader of Ptolemy's *Harmonica*, and, with a weightier role, Gerolamo Mei), or in a contextualization of Aristotle's *Poetics* within his larger corpus, including *Politics* or the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*. Precisely these texts will lead to a coherent interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of ἡδυσμένος λόγος (*suavis oratio*) and favour a recasting of the choral song.

In "Chorus and Chorality in Early Modern English Drama", Silvia Bigliazzi raises the question of how the ancient plural chorus was gradually reduced to solo performances in early modern English drama, while assuming "new and multiple guises" often only nominally linking it back to its classical prototype. Bigliazzi then passes on to an analysis of the two formal Choruses present in *Romeo and Juliet*, as possibly the earliest dramatic examples of a new prologic awareness, before dealing with other forms of experimental chorality disseminated within the play. The starting point is an articulated overview of the late sixteenth-century English drama illustrating the "gradual transformation of the Senecan-like chorus towards a new prologic and narrative form" through which "Elizabethan drama gradually came to offer a fresh interlacing of action and narrative on different dramatic levels and with different degrees of authority". Despite some substantial changes, the ascendancy of classical models is traceable especially in the drama of the 1560-80s. Their living presence is witnessed by the record of the Latin performances of ancient plays, by the translations of Senecan drama from the late 1550s onwards, by the recasting of the formal chorus in early English tragedy (such as *Gorboduc*, 1561), as well as by the translation of rewrites of classical plays, as George Gascoigne's and Francis Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta* (1566). However, also in some of these examples, including *Gorboduc* and the first amorous tragedy of the age, the multi-authored *Gismond of Salerne* (1567-68, and its revised version *Tancred and Gismund* 1591), one perceives that English drama was taking a new direction, for instance by relying on the performative potential of pantomime and music. These additions varied the dramaturgic function of the chorus

in respect to the Senecan tradition, "possibly [carrying out] contaminations with other autochthonous framing forms". Bigliazzi underscores this convergence, and links it to the reception of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which, in Thomas Drant's translation (1567), seems to adumbrate an interpretation of the chorus as a singular voice. This singularity appears coherent with the one-man prologues and epilogues cast as choruses, as well as with Jasper Heywood's own interpretation of the chorus as a part excluded from "the substance of the matter". The analysis of the two Quartos of *Romeo and Juliet* focuses upon the function of the formal Chorus, "'fluid' in the sense that the[ir part] could be alterable 'performance by performance' (Stern 2009: 109)", as well as on the diffracted chorality of the lamentation scene upon Juliet's body (4.5), as an out-and-out *kommos* with a pronounced metrical and phonic 'responsion' (to refer to classical metrics), both internal (ll. 46, 52, 58, 62), and external (ll. 49~54 and 50~52). The choral articulation in Q1, albeit different, still points to an experimental form of dissonant chorality. Thus, the "discordant vocality", attested in both Q texts, provides evidence of "a polyphonic pattern which has clearly superseded the traditional responsorial form of liturgical performance as well as the Senecan threnodic exempl[arity]".

There follows Guido Avezzù's new annotated translation of Friedrich Schiller's brief essay "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie", appended as a preface to his *Braut von Messina* (1803), and here introduced by Stephen Halliwell. As Joshua Billings has noticed – and as Avezzù's short "Note on the text" confirms with regard to the *Braut*'s two semi-choruses – the use of the chorus in "Schiller's *Braut* is an appropriation much more than an approximation of the Greek chorus". In fact, "Schiller's choral theory … is not intended to describe the Greek chorus (as Schlegel's is), but, rather, to formulate the programme for a self-consciously modern choral practice" (Billings 2013: 148). Schlegel's well-known reference is to the chorus as "the idealized spectator" ("der idealisierte Zuschauer"), that is, in Billings' words, "a form of mediation between the spectator's empirical response and a desired aesthetic one".[53] Yet Nietzsche's approval of Schiller's idea of the Greek tragic chorus hints at a more complex evaluation of Greek tragedy as *Musikdrama*, in some measure indebted to Schiller's concept of "two, so to speak, concentric theatres: a 'natural' one, where characters speak to the choral collective 'derived from the poetical form of real life', as their immediate spectators, and an 'artificial' one, where characters and chorus play in front of their actual audience". As Halliwell has it, "reading [Schiller's] essay … is", therefore, "one valuable way of addressing the challenges which the Greek chorus poses to our understanding and imagination", and entails the affirmation of an anti-naturalistic poetics

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53. Schlegel 1996: 65; see Billings 2013:143-4.

of the chorus, after the refusal of the ancient choral practice in the name of a 'natural' *simplicité* by eighteenth-century French dramatists.

In "The Chorus's 'moral effect' in Italian Opera", Francesco Bissoli illustrates how "in addition to its predominantly narrative and commenting side-role, inscribed in the dramatic frame, in Rossini's years the chorus occasionally started to perform as an acting crowd, later acquiring an extra-diegetic function or actually metamorphosing into a purely timbric component". Bissoli's analysis begins with the chorus of an almost prototypic 'rescue opera', Simon Mayr's *Lodoiska* (1796). Here, the limited space granted to the choral parts is counterbalanced by the variety of their treatments, from the addition of an exotic veneer, to the proposal of a chorus *di dentro* ('from within'), with the effect of "a broadening of the spatial horizon" or "otherwise … enriching a lyrical and introspective scene" or announcing a turning point in the action. This last aspect will feature also in the dramaturgy of several operas by Rossini. It was Giacomo Leopardi who claimed that the chorus should be characterized by a "moral effect" rather than being "of interest" only "to the eyes and ears". The attribution of an ethos to the chorus entails that, to some extent and in its own terms, it can be conceived of as a character. Leopardi underlines its dramatic success especially in the comic opera, which implicitly confirms the 'popular' dimension of a chorality that in modern theatre is more or less consciously derived from Shakespeare.[54] At the same time, Leopardi's a-systematic considerations agree with an idea of the chorus's 'plural' essence as repeatedly asserted since Schiller, and culminating in Nietzsche's notion of the "gigantic individual". At the same time, Leopardi also elaborates an idea of the chorus as mediator of "maxims of justice, virtue, heroism, compassion, patriotism", impersonal values not advocated by any individual character. In this way, the dramatic function of the chorus in the Italian opera of the Risorgimento is well defined both in its ideological traits, and in the range of its possible realizations. The chorus's central position in Italian opera is aptly exemplified by Giovanni Bottesini's *L'Assedio di Firenze* (1856 and 1860), whose musical numbers interestingly include "as many choral songs (four) as soloes and duets".

In "The Chorus in Early Twentieth-Century Spanish Theatre" Paola Ambrosi examines the recurrent use of the chorus by Spanish playwrights in the 1920s and 1930s, a device which was then adopted "almost uninterruptedly until the 1970s". Ambrosi focuses especially upon the main representatives of the so-called *Etad de Plata* ('Silver Age') of the Spanish literature: Ramón del Valle-Inclan, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón Gomez de la Serna, José Bergamín, Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, heirs of a classical poetic tradition, but

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54. See for instance the overview drawn by Baur 1999: 38-9.

at the same time also active in the European avant-gardes, and conscious witnesses of the cultural changes that were taking place in the early twentieth century. In these experiments theatrical chorality translated into the language of drama an ideological assumption: it gave voice and body to Ortega y Gasset's statement that "[t]here are no longer protagonists; there is only the chorus" (1969: 39). Besides, to use Garcia Lorca's words, it seeks to involve the spectators who do not sit in the first rows. Apart from such considerations and their having been inspired by an ambiguous millenarist pessimism or, instead, by deeply felt social stances, these experiments raise, and deal with, an issue already cropped up in the Renaissance: while the ancient chorus was a "truly homogenous mass", the modern one is "differentiated", it is the bearer of a "different individualistic stances" (1986: 86n1). In this Spanish context an awareness of the peculiarity of modern dramatic chorality entails a variety of different poetic approaches, experimented upon in both play-texts and in dance librettos including choruses, albeit destined to remain unknown for decades during Francoism. Stagecraft experimentalism is typical of the two works by José Bergamín selected by Ambrosi: *The Philologists* (1925), where it is overtly inspired by Aristophanes's animal choruses, and *Laughter in the Bones* (1973, but including texts written between 1924 and 1927), respectively. The article eventually lingers on the 'classical' characterization of García Lorca's choruses, and on the scenic and choreographic innovations carried out by Rafael Alberti – an interest he shared with Bergamín – as evidences of the diversified choral outcomes that twentieth-century Spanish theatre offered.

In "'Sordid particulars': Deixis in the Chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral*", Serena Marchesi investigates the function of the deictic markers used by T.S. Eliot's Chorus in bringing the audience to participate in the ritual slaughter of the protagonist and, more generally, in the horrors of history, with a direct reference to the 1930s. The 'classical' use of deixis, starting with the choral prologue as a sort of recasting of the Greek tragic *parodos*, is particularly significant precisely because it is carried out by the choral collective instead of a soliloquizing or dialoguing character, as was often the case with ancient drama. The collective choral voice (Nietzsche's "supernatural lungs") is distributed among the voices of 'commoners' and 'citizens'. This dissolution into single voices, rooted in the Renaissance stage tradition, as Marchesi fully acknowledges, underlines the similarity between the beginning of *Murder in the Cathedral* and the first scene of *Coriolanus* ("… hear *me* speak", *Coriolanus*, 1.1.1). However, Marchesi rightly points out that the Chorus's voice is the bearer of messages of disparate origin (for instance from Revelation), as well as of allusions "to something that [Eliot's] middle-class audience could not have failed to perceive", such as newspaper reports. In their allusion to "private terrors" as well as to the "girls … disappeared" (ll. 179-89), the Chorus would

evoke "recognisable echoes of newspapers reports": these "tales of homely horrors ... perfectly fit" not only in "Eliot's Modernist poetics", but also in his "Modernist theodicy" perceptible in "all [the] graphic details" of an ordinary horrific cruelty.

"Of Men and Ghosts: Delmore Schwartz's Re-visitation of the Greek Chorus" by Alessandra Calanchi deals with the experimentalism of an author "escap[ing] canonical taxonomy": Schwartz, editor of the *Partisan Review*, wrote dramas and essays, and "anticipated in many ways the later interest – and involvement – of intellectuals in the mass media, popular arts, and the critique of consumer society". More interested in European than in American theatre, and, if anything, in the Yiddish theatre transplanted into the American Jewish culture, Schwartz produces a "typical literary cocktail of genres and styles", whose foretaste is provided by 'verse plays' such as *Coriolanus and His Mother* and *Paris and Helen*. In *Coriolanus and His Mother*, the Chorus is located among the audience and is made up of a plurality of voices (six) which evoke ghostly "stars" (four of them are former eminent people) or indefinite individuals (the author himself, or maybe his own *Doppelgänger*). In *Paris and Helen*, instead, against the backdrop of the Helen-Paris-Menelaus triangle a Chorus of Old Men recalls the presence and comments of the Old Men on the walls of Troy in *Iliad* 3. In these experiments the chorus is distributed among several voices, as often happens in modern versions of this ancient dramatic device. As Calanchi illustrates, Schwartz's following works confirm "[his] obsessive research for *another* kind of epiphany – and a really extreme one: one which could disclose existence out of the body, one which could even 'dispose' of the body more definitely than a ghost", well beyond the experimentation of *Coriolanus and His Mother*. Along those lines, the radio "represents an appropriate chorus" (Valenti: 211) in *Choosing Company* (1936, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*): "a mechanical voice that is neither male nor female, and when it does not speak it plays jazz ... [and] combines a[n] ... 'oratorio' ... with the social dimension of broadcasting": "the radio is poet laureate / to Heinz, Palmolive, Swift, and Chevrolet" (Schwartz 1950: 57). This strange entity endowed with a mysterious voice is invested with both authority and authorship, and its "admonition[s]" are located in the same communicative space of advertising. The contamination between a modern idea of chorality and the use of mass media is brought a step ahead in *Dr Bergen's Belief* (where the choral function is accomplished by a phonograph and some photographs), while in *Venus in the Back Room* four of its eight characters are mere dematerialized voices. *Shenandoah* (1941) provides yet another variation with the use of a telephone as the bearer of "oracular potentiality". In *Shenandoah* all these voices realize a sort of "chorus from the past" – their choral function being acknowledged by Schwartz himself (1943: vii). Finally,

the broadcast play *Kilroy's Carnival: A Poetic Prologue for TV* (1958) marks the conclusive shift from radio to television. Calanchi's discussion of the media used by Delmore Schwartz in his multifarious revisiting of the Greek chorus explains how, in his constant variety of choices, he "appropriates the spirit of the Greek chorus without forgetting his own (Jewish) American identity, thus creating a bridge between ages and cultures capable of curing 'the long illness of time and history' (Schwartz 1992: 10)".

Abbreviations

FGrH   *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin 1923 – Leiden 1958.

LSJ   Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones (eds) (1968), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj; last access 19th February 2015).

P. Oxy.   *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (1899-), London: The Egypt Exploration Society.

TrGF   Snell, Bruno (ed.) (1986), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*: vol 1: *Didascaliae tragicae…*, editio correctior et addendis aucta curavit Richard Kannicht, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

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Andreas Bagordo*

Lyric Genre Interactions in the Choruses of Attic Tragedy

Abstract

This article aims at exploring the traces of the choral lyric genres in tragic choruses, with special regard to the allusive presence of the paian, the epinikion, the partheneion, the hymenaios, and the threnos. The retracing in a dramatic context of elements belonging to these traditional genres and to their correspondent ritual occurrences brings about an intriguing web of correspondences in which these lyric patterns are developed, combined or even radically refashioned depending on the peculiarities of the single tragic plots. The investigation of the choral-lyrical passages is conducted by means of a close reading of the interactions between the pragmatic dimension of what we may define as 'lyric paradigms' that underlie ritual performances and the individual choral songs in order to show how the tragic choruses may mirror and possibly perpetuate pre-existent lyric genres.

It is an unquestionable fact that lyric parts in Attic tragedies echo the pre-existent conventions of choral lyric genres, implying a generative relationship between traditional poetic genres and drama, the variety of meters and the dialectal nuances notwithstanding.[1] This legacy, descending from the lyric (and not simply choral) tradition, can be recognized in the tragic parts defined as lyric in so far as they are meant to be performed musically and sung by a tragic chorus. To deny this kinship would be tantamount to negating the existence of a poetic tradition axiologically and chronologically inferior only to the Homeric epos. Therefore the point of my discussion is not to prove this connection but to trace the path leading to it, to draw its boundaries and to determine its most tangible possibilities of interaction. The extent to which

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1. For an extensive survey on the issue of choral lyric genres see Swift 2010 (see also my review: Bagordo 2015). Her intriguing suggestion that "[w]e must read tragedy not only as drama but as choral song" (Swift 2010: 1) will surely bring on further discussion and critical examination. On the same topic see also Rodighiero 2012; on lyric tradition in the Euripidean monodies see De Poli 2012.

the lyric tradition has played a mediative and filtering role among the various *ritual practices* is a more complicated matter perhaps destined to remain unresolved. The difficulty of drawing conclusions from literary evidence in order to reconstruct the underlying ritual performances can be seen, with regard to Sophocles, in the many clues regarding the merging of lyric genres in the first stasimon of *Trachiniae*, and the *paian* in the *parodos* of *Antigone* respectively (Rodighiero 2012: 79-88, 134-7). As for *Antigone*, Rodighiero's aporetic conclusion can be easily applied to all similar cases: "Would it be conceivable to detect in the opening verses of the chorus of *Antigone* a trace, albeit vague and maybe hardly perceivable, of the boisterous dance the Greeks used to enact rhythmically stomping their feet while striking up a victory *paian*?" (ibid.: 137).

Music and singing, particularly in choral form, had an extraordinary relevance to several aspects of Greek culture. The audience of a tragedy could find in the choruses a poetical reflection of the multifarious daily rituals which had already been formalized and institutionalized in lyric genres. Consequently, the concept of interaction seems the most appropriate one to define this kind of echoing, not limited to formal and purely literary aspects; indeed, this concept also allows the examination of tragic allusions to lyric genres as a way to evoke a whole cultural system which intersects the normative assumptions and inherited conventions permeating the poetic tradition.

Over and above particular intertextual instances (allusions, reminiscences, etc.), only sporadically present in tragedies as a whole (and therefore not just in the choruses),[2] the lyric legacy of tragedies consists in a wide range of motifs, themes, and resonances, not necessarily tied to the verbal fabric of tragic choruses. However, the examples of the three levels of interaction ("low", "medium", and "high") put forward by Laura Swift (2010: 28-31) show the difficulty of dispensing with the unpretentious, yet effective, idea of intertextuality in order to adopt the more ambitious one of interaction. For instance, the example of "medium-level interaction" between the *parodos* of Sophocles's *Antigone* and a fragment of a Pindaric *paian* (fr. 52k, 1 Sn.-M.) would be unthinkable without the literal quotation of Pindar's powerful image (ἀκτὶς ἀελίου: "sunbeam") in the *incipit;* conversely, suggesting that the term παιώνιος in Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women*, 1066, where it refers to the hand of Zeus and is used with the common meaning of 'healing', may recall, even though as an example of low-level interaction, the paeanic genre, appears a little rash, to say the least. A different case is the one of the epithet καλλίνικος, whose many occurrences in Euripides's *Heracles* indubitably refers to the epinician genre.

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2. About these occurrences see Garner 1990 and Bagordo 2003.

The choral lyric genres whose traces can be found, in more or less indirect form, in tragic choruses are the *paian*, the *epinikion*, the *partheneion,* the *hymenaios*, and the *threnos*. These five genres can interact or be interrelated with tragedy even through the mere presence of a certain imagery connected to them. Consequently, it appears natural (and so it must have appeared to the Athenian spectators) that some favourable ground had to be set for one specific lyric genre to be recognizable at every possible level of explicitness, from the most covert and veiled to the most evident. Considering the nature of lyric genres, whose performance was linked to a specific *Sitz im Leben*, perhaps to some noteworthy events or circumstances in the citizens' lives (be they private or public, secular or religious), it is not surprising that their occurrence or their reference in a tragedy prompted the introduction of elements that usually accompanied those same events in real life. Accordingly, the celebration of an engagement or of a wedding would call for the presence of hymeneal elements (1a), while a funeral would require threnodic ones (1b); a ceremony of healing, an apotropaic ritual or the request of divine intervention were proper to the *paianes* (2a), while the celebration of a victory, be it military or athletic, would recall the epinician tradition (2b). A few examples may help clarify this point:

(1a) *hymeneal elements*: see, for instance, the chorus's description, full of hymeneal terms and referring to the ritual praxis, of the wedding of Heracles and Iole in Eur. *Hipp.* 545-54, of Peleus and Thetis in Eur. *IA* 1036-197 and of Paris and Helen in Aesch. *Ag.* 699-716 or, as recounted by Helen herself, in Eur. *Hel.* 639-41, 722-4. Also, see the motif of the wedding with Thanatos, often accompanied by an inverted *makarismos*, concerning, for example, Cassandra in Aesch. *Ag.* 1156-9, Antigone in Soph. *Ant.* 813-6, 876-8, 891, 916-18, and Polyxena in Eur. *Hec.* 416.523-4, 609-18.

(1b) *threnodic elements*: in addition to the several conventional cases of ritual lamentation, to which we will return later, see the commonly 'perverted' *threnos* pronounced by someone who faces a destiny of death: Cassandra in Aesch. *Ag.* 1322-30, Clytemestra in *Cho.* 926, Ajax in Soph. *Ai.* 859-65 or Antigone in *Ant.* 806-82.

(2a) *request of divine intervention*: consider, for instance, Chalkas's plea to Apollo to protect the Greeks against Artemis's wrath in Aesch. *Ag.* 146-50; Pythia's prayer to Apollo to fight back the Erinyes in *Eum.* 60-3; or the priest's appeal to Apollo to save his town from the plague in Soph. *OT* 149-50; or, on the contrary, the ironic invocation in paeanic terms to Persephone, a goddess related to death and not to salvation, in Eur. *Hel.* 175-8.

(2b) *epinician tradition*: see, for instance, the portrayal of the Trojan war as an athletic contest in Aesch. *Ag.* 62-6; Deianira's employment of sport imagery in describing how Heracles rescued her in Soph. *Trach.* 20-36, thus supporting the hero's image as a sports champion. The same status, already asserted by

Zeus, *Agonios* (26), is also referred to in the Euripidean *Alcestis*, as explicitly stated for example at lines 843-9, where Heracles himself declares his will to challenge Thanatos to a duel.

The paian

In tragedies, the *paian* is related to the sphere of illness, recovery, and death, often expressing tension or irony, although it may also have a celebratory function.[3] While more easily recognisable than other genres thanks to the presence of the refrain (a paeanic epithet like *paian* or *paion*), it only occasionally rises to a strategic role in the economy of the drama. In many cases the refrain is simply an isolated warning light inside other lyric contexts. An instance of this can be found in Soph. *Phil.* 827-32:

> Ὕπν' ὀδύνας ἀδαής, Ὕπνε δ' ἀλγέων,
> εὐαὴς ἡμῖν ἔλθοις, εὐαίων,
> εὐαίων ὦναξ· ὄμμασι δ' ἀντίσχοις
> τάνδ' αἴγλαν, ἃ τέταται τανῦν.
> ἴθι ἴθι μοι, Παιών.

> [Sleep, ignorant if anguish, ignorant of pains, come to us with gentle breath, come bringing felicity, bringing felicity, lord! Over his eyes hold this brightness that now extends before them! Come, come, Healer! (trans. by H. Lloyd-Jones)]

The term παιών, inserted in a hymn to Hypnos, recalls the healing dimension of the *paian*, but also refers to a divinity unrelated to the cult of Apollo. One may wonder if the inclusion of this term was sufficient for the audience to recognize the hymn as a *paian*, even discounting a possible ironic disposition of the song which joins together the elevated tone of a prayer and the more intimate and unpretentious modulation of a lullaby.[4]

The paeanic traces that we find in Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus* stand closer to the characteristically Apollonian field of redemption. In this tragedy the central theme of light (and consequently of sight) finds its origin in the imagery of luminosity of the *paian*, which, however, originally had only a redeeming value. The ambiguous traits it acquires in Sophocles, which have it swing between the request of healing and the terror for divine retribution, are totally absent from the original genre:

153-7   ἐκτέταμαι φοβερὰν φρένα, δείματι πάλλων,
         ἰήιε Δάλιε Παιάν,

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3. On this particular aspect see Käppel 1992 and Rutherford 2001.
4. On this mingling of tones, see Avezzù 2000 and Rodighiero 2012: 148-9.

ἀμφὶ σοὶ ἁζόμενος· τί μοι ἢ νέον
ἢ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις πάλιν ἐξανύσεις χρέος;
εἰπέ μοι, ὦ χρυσέας τέκνον Ἐλπίδος, ἄμβροτε Φάμα.

[I am prostrated, my mind is shaken by terror, Delian healer invoked with cries, in awe of you, wondering what thing you will accomplish, perhaps new, perhaps coming again with the revolving seasons. Tell me, child of golden Hope, immortal oracle! (trans. by H. Lloyd-Jones)]

186-8   παιὼν δὲ λάμπει στονόεσσά τε γῆρυς ὅμαυλος·
τῶν ὕπερ, ὦ χρυσέα θύγατερ Διός,
εὐῶπα πέμψον ἀλκάν.

[Loud rings out the hymn to the Healer and the sound of lamentation with it! For these things, golden daughter of Zeus, send the bright face of protection! (trans. by H. Lloyd-Jones)]

Likewise, the paeanic calls to Apollo, with which Admetus and the chorus try to avoid the Queen's death, are essential to the plot of Euripides's *Alcestis*:

91-2   εἰ γὰρ μετακοίμιος ἄτας,
ὦ Παιάν, φανείης.

[O God of Healing, may you come bringing respite from disaster!]

220-5   ὦναξ Παιάν,
ἔξευρε μηχανάν τιν' Ἀδμήτῳ κακῶν
– πόριζε δὴ πόριζε· καὶ πάρος γὰρ
†τοῦδ' ἐφεῦρες† καὶ νῦν
λυτήριος ἐκ θανάτου γενοῦ,
φόνιον δ' ἀπόπαυσον Ἅιδαν.

[Lord of Healing, contrive for Admetus some escape from disaster. – Yes, devise a way. For you found one for him before. Now too be his rescuer from death, check deadly Hades. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

In this tragedy we can still find some references to luminosity, which are sometimes suggested by the chorus themself:

82-3   ἔτι φῶς λεύσσει Πελίου τόδε παῖς
Ἄλκηστις.

[whether Pelias' daughter still lives and looks on the light, Alcestis.]

122-3   εἰ φῶς τόδ' ἦν
ὄμμασιν δεδορκὼς.

[if he still looked upon the light of the sun.]

436-7   χαίρουσά μοι εἰν Ἀίδα δόμοισιν
τὸν ἀνάλιον οἶκον οἰκετεύοις.

[farewell, and may you have joy even as you dwell in the sunless house of Hades! (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

The epinikion

Notable traces of the epinician genre can be found in tragedies, most of which are connected with the characters of Heracles and Orestes.

The contrast between the tradition depicting Heracles as a hero, whose deeds perfectly suit the epinician repertory, and his tragic dimension is apparent, for instance, in Euripides's *Heracles*. The first *stasimon* (ll. 348-450) has often been considered as a sort of *threnos*. However, this judgement does not stand a close examination, and even the presence of Apollo, which could hint at a *paian*, is misleading and the laudatory nature, typical of the epinicion, prevails. First of all, having the chorus declare to be consciously performing a eulogy, that is, an encomium (ll. 355-6 ὑμνῆσαι στεφάνωμα μό-/χθων δι' εὐλογίας θέλω),[5] is an often recurring theme in Pindar's epinicia – see two significant examples of *incipit* in Pind. *O*. 2.1-2 and *O*. 3.3-9:[6]

> *O*. 2.1-2
> Ἀναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι,
> τίνα θεόν, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα δ' ἄνδρα κελαδήσομεν;

[Songs, rulers of the lyre, what god, what hero, what man shall we celebrate?]

> *O*. 3.3-9
> Θήρωνος Ὀλυμπιονίκαν
> ὕμνον ὀρθώσαις ... Μοῖσα δ' οὕτω ποι παρέ-
> στα μοι νεοσίγαλον εὑρόντι τρόπον
> Δωρίῳ φωνὰν ἐναρμόξαι πεδίλῳ
> ἀγλαόκωμον ... φόρμιγγά τε ποικιλόγαρυν
> καὶ βοὰν αὐλῶν ἐπέων τε θέσιν
> Αἰνησιδάμου παιδὶ συμμεῖξαι πρεπόν-
> τως, ἅ τε Πίσα με γεγωνεῖν.

[While I honor renowned Acragas by raising my song in praise of Theron's victory at Olympia ... With this in view the Muse stood beside me when I found a shining new manner of fitting the splendid voice of the victory procession to the Dorian sandal ... to blend harmoniously for the son of Aenesidamus the embroidered song of the lyre and the cry of the flutes with the arrangement of words, and Pisa bids me to raise my voice. (trans. by D. Arnson Svarlien)]

Further epinician elements which are worth to be taken into consideration are the presence of a strong simile, the emphasis on the lyre, the mention of the *laudandus*'s family, the chorus's assertion that their song is a reward to the hero's *aretè*, the reference to Heracles's labours as δρόμοι (l. 425 δρόμων τ'

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5. "I wish to praise as a coronal to his labors", trans. by D. Kovacs.
6. See also *O*. 4.1-5, *P*. 2.1-6, 9.1-4, *N*. 5.1-5, *I*. 1.1-12.

ἄλλων ἀγάλματ' εὐτυχῆ),[7] and the widespread presence of typically Pindaric-Bacchylidean compounds. This is enough to characterize Euripides's Heracles as a sporting champion; in fact, this does not come as a surprise if you consider that the foundation of the Olympic Games was ascribed to him. In addition to that, he is mentioned, and fulfils a topical role, in many epinikia by Pindar.[8]

In the second *stasimon* of *Heracles* (637-700), at least two important *topoi* of the epinikion have been recognized: the comparison between the strength of youth, embodied by Heracles, and wealth (637-49),[9] and the connection between the praise of the nature of *aretè* and the role of the poet who glorifies it.[10]

Similarly, the third *stasimon* (763-814) is not devoid of elements characteristic of the *epinikion*. They especially emerge in the gnomic tone employed in describing the inherent dangers of excessive wealth and power, and in the glorification of the hero's homeland, Thebes – a reference to the local legend meant introduced in order to praise the contemporaries (792-7). Yet, the apex is represented by the significant use of καλλίνικος: this epithet has cultic connotations, but in celebrating Heracles's triumph it characterizes the triumph itself as a sports victory:

781-9 Ἰσμήν' ὦ στεφαναφόρει
ξεσταί θ' ἑπταπύλου πόλεως
ἀναχορεύσατ' ἀγυιαὶ
Δίρκα θ' ἁ καλλιρρέεθρος,
σύν τ' Ἀσωπιάδες κόραι
πατρὸς ὕδωρ βᾶτε λιποῦσαι συναοιδοὶ
Νύμφαι τὸν Ἡρακλέους
καλλίνικον ἀγῶνα.

[Go gaily in garlands, River Ismenus, and O ye smooth-worn streets of the city of seven gates, strike up the dance, and Dirce too with your lovely streams! Come as well, daughters of Asopus, leave your father's waters and join me in singing, Nymphs, of Heracles' glorious victory! (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

In doing so, this term hinges on a deep-rooted epinician tradition (Pind. *P.* 5.106, *N.* 3.19, 4,16) that can be traced back to a refrain composed by Archilochus (fr. 324 W.[2]):

τήνελλα καλλίνικε
χαῖρε ἄναξ Ἡράκλεις
αὐτός τε καἰόλαος, αἰχμητὰ δύω.

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7. "The glorious successes of his other quests", trans. by D. Kovacs.
8. For a bibliography on the *epinikion* see Bagordo 2011: 243-6.
9. See also Pind. *O.* 1.113-4, *P.* 5.1-5, *I.* 3.1-3.
10. See Pind. *O.* 1.115-6, *P.* 3.114-5, *N.* 9.6-10.

[Tenella gloriously triumphant, / hail lord Heracles, / both you and Iolaus, a pair of warriors. (trans. by D. Gerber)]

For a reference to Archilochus, see Pind. *O.* 9.1-2:

> τὸ μὲν Ἀρχιλόχου μέλος
> φωνᾶεν Ὀλυμπίᾳ, καλλίνικος ὁ τριπλόος κεχλαδώς.

[The resounding strain of Archilochus, the swelling thrice-repeated song of triumph. (trans. by D. Arnson Svarlien)]

Orestes is another hero whose deeds are described by the chorus as athletic victories. The most obvious passage can be found in Euripides's *Electra* 860-5:

> θὲς ἐς χορόν, ὦ φίλα, ἴχνος, ὡς νεβρὸς οὐράνιον
> πήδημα κουφίζουσα σὺν ἀγλαΐᾳ.
> νικᾷ στεφαναφορίαν
> †κρείσσω τοῖς† παρ᾽ Ἀλφειοῦ ῥεέθροισι τελέσ-
> σας κασίγνητος σέθεν· ἀλλ᾽ ὑπάειδε
> καλλίνικον ᾠδὰν ἐμῷ χορῷ.

[Lift your feet in dancing, dear friend, leap heaven-high like a fawn in your rejoicing! Your brother has completed, has won a crown of victory greater than that by the streams of the Alpheus! Accompany with your song of triumph the steps of my dance! (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

In this passage the dactylo-epitrite metre also recalls the epinician genre, while the chorus themselves define their own song as *kallinikos*, repeating the same word used by Electra when hailing Orestes in 880-1:

> ὦ καλλίνικε, πατρὸς ἐκ νικηφόρου
> γεγώς, Ὀρέστα, τῆς ὑπ᾽ Ἰλίῳ μάχης.

[O Orestes, glorious in victory, son of the man who won the prize of victory in the war at Troy. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

and, above all, Orestes's triumph, that is, his revenge, is also explicitly compared to an Olympic victory.

The *partheneion* and the *hymenaios*

In the choruses of Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Helen*, and *Hippolytus*, and of Aeschylus's *Suppliant Women* we can retrace significant echoes of the kindred genres of *partheneion* and *hymenaios*.[11] These virginal and nuptial chants

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11. On the partheneion see, in particular, Calame 1977 and on the hymenaios see Contiades-Tsitsoni 1990 and Baltieri 2011.

represent two contiguous and often combined moments. The characters of Iphigenia and Helen paradigmatically show a problematic attitude, to say the least, towards the passage from virginity to adulthood. This is partly true also for the Euripidean Electra. After she has reluctantly married a peasant, her ambiguous liminal position between *parthenos* and *gynè* confines her to a state of miserable isolation. When the chorus urges her to join the celebration of the Heraia with the other Argive maidens – defined as 'brides' at l. 180 (Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις) – she replies that her daily and only toil will be wailing (*El.* 167-212). As she resignedly points out, her situation, reflected in the material bleakness of her life, makes her unsuitable for the rite:

> 310-3   ἀνέορτος ἱερῶν καὶ χορῶν τητωμένη.
> ἀναίνομαι δὲ γυμνὰς οὖσα παρθένος,
> αἰσχύνομαι δὲ Κάστορ', ὃ πρὶν ἐς θεοὺς
> ἐλθεῖν ἔμ' ἐμνήστευον, οὖσαν ἐγγενῆ.

[bereft of festivals and deprived of dances. For since I have no clothes I shun the maidens, shun likewise Castor and Polydeuces, who before the went up to heaven were suitors for my hand since I was their kinswoman. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

The end of the second stasimon of Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris* is an interesting case in point:

> 1143-52   χοροῖς δ' ἐνσταίην, ὅθι καὶ
> παρθένος εὐδοκίμων δόμων,
> παρὰ πόδ' εἱλίσσουσα φίλας
> ματρός, ἡλίκων θιάσοις
> ἐς ἀμίλλας χαρίτων
> ἁβροπλούτου τε χλιδᾶς
> εἰς ἔριν ὀρνυμένα, πολυποίκιλα
> φάρεα καὶ πλοκάμους περιβαλλομένα
> γένυσιν ἐσκίαζον.

[May I take my place in the choruses where once as maiden of illustrious family near my dear mother I whirled in dance, and competing in grace with the throngs of my agemates and vying with them in luxury born of soft-living wealth I put on a veil of many hues and let down my tresses to shade my cheek. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

The interaction here is not limited to the *hymenaios* nature of the ode, but it also includes elements of the *partheneion*: its self-reflective nature, the focus on superficial aspects such as clothing,[12] accessories and hairdressing, girlish gestures, and allusions to a sort of beauty contest. All these elements can be detected in Alcman's *partheneia*, the best known among them.

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12. In this regard, see also Eur. *El.* 190-2: μεγάλα θεός· ἀλλ' ἴθι καὶ παρ' ἐμοῦ χρῆσαι / πολύπηνα φάρεα δῦναι / χρύσεά τε χάρισιν προσθήματ' ἀγλαΐας ["Great is the goddess. Come, then, and borrow from me robes of thicks weave to put on and gold to add to the pleasures of the feast" (trans. by D. Kovacs)].

Analogies with Alcman's *partheneia* (*PMGF* 1 and 3) can also be found in Euripides's *Helen.* In the *parodos*, the exchange between Helen and the chorus of Sirens, also alluded to as παρθένοι (virgins), draws a connection between the Sirens themselves and Persephone, consequently inferring an association with death, too. This makes way for the representation of the transition between maidenhood and womanhood, which becomes particularly evident at lines 184-90:

> ἔνθεν οἰκτρὸν ὄμαδον ἔκλυον,
> ἄλυρον ἔλεγον, ὅτι ποτ' ἔλακεν
> ‹λαμπροῖσιν› αἰάγμα-
> σι στένουσα Νύμφα τις,
> οἷα Ναῒς ὄρεσι φύγδα
> νόμων ἰεῖσα γοερόν, ὑπὸ δὲ
> πέτρινα γύαλα κλαγγαῖσι
> Πανὸς ἀναβοᾷ γάμους.

[There I heard a noise to stir my pity, a lament not fit for the lyre, uttered in ‹loud› complaint by some wife: so would a Naiad in flight on the mountains utter a woeful plaint as in some rocky glen she cries out that she is being ravished by Pan. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

Helen, here described as a *nympha*, a bride and a ravished nymph at the same time, reproduces the archetypical *topos* embodied by Persephone, whose passage to sexual maturity is marked by her abduction by Hades. In the third stasimon, the cult of the Leucippides and the dances for Hyacinthus recall, as is in Alcman fr. 1 *PMGF*, the initiation of Spartan girls and the related *partheneia*:

1465-77
> ἦ που κόρας ἂν ποταμοῦ
> παρ' οἶδμα Λευκιππίδας ἢ πρὸ ναοῦ
> Παλλάδος ἂν λάβοι,
> χρόνῳ ξυνελθοῦσα χοροῖς
> ἢ κώμοις Ὑακίνθου
> νύχιον ἐς εὐφροσύναν,
> ὃν ἐξαμιλλασάμενος
> τροχὸν ἀτέρμονα δίσκου
> ἔκανε Φοῖβος, εἶτα Λακαί-
> νᾳ γᾷ βούθυτον ἀμέραν
> ὁ Διὸς εἶπε σέβειν γόνος·
> μόσχον θ' ἂν λίπετ' οἴκοις
> ‹δέρκοιτ' ἂν Ἑρμιόναν,›
> ἃς οὔπω πεῦκαι πρὸ γάμων ἔλαμψαν.

[I think she will find the daughters of Leucippus by the river or before the temple of Pallas, as she arrives home at the time of the dances or revels of Hyacinth and their nightlong feasting, Hyacinth, whom Phoebus, trying to hurl far the round discus, killed, and thereafter to the land of Lacedaemon the son of Zeus gave ovrder to keep a day of sacrifice. And ‹she may see› the calf she left in the house, ‹Hermione,› whose marriage torches have not yet gleamed. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

The state of preservation of Alcman's texts allows us to take him as the natural point of reference for the *partheneia* genre and its survival in tragic choruses. The same can be said of Sappho with regard to the *hymenaios*, that is, the song traditionally associated with nuptials. Like the *paian*, the *hymenaios* often carries out the task of creating a joyful atmosphere, which sometimes clashes ironically with the ruinous events of tragedy.

An instance of the hymeneal mode is perhaps briefly perceivable in the third *stasimon* of Euripides's *Hippolytus*:

> 1137-41 ἀστέφανοι δὲ κόρας ἀνάπαυλαι
> Λατοῦς βαθεῖαν ἀνὰ χλόαν·
> νυμφιδία δ’ ἀπόλωλε φυγᾷ σᾷ
> λέκτρων ἅμιλλα κούραις.

> [Bare of garlands will be the resting-places of Leto's daughter in the deep greenwood. The rivalry of maidens to be your bride has been brought to an end by your exile. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

Nuptial imagery is here paradoxically employed in the allusion to maidens quarrelling over a bridegroom, who is in fact chastity-vowed Hippolytus. This ambiguity is enhanced by a further ironic note in the reference to his devotion to Artemis (1137-8). The inversion of the nuptial motif is fully accomplished at the end of the *stasimon*. A reversed *makarismos*, which replaces the vocabulary of happiness and good luck with the one of sorrow and misfortune,[13] is followed by Hippolytus's forsaking of his father's house. His desertion is described in terms reminiscent of the hymeneal language such as the verb πέμπειν, usually employed to describe the 'escorting' of the wedding couple to the altar, and the epithet *syzygiai*, normally attributed to the Graces:

> 1148-50 συζύγιαι Χάριτες, τί τὸν τάλαν’ ἐκ πατρίας γᾶς
> οὐδὲν ἄτας αἴτιον
> πέμπετε τῶνδ’ ἀπ’ οἴκων;

> [Ye Graces that dance your round, why do you not accompany this man from his father's land and from this house? (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

Likewise, in the exodus of Aeschylus's *Suppliant Women* the hymeneal elements are circumscribed to a few scant allusions, and one may reasonably wonder whether they were sufficient to have the audience recognize it as a nuptial song:

> 1026-33 ποταμοὺς δ’ οἳ διὰ χώρας
> θελεμὸν πῶμα χέουσιν,
> πολύτεκνοι, λιπαροῖς χεύμασι γαίας

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13. For this and similar cases in tragedy, see Halleran 1991: 114.

τόδε μειλίσσοντες οὖδας.
ἐπίδοι δ' Ἄρτεμις ἁγνὰ
στόλον οἰκτιζομένα, μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας
γάμος ἔλθοι Κυθερείας·
Στύγιον πέλοι τόδ' ἆθλον.

[but of the rivers that pour their tranquil waters through this land, to drink for health and for fertility, softening the soil of the land with their oil-smooth streams. May chaste Artemis watch over this band in pity, and may Cytherea's consummation not come to us by compulsion: may that prize be won only in Hades. (trans. by A.H. Sommerstein)]

The allusion to human fertility, hinted at by the epithet πολύτεκνοι applied to rivers, is later made explicit in the reference to a forced, if soon refused, wedding; in fact, the chorus of the Danaids wish for the triumph of chaste Artemis over Aphrodite. In this passage we can perceive some kind of internal interaction deriving from the Danaids' traditional status, rather than from the circumstances of the drama.

This song of refusal, albeit ambiguous since the fertility of the rivers is praised and the refusal itself refers to a *forced* marriage, is counterbalanced by the subsequent song. Probably sung by the first semi-chorus, it acknowledges Aphrodite's charm as equally irresistible to the Danaids themselves, while the goddess is tellingly paired with the one presiding over nuptial knots, that is, Hera:

1034-7 Κύπριδος δ' οὐκ ἀμελεῖν, θεσμὸς ὅδ' εὔφρων·
δύναται γὰρ Διὸς ἄγχιστα σὺν Ἥρᾳ,
τίεται δ' αἰολόμητις
θεὸς ἔργοις ἐπὶ σεμνοῖς.

[But it is a wise rule not to ignore Cypris; for she holds power very close to Zeus, together with Hera, a goddess of cunning wiles who is honoured for awesome deeds. (trans. by A.H. Sommerstein)]

In the following lines, other related deities, such as Pothos, Peitho, and Harmonia, are evoked, while the ending sanctions the inexorability of both fate's and Zeus' will, which levels all women and, in the case of the Danaids, defines the inevitability of their unwanted wedding with the sons of Aegyptus (1050-1 μετὰ πολλῶν δὲ γάμων ἅδε τελευτὰ / προτερᾶν πέλοι γυναικῶν).[14]

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14. "[A]nd this outcome, marriage, would be shared with many women before you", trans. by A.H. Sommerstein.

Threnos

As regards the ritual lamentation (*threnos*), there is a noticeable discrepancy between the praxis of the age and its poetic representation. Solon's laws, issued to avoid inordinate forms of mourning, clashed with the tendency, on the part of tragic heroes, to be excessive even in their grieving.[15] The Sophoclean Electra, whose prolonged wailing is at odds with Clytemestra's contemptuous attitude towards mourning, and Admetus in Euripides's *Alcestis* are emblematic of this inclination. Yet, such interesting cues are already present in Aeschylus.

In the *kommos* of Aeschylus's *Persians* (908-1077), which is in itself a long lamentation sung by the chorus for the defeat against the Greeks, we can spot, especially in the finale, some reminiscences of a funerary procession, which attribute to the lament a form recalling funeral mores.[16] The chorus themselves assert the barbaric, Eastern nature of the *threnos* they are intoning, and their consequent foreignness to the Greek world:

935-40   πρόσφθογγον σοι †νόστου τὰν†
           κακοφάτιδα βοάν, κακομέλετον ἰὰν
           Μαριανδυνοῦ θρηνητῆρος
           πέμψω πέμψω πολύδακρυν.

[In response to your return I shall send forth, send forth with many tears to shout of woeful words, the cries of woeful thoughts of a Mariandynian dirge-singer. (trans. by A.H. Sommerstein)]

The Greek style of lamentation differs from the Persian one, in that the Greek style was regulated by a certain self-control and measure, even in codified forms. Another feature that we may infer from the language and gestures employed by the Persians in their wailing is a succession of feminine behaviours. These include the use of the term γόος and other derived words (1047 διαίνομαι γοεδνὸς ὤν "I wet my cheeks in mourning", 1050 ἐπορθίαζέ νυν γόοις "Now raise a high-pitched wail", 1057 ἄπριγδ' ἄπριγδα, μάλα γοεδνά "With clenched hands, with clenched hands, very mournfully!"), the beating of their chests and heads (1046 ἔρεσσ' ἔρεσσε καὶ στέναζ' ἐμὴν χάριν "Row, row with your arms, and groan for my sake", 1054 καὶ στέρν' ἄρασσε κἀπιβόα τὸ Μύσιον "Beat your breasts too, and accompany the action with a Mysian cry"),

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15. On the lyric form of lamentation, see Alexiou 1974 and Cannatà Fera 1990; on form and function of lamentation in tragedy see Schauer 2002.

16. The metric form is also significant: the *kommos* opens with the anapaests recited by Xerxes and goes on with the chorus's intervention (922) which also includes lyric anapaests. This alternating of anapaestic sequences, recited and lyric, is typical of those parts of the tragedy in which "the emotional level fluctuates" (West 1982: 122). Similar examples can be found in Electra's lament in Soph. *El.* 86ff. or in Creusa's lamentation in Eur. *Ion.* 859-922, as well as in Heracles's death scene in Soph. *Trach.* 971-1003.

the plucking of their hair (1062 καὶ ψάλλ᾽ ἔθειραν καὶ κατοίκτισαι στρατόν "And pluck your hair, and voice your pity for the army"; replaced by beards in 1056 καί μοι γενείου πέρθε λευκήρη τρίχα "Now, please, ravage the white hairs of your beard") and the tearing of their clothes (1060 πέπλον δ᾽ ἔρεικε κολπίαν ἀκμῇ χερῶν "Tear the folds of your robe with your hands").[17]

In the *kommos* of the Aeschylean *Agamemnon* the chorus painfully ask themselves who will take care of Agamemnon's burial and perform the funerary rites accompanying them with an adequate lamentation (1541 τίς ὁ θάψων νιν; τίς ὁ θρηνήσων "Who will bury him? Who will sing his lament?"). Then, addressing his murderer, Clytemestra, they express their fear that she will be the one and wonder who will deliver the eulogy at the grave, as this person would need to show a sincere disposition and shed real tears:

> 1548-50 τίς δ᾽ ἐπιτύμβιον αἶνον ἐπ᾽ ἀνδρὶ θείῳ
> σὺν δακρύοις ἰάπτων
> ἀληθείᾳ φρενῶν πονήσει;

> [Who that utters praises over the tomb of a godlike man, accompanied by tears, will do that task with sincerity of heart? (trans. by A.H. Sommerstein)]

These references evoke real funerary customs. In addition to this, a proper directory of mourning practices is supplied by the *parodos* of *Choephoroi*: the bystanders should offer libations, beat and scratch their faces, and tear their robes.

Similar instructions about ritual lamentation are confirmed by the chorus of Euripides's *Orestes* who prematurely bemoan the prospective deaths of Orestes and Electra by cheek scratching, head beating, and self-mutilation. The praxis is sealed by gnomic considerations about the frailty and unpredictability of human destiny:

> 976-81 ἰώ, ὦ πανδάκρυτ᾽ἐφαμέρων
> ἔθνη πολύπονα, λεύσσεθ᾽ ὡς παρ᾽ ἐλπίδας
> μοῖρα βαίνει.
> ἕτερα δ᾽ ἕτερον ἀμείβεται
> πήματ᾽ ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ
> βροτῶν δ᾽ ὁ πᾶς ἀστάθμητος αἰών.

> [Ah, ah, you race of mortals, full of tears, trouble-laden, see how fate defeats your expectations! Different woes come by turns to different men over the length of days, and beyond our power to reckon is the whole course of human life. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

In the *kommos* of Sophocles's *Electra* (86-253), during the exchange between Electra and the chorus of Mycenaean women, the latter often draw on a

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17. The translation of the quoted passages is by A.H. Sommerstein.

repertory of funereal consolations. The conflict is about the manner in which they should voice their lament: while Electra does not want to contain her grief, indulging in the excesses of a disorderly lamentation, the chorus urge her not to isolate herself from the rest of the world in her wild and uncontrollable mourning; see 153-5:

> οὔτοι σοὶ μούνᾳ,
> τέκνον, ἄχος ἐφάνη βροτῶν,
> πρὸς ὅ τι σὺ τῶν ἔνδον εἶ περισσά.

[Not to you alone among mortals, my child, has sorrow been made manifest, a sorrow that you suffer beyond others in the house. (trans. by H. Lloyd-Jones)]

The call for moderation, which had fallen on deaf ears in the *kommos*, is reiterated at ll. 1171-3:

> θνητοῦ πέφυκας πατρός, Ἠλέκτρα, φρόνει·
> θνητὸς δ' Ὀρέστης· ὥστε μὴ λίαν στένε·
> πᾶσιν γὰρ ἡμῖν τοῦτ' ὀφείλεται παθεῖν.

[You are the child of a mortal father, Electra, remember, and Orestes was mortal; so do not lament too much! (trans. by H. Lloyd-Jones)]

In Euripides's *Alcestis*, the chorus confront Admetus for being excessive in mourning his dead spouse. At first they try and comfort him by reminding him that his misfortune is not an isolated one and that all men share the same destiny of death:

> 416-9   Ἄδμητ', ἀνάγκη τάσδε συμφορὰς φέρειν·
> οὐ γάρ τι πρῶτος οὐδὲ λοίσθιος βροτῶν
> γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἤμπλακες· γίγνωσκε δὲ
> ὡς πᾶσιν ἡμῖν κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται.

[Admetus, you must endure this misfortune. For you are not the first or last of mortals to lose a noble wife. Know that death is a debt we all must pay. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

Afterwards they suggest a positive and decidedly normative paradigm that shows how to bear bereavement in a composed and acceptable way:

> 903-10   ἐμοί τις ἦν
> ἐν γένει, ᾧ κόρος ἀξιόθρη-
> νος ὤλετ' ἐν δόμοισιν
> μονόπαις· ἀλλ' ἔμπας
> ἔφερε κακὸν ἅλις, ἄτεκνος ὤν,
> πολιὰς ἐπὶ χαίτας
> ἤδη προπετὴς ὢν
> βιότου τε πόρσω.

[I had a kinsman whose son, full worthy to lament, perished at home, an only child. But still, he bore his sorrow in measure, though he was without an heir and already sunk down toward gray old age and far on in years. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

The interaction between the pragmatic dimension of the *threnos*, which has in the epitaph its material *pendant*, and the tragic choral song finds its fullest realization in the lines in which the chorus, after voicing some general gnomic-philosophical considerations and acknowledging the merciless nature of Necessity, imagine Alcestis's funereal epigram. The epigram contains every convention and topos, from the passer-by stopping in front of the sepulchral monument to the farewell formula, from the praise of the deceased to the anticipation of a blissful afterlife:

906-1005   μηδὲ νεκρῶν ὡς φθιμένων χῶμα νομιζέσθω
          τύμβος σᾶς ἀλόχου, θεοῖσι δ' ὁμοίως
          τιμάσθω, σέβας ἐμπόρων.
          καί τις δοχμίαν κέλευ-
          θον ἐμβαίνων τόδ' ἐρεῖ·
          αὕτα ποτὲ προύθαν' ἀνδρός,
          νῦν δ' ἔστι μάκαιρα δαίμων·
          χαῖρ', ὦ πότνι', εὖ δὲ δοίης.
          τοῖαί νιν προσεροῦσι φῆμαι.

[Let not the grave of your wife be regarded as the funeral mound of the dead departed but let her be honored as are the gods, an object of reverence to the wayfarer. Someone walking a winding path past her tomb shall say, 'This woman died in the stead of her husband, and now she is a blessed divinity. Hail, Lady, and grant us your blessing!' With such words will they address her. (trans. by D. Kovacs)]

Conclusion

These examples, chosen for their representativeness, have been selected with the intention to offer an account, albeit partial, of a tangled and composite reality. Our aim has been to show how the tragic choruses, acting as bearers of definite conventions and motifs, mirror and, in a way, perpetuate pre-existent lyric genres. Thanks to their ties to a specific *Sitz im Leben*, these genres crossed and interacted with pragmatic realities, deeply rooted in Greek culture.

    Once inserted in the fabric of tragedy, the lyric elements were necessarily denaturalized and deprived of the context for which they had been conceived.[18] Thus, they relinquished the role they had hitherto played in ritual praxis and

18. This aspect has been efficaciously foregrounded by Rodighiero, who pointed out how "[t]he potential codes of a genre are necessarily de-contextualised every time they are grafted on a tragedy" (2012: 9).

delegated the task of recreating this function to a new setting, a new performing situation (either a drama festival or a single performance), and new actors, that is, a tragic chorus or, alternatively, the characters of the tragedy. This redirecting of their function very much depended on the ability of the playwright to attract the attention of the audience towards particular expectations of an audience already absorbed by the dramatic action. Modern readers are free to speculate on the import and success of each of these *literary* operations, always keeping in mind that the risk of attaching excessive significance to the presence of lyric elements in the tragedies is directly proportional to their opaqueness. Even relatively clear coordinates, as those shown in the quoted examples, do not allow us to be reasonably sure that only the most perceptive people who sat in the audience would devote our same attention to these phenomena. However, because of their very nature, they could at times kindle some univocal lyric reminiscences through the inclusion of the least and yet most powerful poetic device, such as the paeanic refrain ἰήιε Παιάν ("O Healer"). Nevertheless, from another point of view, the choral parts were sometimes so firmly tied to the economy of a drama that even a whole song would not suffice to make their lyric legacy recognizable.

English translation by Carlo Vareschi

Abbreviations

PMGF   Davies, Malcom (ed.) (1991) *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: Alcman Stesichorus Ibycus*, post Denys L. Page, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991, vol. 1.

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Men or Animals? Metamorphoses and Regressions of Comic Attic Choruses: the Case of Aristophanes's *Wealth*

Abstract

This article starts from a reconsideration of the different theories that, since the last decades of the nineteenth century onwards, have discussed the issue of origins of the animal choruses disseminated in the comic Attic production of the fifth and fourth century BC. Nonetheless, it refrains from advancing solutions to a question which is destined to remain open, as well as from scrutinizing the more significant peculiarities of the choruses from the surviving and fragmentary plays by Aristophanes and other comedians of *archaia* and *mese*. It focuses instead on a particular case, the *parodos* of *Wealth* (*Plutus*), the last surviving comedy by Aristophanes, where a human chorus of old farmers temporarily regresses to a grotesquely wild animal state: a phenomenon which carries interesting implications for the metamorphic potentialities shown by an Attic comic chorus in an age of transition from *archaia* to *mese*.

The issue of the origin of the animal choruses disseminated in the comic Attic production of the fifth and fourth century BC has always attracted the interest of scholars for the variety of historical, iconographic, literary, performance-related, as well as ritual, and even anthropological perspectives that it opens on the theatrical phenomenon in the ancient world. Such critical interest and responsiveness have also been demonstrated by the publication (with an interval of almost forty years between them) of two monographs specifically dedicated to this topic by Grigoris M. Sifakis (1971) and Kenneth Rothwell Jr. (2007). Albeit methodologically different in their approach and coming to different results, these studies contributed to re-establish the centrality of this issue in the critical debate on Attic comedy. Sifakis's enquiry represents

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the first systematic investigation of the nature and genesis of theriomorphic choruses in relation to the origins of ancient Attic comedy and its canonical structural nucleus, the parabasis. Although his starting point is the reconsideration of the best-known interpretative theories about animal choruses, he actually focuses his analysis on the evaluation of the few objective data that we can derive from Attic vascular iconography and from the fragmentarily surviving comic production of the *archaia*. If on the one hand, this kind of choruses appear between the forties of the fifth century[1] and the early decades of the fourth, on the other hand, the iconographic presence of animal choruses occupies a limited time-span, between the second half of the sixth century and the first two decades of the fifth (that is, meaningfully in advance of the official acknowledgment of comedy in the programme of the *Dionysia* in 486 BC). Rothwell's viewpoint is completely different. Starting from a revision of the documentation coming both from Attic ceramics and comedies, he aims at demonstrating that: 1) the presence of animals in comedies, be they hybrid creatures (like men-bulls or satyr-roosters), 'amphibians' (like dolphins, having a double aquatic and mammal nature) or real animals, like horses or ostriches, ridden by men (in a way, hybrids themselves) did not allude to the state of nature but rather to the symbolic journey of humans from primitivism to civilization; 2) the phenomenon must be traced back to the sphere of the aristocratic symposium: an assumption that clearly implies a drastic re-evaluation of the cultic-ritualistic element generally predominant in the traditional interpretation. Indeed, the most prevalent theory identifies animal choruses with theriomorphic demons linked to totemic earth-fertility rites,[2] in which such choruses were hardly distinguishable from the procession of satyrs and *sileni* (somehow also theriomorphic) usually connected with the Dionysian cult.[3] A second theory reduces the *kômoi* of zoomorphic 'demons'

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1. The only possible, and yet problematic, precedent would be the one of Magnes's choruses. According to the scholiasts, the participles in Aristoph. *Eq.* 522-3 would refer either to the title of his comedies (including three with an animal chorus, *Birds*, *Gall-Flies* and *Frogs*) or to their peculiar performative aspects, which probably envisaged the presence of the playwright himself as an actor (see Imperio 2004: 188 f.)

2. This interpretation can be linked to the hypothesis early formulated, among the others, by Cook (1894), Eitrem (1936), Gelzer (1960: 230, n. 2), Pickard-Cambridge (1962: 152), and later resumed by Lawler (1965: 58-73) and Ghiron-Bistagne (1976: 259-62).

3. This hypothesis, originally suggested by Poppelreuter (1893: 16), and substantially shared by Kranz (1919), Herter (1947: 32-3) and Giangrande (1963: 12, 21-3), defines the Dionysian phallophoric and ithyphallic processions as zoomorphic *kômoi*: that is to say, enacted by a chorus performing mimetic dances disguised as animals. This position has been later radically challenged by Reich (1903: 480-3), who denied every link between the theriomorphic choruses and the primeval totemic animal dances. According to him, this relationship could be traced back to the single actors, the only ones who bore the fertility symbol of the phallus and therefore had demonic connotations.

to ritual processions of beggars, in which the participants, accompanied by animals or provided with animal attributes, solicited gifts by alternately flattering and insulting the bystanders. This practice reminds of the one carried out in Rhodes and documented by Athenaeus (VIII 360b-d) and Hesychius (κ 3747 Latte e χ 324 Hansen-Cunningham). Singing petitioners went about to collect alms 'for the Crow' or 'for the Swallow', and were consequently identified as κορωνισταί and χελιδονισταί.[4] Hence derives Paul Mazon's combinatory hypothesis. Mazon tries to bring together beggars' processions and totemic rituals by imagining the presence of groups of young people who would tour villages soliciting gifts and improvising drolleries and jokes; they would hold little animals (birds or fish) in their hands or would sometimes disguise themselves as animals, "imitant ainsi sans le savoir de vieux *cômoi* rituels, restes de cultes zôomorphiques où les fidèles s'assimilaient au dieu qu'ils célébraient" (Mazon 1951: 15) ["imitating unawares the old ritual *kômoi*, that is, the remains of zoomorphic cults in which the faithful identified themselves with the god they celebrated"].

In the eighth chapter of his book, Sifakis pointed out the shortcomings of these otherwise thought-provoking interpretations. His conclusion reads:

> None of these theories is satisfactory – though they are not useless either. Their inadequacy is due to the scarcity of facts, which are combined and arranged in a scheme imposed by the application of a principle (e.g. totemism) or a more inclusive theory about animal cults, the nature of primitive animal dances, or the origins of comedy. Their value lies in their pointing out many possibilities of interpretation. But their variety shows how inconclusive the evidence is. (1971: 85)

As regards Rothwell's enquiry, it has been already remarked how it supplies an original and stimulating contribution to the evaluation of the phenomenon of animal choruses, provided that the albeit plausible prospect of an archaizing reinvention of the aristocratic komastic-symposial tradition is not perceived as an 'ideologically' and politically oriented reproposal of the original combination symposium-upper class. Such coupling would prove mechanic as much as misleading, especially when referred to the Athenian society of the late fifth century (see Imperio 2010). As several scholars have remarked,[5] in this historic phase the symposium, and with greater reason the *kômos*, was not an exclusively aristocratic event anymore. Lower class citizens had access to it, had grown familiar with this form of entertainment and were therefore perfectly able to grasp the main points of the most famous symposial scenes in Aristophanes's comedies.

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4. This supposition, originally introduced by Radermacher (1954: 7-9), has been later favourably re-considered, among the others, by Pickard-Cambridge (1962: 155-6; see also 159 for Webster's criticism on it).

5. See, for instance, Pütz 2007.

This contribution will refrain from advancing solutions to a question inherently destined to remain open, as well as from scrutinizing the more significant peculiarities of the choruses from the surviving and fragmentary plays by Aristophanes and other playwrights of *archaia* and *mese*. These peculiarities have already triggered accurate inquiries dealing with the existence (or co-existence) and nature of: a) possible direct or indirect relations between comic texts and vascular paintings; b) recognizable polarities in the dramatic treatment of the animals-*choreutae*, whose features are sometimes clearly defined as theriomorphic or, alternatively, anthropomorphic, and are sometimes characterized as hybrid and ambiguous, thus representing the whole range between a wild state and a civilised, advanced one; c) the never-ending dialectics between the issues of power, violence, and oppression and the ones of cohesion, solidarity and shared ideals, interests, and goals that inform plots and themes of the comedies that include an animal chorus; d) the subversively utopian-surreal intents and the antithetical realistic-satirical projections which probably inspired the playwrights with the idea of putting on the comic scene, making the different (and never human) choruses act, speak, dance, and sing, either in respect or in antagonism to the several ethological rules presiding over the natural behaviour of the various animal species.

We will focus instead on a single case: the chorus of *Wealth* (*Plutus*), which constitutes a unique example in the surviving comic production. In the course of the *parodos* (its only meaningful apparition is at ll. 253-301), this chorus seems to undergo a degrading metamorphosis in which the human *choreutae* regress to an animal state. Whether this is a case of a 'regressive metamorphosis' and to what extent it operates will be the topic of our discussion.

Following a mode already employed by Aristophanes in the *parodoi* of *Knights* (ll. 242-77) and *Peace* (ll. 296-345), the chorus appear on the stage, and immediately engage in the action, after an actor has summoned them by means of conflict, as in the *Knights*, or dialogue, as in *Peace* and *Wealth*. This typology of *parodos*[6] is characterized by a plea for help. Metrically marked by a switching from the iambic trimeters of the prologue to the catalectic trochaic tetrameters in the *Knights* and in *Peace*, and to the catalectic iambic tetrameters in *Wealth*, in which this change is even more emphatically marked by the chorus accessing an empty stage, this appeal is delivered by a character already present in the prologue (see *Eq.* 242-46; *Pax* 296-300) and is addressed to the chorus in order to involve them in the comic action. Relying on the

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6. Following the codification suggested by Zimmermann (1985: 29-33); see also Zimmermann 1984: 14-17 now in Segal 1996: 183-6, and, with regard to the *parodoi* of *Knights, Peace* and *Wealth*, 1985: 57-64).

oracle of Apollo (ll. 40-3; ll. 212 f.), the rustic Chremylus has taken home the blind Plutus promising to help him regain his sight, so that wealth may be fairly distributed. Unlike the events in the *Knights* and in *Peace,* the chorus's help is not invoked by the main character, but by his slave, Cario, who has been charged with summoning the poor peasants (ξυγγέωργοι, l. 223) from the fields. In *Wealth* the *Hilferuf* ('plea for help') to the chorus is better motivated than in the *Knights* and in *Peace*, thus foreshadowing a tendency attested in the *mese*, where the alien and unreal presence of the chorus sometimes needs to be justified. Here the chorus is formed by humble, hardworking (see ll. 219-24, 281 f., 627 f.) elder peasants, natural allies to the main character; they carry on with their frugal existence by labouring in the fields and harvesting nothing but thyme (ll. 252, 283), and that is why Plutus's healing is expected to bring wealth to everyone (ll. 627-40).

After such a well-motivated entry and well-defined identity, one would expect the chorus to play a decisive role in the realization of Chremylus's scheme. Yet, these expectations go unfulfilled: the *parodos* is followed by a quick exchange with Chremylus, who comes back on stage to greet the chorus affectionately and renew his request for help; on his part the coryphaeus confirms his willingness to stand by him and fight together as aggressively as Ares (ll. 322-31). However, *Wealth*'s *choreutae* appear in fact only as passive recipients of a new state of things that the main character alone would achieve (see ll. 221-6, 262 f.). After the *parodos*, the chorus limit themselves to a short exchange with the actors (in iambic trimeters, ll. 328-31, 631 f.), to the *katakeleusmós* of the agon (487 f.), to an explosion of joy at the news of Plutus's recovery (in dochmiacs, ll. 637, 639 f.), and to the announcement of the end of the comedy (ll. 1208 f.).[7] Only forty-six out of 1209 lines are assigned to the chorus. Here, as well as in the *Assemblywomen,* the annotation χοροῦ (or κομμάτιον χοροῦ) – repeatedly attested by the Ravennas and/or by the Venetus, as well as by Byzantine scholia and manuscripts, and, as for ll. 958 f., by *POxy.* 4521 –[8] does not signal the parabasis and the post-parabatic songs but marks the presence of interludes that partly contribute to reconstruct a division of the comedy into five acts.[9]

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7. The statement δεῖ γὰρ κατόπιν τούτων [τούτοις R] ᾄδοντας ἕπεσθαι at l. 1209 – as already hypothesized by Meineke (1860: II, xxxii) – seems to introduce a song of exodus on the part of the chorus. This follows a manner well documented in the finale of *Acharnians* and *Lysistrata*, where the chorus is given strict directions about the oncoming κῶμος (see *Ach.* 1233 f.; *Lys.* 1320 f.). For a general commentary on the choral songs in the *exodoi* of *Lysistrata*, *Peace, Birds, Assemblywomen, Wasps* and *Frogs,* see Calame 2004: 157-84.

8. For further details on the exact position and the disputed nature of these annotations, see Imperio 2011: 121 f., 131-42.

9. Although differently formulated, this hypothesis has been acknowledged by Sommerstein (1984: 140-4) and Hamilton (1991: 352 f.). It appears unnecessary to postulate, with Bergk (1857: 2,

However, it has been rightly pointed out that

> After trimeters 328-31, the coryphaeus's activity is slighter but more sustained …. The characters also focus their attention fairly constantly on the chorus and the coryphaeus: apart from 627-30, 802-22, 959-61 and 1171, addressed to the chorus, see the indirect mention of the chorus and the coryphaeus in 341 and 641. One should note that this did not take place in *Assemblywomen*, where the chorus is remembered in the finale alone. In *Plutus*, therefore, the treatment of the chorus is more coherent: whilst it may be more modest, it has found a new equilibrium. (Russo 1994: 231)

As scholars have frequently conjectured, the question arises of whether this peculiar way of dealing with the chorus could carry possible traces of the homonymous lost comedy staged by Aristophanes in 408 BC (that is, twenty years before), of which the surviving *Plutus* is sometimes believed to be no more than a rewriting.[10]

At the beginning of the *parodos*, Cario, inviting the chorus to hasten, has a chance to clearly define their identity: "You, who have often fed on the same thyme as my master, friends, labour-loving fellow countrymen, come on, be quick, hurry up: this is not the time to be slow, this is the crucial moment when your helping presence is needed" (ll. 253-6). Following a dramatic model recurring in the tragic *parodoi* (see Pattoni: 1989) the *choreutae* rush sympathetically at Chremylus's call: they have often shared their thyme with him (l. 253), meaning that they are poor peasants as he is (l. 224). Being Chremylus's friends and fellow-villagers (see δημόται, l. 254, repeated afterwards by Chremylus at l. 322, in clear connection with Cario's *Hilferuf* when introducing them on the stage), they share his love of fatigue (ll. 252 f., 282 f.); therefore, their willingness to assist the main character is naturally and deeply connected with their condition. Chremylus calls them "collaborators" (συμπαραστάται, l. 326) and "true rescuers of the god" (σωτῆρες ὄντως τοῦ θεοῦ, l. 327). However, as he has declared when addressing the god at ll. 218-21, they look forward to becoming rich and respected ξύμμαχοι. How much their intervention is expected to be at least potentially decisive can be clearly inferred by the pressing request with which Cario entreats them to hasten to bring help "in the present situation" (παρόντ' ἀμύνειν, l. 256), "in the crucial moment" (ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀκμῆς, l. 256). This sympathetic disposition is shared by this chorus and by those of Aristophanes's three 'feminine' comedies: the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the most intrinsically 'choral' of his surviving plays,[11] *Assemblywomen*,[12] and *Lysistrata*.

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324), a choral interlude after l. 1170, not mentioned in any manuscript, nor in the Triclinian metric scholia; about this issue, see Sommerstein (2001: 213 f.).

10. This supposition has been brought forward by MacDowell (1995: 324-7) and partially maintained by Henderson (2002: 415), while Sommerstein (2001: 28-33) opposed it following Rogers (1907: vii-xiii).

11. Also from a stage perspective (Russo 1994: 192).

12. On the 'feminine choralism' of *Assemblywomen* and particularly on the close relationship

In this last play the semi-chorus of old women, although not summoned by the protagonist, rush to the Acropolis to help her and the other women who are there entrenched.[13] This characteristic is also partially present in the choruses of *Wasps*[14] and *Peace*. In the latter, the composite, and yet fluid identity of the PanHellenic chorus[15] does not prevent us from recognizing the peasants as Trygaeus's main interlocutors. Facing the sluggishness and reluctance of some of them (ll. 464-66, 478-80, 481 f., 484, 491-3, 500-7), the protagonist ends up by openly and effectively addressing his plea for help precisely to them (ll. 508-11); he argues that being peasants, just like him, they are directly, if not exclusively, concerned with the end of the war (l. 509) and, indeed, they will be the ones rescuing the goddess, as clearly stated at l. 511.

As Bernhard Zimmermann has pointed out, in the dialogue section of the *parodos* of *Wealth* (ll. 253-89, and in particular ll. 279-89), we can trace a relic of *Streitszene* ('quarrel scene'). This is how Cario addresses the coryphaeus:

> A plague on you! you are a shameless knave at heart, you are fooling us and do not even take the trouble to explain us why your master has made us come. Although we had put up with weariness and did not have time to waste, we came here willing to help, and hurriedly traversed fields full of thyme roots.

Even before (at ll. 260, at 268, and eventually at 271 f.) the *choreutae* had also pestered the slave with questions, while he persisted in his reticent insolence about the reason for such a hasty call; at ll. 275 f., they ended up by threatening him to use the walking sticks they difficultly prop themselves on and to put him in chains. Evidently the *choreutae* do not grasp the elaborate wit that Cario employs to carry on with his buffoonery. He makes them foresee a prospective

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between the chorus, essential to the accomplishment of the main character's project, and the 'comic theme', see Imperio 2011: 114-20.

13. See in particular ll. 331b-335 where the semi-chorus of Old Women peremptorily asserts "ταῖς ἐμαῖς δημότισιν ... βοηθῶ", while hastening to bring water in order to save the women from the fire set up by the men: a purpose later explicitly confirmed by the coryphaea at ll. 539 f. ("ταῖς φίλαις συλλάβωμεν").

14. Here the chorus of old dicasts, summoned by Philocleon, do not acknowledge his *Hilferuf,* but enter the stage much later and of their own will, when, at l. 230, they call on him on their way to the tribunal.

15. At the beginning the chorus is an undifferentiated Panhellenic group ("ὦ Πανέλληνες", l. 302), in which various professions (peasants, merchants, and craftsmen: see ll. 296 f.) and 'ethnicities' (metics, foreigners, and islanders, see ll. 297 f.) are easily recognizable; they later become a homogeneous company of Athenians (ll. 349-57), only to turn PanHellenic again (that is, citizens coming from different Greek cities: Boeotians, Spartans, Argives, Megarians, Athenians, see ll. 464-507) at the disinterring of Eirene's statue. From l. 508 onwards ("only the peasants remain", and it is unclear whether they are Attic or generically Greek peasants), the chorus acquire the dramatic identity of Attic countrymen. As for the contentious dramatic proceeding that brings the peasants to separate, even visually, from the rest of the chorus after l. 508, see Cassio (1985: 76), and Sommerstein (2005: xviii f.).

wealth worthy of Midas – donkey's ears included – and evokes the myth of the king's extraordinary riches, also ironically alluding to his sad destiny of starvation, directly caused by the privilege of turning into gold everything he touched.[16] It is worth mentioning that the donkey's ears,[17] regarded by some as the legacy of Midas's former status as a sylvan theriomorphic demon,[18] would become a canonical literary and iconographic attribute of the Phrygian king precisely because of this Aristophanic reference.[19] Moreover, they introduce a ferine trait in the characterization of the *choreutae*; this beast-like feature, further enhanced by the 'mimetic' confrontation in the following amœbaean song, resounds of the insulting animal apostrophes which were typical of satyr choruses.[20]

Originally shifting from the comic pattern of the inverted slave-master relationship, the *choreutae*'s distrust for the promises made by Cario (l. 289) – who is both the prototype of the insolent slave and the double and mouthpiece of his master, Chremylus – is counterbalanced by his own cunning. Cario repeatedly mocks and, if only temporarily, belittles the chorus members, but when he tells them that Pluto is soon going to make them rich (ll. 284 f.), the peasants cannot hide their unrestrained enthusiasm and openly assert their willingness to dance ("ὡς ἥδομαι καὶ τέρπομαι καὶ βούλομαι χορεῦσαι / ὑφ' ἡδονῆς κτλ"). In that, they follow a mode which is also present in the *parodos* of *Peace* (ll. 335 f.), where the coryphaeus declares: "I rejoice, I am happy, I fart and laugh for I escaped the shield, even more than if I had stripped myself of

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16. A similar confrontational dynamics is also recognizable in the *parodos* of *Knights*, in which, however, the chorus's hostility is not directed at the character who summons them on stage (that is, the Sausage-Seller) but at the one the chorus are meant to help, Paphlagon. They see him as an enemy both to them and to the Sausage-Seller, with whom they instinctively sympathize (see ll. 258-77; Zimmermann 1985: 12). Zimmermann singles out traces of *Streithandlung* ('acted quarrel') also in *Peace*, in which Trygaeus's disapproval (see ll. 309 f., 318 f., 321 f., 326, 328, 330, 333, and 339 f.) of the chorus's exuberant behaviour (see, in particular, ll. 301-8, 311 f., 316 f., 320 f., 324 f., and 334-6) implies a contrast, feeble and short-lived as it may be, between the character and the chorus: here, however, the sense of solidarity and common purpose between them is soon apparent (see ll. 339-45, and especially ll. 367-70), also as a result of Trygaeus's prompt revelation of the enterprise to come which the chorus immediately recognizes as a shared goal. On the various ironic implications of Cario's reference to the mythical king Midas and his morbid relationship with wealth, see Torchio (2001: 146 f.), with bibliography.

17. Perhaps, as hypothesized by Rogers (1907: 33), actors performing Cario hinted at them with a mocking gesture on stage.

18. See, for example, Kroll (1932: 1531).

19. See Miller (1997: 846); Miller specifically disagrees with the hypothesis of theriomorphic origin of this character's iconography (850).

20. See Aesch. *Diktyoulkoi* (*Net-Haulers*) 775 (κνωδάλοις); Soph. *Ichneutai* (*Tracking Satyrs*) 147, 221, 153 (θῆρες, θηρία); Eur. *Cycl.*, 624 (θῆρες); and see Zagagi (1999: 190, n. 28).

the skin of old age" ("ἥδομαι γάρ, καὶ γέγηθα καὶ πέπορδα καὶ γελῶ / μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ γῆρας ἐκδὺς ἐκφυγὼν τὴν ἀσπίδα").[21]

In the *parodos* of *Plutus*, the same *topos* of the joyful rejuvenation we find in the *parodos* of *Peace* is shaped as an implicit echo of the motif of the gait which old age has made slow and hesitating, and consequently unable to keep up with the wish to take part actively in the action.[22] This topic, often employed by the comic choruses of old men,[23] is related to the sorrowful lamentation for the loss of youth sung by the choruses of elders in satyr and tragic *parodoi*.[24] With regard to this particular aspect, the entrance of Silenus, father of satyrs, in Sophocles's *Ichneutai* (*Tracking Satyrs*) proves especially meaningful. He appears running, or better, moving "at the pace an old man is allowed to" (l. 47), enticed as he is by the handsome reward Apollo promised to anyone who would give him back the cows that Hermes has stolen. Similarly, in *Wealth*'s *parodos*, the satyrs are allured by the promise of a μισθός. This μισθός will be a double one of gold (l. 51) and freedom (l. 63) to which the satyrs themselves allude while reciprocally urging to start the research (ll. 65-78) and finally enacting a quest scene triggered by an authentic commercial bargaining with Apollo.[25]

However, it is apparent that, together with these outbursts of joy, the mimetic and unrestrained danced movements, previously announced and commented upon in the lyric section of this *parodos*, also played a major role in reviving, even visually, the traditional *topos* of rejuvenation. In my opinion, a meaningful evidence of this aspect is provided by Attic pre-dramatic iconography. In particular, a black-figured *skyphos*, probably coming from the

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21. This modality recalls the self-referential expressions of joy and grief employed by tragic choruses in order to show either their willingness or refusal to dance; these authentic declarations of independence, even of defiance, on the chorus's part are discussed by Henrichs (1994/95: 56-111) in a well-known essay entitled after the famous τί δεῖ με χορεύειν in Soph. *OT* 896 ("why should I dance?"). See also Henrichs 1996: 58, where the occurrence in *Wealth* is mentioned as the last known appearance of the dramatic chorus's *Selbreflexivität* ('self-reflexivity'). For a general commentary on the relationship between self-referentiality and rituality in the performances of the comic, tragic, and satyr choruses, see Bierl (2001: 37-86).

22. See, in particular, the repetition of the adverb προθύμως ('zealously', 'actively') in *Wealth*. Used by the coryphaeus (ll. 257, 282) and by Chremylus (l. 324), it refers in both cases to the *choreutae* (see προθύμως in *Pax* 301).

23. See Aristoph. *Ach.* 210-22, *Vesp.* 230-9, *Lys.* 254 f. However, in these contexts the request to hasten is voiced by the coryphaeus himself.

24. The best-known examples are probably to be found in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Heracles*: as for the latter, see in particular Pattoni (1989: 43, n. 19). See also Euripides *Cresphontes* fr. 448a Kannicht (see Cropp 1997: 140ff., *ad* Eur. *Cresph.* fr. 448a Kannicht, ll. 110-12). On the presence of paratragic patterns of βοήθεια and βοηδρομία in *Wealth*'s parodos see also Pagni (2013: esp. 189-96).

25. Following a pattern recognized as typical of comedy, especially of *nea* and *palliata*, but not extraneous to *archaia* (Zagagi 1999: 182-4).

Figure 1: *Skyphos*, Thebes 342 (side B). Courtesy of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Boeotia.

area of Tanagra[26] and dated between 530 and 510 BC and anyway not earlier than the first two decades of the fifth century,[27] shows (Figure 1) the acrobatic exhibition of a group of old men, probably *choreutae*, who, led by an *auletes*, dance standing on their heads. This suggests a performing situation which seems quite similar to the one that is conceivable starting from the numerous stage directions of both sung and recited sections of the *parodos* of *Wealth*.

In *Ichneutai*, Silenus censures both the mimetic activities of the satyr *choreutae* and the cowardice they show when hearing the unknown sound of Hermes's cithara; nevertheless, a few lines below (ll. 203-9) in a tightly woven repartee his criticizing will be thrown in his face by the *choreutae* themselves. With regard to this passage, Zagagi (1999: 199-204) has singled out yet another conventional comic technique which closely resembles Trygaeus's rebuke of the *choreutae*' mimetic dances in the *parodos* of *Peace* (ll. 318-36). Trygaeus worries that their joyful cries and unbridled stomping at the news of the forthcoming rescue of Peace may rekindle Polemos and call back Cleon-Cerberus from Hades. A similar dialectic dimension – characterized by a mutual censure of mimetic performances and a repeated reversal of roles and power relationships between the two contenders – can also be found in the lyric section of the *parodos* of *Wealth*, namely in the *Streitamoibaion* ('amœbaean querrel's song'; see Zimmermann 1985: 167 f.), which follows the dialogued section between Cario and the coryphaeus. This lyric quarrel, during which the two antagonists (Cario and the chorus) repeatedly exchange their roles and carry on a mimetic dance accompanied by the onomatopoeic refrain θρεττανελο (ll. 290, 296)[28] and at the same time described by its own

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26. I thank Vassilis Aravantinos who suggested this hypothesis in a letter dated 7 February 2015.
27. See Trendall and Webster 1971: 23, I 13; Green 1985: 102. About this vessel, see also Todisco 2013: 48.
28. As attested by the *scholia* on line 290 (*Sch.* in Aristoph. *Pl. vetera* 290c a, b, g Chantry, *recenti-*

'actors', is composed of two strophic couplets.[29] In the first (ll. 290-5 ~ 296-301), Cario assigns the role of Polyphemus to himself and the one of his flock to the peasants, thus assuming their lead; on their part, they soon turn against him, demanding for themselves the characters of Odysseus and his comrades and thus threatening to blind him. In the second (ll. 302-3 ~ 309-15), he takes over the identity of Circe,[30] attributing the one of pigs to the *choreutae*; he threatens to feed them with a dough of dung he has kneaded with his own hands. When they answer by promising a degrading and paradoxical revenge – that is, to hang the sorceress by her testicles (!) and to besmear 'her' nose with excrements – Cario exits the stage, after urging the chorus to give up the drolleries and to "ἐπ᾽ ἄλλ᾽ εἶδος" (ll. 316-21, "behave differently").[31]

The consonances between the *parodos* of *Wealth* and the satyr genre also appear to be reinforced by the models hidden behind the two strophic couplets of the amœbaean song. Regarding the first, the hypotext has been already identified by the ancient scholiasts in the dithyramb *Cyclops or Galatea* by Philoxenus of Cythera (*PMG* 815-824),[32] which was in its turn clearly based on the model of the homonymous Euripidean satyr drama.[33] As for the second,

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ora 290d-e Chantry, *recentiora* Tzetzes 290, pp. 83a1-84a8, 83b1-84b13 Massa Positano), this expression reproduces the sound of the cithara that Polyphemus plays in the Philoxenus's dithyramb here parodied (see below note 32) to accompany his song to Galatea. On this musical onomatopoeia and on others referring to animal sounds, which are contained in the amœbaean song of *Wealth*'s *parodos*, see Kugelmeier (1996: 257) and Wille (2001: 1, 359 f.). On the distinctly mimetic nature of this amœbaean song and, presumably, of Philoxenus' hypotext, see Koller (1954: 46 ff.), and, more recently, Mureddu (1982-3: 78-84), Dobrov 1997, and De Simone 2006.

29. On this mode of commenting upon the mimetic activities of choruses or of other groups that recurs in the Plautine comedy, well in advance of Augustan pantomime, see Zimmermann 1995; on earlier instances of a similar attitude in Greek comedy, see Rossi 1978 (with special reference to the grotesque mimetic dance of Philocleon in the finale of *Wasps*).

30. Circe is here identified with a famous Corinthian courtesan, romantically tied to Philonides, a rich and fat libertine from the demos Melite (*LGPN* II s.v. Φιλωνίδης, nr. 52, *PAA* nr. 957480). Philonides is repeatedly denounced as graceless, boorish, and ignorant by fifth and fouth-century playwrights, and especially by Plato Comicus (fr. 65.5f. Kassel-Austin), Theopompus (fr. 5 Kassel-Austin), Nichocares (fr. 4 Kassel-Austin), and Philyllius (fr. 22 Kassel-Austin). In the prologue of *Wealth*, he is also the target of ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν ("ridicule by name").

31. For the possible implications of this concise pronouncement, see Imperio 2011: 141.

32. By alluding to the tyrant Dionysius the Elder of Syracuse, probably allegorized by Polyphemus while Odysseus would stand for the playwright himself, this text testifies to the 'anti-Dionysius' climate spreading among the Athenians at the very end of the fourth century (see, in this regard, Anello 1984; Caven 1990: 222-53; Sordi 1992: 83-91, 2003: 267-77; Pizzone 2006: 58-66; on the controversial compositional and performative nature of this text see Hordern 1999: 445-55, with bibliography). On this Philoxenus's dithyramb see now Fongoni 2014: 107-10).

33. "Notables parallélismes" ("notable parallelisms") are detected by Melero Bellido (1997: 333-6), with special regard to the choral description of the scene of the blinding, between the choral song of the Euripidean *Cyclops*, starting at l. 656, and Cario's invocation to the chorus at ll. 253 ff. Note also the wild displays of joy, both sung and danced, by the chorus of *Wealth* in

the individuation of a possible literary antecedent is much more contentious; since the Homeric source never alludes to any form of revenge on Circe, the enchantress, it is much more plausible to suppose (with Di Marco 1994) that Aristophanes drew his inspiration from a scene of coprophagy to be found in the satyr drama that Aeschylus dedicated to the witch of Aeaea.

A degrading swine metamorphosis could indeed be hypothesized also in some other Doric and Attic comedies that in the fifth and fourth centuries focused on the Odyssiac theme: from Dinolochus, who wrote a *Circe or Odysseus*, to Ephippus and Anaxilas, both authors of a *Circe*. In such comedies Odysseus's companions could presumably have played the chorus. Fr. 13 Kassel-Austin of Anaxilas's *Circe* shows a clear reference to the piggy snout, undoubtedly caused by some sorcery that the witch practised in the course of the action, and to the bothersome itching deriving from it. Furthermore, in the Anaxilas's *Calypso*, somebody declares: "I realized I had a piggy snout" (fr. 11 Kassel-Austin).

Both these fragments, which derive from two comedies of the *mese*, as well as the more detailed example provided by the last surviving Aristophanic comedy show some kind of tendency towards zoomorphic mimesis; dignified by being the target of musical and literary parodies and experimentations, this mimetic leaning deeply influenced the aesthetic trends of fourth-century comic theatre,[34] but, as we have already pointed out, must have characterized also the early stages of Attic[35] as well as Doric comedy. To come to a conclusion, in both fourth-century comedies, *Circe* and *Wealth*, the choruses undergo a grotesque animal metamorphosis enacted, if not by actual camouflaging, by means of words, gestures, and mimetic dancing. The gap between these choruses and the anthropomorphizing attitude of the four surviving Aristophanic comedies which include an animal chorus (*Knights*, *Wasps*, *Birds* and *Frogs*) cannot go unnoticed. In these plays, insects or other animals classifiable as 'social' (in an Aristotelian sense) are active on stage, while others, considered to be unjust,

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this *parodos* which is considered "le seul chant pastoral d'Aristophane" ("the only bucolic song of Aristophanes"); see, for example, the participle παρενσαλεύων in *Pl.* 291, reflected in the movements of the satyrs in the *parodos* of the Euripidean drama ἀοιδαῖς βαρβίτων σαυλόμενοι (see l. 40). In a more general sense, a link between the activities of the comic choruses in the sections preceding the *parabasis*, and especially in the *parodos*, and the satyr choruses that, as in the *parodos* of *Cyclops*, "pantomimically imitate the movements of a wild dance" ("ahmen Handlungen in wilden tänzerischen Bewegungen pantomimisch nach") is explicitly pointed out by Bierl (2001: 76-9; the quotation comes from p. 77).

34. On this fundamental aspect of the comic production of the fourth century see especially Nesselrath 1990: 241-80; 1993.

35. Scholars have singled out an ideal *trait d'union* between the κῶμος derived from the chorus of the New Comedy and the κῶμος referable to the early stages of the κωμῳδία (see, in particular, Leo 1908; see also Fantuzzi and Hunter 2011: 407).

violent, wild, or endowed with demonic powers, or 'anti-social', as it were, are excluded. This distance is also reaffirmed by the fragments of lost comedies such as *Beasts* by Crates, *Fishes* by Archippus, and even *Goats* by Eupolis in which the animals, although genetically refractory to civilized behaviour, or organised in self-sufficient and self-referential worlds, speak with human voices and betray an undeniable interest in the typical features of civilization, such as writing, laws, politics, poetry, music, and dance, and feel the urge to recreate some micro-societies.[36]

Following an inverted process of regression to a grotesque animal dimension, another 'minor' chorus, composed of the old peasants of *Wealth*, express an unexpected and unsuspected animality that, in the lyric section of the *parodos*, confers on them a both archaizing[37] and atypically avant-gardist patina, and positions them in a peculiar, or, one could say, liminal state in the transition from *archaia* to *mese*. Such formula, tied to tradition and yet inspired by a daring experimentalism aimed at the future developments of the comic genre, had already been adopted by Aristophanes fifteen years before by exploiting the mimetic potentialities of an intrinsically 'liminal' chorus: the *parachoregema* ('secondary chorus') of *Frogs*.[38]

Men and animals, nature and culture, tradition and innovation: the metamorphic kaleidoscope of Attic comic choruses allows us to catch a glimpse of inexhaustible and unpredictable, although largely and irreparably lost outcomes.

English translation by Carlo Vareschi

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36. Following a dynamics well described by Rothwell 2007.

37. As specifically pointed out by Pickard-Cambridge: "in the Middle and New Comedy the old grotesqueness was soon abandoned, and in so far as choruses appeared they appeared as ordinary human beings" (1962). As regards Aristophanes's late production, Segal (1973: 135 now in 1996: 7) has underlined the greater slowness of this author, if compared to his contemporaries, in evolving towards what is usually defined as 'middle' comedy. For the problems originating from this term in relation to the canonical tripartite classification of Attic comedy, see, among the others, Csapo 2000, with bibliography.

38. On the peculiar nature and disputed presence on the stage of the secondary chorus in *Frogs*, see, among the most recent contributions, Andrisano (2010) and Corbel-Morana (2012: 233-48), with bibliography. As noted by one of my anonymous reviewers, whom I thank for the thought-provoking comments and precious suggestions, I intentionally leave the choice between these two options with the readers: a) identifying – as Bierl (1994) does –a ritual and regressive process in the metamorphosis of *Wealth*'s chorus; b) privileging its parodic and allusive dimension, related to the refined intertextual weaving of comedy, dithyramb and satyr drama that makes for the peculiarity of the regressive metamorphosis itself, and spotting in it the traces of a conscious change and reassessment of the role and function of the chorus in fourth-century comedy. I would prefer the latter hypothesis, although it still needs further study, which I intend to carry on in the future.

Abbreviations

POxy.   Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt et al. (1898-), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, London: Egypt Exploration Fund, then Egypt Exploration Society.

LGPN   *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* I-V.A-B (1987-2013), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

LIMC   *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* I-VIII (1981-1997), Zürich und München; *Indices* 1-2 (1999) Düsseldorf, *Supplementum* I-II [Abellio-Zeus] (2009), Düsseldorf: Artemis.

PAA   Traill, John S. (1994-2012), *Persons of Ancient Athens*, Toronto: Athenians.

PMG   Page, Denys L. (1967), *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

RE   *Paulys Realenciclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg Wissowa, fortgeführt von Wilhelm Kroll und Karl Mittelhaus. Unter Mitwirkung von zahlreicher Fachgenossen, herausgegeben von Konrat Ziegler, abgeschlossen von Hans Gärtner. I Reihe (A-Q), 24 Bände, II Reihe (R-Z), 10 Bände; Supplemente I-XV (1893-1978), Stuttgart-München: Druckenmüller.

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Donatella Restani*

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 "quant-itative 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 instrumenti 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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Chorus and Chorality
in Early Modern English Drama

Abstract

The essay offers a discussion of the progressive divergence, in early modern English drama, of the dramatic function of the chorus from the plural and lyrical performance derived from ancient theatre. Through an analysis of the gradual reduction in number of the performers and the chorus's conflation with prologic and other framing texts in a time span of about fifty years, the essay retraces the gradual steps of the chorus's transformation into an increasingly meta-theatrical piece, depriving the play of an element of lyrical artificiality traditionally attached to it. By showing that this theatrical device does have a history of its own in the English theatre, the essay argues that the loss of its traditional features, which allowed drama to provide a collective and lyrical response to the action enacted on stage, is occasionally made up for by a new and challenging idea of polyphonic chorality dislocated to other dramatic portions. *Romeo and Juliet*, in particular, is examined as an early example of this new choral experience, balancing the meta-theatrical dimension of a lyrico-narrative solo performance of the Chorus, strategically appended to the play as a narrative voice competitive with the representational potential of (lyrical) drama.

— 1 —

When in 1803 Schiller wrote his famous piece on the Greek chorus appending it as a preface to *The Bride of Messina*, British theatres had already been acquainted with this theatrical device for more than two centuries. In that piece, Schiller suggested that, had Shakespeare used the chorus, it would have given his tragedy "its true meaning for the first time" (2015: 155). This claim tacitly assumes that the choruses featuring in the Bard's plays are not choruses at all – at least according to classical standards. Indeed, Shakespeare's handling of this dramatic artifice, like his contemporaries', was not quite what Schiller

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meant by it. If, he argued, the Greek chorus provided the necessary artificiality to break the naturalistic illusion, distract from an ordinary perception of the action as common reality, and thus engage the soul in a higher poetic involvement, Shakespeare's plays, in many if not all respects, did not know it.

In the English drama of the early modern age choruses were often quite unlike their classical predecessors, although we do not fully know how they came to acquire new and multiple guises. We know, however, that from the 1590s onwards they frequently overlapped with prologues, inductions, and epilogues, thus becoming one of the many framing texts common at the time. The numerous stage directions indicating that prologues or epilogues entered as choruses testify to this confusion (see Schneider 2011: Appendix), and it is not accidental that modern critics tend to treat them as virtually interchangeable. Ann Righter, for one, groups them indifferently as "bridges between the two realms of reality and illusion" (1962: 55), and D.J. Palmer recalls that they are "commonly assumed" to share the one and the same function of both conveying "necessary and reliable information" and speaking "on behalf of the play, not at variance from it" (1986: 501). More recently, Stern has pointed out that "prologues, epilogues and choruses sometimes constituted a collection of linked scrolls, so that they were created as a group or lost as a group"; this was "indicated by the habit of writing plays first and epilogues and choruses, as a group, second" (Stern 2009: 109). Besides, they also became contiguous in function, so that they could indifferently be played by the same character (Weimann and Bruster 2004; Stern 2009: 106-7; Schneider 2011).

It is undeniable, however, that, as Schneider has rightly pointed out, "[t]he Chorus in early modern drama shifts its very nature from the Senecan model in such plays as *Gorboduc* to the highly individualized Chorus encountered in *Henry V*" (2011: 49), which is proof that the chorus does have a history of its own. If, as Schneider has remarked, "the standard prologue might be described as one that gains the audience's attention and silence, introduces the play and more or less humbly asks for the spectator's approval, or at least tolerance, for the author's shortcomings and the play's perceived imperfections" (ibid.: 13), then the formal chorus, while occasionally and increasingly sharing these features, is by all means irreducible to the prologue – at least at its inception.

Strictly speaking, choruses, originally, were not identical with prologues or epilogues or other presentational or metadramatic pieces; they conveyed an idea of collective performance, including gesture and melodic speech or song, not implied in other later framing texts of early modern drama. There are scant accounts of how often and in what diverse ways classical plays were mounted during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, but we know that they occasionally were staged. Indirect indication is contained in scattered references to what playing the chorus meant, and this points towards something quite

different from the ancient model of choral dance (χορός), song, and poetical modulations. Only by strict adherence to that model could one deem it extraordinary to hear Ophelia say to Hamlet that he is "as good as a chorus" (3.2.230) when illustrating "*The Mousetrap*" to the court: there is nothing melodious, nor choreographic or highly poetic in his solo performance; and, even before then, it may have sounded equally amazing, by classical standards, to hear Revenge say to Antonio, while sitting as spectators at 'Hieronimo's play', that they could well "serve for chorus in this tragedy" (*The Spanish Tragedy*, 1.1.91).[1] What one was expected to understand from such remarks was a commentary on the play with no actual choral performance being involved.

And yet, in the late sixteenth century formal choruses did persist both in the Senecan translations and in the plays following Latin drama, starting with the first tragedy in blank verse, *Gorboduc* (performed in 1561 at the Inner Temple), and the first amorous tragedy, *Gismond of Salerne* (performed in 1567-68 before the Queen). In such cases, formal choruses introduced a degree of artificiality similar to the one underlined by Schiller with regard to the Greek chorus (a device to erect "a living wall which tragedy draws around itself in order to guard itself from the world of reality", 2015: 149), testifying to the persistence, in a revised form, of that time-honoured classical legacy.

For some time, the two options – the formal chorus in the Senecan style and the chorus as an individual interpretative or narrative 'voice-over' – ran in parallel, at least until the chorus's own new self-aware role was definitely transferred to the threshold of action with an increasingly framing function. From that liminal position, the chorus introduced and interpreted the characters and events of the play or of a dumb show, thus partaking in authorial knowledge, actorial skill, and, in some way, the spectator's own role. This of course meant lifting the veil of fiction with new tools. As far as we know, this meta-theatrical 'in-betweenness' was not alien to the ancient comic chorus,[2] but what is exceptional here is that this is almost exclusively what early modern choruses on the English stages were gradually turned into – with different

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1. On Kyd's appropriation and re-elaboration of the Senecan chorus see Coral Escolá 2007.
2. Reference is to the so-called παράβασις, i.e. the part of the comedy (fifth-century BC) where the members of the Chorus directly addressed the audience showing authorial knowledge. Euripides's plays too present four cases of exodus (in *Hyppolitus*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orestes*, and *Phoenissae*) where they meta-theatrically unveil their authorial awareness, although these passages are often expunged by modern editors as spurious. Cunliffe points out that, in *Phoenissae*, this piece was a "'tag' purporting to be spoken by the Chorus, not in their assumed character as persons in the drama, but in their true character as Athenians contending in a dramatic competition. The tag takes the form of a prayer to Victory, 'O mighty lady, Victory, pervade my life, and cease not to give me crowns'" (1893: 413). However, it must be remarked that this added portion can by no means be authorial.

degrees of integration –,[3] before eventually being silenced. At the same time, experiments with other types of chorality, albeit unusual, were carried out, and this is proof of a need to come to terms with an idea of collective performance which was lost in the chorus, but was vital to the development of a new drama, in several diverse ways and with various functions. At least in one early case, that of *Romeo and Juliet*, this experimentation appears cognate to a particular form of ancient choric expression revised through the filter of contemporary performative and musical paradigms.

What I am interested in here is precisely the transformation, in early modern English drama, of the idea of choral plurality of classical ascendancy into a new oxymoronic idea of choric singularity. I am also intrigued by the relocation of the lost collectiveness and artificial drive of the old chorus to different dramatic positions characterized by an equivalent degree of artificiality. Wagner once wrote that Shakespeare's drama is superior to Greek tragedy precisely because it got rid of the chorus by "resolv[ing it] into diverse individuals directly interested in the Action, and whose doings are governed by precisely the same prompting of individual Necessity as are those of the chief Hero himself" (1995: 60). Like Schiller, he disregarded that choruses do appear in Shakespeare's plays, and suggestively mentioned the Bard's transformation of the ancient chorus's plurality into singularity and multiple characterization as proof of the superiority of his tragedies. By associating this principle of individualization with the proliferation of individual characters, Wagner ignored other forms of collectivity somewhat akin to an idea of chorus (like the citizens in *Richard III*,[4] *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*). Chorality as a purely performative potential was simply missed in this remark. In the following pages I will turn to a brief analysis of this potential. In particular, I will consider how chorality, while normally dislodged from the chorus proper, may occasionally be dislocated to different dramatic portions involving polyphony as a revised form of choral performance. To this end, I will offer a few preliminary notes

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3. McCaullay calls them "non-organic dramatic elements" in order to underline their being fundamentally extraneous to the plays (1917: 186; see also 186-96), a position which more recent criticism has variously revised (see for instance Schneider 2011; for a critique of McCaulley see ibid.: 3).

4. It may be worth noting, with Clemen, that the choric dimension of 2.3 derives from the fact that "the events of the drama are surveyed from a distance, [and] the specific case is seen as exemplifying a more general truth, and as standing, therefore, in some relationship to the great universal laws operative in other spheres as well (32ff.)"; yet, the opening lines of the three citizens are "informal, realistic, and therefore un-chorus-like; the opening and concluding play of question and answer suggests that they come from a workaday world to which they will return at the close of the scene. These citizens, then, occupy a place somewhere between impartial, choric figures and characters involved in the action" (1968: 108). On the function of crowds in Shakespeare see Wiegandt 2012.

on the early modern English approach to the classical chorus via Seneca and its appropriation in the tragedies of the 1560s, 1580s and 1590s. This analysis, showing how the chorus gradually came to be individualized and identified with other narrative and meta-textual as well as meta-theatrical dramatic parts, will pave the way to a final examination of *Romeo and Juliet* as one of the earliest examples of how chorus and chorality ended up being divided into two different dramatic stances: a narrative, prologic voice as opposed to other lyrical forms of chorality separate from the chorus proper.[5]

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Situated in the theatrical context of the early 1590s, *Romeo and Juliet* was one of the first amorous tragedies of the Elizabethan period to present choruses and choral parts. What is most interesting, though, is that it is likely to have been the first play to mark a neat divide between the two in a period when tragedies in the classical tradition still appended a chorus at the end of each act, and the prologue was not yet confused with choric parts. As amorous tragedy, it was preceded only by the multi-authored *Gismond of Salerne* (1567-68) and its revised version, entitled *Tancred and Gismond*, by Robert Wilmot (printed in 1591). Both versions of this play, largely derived from Boccaccio's novella of Tancredi and Ghismunda (*Decameron*, 4.1), present a formal Chorus in the Senecan tradition at the end of the first four acts: *Gismund* has a group of four Gentlemen of Salerno who speak in iambic pentameters like every other character in the play (although no performing indication is extant), and their lines constitute a distinct dramatic partition from the prologic section, played by Cupid, and from a no better specified Epilogus. *Tancred* has instead a Chorus of four maids attending Gismund, and they appear only three times in the course of the play: the first two times they speak individually in sequence, the last time we hear only the first maid. From act two on, at the beginning of each act dumb shows and music complement the action. Despite this attempt to offer dramatic variation through music and pantomime, however, these two plays, like most plays making up the panorama of English drama succeeding the vernacularization of Seneca, closely followed the Latin choric pattern. Although their later transformation into a framing text shows the influence of a number of other native sources,[6] the chorus's formal inception in English

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5. If not otherwise stated, all dates of the plays refer to the printed editions. For more details see Chambers 1923, 1930.

6. Including the religious responsorial models of the "priest and the *Te Deum* or the *Magnificat* of the mediaeval church service" (McCaullay 1917: 162), and the "prayers at the end and

drama dates precisely from the 1550s and 1560s with the translation of Seneca, a fact whose trace is clearly borne by the early classical tragedies in English.

As recalled above, Latin plays were occasionally performed on the English stages. The *Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama* records twelve Latin performances of Senecan dramas between the 1540s and 1592 (plus one *Hyppolitus* in 1603-4),[7] and four performances in English by the turn of the century, starting with Alexander Neville's 1559 translation of *Oedipus* (printed in 1563),[8] followed by John Studley's 1566 *Agamennon*. Another play of classical ascendancy, *Jocasta*, supposedly drawn from Euripides (in fact a rendition of Lodovico Dolce's 1549 *Giocasta*),[9] was also performed in 1566. It too had choruses and the translation was penned by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe. Between 1556-67 and 1581 all of Seneca's tragedies were translated and printed several times, and finally collected in Thomas Newton's edition of *Seneca. His Tenne Tragedies* (1581). Although composed by different hands, these translations showed a general freedom compared with the original, which was not followed "word for word", as Neville wrote in the letter of dedication "To the Right honourable, Maister Doctor Wotton; one of the Queenes Majesties privy Counsayle" (Newton 1581: 75b). In fact, they were often remodelled to adjust the results to the English language and the verse adopted. The aim was, "sometymes by addition, sometimes by subtraction, to use the aptest Phrases in giving the Sense that [Neville the translator] could invent" (ibid.: 76a). The other translators made similar comments and textual interventions. Heywood, in particular, was so daring as to augment and alter the text massively, often showing the talent of a playwright rather than of a translator. De Vocht makes this point when noticing that "As the plot of *Troas*[10] is based on the apparition of Achilles Ghost, which has as necessary consequence the death of Polyxena and Astyanax, Heywood felt that a relation of this vision through Talthybius was not sufficient to point out its importance in the play, and he makes the ghost appear in a new scene (act

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invocations to the deity at the beginning of, for example, Mystery plays" (Schneider 2011: 3). Evidently these influenced the development of the chorus indirectly, that is, via the other framing portions with which it gradually identified.

7. All versions and performances of *Phaedra* are under the name of *Hippolytus*, deriving from the A manuscript *recensio* of Seneca's tragedy on which the first printed editions, used by the Elizabethans, were based until 1662. See de Vocht 1913.

8. The *APRGD* attributes to a period comprised between 1550 and 1567 a performance of John Pikeryng's *Horestes* (sic), printed in 1567 and based on William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (translated from French in 1475; see Bevington 1962: 179ff.), or, according to Karen Maxwell Merritt, on John Lydgate's *The Book of Troy* (Merritt 1972).

9. On which see Montorfani 2006.

10. This title is present in all printed editions until Gronovius's (J.F. Gronov 1662), all based on the so-called A *recensio*.

II, sc. i)" (1913: xxx). What most attracted the translator's attention, however, were the choruses, which he increased by one (the first) and occasionally making substantial alterations. For instance he appended three stanzas at the end of the second Chorus and modified the beginning of the third Chorus in order to make it more palatable to an English readership not acquainted with all "the names of so manye unknowen Countreyes, Mountaynes, Desertes, and Woodes" there mentioned. It is interesting to observe that he justified this last change by assuming "that Chorus is no part of the substance of the matter" ("To the Reader", Newton 1581: 95b-6a).

In this regard it may be recalled that in 1567 Thomas Drant had provided a peculiar translation of a passage in Horace's *Poetics* in which he had similarly deprived the chorus of centrality by transforming it into a kind of authorial voice-over. While the original, following Aristotle's precepts on the chorus as one of the actors (*Po.* 1456a25-7), prescribed that he should "sustain the part and strenuous duty of an actor, and sing nothing between acts which does not advance and fitly blend into the plot" (Horace 1999: ll. 193-207: "actoris partis chorus officiumque virile / defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus, / quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte"), Drant's translation turned the chorus into an ethical arbiter:[11] "The autor the Chorus must defende / or else some other one / Whose innocensie, or manhode / deserveth prayse alone. / Let them not singe twix acte, and acte/ that squayreth from the rest. / Such let their songs be, as will tune / unto the purpose best" (1567: 13). A different rendition of this passage, which agrees with current interpretations, would be published only at a later date, in 1640, penned by the neo-classical Ben Jonson,[12] but before then the chorus was indeed "no part of the substance of the matter", as Heywood put it.

This tells us something about the course that was being taken by the chorus on the English stages. Possibly through misinterpretation (as in Drant's case), but also appropriations smacking of contaminations with other autochthonous framing forms, it took on an increasingly authorial and authoritative function.

The choric part of these early versions of Seneca had a markedly literary vocation, as in the rest of the plays, something which clearly reflects an awareness of print. As Nashe's epistle *To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities*

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11. Drant must have misinterpreted the Latin "defendat", which he read as meaning 'to take sides with' rather than 'to play the part of'; see Lewis and Short (1958) *defendo* II.A.α: 'sustain', and Gaffiot (2005) *defendo* 3: 'play the part'. This interpretation is in line with Aristotle's *Poetics* 1456a25-7 ["καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν", "the chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors", Butcher 1907]; for a similar use see Horace *Sat.* 1.10.12: "*defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poetae*" ["in keeping with the rôle, now of orator or poet", Fairclough 1999].

12. "An Actors part, and office too, the quire / Must manly keep, and not be heard to sing / Between the Acts a quite cleane other thing / Than to the purpose leads and fitly agrees" (ll. 276-9).

prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589) implies, these plays were mainly aimed at readers who, in Nashe's view, greatly profited from them ("English Seneca read by candle light", wrote Nashe, "yeeldes manie good sentences"; Greene 1589: **3).[13] How Seneca's choruses were thought to have been performed, however, whether chorally or not, remains unknown;[14] what is known is that the 1581 printed edition signalled these parts as distinct from the rest of the play by using a different typeface – Roman instead of Gothic. In the latter type the printer Thomas Marsh cast the monotonous fourteeners in which the rest of the characters spoke, as opposed to the iambic pentameters of the chorus. Yet no indication is added as to the number of the actual speakers and their choric performance, whether the lines were meant to be uttered collectively or only by the chorus leader, as in the chorus's dialogues with the other characters (always in fourteeners, marked in Gothic type). Nevertheless, it may be noticed that when massive alterations or additions were made, as in the case of Heywood's *Troas*, the first person singular was often the choice, and this should be kept in mind. For instance, at some point in the last three stanzas of the second Chorus of this play, added by the translator, the Chorus unequivocally mentions "mine iyes" before addressing the ladies with an invitation to cry over Hecuba. While it is not unusual for the Greek and Latin choruses to say "I" even when meant to be collective, this is precisely the English translator's choice in a piece of his own making that bears no indication of plurality.

There are several hints that chorus and chorality did not always go hand in hand already in the Englished Seneca,[15] as well as, more generally, in the Elizabethan conception of the chorus *tout court*. This fact can be indirectly evinced from a literary anecdote concerning the solo recitation of Latin drama. The current idea "from the tenth century onwards" (Cunliffe 1912: xiv) was that recitation was accompanied by a pantomime or dumb show. Such notion refers to spectacular models which did not disdain individual performance in place of plural action. The anecdote Cunliffe relates is the following: "Nicholas

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13. As de Vocht points out, "It is difficult to state in the cases where there is an influence of Seneca on the dramatic literature of Elizabeth's time, whether it has been caused by the Latin text or by the English rendering; still there are some passages amongst those that are quoted by Cunliffe [1893] as having been inspired by the Roman playwright, that have a singular coincidence with Heywood's translation" (1913: xxxiii).

14. Recent work on Seneca (see Zanobi 2010; Slaney 2013) has suggested, albeit not conclusively, the relevance of pantomime and the possibility for solo choral performances accompanied by mimes. Whichever the case, this has no bearing on early modern knowledge of ancient performances of Seneca.

15. Clear evidence is provided by Heywood's duplication of two choruses in his translation of *Troas*, one of which is evidently singular in number (this issue is part of my current work on this topic within a wider research on the Chorus in early modern drama).

Trivet or Treveth (c. 1260-1330), an English Dominican who edited Seneca's tragedies, explains in the introduction to the *Hercules Furens* that in a little house in the theatre, called *scena*, the prologue of the play was read, while a *mimus* with gestures imitated the angry Juno" (1912: xvi; see also xiv-xix). The same idea was later, and more famously, expressed in expanded form by John Lydgate in the *Book of Troy* (1412-20), where, by taking up "a remark in the *Historia Trojana* of Guido delle Colonne that tragedies and comedies are said to have been first acted at Troy", dedicated a long passage of his book 2 (ll. 842-926) to a detailed description of a performance in the Trojan palace:

> Al þis was tolde and rad of þe poete.
> And whil þat he in þe pulpit stood,
> With dedly face al devoide of blood,
> Singinge his dites, with muses al to-rent,
> Amydde þe theatre schrowdid in a tent,
> þer cam out men gastful of her cheris,
> Disfigurid her facis with viseris,
> Pleying by signes in þe peples siȝt,
> þat þe poete songon hath on hiȝt;
> So þat þer was no maner discordaunce
> Atwen his dites and her contenaunce:
> For lik as he aloft[e] dide expresse
> Wordes of loye or of heuynes,
> Meving and cher, byneþe of hem pleying,
> From point to point was alwey answering –
> Now trist, now glad, now hevy, and [now] liȝst,
> And face chaunged with a sodeyn siȝt,
> So craftily þei koude hem transfigure,
> Conformyng hem to þe chaunt[e]plure,
> Now to synge and sodeinly to wepe,
> So wel þei koude her observaunces kepe;
> (896-916)

Mehl has correctly remarked that the performance described by Lydgate "is not different from the way in which some pantomimes are commented on by a figure appearing as presenter in Elizabethan drama more than a century later" (1965: 3); nor does this practice differ consistently from the so-called mummings or disguisings, that is, "commentary on a mime performed simultaneously or subsequently", or "festive parades, usually in allegorical guise, which were frequently presented on special occasions, such as after a banquet" (ibid.).

Gradually becoming recurrent in early modern plays, this combination of a solo voice accompanying the gesture of mimes, however, was not the norm. Commenting upon the presence of a five-act distribution of *The Battle of Alcazar* with possibly five dumb shows following the speeches of the Presenter (but the 1594 Quarto has only three), Bradley has observed that "[t]here is

… very little normative evidence on which we can base an assumption of this intention to accompany them all with shows. Only five earlier extant plays are regularly equipped in that way – *Gorboduc* (1562), *Jocasta* (1566), *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1582), *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588), and *Locrine* (1594) – and only three of a later date: in *The Whore of Babylon* (1606) and two of Heywood's *Ages* plays, *The Golden Age* (1610) and the *Silver Age* (1611)" (1992: 217). It should be noticed, at all events, that in those early plays no formal chorus is either present or comments upon the dumb shows: in *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* and in *Locrine*, the function of the presenter/prologist is played by Mercury and Ate, respectively; in *Gorboduc* and *Jocasta* Chorus and dumb shows are dislocated quite afar from each other, at the end and beginning of each act, with no possible interaction but only occasional cross-references (see Mehl 1965: Part 2, chapter 3); finally in Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* there is a prologue, not a Chorus, who introduces the first dumb show, and in Heywood's two plays the role of presenter is given to Homer. Apart from the *Spanish Tragedy*, whose only dumb show occurs during the fourth 'Chorus' of Andrea and Revenge, only the dramas featuring formal or actual presenters[16] – such as the *Battle of Alcazar*, or *Hengist, King of Kent* – rather than formal choruses, fit in the frame of a speaker commenting upon a pantomime. This seems to confirm that originally formal choruses had a different function from that of an individual speaker presenting or explicating the dumb show, a conjunction that seems to be attested only sparsely and at relatively later date (*The Christian Turned Turk*, 1612, and *The Bloody Banquet*, 1639). Besides, this also confirms that early choruses were not single in number, and that singularity possibly came to denote choruses only in their later overlapping with the solo prologist or the presenter.

It should also be mentioned that, as Mehl has argued with reference to dumb shows, the assumed Italian ascendancy of *intermedii*, originally proposed by Cunliffe (1912; see also McCaullay 1917), should be revised and related to a contamination of different traditions, as dumb shows "cannot be explained without reference to the Royal Entries, City Pageants and Lord Mayor's Shows" (Melh 1965: 6). This is not irrelevant to the fortune of the formal chorus in English drama, because the presence of dumb shows testifies to a practice of "employing various artistic means simultaneously"; this "also explains why rhetorical tragedies in the Senecan tradition were never really at home in England as they were in Italy and France" (ibid.: 4). Nor is it "surprising

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16. Mehl points out a few instances of the appearance of a 'presenter'; besides the one in the *Battle of Alcazar* he lists Heywood's *Four Prentices of London*, and Middleton's *Your Five Gallants* (1965: 6-7; n. 1, 18).

that the authors of even the first classical tragedies, such as *Gorboduc* and *Jocasta*, tried to relieve the monotony of the formal structure by inserting scenes of a pantomimic nature which present the moral of the play in the form of a pageant appealing vividly to the eye" (ibid.: 5). The coexistence, in the early tragic plays, of, albeit mutually unrelated, choruses and dumbs shows demonstrates, therefore, the need to experiment with different forms of theatrical performance. Their not fitting quite well with each other (ibid.: Part 2, ch. 3) proves that no real integration could be fully achieved until the chorus got closer to autochthonous framing-texts, taking over a different role from the Senecan one. Yet, the co-presence of chorus and dumb show also demonstrates the need, in these portions of drama, of an action involving a plurality of characters and actors, enlivening the play with variety and multitude.

In this respect, it should be noticed that, both in the 1560s, when play-wrights "first wanted their Seneca whole in the form of complete translations and extensive imitations", and later, in the 1580s and 1590s, when they wanted him only "in parts" (Winston 2006: 30),[17] formal choruses generally included several characters, normally four in number (for instance in *Gorboduc*, *Gismond of Salerne* and *Tancred and Gismund*, but also in *The Glasse of Government*, 1575), or three (*Soliman and Perseda*, 1592), and more generally as an indefinite multitude (*The Tragedy of Antonie*, 1592, *Cleopatra*, 1593, *Cornelia*, 1594, *Octavia*, 1598, and in the early years of the seventeenth century, *Mariam*, 1602-4, *Philotas*, 1605, *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, 1607). The bare indication of 'Chorus' recurs from the late 1580s on, starting with the *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587-88), and continuing with *Cornelia* (1594), *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia* (1594), *Dr Faustus* (performed 23 times between 1594 and 1597), *Romeo and Juliet* (1597, 1599, but possibly composed between 1591-96), *Henry V* (1599), *David and Bethsabe* (1599), *Old Fortunatus* (1600), and *The Life and Death of Thomas Cromwell* (1602). The numerically unspecified chorus turns increasingly into the norm as the time goes by, so that in the first decade of the seventeenth century choruses, when present, are regularly unidentified in number and members (for instance *Catiline*, 1611, *A Christian Turned Turk*, 1612, *If you not know me* – chorus present only in the 1632 version –, *Alaham*, printed in 1633 but composed much earlier, *Mustapha*, 1609-33, *The Bloody Banquet*, 1639). In parallel with the gradual transformation of the plural chorus into an indistinct figure, possibly suggesting singularity (as will unequivocally be the case in *The Winter's Tale*), other changes occur: characters listed among the speakers at some point declare to be playing the part of the Chorus (as the

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17. For a reappraisal of the Senecan influence on the Elizabethans, besides Cunliffe 1893 and 1912, see Baker 1939; Charlton 1946; Kiefer 1978 and 1985; Braden 1985; Miola 1992; Boyle 1997; Coral Escolá 2007: 5-20.

ghost of Andrea and Revenge in the *Spanish Tragedy*), or suggest a gradual conflation of their own features with some of the chorus's qualities: for instance, they may be present throughout the play or may take up the commenting and interpretative function of the formal chorus, as in the case of the Presenter in the *Battle of Alcazar* (1588-89), of Gower in *Pericles* (1607-8?), or Raynulph in *Hengist King of Kent* (1615-20?). This overlapping of functions and roles is precisely the cause of critical disaccord over who does what in early modern drama, because the evidence is often contradictory and no general rule neatly to separate functions has yet been identified conclusively.

What can be safely affirmed, however, is that, in the course of about five decades, the term Chorus came to designate quite different phenomena, in both function and form, as well as the number of its components. Thus, taking for granted that the Chorus was normally played by a single speaker, dressed in a dark velvet cloak, possibly with a beard, who entered on stage after three blows of a trumpet, as was often the case with the prologue (Goussef 1962: 580-1; Weimann and Bruster 2004: 7-8), may mean to misconstrue and simplify a much more complex and fluid phenomenon. This is true also for plays not originally meant for the stage, such as the closet dramas of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, of Elizabeth Cary, of Samuel Daniel and of Fulke Greville. They too adopted the chorus, and in following Seneca and his continental epigones, revised their models significantly,[18] offering the reader their own version of this part: plural and markedly lyrical.

Thus, in the space of a few decades, choruses, in print and on stage, came to include a wide range of different dramatic forms which evolved over time, gradually abandoning the Senecan model they sprang from, while often retaining much of the non-naturalistic, artificial, and lyrical drive that characterized their original impetus. Here suffice it to mention that, as in the Senecan translations recalled above the choric parts were identified by both metre and typeface (iambic pentameters marked in Roman type as opposed to couplets of fourteeners in Gothic type), which betrayed an ascendancy of print culture, also in the plays written in the imitation of Seneca before the turn of the century choruses were metrically contrasted with the rest of the play. They exhibited a perceptibly different lyrical pace from the monotonous base of rhyming iambic pentameters or the more discursive blank verse in which the rest of the characters spoke, often featuring rather complex stanzaic forms, or even sonnets. In these years, examples of choruses in blank verse are definitely sparse (for instance in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*, and in Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia*).

Besides, choruses, like prologues, became quite fluid also in another sense

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18. On Fulke Greville see the recent Roscoe 2013.

as they could be easily added and removed depending on the occasion, being alterable "performance by performance" (Stern 2009: 109). As has been further remarked, "as prologues are generally linked to first days, choruses on occasion may, too, belong only to first or special days, not to all performances – or, rather, any 'removable' text might sometimes, perhaps often, have been removed (for any removable text can also be returned at any time)" (ibid.).

Romeo and Juliet seems to provide one of these instances of fluid choruses. Most of all it stands out as a glaring example of how chorus and chorality took two radically different paths at a very early stage in the history of early modern drama, when English dramaturgy was still striving to emancipate itself from the classical model, inaugurating a new phase of dramatic experimentation.

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It is still uncertain when *Romeo and Juliet* was composed, although critics tend to assign it to a period comprised between 1591 and 1596 (see for instance Chambers 1930: 345-6; Baldwin 1959). It has been contended (Melchiori 1983, 1994, 1999) that if Shakespeare started work on it in the early 1590s, when theatres were closed because of the plague (between 1592 and 1594), he might have wished to experiment with a new lyrical genre to be performed by a company of children for a private production. This would explain the stylization of characters, and above all the two choruses in the form of a sonnet, besides the madrigal-cast of the lamentation scene (4.5). The re-opening of theatres, however, would have prompted Shakespeare to abandon the experiment and adapt the play for a company of adult players. He would have forgotten about the choruses, apart from the two already composed, and at the end of 4.5 he would have added the comic scene featuring the famous actor William Kemp, who in 1594 had joined Shakespeare's Company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Other hypotheses have been put forward, and the presence of only two choruses has been explained in a variety of ways. For instance, on the basis of 'internal', rather than historical, premises, J.D. Palmer has reasonably contended that, after the second Chorus, the "sonnet world" it introduced "begins to come to life", so that its "preparatory function in the play has been performed, and he is needed no more" (1982: 511). Whichever the reason, what can be safely argued is that after the original composition the play underwent revision of a collaborative nature. Today there is fairly general consensus on considering Q1 and Q2 two different plays: Q1 dating from 1597 and possibly composed between the end of 1595 and the early 1596, and Q2, dating from 1599. We also know that the play was first produced at the Theatre, that in 1597 it moved to

the Curtain (Gurr 1996), that the company resorted to a practice of doubling to cover all the roles, and we may also conjecture that the second Chorus "was hardly ever performed" (Melchiori 1983: 791).

Although it was one of the first plays to experiment with chorus and chorality, *Romeo and Juliet*'s originality has often been passed off in silence or at best played down. In her long essay on early modern chorus, for instance, McCaullay significantly, and erroneously, contended that "there is one lonely chorus between the first act and the second; a chorus no better than some already considered, and worst than most" (1917: 184). Evidently referring to neither quarto edition (Q2 is ignored and Q1 is only mentioned in passing), she heavily criticized the piece with the support of Dr Johnson. His objection was that the chorus "not only reiterates what the first act has already presented, but also 'relates it without [adding] the improvement of any moral sentiment'" (ibid.; Johnson 1906: 186). Claiming that the piece she referred to was not in the first Folio and attributing it to the Folio printed in 1632, she concluded that "[i]ts omission from the version of the play printed in Shakespeare's lifetime and from the folio published by his friends and admirers after his death, might well suggest that it was added for the exigency of a later performance, to do honor to some actor or some poetaster" – possibly "a later addition by someone who had, obviously, small care for stylistic congruity" (1917: 184). The play, in fact, has more than one Chorus: Q2 has two; Q1 has a prologue reproducing, in a shorter form, the first Chorus of Q2; the first folio has a Chorus with no mention of it being a prologue (identical with the second Chorus of Q2), so that Q1 and F together have two Choruses just like Q2. It is worth pointing out that the alternative headings – "Prologue. Corus [sic]" and "Chorus" in Q2; "Prologue" alone (Q1); "Chorus" (F) – clearly suggest an overlapping of choric and prologic functions possibly for the first time in early modern drama.

Before *Romeo and Juliet*, in fact, choruses and prologues were normally kept separate. *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587-88), which, as recalled above, is the first play to have had a Chorus with no specified characters in both identity and number,[19] presents five Choruses, one at the end of each act, different from both the Prologue, played by the Ghost of Gorlois, and from the Epilogue. Besides, the first two Choruses' elaborate metres (six- and eight-lines stanzas of iambic pentameters rhyming *ababcc* and *ababccdd*, respectively) testify to a need to distinguish these parts lyrically from the less elaborate rest of the play and the other three Choruses, all in blank verse. The four speakers (Chorus I, II, III, IV) intervene three times in sequence, thus suggesting individual

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19. At least in the list of speakers, because it clearly comprises four. The closing line of the "Argument and manner of the first dumb shewe" specifies that "After their [of the nuns in the dumb show] departure, the fowre which represented the Chorus tooke their places" (Cunliffe 1912: 225).

performances within an indistinct group, which points to a gradual thinning of the choral performance into solo speeches. Poetic experimentations were also carried out in the above-mentioned closet dramas of 1592-94, whose extremely sophisticated patterns of chorus lines reflect an awareness of the lyrical import of choral parts. There is nothing in these texts, however, to suggest that either the chorus is a one-man show, or has prologic features.

Also from 1594, though, dates an early choric example of what in fact may be interpreted as a prologue, albeit undefined as such in print. In a piece addressed "To the Audience", clearly misplaced in the middle of the second act of Robert Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia*, the speaker as prologist and mouthpiece of the actors claims that "needlesse antickes imitations, / Or shewes, or new deuises sprung a late" have been "exiled from [their own] tragicke stage",

> As trash of their tradition, that can bring
> Nor instance, nor excuse. For *what they do*
> *Instead of mournfull plaints our Chorus sings*,
> Although it be against the vpstart guise,
> Yet warranted by graue antiquitie,
> We will reuiue the which hath long beene done.
> (n.p.; emphasis added)

Here the "Chorus" is the individual singer ("sings") of what characters *do*, not of mournful plaints, as in the contemporary revival of ancient Latin drama. Yet no such Chorus is extant so that its actual characteristics and functions remain purely conjectural.

A few years later, in 1598, Robert Greene's *The Scottish History of James the Fourth* presents the heading "Chorus" twice in the course of the play, first at the entrance of the Scotsman Bohan between acts 3 and 4, and then at the entrance of Bohan and Oberon, King of Fairies, between acts 4 and 5. In his 1921 edition, A.E.H. Swaen extended the same heading to three other interventions of Bohan and Oberon placing the indication II Chor. and III Chor. in the margins of the text, at the beginning of acts 2 and 3, respectively (in this last case the original printed edition had "Chorus Actus 3" only after their exit and before "Scena prima"). This adds to the already befuddling set-up of the play due to the appearance of the same Bohan and Oberon also in the opening scene before act 1, thus tacitly suggesting an overlapping between what is to all effects an induction (the portion preceding the beginning of the play) and the presence of what is occasionally called "Chorus" during the play (Swaen makes it explicit in the list of speakers that Bohan and Oberon play the induction *and* the Chorus).

Finally, in his 1599-1600 *Old Fortunatus* Thomas Dekker devises two Choruses as distinct portions of the play from both the Prologue and the Epilogue, but,

again, only to suggest a possible conflation of Prologue and Chorus. The former, indeed, evidently features as a threshold speaker, meta-theatrically positioned in-between the author, the actors, and the spectators. He prologically declares dependence on the Muse's help and suggests identification with the Chorus in trying to get the meaning of the story through to the spectators:

> So some will deign to smile, where all might frown:
> And for this small circumference must stand,
> For the imagined surface of much land,
> Of many kingdoms, and since many a mile
> Should here be measured out, our Muse entreats
> Your thoughts to help poor art, and to allow
> That *I may serve as Chorus* to her senses;
> She begs your pardon, for she'll send *one forth*,
> *Not when the laws of poesy do call,*
> *But as the story needs*; your gracious eye
> Gives life to Fortunatus' historie.
> (ll. 14-24, n.p.; emphasis added)

Like the piece addressed to the audience in the *Warres of Cyrus*, this one too looks like a statement of dramatic poetics. The Chorus is not meant to be choral, he is not expected to sing a song collectively, but is an authoritative narrative voice explaining individually the dramatic action. This was what the more famous Chorus of *Henry V* (1599-1600) was accomplishing in those years by supplying between-act information on the story.

The composition, performance, and publication of *Romeo and Juliet* are located precisely in this context of gradual transformation of the Senecan-like chorus towards a new prologic and narrative form. As we have seen, through the voice of an authorized individual speaker, who retains the gravity and authority of the ancient collective chorus, without being one, Elizabethan drama gradually came to offer a fresh interlacing of action and narrative on different dramatic levels and with different degrees of authority. *Romeo and Juliet* is likely to be the play which inaugurated this new conception of the chorus. At the same time, it is also the play which, most daringly, recuperated the artificial dimension of ancient chorality in a polyphonic lamentation piece. This was exemplary of the counterpointing musical culture of the age, and offered an updated version of lyrical drama beyond the traditional autoch-thonous tradition of responsorial performance. I will come to this peculiar scene in moment. But before looking at it more closely, it is worth considering the transformation that the Chorus proper underwent in this play, acquiring a strikingly hybrid form: a lyrical guise vaguely reminiscent of its classical origin combined with new prologic features, accommodated to a markedly meta-theatrical and narrative stance typical of the framing texts of medieval drama, as well as of the early modern novella tradition.

The first noteworthy feature of these two Choruses is that they are in the form of a sonnet. This suggests an attempt to adjust them to the lyrical dimension appropriate to the amorous theme of the tragedy about to begin. Yet this choice proves peculiar also in other respects, since sonnets were not normally used for choruses in English drama. Those present in Gascoigne's *Jocasta* (1566) and Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra* (1593-94) – one dedicated to a fairly ordinary complaint on the fickleness of Fortune, and the other one made up of four sonnets on the late unruliness of Egypt – have no sophisticated framing function as those in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare would use the sonnet again shortly afterwards, in the sixth Chorus of *Henry V* (1599-600), this time adjusting it to the function of the epilogue.[20] But in those years the example of *Romeo and Juliet* stands as unique. The closest parallel, as a matter of fact, is not with a play, but with the "Argument" in sonnet form at the beginning of Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). This helps better identify the actual contiguity between the play and the poem which so far has been considered as its more likely source as regards the plot. Set side by side, Argument and Chorus extend this contiguity to other aspects, casting light on the function of narrative in this tragedy starting from its prologic locus.

Compared to Brooke's piece, the first Chorus in either quarto version is extremely refined. Brooke squeezes the subject into the usual fourteen lines with hardly any sense of poetical subtlety, summing up the tragic action step by step, from Romeo's and Juliet's sudden falling in love and their secret marriage with the help of a friar, to Tybalt's rage after three months of their secret enjoyment of mutual love and Romeo's ban for killing him; then he moves on to the arranged marriage with Paris and Juliet's resolution to enact the show of her own death, to Romeo's fatal mistake and the two lovers' tragic suicide. No significant comment is made here, differently from the highly moralistic preface and rest of the poem, where the narrator makes unequivocal remarks on the lovers' culpability. Also in the two quartos the Chorus introduces the action and foretells the play's moral on the scapegoating function of the two lovers. Yet, it does more: it advertises the play and asks for theatrical cooperation in melodious accents, rich with alliterations and

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20. Schneider (2011: 14) correctly points out that "[t]he last speech of the play is heralded by the stage direction 'Enter Chorus', to which some later editors have added 'as Epilogue' or simply changed to 'Epilogue'. These emendations possibly recognize the speech as different in intent, tone and structure from the Chorus speeches in the body of the play. Certainly it is the only Chorus speech that is in rhyme, and it is the only one that refers to the playwright as 'our bending author'. It also begs the audience's indulgence in the last line: 'In your fair minds let this acceptance take', a characteristic plea in many epilogues. At the beginning and end of *Henry V*, therefore, the identity of the Chorus cover uncertainly before finally shading into the role of the Prologist and Epilogist".

expressive parallelisms that mark from the start the crafty presence of a speaker who negotiates the audience's attention and reflects upon the potential and limits of the stage:[21]

Q1	Q2
Two houshold Frends *alike* in dignitie,	Two households both *alike* in dignity,
(In faire Verona, where we lay our Scene)	(In fair Verona where we lay our scene)
From ciuill broyles broke into enmitie,	From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Whose ciuill warre makes ciuill hands uncleane.	Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatall loynes of these two foes,	*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes*
A paire of starre-crost Louers tooke their life:	*A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,*
Whose misaduentures, piteous ouerthrowes,	Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
(Through the continuing of their Fathers strife,	Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
And death-markt passage of their Parents rage)	The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
Is now the two howres traffique of our Stage.	And the continuance of their parents' rage,
The which if you with *patient eares attend,*	Which but their children's end, naught could remove,
What here *we want wee'l studie to amend.*	*Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;*
	The which if you with *patient ears attend,*
	What here shall miss, *our toil shall strive to mend.*

While providing a neat viewpoint on the story, both versions show awareness of being a peculiar type of narrative endowed with the framing function of introducing the performance as a cooperative 'auditory' event, requiring the audience's attention ("What here *we want wee'l studie to amend*", Q1, l.12, "What here shall miss, *our toil shall strive to mend*", Q2, l. 14, emphasis added). But if it is made clear that "the interpretive skills of the audience are partly responsible for the significance of the play" (Hunter and Lichtenfels 2009: 112), there is no undercutting of the Chorus's own narrative authority, nor of the actors' role, entrusted with the task of getting the meaning of the action through to the audience. This hints at a peculiar balance between narrative monologism, theatrical self-advertisement (as in the medieval banns; cf. Chambers 1925; Giaccherini 2013: 164-6), and negotiation of performative collaboration. This interlacing of functions discloses the composite nature of the metamorphosis that the classical chorus undergoes in this piece. Located in a peculiar theatrical position, both in and out of the play, this Chorus fashions himself as the mouthpiece of a reliable perspective on a story presumably wellknown at the time through its novella versions, of which he retains the diegetic control over the story. From a liminal space, situated between the actors and the real world of the audience to whom he tells how to judge the events, he does not claim testimonial authority, and yet is the repository of its truth. Possibly for the first time in early modern English drama, this Chorus, engaged in a performative transaction for the success of the play,

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21. Quotations are from Shakespeare 1597 and 1599; emphasis added.

shows an attempt to accommodate the classical name he bears to an entirely new dramatic conception of the framing text.

To get back to the content of the story recounted, it should not pass unnoticed that it appears extraordinarily simplified compared to the complexities of the tragedy which will soon be shown on stage. The first eleven lines, in Q2, and the first nine, in Q1, lay emphasis on the sacrifice of the lovers which is needed "to bury their parents' strife" (Q2, l. 8). These lines take up a generic suggestion of envy contained in lines 25-32 of Brooke's poem and develop out of it a plot of unquenchable fury. Brooke's emphasis on the two families' likeness in dignity and (un)fortune is also of both Q1 and Q2, but Q2 makes their enmity more ancestral, talking about "ancient grudge" (l. 2) – Q1 has "civill broyls" – which contrasts with the allusion to a former friendship in Q1 (l.1: "two households Friends alike in dignitie"), absent in Q2 ("both alike"). The major difference between Q1 and Q2 is contained in lines 10-11 of Q2, which make the reconciliatory function of the two lovers' death central to the tragic course, drawing a direct line between civil crisis and reconciliation through Romeo's and Juliet's star-marked deaths. This passage is missing in Q1. The perspective on the story, however, is unequivocal in both texts: the lovers have no liberty to take their lives in their own hands because they are the puppets of a superior Will, be it the stars or Fortune, so that they are doomed to fall in love and die for it. And yet, the ensuing action does not smoothly adhere to this view. As a matter of fact, the tragedy risks being hardly attractive if reduced to the sole issue of civic peace sketched by this Chorus (Kottman 2012: 4), and what follows in the action fully demonstrates that something else is definitely at stake.

This point needs stressing because it is precisely in this clash that the play unveils an awareness of the singularity of drama and its extraordinary capacity for complicating and questioning the narrative it derives from, and whose authority it subtly erodes. In passing, it may be noticed that the issue of narrative authority may have been heavily underlined if the piece was recited by the actor playing the Prince, a hypothesis put forward by Melchiori (1983), for the obvious reverberations this would have had on the idea itself of authority.[22] Yet whoever may have been the speaker, the framing voice of the Chorus is no longer thematically and dramatically integrated in the play, but marks a rift between its narrative message and the actual drama

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22. "*Romeo and Juliet*, apart from the analogy of roles (the clown, the confidant), reveals subtler aspects of this use of doubling. The Prince who speaks the formal epilogue to the play must also have been cast as the Chorus, that is to say, the Prologue, since, as I tried to show, the second chorus was hardly ever performed. He is in fact the objective narrator, in contrast with Friar Lawrence (another possible speaker of the prologue) who is instead a manipulator of the action, while Benvolio-Balthasar is a witness" (Melchiori 1983: 791).

shown to the audience: between its being a voice situated on the threshold of drama encasing the action and the encased drama on stage, with its multiple voices and clashing perspectives. D.J. Palmer has correctly pointed out that the "Prologue's fatalistic view of *Romeo and Juliet* as 'a pair of star-cross'd lovers' places too much emphasis on external agency", because "[w]hile it is true that each of the lovers has at different times a premonition of disaster, they are far from being merely the passive victims of fate" (1982: 510). Their active role, which is both self-inquisitive and subversive of family rule, problematizes the Chorus's seemingly linear perspective of an all-determining, transcendental design. This is an important issue, as it suggests that the Chorus is either an accretion to the play, or a paratextual tool functional to offering a competitive representational model in respect to drama; it demonstrates how narrative and drama in fact diverge in telling and showing one and the same story. This is possibly the subtlest way in which the Chorus as prologue comes to unveil a meta-theatrical drive besides and beyond the explicit reference to the performance contained in the final couplet. At the same time, it also suggests on what the play's self-promoting strategies could rely, unveiling an awareness that doomed love and scapegoating were attractive subjects.

The second Chorus, present only in Q2 (and in the Folio), is normally positioned at the beginning of 2.1, but as these early editions have no division into acts and scenes, it has often been argued that, in a Latin-like fashion, it rather functions as an epilogue. This has been the norm at least since Samuel Johnson's already recalled famous remark that "[t]he use of this Chorus is not easily discovered; it conduces nothing to the progress of the play, but relates what is already known, or what the next scene will show" (Johnson 1906: 186; see also Blakemore Evans in Shakespeare 2003: 102). The uncertain position of this piece shows yet another possible transformation of its classical antecedent, because it neither provides a comment integrated in the action, nor is it a prologue, but a between-act piece bridging different portions of drama. It has also been argued that, although normally expunged from performances, its narration is in tune with a play often interrupted by narratives, whether of premonition or of summary and recapitulation. It also helps the spectator or the reader to concentrate on other aspects than the story, "such as emotion, circumstance, language and so on" (Hunter and Lichtenfels 2009: 113). Besides, it offers a parody of "the choral element in classical drama, and of the opening sonnet to the play", and as such it "undermines any sense of generic stability" (ibid.). Whether it can really be seen as a parody, especially of any classical choral dimension, and whether it helps to focus on aspects other than the plot, are issues that remain open to debate. What appears less questionable, though, is that this Chorus brings a step forward the evaluative teaching of the anonymous, but authoritative, voice-over of the first one, and tells us that

the fickleness of Romeo's love is not to be held guilty after all, since the two lovers have been conquered by a beyond-all-boundaries passion:

> Now old desire doth in his deathbed lie,
> And young affection gapes to be his heir;
> That fair for which love groaned for and would die,
> With tender Juliet matched is now not fair.
>
> Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,
> Alike bewitchèd by the charm of looks,
> But to his foe supposed he must complain,
> And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks.
>
> Being held a foe, he may not have access
> To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,
> And she as much in love, her means much less
> To meet her new belovèd anywhere:
>
> But passion lends them power, time means, to meet,
> Temp'ring extremities with extreme sweet.

These two examples show how the Chorus, while displaying affinity with the monological stance of the epilogue pronounced by the Prince, is clearly shifting its function towards meta-theatre and an authoritative affirmation of the ideological issues at stake, in stark contrast with the problematic dramatization of the story enacted in the course of the play. The intermodal confrontation between the narrative conveyed by these two pieces and the action (or the other narratives) they frame (and bridge) calls into question the nature of drama itself: its polyphonic and conflicting dimension as opposed to a more assertive and monological type of narrative from which the story is derived and which is absorbed and remoulded in its liminal, choric, places. Chorality is evidently redundant here and leaves room to the solo performance of an anonymous speaker retaining but the name of the ancient Chorus.

Yet chorality does remain an issue in this tragedy, although of a different kind. The orchestration of collective scenes is a case in point, with the gradual arrival of characters and citizens in the brawls taking place in the streets of Verona (see 1.1 especially). The lamentation scene in 4.5 is yet another case, and a very peculiar one. The closest model for this last piece is Hecuba and the Chorus of women in Seneca's *Troas*, where Hecuba gives them directions on how to weep over Hector's fate, and they lament and act accordingly (1.2). *Troas* presents another comparable piece in 4.4, where Hecuba, Andromache and Helen lament over Priam, Hector and Paris, respectively, with the support of the Chorus. It has been pointed out that autochthonous examples of threnody may be found in Peele's *David and Bethsabe* (10.1022ff.), in *Locrine* (3.2), as well as in Marlowe's *2 Tamburlaine the Great* (5.3), where there are at

least three characters performing their choral-like lament onstage. Mention of the "laments of the three Marys in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century mystery plays" has also been made to suggest that in this "early stage of the development of the lamentation-scene" the pattern was that of three women joining in "antiphonal lament", each "taking up and echoing the turns of phrase used by the preceding speaker" (Clemen 1968: 186).[23] *Richard III* provides yet another such instance in the famous 4.4 (ll. 9-135), where Queen Margaret, Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York participate in an "antiphonal lament" in which they "hardly seem to be individuals at all, but simply voices in a chorus" (ibid.: 180). Clemen is positive in underlining the antiphonal dimension of the performance in at least the last two examples, with particular regard to the canon structure of the last one, where "the theme is shared by several voices, now in counterpoint, now in unison" (ibid.). This description, though, is more suggestive than literal, since the pattern is definitely irregular, although occasional echoes are perceiveable in anaphoric and epiphoric position. But this echo-effect is not sufficient to make for substantial counterpoint. What we find in 4.5 of *Romeo and Juliet*, instead, appears closer to one such experimentation and the way it is carried out proves daringly and intriguingly new.

This is an extremely artificial scene, where the mourning characters show pain for Juliet's apparent death while in fact revealing a fundamental "propensity for solipsism" (Moisan 1983: 394). This piece is followed by a "[c]omically indecorous and ill-tuned" scene, with the musicians and Peter deconstructing "Edwards' *Paradise of Dainty Devices*", a collection of poems summing up "the kind of lachrymose rhetoric" just heard, which reminds us "of why we may not have felt disposed to listen closely to what was said in it" (ibid.: 402). As a matter of fact, in that scene of fortissimo lamentation, sound prevails over meaning, and, if looked at more closely, confusion over sound. As Levin has observed, discord and harmony are what seems to be produced in a scene construed as "virtually an operatic quartet" (1960: 10) significantly and innovatively making for dissonance.

Giorgio Melchiori (2007) has pointed out that Shakespeare shows here an experiment in musical patterns without music: there are no songs in the play, but human voices are sometimes used as musical instruments by relying exclusively on the sound and combination of words. In particular, what Melchiori had in mind was the Italian madrigal. Often understood as a word for a short love poem, it in fact defined "a part song for three or more voices only, without instrumental accompaniment" (ibid.: 241). Italian madrigals were collected and published in London in 1588 by Nicola Yonge in a book entitled

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23. See in particular "The Resurrection of the Lord" in the *Wakefield Cycle* (ll. 334-81), and *Play 38* in the *York Cycle* (ll. 187-234); see Stevens and Cawley (1994); Purvis (1966).

Musica Transalpina, and they must have become well known if they were iron-ically mentioned in Robert Greene's 1589 *Menaphon* as extremely sorrowful compositions, but with no allusion to their polyphonic quality ("If a wrinckle appear in her brow, then our sheaperd must put on his working day face, and frame nought but dolefull madrigals of sorrow"; Greene 1589: 25). Their Angli-cization, though, dates from a few years later (1594), when Thomas Morely, pupil to William Byrd, published his first book of *Madrigalles to foure Voyces*, precisely "at a time when Shakespeare, after writing his two poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, was presumably at work on what can be considered his only truly lyrical tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*" (Melchiori 2007: 241). As Uhler has suggested, "Morley's four-voice madrigals were highly significant of the new spark in London's atmosphere of art. They are not only dramatic music in themselves, but the cause of musical drama in other artists" (1955: 330). On the same assumption, Melchiori has demonstrated that the main structural features of these two passages in both Q2 and, to a lesser degree, Q1 fall into a clearly contrapuntal pattern that suggests an operatic performance involving chorality, rather than sequential utterances.

To summarize Melchiori's contention about Q2 (2007: 247-50, see Ap-pendix, Table 1): 1) Paris, Lady Capulet, and Capulet start off with lines having exactly the same structure, while the Nurse's "fourfould repetition" of the onomatopoeic syllable "woe" sounds like a "wailing echo to the words of the other three"; 2) in the following line, the Nurse "falls into step with the rest", who begin with "a sequence of five extremely similar syllables"; 3) in line three the Nurse again differs from the others, who close on a polysyllabic word, but "shares with them the initial insistence on alliterative iteration of words and sounds"; 4) in line four, which is Paris's last one, there is overall concord in the speakers' exclamatory impetus, featuring "interjection (O, O, O …) and repetition (love, life/ etc.)"; 5) at this point (ll. 5-6), "the impression of confusion increases", because the speakers utter "different lines, and the Nurse's last line is incomplete as if the expression of her woe could go on for ever". This supplies enough evidence to prove the potential for a choral performance of a piece which Moisan has rightly judged as displaying "a greater congruence between content and form than is commonly surmised, for the experience that does not occur is mirrored by what the rhetoric does not address, namely the reality of death in all of its immanence and importunity" (1983: 391). In his view, the characters' predilection for a rhetoric of repeti-tion wrought on sound effects provides insulation "against the silence death brings" (ibid.). Paris's grieving comes through a proliferation of accusations as if excess could make up for the nonsense of death and the inadequacy of language to articulate it, including the mimicking of Romeo's early oxymora ("brawling love", "loving hate") in his "love in death" compound of line 4. Dis-

connectedness and reiteration feature also in the other characters' speeches, Lady Capulet's and the Nurse's especially, showing a distinct proclivity for sound over sense. Both Melchiori and Moisan are very keen on underlining the performative and semantic implications of this extraordinarily artificial scene, which, according to Melchiori, once transposed in Q1, shows the crafty hand of a reporter who does away with the Nurse's wailing "background noise" and devises five entirely new lines for the other three speeches, "which have hardly any word in common with the corresponding [ones] recorded in Q2" (2007: 246). As remarked by Erne (Shakespeare 2007: 137), these three parts "are not only of identical length but also have a similar structure, beginning with an exclamation before raising self-indulgent rhetorical questions about the speakers themselves (e.g. ll. 86, 91, 95-6) in a way Q2's do not". Compared with Q2, the lines appear more consequential: Paris addresses a personified sorrow with redundant and hyperbolic tones ("sad-fac'd", "map of misery", l. 1) and asks himself why he has wished to see this "unjust" and "impartial" (i.e. 'partial'; cf. *OED*, 3) day. Thus, hitting on the unfolding of tragic irony, he bemoans the sudden and unexpected reversal of fortune. Lady Capulet's speech is less varied and more wailing, with repeated interjections ("Alacke", ll. 3, 5) making for outright lament at the perception of nonsense and unjustice, a radical feeling which also Capulet shares and expresses with cross references to the cruelty and partiality of destiny mentioned by Paris.

The dramatic and musical quality of this piece, in either case, is all the more striking if one compares it with the corresponding lines of Brooke's poem, which, within an overall 48 lines (2.424-72), contain an eighteen-line speech by Lady Capulet, followed by the narrator's description of the other characters' grieving – Capulet's especially, struck dumb by pain –, as well as by the dismay of the whole city of Verona. Shakespeare had to render this long narrative piece dramatic by adjusting it to the requirements of stage action. He may have wanted the characters to perform their woe visually, but no stage direction stands as indication of gestures of sorrow. Yet he certainly worked on the piece aurally, and in this regard Q1 retains an especially interesting cue: a stage direction suggesting that at some point all the characters pronounce at least two lines together (or all the following lines): "*All at once cry out and wring their hands. / All cry*: All our ioy, and all our hope is dead, / Dead, lost, vndone, absented, wholy fled" (17.83-4; emphasis added). Q2, in turn, seems to allude to the confusion produced by the performance itself by having the Friar quip on the word confusion, meaning both distraction and noise ("Peace ho, for shame! *Confusion's* cure lives not / *In these confusions*", 4.5.65-6; emphasis added). This evidence is clearly suggestive of a peculiar type of chorality relying on counterpoint and simultaneous utterance.

And yet, this same evidence may also be suggestive of no less than another

type of chorality, at least as far as Q1 is concerned. The modularity of the speeches in the two cases, in fact, is not the same, since the identifiable patterns seem to hint at different performative potentials. While Q2 displays regular speech patterns both syntactically and in the number of syllables per line, as well as in rhythmical and alliterative schemes, Q1 shows reduced parallelisms in terms of word length, as well as modular syntactic and discursive units (see Appendix, Table 1). Besides, Q1's lines are more discursive and less fragmentary than Q2's, and appear to cohere less in terms of lexical and sound regularity than those in the other quarto. They also display a more elaborate form of counterpoint, bringing together the speeches through lexical or syntactic repetition alternatively two by two, as if one character were followed high on the heels by the next in taking up and variating part of his/her cue (for instance Lady Capulet's combination of "to see" and "this day" in line 2 recurs in split form in Paris's and Capulet's second lines, respectively: "… I desird to see", "To see this day, this miserable day", "Why to this day"). This creates an echo effect that reverberates from line to line and from one speaker to the next, extending to distant lines through lexical iteration (as in ll. 1, 3, 5: "unjust, impartial destinies"), thus unveiling a clearly coherent design underneath a seemingly disjointed set of speeches. This canon-like structure becomes apparent especially if each speaker pronounces each line sequentially, rather than in unison, with Lady Capulet providing an only slightly different tonality featuring an enhanced exclamatory register. Rich with alliterative effects, especially on the liquid /l/ and the plosive /d/ ("Alack the day, alacke and welladay"), her lines supply a protracted wailing effect derived from a sustained high-pitch voicing of grief that replaces the Nurse's prolonged interjections and exclamations in Q2 (see Appendix, Table 2).

This is why, contrary to a reading of the stage direction present in Q1 as proof of a collective utterance of the four lines, the stronger impression is that this direction rather concerns only the two lines immediately following, which in fact contain unequivocal indication of plurality: "All *our* ioy, and all *our* hope is dead / Dead, lost vndone, absented, wholy fled" (my emphasis). Perhaps it should not go unnoticed that, after this outburst of collective dismay, all the characters resume an individual attitude in expressing their own grief, replacing the plural pronoun with the singular "I". More could be noticed on the sound patterns and on how they affect both meaning and intention. Yet what has been pointed out suffices to suggest that there may be alternative readings to the current view that "the reporter was able to make little of the performed confusions" (Jowett in Wells and Taylor 1987: 300; see also Melchiori 2007: 245ff.), unless this means that whoever wrote this part either assisted to a different type of performance or simply devised a new and different one.

All the textual interpretations put forward to date are still largely con-

jectural (including Q1 as a reported text), and no definitive say is possible as to the degree of the testimonial quality of these texts regarding the actual or potential performance registered (or envisaged) here. However, what can be reasonably argued is that a loose thematic thread runs through Q1 and Q2, for instance in Capulet's only reference to his child and in all the speeches' consistent mention of the sadness of the time. It can also be maintained that both Q1 and Q2 show an acute awareness of the performative potential of choral polyphony, although in different ways. My opinion is that the elaborate articulation of anaphoric and epiphoric references in Q1 is neither casual nor necessarily dependent on the faulty memory of a reporter. It rather seems to suggest a different choral conception from Q2, more suitable to a sequential type of performance. This would fulfill an idea of choral counterpoint as the development of, and variation upon, a semantic or sound unit derived from a long-experimented upon antiphonal model. Precisely this model, which was passed down to the Renaissance from the medieval liturgy and through scattered instances of sixteenth-century drama, is here revised and enhanced (see Appendix Table 3, for possible speech distribution in Q2 and Q1).

Whatever option proves more tenable, discordant vocality is unquestionably prominent in both Q2 and Q1 within what appears to be a polyphonic pattern which has clearly superseded the traditional responsorial form of liturgical performance as well as the Senecan threnodic example of *Troas*. Confusion within harmony is the dramatic experimentation attempted by Shakespeare in a play that sets its lyrical tone from its initial narrative Chorus: while depriving this Chorus of chorality, it eventually recreates it musically, through dissonance, in a choral performance without a Chorus.

Appendix

Table 1

	PARIS	CAPULET WIFE	NURSE	CAPULET
Q2				
1	Beguiled, divorced, wrongèd, spited, slain 2 3 2 2 1	Accursed, unhappy, wretched hateful day! 2 3 2 2 1	O woe, O woeful, woeful, woeful day! 1 1 1 2 2 2 1	Despised, distressed, hated, martyred, killed! 2 3 2 2 1
2	Most detestable death, by thee beguiled, 1 3 1 1 1 2	Most miserable hour that e'er time saw 1 3 1 1 1 1 1	Most lamentable day, most woeful day 1 3 1 1 2 1	Uncomfortable time, why cam'st thou now 4 1 1 1 1 1
3	By cruel, cruel, thee quite overthrown! 1 1 1 1 1 3	In lasting labor of his pilgrimage! 1 2 2 1 1 3	That ever, ever I did yet behold! 1 2 2 1 1 1 2	To murder, murder our solemnity? 1 2 2 1 4
4	O love, O life, not life, but love in death! 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	But one, poor one, one poor and loving child, 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1	O day, O day, O day, O hateful day, 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1	O child, O child, my soul and not my child! 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
5		But one thing to rejoice and solace in, 1 1 1 1 2 1 2 1	Never was seen so black a day as this! 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Dead art thou, alack, my child is dead, 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1
6		And cruel death hath catched it from my sight! 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	O woeful day, O woeful day... 1 2 1 1 2 1	And with my child my joys are burièd. 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2
Q1				
1	O sad fac'd sorrow map of misery, 1 1 1 2 1 1 3	O woe, alacke, distrest, why should I liue? 1 1 2 2 1 1 1 1	Cruel, vniust, impartiall destinies, 1 2 3 3	
2	Why this sad time haue I desird to see. 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1	To see this day, this miserable day. 1 1 1 1 1 3 1		Why to this day haue you preseru'd my life? 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1
3	This day, this vniust, this impartiall day 1 1 1 2 1 3 1	Alacke the time that euer I was borne, 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1		Too see my hope, my stay, my ioy, my life, 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
4	Wherein I hop'd to see my comfort full, 2 1 1 1 1 1 2 1	To be partaker of this destinie. 1 1 3 1 1 3		Depriude of sence, of life, of all by death, 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
5	To be depriude by suddaine destinie. 1 1 2 1 2 3	Alacke the day, alacke and welladay. 2 1 1 2 1 3		Cruell, vniust, impartiall destinies. 1 2 3 3

The figures below the lines indicate the number of syllables

Top panel

	P	LC	C
1	<u>O</u> sad fac'd sorrow map of <u>misery</u>, a1 a2 a3	<u>O</u> woe, *alacke*, distrest, *why* should I *liue?* a1 b1 b2 b3	**Cruel, vniust, impartiall destinies.** c1 c2 c3 c4
2	*Why* <u>this</u> sad <u>time</u> haue I desird <u>to</u> see. b2 d1 a2 d2 d3	<u>To</u> see this *day*, <u>this</u> miserable *day* d3 d1 e1 d1 a3 e1	*Why* to <u>this</u> day haue you preseru'd my *life?* b2 d1 e1 b3
3	This *day*, this **vniust**, <u>this</u> **impartiall** *day* d1 e1 d1 c2 d1 c3 e1	*Alacke* the <u>time</u> that euer I was borne, b1 d2	*Too see* **my hope, my** stay, **my** ioy, **my** *life*, d3 f1 f2 f1 f1 b3
4	Wherein I **hop'd** *to see* **my** comfort full, f2 d3 f1	*To be* partaker of <u>this</u> **destinie.** g1 d1 c4	**Depriude** of sence, of *life*, of all by death, h1 b3
5	*To be* **depriude** by suddaine **destinie.** g1 h1 c4	*Alacke* the *day, alacke* and well*aday.* b2 e1 b2 e1	**Cruell, vniust, impartiall destinies.** c1 c2 c3 c4

Bottom panel

	P	LC	C
1	a1 + a2 + a3	a1 + b1 + b2 + b3	c1 + c2 + c3 + c4
2	b2 + d1 + a2 + d2 + d3	d3 + d1 + e1+ d1 + a3 + e1	b2 + d1 + e1+ b3
3	d1 + e1 + d1 + c2 + d1 + c3 + e1	b1 + d2	d3 + f1 + f2 + f1 + f1 + f1 + b3
4	f2 + d3 + f1	g1 + d1 + c4	h1 + b3
5	g1 + h1 + c4	b2 + e1 + b2 + e1	c1 + c2 + c3 + c4

Table 2

Words first used by P, LC, and C respectively are marked as follows: P = underlined; LC = italics; C = bold. Letters indicate the first occurrence of the marked word in each line; each line corresponds to a letter (P1: a; LC1: b; C1: c etc.). Going by this count, the first two lines have new entries until LC, while the third line presents only a new word ("hope") in C's line. In l. 4 there are two new entries (LC: "To be"; C: "Depriude"), and C's line duplicates the regular rhythmical pattern of l. 3 (sequence of monosyllables depending on the initial verb/participle); l. 5 shows little variation, marked lexical parallelisms (LC and C), and no new entry. Cross references are evident to the end, with the final epiphoric emphasis on c_4, "destinie/s" (1C, 4LC, 5P, 5C).

Q2

PARIS	CAPULET WIFE	NURSE	CAPULET
Have I thought long to see this morning's face, And doth it give me such a sight as this? Beguiled, divorcèd, wrongèd, spited, slain Most detestable death, by thee beguiled, By cruel, cruel, thee quite overthrown! O love, O life, not life, but love indeath!	Accursed, unhappy, wretched, hateful day! Most miserable hour that e'er timesaw In lasting labor of his pilgrimage! But one, poor one, one poor andloving child, But one thing to rejoice and solacein, And cruel death hath catched it from my sight!	O woe, O woeful, woeful, woeful day! Most lamentable day, most woeful day That ever, ever I did yet behold! O day, O day, O day, O hateful day, Never was seen so black a day asthis! O woeful day, O woeful day...	Despised, distressèd, hated, martyred, killed! Uncomfortable time, why cam'st thou now To murder, murder our solemnity? O child, O child, my soul and notmy child! Dead art thou, alack, my child is dead, And with my child my joys are buried.

Q1

PARIS	MOTHER	ALL	CAPULET
Haue I thought long to see this mornings face, And doth it now present such prodegies? Accurst, vnhappy, miserable man, Forlorne, forsaken, destitute I am: Borne to the world to be a slaue in it. Distrest, remediles, and vnfortunate. O heauens, O nature, wherefore did you make me, To liue so vile, so wretched as I shall.	O heere she lies that was our hope, our ioy, And being dead, dead sorrow nips vs all.	*All at once cry out* *and wring their hands.*	
O sad fac'd sorrow map of misery, Why this sad time haue I desird to see. This day, this vniust, this impartiall day Wherein I hop'd to see my comfort full, To be depriude by suddaine destinie.		All our ioy, and all our hope is dead, Dead, lost, vndone, absented wholy fled.	**Cruel, vniust, impartiall destinies.** Why to this day haue you preseru'd my life? Too see my hope, my stay, my ioy, my life, Depriude of sence, of life, of all by death, Cruell, vniust, impartiall destinies.

Table 3

Abbreviations

APGRD   *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama*,
            http://www.apgrd. ox.ac.uk (last access 18 October 2014).
OED   *Oxford English Dictionary* (2015, Oxford: Oxford University Press,
            online edition).

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FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie / On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy

Introduction *by Stephen Halliwell*

Schiller's essay "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy" is an important document in the history of modern attempts to make poetic and aesthetic sense of the function of the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy. It forms part of an intricate web of German writings on Greece whose criss-crossing lines of argument have been extensively studied elsewhere and obviously cannot be pursued in detail here. The purpose of these brief introductory remarks is to suggest that we can continue to learn from Schiller's engagement with the subject, not only because of the essay's significance in its own historical context but also because it prompts reflection on fundamental questions about modernity's relationship to Greek antiquity, and because, at a certain level, its problems are still our problems too.

Writing the piece at an advanced stage in his career as both playwright and philosopher of culture, Schiller was influenced by, and contributed to, a major shift in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century German theory and aesthetics of drama (as well as of art more generally). Reacting against the perceived formalism and moralism of French neoclassical theatre, in which the chorus had been either dispensed with altogether or reduced in scope in ways which were thought conformable with the ruling canon of *vraisemblance* (including the unities of time and space), Schiller sought to justify a reinvention of the tragic chorus on the contemporary stage which would satisfy the essential aim of art, conceived by him (along partly Kantian lines) as being to enable the human soul or spirit to find and exercise freedom through the living play of all its faculties ("die Freiheit des Gemütes in

dem lebendigen Spiel aller seiner Kräfte"). The best art, according to Schiller, can never be concerned with naturalistic, let alone illusionistic, appearances; through the power of creative imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) it transcends the constraints of the material world and provides insight into the deep truth that lies within, but not on the surface of, 'nature' (itself an idea generated by the spirit, not a set of material laws). The chorus is a vital means to this end, according to Schiller, because its lyric freedom can safeguard tragedy against the encroachment of unwanted and reductive verisimilitude.

The central thrust of Schiller's essay brings together, and somehow hopes to fuse into a unified aspiration, the original Greek institution of the tragic chorus with the governing principles of German aesthetic idealism. That fact alone makes the essay both remarkable and problematic. One crucial consideration which arises in this connection is how the imperatives of idealism are to be translated into fully theatrical effectiveness. Schiller himself was not blind to this issue; after all, he wrote the essay in somewhat anxious response to the first productions of *Die Braut von Messina*. At the very outset, Schiller insists that use of the chorus would speak for itself in a properly presented performance, which for him means one involving a sensuously powerful accompaniment ("diese sinnlich mächtige Begleitung"); even more fundamentally, he asserts that tragedy requires such performance in order to realise its complete unity of language, music and dance. But the prominent position of these statements might be thought less a symptom of Schiller's practical priorities than of his implicit sensitivity to the potential disparity between idealism and physical *Inszenierung*. That sensitivity betrays itself immediately when he feels the need to introduce a contrast between the existing conventions of theatre and those of a "possible" theatre ("eine *mögliche* [Bühne]", with Schiller's own emphasis). Before performance can speak for itself, it seems, the conditions of performance themselves need to be reconstructed (or reimagined) in accordance with the demands of an idealist aesthetic.

It is easy to underline that tension in Schiller's position by stressing, as many have done, how little practical detail the essay contains about either the original theatrical circumstances of choral performance or the proposed recreation of the chorus on the modern stage. But I would like to make a different point, one which treats this aspect of the essay as more intelligible and less of a simple shortcoming. Schiller is grappling in his own way with a recalcitrant problem that inevitably confronts any careful perspective on the chorality of Greek tragedy. The tragic chorus – inheriting this feature from the larger choral traditions of archaic Greece – is a poetically and aesthetically complex entity, suspended ambiguously (in its dramatic voice and consciousness) between collective and individual identity, between the status of observer and participant, between the frameworks of myth and actuality, and, most broadly

of all, between reflective abstraction and sensuous immediacy. A recognition of these ambiguities can be discerned at several junctures in the essay, but especially in the paragraph beginning 'Und dieses leistet nun der Chor in der Tragödie' ('And this is just what the chorus accomplishes in tragedy'). If Schiller fails fully to reconcile his idealist with his theatrical terms of reference, that is in part, then, because of his awareness of the subtle, elusive fluidity that belongs to the aesthetics of the Greek tragic chorus in its own right.

The task Schiller sets himself, however, is not so much the reconstruction of tragic chorality in historically close detail (something, as mentioned, which he does not purport, and was in fact not well equipped, to undertake) as the shaping of a self-conscious cultural relationship between the modern and the ancient. Here it is to his great credit that he does not claim a facile continuity or a readily achieved rapport. On the contrary, he makes things harder for his own arguments by adopting a particular account of the original standing of the tragic chorus. While (implicitly) following Aristotle's *Poetics* in seeing the chorus as the poetic origin of tragic drama, he superimposes on this premise a distinctively modern (and proto-romantic) conception of an archaic Greek world in which the chorus was itself a *social* phenomenon. Schiller formulates this conception rather strangely by saying that ancient tragedy 'found [the chorus] in nature, and employed it because it had found it' ('sie fand ihn in der Natur und brauchte ihn, weil sie ihn fand'). What he appears to mean by this is that at a very early stage of Greek society, when it was a world of "heroes and kings", social action of significance was conducted in the presence of a chorus-like public, so that the subsequent use of a chorus in tragedy paradoxically "derived from the poetical form of real life" ("er folgte schon aus der poetischen Gestalt des wirklichen Lebens"). Whereas modernity, on this view, is marked by a conflict between the social and the poetic, no such conflict existed "in those simple and primeval times" ("in der einfachen Urzeit"). Schiller's essay projects back a myth of aesthetic harmony onto the supposedly 'childlike' cultural purity of ancient Greece. And despite its strong sense of the gap between ancient and modern, it proposes that the reinstatement of an authentically handled chorus can somehow enable "the modern ordinary world" to be transformed into "the ancient poetical world" ("die moderne gemeine Welt in die alte poetische verwandelt").

Like much other philhellenism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Schiller's vision of the tragic chorus as a medium through which to recover a Greek aesthetic is unmistakably stamped with nostalgia. It is impossible, for instance, not to hear overtones of Winckelmann's "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" in the rather one-sided thesis that the chorus brings to the action of tragedy "the beautiful and elevated calm which must feature in a noble work of art" ("die schöne und hohe Ruhe, die der Charakter eines edeln Kunstwerkes

sein muβ"). In this and other respects, the essay's argument is an expression and advocacy of cultural ideals more than an exercise in historical analysis. It is also fascinating testimony to an unusual kind of self-interpretation: an attempt by Schiller the philosopher to make retrospective, theoretical sense of the work of Schiller the playwright. But these historical and personal factors in no way limit the lasting interest of the essay for students of theatre. One reason why that should be so is that the genealogy of our own attitudes to Greek antiquity is inescapably entangled with German philhellenism. Another is that we cannot confidently claim to have an appreciation of the tragic chorus superior to Schiller's. Schiller himself, I have suggested, possesses a shrewd awareness of the dialectical subtleties built into the peculiar workings of the chorus as a lyric presence within the structures of drama. Reading his essay, therefore, is one valuable way of addressing the challenges which the Greek chorus poses to our understanding and imagination.

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Friedrich Schiller

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie

On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy

Translation, notes and Notes to the text
by Guido Avezzù

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie

Ein poetisches Werk muß sich selbst rechtfertigen, und wo die Tat nicht spricht, da wird das Wort nicht viel helfen. Man könnte es also gar wohl dem Chor überlassen, sein eigener Sprecher zu sein, wenn er nur erst selbst auf die gehörige Art zur Darstellung gebracht wäre. Aber das tragische Dichterwerk wird erst durch die theatralische Vorstellung zu einem Ganzen; nur die Worte gibt der Dichter, Musik und Tanz müssen hinzukommen, sie zu beleben. So lange also dem Chor diese sinnlich mächtige Begleitung fehlt, so lange wird er in der Ökonomie des Trauerspiels als ein Außending, als ein fremdartiger Körper und als ein Aufenthalt erscheinen, der nur den Gang der Handlung unterbricht, der die Täuschung stört, der den Zuschauer erkältet. Um dem Chor sein Recht anzutun, muß man sich also von der wirklichen Bühne auf eine *mögliche* versetzen, aber das muß man überall, wo man zu etwas Höherm gelangen will. Was die Kunst noch nicht hat, das soll sie erwerben; der zufällige Mangel an Hilfsmitteln darf die schaffende Einbildungskraft des Dichters nicht beschränken. Das Würdigste setzt er sich zum Ziel, einem Ideale strebt er nach, die ausübende Kunst mag sich nach den Umständen bequemen.

Es ist nicht wahr, was man gewöhnlich behaupten hört, daß das Publikum die Kunst herabzieht; der Künstler zieht das Publikum herab, und zu allen Zeiten, wo die Kunst verfiel, ist sie durch die Künstler gefallen. Das Publikum braucht nichts als Empfänglichkeit, und diese besitzt es. Es tritt vor den Vorhang mit einem unbestimmten Verlangen, mit einem vielseitigen Vermögen. Zu dem Höchsten bringt es eine Fähigkeit mit, es erfreut sich an dem Verständigen und Rechten, und wenn es damit angefangen hat, sich mit dem Schlechten zu begnügen, so wird es zuverlässig damit aufhören, das Vortreffliche zu fodern, wenn man es ihm erst gegeben hat.

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[1] *Tat*: here the performance of the dramatic work, its theatrical 'doing', and, more in general, any performance whatsoever (the performative event per se).

[2] By saying that the words of an 'inappropriately performed' chorus, that is, lacking the accompaniment of music and dance, chill the audience, Schiller seems to bear in mind the Aristotelian doctrine regarding the chilling effect (τὸ ψυχρόν, the *psychron*) produced by high diction in dramatic dialogues characterised by an everyday-type of communication. Without music or dance accompaniment, it simply does not rise above ordinary language, while sounding mismatched in respect to its dramatic context.

[3] With 'the practising art' ("die ausübende Kunst") Schiller significantly contrasts the truly inspired artist with theatrical practitioners by referrring to the latter via the minor form of art they practice: one which is attuned to circumstantial needs rather than to higher spiritual

On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy*

A poetical work must justify itself, and where the deed[1] does not speak, words will not be of much help. Thus, one might well let the chorus be its own spokesman, provided that it were appropriately performed. But the tragic work of art achieves wholeness only through the theatrical performance: the poet provides only the words, music and dance must be added in order to make them come alive. Therefore, as long as the chorus lacks this sensuously powerful accompaniment, it will appear to be a thing external to the economy of the tragic drama like a foreign body and a resting-point which only disrupts the progress of the plot, disturbs the illusion, and chills the spectator.[2] Thus, in order to do justice to the chorus, one must relocate oneself from the actual stage to a *possible* one, but this is what one has to do whenever one wants to achieve something higher. What art does not have yet, this it must obtain; the fortuitous lack of resources must not be allowed to constrain the poet's creative power of imagination. He aims at what is most worthy, he strives towards an ideal, whereas the practising art may accomodate itself to the circumstances.[3]

It is not true, as one hears it usually claimed, that the audience degrade art: the artist degrades the audience, and at all times when art declined, it fell because of the artists.[4] The audience need nothing more than receptivity, and they do have it. They step in front of the curtain with a vague yearning, with a manifold capacity. They bring along a flair for what is highest; they enjoy what is sensible and right and yet, if they once begin to be satisfied with what is poor, then they will certainly cease to demand what is excellent, even when it is provided.

goals. Below (l. 28) with "contingent, limited and practising [art]" ("*die bedingte, beschränkte, ausübende Kunst*") he alludes again, and more explicitly, to the practical contingencies of theatrical performance. Reigner (Schiller 1869: 255): "c'est à l'art qui exécute de s'accommoder aux circonstances".

[4] 'Declined' and 'fell' are meant to render in English the spatial metaphor of descent, meaning degeneration, suggested by the verbs *verfallen* and *fallen*. It is important to note that this axiological opposition concerns exclusively the aesthetic sphere, cf. Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), 10: "It is certainly a matter requiring reflection that, at almost all the periods of history when art flourished and taste held sway, humanity is found in a state of decline" ("In der That muß es Nachdenken erregen, daß man beinahe in jeder Epoche der Geschichte, wo die Künste blühen, und der Geschmack regiert, die Menschheit gesunken findet").

Der Dichter, hört man einwenden, hat gut nach einem Ideal arbeiten, der Kunstrichter hat gut nach Ideen urteilen, die bedingte, beschränkte, ausübende Kunst ruht auf dem Bedürfnis. Der Unternehmer will bestehen, der Schauspie-
ler will sich zeigen, der Zuschauer will unterhalten und in Bewegung gesetzt sein. Das Vergnügen sucht er und ist unzufrieden, wenn man ihm da eine Anstrengung zumutet, wo er ein Spiel und eine Erholung erwartet.

Aber, indem man das Theater ernsthafter behandelt, will man das Vergnü-gen des Zuschauers nicht aufheben, sondern veredeln. Es soll ein Spiel bleiben,
aber ein poetisches. Alle Kunst ist der Freude gewidmet, und es gibt keine höhe-re und keine ernsthaftere Aufgabe, als die Menschen zu beglücken. Die rechte Kunst ist nur diese, welche den höchsten Genuß verschafft. Der höchste Genuß aber ist die Freiheit des Gemütes in dem lebendigen Spiel aller seiner Kräfte.

Jeder Mensch zwar erwartet von den Künsten der Einbildungskraft eine
gewisse Befreiung von den Schranken des Wirklichen, er will sich an dem Möglichen ergötzen und seiner Phantasie Raum geben. Der am wenigsten erwartet, will doch sein Geschäft, sein gemeines Leben, sein Individuum ver-gessen, er will sich in außerordentlichen Lagen fühlen, sich an den seltsamen Kombinationen des Zufalls weiden, er will, wenn er von ernsthafterer Natur
ist, die moralische Weltregierung, die er im wirklichen Leben vermißt, auf der Schaubühne finden. Aber er weiß selbst recht gut, daß er nur ein leeres Spiel treibt, daß er im eigentlichen Sinn sich nur an Träumen weidet, und wenn er von dem Schauplatz wieder in die wirkliche Welt zurückkehrt, so umgibt ihn diese wieder mit ihrer ganzen drückenden Enge, er ist ihr Raub,
wie vorher, denn sie selbst ist geblieben, was sie war, und an ihm ist nichts verändert worden. Dadurch ist also nichts gewonnen, als ein gefälliger Wahn des Augenblicks, der beim Erwachen verschwindet.

Und eben darum, weil es hier nur auf eine vorübergehende Täuschung abgesehen ist, so ist auch nur ein Schein der Wahrheit oder die beliebte Wahr-

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[5]Cf. n. 13.

[6]Here Schiller is evidently assuming that 'play' (*Spiel*) is deemed coterminous with 'entertain-ment' (cf. *unterhalten*, ll. 30 and 89), and by stressing the audience's disappointment at being confronted with an unexpected intellectual effort, proposes a different conception of theatrical art as spiritual engagement. *Spiel* is translated as 'playfulness', as opposed to 'seriousness' (*Ernst*) at l. 90. 'Play' has elsewhere deeper implications, see for instace l. 43ff., where Schiller contrasts 'theatre' (*Schauplatz*, here equivalent to *Theater* or *Bühne* ['stage'] where people feed upon unreal visions (*Traüme*), with 'the real world' (*die wirkliche Welt*).

[7]Cf. 'Note on the text', 3.

[8]*Gemüt*: cf. 'Note on the text', 3.

The poet, one hears it objected, may well work according to an ideal, the critic may well judge according to ideas, but art, contingent, limited and practising as it is, rests on needs.[5] The entrepeneur wants to survive, the actor wants to show himself, the spectator wants to be entertained and moved. He seeks enjoyment and is dissatisfied if one demands an effort from him, where he expected a play[6] and recreation.

But by treating theatre more seriously one does not suspend the spectator's enjoyment, rather one ennobles it. It should remain a play, but a poetical one. All art is dedicated to joy, and there is no higher or more serious task than to make people happy. Proper art[7] is only that which produces the highest pleasure – but the highest pleasure is the freedom of the soul[8] in the living play of all its faculties.

Every one, indeed, expects from the imaginative arts a certain liberation from the bounds of reality; in this way he wants to enjoy the possible, and give room to his own fantasy. He who has the lowest expectations, still wants to forget his business, his ordinary life, his individuality. He wants to feel himself in extraordinary situations, to feed upon the strangest coincidences of chance, and, if he is of a more serious nature, to find upon the stage that universal moral rule which he fails to meet in real life. But he is also well aware that he is engaging only in a play, that, in the true sense, he is only feeding upon dreams, and when he returns from the theatre into the real world, this surrounds him again with its all oppressive constrictions – he is its prey as he was before because the world itself has remained as it was and in him nothing has changed. Therefore, nothing has been gained but a pleasant, fleeting delusion which vanishes when one awakens.

And just for this reason, since only a transient illusion is shown here, what is necessary is only an appearance of truth, or the well-beloved verisimilitude,

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55 scheinlichkeit nötig, die man so gern an die Stelle der Wahrheit setzt.

Die wahre Kunst aber hat es nicht bloß auf ein vorübergehendes Spiel abgesehen, es ist ihr Ernst damit, den Menschen nicht bloß in einen augenblicklichen Traum von Freiheit zu versetzen, sondern ihn wirklich und in der Tat frei zu *machen*, und dieses dadurch, daß sie eine Kraft in ihm erweckt,
60 übt und ausbildet, die sinnliche Welt, die sonst nur als ein roher Stoff auf uns lastet, als eine blinde Macht auf uns drückt, in eine objektive Ferne zu rücken, in ein freies Werk unsers Geistes zu verwandeln und das Materielle durch Ideen zu beherrschen.

Und eben darum weil die wahre Kunst etwas Reelles und Objektives will,
65 so kann sie sich nicht bloß mit dem Schein der Wahrheit begnügen; auf der Wahrheit selbst, auf dem festen und tiefen Grunde der Natur errichtet sie ihr ideales Gebäude.

Wie aber nun die Kunst zugleich ganz ideell und doch im tiefsten Sinne reell sein – wie sie das Wirkliche ganz verlassen und doch aufs genaueste mit
70 der Natur übereinstimmen soll und kann, das ists, was wenige fassen, was die Ansicht poetischer und plastischer Werke so schielend macht, weil beide Foderungen einander im gemeinen Urteil geradezu aufzuheben scheinen.

Auch begegnet es gewöhnlich, daß man das eine mit Aufopferung des andern zu erreichen sucht und eben deswegen beides verfehlt. Wem die Natur zwar
75 einen treuen Sinn und eine Innigkeit des Gefühls verliehen, aber die schaffende Einbildungskraft versagte, der wird ein treuer Maler des Wirklichen sein, er wird die zufällige Erscheinungen, aber nie den Geist der Natur ergreifen. Nur den Stoff der Welt wird er uns wiederbringen, aber es wird eben darum nicht unser Werk, nicht das freie Produkt unsers bildenden Geistes sein und kann also
80 auch die wohltätige Wirkung der Kunst, welche in der Freiheit besteht, nicht haben. Ernst zwar, doch unerfreulich ist die Stimmung, mit der uns ein solcher Künstler und Dichter entläßt, und wir sehen uns durch die Kunst selbst, die uns befreien sollte, in die gemeine enge Wirklichkeit peinlich zurückversetzt. Wem hingegen zwar eine rege Phantasie, aber ohne Gemüt und Charakter, zuteil
85 geworden, der wird sich um keine Wahrheit bekümmern; sondern mit dem Weltstoff nur spielen, nur durch phantastische und bizarre Kombinationen zu überraschen suchen, und wie sein ganzes Tun nur Schaum und Schein ist, so wird er zwar für den Augenblick unterhalten, aber im Gemüt nichts erbauen und begründen. Sein Spiel ist, so wie der Ernst des andern, kein poetisches. Phan-
90 tastische Gebilde willkürlich aneinanderreihen, heißt nicht ins Ideale gehen,

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9 *Stoff… das Materielle*: cf. 'Note on the text', **3**.

that people so easily substitute for truth.

But true art does not aim at a play soon to be forgotten; its seriousnesss does not simply consist in situating people in a dream of freedom lasting the twinkling of an eye, but in *making* them really and in fact free, and this by awakening, exercising, and developing in them a power to drive into an objective distance the sensuous world, which otherwise would weigh upon us like coarse fabric and would press upon us as a blind force, to transform it into a free work of our spirit, and to dominate the material[9] by means of ideas.

And just for this reason, because true art wants something real and objective, she cannot be satisfied merely with the appearance of truth; upon truth itself, upon the firm and deep foundation of nature, she builds her ideal edifice.

But now, how art can be at once altogether ideal and yet in the deepest sense real – how she must and can utterly distance itself from the actual and yet be in the most perfect harmony with nature, this is what few understand, hence the squint perspective on poetic and plastic works of art, since in the ordinary way of judging these two claims seem to counteract each other.

Furthermore, it is habitually contended that by sacrificing the one one seeks to achieve the other, and exactly in this way one misses both. He who was endowed by nature with a true sensibility and deeply ingrained feelings, but was denied the creative imaginative power, will be a faithful painter of the actual, will be able to grasp accidental appearances but not the spirit of nature. He will be able to reproduce for us only the stuff of the world, but in this way it is not our own work, the free product of our creative spirit, nor does it have the beneficial effect of art, whose foundation is freedom. Serious, indeed, yet unpleasant, is the mood in which such an artist and a poet leave us: we see ourselves painfully thrown back into our mean and narrow reality by the very art which should have liberated us. On the other hand, an artist who shares in a vivid fancy, but is destitute of soul and character, will not bother about truth at all: instead, he will only play with the stuff of the world, and seek to surprise us with fantastical and whimsical combinations; and since his whole performance is nothing but foam and appearance, he will, to be sure, entertain us for the twinkling of an eye, but will fail to build up and found anything in the mind. His playfulness, like the seriousness of the other, is thoroughly unpoetical. To arrange fantastic shapes in an arbitrary sequence does not

und das Wirkliche nachahmend wieder bringen, heißt nicht die Natur darstellen. Beide Forderungen stehen so wenig im Widerspruch miteinander, daß sie vielmehr – eine und dieselbe sind; daß die Kunst nur dadurch wahr ist, daß sie das Wirkliche ganz verläßt und rein ideell wird. Die Natur selbst ist nur eine
95 Idee des Geistes, die nie in die Sinne fällt. Unter der Decke der Erscheinungen liegt sie, aber sie selbst kommt niemals zur Erscheinung. Bloß der Kunst des Ideals ist es verliehen, oder vielmehr, es ist ihr aufgegeben, diesen Geist des Alls zu ergreifen und in einer körperlichen Form zu binden. Auch sie selbst kann ihn zwar nie vor die Sinne, aber doch durch ihre schaffende Gewalt vor
100 die Einbildungskraft bringen und dadurch wahrer sein als alle Wirklichkeit und realer als alle Erfahrung. Es ergibt sich daraus von selbst, daß der Künstler kein einziges Element aus der Wirklichkeit brauchen kann, wie er es findet, daß sein Werk in *allen* seinen Teilen ideell sein muß, wenn es als ein Ganzes Realität haben und mit der Natur übereinstimmen soll.

105 Was von Poesie und Kunst im Ganzen wahr ist, gilt auch von allen Gattungen derselben, und es läßt sich ohne Mühe von dem jetzt Gesagten auf die Tragödie die Anwendung machen. Auch hier hatte man lange und hat noch jetzt mit dem gemeinen Begriff des *Natürlichen* zu kämpfen, welcher alle Poesie und Kunst geradezu aufhebt und vernichtet. Der bildenden Kunst gibt man
110 zwar notdürftig, doch mehr aus konventionellen als aus innern Gründen, eine gewisse Idealität zu, aber von der Poesie und von der dramatischen insbesondere verlangt man *Illusion*, die, wenn sie auch wirklich zu leisten wäre, immer nur ein armseliger Gauklerbetrug sein würde. Alles Äußere bei einer dramatischen Vorstellung steht diesem Begriff entgegen – alles ist nur ein
115 Symbol des Wirklichen. Der Tag selbst auf dem Theater ist nur ein künstlicher, die Architektur ist nur eine symbolische, die metrische Sprache selbst ist ideal, aber die Handlung soll nun einmal real sein und der Teil das Ganze zerstören. So haben die Franzosen, die den Geist der Alten zuerst ganz mißverstanden, eine Einheit des Orts und der Zeit nach dem gemeinsten empirischen Sinn
120 auf der Schaubühne eingeführt, als ob hier ein anderer Ort wäre als der bloß ideale Raum, und eine andere Zeit als bloß die stetige Folge der Handlung.

Durch Einführung einer metrischen Sprache ist man indes der poetischen Tragödie schon um einen großen Schritt näher gekommen. Es sind einige lyri-

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[10] *Alles Äußere*: reference to all that does not belong intrinsically to the materiality of theatre and rather relates to its illusionistic power (as Schiller explains soon afterwards, the illusion of daylight, architecture and so on which belong to the real world, not the stage itself).

[11] *Der Teil das Ganze zerstören*: the "part" he speaks of here is the action itself, whose reality dismantles the overall theatrical illusion.

mean to enter into the ideal, and closely to reproduce reality does not mean to represent nature. These two claims are so little contradictory that they rather are one and the same, because art is true only if it altogether forsakes actuality and becomes pure ideal. Nature herself is just an idea of the spirit, which does not fall under the senses. She lies beneath the veil of appearances, but never appears herself. The art of the ideal alone is granted, or rather appointed, to grasp this spirit of the universe and bind it to a corporeal shape. But not even this art can present it to the senses by means of her creative force, rather she can present it to our imaginative faculty and consequently be truer than all actuality, and more real than all experience. It follows, self-evidently, that the artist can use no single element taken from actuality as he finds it, that his work must be ideal in *all* its parts in order to possess reality as a whole and to be in harmony with nature.

What is true of poetry and of art in general also holds for all their genres, and what has just been said may be applied to tragedy with no difficulty. Here, too, one had, and still has, to contend with the ordinary concept of the *natural*, which altogether dissolves and annihilates all poetry and art. The fine arts are somehow granted a certain ideality, on conventional rather than intrinsic grounds. But from poetry and, especially, the dramatic one, one demands *illusion*, which, even if it were achievable, would only be the poor trickery of a charlatan. In a dramatic performance all that is external[10] is contrary to this notion – everything is but a symbol of the real. In the theatre, the day itself is only artificial, the architecture symbolic, the metrical language itself ideal, but at least the action must be real – and the part destroys the whole.[11] Thus the French, who first wholly misunderstood the spirit of the Ancients, introduced on the stage the unities of space and time in the most ordinarily empirical sense, as if it were a place other than a purely ideal space, and time were other than the purely consistent sequence of the actions.

Meanwhile, by introducing metrical speech, a large step closer to poetical tragedy has been taken. Some lyrical experiments have been successfully

125 sche Versuche auf der Schaubühne glücklich durchgegangen, und die Poesie hat sich durch ihre eigene lebendige Kraft, im einzelnen, manchen Sieg über das herrschende Vorurteil errungen. Aber mit den einzelnen ist wenig gewonnen, wenn nicht der Irrtum im Ganzen fällt, und es ist nicht genug, daß man das nur als eine poetische Freiheit duldet, was doch das Wesen aller Poesie ist. Die Einführung des Chors wäre der letzte, der entscheidende Schritt – und wenn

130 derselbe auch nur dazu diente, dem Naturalism in der Kunst offen und ehrlich den Krieg zu erklären, so sollte er uns eine lebendige Mauer sein, die die Tragödie um sich herumzieht, um sich von der wirklichen Welt rein abzuschließen und sich ihren idealen Boden, ihre poetische Freiheit zu bewahren.

Die Tragödie der Griechen ist, wie man weiß, aus dem Chor entsprungen.

135 Aber so wie sie sich historisch und der Zeitfolge nach daraus loswand, so kann man auch sagen, daß sie poetisch und dem Geiste nach aus demselben entstanden, und daß ohne diesen beharrlichen Zeugen und Träger der Handlung eine ganz andere Dichtung aus ihr geworden wäre. Die Abschaffung des Chors und die Zusammenziehung dieses sinnlich mächtigen Organs in die charakterlose

140 langweilig wiederkehrende Figur eines ärmlichen Vertrauten war also keine so große Verbesserung der Tragödie, als die Franzosen und ihre Nachbeter sich eingebildet haben.

Die alte Tragödie, welche sich ursprünglich nur mit Göttern, Helden und Königen abgab, brauchte den Chor als eine notwendige Begleitung, sie fand

145 ihn in der Natur und brauchte ihn, weil sie ihn fand. Die Handlungen und Schicksale der Helden und Könige sind schon an sich selbst öffentlich und waren es in der einfachen Urzeit noch mehr. Der Chor war folglich in der alten Tragödie mehr ein natürliches Organ, er folgte schon aus der poetischen Gestalt des wirklichen Lebens. In der neuen Tragödie wird er zu einem Kunstorgan; er

150 hilft die Poesie *hervorbringen.* Der neuere Dichter findet den Chor nicht mehr in der Natur, er muß ihn poetisch erschaffen und einführen, das ist, er muß

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[12]In his letter of 28 March 1803 to Christian Gottfried Körner (Schiller 1984: 25, n. 33), Schiller wrote that "a great part of the German public is not able to renounce its prosaic concept of what it supposes to be natural in a poetic work" ("ein großer Theil des ganzen Deutschen Publicums seine prosaische Begriffe von dem Natürlichen in einem Dichterwerk nicht ablegen kann"). On April 25th, Körner replied: "The wrong notion of our public about what is natural has to some degree compelled some art theoreticians to debase art to a trade. Opinions about painting most often seem more reasonable, but about a poem etc." ("Die falschen Begriffe unsers Publikums über das Natürliche sind wohl zum Theil einige Kunsttheoretiker veranlaßt worden, die Kunst gerne zu einem Geschäft herabwürdigen möchten. Über Gemählde hört man auch öfter ein gesundes Urtheil, als über ein Gedicht etc."; Schiller 1987).

[13]Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, ch. 7: "An infinitely more valuable [*than that of A.W.*

staged, and poetry, in some individual cases, has prevailed over current prejudice by its own living force. But in individual cases little is gained if the error is not definitely eradicated, and it is not sufficient that what in fact is the essence of all poetry be tolerated as poetical licence. The introduction of the chorus would be the last and decisive step – and even if it only served to openly and honestly declare war upon naturalism in art,[12] the chorus should be to us a living wall which tragedy draws around itself in order to guard itself from the world of actuality, and maintain for itself its own ideal ground, its poetical freedom.[13]

Greek tragedy, as is well known, originated from the chorus.[14] But although historically and in the course of time it cut itself loose from the chorus, even so one may say that poetically and in spirit it arose precisely from the chorus, and that without such a persistent witness and bearer of the action a completely different poetical genre would have grown out of it. The dissolution of the chorus and the conflation of this sensitive and powerful organ with the characterless, boring, and ever recurring figure of a simple confidant[15] were by no means such a great improvement of the tragedy as the French and their imitators have imagined.

Ancient tragedy, which originally dealt only with gods, heroes, and kings, required the chorus as a necessary accompaniment; it found it in nature, and employed it because it had found it. The deeds and fates of the heroes and kings are public in themselves, and in those simple and primeval times they were even more so. Thus, in ancient tragedy the chorus was more than a natural organ, in so far as it derived from the poetical form of real life. In modern tragedy, it becomes an artificial organ; it helps to bring poetry forth. The modern poet no longer finds the chorus in nature, he must create it poetically and *introduce* it, that is, he must make such a change in the plot he is handling

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Schlegel] insight into the significance of the chorus was displayed by Schiller in the celebrated Preface to his *Bride of Messina*, where he regards the chorus *as a living etc.*" (Nietzsche 2000: 58; my emphasis; "Eine unendlich werthvollere Einsicht über die Bedeutung des Chors hatte bereits Schiller in der berühmten Vorrede zur *Braut von Messina* verrathen, der den Chor als 'eine lebendige Mauer etc.'"). As remarked by Silk and Stern, "Nietzsche sees [the separateness of stage and auditorium] at one and the same time as a physical fact, an aesthetic phenomenon and a metaphysical-religious condition" (1983: 350).

[14]Schiller refers to Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449a10f.: "The (tragedy) came from the leaders of the dithyramb" ("γενομένη... ἡ [τραγῳδία] ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον").

[15]Schiller alludes to the conflation of the choral collective into an individual character who, among all the chorus's privileges, maintains only that of receiving the confidences of the main

mit der Fabel, die er behandelt, eine solche Veränderung vornehmen, wodurch sie in jene kindliche Zeit und in jene einfache Form des Lebens zurückversetzt wird.

155   Der Chor leistet daher dem neuern Tragiker noch weit wesentlichere Dienste, als dem alten Dichter, eben deswegen, weil er die moderne gemeine Welt in die alte poetische verwandelt, weil er ihm alles das unbrauchbar macht, was der Poesie widerstrebt, und ihn auf die einfachsten, ursprünglichsten und naivsten Motive hinauftreibt. Der Palast der Könige ist jetzt geschlossen,
160 die Gerichte haben sich von den Toren der Städte in das Innere der Häuser zurückgezogen, die Schrift hat das lebendige Wort verdrängt, das Volk selbst, die sinnlich lebendige Masse, ist, wo sie nicht als rohe Gewalt wirkt, zum Staat, folglich zu einem abgezogenen Begriff geworden, die Götter sind in die Brust des Menschen zurückgekehrt. Der Dichter muß die Paläste wieder auftun, er
165 muß die Gerichte unter freien Himmel herausführen, er muß die Götter wieder aufstellen, er muß alles Unmittelbare, das durch die künstliche Einrichtung des wirklichen Lebens aufgehoben ist, wieder herstellen und alles künstliche Machwerk an dem Menschen und um denselben, das die Erscheinung seiner innern Natur und seines ursprünglichen Charakters hindert, wie der Bildhauer
170 die modernen Gewänder, abwerfen und von allen äußern Umgebungen desselben nichts aufnehmen, als was die höchste der Formen, die menschliche, sichtbar macht.

    Aber ebenso, wie der bildende Künstler die faltige Fülle der Gewänder um seine Figuren breitet, um die Räume seines Bildes reich und anmutig
175 auszufüllen, um die getrennten Partien desselben in ruhigen Massen stetig zu verbinden, um der Farbe, die das Auge reizt und erquickt, einen Spielraum zu geben, um die menschlichen Formen zugleich geistreich zu verhüllen und sichtbar zu machen, ebenso durchflicht und umgibt der tragische Dichter seine streng abgemessene Handlung und die festen Umrisse seiner handelnden

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characters. How the collective became an individual corresponds to the history of the dramatic chorus since its rediscovery in the sixteenth century (see here Bigliazzi, this issue: 101-33).

[16]"In jene kindliche Zeit und in jene einfache Form des Lebens": cf. 150. ("in der einfachen Urzeit"), 124 ("die einfachsten, ursprünglichsten und naivsten Motive"). See 'Note on the text', 4.

[17]*Aufstellen*: rather than resurrecting the gods, the idea is that of restoring their statues.

[18]The expression "all artificial and poor efforts" ("alles künstliche Machwerk") is eventually referred to "the artificial frame" ("die künstliche Einrichtung") of real life' (ll. 170ff.) with a clearly ironic and derogatory meaning.

[19]Albeit etymologically close to the word *Geist*, which in these pages normally has the meaning of 'spirit' rather than 'mind', here *geistreich* conveys an idea of ingenuity, cleverness, rather than inspiration.

whereby it is brought back to that childlike time and to that simple form of life.[16]

    Therefore, the chorus renders a more substantial service for the modern tragedian than it did for the ancient poet, precisely for this reason, because it changes the modern ordinary world into the ancient poetical one, because it makes all that goes against poetry useless to the poet, and drives him aloft to the most simple, original, and naive motifs. The palace of the kings is now closed, the courts of justice have withdrawn from the city gates into the interior of abodes, writing has replaced the living word, the people itself – the sensuous, living mass –, when it does not act as brute force, has become the state and thereby an abstract concept, the gods have retreated into the bosom of man. The poet must open the palaces again, he must lead the courts out under the open heavens, he must restore[17] the gods, he must re-establish all that is immediate and was dissolved by the artificial frame of real life, and cast off all artificial and poor efforts[18] *on* and *around* man, which prevent the manifestation of his inner nature and original character, just as the sculptor casts off modern robes, and nothing takes of the external circumstances, but what makes the highest of all forms, the human ones, visible.

    But just as a painter spreads the profusion of pleated garments around his figures in order to richly and gracefully fill the space of his pictures, combine its several parts in regular and balanced proportions, give room to play to colour, which entices and refreshes the eye, ingeniously[19] veil human shapes and at the same time make them visible, so the tragic poet interlaces and surrounds his rigorously proportioned plot and the firm outlines of his acting figures with a splendid, lyrical fabric, in which the acting characters freely

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180 Figuren mit einem lyrischen Prachtgewebe, in welchem sich, als wie in einem weit gefalteten Purpurgewand, die handelnden Personen frei und edel mit einer gehaltenen Würde und hoher Ruhe bewegen.

In einer höhern Organisation darf der Stoff oder das Elementarische nicht mehr sichtbar sein, die chemische Farbe verschwindet in der feinen Carnation
185 des Lebendigen. Aber auch der Stoff hat seine Herrlichkeit und kann als solcher in einem Kunstkörper aufgenommen werden. Dann aber muß er sich durch Leben und Fülle und durch Harmonie seinen Platz verdienen und die Formen, die er umgibt, geltend machen, anstatt sie durch seine Schwere zu erdrücken.

In Werken der bildenden Kunst ist dieses jedem leicht verständlich, aber
190 auch in der Poesie und in der tragischen, von der hier die Rede ist, findet dasselbe statt. Alles, was der Verstand sich im allgemeinen ausspricht, ist ebenso wie das, was bloß die Sinne reizt, nur Stoff und rohes Element in einem Dichterwerk und wird da, wo es vorherrscht, unausbleiblich das Poetische zerstören; denn dieses liegt gerade in dem Indifferenzpunkt des Ideellen und
195 Sinnlichen. Nun ist aber der Mensch so gebildet, daß er immer von dem Besondern ins Allgemeine gehen will, und die Reflexion muß also auch in der Tragödie ihren Platz erhalten. Soll sie aber diesen Platz verdienen, so muß sie das, was ihr an sinnlichem Leben fehlt, durch den Vortrag wieder gewinnen, denn wenn die zwei Elemente der Poesie, das Ideale und Sinnliche, nicht innig
200 verbunden *zusammen wirken*, so müssen sie *nebeneinander* wirken, oder die Poesie ist aufgehoben. Wenn die Waage nicht vollkommen inne steht, da kann das Gleichgewicht nur durch eine *Schwankung* der beiden Schalen hergestellt werden.

Und dieses leistet nun der Chor in der Tragödie. Der Chor ist selbst kein
205 Individuum, sondern ein allgemeiner Begriff, aber dieser Begriff repräsentiert sich durch eine sinnlich mächtige Masse, welche durch ihre ausfüllende Gegenwart den Sinnen imponiert. Der Chor verläßt den engen Kreis der Handlung,

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[20]Schiller again resorts to a spatial metaphor of verticality ("higher"), implying a positive value judgement, in order to signify here the work's refined articulation. Shortly afterwards the vertical metaphor returns to denote the heavy pressure exerted by materiality which degrades the work of art and prevents it from achieving the ideal through spiritual elevation.

[21]Also in this case Schiller opts for an abstract terminology which does away with all idea of phenomenological and elemental reality in order to foreground elementarity as a general/ontological concept.

[22]Schiller suggests a conceptualisation of the chorus, neither an individual nor only a crowd of individuals, but a concept (*Begriff*), yet able to make itself perceptible as a "sensuous and mighty mass". In his Basle lecture on the "Greek Music Drama" (1871) Nietzsche will similarly emphasise the chorus as a formidable singleton, whose singularity is quite different from

and nobly move, as in a purple multipleated garment, with sustained dignity and high composure.

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In a higher organisation,[20] the stuff or the elementary[21] must no longer be visibile – chemical colours dissolve into the fine carnation of the living subject. But the stuff, too, has its own splendour, and as such can be included in a work of art. But then it must earn its place with liveliness and fullness and harmony, and confer value on the ideal forms which it surrounds, rather than overwhelm them with its gravity.

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This may be easily understood in the fine arts, but the same may be found also in poetry and the tragic, of which we are talking here. All that our under-standing expresses in general, is precisely like that which simply excites the senses, only stuff and raw element in a poetical work, and if it predominates, it will inevitably destroy the poetical, because this lies precisely at the midpoint between the ideal and the sensible. Now, the human being is so constitued that he always wants to proceed from the particular to the general, and reflection must have its place in tragedy. But if it is to earn this place, it must regain what it lacks in the sensuous life through the performance. If the two elements of poetry, the ideal and the sensuous, do not *work closely together*, they must work *side by side*, otherwise poetry is lost. If the scale is not in perfect balance, the equilibrium may be restored only by *swaying* the pans of the scale.

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And this is just what the chorus accomplishes in tragedy. The chorus *per se* is not an individual, rather a general concept; but this concept shows itself in a sensuous and mighty mass, which appeals to the senses with its pervading presence.[22] The chorus leaves the narrow boundaries of the action in order to

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the individuality of the characters: "although a multiplicity of persons, the chorus does not musically represent a mass of people, but only an enormous individual being endowed with supernatural lungs" ("obschon eine Mehrheit von Personen, stellt er doch musikalisch keine Masse vor, sondern nur ein ungeheures, mit übernatürlicher Lunge begabtes Einzelwesen"; Nietzsche 1980: 15f.).

um sich über Vergangenes und Künftiges, über ferne Zeiten und Völker, über das Menschliche überhaupt zu verbreiten, um die großen Resultate des Lebens
210 zu ziehen und die Lehren der Weisheit auszusprechen. Aber er tut dieses mit der vollen Macht der Phantasie, mit einer kühnen lyrischen Freiheit, welche auf den hohen Gipfeln der menschlichen Dinge, wie mit Schritten der Götter, einhergeht – und er tut es, von der ganzen sinnlichen Macht des Rhythmus und der Musik in Tönen und Bewegungen begleitet.

215 Der Chor *reinigt* also das tragische Gedicht, indem er die Reflexion von der Handlung absondert und eben durch diese Absonderung sie selbst mit poetischer Kraft ausrüstet; ebenso, wie der bildende Künstler die gemeine Notdurft der Bekleidung durch eine reiche Draperie in einen Reiz und in eine Schönheit verwandelt.

220 Aber ebenso, wie sich der Maler gezwungen sieht, den Farbenton des Lebendigen zu verstärken, um den mächtigen Stoffen das Gleichgewicht zu halten, so legt die lyrische Sprache des Chors dem Dichter auf, verhältnismäßig die ganze Sprache des Gedichts zu erheben und dadurch die sinnliche Gewalt des Ausdrucks überhaupt zu verstärken. Nur der Chor berechtigt den
225 tragischen Dichter zu dieser Erhebung des Tons, die das Ohr ausfüllt, die den Geist anspannt, die das ganze Gemüt erweitert. Diese eine Riesengestalt in seinem Bilde nötigt ihn, alle seine Figuren auf den Kothurn zu stellen und seinem Gemälde dadurch die tragische Größe zu geben. Nimmt man den Chor hinweg, so muß die Sprache der Tragödie im Ganzen sinken, oder was jetzt
230 groß und mächtig ist, wird gezwungen und überspannt erscheinen. Der alte Chor, in das französische Trauerspiel eingeführt, würde es in seiner ganzen Dürftigkeit darstellen und zunichte machen; eben derselbe würde ohne Zweifel Shakespeares Tragödie erst ihre wahre Bedeutung geben.

So wie der Chor in die Sprache *Leben* bringt, so bringt er *Ruhe* in die
235 Handlung – aber die schöne und hohe Ruhe, die der Charakter eines edeln

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[23]The word "power" here renders the original "*Kraft*" as in previous occurrences, in order to respect the iterative lexical choices of the author, although its meaning is now closer to that of 'vigour'.

[24]In this case Schiller does not use exactly the same verb as before (l. 223: "compel"/*zwingen*) to convey an idea of 'obligation', thus sacrificing perfect parallelism and choosing to emphasise a more physical, material, overtone, tinged with a connotation of inevitability – here rendered by the verb "push" ("*auflegen*", almost as if it were *auferlegen*).

[25]Nietzsche will recall the gigantism of Greek tragedy in his "Greek Music Drama": "For what else, other than puppets, would call those beings, standing on high heels or on *cothurni*, with giantsized, gaudily painted masks …" (Nietzsche 2013: 12). It is worth noting that both Schiller and Nietzsche, as many others, emphasised the raised *cothurni* against

encompass the past and the future, distant times and nations, and humanity in general, so as to draw conclusions on the grand results of life and pronounce the teachings of wisdom. But it does so with the full power of fantasy, with a bold lyrical freedom, which ascends to the highest summits of human things with almost god-like step – and it does so with the accompaniment, in its accents and movements, of the full sensuous power of rhythm and music.

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The chorus thus *purifies* tragic poetry, while separating reflection from the action, and, by means of this separation, supplies reflection with poetical power[23] – just as the artist transforms the ordinary necessity of clothing into charm and beauty by means of a rich drapery.

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But just as the painter feels himself compelled to intensify the shade of his living subject in order to maintain a balance between his powerful materials, so the lyrical language of the chorus pushes[24] the poet to proportionally heighten his entire poetical language, and thus to intensify the sensuous force of the expression in general. Only the chorus justifies the tragic poet in this heightening of tone, which fills the ear, strains the spirit, and expands the entire soul. This one giant form in his picture obliges him to place all of his figures upon cothurni, thus giving his painting tragic greatness. Should the chorus be taken away, then the whole language of tragedy would inevitably be lowered,[25] or what is now great and mighty would appear contrived and overstrained. The ancient chorus, if introduced into the French tragic drama, would reveal its full poverty and unmake it to nothing;[26] exactly the same thing would doubtlessly give Shakespeare's tragedy its true meaning for the first time.[27]

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As the chorus brings *life* to language, so it gives *calm* to the action – but the beautiful and elevated calm which must feature in a noble work of art.

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archaeological evidence (see Taplin 1985: 14).

[26] *Zunichte machen*: elsewhere in this text Schiller uses images of destruction and annihilation (cf. l. 92), but never with such emphasis, due to the collocation of two strong words side by side; hence the expressive redundancy in English of "unmake… to nothing" which foregrounds, by antithesis, what he says soon afterwards about Shakespeare.

[27] Richard Wagner will express a different view on this subject: "Shakespeare's tragedy unconditionally stands above that of Greece, in so far as it has enabled artistic technique to dispense with the necessity of a Chorus" (Wagner 1995: 6of.) ("Shakespeare's Tragödie steht insofern unbedingt über der griechischen, als sie für die künstlerische Technik die Nothwendigkeit des Chores vollkommen überwunden hat", Wagner 1869: 52f.). On the chorus in Shakespeare see Bigliazzi, this issue: 101-33.

Kunstwerkes sein muß. Denn das Gemüt des Zuschauers soll auch in der heftigsten Passion seine Freiheit behalten, es soll kein Raub der Eindrücke sein, sondern sich immer klar und heiter von den Rührungen scheiden, die es erleidet. Was das gemeine Urteil an dem Chor zu tadeln pflegt, daß er die

240 Täuschung aufhebe, daß er die Gewalt der Affekte breche, das gereicht ihm zu seiner höchsten Empfehlung, denn eben diese blinde Gewalt der Affekte ist es, die der wahre Künstler vermeidet, diese Täuschung ist es, die er zu erregen verschmäht. Wenn die Schläge, womit die Tragödie unser Herz trifft, ohne Unterbrechung aufeinander folgten, so würde das Leiden über die Tätig-

245 keit siegen. Wir würden uns mit dem Stoffe vermengen und nicht mehr über demselben schweben. Dadurch, daß der Chor die Teile auseinanderhält und zwischen die Passionen mit seiner beruhigenden Betrachtung tritt, gibt er uns unsre Freiheit zurück, die im Sturm der Affekte verlorengehen würde. Auch die tragischen Personen selbst bedürfen dieses Anhalts, dieser Ruhe, um sich

250 zu sammeln; denn sie sind keine wirkliche Wesen, die bloß der Gewalt des Moments gehorchen und bloß ein Individuum darstellen, sondern ideale Personen und Repräsentanten ihrer Gattung, die das Tiefe der Menschheit aussprechen. Die Gegenwart des Chors, der als ein richtender Zeuge sie vernimmt und die ersten Ausbrüche ihrer Leidenschaft durch seine Dazwischenkunft bändigt,

255 motiviert die Besonnenheit, mit der sie handeln, und die Würde, mit der sie reden. Sie stehen gewissermaßen schon auf einem natürlichen Theater, weil sie vor Zuschauern sprechen und handeln, und werden eben deswegen desto tauglicher, von dem Kunsttheater zu einem Publikum zu reden.

Soviel über meine Befugnis, den alten Chor auf die tragische Bühne zu-

260 rückzuführen. Chöre kennt man zwar auch schon in der modernen Tragödie, aber der Chor des griechischen Trauerspiels, so wie ich ihn hier gebraucht habe, der Chor als eine einzige ideale Person, die die ganze Handlung trägt und begleitet, dieser ist von jenen operhaften Chören wesentlich verschieden,

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[28]Here Schiller alludes to both the chorus's interventions dividing the acts of the play – like the *stasima* (choral songs, sung by the chorus when 'stationary') of Greek tragedy and his own (half-)choruses in the *Bride* (Zimmermann 2011: 302) – and to the chorus's contributions to the characterisation of their interlocutors by intervening in, or breaking up, their dialogues.

[29]Here "force" (*Gewalt*) has the meaning of 'impulse' of the moment, referring to the subjective response to circumstances.

[30]This too is a somewhat dense image suggesting a distinctly Schillerian stylistic choice, which may be paraphrased as 'the deep core' or 'heart' of humanity, and which Lodge (Schiller 1863) significantly rendered as "deep things of humanity".

[31]Lodge (Schiller 1863) did not translate the German text corresponding to ll. 235-40. In these enigmatic words of Schiller we can envisage two, so to speak, concentric theatres: a "natural"

Because the audience's mind ought also to maintain its freedom even in the midst of the fiercest passion; it should not fall prey to impressions, rather always clearly and serenely detach itself from the emotions it suffers. What in the ordinary way of judging is objected to the chorus, that it suspends the illusion and breaks the force of affections, this credits it with the highest recommendation, because precisely this blind force of affections is what the true artist avoids, this illusion is what he disdains to excite. If the blows with which tragedy strikes our hearts followed one another without interruption, then suffering would win over action. We would be confounded with the stuff, and no longer float above it. Thus, since the chorus holds the parts asunder[28] and steps between the passions with its calming considerations, it gives us our freedom back, which would be lost in the storm of affections. Also the tragic characters themselves need this pause, this calm, in order to collect themselves; because they are no real beings, who merely obey the force[29] of the moment and merely represent one individuality, rather ideal characters and representatives of their species, who express the depth[30] of humanity. The presence of the chorus, which listens to them as a judging witness and by its own intervention harnesses the incipient outbursts of their sufferings, motivates the reasonableness with which they act and the dignity with which they speak. To some extent they stand in a natural theatre, because they speak and act in front of spectators, and therefore they will speak even more appropriately to their audience from an artificial theatre.[31]

Thus much on my right to reintroduce the ancient chorus upon the tragic stage. Indeed, choruses are already known in modern tragedies; but the Greek tragic chorus, such as I have employed it here, the chorus as a single ideal person furthering and accompanying the whole action, this is essentially different from those operatic choruses,[32] and when sometimes I hear talk about

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one, where characters speak to the choral collective "derived from the poetical form of real life" (l. 140), as their immediate spectators, and an "artificial" one, where characters and chorus play in front of their actual audience. In a sense, it is as if the chorus, "create(d) and introduce(d)" by the modern playwright who "no longer finds (it) in nature" (ll. 142f.) but in "childlike", "original", "primeval", and "simple" forms of life (cf. n. 16), always had their back turned to the audience, just like a "living wall" (l. 123).

[32]Here Schiller seems to anticipate Wagner's well-known position against operatic choruses (Wagner 1995: 60-63; 282f.; 335f; 303-306).

und wenn ich bei Gelegenheit der griechischen Tragödie von *Chören* anstatt
265   von einem Chor sprechen höre, so entsteht mir der Verdacht, daß man nicht
recht wisse, wovon man rede. Der Chor der alten Tragödie ist meines Wissens
seit dem Verfall derselben nie wieder auf der Bühne erschienen.

Ich habe den Chor zwar in zwei Teile getrennt und im Streit mit sich selbst
dargestellt; aber dies ist nur dann der Fall, wo er als wirkliche Person und als
270   blinde Menge mithandelt. Als *Chor* und als ideale Person ist er immer eins
mit sich selbst. Ich habe den Ort verändert und den Chor mehrmal abgehen
lassen; aber auch Aeschylus, der Schöpfer der Tragödie, und Sophokles, der
größte Meister in dieser Kunst, haben sich dieser Freiheit bedient.

Eine andere Freiheit, die ich mir erlaubt, möchte schwerer zu rechtferti-
275   gen sein. Ich habe die christliche Religion und die griechische Götterlehre
vermischt angewendet, ja, selbst an den maurischen Aberglauben erinnert.
Aber der Schauplatz der Handlung ist Messina, wo diese drei Religionen teils
lebendig, teils in Denkmälern fortwirkten und zu den Sinnen sprachen. Und
dann halte ich es für ein Recht der Poesie, die verschiedenen Religionen als ein
280   kollektives Ganze für die Einbildungskraft zu behandeln, in welchem alles, was
einen eignen Charakter trägt, eine eigne Empfindungsweise ausdrückt, seine
Stelle findet. Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee
eines Göttlichen, und es muß dem Dichter erlaubt sein, dieses auszusprechen,
in welcher Form er es jedesmal am bequemsten und am treffendsten findet.

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[33]In Schiller's *Bride of Messina* the Choruses consist of the Followers of Don Manuel and Don
Caesar, respectively. Akin to their respective masters, the brothers Don Manuel and Don Caesar,
the two Choruses are actually "two real characters, who clash one another" (Luzzatto 1959:
114).

[34]The Chorus exit, for example, at the end of Act 1. Schiller clearly alludes to Aeschylus'
Eumenides, where the Chorus exit at 231 and re-enter at 244 (and between 234 and 235 the
audience must also suppose a lapse of time), and to Sophocles' *Ajax*, where the Chorus exit at
814 and re-enter at 866. However he does not mention Euripides, where we find instances of
the same phenomena (*Alcestis*, 746 and 861; *Helen*, 385 and 515; *Rhesus*, 564 and 674). Indeed, in
post-classical tragedy it was common for the chorus to exit, even repeatedly, during the course
of the drama. Therefore, in this too, modern understanding of the ancient chorus is deeply

choruses of the Greek tragedy instead of a single chorus I become suspicious that the person does not know what he is talking about. The chorus of ancient tragedy, to my knowledge, has no longer appeared upon the stage since the demise of tragedy itself.

I have, indeed, divided the chorus in two parts, and represented it in conflict with itself; but this is only when it partakes in the action as a real person and as a blind multitude. As *chorus* and as ideal person it is always one and the same.[33] I have changed the place and allowed the chorus to exit several times; but also Aeschylus, the creator of tragedy, and Sophocles, the great master of this art, have taken this liberty.[34]

Another liberty that I have permitted myself may be more difficult to justify. I have blended Christian religion and Greek pagan mythology, yes, and even recalled some Moorish superstitions. But the scene of the play is Messina, where these three religions have exerted their influence, partly through living practice, and partly through monuments, and they speak to the senses. And besides I deem it a privilege of poetry to treat the different religions as a collective whole for the power of imagination, where everything that bears an individual character, expresses an individual sensibility, finds its own place. Under the veil of all religions there lies religion itself, the idea of something divine.[35] And the poet must be allowed to express this in whichever form he finds most fitting and appropriate.

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influenced by late theatrical practices, and, chiefly, by Senecan tragedy (Zwierlein 1966: 80-87).

[35]"Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee eines Göttlichen": this sentence achieved resounding success, cf. Feil 2012: 652-66.

Note on the text *by Guido Avezzù*

Schiller appended this short text as preface to the first edition of his *Bride of Messina* (*Die Braut von Messina oder Die feindlichen Brüder, ein Trauerspiel mit Chören*, Tübingen, Cotta, 1803). The play had been first staged in Weimar on 19 March of that year, and then again, in early May, in Hamburg. Schiller worked on this essay in that same month of May and sent it to the publisher on 7 June. On May 24, Schiller wrote to Goethe: "I have had a hard time on another subject, since I am just about to say a few words on the tragic chorus, which are to be the foreword to my *Bride of Messina*".[1] Therefore, it is plausible that, despite its clearly theoretical approach, this piece aimed at justifying and supporting also his own more daring dramatic innovations; it represents the author's final considerations on specific features of its plot. At all events, the interplay between dramatic structure and theories of art in Schiller's *Bride of Messina* was clear to Richard Wagner, who, in his *Opera and Drama* (1853), wrote that "never was anything so purposely planned from a purely art-historical standpoint, as this *Bride of Messina*: what Goethe shadowed in his marriage of Faust with Helena, was here to be embodied through artistic speculation" (Wagner 1995: 146).[2]

1. Text: Schiller 1980; Schiller 1965.
2. Selected translations:
    – in English: Schiller 1847; Schiller 1863; Schiller 2003;
    – in French: Schiller 1869;
    – in Italian: Schiller 1969.
3. Language.
    Schiller's vocabulary, not unexpectedly, exhibits some recurring and interwoven basic antitheses. Some of them concur to drawing a distinctive axiological system, as 'high' *vs* 'low', 'seriousness' (*Ernst, ernsthaft*) *vs* 'playfulness' (in two instances, at ll. 35 and 90, the ambiguous *Spiel* is clarified as "*poetisches*" or "*kein p.*") or construct a generic 'psychology' made up of mind, soul, and spirit (I have usually translated *Geist* as "spirit" and *Gemüt* as "soul"). Other antitheses have a more substantial theoretical import:

    – *Trauerspiel* is here translated as "tragic drama", rather than as the literal

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1. "Ich habe jetzt auch meine Noth mit dem Stoffe anderer Art, denn da ich eben daran bin, ein Wort über den tragischen Chor zu sagen, welches an der Spitze meiner Braut von Meßina stehen soll, etc." (Schiller 1984: 41, n. 51).
2. "Nie ist vom rein kunsthistorischen Standpunkte aus so absichtlich geschaffen worden, als in dieser *Braut von Messina*: was Goethe in der Vermählung des Faust mit der Helena andeutete, sollte hier durch künstlerische Spekulation verwiklicht werden" (Wagner 1969: 134).

> "mourning-play", or the more current "tragedy"; however, "tragedy" is
> used for the same word at l. 264, because there *das griechische Trauer-*
> *spiel* refers to ancient tragedy, which Schiller normally calls *Tragödie*.
>
> – *(Die) wahr(e) Kunst* is rendered as "true art" (ll. 47, 65, 95) and *(der)*
>   *wahr(e) Künstler* as "true artist" (l. 245), whereas *die rechte Kunst* is
>   translated as "proper art" (l. 37). More complex is the juxtaposition
>   of "true", "reality", and "real" at ll. 100-2: "this art ... can ... be truer
>   (*wahrer*) than all reality (*Wirklichkeit*), and more real (*realer*) than all
>   experience (*Erfahrung*)".
>
> – *Natur*, *natürlich*, *Wirklichkeit*, *wirklich*, and *Kunst*, *künstlich* articulate
>   various substantial oppositions; the most controversial seems to be
>   the one between a "natural" and an "artificial theatre" (ll. 259-61), for
>   which see n. 31.
>
> – *Stoff*, sing. (frequently *Weltstoff* and similar) and collective, is always
>   translated as "stuff" except for l. 61, where "ein roher Stoff" seems to
>   allude to the recurring imagery of clothes; but *Stoffen* as "materials"
>   at l. 224. "*Das Materielle*" ("material", l. 63) is used as synonym of 'ele-
>   mentary' and appears connected with the plain, raw, and constraining
>   reality (*Wirklichkeit*, etc.), as opposed to the freedom of the spirit and
>   the power of ideas (cf. ll. 57-64; 250ff.).

More generally, Schiller's style here displays signs of an impromptu piece,
and indeed we may conjecture that these pages were written after the letter
sent by Körner on 25 April (see n. 12), and were completed when Schiller
wrote to Goethe on 28 May (see above). This seems to be proved by the often
tortuous phrasing, the occasional awkwardness of style and poor lexical
variety, the frequent repetitions and iterated discursive schemes, such as
"if ... then" clauses, testifying to an obsessive effort to make the argument
consequential and logically incontrovertible. Abstractions are especially
favoured in a revealing attempt to communicate general concepts touching
on the essence of dramatic art, with a seemingly total disregard of its
practical and actual phenomenology. Being strong stylistic features bearing
on the conceptual framework of the piece, they have intentionally been
maintained in English.

4. "(Coming) back to (a) childlike time and to that simple form of life" (ll.
   155-7): it is very easy to find obvious cross-references to Schiller's essay
   On Simple and Sentimental Poetry (1795-96), e.g., to statements, at its very
   beginning, such as "this sort of interest which we take in nature is only
   possible under two conditions. First the object that inspires us with this
   feeling must be really nature, or something we take for nature; secondly

this object must be in the full sense of the word simple, that is, presenting the entire contrast of nature with art, all the advantage remaining on the side of nature. Directly this second condition is united to the first, but no sooner, nature assumes the character of simplicity".[3] See also: "[T]he child is to us like the representation of the ideal; not, indeed, of the ideal as we have realized it, but such as our destination admitted; and, consequently, it is not at all the idea of its indigence, of its hinderances, that makes us experience emotion in the child's presence; it is, on the contrary, the idea of its pure and free force, of the integrity, the infinity of its being".[4] Therefore, from Schiller's point of view, Euripides obviously was the beginner of 'sentimental' poetry, whereas, among the moderns, Shakespeare is highly representative of "the poet of a young world, simple and inspired" (*der Dichter einer naiven und geistreichen Jugendwelt*).

5. The Chorus in *The Bride of Messina*.

On Schiller, Greek tragedy, and *The Bride of Messina* see Schwinge 2008, Oesterle 2008. With regard to the Chorus, an extensive description has been made by Zimmermann 2011: 302-4. Therefore I confine myself to a thorough analysis of the 'choral' portions in Act 1. The Chorus consists of two half-choruses: (1) Cajetan, Berengar, Manfred, Tristan, and eight other followers of Don Manuel; (2) Bohemund, Roger, Hippolyte, and nine others of the party of Don Caesar. They speak mainly in trochees and anapaests, whereas the characters speak in iambics. In order to explain Schiller's admission of having divided his Chorus in two parts (ll. 270ff.), here is a tabulation of the Chorus's interventions in Act 1, based on three different witnesses:

Comparing this chorus with its ancient predecessors, and borrowing classical terminology, the whole 1.3 is as a sort of *parodos* (first song sung by the chorus after their entrance), and the whole 1.8 a *stasimon* (sung by the chorus when *stationary*) and, at the same time, a *metastasis* (exit of the chorus) which preludes to a second *parodos* (*epiparodos*). In 1.7, the leader of the first half-chorus, Cajetan, speaks in iambics, just like an ancient *coriphaeus*, both in short monologues and in the dialogue with

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3. "Diese Art des Interesse an der Natur findet aber nur unter zwei Bedingungen statt. Fürs erste ist es durchaus nötig, dass der Gegenstand, der uns dasselbe einflößt, Natur sei oder doch von uns dafür gehalten werde; zweitens, dass er (in weitester Bedeutung des Wortes) naiv sei, d.h., dass die Natur mit der Kunst im Kontrast stehe und sie beschäme. Sobald das Letzte zu dem ersten hinzukommt und nicht eher, wird die Natur zum Naiven" (Schiller 1962: 412).

4. "Das Kind ist uns daher eine Vergegenwärtigung des Ideals, nicht zwar des erfüllten, aber des aufgegebenen und es ist also keineswegs die Vorstellung seiner Bedürftigkeit und Schranken, es ist ganz im Gegenteil die Vorstellung seiner reinen und freien Kraft, seiner Integrität, seiner Unendlichkeit, was uns rührt" (Schiller 1962: 416).

act. scene ll.		stage directions		
		A	**B**	**C**
1.3	132-44	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	145-54	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
	155-71	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	172-74	All	–––	
	175-80	1st Chorus	Berengar	
	181-86	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
	187-89	All	–––	
	190-211	One of the Chorus	Berengar	
	212-27	Another	Cajetan	Manfred
	228-54	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	255-58	Both Choruses	Cajetan	
	259-66	1st Chorus	Berengar	Bohemund
	277-93	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	277-92: Berengar
				283-: Roger
1.4	324-327	Chorus	Bohemund	
	370-75	Chorus	Cajetan	
	433-38	Chorus	Cajetan	
1.5	460-65	Chorus	Cajetan	
	524-29	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
1.6	530-33	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
1.7	592-604	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	633-49	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	668-77	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	718-21	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	739-76	[Dialogue]	Cajetan*	
	789-92	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	811	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	844-46	Chorus	Cajetan*	
1.8	861-70	Chorus	Cajetan	
	871-91	One of the Chorus	Manfred	
	892-901	Another	Berengar	
	902-6	Another one	Cajetan	
	907-18	The 1st one	Manfred	
	919-38	The 2nd one	Berengar	
	939-59	The 3rd one	Cajetan	
	960-68	–––	Berengar	
	969-80	Chorus	Cajetan	
			exit Chorus	

A Stage directions according to the first edition.
B Additional stage directions according to further editions.
C *Augsburger Schema* (cf. Schiller 1980: 321-7), only when diverging from **B**.
*   Iambics.

his master Don Manuel (ll. 739-76 are patterned after a classical sequence of two-line speeches in alternation [*distichomythia*]): there is no doubt that the stage direction "Chorus" here means an individual voice. Only in two instances (1.3.172-4 and 187-9) both *hemichoria* (1st and 2nd Chorus) 'sing' in one voice: in both cases, they erupt with shared emotional outbursts, which obfuscates their individual character. However, the capital question was if the Chorus had to sing or to declaim,[5] cf. Zimmermann 2011.

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The Chorus's "moral effect" in Italian Opera

Abstract

Despite Italian operatic tradition had lengthily relegated the chorus to a mainly accessory and even decorative function, its presence in nineteenth-century melodrama progressively gained momentum and acquired a rather crucial import, especially during the Risorgimento. In his *Zibaldone* Giacomo Leopardi expressed his opinion about the chorus in melodrama, comparing its current ancillary position to the role and the "moral effect" it had in ancient theatre. The moral implications suggested by the poet were more precisely and firmly developed by Giuseppe Mazzini in his *Filosofia della musica* [*Philosophy of Music*], where the importance of the chorus is passionately stressed. Being aware of the centrality and communicative potential of melodrama in Italy, Mazzini charged the chorus with a mission of cultural and social renewal. This article explores these issues by examining not only famous examples taken from Gaetano Donizetti and Giuseppe Verdi but also less known works such as Giovanni Bottesini's *L'assedio di Firenze* (1856) [*The Siege of Florence*]. Based upon a novel with the same title by Francesco Domenico Guerazzi, *L'assedio di Firenze* is a rare example of an opera in which political sentiments are openly proclaimed. Indeed, Bottesini's use of the chorus appears to be particularly attuned to Mazzini's idea and proves a case in point of the "moral effect" exercised by the chorus during the great season of Italian melodrama.

Defined by Nietzsche as the *Urgrund*, the primal ground, of a representative form of Apollonian and Dionysian descent (Nietzsche 1994: 1), the chorus played a fundamental aesthetic and moral role in ancient tragedy and constituted its dramatic centre of gravity until Sophocles. With their dancing and singing in the *orchestra*, the chorus epitomized the Greek concept of music as a synthesis of all dynamic arts (Comotti 1991: 5), and provided an area specifically devoted to reflections of universal import. As the repository of ethical values and being at times involved in the action, the chorus had the *mousikà* transformed into elements that expressively connoted dramatic situations, emotions, and moods.

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In the second half of the sixteenth century the ambition to revive ancient Hellenic theatre was one of the decisive factors behind the development of the idea of melodrama. As for this new musical genre, the intermingling of drama and chorality found its fullest expression in Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607). Yet, the growth of a theatrical managerial system contributed to assign an absolutely central role to solo voices, for both aesthetic and commercial reasons, downsizing or altogether deleting other elements, such as choral interventions. In the same period in France the choral parts took on a preeminent role in the richly spectacular *tragédies en musique* of Lullian derivation, under the patronage of Louis XIV. In Italy, the chorus was completely reintegrated into serious opera only in the second half of the eighteenth century, once the French influence and Gluck's reform had led to the abandonment of the traditional Metastasian structure. Thus the last phase of Italian operatic tradition saw the chorus establish itself as an important resource, although in the early nineteenth century it was still endowed with a mainly accessory and decorative role, comparable to that of the scenery. In addition to its predominantly narrative and commenting side-role, inscribed in the dramatic frame, in Rossini's years the chorus occasionally started to perform as an acting crowd, later acquiring an extra-diegetic function or actually metamorphosing into a purely timbric component. In the following pages we will focus on these aspects by examining more or less well-known examples taken from the operatic repertoire from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

In conformity to a theatrical trend towards the ethnic or geographical characterization of staged events (following the contemporary fascination for ethnically or geographically characterized dramas), the chorus could be employed to boost the *couleur locale* without really influencing the unfolding of the plot: see the Muslim, Savoyard, Tartar, or Polish choruses present in many operas between the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. *La Lodoiska* (Venice, 1796) by Simon Mayr, based upon a successful *pièce à sauvetage,* complies with this fashion and has the few lines sung by the chorus denounce its marginal, albeit dramaturgically functional, role. The action begins with the intervention of a group of Poles bearing flowering branches and celebrating the upcoming wedding between Boleslao and the female protagonist, who is actually in love with Lovinski:

> Scenda propizio imene,
> E in sacro laccio unisca
> La vaga Lodoiska
> All'inclito signor.
> (Gonella 1796: 9)

[May the god of marriage benevolently descend / to tie the sacred knot / between beautiful Lodoiska / and this illustrious man.][1]

In 1.6 an aggressive chorus of Tartar soldiers is present on stage, while in 1.8, a group of Polish prisoners sing *di dentro* before being freed by Lovinski. In Act 2, two choruses soon appear on stage: the victorious Poles and the Tartars, now imprisoned. The chorus of Poles interact with other characters in 2.9, and in 2.14 sing two tercets of ten-syllable lines to celebrate the wedding of their lord with Lodoiska; they then remain on stage punctuating the conflictual *concertato* that closes the act. In the epilogue, the entrance of the Tartar soldiers, aimed at liberating the two lovers imprisoned by the evil Boleslao, does not result in an autonomous choral song and the action ends on a joyous quatrain sung by all those on stage:

> Cessin la strage, e il sangue,
> Sia l'ira ormai placata
> E torni con l'amata
> L'amante a respirar.
> (Gonella 1796: 72)

[Cease the bloody slaughter, / May the rage be calmed / May lover and beloved / breathe in relief.]

All in all, a simple recounting of the lines assigned to the choruses – roughly forty lines in the whole libretto – suffices to assess the actual relevance of the masses in the action.

Although the use of the chorus is deemed to be a Rossinian innovation, its recurrence in the Pesarese composer's operatic production is far from being regular or consistent (Tortora 1996: 19). In Rossini's work the choral interventions especially characterize large-scale pieces. The chorus is always to be found in the introduction, where it serves, so to speak, as an icebreaker: it either plays a prologic role by giving useful information about the antecedents, or merely facilitates the scenic development. In the finale it enhances the musical and dramatic complexity and pomp, emphasizing the conflicts on stage and taking the parts of the protagonist or of a group of characters. It also quite frequently appears in multi-section forms (arias, large-scale scenes, ensembles), for instance as a group of maidservants comforting the female protagonist, who sublimates her affliction into a solo aria. Here is the opinion of an authoritative contemporary witness:

> Coi rondò va unito il coro, né perciò quelli si dicono meno esser pezzi assoli. Alcune volte il coro ne intona il proemio; altre volte, dopo una parte sentesi cantare di dentro (anche un semplice suon d'istrumenti fa lo stesso uffizio), quindi, arrivando sulla

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1. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Italian quotations are by Carlo Vareschi.

scena, da quanto annunzia, prendesi occasione di cambiare la situazione, variar lo stile musicale, porre secolui a dialogo l'attore soliloquente, e terminar col gradito secondo delle simultanee voci corali ... Anche il coro canta solo, come non secondario interlocutore ... Allora il suo canto è aria, che, detta da più voci, diviene suscettiva di particolare contrappunto. Né mancano esempj di duetti fra due cori distinti. (Ritorni 1841: 42-3)

[The chorus should take part in the rondos, without belittling their soloist quality. Sometimes the chorus intones a prelude; some other times, after being heard singing off stage (this effect can also be provided by instrumental music), it enters the stage and alters the situation with an announcement, changes the musical style, and dialogues with the soloist pleasantly assisting him or her by joining voices ... The chorus can also sing alone, not as a secondary character ... Its song is then a multi-voiced aria, susceptible to a particular counterpoint. And there are also examples of duets between two different choruses.]

The choruses *di dentro* mentioned by Ritorni, though infrequent, allow a broadening of the spatial horizon, as is the case with the already cited intervention of the Polish prisoners in *Lodoiska*; otherwise they can perform the task of enriching a lyrical and introspective scene or of signalling the approaching of a military squad.

Introductions usually have a ternary structure: a) an opening section sung by the chorus, sometimes together with one or more secondary characters; b) a slow *cantabile* in which a main character is introduced; c) a *cabaletta*, with the return of the chorus and other characters on stage (Gossett 1970: 54-55). At the end of the overture of Rossini's *Otello* (Napoli, 1816), a cheering crowd welcomes the victorious protagonist with two quatrains of eight-syllable lines. The chorus "Viva Otello, viva il prode" ["Hooray for Otello, hooray for the hero"] is followed by a military march, which accompanies the commander's entrance, and a long recitative. After being awarded the Venetian citizenship by the Doge, fuelling Iago's and Roderigo's discontent, Otello sings a *cavatina*, "Ah sì per voi già sento" ["I already feel for you"], and the following *cabaletta*, "Deh! amor dirada il nembo" ["Pray, love, dissolve the clouds"], is interspersed by the interventions of the chorus of Venetian senators and citizens: "Non indugiar, t'affretta, / Deh! vieni a trionfar" (Berio 1816: 7) ["Hurry without delay, / Pray! join your triumph"].

At least until Rossini's successful stay in Naples (1815-22), contemporary choral pieces were generic and stylistically conventional, which made them suitable for all occasions. In spite of this, the chorus established itself as a fundamental element from the point of view of staging. In this regard in 1836 Pietro Lichtental declared that "the Chorus is one of the most beautiful ornaments of the operatic stage, and with its impressive crowds it offers the most magnificent example of union between melody and harmony, voices and instrumental music" ("il Coro è uno de' più bei ornamenti della scena lirica, ed

offre colle sue masse imponenti il complesso più magnifico dell'unione della melodia all'armonia, e delle voci all'orchestra" (Lichtental 1836: 216).

In those same years, even Giacomo Leopardi expressed his view on the use of the chorus in opera. In his non-systematic aesthetics, music is a recurring presence. Indeed, the *Zibaldone* abounds with references to music in general and to the contemporary musical scene in particular. Yet, despite his deep interest and romantic appreciation of the power of music to express an idea of infinity, Leopardi's knowledge was limited to the theatrical panorama of Recanati and the other Italian towns where he resided. In general terms, he agreed with the critical attitude which censured opera theatre because of its lack of ethical values, indifference to dramatic laws, and acquiescence to the discretion of singers and musicians, all of which were held to be detrimental to poetry. In an entry dated 7 July 1823, Leopardi gives his opinion about the presence of the chorus in melodrama, comparing its current ancillary position to the role it had in ancient theatre:

> Nelle nostre Opere serie e buffe l'effetto del coro non è cattivo. Ma esso nelle opere serie è ben lontano dal far quegli uffici, dal sostener quel personaggio, e quindi muovere quelle illusioni e far quegli effetti che faceva nelle tragedie antiche: ond'è che esso riesce forse meglio nelle opere buffe, quanto all'effetto morale, giacché muove pure all'allegria, e fa, come l'uffizio, così l'effetto che produceva nelle antiche commedie, né il muovere all'allegria ch'è pure una passione, è piccolo effetto morale. Laddove nelle opere serie esso non interessa quasi che gli occhi e gli orecchi, e niuna passione ancorché menoma né desta né pur tocca. Ma questo è pur troppo il general difetto di tutta l'Opera, e massime della seria, e nasce dal far totalmente servir le parole allo spettacolo e alla musica, e dalla confessata nullità d'esse parole, dalla qual necessariamente deriva la nullità de' personaggi, e così del coro, e quindi la mancanza d'effetto morale, ossia di passione; se non altro la molta scarsezza, rarità, languidezza, e poca durevolezza dell'uno e dell'altra. (2905-6, Leopardi 1991:1538-9)

> [The effect of the chorus in our serious and comic *Operas* is not bad. But in serious *operas* it is very far from performing the same functions, from preserving the same character, and hence from evoking the same illusions and from having the same effects it had in ancient tragedy. Perhaps it succeeds better therefore in *comic operas*, so far as the moral effect is concerned, since it induces gaiety, and has both the function and the effect that it had in ancient comedies. And inducing gaiety, which is also a passion, is a moral effect of no little weight. Whereas in serious *operas* the chorus is almost only of interest to the eyes and the ears, and does not rouse or touch even the slightest of passions. But this unfortunately is the general shortcoming of all *Opera*, especially of the serious kind. It is due to the total subordination of the words to the spectacle and to the music, and to the acknowledged nothingness of those words, from which necessarily derives the nothingness of the characters, and likewise of the chorus, and hence the lack of moral effect, in other words passion. Or, if nothing else, the great scarcity, rarity, feebleness, and fleeting nature of one and the other. (2905-6, Leopardi 2013: 1202)]

He could not envision that this comic tendency would soon dry up. From 1830 onwards, the operatic production would indeed mostly comprise serious

operas, with the exception of the lasting popularity of mock-serious subjects, and a fleeting comic revival during the light-hearted Fifties. While keeping in mind that the dramatic and musical function of the chorus is mainly narrative, it is also essential to point out that, in its lyric interventions, the chorus recounts, comments upon, and emphasizes the action. Thus, as Daniela Tortora has it, the chorus creates "systematic shifts in the perception of theatrical time, wholly incompatible with musical comedy" (1996: 20).

Between 1810 and 1830 the chorus underwent an interesting development. For instance in *Mosè in Egitto* [*Moses in Egypt*], a mayor success of Rossini's Neapolitan years, individual emotions fit into collective vicissitudes and, as a result, the chorus gains a more central role. Also Act 2 of Gaspare Sontini's *Agnes von Hohenstaufen* (Berlin, 1829) is informed by a pyramidal structure on the basis of two powerful concerted pieces with a wonderful chorus of religious women accompanying the wedding between the protagonist and Henry the Lion. However, Leopardi's excerpt seems to advocate more than a simple increase in the chorus's presence and dramatic relevance. The fundamental theatrical term "effetto" ["effect"] is repeatedly used in the sense of *ethos,* the peculiar quality accorded to the various *harmoniai* [scales] and above all to their *tropoi* [modes] by the theory traditionally attributed to Damon (fifth century BC). In the *poikilia* [differentiation] of musical combinations, each *ethos* has an effect, an inevitable repercussion on the human body and soul. In this respect Plato goes as far as to argue that changes in musical styles could result in dangerous alterations "in the most important *politikoi nomoi*" [civic laws] (Plato 1969: 4.424c; Wallace 2010: 86-8). Leopardi differently argued that the musical "effect" is to be connected to the "sound", the natural and primeval element that has music become the quintessential art, capable of acting directly on human sensibility: "[M]usic imitates and expresses only feeling itself, which it draws from itself" (79, Leopardi 2013: 79) ("[L]a musica non imita e non esprime che lo stesso sentimento in persona, ch'ella trae da se stessa", 79, Leopardi 1991: 98). Nietzsche maintained that, in the most advanced stage of ancient theatre, the chorus led to the *tragischer Eindruch*, a strictly aesthetic phenomenon consisting in a peak of lyrical *pathos* with a minimum of *dran* or action (Ugolini 2011: 322). Leopardi uses the word "effect" three times and with a precise meaning, linking it to the adjective "moral", and thus evoking the ethic essence of the chorus as conceived by Aristotle and echoed by Horace in his idea of a universal voice proclaiming the sacred moral laws (*Ars Poetica*, ll. 193-201). In the early nineteenth century's dramatic theory defined the chorus not only as the agent that endowed the theatre with a moral dimension, but also as an element that broke the scenic illusion by separating reflection from action, transcending the latter and speaking for all humankind: "a living wall which tragedy draws around itself in order to guard itself from the world of

actuality, and maintain for itself its own ideal ground, its poetical freedom" (Schiller 2015: 149) ("[E]ine lebendige Mauer sein, die die Tragödie um sich herumzieht, um sich von der wirklichen Welt rein abzuschließen und sich ihren idealen Boden, ihre poetische Freiheit zu bewahren", ibid.: 148). Thence the chorus derives its contradictory nature, already discussed in Chapter 18 of Aristotle's *Poetics* (1932: 1447a, 7-10): although incorporated in the action, the chorus echoes and transcends it (Zimmermann 2011: 294). Advocate of a monumental notion of chorus wholly devoid of any information regarding its members, in the entry dated 21 June 1823 Leopardi connects its presence to:

> quell'indefinito ch'è la principal cagione dello charme dell'antica poesia e bella lette-ratura ... Il bello e il grande ha bisogno dell'indefinito, e questo indefinito non si poteva introdurre sulla scena, se non introducendovi la moltitudine. Tutto quello che vien dalla moltitudine è rispettabile, bench'ella sia composta d'individui tutti disprezzabili. ... Le massime di giustizia, di virtù, di eroismo, di compassione, d'amor patrio sonavano negli antichi drammi sulle bocche del coro, cioè di una moltitudine indefinita, e spesso innominata, giacché il poeta non dichiarava in alcun modo di quali persone s'intendesse composto il suo coro. Esse erano espresse in versi lir-ici, questi si cantavano, ed erano accompagnati dalla musica degl'istrumenti. Tutte queste circostanze, che noi possiamo condannare quanto ci piace come contrarie alla verisimiglianza, come assurde, ecc. quale altra impressione potevano produrre, se non un'impressione vaga e indeterminata, e quindi tutta grande, tutta bella, tutta poetica? (2804-5, Leopardi 1991: 1485-6)

> [that indefiniteness which is the principal cause of the *charme* of ancient poetry and fine literature ... The beautiful and the great need indefiniteness, and this indefiniteness can only be brought on to the stage by bringing on the multitude. Everything that stems from the multitude is respectable, though it is composed of wholly contemptible individuals ... In the ancient dramas the maxims of justice, virtue, heroism, compassion, patriotism were spoken by the chorus, that is to say, an indefinite and often unnamed multitude, since the poet did not in any way declare which persons his chorus was supposed to consist of. These maxims were expressed in lyric verses, and the latter were sung and accompanied by musical instruments. All these circumstances, which we are at liberty to condemn as implausible, as absurd, etc., what other impression could they give save a vague and indeterminate one, and hence one that was altogether great, beautiful, poetic?] (2804-5, Leopardi 2013: 1160)

The problem of broken theatrical illusion emerges in Leopardi's words, even though it is seemingly solved by the thesis that attended the early history of opera: the implausibility of theatrical singing is the price to be paid in order to boost dramatic effectiveness, and even more to morally sublimate staged events through reflection. The aim is to fuse the real and the ideal world, expressing "the benefit to be derived from the example of such events" (2808, Leopardi 2013: 1161) ("l'utilità che si cava dall'esempio di quelli avvenimenti", 2808, Leopardi 1991: 1487).

In the opera, a genre between drama and narrative, music is the factor that primarily conveys drama. Given its peculiar interaction with theatrical

communicative and expressive mediums, both verbal and visual, it constantly violates the scenic illusion, imposing a meditation on the staged events (Dahl-haus 1981: 3). Therefore, in an operatic context, the chorus either becomes involved in the action, thus being charged with the "moral effect", or plays only a secondary, mostly decorative, role, even when extensively employed as in the French tradition. Indeed, it is neither a means of amplification of hero's sentiments and feelings, nor a "cantuccio" ["nook"] from which the poet may speak "in persona propria" (Manzoni 1989: 77) ["in his own voice"]; nor does it act as an "idealised spectator" (Schegel 1977: 49) who fixes the correct contemplative distance between the audience and the action on stage. In fact, it is the orchestra that takes on these tasks under the control of the omniscient composer-narrator.

After his early production, marked by the influence of the *grand-opéra*, Richard Wagner employed the chorus only when the action actually required it, which rarely happened because of its realistic connotations. In the *Zukunfts-musik* project, the function that historically pertained to the chorus is entrusted to the orchestra, which Wagner considered to be the highest expression of human sensibility, in that it can convey a new collective experience. The elab-oration of the scenic themes and their critical interpretation are passed on to the instrumental ensemble. Furthermore, while the ancient chorus usually did not take part in the drama, the symphonic plot and its *leitmotivs* are com-pletely combined with the action through the so-called *unendliche Melodie*, the ultimate product of the German *Durchführung* tradition. Thus, the "endless melody" clearly came to express what the poet could only consign to silence – the "unspeakable" (Wagner 1907: 338). As regards the orchestra, Wagner wrote:

> Es wird zu dem von mir gemeinten Drama in ein ähnliches Verhältinss treten, wie ungefähr es der tragische Chor der Griechen zur dramatischen Handlung einnahm. Dieser war stets gegenwärtig, vor seinen Augen legten sich die Motive der vorge-henden Handlung dar, er suchte diese Motive zu ergründen und aus ihnen sich ein Urtheil über die Handlung zu bilden. Nur war diese Theilnahme des Chores durchge-hends mehr reflektirender Art, und er selbst blieb der Handlung wie ihren Motiven fremd. Das Orchester des modernen Symphonikers dagegen wird zu den Motiven der Handlung in einen so innigen Antheil treten, dass es, wie es einerseits als verkörperte Harmonie den bestimmten Ausdruck der Melodie einzig ermöglicht, andererseits die Melodie selbst im nöthigen ununterbrochenen Flusse erhält und so die Motive stets mit überzeugendster Eindringlichkeit dem Gefühle mittheilt. (Wagner 1861: 46)

> [It will enter much the same relation to the drama meant by me, as the Tragic Chorus of the Greeks to theirs. This Chorus was always in attendance; to it were bared the motives of the dramatic action going-on before its eyes; these motives it sought to penetrate, and thence to form a judgment on the action. Only, this interest of the Chorus's was more of a reflective kind, throughout; itself had neither part nor lot in action or in motives. The orchestra of the modern Symphonist, on the contrary,

will take so intimate an interest in the motives of the plot, that whilst, as embodied harmony, it alone confers on the melody its definite expression, on the other hand it will keep the melody in the requisite unceasing flow, and thus convincingly impress those motives on the Feelings. (Wagner 1907: 338)]

Involved in the stage action, the operatic chorus completely loses the significance it had in ancient Greece. Its function is taken over by the orchestra: a continuous "but never troubling" presence which imbues each moment of the scenic action with emotion; therefore, if not strictly required as a character, the chorus becomes "superfluous and disturbing" (ibid.), as Leopardi had justly foregrounded.

The moral implications suggested by the poet are more precisely and firmly developed by Giuseppe Mazzini in his *Filosofia della musica* [*Philosophy of Music*], where the importance of the chorus is passionately stressed. Being aware of the centrality and communicative potential of melodrama in Italy, Mazzini charges the chorus with a mission of cultural and social renewal; in that, he addresses those who can understand what influence this "new art" – leading to patriotic and civil redemption – could exercise, if deeply-rooted habits and commercial reasons had not reduced it to a stereotyped entertainment for a limited and idle group of theatregoers. Relying on the idea of the theatre as a catalyst for political passions, Mazzini contrasts the term "effect" with its plural "effects" (Mazzini 1891: 10), which alludes to the various, fragmented aspects of the performance that transform opera into a sort of "mosaic" (ibid.: 11). This prevents the surfacing of a central idea, of an essential unifying connection able to summarize the ethical meaning of the staged events:

> E non pertanto la musica, sola favella comune a tutte le nazioni, unica che trasmetta esplicito un presentimento d'umanità, è chiamata certo a più alti destini che non son quelli di trastullar l'ore d'ozio a un picciol numero di scioperati: non pertanto questa musica, che oggi è sì vilmente scaduta, s'è rivelata onnipotente sugli individui e sulle moltitudini, ogni qualvolta gli uomini l'hanno adottata ispiratrice di forti fatti, angiolo de' santi pensieri; ogni qualvolta gli eletti a trattarla ricercarono in essa l'espressione la più pura, la più generale, la più simpatica d'una fede sociale. Un inno di poche battute ha creata in tempi vicino a noi la vittoria. (Mazzini 1939: 286-7)

> [Yet music, the sole language which, by being common to all nations, is explicitly prophetic of Humanity, was surely destined to a higher aim than that of amusing the listless hours of the idle few. This Music, now fallen so low, once exercised an omnipotent sway over individuals and multitudes, when it was accepted as an angel of holy thoughts, inspiring to noble deeds; when those privileged to wield his power, employed it as the most potent, purest, most universal and sympathetic expression of social faith. In times near our own, a hymn sung by a conquered few has regained for them the victory. (Mazzini 1891: 13)]

Mazzini brings the artistic tendencies of his time down to two: one concentrates on the individuals and individual thoughts and the other focuses on mankind and social thought. The "primary generating elements" (ibid.: 21) of these trends are melody and harmony, respectively. Therefore, an encounter between the melodic nature of the Italian tradition and the harmonic depth of the German one is wished for in order to create an authentically "European music" (ibid.: 49), that is, a coalescence devoted to a social mission. After underlining the importance of historical subjects ("[if musical] drama is to be put in harmony with the progress of civilisation – whether by following in its steps or by leading the way – so as to exercise a social ministry and function ...", ibid.: 40), Mazzini goes on to examine the role of the chorus, recalling its function in ancient tragedy, in which it synthesised "the unity of impression produced upon the judgment and conscience of the majority" (ibid.: 43). On the contrary, the chorus in the opera, instead of being an authentic representation of the community, is censured for descending from "the people in Alfieri's tragedies, confined to the expression of a single sentiment or idea, in a single melody (often even sung in unison) by ten or twenty voices" (ibid.: 44). Far from being a well-defined musical and dramatic component, then, it seems mostly to provide some rest to the main characters or to be merely a means for expressing or amplifying the feelings and the thoughts of the protagonists:

> Or, perché il coro, individualità collettiva, non otterrebbe, come il popolo di ch'esso è interprete nato, vita propria, indipendente, spontanea? Perché, relativamente al protagonista o a' protagonisti, non costituirebbe quell'elemento di contrasto essenziale ad ogni lavoro, drammatico – relativamente a se stesso – non darebbe più sovente immagine col concertato, coll'avvicendarsi, coll'intrecciarsi di più melodie, di più frasi musicali, intersecate, combinate, armonizzate l'una con l'altra a interrogazioni, a risposte, della varietà molteplice di sensazioni, di pareri, d'affetti, e di desiderii che freme d'ordinario nelle moltitudini? (Mazzini 1939: 307)

> [Ought not, however, the Chorus – a collective individuality – to be allowed an independent and spontaneous life of its own, as surely as the People, whose natural representative it is? Ought it not, with relation to the Protagonist, to constitute that principle of contrast so essential to every dramatic work? And with relation to the collective element it is especially intended to embody, should not concerted Music be more frequently employed in the Chorus, in order, through the interchange, alternation, or co-mingling of a variety of melodies, or musical phrases, intersected, harmonised, and combined, to represent the multiple variety of sensations, opinions, affections, and desires, which ordinarily agitate the masses? (Mazzini 1891: 44-5)]

Also Lichtental, in his aforementioned *Dizionario*, shows his appreciation for the sweeping sonorities of the *concertati* (Lichtental 1836: 217), where the chorus becomes a realistic and active mass, as in the theatre of Giacomo

Meyerbeer. In his *Les Huguenots* (Paris, 1836), he introduced an antithesis between two choruses – a feature Verdi will adopt in his *Les vêpres siciliennes* and *Aida* – and achieved a perfect balance between individual events and historical context in an atmosphere of impending tragedy and "collective horror" (Della Seta 1993: 133). Yet the hopes for a regeneration of Italian music where pinned on a musician who – according to Mazzini – was for the first time able to make use of a new passionate language and instil an ethical quality into opera: Gaetano Donizetti. Donizetti had already proved these skills very clearly in *Marino Faliero* (Paris, 1835), whose passionate war song against the oppressor was much appreciated by Mazzini; or in *L'assedio di Calais* (Naples, 1836) [*The Siege of Calais*]), where the patriotic ideal is not just the prerogative of flawless heroes but of all the population that take part in the drama. The power struggles that characterize its literary source (*Le siège de Calais* by Dormont de Bolloy) give way to the choral energy expressed by the whole community, which becomes the main feature of Donizetti's rendition (Tatti 2005: 126). The heroism of six citizens, ready to sacrifice themselves in order to save the city, and the mournful participation of all the townsfolk move the English Queen who earns them King Edward's forgiveness.

Poliuto (premiered in Naples in 1848, but composed ten years before) opens with "Ancor ci asconda un velo arcano" ["Still a mysterious veil hides us"] sung by a group of Christians gathered in an underground shrine, where they are celebrating the baptism of the protagonist, newly converted to Christianity. A choral welcome song ("Plausi all'inclito Severo" ["Praise to the noble Severo"]) introduces the baritone's aria in 1.6, while in Act 2 Donizetti reaches one of the peaks of his production. "*In tuono di fanatico zelo*" ["*In a tone of fanatical zeal*"], reinforced by the *fortissimo* of the orchestra, the chorus of the priests sing in unison a hymn in praise of Jupiter, interpolated by a delicate passage sung by the female chorus. Nearco, interrogated by Severo and the priests, refuses to reveal the name of the neophyte, but Poliuto identifies himself as such, triggering the *concertato*. In the finale of the act, Callistene and the chorus reprise the tremendous initial hymn that becomes an implacable bass line on which the other voices cross each other. A balance between personal conflicts and the public sphere is maintained throughout this long scene, in which, as Ashbrook put it, Italian opera achieves a new and much larger dimension (1982: 189). Act 3 begins with the bellows of the mob heading to the circus to watch the martyrdom of the Christians. After a passionate duet in which Paolina decides to share her husband's fate, the impatient crowd intone "Alle fiere chi oltraggia gli dei" ["To the wild beasts with the impious"], setting off the finale which they then punctuate with their song. The final events regarding the protagonists are accompanied by the intertwining of the hymn

of the faithful Christians with the menacing chant of the priests, already heard in Act 2.

If Donizetti convincingly applied Mazzini's principles, it was Giuseppe Verdi who interpreted the historical spirit of his time better than any other composer, conferring upon the public sphere an "inner resounding echo" (Mila 1984: 144), and characterizing the choral ensemble as the Folk theorized by Wagner, that is, the "epitome of all those men who feel a *gemeinschaftliche Noth* [collective need]" and therefore act "irresistibly, victoriously, and right as none besides" (Wagner 1892: 75). The choruses present in Verdi's operas of the 1840s act as 'collective individualities' and take on a unique dramatic function, underlined by the composer in the stage directions.

The hope of being rescued from a miserable predicament and the homesickness evoked in choral interventions such as "Va' pensiero" and "O Signore dal tetto natio" have often been the object of a metaphorical reading, but it is worth pointing out that their political interpretation has to be ascribed to the mythopoeia following the Italian unification. In fact, nineteenth-century viewers did not perceive them as patriotic calls (Pauls 1996; Parker 1997; Toscani 2008: 29), as attested by contemporary witnesses and by the musical structure itself. Fabrizio Della Seta has recently pointed out that the task of musicology is to explain how music was able to incarnate the ideas and the values of the Italian Risorgimento by using its own specific language (2013: 38). For instance, the ten-syllable lines typical of Risorgimento patriotic hymns are occasionally matched to a characteristic up-beat start with dotted rhythms and ascending intervals, a general unison, as well as an essential harmonic progression and rhythmic military energy, all of them originating from the French revolutionary tradition (as in the *Marseilleise*, to which Mazzini refers in his *Philosophy of Music*). In particular circumstances, some opera pieces can lose their diegetic function and acquire a conative one, in so much as they can press the audience to react emotionally, or even rebelliously. If it is indeed true that in 1844 the Bandiera brothers sang the chorus "Chi per la patria muor" ["The man who dies for his country"] from Saverio Mercadante's *Caritea regina di Spagna* (1826) before they were executed, it must be assumed that certain songs had a significant circulation in isolated form, independently from the opera to which they originally belonged. In addition to the unequivocal content of the text (quatrains of alternate five-syllable lines and masculine six-syllable lines), the irresistible 'moral effect' is fulfilled by the music:

> Aspra del militar
> Bench'è la vita,
> Al lampo dell'acciar
> Gioja l'invita.
> Chi per la gloria muor

Vissuto è assai;
La fronda dell'allor
Non langue mai.
Più tosto che languir
Per lunghi affanni,
È meglio di morir
Sul fior degli anni.
Chi muore e che non dà
Di gloria un segno
Alla futura età,
Di fama è indegno.
(Pola 1826: 18-19)

[Though hard, / soldier's life / is, by the flash of metal, / called to joy. / The man who dies for his glory / has lived enough. / Laurel leaves / never wither. / Instead of languishing / in long sufferings, / it is better to die / in one's prime. / The man who dies without addressing / future ages / with a sign of glory / is unworthy of fame.]

Around 1848, a political wind swept through the operatic world, in a climate of collective exaltation. Allusions to the contemporary political situation were read in significant passages taken from earlier works, such as "Guerra, Guerra!" ["To war, to war!"] from Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma.* Occasionally it was singers themselves who operated some changes and tinged otherwise unbiased passages with a patriotic hue: for example, in 1848 the "Leon di Castiglia ["Lion of Castile"] from *Ernani*'s famous chorus, became the "Leon di Caprera" ["Lion of Caprera"], and "Leon di S. Marco" ["St Mark's Lion"] alluding to Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Venetian republic respectively (Sorba 2007: 485). Yet, explicit political statements were rather unusual (Gossett 2005: 375); an exception can be found in *La battaglia di Legnano* [*The Battle of Legnano*] conceived during the brief withdrawal of the Austrian troops from Milan after the Five Days rising in 1848, and performed in Rome on 27 January 1849 during the Roman Republic led by the triumvirs Carlo Armellini, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Aurelio Saffi. *La battaglia di Legnano* was Verdi's most political opera (when revived in Parma in 1860 it significantly received the subtitle of *La sconfitta degli Austriaci* [*The defeat of the Austrians*]) and contained patriotic scenes and choruses that were not included in its literary source (*La bataille de Toulouse* by Joseph Mery, 1836). The brave Arrigo is introduced in the opening scenes as an example of vibrant heroism. Against the backdrop of "*Parte della riedificata Milano*" ["*A rebuilt part of Milan*"], the Lombard League allies sing the praises of Italy as "forte ed una" ["strong and one"], which sounds as an authentic call for action. For the first time, the Italian situation was directly and not only metaphorically connected with an idea of national dignity and unity:

Example 1

Tenori — Grandioso

mf

Bassi

Vi- va I- ta - lia sa - cro un pat - to tut - ti strin - ge i fi - gli suoi

The general preoccupation with their homeland's destiny dims Rolando's joy when he meets his friend Arrigo, whom he had presumed dead (Mellace 2005: 136). With a flourish of trumpets, Milan's consuls receive the brave volunteers, prompting them to anachronistically fight the "Austro" ["Austrian"] foe. At the beginning of Act 3 the oath of the "Cavalieri della Morte" ["Knights of Death"] in St Ambrose's crypt recalls the unforgettable "Si ridesti il leon di Castiglia" ["Let the Lion of Castille rise again"] from *Ernani*, also written in ten-syllable lines (Scene and hymn 12). At Aachen, in Charlemagne crypt a group of conspirators, guided by Ernani and Silva, plots against don Carlo, who is there to be crowned emperor. He has preceded them at the crypt and has descended into the sepulchre in disguise. Ernani is chosen by lot to be Carlo's murderer and "*tutti si abbracciano e nella massima esaltazione traendo le spade*" ["everybody embrace and in frenzy draw their swords"] singing:

Example 2

Ernani, tenori

Si ri - de - stii il Leon di Ca - sti - glia, e d'I - be - ria ogni mon - te ogni li - to e - co

Silva, Jago, bassi

for - mial tre - men - do rug - gi - to, co - me un di contro i Mo - ri oppres - sor. Sia - mo

tut - ti u - na so - la fa - mi - glia, pu - gne - rem col le brac - cia, co' pet - ti

In this vibrant Verdian hymn, the gestural character, typical of oath scenes, and the musical peculiarities of the choruses, resonant with distinctive Risorgimento features, such as the initial fourth interval, the warlike modulation, the repeated accents and the unison of the voices, are underscored by the incisive

orchestration that associates the shrill doubling of brass to the pizzicato string accompaniment. The allegory of the lion is reprised in the opening chorus of *L'assedio di Firenze* [*The Siege of Florence*], a forgotten work by composer Giovanni Bottesini from Crema. Based upon the novel with the same title by Francesco Domenico Guerazzi, is another rare example of an opera in which political sentiments are openly proclaimed. It has a few affinities with Verdi's *La battaglia di Legnano*: the unfolding of Act 1; the lingering sense of menace coming from the presence of a foreign oppressor (who appears on stage in the second version of *L'assedio*); the romantic intrigue involving three men (one of whom erroneously presumed dead) and the female protagonist, and, more than anything, the increased and intensified role of the chorus which, in compliance with Mazzini's intents, embodies the spirit of a united, free, and self-assured people. In 1855 Verdi staged the historical and patriotic legend of *Les vêpres siciliennes* at the Parisian Opéra which predictably attracted many Italian exiles: the opera closes with the irruption on stage of the Sicilians who, led by Procida, rush on Monfort singing "Oui, vengeance! vengeance!" ["Yes, vengeance! vengeance!"] and kill him. In the same year, having achieved international fame thanks to his amazing virtuosity, Bottesini was appointed to the post of conductor at the Théâtre des Italiens, on whose planks *L'assedio di Firenze,* composed in collaboration with poet and librettist Carlo Corghi, was staged in February 1856. To be exact, the opera was premiered on 21 February, shortly before the opening of the Congress of Paris (25 February-16 April 1856), in which Cavour succeeded for the first time in introducing the 'Italian question' as a legitimate problem of the Italian people as a national entity. As a result of the mixed reviews by the French critics, Bottesini revised the score, reducing it to 16 musical numbers and merging the last two acts, which had been the least favourably received. This amended version of *L'Assedio* was subsequently performed at La Scala opera house in September 1860, only a few days before the battle of Castelfidardo between the Sardinian army and the Papal troops.

A brief atmospheric Prelude, enlivened by the anapaestic pulses of horns and trumpets, introduces the opening scene in which the Florentines, intent on preparing their defence, sing "Ruggi, fremi, o Leone d'Etruria" ["Roar and tremble, o lion of Etruria"]. Examining the musical numbers from *L'Assedio di Firenze* in their totality, it is interesting to observe that there are as many choral songs (four) as soloes and duets, plus three ensembles for more than two voices. In this opera the use of the chorus, starting with the magnificent introductory piece, is attuned with Mazzini's outline and in this regard, it is worth focusing on the substantial alterations introduced in the second version which were aimed at enhancing the text's effectiveness:

[Parigi 1856]
Frema, frema l'etrusco Leone,
Sciolga all'aure l'irsuta sua chioma;
Ma Fiorenza, a dispetto di Roma,
Presta all'armi intonando qui sta:
5   Viva la Libertà!
Stretti siam da quell'orda spietata
Che qui traggi, o Signor di Lamagna;
Ma il tuo gufo dall'unghia grifagna
Altro grido qui alzar non udrà:
10 Viva la Libertà!
Ha Fiorenza, inumano Clemente,
Della stola le folgori a scherno;
Al fischiar d'un ingordo serpente
Qual è a darsi risposta ben sa:
15 Viva la Libertà!
Di Fiorenza oppressori tremate:
Minacciosa già alzata è la mano:
Vendicata dal popol sovrano
Tant'infamia, tant'onta sarà.
20 Viva la Libertà!
(Corghi 1860: 7-8)

[Milano 1860]
Ruggi, fremi, o Leone d'Etruria,
Sciogli all'aure la fulva tua chioma;
Ché Firenze alla perfida Roma
Questa sola risposta darà:
5   Viva la Libertà!
Benché stretta d'assedio dai barbari
Che Lamagna ed Iberia raduna,
Anche in mezzo all'avversa fortuna
Alto grida l'eroica città:
10 Viva la Libertà!
Omai scagli, o mitrato Pontefice,
Contro noi le tue folgori invano;
Fin nel covo del tuo Vaticano
Questo grido tremar ti farà:
15 Viva la Libertà!
Paventate, o tiranni, d'un Popolo
Che con tanto valore si desta.
Oh, per voi l'ultim'ora fia questa!
Tutta Italia con noi griderà:
20 Viva la Libertà!
(Corghi 1860: 5-6)

[Paris, 1856 – May the Etruscan Lion tremble with rage / and untie its hirsute mane / while Florence, careless of Rome / is here singing and ready to fight: / hooray for freedom! / We are besieged by this ruthless horde / gathered by you, German sire, / but your rapacious owl / will hear only one cry rising from here: / hooray for freedom! / Inhuman Pope Clement, Florence does not fear / the thunderbolts of your priests. / She knows how to answer / the hiss of a ravenous snake: / hooray for freedom! / Tremble with fear, oppressors of Florence, / the unforgiving hand is raised: / a free folk will take revenge / for such shame and infamy. / Hooray for freedom!]

[Milan, 1860 – Roar and tremble, o lion of Etruria, / untie your tawny mane; / for this is the only answer Florence will give / to perfidious Rome: / hooray for freedom! / Although besieged by barbarians / here gathered by Germany and Spain, / even in the face of adverse fortune / the heroic city keeps crying: / hooray for freedom! / In vain, you mitred Pope / throw your thunderbolts at us; / even in the deepest den of your Vatican / this cry will have you trembling: / hooray for freedom! / Tyrants, dread a folk / that rises with such valour. / May this hour be your last, / all of Italy will cry with us: / hooray for freedom!]

The two versions share the same rhyming scheme (ABBCc, DEEFf, etc.) and metrical structure, based on four stanzas of anapaestic ten-syllable lines (recalling both Verdi's most famous choruses from the 1840s and some of Manzoni's poems), plus a masculine six-syllable line repeating the political refrain "Viva la Libertà" ["Hooray for freedom"]. In both variants, the call for action in the first two stanzas is followed by an invective in the third one and a final admonition. Nonetheless, the most interesting and substantial changes occur at the lexical level thus endowing the text with a greater ideological import with regard to the contemporary political situation.

In the first line the initial repetition ("Frema, frema" ["tremble with rage"]) is substituted by the isocolon or parallelism ("Ruggi, fremi", "Roar and tremble"); the passage from the third to the second person singular, together with the alliteration, makes the appeal more direct and effective. The following prosopopeia or personification, derived from the Etruscan chimera and reminiscent of Verdi's "Lion of Castile", is reinforced by the zoological pertinence of the opening verb ("ruggi", "roar") and by the geographical reference ("d'Etruria", "of Etruria") which replaces the adjective ("etrusco", "Etruscan"). Moreover, the Latin origin of the term "fulva" ["tawny"], alluding to the colour of the lion's mane ("chioma"), enhances the splendour of the image, in comparison with the harshness of the original "irsuta" ["hirsute"], and creates an analogy with the motive of heroism and bravery evoked in the second and third stanzas. Differently from Germany, in Italy the movement for national unity resulted mostly from individual spontaneous efforts, as recounted in the initial chorus of *La battaglia di Legnano*. What is stressed here is that Italy, epitomized by Florence, is no more forced in a defensive position since, no longer dominated by foreign powers, it can proudly stand up and shine. An even more distinct shift is detectable in the third line, in which the adjective "perfida" ["perfidious"] emphasises the negative connotation of Rome as papal residence, notwithstanding the Roman republic experience. Mazzini's short-lived Republican venture had massively boosted the myth of the 'New Rome' as inseparable from the process of Italian unification, together with the rhetoric of messianic regeneration of the ancient imperial glory (Duggan 2008). Back in 1529-30, the siege of Republican Florence had marked the beginning of Spanish domination in Italy. The Emperor Charles V wanted to regain Papal favour after the sack of Rome and the attack against Clement VII Medici in 1527, and was forced to reinstate, although unenthusiastically, the Pope's family on the ducal throne of Florence. While the Parisian text directly mentions Pope Clement (l. 3), the periphrasis in the second version ("mitrato Pontefice", "mitred Pontiff") allows a topical interpretation of the invective with reference to contemporary events. As is well known, Pope Pius IX was greatly unpopular with Italian patriots for his ambiguity and cynicism. In July 1846, a few weeks after his election, he had granted an amnesty for political prisoners, causing an extraordinary wave of expectation in those who hoped to combine the enthusiasm for the national cause with religious faith in order to achieve the wider involvement of the populace; yet, in 1848, after he had sent troops in support of the Five Days rising in Milan, Pius repented of having taken sides against Catholic Austria and abandoned the alliance with the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. In 1850, when he was restored to the Papal throne after the brief spell of the Roman Republic, he repealed the Constitution issued by the Triumvirate; in 1852 he even ordered the defrocking of Father Enrico

Tazzoli, which allowed the Austrians to carry out his death sentence. A few years later, in 1859, he brutally repressed the insurrection of Perugia, sending Swiss mercenary troops to restore the rebel town to the Papal states. During the La Scala run of *L'Assedio di Firenze*, although Vittorio Emanuele agreed with Napoleon III not to invade Rome after the battle of Castelfidardo, the Pope's sovereign possessions were reduced to Lazio. The syntax and meaning of the third stanza in the second version of the chorus contribute to enhance the effectiveness of the invective. The anastrophe introduced at ll. 11-12 clarifies the image of the Pope thundering against the insurgents, and, in the following line, the original metaphor of the snake is alluded to by the word "covo" ("den"), sinisterly reverberating in the assonance with "tuo Vaticano" ("your Vatican"). Finally, the "risposta" ["answer]" of the first version becomes a "grido" ["cry"] for freedom, and, reinforced by the deictic "questo" ["this"], turns into an ominous warning to the Pope. The siege is actually evoked in the second stanza. In the Parisian version, with an intended historical shift, the "orda spietata" ["ruthless horde"] is under the command of a "Signor di Lamagna" ["Lord of Germany"], instead of whom we would expect to find Charles V; in the second version, the Grecism "barbari" ["barbarians"] is far more evocative in that it may allude to all forms of foreign oppression. The inner force sustaining the "città eroica" ["heroic city]" in its misfortunes is underlined by the enallage or substitution of a grammatical form with another ("alto", "loud" for "loudly") and is attuned with the general purpose of the whole rewriting of the chorus aimed at exalting the final and glorious stages of the Italian redemption. However, the most significant transformation occurs in the last stanza, where the original "Fiorenza" ["Florence"] is replaced by the hypotiposis, or vivid description, of "Un Popolo che con tanto valore si desta" ["A people that arises with such valour"]: the warning which in the first version is launched against Germans, Spaniards and the Vatican is now a roaring cry directed at all tyrants by "tutta Italia" ["the whole of Italy"]. And it was that same Italy whose unification had been almost accomplished at Castelfidardo while *L'Assedio* was performed at La Scala. In the second version of the chorus, the dogma of national unity and the exaltation of freedom and independence are linked together by popular will.

The musical form echoes the ternary time signature (12/8) and the general characteristics of the oath scene in Act 3 of *La battaglia di Legnano*. A strong crescendo by the whole orchestra likewise prepares the fortissimo attack by the chorus on a held note which then falls back to a descending line, impetuously counterpointed by the strings (see example 3).[2] The first two stanzas receive

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2. The reduction of the original autograph score (examples 2, 3, and 4), kept in the Archivio Ricordi in Milan, is mine.

Example 3

identical treatment, this time in F minor. The third modulates to E flat (see example 4) and in the fourth the fierceness of the final warning is stressed by the rising of the original key to its major mode (see example 5).

Example 4

Example 5

In the last stage of Italian opera tradition, after this genre had ceased to be the representative of the community and the standard-bearer of shared values, the chorus dropped to a secondary position. In Giacomo Puccini's protagonist-centred dramas, the mass never plays a decisive role: its function is often that to enliven and characterize the action, at least until it recuperates a fairly relevant dramatic standing in *Turandot* (Spagna 2008: 186). Therefore it is not surprising that Puccini's most famous choral intervention is the humming chorus in act 2 of *Madama Butterfly* (drawing on Verdi's naturalistic experiment in Act 3 of *Rigoletto*), which can hardly be considered a chorus – we could actually label it a 'non-chorus' – since it consists of a number of sopranos and tenors variously positioned on the stage, while the accompanying *viola d'amore* and string *pizzicato* turn into an instrumental ensemble providing an evocative backdrop to the thoughts of the female protagonist.

English translation by Carlo Vareschi

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Paola Ambrosi*

The Chorus in Early Twentieth-Century Spanish Theatre

Abstract

The presence of the chorus in contemporary Spanish theatre is a still largely unexplored subject. Its recurrent use by Spanish playwrights from the 1920s and 1930s, and almost uninterruptedly on to the 1970s, has been probably perceived as so widespread, functional and naturally tied to the text as to be taken for granted and not worth a specific critical investigation; suffice it to say that even the works of famous authors, such as Federico García Lorca, have not been thoroughly examined in this respect. The writing style adopted by the leading authors of the early twentieth-century Spanish theatrical new wave is deeply engrained in the classic and baroque traditions: I refer in particular to Ramón del Valle-Inclan, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón Gomez de la Serna, José Bergamín, Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, just to mention some main exponents of that happy cultural season known as *Etad de Plata*. Their work offers interesting examples of chorus; indeed, the aim of this article is to point out an essential line of investigation of the presence of the chorus in early twentieth-century Spanish drama by restraining the analysis to a few meaningful texts by Bergamín, Lorca and Alberti, and by especially exploring its performative potentialities.

The presence of the chorus in contemporary Spanish theatre is a still largely unexplored subject.[1] Its recurrent use by Spanish playwrights from the 1920s and 1930s, and almost uninterruptedly on to the 1970s, has been probably perceived as so widespread, functional and naturally tied to the text as to be taken for granted and not worth a specific critical investigation; suffice it to

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1. This subject is dealt with in a still unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by García-Ramos Merlo which, starting form a European perspective, focuses on the presence of the chorus as a renovating dramatic element in early twentieth-century Spanish theatre; thus, the analysis does not go beyond the years of the Spanish Civil War (García-Ramos Merlo 2011). It is worth noting that even the best studies giving an international overview of the chorus fall short of examining the Spanish theatre (see, for instance, Billings, Budelmann, and McIntosh 2013).

say that even the works of famous authors, such as Federico García Lorca, have not been thoroughly examined in this respect.

The writing style adopted by the leading authors of the early twentieth-century Spanish theatrical new wave is deeply engrained in the classic and baroque traditions: I refer in particular to Ramón del Valle-Inclan, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón Gomez de la Serna, José Bergamín, Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, just to mention some main exponents of that happy cultural season known as *Etad de Plata.* In their being sophisticated heirs to an outstanding poetic tradition, these prominent figures of the renewal of Spanish theatre act both as protagonists of the European avant-garde and keen witnesses of the social and political changes of the early twentieth century. Their work offers interesting examples of the inclusion of the chorus in *pièces* that belong in their own right to a widely shared European cultural tendency. This classic pattern interacts with the innovative trend of the period as various studies of the last decade[2] and this article aims indeed at pointing out an essential line of investigation of the presence of the chorus by restraining the analysis to a few meaningful texts by Bergamín, Lorca and Alberti written between 1924 and 1934, with a brief excursion into the Fifties.

The profound and wide-ranging cultural influences of many of these extraordinary artists (poets, playwrights, painters, musicians), mostly belonging to the so-called *generación del '27*, encouraged them to interweave avant-garde techniques with consolidated classical forms, such as, in the case of the theatre, the chorus. Given its multipurpose nature, almost unaffected by the course of the centuries, the chorus presented these playwrights with solutions intended to innovate the theatrical structure of the text, starting from its relationship with the audience. Among its many functions, the chorus's role of mediation between onstage action and offstage reception offered the possibility of reshaping the otherwise rigid and univocal relationship with the bourgeois audience who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cheered the success of the *benaventina* or *alta comedia.* Conversely, we could reckon that the drying up of that kind of comedy, based upon the clash of individuals, prompted a renewed reflection on collective destinies.

From a historical viewpoint, the considerable presence that the masses were conquering in society was reflected in the European dramatic production. The same phenomenon would be clearly noticeable in Spain, albeit differently. That is to say, in those years Spanish theatre conveyed this widely felt urgency in two ways: by attracting larger audiences from every social class, as in its

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2. For an overview of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century theatre (from Pérez Galdós to Valle Inclan) see Ayuso (2014); on the Spanish avant-gardes see Floriana Di Gesù (2006), Muñoz and López's introductive essay to *Teatro español de Vanguardia* (2003), and Montesa's edited collection on experimental avant-garde theatre (2002).

Golden Age, and by restoring traditional poetic forms closely connected with its enormous folk heritage, the recuperation of which was then under way. Thus the chorus became a practice responding, even in a social dimension, to this collective civic, religious and artistic impulse to give visibility to the masses.

Contemporary critics stressed the importance of texts such as *La batalla teatral* [*The theatrical Battle*] by Luís Araquistáin (1930), *El teatro de masa* [*Theatre of Masses*] by Ramón José Sender (1931), or the famous essay by Ortega y Gasset *La rebelión de las masas* (1930) [*The Revolt of the Masses*] that, from the early paragraphs on, underlines that "The multitude has suddenly become visible, positioning itself in the preferential places of society. Before, if it existed, it passed unnoticed, occupying the background of the social stage; now it has advanced to the footlights and is the main character. There are no longer protagonists; there is only the chorus" ("La muchedumbre, de pronto se ha hecho visible, se ha instalado en los lugares preferentes de la sociedad. Antes, sí existía, ocupaba el fondo del escenario social; ahora se ha adelantado a las baterías, es ella el personaje principal. Ya no hay protagonistas: sólo hay coro", 1969: 39).[3] García Lorca had already stated that "to write for those in the best seats is the saddest thing imaginable" ("escribir para el patio principal es lo más triste del mundo"). and that it would have been sufficient to have the gallery occupants sit in the pit to operate an inevitable and much needed change in the contemporary stage. In his *Charla sobre teatro* [*Talk on Theatre*] he also claims his support for a socially active theatre arguing that

> un teatro sensible y bien orientado en todas sus ramas, desde la tragedia al vodevil puede cambiar en pocos años la sensibilidad de un pueblo … El teatro es una escuela de llanto y de risa y una tribuna libre donde los hombres pueden poner en evidencia morales viejas o equívocas y explicar con ejemplos vivos normas eternas del corazón y del sentimiento del hombre. (García Lorca 1977: 1215).

> [a theatre which is sensitive and constructively directed in all its forms, from tragedy to vaudeville, is capable of altering in a few years the sensibility of a country … the theatre is a school of tears and laughter, and an open arena where some individuals can expose old or faulty morals and illustrate with living examples the eternal principles ruling the hearth and feelings of all men].

Many years before, Unamuno, a staunch advocate of an authentic popular theatre, had anticipated that theatre would go back to the chorus, pointing out that while the ancient chorus was a "verdadera masa homogénea" (1916: 85) ["truly homogenous mass"], the modern one emerged as "diferenciado" (86, n.

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3. The author refers here to concepts he already expressed in both *España invertebrada* [*Spineless Spain*] (1921) and in a 1922 article entitled "Patología nacional. I. Imperio de las masas" ["National Pathology. I. The Empire of the Masses"]. See also Ortega y Gasset (1969: 37, n. 1).

1) ["differentiated"]. "In the contrast between the ancient chorus and the one present in contemporary plays such as Hauptmann's [*The Weavers*] we can appreciate the difference between past socialism and that yet to come, integrated with the different individualistic stances" ("En ese carácter del coro antiguo en oposición al coro que se esboza en obras como la de Hauptmann se ve la diferencia del socialismo antiguo al venidero, integración de la diferenciación individualista", ibid.).

In order to evaluate the chorus properly in relation to the complex dynamics of transformation in early twentieth-century theatre, one has firstly and necessarily to keep in mind the popular element enshrined in Spanish culture, language, and literature of all centuries: this feature has so deeply affected high culture as to become inseparable from it, also surfacing unmistakably in an age of avant-gardes with the *romanceril* poetry, the *coplas*, the proverbs and, above all, the spirit of the folk festivities pervading even this experimental kind of theatre and its choruses. This popular quality is a factor of continuity between traditional and avant-garde theatre, in that it perfectly intermingles with the contemporary innovative search for a universal trait; the representations of popular spaces, circumstances, and characters are embedded into a renovated theatrical context thus gaining a fresh artistic value. This is particularly evident in many dance librettos which include a chorus; a few titles are sufficient to prove their strong ties with tradition: *Don Lindo de Almería* by Bergamín, *Lola, la comedianta* [*Lola the Actress*] by Lorca, *La romería de los cornudos* [*The Cuckolds' Fair*] by Lorca and Rivas Cherif, *La pájara pinta* [*The Coloured She-Bird*] and *Colorín Colorado* by Rafael Alberti. It is worth mentioning that these are, nevertheless, quite provocative and avant-garde works, despite their links with tradition (Ambrosi 2010).

Music and dance were the leading arts of the historical European avant-gardes and the development of the chorus in this context certainly influenced the theatre, thanks to its structuring potential and choreographic implications. Its presence imposed balance and harmony among all the elements involved in the staging, while often furthering an approach to a ritual dimension: in this respect the influence of the Wagnerian oeuvre was crucial.[4]

The reading of Aristophanes's comedies prompted by Menéndez y Pelayo's introduction to the 1908 edition of his works undoubtedly played a central role in the theatrical education of various early twentieth-century young writers. Aristophanes's popularity among them was further enhanced by the new 1916 translation which inspired an Aristophanic quality in their critical spirit and ironic approach to social problems.[5] Aristophanes's influence was particularly

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4. For Wagner's influence on playwriting, see Sánchez (1994: 19-28).
5. A new edition of Aristophanes's comedies, translated from the Greek by Federico Baraibar y

evident and explicit on some texts by José Bergamín, Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti.

— 1 —   Aristophanes's Influence on Bergamín's Chorus

In the 1920s (especially between 1924 and 1926), José Bergamín made use of the chorus in some very interesting plays, following the trend of the best European avant-garde. Sometimes this presence was explicitly acknowledged; sometimes its role was assigned to groups of characters, usually with a generic name, who played the chorus's part without being formally recognised as such in the *dramatis personae*. In these *pièces* the choruses explored a wide range of expressive possibilities, hinting also at a possible musical execution with the passages entitled "variación y fuga" ["variation and fugue"] and "cantata a tres voces" ["cantata for three voices"].

The comedy *Los filólogos* [*The Philologists*] ends with a sort of colophon classifying it as an Aristophanic farce: *Fin del acto III / y de la / farsa aristo-fanesca / 16 de enero de 1925* [*End of act III and of the Aristophanic farce, 16 January 1925*]. The chorus is introduced in the list of character as follows:

> El Coro
>
> Coro de Pájaros
>
> Coro de Monos
>
> Coro de Sátiro
>
> Coro de Fichas
>
> [The Chorus // Chorus of Birds // Chorus of monkeys // Chorus of Satyrs // Chorus of Cards]

The aforementioned subtitle clearly asserts the ties with the classical tradition of satyr plays, comedies and tragedies; this tradition is also evoked by the presence of the animal choruses (Birds and Monkeys) and of the ones composed of mythological creatures (the Satyrs). These choruses are joined by a distinctly avant-garde one, composed of personified objects: the catalogue Cards of the library in which the first act is set. They are anthropomorphic Cards which, in order to exalt the place (a fictional Study Centre alluding to

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Zumarraga (first edition 1875, Madrid, Libreria de Perlado, Páez y C. Sucesores de Herando) was reprinted in 1908, while in 1916 a new translation was published by R. Martínez Lafuente (Valencia: Prometeo). The introduction to the 1908 edition, entitled "Acerca del teatro griego en España" ["On the Greek theatre in Spain"] was written by M. Menéndez y Pelayo. It should be noted that the Aristophanic tradition in the years following this early twentieth-century revival of interest has been surprisingly neglected by Spanish scholars.

the Centro de Estudios Históricos which Ramón Menéndez Pidal founded in 1910),[6] enter the stage with goddess-like dignity, moving and talking to the rhythm of the March of the Knights from Wagner's *Parsifal*.[7] One has to listen carefully to the bars of this musical passage to realise the exact tempo to be adopted by the members of this chorus in their movements and in the long speech partially quoted here:

> Nosotras somos blancas y castas diosas protectoras. Somos el principio y el fin de la sabiduría. El que nos ama, ama la Palabra … La Palabra se concibió en nuestra pureza, y de nuestra virginidad, desnuda, nació la Poesía. Antes de nosotras nada ha existido. (Bergamín 2004: 272)[8]

> [We are white, chaste tutelary goddesses. We are the beginning and the end of knowledge. He who loves us, loves the Word … In our purity the Word was conceived, and from our naked virginity Poetry was born. Nothing existed before us.]

The solemnity of the moment is enhanced by the following exchanges which acquire a distinct ritual quality, with the chorus becoming antiphonal and their repeated lines sounding increasingly like an ejaculatory prayer:

El Doctor Américus, El profesor Doble, El Neófito	[*Golpeándose el pecho devotamente.*] Filólogus sunt, Filólogus sunt, Filólogus sunt.
La primera mitad del Coro	Si queréis salvaros, ya lo sabéis: una sola cosa importa.
La segunda mitad del Coro	El amor a nosotras sólo. Bien lo decís: una sola cosa importa.
El Doctor Américus, El profesor Doble, El Neófito	La filología, la filología, la filología. (ibid.)

> [Doctor Américus, Professor Double, The Neophyte (*Devoutly beating their breast*) Filologus sunt, filologus sunt, filologus sunt. // First Semi-Chorus: If you want to be saved, you know it already, there's just one thing that matters. // Second Semi-Chorus: Your love to us. You said it well: that's all that matters. // Doctor Américus, Professor Double, The Neophyte: Philology, philology, philology]

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6. The Centro de Estudios Históricos took on the task of reviving the immense heritage of *cantares de gesta*, *romances*, *villancicos*, and *coplas* which until then had been scattered and left to collective memory.

7. Unamuno, who, for chronological reasons, would not know Bergamín's and Alberti's works here quoted, nonetheless considered Wagner to be a master in theatre, as regards the rituality and the integration of different forms of art: "Wagner's importance has not yet received its due recognition outside the musical field" ("Aún no ha influido Wagner lo que debiera fuera de la música", 1916: 87).

8. The precise stage directions, provided by the author himself, were experimented in the first and only representation of this farce by a group of students at the University of Verona on 2 April 1998 under the direction of Roberto Totola and Eugenio Chicano, with the collaboration of Guillermo Heras. The performance was occasioned by the first international symposium on José Bergamín.

Each chorus play a definite role in different moments of the *pièce*, which is based upon the clash between poetic and philological languages: the first is represented by the singing of the Birds and the second by the wild gesticulating of the Monkeys. The latter have been indoctrinated by the Parrot (Cacatúa) which, like a benevolent spirit, alights on the head of Master Ramón Menéndez (as does the dove with Parsifal in the final scene of the Wagnerian opera) while he is escorted by a group of students: the Neophyte, Doctor Americus, Professor Double, the last two caricaturing the famous scholars Américo Castro and Tomás Navarro Tomás. The chorus address all three both in unison and antiphonally (first semi-chorus; second semi-chorus). Two singing masters stand out among the Birds: the Nightingale, embodying the spirit of Juan Ramón Jiménez, poet-prophet of the '27 group, and the Blackbird, prologue character and alter ego of the same Bergamín.

From a formal viewpoint, the chorus of Birds always performs as a whole, while the Monkeys separate into two sections, like the Cards in the first act: "First semi-chorus" and "Second semi-chorus". The semi-choruses' alternating lines aim at a comic purpose, in that they ridicule well-known contemporary intellectuals such as Ortega y Gasset and Menéndez Pidal with gossips and vulgar innuendoes. On their part the chorus of Satyrs welcomes Ortega's entrance in hunting gear, as a hunted hunter Parsifal, with bow and arrow and wearing a feathered trilby hat visibly showing a "Made in Germany" label as if he were a hero: "¡Alegría! ¡Alegría! Le hemos cazado. ¡Victoria!" ["Cheers, cheers! We caught him. Victory!"]; and exit, carrying their prey with equal rejoicing: "[*Se lo llevan entre gritos de júbilo y cabriolas, como a la entrada. Ortega sale arrastrado por ellos … todo el cuerpo desmadejado, como una bacante de friso clásico*" (Bergamín 2004: 280, 282) ["*They carry him and exit with exultant cries and somersaulting as they had entered. Ortega is dragged out of the scene, … his body flabby as a bacchante from a classical frieze*"]. At this particular point, the chorus, only for one line, divide into "First semi-chorus" and "Second semi-chorus".

In the third act, the responsorial form is extensively employed in a long dialogue between the Master (the soloist, Menéndez Pidal himself) and the chorus of Monkeys (the collective part) and between the Nightingale or the Owl (personification of Miguel de Unamuno, wisdom incarnated) and the chorus of Birds. The chorus of Monkeys enters in the last scene of the third and final act accompanying the Master. He is very pleased with them, who grasp his teaching best: also in their pose, they perfectly imitate the stiff posture in profile characterising Menéndez y Pidal from his entrance on stage, a posture that caricatures Nijinsky's geometries, plastic expression of Pascal's "*esprit de géométrie*" as opposed to "*l'esprit de finesse*". When the Master, dejected by the birds' killing of Cacatúa, loses his hieratical attitude in profile and cries, the

Monkeys, who until then have played a solemn ceremonial role, climb back up the trees and pelt him with coconuts:

Coro de monos	Nos ha engañado. Nos ha traicionado. Es un hombre, no es un filólogo. ¡Muera! ¡muera! ¡muera!.
	...
Coro de Pájaros	[*con júbilo*] Eso, muera, muera el filólogo. ¡Victoria! ¡victoria!.
Coro de monos	El filólogo sí; la filología no; la filología no puede morir, es ya cosa muerta.
	(Bergamín 2004: 295)

[Chorus of Monkeys He deceived us. He betrayed us. He is a man, not a philologist. Death, death, death. // ... Chorus of Birds (*exultantly*) Yes, to death, to death the philologist. Victory! Victory! // Chorus of Monkeys Death to the philologist, not to philology. Philology cannot die, it's already dead]

This thematic emphasis by the chorus of Monkeys in the finale of the farce is both textually remarkable and choreographically fundamental. Indeed, the intention to exploit all the stage potentials is quite clear here, as it was obviously an essential part of Bergamín's theatrical concept: it is worth noting that, at the time, he was also writing *Don Lindo de Almería* (the dance libretto he submitted to Picasso and De Falla).[9]

The experimental attitude in *Las risas en los huesos* [*Laughter in the bones*] (1973) is widely different. The choruses present in the complex structure of this work, which includes various texts written by Bergamín many years before (between 1924 and 1927), differ in style and length. The unitary cast of this collection makes for a more coherent and comprehensive reading, and underlines the themes that the author considered most meaningful. The fragments that interest us, due to the originality in their use of the chorus, occupy the central part of *Enemigo que huye* [*A fleeting enemy*]: *Variación y fuga del fantasma* [*Variation and Fugue of the Ghost*], where the ghost is Hamlet, *Variación y fuga de una sombra* [*Variation and Fugue of a Shadow*], where the shadow is Don Juan, and *Intermedio* [*Interlude*] which could be considered a legacy of the ancient *Entremés*.

Variación y fuga del fantasma [*Variation and Fugue of the Ghost*] is divided into three parts numbered 1, 2, and 3. In the second, the chorus accompany the entrance of Ophelia who, after a brief exchange with Hamlet in which she reveals her intention to take the veil, throws herself from a balcony. She is followed by Hamlet himself; however, the other characters on stage stop him. The iconographic import of the Chorus's cues is suggested by their graphic arrangement on the page; we can consider it a manifestation of avant-garde

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9. For a discussion of this work see Ambrosi 2010.

experimentalism, although its significance mostly lies in its implicit performative possibilities, pointing to the expressive tradition of the chorus (both in its musical and choreographic aspects):

Coro   [*Con tono monótono de suave salmodia*]
Eva,
     evasiva,
           fugitiva
esposa
      terrenal
           – provisional –
                    caprichosa:
              consensual
              bilateral
              conmutativa
              y onerosa.
Tentación
        en capuchón
                 rosa.
       Inocencia.
Preparación
       para la penitencia.

[*Hamlet se echa atrás y mira estupefacto.*]

Coro   [*Como antes*]
Eva,
     evasiva;
     disyuntiva.
     Rosa
        irreal,
           inmaterial
               – milagrosa –.
Ignorada
       pignorada
          y delictiva.
Locura
oscura
      y conjunción
     copulativa.
Misteriosa
       aparición
     en capuchón
  rosa.
Inconsecuencia.
       Preparación
     para la penitencia.
(Bergamín 2004: 177-8)

[Chorus (*in a sweet, monotonous psalmody*) Eve, / evasive, / fugitive, / earthly / – provisional – / moody / bride: / consensual / bilateral / commutative / and onerous.

/ Pink / hooded / temptation. / Innocence. / Preparation / to penitence. (*Hamlet, bewildered, backs off and stares*) // Chorus (*as before*) Eve, / evasive; / disjunctive. / Rose / unreal / ethereal / prodigious / Ignored / pawned / and illicit. / Dark / madness / and copulative / conjunction. / Mysterious / pink / hooded / apparition. / Inconsequence. / Preparation / to penitence.]

The image of flowing water reinforces the idea of escape from death and the murmur and music of the lines pronounced by the chorus both reveals and accompanies this image; the rhetorical repetitions and alliterations amplify the sense of rituality, as does the proverbial conclusion ("for a fleeing enemy make a silver bridge"):

Coro   [*Muy lentamente, murmurándolo como un rezo*]
          Huyendo de la muerte, cuerpo frío
          – frío, frío, frío, como el agua del río –,
          Te lleva su corriente y te delata.
          A enemiga fugaz, puente de plata.

[*Entra el cuerpo muerto de Ofelia, ceñido por el mallot negro, con la cabeza descubierta, coronada de bucles rubios, y lo visten, como de un hábito, con el capuchón rosa.*] (Bergamín 2004: 179)

[Chorus (*very slowly, murmuring prayer-like*) Cold body escaping death / Cold, cold as the water of the stream / Its flow both carries and betrays you. / A silver bridge is for a fleeing she-foe. (*Enters Ophelia's dead body, squeezed into a black vest, her head bare and crowned with fair curls; they dress her with the pink hooded cloak*)]

In the third part the members of the Chorus attending Ophelia's funeral wear pink-hooded cloaks identical to the one covering her dead body:

[*Entra el cortejo fúnebre de Ofelia, con antorchas encendidas; viene descubierto el ataúd y el cuerpo negro de Fantomás envuelto en el capuchón rosa; lo traen enmascaradas en capuchón rosa y antifaz negro.*]

Hamlet y el cortejo fúnebre de Ofelia
Coro de penitentes en capuchón rosa
      [*Rezando*]
      Ni tuyo,
      ni mío,
      ni nuestro,
      ni vuestro;
      - huida inútil,
      imposible encuentro -:
      lo mismo que antes,
                que siempre
                    que nunca.
      ¿Está vivo o está muerto?

> Lo tuyo,
> lo mío,
> lo nuestro,
> lo vuestro;
> - huida imposible
> inútil encuentro -:
> ahora y nunca
>   – ¡siempre! –
> persiguiéndolo;
> persiguiéndonos.
> (Bergamín 2004: 182-3)

[(*Enter Ophelia's funeral with burning torches; the coffin containing Fantomas's black body, dressed in the same pink hooded cloak, is uncovered; the mourners, wearing black masks and pink hooded cloaks, raise it*) HAMLET AND OPHELIA'S FUNERAL CHORUS OF MOURNERS IN PINK HOODED CLOAK (*praying*) It's not mine, / nor yours, / nor ours, / nor yours; / it's a pointless flight / An impossible encounter –: / the same as before, / as ever / as never / Is it dead or is alive? / My own, / your own, / our own, / your own; / – it's an impossible flight / a pointless encounter –: / now and never / – forever! – / Chasing him; / chased by him.]

The rhythmic and graphic progression of these lines, by no means contrapuntal, is clearly influenced by the new tendencies brought forward by the historical avant-gardes of those years. This seems to suggest a relation with a sculpture kept in the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin, especially if one imagines it in horizontal section. This work (Figure 1) was realised in 1928 by the Rumanian artist and musician Henrik Neugeboren (better known as Henri Nouveau, 1901-1959) as a plastic representation of the *Fugue in E flat minor* by Johann Sebastian Bach; Nouveau was influenced by the discussions on the concept of synaesthesia (especially between Vasilij Kandinsky and Paul Klee) then under way in the Bauhaus School, a leading artistic circle well-known to Bergamín himself. What I wish to stress is the importance that in the 1920s and 1930s was attributed to the musical form of the Fugue as a structuring model affecting also other forms of art: Bergamín here seems to allude to this extremely suggestive, yet little used, device that aroused a certain interest in the artistic avant-gardes for its capacity to interweave musical, structural and plastic effects within an overall synaesthetic choreography. This fugue-like choral structure can suggest a polyphonic performance even if the stage direction indicates a monotonous psalmody: this may also apply to other choral lines, thanks to their brevity, musicality and popular playfulness, as, for example, in the *Intermedio*, where the insects make up a chorus. They enter the stage divided into entomologically distinctive groups (Ladybirds, Scarab Beetles, Red Ants, Bees, and many more) and then utter their lines in turns, thus providing a highly varied dramaturgical effect.

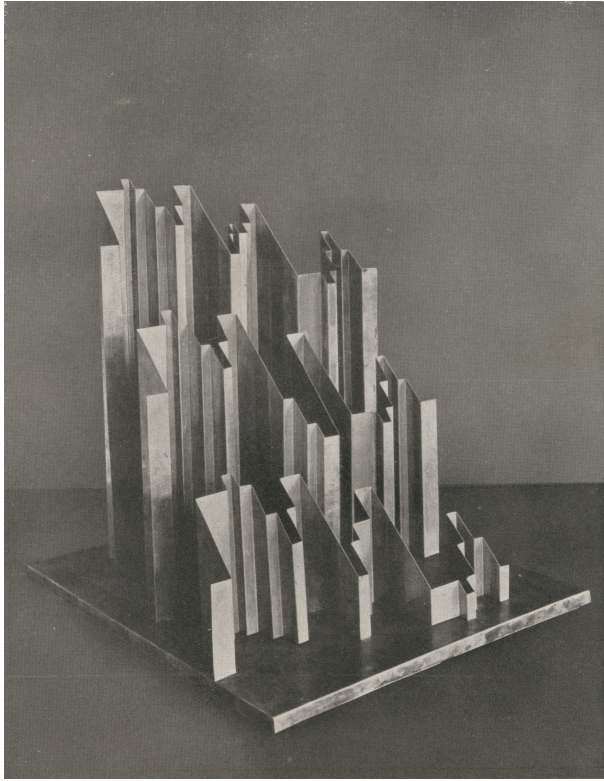Figure 1: Henrik Neugeboren (Henri Nouveau), *Plastic representation of the Fugue in E Flat Minor* by J.S. Bach, 1928. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

[*Entran las Cochinillas*]
Cochinilla …
Una Cochinilla …
Otra …
Otra …
Otra …
Otra …
[*Entran los Escarabajos*]
El Escarabajo Sagrado …
Los Escarabajos …
Un Escarabajo …
Otro …
Otro …
Otro …
Otro …
Otro …
El Escarabajo sagrado …
Los Escarabajos …
(Bergamín 2004: 223-6)

[(Enter *the Ladybirds*) // The Ladybirds … // one ladybird … // another … // another … // another … // another … (*Enter the Scarab Beetles*) The Sacred Scarab Beetle … // The Scarab Beetles … // One Scarab Beetle … // Another … // Another … // Another … // Another … // Another … // The Sacred Scarab Beetle … // The Scarab Beetles …].

In Bergamín's second "Variation", the element of the Fugue (Bergamín plays upon the homophony between "Fuga" [Fugue] and "fuga" [escape]) is recognisable in two moments. The first, "Fuga de los ángeles del espectro solar a través de la nube rota" ["The flight of the angels of the solar spectrum through the cracked cloud"], is divided into ten poetic sequences of different lengths, each attributed to an angel carrying the name of a colour of the solar spectrum; the second, "Fuga de los animales del arca" ["The flight of the animals from the ark"], is divided into twelve parts; the first two are composed by short lines ("La oruga / es una arruga / que se fuga / La mitad del coco / es una piragua / que hace agua / y asusta un poco", ["The grub / is a wrinkle / that flees / Half a coconut / is a pirogue / leaking water / getting scary"]), and the others are written in aphoristic prose ("El progreso generaliza una idea de humanidad evolutiva", "la parálisis general también es progresiva" ["Progress spreads an evolutionary idea of mankind", "A general paralysis is progressive too"]). All of them are pronounced by animals: the Flamingo, the Monkey, the Bear, the Squirrel, the Duck, the Turtle, the Snake, the Mouse, the Dromedary, the Goldfish, the Pelican, the West Indian Parrot.

In the *Intermedio* [*Interlude*] following the two "Variations", the function of the chorus seems to be assumed by the *Cantata a tres voces* [*Cantata for three voices*], consisting of six stanzas of various length interpreted in succession (as stated in the stage direction), by Ligia Oceánica, Diógenes Pugilator and Asterias Glacialis, in addition to a tercet that the three members of the chorus perform together.

Just as interesting, even if not as surprising, is the chorus in *La Sangre de Antígona* [*Antigone's Blood*], commissioned by Roberto Rossellini for a young Ingrid Bergman. The original idea had come to the musician Salvador Bacarisse, exiled in France like his friend Bergamín. In the early months of 1955 the two of them committed themselves enthusiastically to this work, originally intended to be partly sung and partly recited: a classically structured tragedy, with two choruses (Chorus 1 and Chorus 2) and two coryphaeus (Coryphaeus 1 and Coryphaeus 2). I mention this *pièce*, though distant from the period of the historical avant-gardes, in order to stress a particular aspect: the many disquieting questions which the chorus can pose directly. This is a characteristic they share with Lorca's choruses of Woodcutters in *Bodas de sangre* and Washerwomen in *Yerma*, and with similar collective presences in other classically structured dramas of the 1920s and 1930s. In Bergamín's *Antígona*,

however, the chorus's queries clearly regard the "évolution de l'interrogation tragique" as defined by Roland Barthes in his study on Greek theatre (1965: 531).

Of all the questions posed by the chorus, three leave a lasting impression on the listener: "¿Por qué muere Antígona? / ¿Por quién muere? / ¿Para qué muere?", ["Why does Antigone die? / Whom does she die for? / To what end does she die?"] (Bergamín 2003: 48). This is what Tiresias asks the Thebans, and the same question is insistently repeated by the chorus in the finale of the tragedy, prompting the audience to confront the problems raised by the myth while trying to answer them. This makes clear how the presence of the chorus constantly spurs the spectators to ponder over the meaning of life.

— 2 — The Classical Chorus in Lorca's Tragedies

The chorus forms a defining feature of genre in Lorca's plays. This opinion is held by García Posada, who distinguishes between tragedies, *Bodas de sangre*, *Yerma* [*Blood Wedding*] and dramas, *Doña Rosita la soltera* [*Miss Rose the Spinster*], *La casa de Bernarda Alba* [*The House of Bernarda Alba*]. According to him, the former can be characterised by a classical structure with few characters, a fairly straightforward plot, a solemn use of poetry and the presence of the chorus, while the latter is marked by a stronger emphasis on plots situated in ordinary urban environments (García Posada: 24-7).

In *Bodas de sangre. Tragedia en tres actos y siete cuadros* (1933) [*Blood Wedding, a tragedy in three acts and seven scenes*] the chorus of Woodcutters (Woodcutter 1. 2. 3) open the first scene of the third act. This chorus employ metaphorical and repetitive language, enriched by a masterly use of alliterations and anaphoras and fulfil various functions. They evoke the event that closed the preceding act, underline the gravity of the flight of the bride (Novia) with her former lover (Leonardo) on her wedding day, and consequently disclose the real reason behind this act: the irresistible power of blood:

> Leñador 1   Se estaban engañando uno a otro y al final la sangre pudo más.
> Leñador 3   ¡La sangre!
> Leñador 1   Hay que seguir el camino de la sangre.
> Leñador 2   Pero sangre que ve la luz se la bebe la tierra.
> Leñador 1   ¿Y qué? Vale más ser muerto desangrado que vivo con ella podrida.
>   (García Lorca 1977: 637)

[Woodcutter 1 They were deceiving each other and, at the end, blood proved stronger. // Woodcutter 3 Blood. // Woodcutter 1. One must follow the urge of the blood. //

WOODCUTTER 2 But when blood sees the light, it is drunk by the earth. // WOODCUTTER 1 So what? It is better to bleed to death than to live with rotten blood.]

The chorus anticipate the inevitability of the impending tragedy (the Bridegroom will kill Leonardo). Woodcutter 1 says: "Cuando salga la luna los verán" ["When the moon rises, they will see them"]. Here, as always in Lorca, the moon is a messenger of death and is personified as a white-faced young woodcutter, who has a privileged conversation with the Beggar Woman, the embodiment of death itself, as openly stated in the dramatis personae.

The opening of the subsequent "Last Scene" is in choral form with the lines of the Girls, 1 and 2, alternating with the voice of the Little Girl. During this dialogue of short, closely woven verses, the members of the chorus unwind a red skein ("*Dos muchachas vestidas de azul oscuro están devanando una madeja roja*"; "*two girls dressed in dark blue unwind a red skein*"), uncoiling a premonitory thread of blood which connects them symbolically. The ritual quality of the action is stressed by the stage direction, which strictly imposes a completely white interior, including the floor, intended to transmit a sense of ecclesiastical monumentality: "*No habrá ni un gris, ni una sombra, ni siquiera lo preciso para la perspectiva* (ibid. 402) ["*There should be not a hint of gray, or a shadow, not even for perspective's sake*"].

In *Yerma. Poema tragico en tres actos y seis cuadros* [*Tragic poem in three acts and six scenes*], the second play of a planned, but never concluded, trilogy, the collective characters prevail: six Washerwomen, two Sisters-in-law, two Girls, three Men. All of these clearly act as a chorus, yet they are not acknowledged as such in the text. Girl 1 and Girl 2 are not even mentioned in the list of characters, even though their importance is evident in distinctive scenes. For instance, in the second scene, they perform a countermelody to Yerma's obsession with maternity. Their voices relate what goes unsaid but is common knowledge. Girl 2, who is uneasy in the conventional role of wife, expresses an eccentric opinion: "Cuánto mejor se está en medio de la calle. Ya voy al arroyo, ya subo a tocar las campanas, ya me tomo un refresco de anís" ["How good it feels to be outside one's house. One can go for a walk to the stream, or ring the bells of the church tower, or have a chilled drink"]. And then, when she must go back home to fix dinner for her husband, she says: "Qué lástima no poder decir mi novio ¿verdad?" (García Lorca 1977: 688-9) ["It's a pity I can't call him my fiancé anymore, isn't it?"].

The chorus, in their role as witnesses to and commentators on the dramatic action and its consequences, reflect the impassioned voice of the author, whose aim was to promote a socially active theatre spreading a strong ideal of freedom. Moreover, his musical education (he was an appreciated pianist) is certainly evident in the rhythm and balance between realism and lyricism.

The chorus of Washerwomen, which occupy the entire first scene of act 2, start and finish their performance with a song. In the stage directions the author precisely defines their position and their movements, as if they were choreographed: "*Las lavanderas están situadas en varios planos*" and "*Cantan todas a coro*", "*Mueven los paños a ritmo y los golpean*" (ibid. 694, 704) ["*The washerwomen are positioned at different levels*", "*They sing all together*", "*They turn and beat the clothes rhythmically*"]. This is in fact a long choral scene in which the women from the village, doing their laundry at the stream, reaffirm the central theme of the tragedy (the sterility afflicting the main character, Yerma). On one hand, they play a narrative role, by lyrically illustrating the subject in metaphorical terms easily interpretable in Lorca's poetics: "En el arroyo frío / lavo tu cinta, / como un jazmín caliente / tienes la risa" ["In a cool stream / I wash your waistband / hot as a jasmine / resounds your laughter"] (ibid. 700) and on the other, they suggest the possibility of a different point of view. Their hymn to life and maternity:

> LAVANDERA 5   ¡Alegría, alegría, alegría,
>   del vientre redondo, bajo la camisa!
> LAVANDERA 2   ¡Alegría, alegría, alegría
>   ombligo, cáliz tierno de maravilla!
>   (1977: 703)

> [WASHERWOMAN 5 Oh joy, oh joy, oh joy / a rounded belly beneath the dress! // WASHEWOMAN 2 Oh joy, oh joy, oh joy / the navel, a wonderful tender chalice.]

dialectically clashes with the menace of sterility, "¡Pero, ay de la casada seca! / ¡Ay de la que tiene los pechos de arena!" ["But wretched the woman who's married and barren / wretched the woman who has breasts made of sand"], the cause of which is also discussed: "Y los hombres avanzan / como ciervos heridos" (ibid.) ["And the men come forth / as the wounded stags do"]. Washerwoman 4 also reports the point of view of Victor, Yerma's husband: "Quiero vivir en la nevada chica / de este jazmín" (ibid. 700) ["I want to live / in the little snowfall / of this jasmine"]. Water, a fecund element, is as cold as the snow that freezes the jasmine, Lorca's symbol of femininity.

Just like a classical chorus, the Washerwomen synthesise the terms of the tragedy; the various alternating voices explain the situation to the audience and underline its inherent dangers. Their attitude is uncompromising towards Yerma's prospective actions: they anticipate the impossibility of a positive outcome and belittle other feasible solutions, like bearing the child of another man or raising one of her nephews. At the same time, the different members of the chorus hint at alternative reasons and points of view recognisable to the audience.

In a famous interview with Juan Chabás in 1934, García Lorca summarised his concept of tragedy: "Four main characters and the chorus, this is the way a tragedy has to be" (1977: 1027), and in a lecture he reasserted the importance of the chorus:

> *Yerma* no tiene argumento. *Yerma* es un carácter que se va desarrollando en el transcurso de los seis cuadros de que consta la obra. Tal como conviene a una tragedia he introducido en *Yerma* unos coros que comentan los hechos, o el tema de la tragedia, que es el mismo constantemente. Fíjese que digo 'tema'. Repito que *Yerma* no tiene argumento alguno. (García Lorca 1977: 1060)

> [*Yerma* has no subject. *Yerma* is a character who evolves during the six scenes of the play. As it is proper for a tragedy, I introduced in *Yerma* some choruses that comment on the events, or the theme of the tragedy, which is always the same. Mind, I say 'theme'. I repeat that *Yerma* has no subject.]

From the perspective delineated by García Posada, one particular moment in *La casa di Bernarda Alba* [*The House of Bernarda Alba*] is especially interesting because it alludes to the presence of a real chorus – a 'quotation' of it, as it were –, which is surprising since this drama is mainly choral in its staging. The action takes place in the interior of a house, after the death of the father of the family. The four daughters, women already, are not allowed to go out of the house and must wear black for eight years, under the constant gaze of the mother-mistress, who torments them so much as to drive the youngest to suicide. In fact, the chorus is not included in the list of characters and remains outside the action. It is only present in a scene that the daughters of Bernarda cannot see, since they are not given permission to look out of the windows: they can only hear the song filtering through the walls:

MAGDALENA	Y ni nuestros ojos siquiera nos pertenecen.
	[*Se oye un cantar lejano que se va acercando*]
LA PONCIA	Son ellos. Traen unos cantos preciosos.
AMELIA	Ahora salen a segar.
CORO	Ya salen los segadores
	en busca de las espigas;
	se llevan los corazones
	de las muchachas que miran.
	(García Lorca 1977: 884)

[MAGDALENA: Not even our eyes are really our own. // (*A song is heard in the distance, drawing nearer*) PONCIA: It's them. They have beautiful songs.// AMELIA: They're off to the reaping. // CHORUS: The reapers are leaving / They're off to fields; / They take with them the hearts / Of all the girls who're watching.]

Once again, the chorus lay bare the underlying tragedy, implicitly pointing at a possible solution when they sing "Open your window": a token of

rustic common sense wholly remote from the middle class values of the main characters:

> Abrir puertas y ventanas
> las que vivís en el pueblo,
> el segador pide rosas
> para adornar su sombrero.
> (García Lorca 1977: 885)

> [Open your doors and windows / Girls who live in this village / The reaper asks for roses / To embellish his sombrero.]

— 3 — The Chorus in Rafael Alberti's Plays

The strong tie with classical tradition, expressed in the innovative forms of the Spanish literary production of the 1920s and 1930s, is strongly evident in the plays of the youngest among the poets of '27, Rafael Alberti; Alberti both befriended the authors of this group and shared their creative experience.

For instance, in the eight scenes (numbered from I to VIII) of *La Pájara pinta, Guirigay lírico-bufo-bailable, en un prólogo y tres actos* (1926) [*The Coloured She-Bird, a Lyric-Comic-Musical Pastiche in one Prologue and three Acts*], Alberti includes the Coro de personajes anónimos [Chorus of anonymous characters] in the *dramatis personae*, although the long and detailed initial stage direction clearly states that the chorus do not take part in the main action of the farce. This deals with the birthday party of the eponymous heroine and the love affairs of other characters, whose folk descent is apparent: "*Rodeando el árbol, todos los personajes de la farsa, a excepción del* Coro *y* Pipirigallo*, jugando al corro*" (Alberti 2003: 7) ["*All the characters of the farce play Ring-A-Ring o' Roses round the tree, except the Chorus and Pipirigallo*"].

Indeed, the chorus are active in the last two scenes, and are described as follows in the final stage direction of the sixth scene:

> *Por detrás de las tapias, de improviso, asoma la cabeza el* Coro de personajes anónimos. *Los seis hombres llevan la misma máscara: una careta plana, sin ojos y sin nariz, solamente con boca y grandes bigotes ladeados. Las seis mujeres, todas las máscaras iguales, planas, solamente con bocas inmensas, como rajas de sandía.* (Alberti 2003: 38)

> [*Behind the wall, the* Chorus of anonymous characters *suddenly raise their heads. The six men all wear the same mask, a plain one, without eyes or nostrils, only with a mouth and handlebar moustaches. The six women also wear plain masks, with enormous mouths resembling watermelon slices.*]

There are twelve characters, six men and six women, wearing identical masks, with big pointed moustaches to denote male figures and huge red

mouths, as big as watermelon slices, for feminine ones. The function of this chorus, in the finale of the farce, is to celebrate and reinforce the distinctive traits of a character whose popularity has lasted through time:

Coro	¡La Pájara pinta,
	La Pájara pinta,
	La Pájara pinta!
	¡Verde salvadora
	¡Verde bienhechora,
	verde protectora!
Todos	¡Vivaaaaaaaaaaa!
	(Alberti 2003: 43-4)

[Chorus The coloured She-Bird / The coloured She-Bird / The coloured She-Bird / Green[10] saviouress / Green benefactress / Green protectress! // Everybody Hooooooorayyyyyyyy!]

The brief seventh scene is entirely occupied by the Chorus, who talks with all the other characters, Todos [Everybody], exalting the immortality of the Coloured She-Bird, her gift of premonition and her redeeming role, celebrated in many playful folk *coplas* [ditties]:

Coro	¡Inmortal, como la tinta
	de la mora del moral!
	¡Gloria a la Pájara pinta!
Todos	¡Pinta, Pinta, Pinta, Pinta!
Coro	¡Tierna madre salvadora
	y al sol, en el limonar,
	cantaora adivinadora!
Todos	¡Dora, dora, dora, dora!
Coro	¡Cantemos su amor, cantemos,
	¡Y de laureles y olivas
	doce coronas bordemos!
Todos:	¡Viva, viva, viva, viva!
	¡Giremos, aire, giremos!
	(Alberti 2003: 38-39)

[Chorus Everlasting as the colour / Of blackberries in their bramble / Cheer the Coloured She-bird! // Everybody Bird, bird, bird, bird! // Chorus Tender loving helping mother / Our Songstress and Prophetess / Up the lemon tree in the sunshine! // Everybody Shine, shine, shine, shine! // Chorus Let us sing a song of love / Laurel twigs and olive branches / Let us twist into twelve wreaths! // Everybody Hooray, Hooray, Hooray, Hooray / Let's turn, let's turn, let's turn in the air!]

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10. In Spanish the adjective 'verde' [green] applies to someone bold, especially sexually, and therefore it is ironically paired by antiphrasis with the terms "salvadora, bienhechora, protectora" ["saviouress, benefactress, protectress"].

In *Auto[11] de fe. Dividido en un gargajo y cuatro cazcarrias* [*Act of faith. Divided into a phlegm spit and four mud stains*] the author includes the chorus in the list of characters: CORO DE CINCO DAMAS PARALÍTICAS [CHORUS OF FIVE PARALYTIC DAMES]. This *Auto de fe* is actually divided into "Primer Vómito e Segundo Vómito" ["First vomit and Second vomit"]. In my opinion the choice of this term, quite unusual in playwriting, must be ascribed to the rebellious nature of the young poets of this group, who never missed an opportunity to target their venerable masters (that is, the older generation of intellectuals, here symbolically shamed and burnt). In this play we find again the Parrot, as in Bergamín's *Farsa de los filólogos,* and also the doubles of Ortega y Gasset, Gómez de la Serna, Fernando Vela and other intellectuals and artists of the time; along with them we meet the CORO DE CINCO DAMAS PARALÍTICAS, devoted fans of the Master (Ortega), from whom they eagerly expect a word of wisdom: "¡Maestro! Esperamos su palabra como un manjar divino" ["Master, we wait for your word as if it were bread from heaven"]. Unfortunately, "*Don Ortega y Gasset acaba de escapársele un grande y ruidosísimo pedo*" ["*Don Ortega y Gasset lets out an extremely noisy fart*"] at which "*La fina, alta y alegre Dama hace mutis llena de* vergüenza" (Alberti 2003: 159) ["*The tall, elegant and jolly Lady exits the stage, embarrassed*"].

This chorus do not speak or dance but simply perform characteristic actions, and never cease to suck their thumbs: "*se chupan el dedo*" ["*they suck their thumbs*"]. Their gestures effectively comment on the action and assist in filling the stage: for instance, in response to a "*coquetuela sonrisa del maestro*" ["*coquettish smile of the Master*"] the Ladies "*Sus labios se contraen en forma de culito de pollo. Su mano izquierda oprime el corazón. Sus ojos se amortiguan en éxtasis. Su boca vuelve a atirantarse*" (Alberti 2003: 179) ["*They pucker up their lips. They bring the left hand to their hearth. Their eyes turn ecstatic. They stretch their mouth again*"].[12]

In *Santa Casilda, Misterio en tres actos y un epílogo* [*Saint Casilda, Mystery play in three Acts and an Epilogue*], set in the eleventh century, there are many characters, listed before each act. The Chorus is never mentioned as such, but we can assume that its role is played by the united voices of characters who, in expressionist fashion, carry a generic name: SOLDIER 1, SOLDIER 2, SOLDIER

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11. The *auto* is a religious play of medieval origin, which later became an allegorical drama. The most famous and frequently staged examples are those from the Baroque Age, and especially the ones by Calderón de la Barca. In the years of avant-gardes, this theatrical form was reintroduced by various authors after centuries of neglect. This is not the only *auto* by Alberti; his most famous one is *El hombre deshabitado* [*The Uninhabited Man*].

12. The graphic and rhythmic effect of this chorus reminds of the characters of Bergamín's *Don Lindo* (1926): "tres curas vestidos de verde con exagerados sombreros de tejas, también verdes" ["three priests wearing green with enormous saturno hats, also green"].

3, PRISONER 1, PRISONER 2, PRISONER 3, SENTINEL 1, SENTINEL 2, SENTINEL 3, OR FIRST VOICE OF AN UNSEEN PRISONER AND SECOND VOICE OF AN UNSEEN PRISONER. The group of angels (ANGEL 1, ANGEL 2, ANGEL 3, ANGEL 4, ANGELS OF THE WALLS) acts as a declamatory or imploring chorus. This mode is repeated in many other plays by Alberti, such as, for instance, *La farsa de los Reyes Magos* [*The Farce of the Three Wise Men*].

In Spanish twentieth-century drama, the chorus is employed in many different ways which are not to be found in the contemporary European tradition. I refer, for example, to the peculiar instances present in the previously examined texts such as the object-characters (Coro de Fichas [Chorus of Cards]) or the countless animals in Bergamín's work, an actual 'zoo', worth of being looked at in its own right.

The strong influence exercised by music and dance (Sánchez 1994; Mateos 2002; Ambrosi 2010; Nommick and Álvarez Cañibano 2000) is apparent in the use of the chorus by Alberti and Bergamín, who were particularly concerned with the distribution in space of all the stage elements. The chorus achieved an important metatheatrical role of reflection on the forms in use in the early decades of the century, but, more than anything, it came to the fore as performing and rhythmical element (think of the chorus who do not sing nor speak in the *Auto de Fé* by Alberti) also with regard to its musical potential and capacity to contribute substantially to the organization of scenic space.

During the years that witnessed the blossoming of the artistic Avant-gardes in Europe, Spanish playwriting mirrored, on one hand, the playful, innovative and experimental aspects of the choral presence on stage, and on the other hand, the authors' deep-rooted determination to preserve their ties with the traditional forms they were studying, renovating and re-proposing. Besides, the chorus reinforced its crucial function of establishing a connection with the audience, while also giving a theatrical evidence of the increasingly prominent role of the mass, one of the most remarkable aspects of the social reality of the twentieth century.

Basically, the chorus keep performing their classical function, even though in more flexible forms than those typical of the rigorously structured ancient tragedy. They do not merely tell the background of the story, nor simply talk to the main character, but take on a more structural role while consistently witnessing to and commenting upon the action, with a typical ritual and ceremonial function.

In the farces the chorus exaggerate the comic elements, underlining faults or telling what other characters would like to pass over in silence. The chorus also emphasise the presence of a character on stage, or a particular situation

or issue, they express individual or collective feelings, and act as both epic and ethical commentator.

As we have seen, in Lorca's *pièces*, though no less innovative or choreographic, the choruses maintain a classical frame and help to create the balance of lyricism and realism typical of his poetics.

These twentieth-century choruses take part in and explain the action, but, above all, they dynamically connect events and characters, and, by posing often implicit and unanswered questions, they provide a link between the action on stage and the audience, thus taking over a metatheatrical function typical of the prologue (Ambrosi 1999). Future investigations into Lorca's theatre might usefully focus on the transfer of metatheatricality from the prologic paratext to text proper, prompting new research possibilities into the works of other contemporary playwrights. The use of the chorus led them to reflect upon the nature of drama, whether classical or experimental, and upon the scenic relevance of the chorus itself, which exploited to its full potential.

English translation by Carlo Vareschi

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"Sordid particulars": Deixis in the Chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral*

Abstract

Much has been written about the ritual function of the Chorus in T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Eliot's masterful handling of the rhythm and the ritual is undeniable, yet there is always more than meets the eye in Old Possum's works. Eliot himself stated that the Chorus's role is that of mediating "between the action and the audience". Traditionally this comment has been read as an invitation to the audience to participate in the ritual as if they were, to all purposes, a congregation. This is only partly true. This paper aims to demonstrate that Eliot, through the – partly Shakespearean – use of deixis in the Chorus's speeches, involves the audience not merely in the ritual slaughter of the martyr Thomas, but also, powerfully, in the horrors of history. The terror and revulsion associated with history, in fact, are expressed through Eliot's thoroughly modernistic handling of the sordid, his well-stocked misogynistic repertoire and his references to recent murders as his most powerful tools to express the loathsome, unbearable burden of "very much reality".

"Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created beings" (*Sweeney Agonistes*, *Epigraph*, in Eliot 2004: 115). This quotation from St John of the Cross, which Eliot chose as one of the epigraphs to his *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926), has often been interpreted as one of the signs of the author's impending conversion (Coghill 1965: 14). It might be so, and the immediately preceding line, Orestes' cry "I must move on" (*Sweeney Agonistes*, *Epigraph*, in Eliot 2004: 115), may indeed reflect the author's sense of an impending change, but if we emphasise the second part of the quotation from St John of the Cross and take the first part for granted, which is perhaps more to the point in the present essay, the passage is vital to an understanding of one of the main issues in Eliot's poetics.[1]

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1. Eliot loved the paradoxes of Christianity. From his standpoint, the nature of Christianity was eminently contradictory: he wrote that all Christians led a life of incompatible extremes,

If it can be said that *Murder in the Cathedral* is permeated by a very peculiar but unquestionable love of God and by the protagonist's terrier-like determination to seek the "divine union" that comes with martyrdom, it can also, and perhaps more forcibly, be said that the play is – even more than *Sweeney Agonistes* – divested of all "love of created beings".[2] In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot's observance of the letter of the paradox quoted above leads to the implacable cruelty with which the author expresses the horrors of the human condition, through the medium of the Chorus, whose members express their self-abhorrence, that sense of terrified loathing that persistently emerges from the lines of the Chorus and that Lyndall Gordon calls "the pervasiveness of corruption" (Gordon 2000: 281).[3]

The importance of the passage from St John of the Cross does not lie in its Christian implications or in their connections with the poet's own spiritual journey. After all, the passage is taken from the epigraph to *Sweeney Agonistes*, which may be many things to many critics, but certainly not a religious work. The passage, in my opinion, is relevant with reference to Eliot's thoroughly Modernist poetics, which shape both his avant-garde "Aristophanic Melodrama" *Sweeney Agonistes* (Eliot 2004: 115) and his later, post-conversion plays.[4]

One of the most shocking innovations of Modernist poetry was its wish to include what had previously been considered unpoetic elements within poetry. Eliot kept faith to this principle both as a young experimentalist poet and as

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torn between the world and God: "you must lose your life in order to save it. One has to be otherworldly and yet deeply responsible for the affairs of this world. One must reserve a capacity for enjoying the things of this world such as love and affection" (qtd in C.H. Smith 1963: 214). Elsewhere he wrote: "Scepticism and disillusion are a useful equipment for religious understanding" (Eliot 1928: 60). The paradoxical nature of Christianity is a concept that is also present in *Murder in the Cathedral*, for instance when the Chorus asks "Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn?" (1.49), in the same crude, unembellished style that can be found in Lancelot Andrewes' sermon on the Nativity (Eliot 1961: 344-53), from which Eliot derived the beginning of his own poem "The Journey of the Magi" (1927).

2. I cannot agree with Conrad Aiken's ironic observation that "in the play Eliot has become human" ("London Letter" to *The New Yorker*, 13 July 1935, qtd in Gordon 2000: 278).

3. See also Coghill 1965: 127-8.

4. The persistence of Eliot's avant-garde tendencies even after his conversion has been discussed by several critics. See, for example, Cotter 2002: 69-78. On Eliot's bathetic vein and the inclusion of unpoetic material in Modernist poetry, see Higgins 1995: 508-17. Eliot's commitment to Modernist poetics after his conversion had an impact on the early productions of *Murder in the Cathedral*, especially the West End run that took place soon after the first Canterbury Festival production. The original production was very innovative in itself, but in London Eliot felt free of the constraints exerted by the inevitably devotional background of the audience and setting of the Canterbury première, and was able to collaborate with Ashley Dukes of the Mercury Theatre in adapting the play to the less religiously committed West End audience (see Marchesi 2009: xii-xiii, xix-xxi).

the sedate darling of the establishment that he became in his maturity. This is something more radical than Eliot's "bathetic vein" (Blaim and Gruszewska 1994: 24), which, in *Murder in the Cathedral*, can easily be recognised in the lines of the Messenger and in those of the Knights – most famously, in their final apology (Marchesi 2009: 37-57).

Even when he had become a sort of unofficial Laureate, deliberately presenting himself to the world as a sort of mock-Tennyson public figure (Litz 1977: 480, 485; Marchesi 2009: xxii), Eliot had no qualms about shocking his audience with the unexpected irruption of the squalid, the disgusting, or even the downright horrific in his plays: the most famous instance of this is arguably the death of Celia Coplestone – "crucified / Very near an ant hill" (3.307) as Alex puts it in the third act of *The Cocktail Party* (1949, Eliot 2004: 434).

Eliot always felt concern over the artistic quality of his work, and in his post-conversion period he emphatically discriminated between a real poet and a Christian one (Marchesi 2009: xxx-xxxii). In particular, in *After Strange Gods* (1934) he showed his deep dislike for devotional poetry, which, he wrote, he considered to be poetry of a lesser kind:

> I am sure that in the matter of devotional poetry a good deal more is at issue than just the purity and strength of the author's devotional passion. To be a 'devotional poet' is a limitation: a saint limits himself by writing poetry, and a poet who confines himself to even this subject matter is limiting himself too. (Eliot 1934: 48)

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, the Chorus is the depository of this disturbing element. The women of Canterbury evoke a world of violence and fear, where evil is accepted as a part of the eternal cycle of the seasons, and the world appears, like Hamlet's unweeded garden, as a place where only rank and gross things can breed.

The opening line, "Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait" (1.1) with its repetition of the spatial deictic "here", takes care to let the audience partake in this world of horrors.

It is from Shakespeare's distinctive use of temporal and spatial deictic markers in the opening line of a play that Eliot probably borrows the effect of including the audience in the here and now of the performance. This effect is particularly marked in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with its powerfully engaging opening question "Who's there?" (1.1.1), and even more in *Richard III*'s equally compelling opening line "Now is the winter of our discontent" (1.1.1), where the audience and the character are immediately projected into the irresistible suddenness of the "now" and in the communality of the experience of "our" discontent.

Eliot may have modelled the opening of *Murder in the Cathedral* on the kind of *incipit* that is typical of Shakespeare, with its sense of a sudden, irresistible

partaking of the audience in the action of the play. In the history plays, this involvement in the action of the play entails the contemporary participation of the audience in the action of the historical events that are performed.[5]

The incipit of *Richard III* has good credentials to be considered the most famous instance of this, but the stress placed there on temporal and spatial deixis is actually a recurrent feature in Shakespeare's histories.[6] *King John* opens with the word "Now" in the King's line "Now, say, Chatillon, what would France with us?" (1.1.1) and *The Second Part of Henry IV*, after the introduction spoken by Rumour, begins with Lord Bardolph's "Who keeps the gate here, ho?" (1.1.1). In *Henry VIII* the prologue is probably the passage where the recurrence of personal, spatial and temporal deictic markers is most pervasive, even taking into account the fact that there – unlike the cases quoted above – the character named "Prologue" addresses the audience directly, and, as a prologue is often meant to do, acknowledges through its spokesman the fact that the audience and the performance do share the physical space of the theatre and the actual time of the performance:

> PROL. I come no more to make you laugh: things now
> That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
> Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe:
> Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow
> We now present. Those that can pity here
> May, if they think it well, let fall a tear
> (*Henry VIII*, Prologue 1-6)

This is also true in the case of the plays by Shakespeare dealing with Roman history. Eliot's beloved *Coriolanus* begins with "a company of mutinous Citizens" (1.1) whose first representative opens the play with the words "Before we proceed any further, hear me speak" (1.1.1). Thanks to the use of the deictic

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5. This is not the only link between the Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* and Shakespeare. The function of the Chorus often comes very close to the Renaissance stage tradition of the commoners or lesser noblemen acting as commentators in historical plays. On this topic, with specific reference to *Richard III*, see Marchesi 2009: XXXIII-XXXIV.

6. All the Histories but one begin with an opening line containing a deictic marker. Besides the instances of temporal and spatial deixis quoted below, it should be mentioned that personal and spatial deixis deserves to be considered the keynote of the opening lines of *Richard II*, with the celebrated address of the King to John of Gaunt, while personal deixis is also present in the opening line of *The First Part of Henry IV*, in *Henry V* (1.1.1), in *The Second Part of Henry VI* (1.1.1), in the opening line of *The Third Part of Henry VI*, and in *King Henry VIII* (1.1.1). *The First Part of Henry VI* is the only case in which deictic expressions do not appear in the play's opening. This is not the right place for a detailed discussion of the use of deixis in Shakespeare, but it is worth noting in passing that Shakespeare's comedies, with their exotic settings, only once open with a spatial deictic marker (Viola's opening line in *Twelfth Night*), whereas his tragedies assign a conspicuous function to personal deictic markers, and, in the tragedies where this applies, do so in their opening lines.

markers, the audience here finds itself in the midst of a rebellion, almost as if its members were participating in the rebellion themselves. It might be worth mentioning here that the Citizens in *Coriolanus* surprisingly reveal many points in common with the Women of Canterbury. They "are undone already" (1.1.44) and they are shown lamenting their harsh lot in terms not unlike those of the "poor, poor women of Canterbury" (*Murder in the Cathedral* 1.4):

> First C.   We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good: what authority surfeits on would relieve us. … the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance: our sufferance is a gain to them… For the gods know, I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge. (*Coriolanus* 1.1.10-16)

Unlike the Women of Canterbury, who meekly accept the fact that "King rules or barons rule; / We have suffered various oppression" (*Murder in the Cathedral* 1.22-3), the Citizens are driven by a desire for social justice and a will to revolt that is absent from the resigned tones of the Chorus. The terms, though, are strikingly similar, as when the Second Citizen laments the carelessness of the patricians who

> suffer us to famish, and their store-houses crammed with grain: make edicts for usury, to support usurers: repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will. (*Coriolanus* 1.1.59-63)

Even at the structural level there are similarities between the first scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and the beginning of *Murder in the Cathedral*: both plays open in a city that is in uproar over an impending political catastrophe. In the opening scene in both plays the discontented citizens are confronted by dignitaries that try to soothe them – all the while clarifying the circumstances for the benefit of the audience, which is their usual role in Renaissance drama – until at last the protagonist comes and quietens the citizens, overwhelming them with his superior dialectics and style. The tone of the saintly Archbishop is different, of course, from that of the proud Roman general, but the dynamics of the scene shows a similar development, and the haughtiness of the two characters reveals a strong resemblance, too:

> Mart.   Thanks. What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,
>   That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
>   Make yourselves scabs?
>   (*Coriolanus* 1.1.145-7)
> Thom.   Peace. And let them be, in their exaltation.
>   (*Murder in the Cathedral* 1.206)

The parallels between *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Coriolanus* are suggestive at a deeper level of meaning, and open up an important query: how remote

is Thomas Becket's martyrdom from Coriolanus's fruitless death? Can Becket be considered, within Eliot's oeuvre, another "broken Coriolanus"?[7]

The Chorus's second intervention is an attempt to involve the audience, again through the repetition of the spatial deictic marker "Here", in the sense of an imminent end, a "doom" which the women evoke three times: "A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom on the world" (l.151). These lines are pervaded by the sense of the decay of the world and even of the decay of time itself as it approaches the end: the year is "rotten" ("O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year", l.147) and the elements partake of the corruption of nature, in (literally) apocalyptic terms ("Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey", l.148), echoing Biblical images of the end of the world, such as "the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel 1:1-2)[8] or Revelation 16:3, which depicts the waters turned to blood: "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea: and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" and Joel 16:4, with "the rivers and fountains of waters" that become "blood", or, again, Revelation 8:9, where, after the sea has become blood, "the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died".

The women of Canterbury describe their surroundings in the terms of the typical prophetic imagery of a land laid waste by the wrath of God, images such as we can find, for instance, in the Book of Joel:

> The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth... and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men... the seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down: for the corn is withered. (Joel 1:10, 12, 17)

The "evil" wind to which the women allude in line 1.148 reverses the traditional idea of the wind as a symbol of the Holy Ghost that can be found in the famous verse from the Gospel of St John, "The wind bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). Thus, from the beginning of the play, Eliot conveys the idea of an evil, satanic presence walking the earth that will be presented more forcefully by the Chorus during Thomas's debate with the Four Tempters.

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7. *The Waste Land*: 419 (Eliot 2004: 74). The similarities between Thomas Becket and the Coriolan of Eliot's early attempt at dramatic writing have already been underlined by Elizabeth W. Schneider, who wrote that, after the incomplete Coriolan fragment, "Eliot's poetical dealings with men and women in the external world were to be carried on through the series of plays; the poems would return to their more subjective element. We hear no more of Coriolanus; he is replaced in drama by the martyr Becket, who utters many lines that might have been his" (1975: 148).

8. All biblical quotations will be taken from King James Bible (2008).

Likewise, the "bitter" sea of line 1.148 is another echo of the eighth Chapter of Revelation, evoking one of the most terrible moments of the destruction of the world, the coming of the third angel:

> And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:10-11)

Afterwards, starting at line 1.153, the rhythm changes: the lines become shorter and more irregular, the style switches to a lower level.[9] What we hear is the description of the natural cycle of the life of common people, which recalls the typically medieval reliefs representing the seasons and the months – which Eliot may have seen in Italy or in France – but, unlike those medieval images, the Chorus's imagery is based on disturbing scenes of poverty and violence. Then the rhythm changes again, and once again the Chorus speaks in the long and solemn cadences which pertain, we might say, to the 'prophetic' register.

The line "But now a great fear is upon us, a fear not of one but of many" (1.184) opens a passage where the Women of Canterbury's expectation of some catastrophe that cannot be readily predicted, "a final fear which none understands", transcends the historical circumstances of the play and power-fully projects the audience, once again through the temporal deictic marker "now", into its own history, where the fear of something indistinct is shared by those "many" in the audience that are joined to the Women on stage by the personal deictic marker "us".

This involvement in history also explains, in my opinion, the overstrained tones of the Chorus, a feature that makes it burdensome in performance, and often relegates the production of *Murder in the Cathedral* to the amateur world of parishes, religious festivals and university theatre groups: suffice it to say that at the Eliot Festival that took place in London in 2008, *Murder in the Cathedral* was performed as a public reading, a kind of oratorio, unlike Eliot's West End plays, that were actually staged (Billington 2008). It may be significant that, to my knowledge, the most recent London production of the play was staged in May-June 2014 at the church of St Bartholomew the Great in London by a company called "The Little Spaniel Theatre", as a part of the activities of the parish. The sense of horror and the fear of the Women of Canterbury are ineffective as drama, and technically misplaced, if they are read as directed only to the circumstances of the Archbishop's death, that is, to the events that belong within the historical frame of the play.

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9.   The presence of "two registers" is a distinctive feature of much of Eliot's drama (Raine 2006: 122-3).

Eliot as a dramatist possessed a rare sense of proportion – and he was always a master of understatement, as shown by the success of his West End plays – so the justification of the Chorus's apocalyptic tones lies, I believe, in the Chorus's involving and partly mirroring the spectators themselves, and in conveying the sense of a catastrophe threatening the whole of Western civilization that must have been felt, powerfully and pervasively, by a 1935 audience, and, most likely, even by later ones.[10]

What emerges from the clash between the ruthless description of the chaos of history in the lines of the Chorus and the thirst for the order of God in the lines of Thomas is an idea that is reiterated several times throughout the play, the idea that "Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen" (*Murder in the Cathedral* l. 44), and that is best synthesised by the Third Priest in the lines "Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear" (2.61-2), where the "sordid particulars" are mentioned first: they take linguistic precedence over the "eternal design". History and the evil it entails must be regarded with a modernistically dispassionate eye, represented in their crude details, divesting the poetic voice of pious insincerity. After all, only one year after his conversion, Eliot wrote that "In a world without Evil, life would not be worth living" (Eliot 1961: 55). The Third Priest's statement has unquestionably something to do with theodicy, but it is also extremely relevant as a declaration of poetics: the Modernist aesthetics of the former avant-garde poet – a master in the art of depicting the sordid – have finally found an extremely good reason to *épater le bourgeois*.

In lines 1.176-9 the anaphora of the personal deictic marker "We" helps the 1935 audience to share the life cycle of the women of Canterbury, and the effect is reinforced by a subtle trick belonging to Eliot's "bathetic vein", the allusion to something that his middle-class audience could not have failed to perceive: newspapers. "We have seen births, deaths and marriages" (l. 176) echoes the familiar "births, deaths and marriages" section in *The Times*, and the "various scandals" (l. 176), the "taxes" (l. 177), the "gossip" (l. 178) all sound very much like the fragments of a newspaper read aloud in a middle-class home – besides being the utterances of the Women of Canterbury. Finally, in lines 179-89, "Several girls have disappeared / Unaccountably", Eliot seems to be quoting an imaginary but credible newspaper clipping, again showing his ability to do "the Police in different voices".

Referring to the title of the play, E. Martin Browne wrote that Eliot "had always wanted the ritual aspect of the play to be balanced by the homicidal"

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10. Ashley Dukes, who saw the 1935 production (and was afterwards responsible for the transfer of the production to his Mercury Theatre in the West End), remembered "the play's actuality… indeed it was never allowed to become historical drama for a moment" (qtd in Malamud 1992: 87).

(Browne 1969: 55). Eliot was a keen reader of the police news and loved crime fiction – especially Sherlock Holmes stories (ibid.) – and the famous true crimes of the last few decades (Brown 1997: 35-41). Thus, the mention of the "several girls" who "have disappeared" may be linked to real murders Eliot had read about in the recent past.

In this connection one must first mention the Edwardian murder par excellence, the murder and dismemberment of Belle Elmore by her husband Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, whom Eliot disturbingly impersonated at more than one party, the last time in 1939 (Seymour-Jones 2001: 446). Belle, a music-hall performer who lived in London with her American husband, Dr H.H. Crippen, had "disappeared unaccountably" from their Camden Town home in January 1910. Immediately afterwards, Ethel Le Neve, Crippen's typist and long-time mistress, had moved into the house with him. Belle's friends grew suspicious and contacted the police. Belle's body parts were found in the cellar of the Crippens' Hilldrop Crescent home. The Doctor, who had run away, embarking on a transatlantic steamer with Ethel Le Neve disguised as a boy and passing for his son, was caught, extradited to England, and hanged.

At a Bloomsbury fancy party in the 1930s, Eliot and his then wife Vivien dressed up as Doctor Crippen and Ethel Le Neve; moreover, links to the case can be found in *Sweeney Agonistes*, whose protagonist was considered by Virginia Woolf to be a kind of masked Crippen.[11] Besides this famous Edwardian murder, with which Eliot – Crippen's fellow expatriate – was evidently well acquainted (Seymour-Jones 2001: 445), during the 1920s there had been several episodes of women who had "disappeared / Unaccountably" and had then been found – murdered.

In particular, I am referring to three similar cases that hit the news during the 1920s: the first is the murder of Emily Kaye by Patrick Mahon, which took

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11. See Seymour-Jones 2001: 445. See also Gordon 2000: 288. In the "Bamboo Tree Song" from *Sweeney Agonistes*, besides links to the Crippen case, references to the notorious case of Cecil Maltby can be found, too. The parallels between the lines from *Sweeney Agonistes* and the case of Cecil Maltby (1923) were first discussed by Grover Smith (1956: 118). In my opinion, reminiscences of another murder can be perceived in the "Bamboo Tree Song": another possible case is that of Ronald True's murder of Gertrude Yates, which took place in 1922, only four years before *Sweeney Agonistes* was written. It is likely that Eliot mainly had the crime of Cecil Maltby in mind, considering, among other details, the physical proximity of Eliot's home to the scene of the crime, but there is one detail that recalls the Ronald True story in the fragment of *Sweeney Agonistes* too specifically to be casual. Sweeney tells Doris and the others how, for a month after the murder of the "girl", "Nobody came / And nobody went / But he [her murderer] took in the milk and he paid the rent". True had collected the milk on Gertrude Yates's doorstep moments before he killed her – and then, after the murder, he had cooked and eaten his own breakfast – and the story was widely circulated in the press (Honeycombe 1982: 112). The detail of the milkman stuck, even if Eliot mixed it with the macabre story of Cecil Maltby, the man that lived for some months secluded with the corpse of the woman he had murdered.

place in a cottage on Penvensey Bay, near Eastbourne, during the Spring of 1924. Patrick Mahon, a married man who worked as a sales manager at Consol Automatic Aerators Ltd. – a firm that sold soda fountains – had persuaded his pregnant mistress, Emily Kaye, a typist for a firm in the City of London, to write to her friends that she was about to leave for South Africa with a man – so that nobody would have noticed her disappearance – and then he had killed her and dismembered her body, hiding the pieces about the cottage – putting her heart and other organs into a hatbox and a biscuit tin, other pieces in a saucepan, her torso in a trunk – and burning the rest in the fire grate (Honeycombe 1982: 115-22). Besides the national resonance of the case, it might be worth remembering that Eliot had actually gone to Eastbourne for a six-week holiday in the summer of that year (Seymour-Jones 2001: 367), so the crime cannot have failed to attract his attention, as no doubt the gruesome and at the same time grotesquely homely details of the murder, which almost reflected in real life the sense of macabre fun that Eliot found in Renaissance stage deaths ("Christopher Marlowe", Eliot 1961: 123)[12] and which, besides, involved a cast of characters that seemed to have been taken straight from *The Fire Sermon.*

The second *cause célèbre* of the 1920s that involved another girl who "disappeared unaccountably" is the murder of Elsie Cameron by Norman Thorne, in more ways than one a copycat killing, which took place in December 1924. Elsie Cameron, a typist, was engaged to Norman Thorne, a poultry farmer from Crowborough, Sussex. When Elsie learnt that her fiancé had changed his mind and was seeing another girl, she took a train to Sussex to discuss the matter with him, and disappeared. The police found her body only months later, dismembered and buried in the grounds of Norman Thorne's chicken farm. As in the case of Emily Kaye, the pieces had been hidden in household objects – her head in a biscuit tin, her personal belongings in an Oxo-cube box (Honeycombe 1982: 123-8). Another similar murder of that period was that of Minnie Bonati (1927), a prostitute who was killed by John Robinson, a house agent, in his office near Westminster Cathedral in London, and whose chopped-up remains were deposited in a trunk at the left luggage office at Paddington Station (Honeycombe 1982: 129-33).

The Chorus, in referring to the disappearing girls in the context of this particular passage of *Murder in the Cathedral*, with its recognisable echoes of newspapers reports, very likely evoked in the audience the memories of these or similar stories of disappearance ending in a gruesome murder. Thus,

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12. Even the death of Thomas has points in common with Eliot's idea of the entertaining side of death in Renaissance drama (Marchesi 2009: 108-10). On the relationship between the death-scene in *Murder in the Cathedral* and Eliot's idea of the horrific in early modern drama, see also Matthews 2013: 174.

it is by these means, through these "sordid particulars", which are part of the experience of both, that the audience and the Chorus share the experience of "the small folk drawn into the pattern of fate" (l. 193), that is, the lesser sordid events that prepare for the greater event of wider significance.

These tales of homely horrors perfectly fit Eliot's Modernist poetics: there is nothing solemn or heroic in these deaths, only the horror that derives from the supremely cruel and the irredeemably squalid. It is not by chance that the original title of *The Waste Land* was *He Do the Police in Different Voices*; the perfect location for the mixture of horror and homeliness that is such a specific trait of Eliot's poetry, where the horrible is always unconnected with the sublime, is reports of police news.

The homeliness of evil, of the Women of Canterbury's "brains unskinned like the layers of an onion" (1.188), can be summarized by the styleme "[our] private terrors" (1.182), where Eliot emphasises the lack of sublime through the adjective "private": the prelude to the great catastrophe of lines 186-7, the communal character of which is stressed by the enjambement after the deictic marker "We" in "We / Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot face, which none understands", "the doom of the world" (1.194). This fear is the anticipation of a great catastrophe, shared by the 1930s audience and the Women of Canterbury alike, united by the repetition of "we", and its approach is described as punctuated by limited but persisting omens: "our private terrors, / Our particular shadows, our secret fears" (1.181-2) – by what the Chorus will later refer to as "a limit to our suffering", where "Every horror had its definition, / Every sorrow had a kind of end" (2.413-15).

After Thomas's dialogue with the Four Tempters, the Women of Canterbury begin to perceive the presence of Evil, and the satanic imagery is deeply permeated by reminiscences of the First World War, which would have been recognisable by a 1930s audience: the scarcity of food and fuel in "The old without fire in winter, / The child without milk in summer" (1.641-2), "the young man mutilated" (l. 645) the "new terror … over the sky" (l. 653), recalling the fear of the newly invented airships during the Zeppelin raids over England which took place only twenty years before, in 1915, and many in the audience must have remembered clearly.[13] Likewise, the repeatedly mentioned "dark air" (1.656, 658, 662) is reminiscent of wartime nights spent in complete darkness because of the danger of air-raids. Thus, the Bosch-like figures of the "Lords of Hell" (l. 661), indistinctly perceivable as strange beastly forms – "Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear, / Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena waiting / For laughter, laughter, laughter" (1.659-61) – that "take shape in the

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13. See White 2014: 294. For eyewitness accounts of wartime darkness and the sense of horror that derived from it, see ibid. 39-41, 221.

dark air" (1.658) enter into a scenario of darkness and violence, a scenario echoing images of a recent war and foreshadowing another imminent war. Thus, to the audience, as much as in the minds of the Women of Canterbury, the "fear" is that of another conflict, an idea to which the Chorus will return in Part 2: "The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men keep the peace of God. / And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it" (2.14-15).

In part 2, the Third Priest had expressed the importance of the "now", for the audience too: "the critical moment / That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear" (2.61-63), ushering in the entrance of the Four Knights, who represent violence and war, and can be considered "sordid particulars" themselves. "Now and here!" (2.132), Thomas's echoing of the First Knight's "here and now!" (2.131) abruptly shifts the timing of the deed that is about to be perpetrated to the time of the audience.

Coming at the end of the horrifying "death-bringers" chorus, lines 2.222-32 convey a direct allusion to the present and the fragility of the political order; the Women of Canterbury ask: "Have I not known, not known / What was coming to be?", and the event – which is only partly Becket's death – is something that is linked to "the horror of the ape" (2.222), that is, the devil as *simia Dei*, but is also something that takes place, more mundanely, "in the plottings of potentates / As well as in the consultations of powers" (2.226-7), which alludes to the several peace conferences held between the two world wars. Thus, when the Archbishop in 2.257 utters the famous line and Eliot's future self-borrowing, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality",[14] it is also Thomas the poet who speaks to his own public – whom he has just presented with the hallucinatory but extremely realistic horrors of the "death-bringers" chorus. It is an audience whose limits the experimental poet knows very well, just as the saint knows the limits of his own flock.

The "Clear the air" chorus is a moment when space and time lose all logic – the logic of the order of God – when exclaiming "Where is England? where is Kent? where is Canterbury? / O far far far far in the past" (2.399-400), but this moment is also strongly meta-theatrical, if we consider the circumstances of the first production, where the space of England-Kent-Canterbury was shared by the onstage characters and the audience alike. It might then be possible that the "past" to which line 2.400 alludes is that of the historical events of Thomas's murder and that the action, after that murder, is taking place in the present – not so much, in my opinion, in the eternal present of the ritual,

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14. The line will be repeated in *Burnt Norton*, Part I (1936). See Gardner 1978: 69.

but very much in the historical moment of the 1930s, as the contemporary language of the Four Knights in their final apology makes clear.[15]

It may be worth mentioning too that, on that occasion, the First Knight will return to the linguistic register of crime reports when he alludes to a "Trial by Jury" (2.432); likewise, the Fourth Knight will echo the police news in his question "*Who killed the Archbishop?*", which is written in italics, as if he were quoting some newspaper headings (2.548) and asking the audience for their "verdict" to be that of "Suicide while of Unsound Mind" (2.574-5). Here the Knights do, indeed, represent the banality of evil. In the final section of their apology all the Knights will address the audience as if its members were actually a jury in a trial, blurring the boundaries of space and time so that they may share in the responsibility for the murder: "Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured… We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us" (2.521-34).

The fact that the "sordid particulars" are all parts of the "eternal design" is expressed by the Chorus's reversal of *coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*, Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork". In lines 2.621 "Thy glory is declared even in that which denies Thee; the darkness declares the glory of light", where the second hemistich presents the same metrical pattern as the first part of the verse taken from the King James Bible. Similarly, even the most disgusting and unwholesome creatures, parasites, are seen as part of the manifestation of the glory of God, which includes "the worm in the soil and the worm in the belly" (2.623).

When, in their final prayer, the members of the Chorus praise God by saying that "All things affirm Thee in living", they make a fundamental point: "the hunters and the hunted" (2.619), that is, the victims and the perpetrators of cruelty, are all equally manifestations of the glory of God: "the bird in the air, both the hawk and the finch; the beast on the earth, both the wolf and the lamb" (2.623).

Thus, the role to be played by the cruelty of history, as evoked in the lines of the Chorus, is that of shocking the spectators into accepting the inevitability of evil, the communality of suffering and the role of the Christian audience as participants, through their involvement in history – history with all its horrors, whose details are linked with a deeply Modernist disenchantment, making them fully aware of all its graphic details. Hence the importance of

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15. The role of the Chorus has always been considered by critics to be eminently ritualistic. I do not wish to contradict this accepted and largely demonstrated view (on this topic, see Williams 1952: 228; C.H. Smith 1963: 107; Mueller 1958: 414-26; Clark 1971: 7; Cutts 1974: 203; Davidson 1985: 156-7; LeCroy 1969: 60; Gardner 1988: 22), but I am convinced that Eliot's complexity warrants a broader interpretation and leaves ample scope for other, complementary, aspects.

the adverb "consciously" in the following line: man "must consciously praise Thee".

As a result of these dramatic techniques, the spectators become participants in the "eternal design" of God: this is what might be termed Eliot's Modernistic theodicy.

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Alessandra Calanchi*

Of Men and Ghosts: Delmore Schwartz's Re-visitation of the Greek Chorus

Abstract

Among the many elements of interest we encounter in Delmore Schwartz's literary production, the re–visitation of the Greek chorus is particularly relevant. Its innovatory appeal, in fact, never ignores the call of tradition, and is rooted on the main issues of American culture, from immigration and problematic assimilation to the rise of consumer society and mass media. Through the presence of various versions of the chorus, which is alternatively composed of men, ghosts, angels, or even mere voices, and shifting from drama to poetry and vice versa, the contemporary reader can get an extraordinary focus on the literary, psychological, and social background of the period spanning from the 1930s to the 1950s, while reconsidering the meaning of the chorus from different perspectives in the light of Schwartz's prophetic insight into the deep changes the new millennium was going to bring about in such fields as communication, consciousness, identity, and collectivity.

— 1 —   Introduction

Delmore Schwartz (1913-1966) is too often wrongly considered a minor representative of twentieth century Anglo-American literature; and when we happen to come across him in anthologies, it is either his poems (usually either "The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me" or "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave") or one single short story (always "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities"). On the contrary, Schwartz was one of the most brilliant, erudite, prolific, and forward-looking minds of his generation, his literary, cultural, and political insight being so deep that when reading his works today we find it hard to believe that they were written so many years ago and in such a problematic

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period as the age spanning from the Marxist decade to the tranquillized Fifties. Moreover, not only did he write poems and short stories, but he was also editor of the mythical *Partisan Review*, wrote dramas and essays, and anticipated in many ways the later interest – and involvement – of intellectuals in the mass media, popular arts, and consumer society. His name has been linked to Walter Benjamin's for his deep understanding and critique of mass culture and for exploring the "sometimes galvanizing but more often corrosive influence of mass forms on language" (New 1985: 431). Yet, his name is now almost forgotten, with due exceptions (e.g. Ford 2005; Runchman 2014) and only a few seem to remember – let alone appreciate – his extraordinary contribution to American literature.

The case of Delmore Schwartz as an author of theatre is extremely fascinating, but also difficult to handle in that he escapes canonical taxonomy. First, "his mode is inclusion": Deutsch uses the term "appetite technique" to define the writer's strategy of "projecting his endless hunger on to the universe in terms of the universe's inexhaustibility" (1996: 917-18). Throughout his whole life Schwartz experimented with many different genres, mixing verse and prose, and shifting easily from one to another, in a constant cross-contamination of styles and forms. Second, he has been lacking recognition from critics as a worthwhile author in the history of US theatre, since he was more interested in writing plays than in having them performed and for this reason he is usually considered a poet and is hardly ever mentioned in theatrical anthologies and surveys. Third, he was far more interested in (and influenced by) European playwrights, from Shakespeare to Auden, than American ones (with the exception of Eliot), and even his contemporaries – such as Thornton Wilder – seem to be ages away from him.

Although Wilder's *The Long Christmas Dinner* (1931) and *Our Town* (1938) do have elements in common with Schwartz's theatre, both thematically (e.g. the family) and formally (e.g. the reduction to the essential), Schwartz was closer to the Yiddish theatre, which had exported to America the themes and forms we find in all Jewish American writers (e.g. Saul Bellow, Philip Roth) and film directors (e.g. Woody Allen and the Cohen Brothers), such as perpetual moving, the necessity to continually re-draw the boundaries, the confrontation with diversity, the dialogue with spirituality, the importance of dialectics, as well as the presence of dreams and hallucinations, the figure of the wise fool, the transcription of episodes from the Bible, music, folklore, orality, and the exaltation of the individual (Calanchi 2008). To all this, the emergence of new media and mass culture must be added: as Schwartz (who never travelled outside the US) once wrote to a friend of his, "international consciousness ... keeps growing bigger all the time in the world – in such strange plants as the radio and the newspaper" (Schwartz 1984: 101). It has been rightly observed

that this conception draws upon Eliot's historical sense, which involves "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (Runchman 2013: 38-39), but differs in that, in Schwartz, the international is perceived by, and in relation to, the individual. While Eliot determined to leave personality out of poetry, Schwartz thought that any attempt to escape personality meant to falsify experience (ibid.).

It easily follows that Schwartz was not so interested in representing the bourgeoisie nor in subverting the rules of acting as he was in trying to come to terms with the role of the alienated, self-exiled individual in relation to a changing community within the modern multicultural, hyperconscious, and hyperconnected society marked by growing internationalization and faster rhythms of life. A Jew (and a son of immigrants), an intellectual, and a radical, Schwartz might have had something in common with Clifford Odets and the Group Theatre, whose experiments in the 1930s included essential language and fusion between actors and audience, or with the avant-garde (Marxist) Russian playwright Erwin Piscator, who in January 1939 moved to New York and founded the Dramatic Workshop, where he used the new technologies to break the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action. Tennessee Williams was one of his students.

Schwartz, however, was rather isolated. "It is a strange thing to be an American", he wrote in 1957 (Schwartz 1986b: 568), and throughout his life he suffered from the typical sense of displacement of the Jewish writers of his time (from Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud to the early Philip Roth), whose characters were "rootless, neurotic, frozen in a scatological daymare" (Schwarz 1978: 185). Since, as Aarons has observed, "estrangement, alienation, and dislocation . . . are the byproducts of both an immigrant heritage and a developing modern consciousness" (1987: 255), Schwartz's "in-between-ness" (Runchman 2014: 2) opened the path to what has been called "post-Jewish" or "post-alienated" identity (Fiedler 1991; Kremer 1993).

Schwartz's personal fight consisted in coming to terms with the cultural, psychological, and social turmoil he sensed within and around him, quite a few years before Allen Ginsberg expressed his hallucinated worries for the *best minds* of his own generation. The intellectuals he interacted with most easily were more often poets and readers of poetry (he published his early verse plays in *New Caravan*, where E.E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams had published their poems) more than playwrights. Nonetheless, even though he missed both the *lost* generation and the *beat* generation, remained an outsider to the Federal Theatre Project, and also lacked Orson Welles's charismatic approach to the radio – never participating in such experiments as the fake Martian invasion that gave everlasting fame to the Mercury Theatre on the

Air – Schwartz created a few true masterpieces still awaiting full appreciation, for which I believe it is high time.

Among the most important reasons that may account for my statement, I think Schwartz's powerful pre-McLuhan insight, together with his exceptional ability to bind the past to the present in his theatrical pieces, deserves due attention. As an American Jew, he was deeply concerned with such issues as the controversial world of the fathers, the still more controversial role of motherhood in a time when interruption of pregnancy became a social and political issue, and the problem of a new (hyphenated? postnational?) identity in the so-called land of opportunities. One of the best definitions he gave to this tormented identity is "scissor self"; it comes from his diaries and is dated 1949 (Schwartz 1986b: 345).

As a New York radical intellectual, he was torn between the scholarly past of the erudite (represented by the legacy of the classics and mythology) and the dynamic, pre-globalized vision of modern metropolitan life (symbolized by the appeal of consumerism, politicians' promises and parades, and an ambiguous fascination for popular media). As a playwright, in particular, Schwartz enacted such double involvement with the past and the present, an involvement actually rooted in his choice of *responsibility* as the guideline of his poetics (Calanchi 2008). Among other things, he felt that the writer (as well as the citizen) ought to use the past to increase their responsibility toward the present, which means they he or she has the moral (political, social) duty to incorporate them both in their art. As has been acknowledged, Schwartz was able "at once to reconcile the past to the present and at the same time to create a future in which continuity and change are not in conflict" (Aarons 1987: 279).

The way Schwartz chose to create a vital link uniting the past and present in his theatrical pieces does not consist simply, as one might think, in quoting Coriolanus, or Dido, or Shakespeare. This would be mere homage, or little more. Also, it would not account for such plays as *Shenandoah*, where no classics are called into play. No. Schwartz's idea was far more refined and complex than this, and was based on a "the sense of an overwhelming fate, rooted as much in Greek tragedy and Jewish history as in Freud" (Dickstein 2011). What links the past and the future in his works, revitalizing Greek tragedy through Jewishness and psychoanalysis, is, among other things, his absolutely original re-visitation of the Greek chorus. True, we also had a chorus in *Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill (1931), the famous retelling of the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus where the action shifts to the Civil War: the chorus was made up of the townsfolk and various members appeared in different scenes. Here,

however, we meet something completely different, and truly innovative, as we shall see[1] .

— 2 — "Coriolanus and His Mother" and *Paris and Helen*

Though never appearing among the *dramatis personae*, and with many differences from the original pattern, the chorus plays a crucial role in all of Delmore Schwartz's verse plays. It appears for the first time in a long narrative poem in five acts whose title is "Coriolanus and His Mother: The Dream of One Performance". Bizarre as it may seem, the poem was included in the volume *In Dream Begin Responsibilities*, Schwartz's most famous collection of short stories, which was published in 1938, when the author was just twenty-three years old.[2] The verse poem then disappeared from later editions, only to reappear in *Selected Poems (1938-1958). Summer Knowledge*, with a slightly different subtitle ("A Dream of Knowledge"). The complex nature of the work – half-way between a poem and a play, since it tells (in verse) of a performance of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, interpreted as a sort of burlesque of Elizabethan theatre – gives the reader a foretaste of what later became Schwartz's typical literary cocktail of genres and styles.

The chorus in this poem is by all means very different from those we find in Greek tragedies. There, the chorus was a homogeneous, non-individualized group of performers who commented with a collective voice on the dramatic action. It consisted of between twelve and fifty players, who were usually the same sex as the main character and offered information to help the audience

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1. My analysis is not located within the tradition that since Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* has questioned and rethought the structure of tragedy. In fact, Schwartz studied and taught philosophy, but his models were others. On the contrary, I shall rely on Aristotle since – despite his maybe inadequate definition of tragedy – he is constantly referred to in Schwartz's production and even appears as a character in his dramas. As for Schwartz's connections with other playwrights of his time, he was strongly influenced by T.S. Eliot, admired Bertolt Brecht and W.H. Auden, and in some ways anticipated Samuel Beckett. Little is known, however, about the staging of his plays, which have been usually analyzed by critics from a literary rather than performative perspective; this is probably due to Schwartz's verse plays and dramas being published among poems and short stories and also to the fact that in all of Schwartz's plays much of the action takes place offstage (Phillips 1992: XIX).

2. Schwartz was probably influenced by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which contains a passage about Coriolanus. A later reinterpretation of *Coriolanus* is *Coriolan von Shakespeare Bearbeitung* (1951-59) by Bertolt Brecht, who in turn might have been influenced by Schwartz. For example, the three "low and foolish characters" he includes in his play, and "who have the features of what the Russian scholar Mikhail Bachtin called 'carnivalesque'" (Montironi 2012: 106), have something in common with the figure of the fool in Schwartz's own rewriting.

follow the performance. They commented on various themes, expressed to the audience what the protagonist could not say, and often provided some characters with the insight they needed. They often communicated in song form, frequently speaking their lines in unison, and used techniques such as synchronization, echo, ripple; they often wore masks.

In this verse play, which reinterprets Shakespeare through "Freudian epistemology of desire" and looks at "the modern family as elementally Oedipal" (Beard 2008: 63, 65), the chorus is not introduced as such, nor is it placed on the stage: on the contrary, it is placed among the audience, in a box-seat. Moreover, it only consists of six actors who play "a motley list of guest stars" (Beard 2008: 65). These "stars" are, of course, ghosts:[3] one is unspecified (even though, according to Edward G. Lynch, it may represent the reader), while the others are gradually introduced as Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Aristotle, and Ludwig van Beethoven. The sixth one is a boy "with muffled voice full of emotion" (Schwartz 1967: 81) who probably represents the narrator or his double. It is only at the end of Act 1 that we have this epiphany: "... myself I see / Enter between the curtains' folds, appear /As many titter and some clap hands in glee, / A sad young clown in gown of domino, / X-ray, cartoon, Picasso's freak in blue, / From the box-seat I see myself on show" (Schwartz 1967: 91). This is the way we learn that the narrating voice belongs to "the most belated Shakespearian fool" (Schwartz 1967: 131). As in the Elizabethan tragedy, the fool's monologues are actually placed between the acts; their aim is to entertain the audience, because "something must be done to occupy our minds or we become too aware of our great emptiness" (Schwartz 1967: 92).

The narrator/fool is, therefore, both in the audience and on stage; the fact that he can look at himself tells us a lot about Schwartz's existential quest in the era of the new media: "Let the observer be observed by all observers in the act of observing what there is to observe" (Schwartz 1967: 116). He certainly wants to problematize the very act of seeing and the self-referential role of the observer, as has been argued (Lynch 2002: 445); however, whereas Lynch considers Schwartz's experiment a mere homage to (and parody of) Shakespeare, as was his later "Hamlet, or There Is Something Wrong With Everyone" and "Iago, or The Lowdown of Life", both included in *Vaudeville for a Princess and Other Poems*, I believe that in "Coriolanus and His Mother" Shakespeare, though important, is only accessory in comparison with the

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3. A chorus of ghosts is also to be found both in the unfinished poem *Genesis,* as we shall see, and in the lost play *Marion.* Schwartz was particularly attached to ghosts, see e.g. the poem "Socrates Ghost Must Haunt Me Now", where he tries to turn Socrates "into a kind of saving, transcendent signifier of academic tradition, a kind of literary savior, a guarantor of traditional meaning" (Beard 2008: 66).

writer's much more relevant *misprision* (sensu Bloom 1982) of the Greek chorus.

In the same way as the poetical voice coincides with the voice of the fool, the five ghosts are neither actors nor characters: they do not have a body, they are not on stage, and they do not act but simply make comments about what happens on stage. Moreover, the narrator sometimes comments on them, which is an absolutely new thing: "Marx bites his nails, resumes his revery, / Ghosts being possessed by consciousness, / Consumed by memory, and powerless" (Schwartz 1967: 85). Nonetheless, these ghosts have many things in common with a Greek chorus. It is true they often disagree among themselves: for example, Freud's views diverge from Marx's, which has been explained with the fact that the "personal" is represented by Freud and the "international" by Marx (Kirsch 2005: 203). However, all the ghosts have something in common: for example, both Marx and Freud can be considered (as Joyce and Freud are in Robert Lowell's poem "To Delmore Schwartz") "grand figures in modernism, heroic nonconformists, exiles, postreligious metathinkers" (Beard 2003: 48). The ghosts actually offer a collective summa of human knowledge and encourage the audience to have a different perspective on events; theirs, as in a chorus, is a voice of the *conscience* that belongs to a sort of collective *un*consciousness whose final recipient is the spectator. Deutsch expresses a slightly different opinion, considering the chorus of ghosts functional to the ego of the author himself (1996: 918):

> In 'Coriolanus and His Mother' another appetite technique reveals itself. It is not enough to present poetic story and commentary – both by the author – but further commentary is provided through the ghosts of Beethoven, Aristotle, Freud, and Karl Marx. What is except an attempt to absorb directly and present directly some of the profoundest cornerstones of our culture, and to have them subserve, directly, … the ego of the author, for whom they are the nutrition?

However, since the author is sitting in the audience, like any other spectator (something similar happens in the short story "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities", where the narrator is sitting in the cinema where the action takes place), the difference may go unnoticed. What matters is that Schwartz's is not a mere parodist re-visitation of the past, insomuch as it responds to the social (Marx), psychological (Freud), artistic (Beethoven), and philosophical (Aristotle) necessity of having somebody (the fifth ghost? the boy? the poetic voice? the reader?) understand and decode what happens in the contemporary world and be able to mediate between the stage and the audience as well as between the self and the outer world.

These famous men from the past, plus "The small anonymous fifth whose face is hidden / By a white mask un-understood by all" (Schwartz 1967: 99), do not deliver any pompous speech nor express futile opinions but, through their

whispers, participate in a choral ritual of mutual (un)recognition, where the Self falls apart – "dark Id rules all" (Schwartz 1967: 110) – and/or multiplies – "Myself divided in identity" (Schwartz 1967: 107) – while the individual longs for a (maybe lost) phylogenetic connection to the community. This virtual sharing of an existential 'being there' which exceeds time and space is at the core of Schwartz's poetics and might foreshadow the social networks euphoria of the third millennium.

We find another chorus of men – though, in this case, unidentified – in *Paris and Helen. An Entertainment* (1941, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*) The play is inspired by the love triangle between Helen, Paris, and Menelaus in the *Iliad*, and the action takes place in ancient times, but the link with the present is evident – Homeric Troy is called "the very early morning of Western culture" (Schwartz 1992b: 37). Here we have a chorus of Old Men commenting on the never-ending war of Troy. Their bitterness and concern, however, mixes with the typical expectation before and during an important sport match:

1ST OLD MAN	Today is going to be a big day –
2ND OLD MAN	Perhaps the war will be ended –
3RD OLD MAN	No, do not deceive yourself. It will not be ended today, tomorrow or the next day
	…
1SR OLD MAN	… What time was the contest supposed to begin?
2ND OLD MAN	They never begin on time anymore!
	…
3RD OLD MAN	This war will never end it seems. (Schwartz 1992b: 40-9)

Schwartz is extraordinarily able to single out the idiosyncrasies of contemporaneity: the old men, though representing the past, also embody the present time's more futile concerns linked to consumerism and society of the spectacle. Love itself becomes the object of *voyeurism* and copulation is called "wrestling" (Schwartz 1992b: 60). All this becomes more ominous and prophetic when we think that the play was published in the same year as the Pearl Harbor attack, shortly before the US entered World War II.

— 3 — *Choosing Company*

But how was Schwartz able to achieve such a prophetic insight? The answer lies in his deep interest in the media technology of his own time, mainly the radio, the cinema, and the telephone. Fully aware as he was of the way politicians,

publishers, and corporations used mass media to shape and control public opinion – as we can see in such works as "Screeno", "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer", or *Kilroy's Carnival: A Poetic Prologue for TV* – he also assigned to these new media an artistic status, including them in his own problematic confrontation with his age. In particular, the technological evolution in the field of mass media and the resulting invention of speaking "boxes" allowed him to experiment with new versions of the chorus.

A voice from the audience – though belonging to Marx's, Freud's, or even Aristotle's ghost – could not fully satisfy Schwartz's obsessive research for *another* kind of epiphany – and a really extreme one: one which could disclose existence out of the body, one which could even 'dispose' of the body more definitely than a ghost. The great innovation in the artist's personal reinterpretation of the chorus lies, therefore, in the genial recourse to those disembodied sounds which came out of the radio, the telephone, the cinema and later the TV screen. The power of these media has been fully acknowledged by another great Jewish American writer, Cynthia Ozick, who has written of the "relentlessly gradual return of aural culture, beginning with the telephone … , the radio, the motion picture, and the phonograph" (Ozick 1991: 164); and their relation to the ghost chorus is implicit in Runchman's statement that "the phone, the movie, the victrola, and the radio all have the *ghostly* effect of making those who are not physically there seem to be present" (Runchman 2014: 80, my italics).

The position of the individual at the dawn of this renewed aural age has much in common with the condition of an embryo, surrounded by sounds it cannot decipher: it is not by chance that the word "foetusdom" appears in Schwartz's play, the hard core of which lies in the dark theatre appearing "like a womb" (Ford 2005: 1) and in the "womb's authority" (Schwartz 1967: 99, 98) that is also the basis of the Oedipal relations existing between Coriolanus and his mother in the homonymous play, as we have seen.

The rising networked culture is something that happens outside the body, like real life for a foetus (or the real world outside the cave, as in the poem "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave"), so that one has to figure out new strategies to manage solitude, alienation, and displacement. Schwartz's multiple reasons for suffering are to be found in his being both "hyperconscious of his Jewishness" (Klingenstein 1998: 65) and a "modern intellectual hero" (Atlas 2000: X), two conditions which meant cultural prejudice and even the suspicion of un-Americanism. A son of immigrants, he considered himself a sort of exile and felt an "almost unbearable sense of disconnection" (Dickstein 1974: 41), so that the act of writing became for him "an almost safe way to connect with others" (Cantor 1989: 81). But that was also the time of the popular media, which seemed to promise and grant unprecedentedly easy connections, and

Schwartz was eager to include them in his poems and writing. Phonographs, radios, telephones, and later on television seduced him with a wide range of voices, so that even such old strategies as the monologue (*Kilroy's Carnival*) or ventriloquism (*Venus in the Back Room*) were revisited from this new media perspective in his works. However, such voices soon revealed their potentially dangerous nature, since they risked turning into spokesmen of the establishment and instruments of manipulation (Calanchi 2007).

While the cinema is more frequently perceived as an arena for private memories and/or associated to dream (such as in the stories "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" and "Screeno", or in the poem "Metro-Goldwin-Mayer"), the radio provides the fit medium for "personal dissociation and American materialism" (Phillips 1992: XV) and also represents "an appropriate chorus" (Valenti 1974: 211) in *Choosing Company* (1936, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*), an even earlier comedy of Schwartz's which he provocatively called "oratorio" and wrote in blank verse to dramatize conversational speech (Schwartz 1992c: 63). The subject was suggested to Schwartz by a scandal he had read about in the papers in the summer of 1933, a young girl's death provoked by illegal abortion. The main characters are the girl (Anne), her boyfriend (Jacob), and a young doctor.

The radio (written RADIO in capital letters in the script) has a mechanical voice that is neither male nor female, and when it does not speak it plays jazz. Its mysterious voice combines a spiritual halo ("oratorio" is a large musical composition for orchestra, choir, and soloists, but in the past it was also a place where a community of believers used to pray, from the Italian word *orazione* which means prayer) with the social dimension of broadcasting. What matters is that it is a disembodied voice which takes on the role of the chorus and provides a link between the past and the present, the individual and society, the stage and the audience – but also male and female, the doctor and the patient, the production system and the customer. As Marshall Mc Luhan would announce many years later, the medium is the message: a slogan which, after all, would have functioned well also in the Greek chorus, since a message conveyed by the chorus has a very different meaning than any other message. The radio in *Choosing Company*, and later in the poem "Some present things are causes of true fear" (included in *Vaudeville for a Princess*) where it appears together with television, represents the medium through which the citizen is being turned into a commodity: in the society of Coca-Cola and soap operas, "the radio is poet laureate / to Heinz, Palmolive, Swift, and Chevrolet" (Schwartz 1950: 57).

In this context, the fact that the author of the play speaks through the radio is particularly meaningful because in this way he comes closer to the chorus (or, in reverse, the chorus is invested with authority and authorship).

As a matter of fact, the author – like the chorus – is speaking from a marginal position (he is in a building outside the theatre, while the radio is placed in an usual position in front of the lime-lights) and "is not part of the action" (Schwartz 1992c: 65). Like a Greek chorus, also, he knows "what will happen" because he watches the players (i.e. the people) and knows "how they spend their freedom" and "their choices" (ibid. 66):

> RADIO   Choosing Company.
> I am the author. I watch from a fifth-floor window.
> Mind and do not mind my speech. It is not part of the action.
> But my mind regarding cast a material shadow
> From my pure balcony, on every warm thing and connection.
> You must see that shadow. It is the mind beholding
> Inside and outside, meaning, money and building.
> They walk in that shadow, and I, high up, watching.
> (ibid. 65)

The author/chorus chooses the radio in order to speak the same language as the listeners/consumers and give them due admonition. Through the radio, which he calls "the mask of the age" (Schwartz 1992c: 66), he is actually determined to *unmask* the medium and use it for a different purpose, which is not broadcasting music, advertisements, and news, but making his fellow citizens realize they risk being led into voluntary slavery by the political/economical system. The writer's sense of alienation, which is expressed by the chorus-like radio – and throughout his poetic work by the frequent use of the terms *mask* and *masquerade* – is caused by America's growing materialism: "It was not his fault, he implied through the Radio's voice, that he was lonely and self-conscious; it was the fault of American society" (Atlas 2000: 86).

That the radio can be considered a chorus to all effects also depends on other factors. Like a chorus, it can be silent, or speak, or sing. Like a chorus, it is made of many voices, since it speaks alternately in a six-year-old child's voice, in Jacob's voice, and in dead Anne's voice, plus the voice of the author at the beginning of the play. Like a chorus, finally, it does not take an active part in the action.

— 4 —   *Dr Bergen's Belief* and *Venus in the Back Room*

A Victrola phonograph and some photographs offer another version of the chorus in *Dr Bergen's Belief* (1937 or 1938, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*). This dramatic short play, often considered little more than an intellectual exercise on modern Gnosticism and Bergsonian philosophy (Ford 2005), tells the story of a man's inquiry into his daughter's suicide. The young

woman is evoked throughout her father's visit to her home. This visit becomes a sort of painful pilgrimage, in the course of which he looks at his daughter's pictures and listens to her voice recorded in a Victrola phonograph:

> [*There is a victrola on the terrace, unseen by the audience ... The voice which issues from it is distant, low, husky yet feminine; and in a way, oracular and dramatic. It actually comes from a victrola record, and is not an off-stage voice.*]
>
> ...
>
> Was that her voice? that was her voice indeed.
> Who can distinguish now between the ghost
> And the actual, the living and the immortal?
> (Schwartz 1992d: 110-11)

The photos and the phonograph have many elements in common with the classic chorus. Though they are the leftovers of a dead woman, they acquire a life of their own and although they fail to reveal all about her real self, her aspirations, character, dreams, and anxieties, they provide a sort of comment to her life and to her father's action on stage. In functioning as a link between father and daughter, stage and audience, they become something more than mere objects, or pictures, or pure sound in the air, or colour on the paper. Ultimately, these objects and these vibratory waves all express what the characters cannot say: they have a collective voice, are gendered, communicate in song form, and give information to the audience and deep insight to the main character.

The already mentioned *Venus in the Back Room* (1937, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*) takes all this to its extremes, since there are eight characters, four of whom are mere voices (*Stimme* meaning "voice" in German):

From *Venus in the Back Room*	
Waitress	Davidson
Noah	1st Male voice
May (a voice)	2nd Male voice
Jones	Stimme
(Schwartz 1992e: 125)	

In this "incredibly bad verse play" (Atlas 2000: 109) a man enters a cafeteria, where he meets some strange fellows and hears a melodious female voice coming from the rear. The owner of the place says it is his daughter, and the man falls almost instantaneously in love with her. At the end it turns out that the owner is a homosexual ventriloquist and no daughter exists.

Here Schwartz shows an extraordinarily precocious insight in what media philosophers have only quite recently called the "progressive dematerialization of culture" in the twentieth century in the face of its "inescapable materiality"

(Taylor and Saarinen 1994: 4, 3). Like the photograph in *Dr Bergen's Belief*, showing "a fading face, / fading and flickering in memory's cinema" (Schwartz 1992d: 96), and the phonograph, making it possible for the father to listen to the real voice of his daughter reading a poem, in *Venus in the Back Room* Schwartz questions and problematizes the very nature of reality at least half a century before one could start speaking of virtual reality. He asks the reader (and himself): are voices and images real? And are voices and pictures to be considered elements of a chorus? Also, are all voices of the same nature? The answer to the latter question is obviously no; consequently, Schwartz raises some doubts as far as the first and second question are concerned. The major idea that is expressed in these two plays is therefore that in a networked culture corporeality itself might become an illusion: "[y]our body is perhaps only your necessary dream … How do you know that the girl is there?" (Schwartz 1992e: 148). It follows that the stuff a chorus is made of, to put it in Shakespearian terms, is likely to change consequently.

— 5 — *Shenandoah* and *Genesis. Book One*

On this matter, it is interesting that in *Shenandoah* (1941, included in *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays*) we move from the radio and phonograph to the telephone. An American Jewish family is deciding which name to give their son, whether a traditionally Jewish one or a typically American one. The discussion goes on for a while, till Father decides to consult a friend of his, a non-Jewish lawyer, by calling him on the telephone. The telephone call on stage, with laughter in the background and the unavoidable absence of the other speaker, creates a deep uneasiness in the audience as well as in the readership. Such uneasiness is increased by the fact that the (obvious) absence of the lawyer is counterbalanced by the (impossible) double presence of the protagonist of the play, who appears on stage both as a new born baby and as an adult man.

Shenandoah, despite his conspicuous presence both on the stage (in the play) and in the saga which bears his name,[4] curiously fails to be considered the hero by Zucker, who prefers to assign him the role of the chorus, on the basis of "the rather stiff yet Wordsworthian solemnity of the bemused and anguished one-man chorus"; he also defines him "poet-chorus" (Zucker 1990:

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4. The so-called *Shenandoah Fish quartet* is composed of the play *Shenandoah* (written in 1935 but published in 1941) and the three short stories "A Bitter Farce", "New Year's Eve" and "America! America!" (all of which are included in *The World Is a Wedding*, 1948). "New Year's Eve" and "America! America" are also included in *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities* (1937 and 1978).

153). As a matter of fact, he is invisible to others and speaks directly to the audience, commenting on the action (and on the telephone itself) yet incapable of influencing events:

> SHEN.   For this did Alexander Graham Bell
>   Rack his poor wits? For this? Was it for this
>   The matchless English language was evolved
>   To signify the inexhaustible world?
>   (Schwartz 1992a: 27)

Being quite intrigued, though not fully satisfied with this albeit fascinating view, I decided to find out if any other more sustainable chorus existed in the whole saga, given Schwartz's tendency to mix genres. I first focused on the telephone, which, though being a mere channel, or medium, is undoubtedly the most interesting object – if not *persona* – in the play. What I discovered is that, despite his personal reluctance to talk on the telephone (Atlas 2000: 125), Schwartz well understood the oracular potentiality of this new medium and did not hesitate in giving it a primary role. As he acknowledges in his short essay "On the Telephone", included in *The Ego Is Always at the Wheel* : "The hubbub about television, of late, has been such, I think, as to conceal the fact that one of the most important things in life is the telephone" (Schwartz 1986a: 11).

Here the telephone is regarded as an oracle: it is the medium, and not the family friend, which is actually questioned and therefore "it is the intervention of technology that decides, though the disembodied entity of the invisible speaker on the other side of the line" (Calanchi 2007: 213). However, the telephone does not think nor talk but only lets the information (questions, answers, silences) be transmitted: therefore, I wonder if it might be considered a chorus. So I re-read the stories and reflected on the fact that Schwartz was particularly fond of this character, who embodied "the irreconcilable duality of being an American Jew" (Saposnik 1982: 151). In one story in particular, however, Shenandoah is grown up and "accepts his hyphenated identity as naturally, and yet as mysteriously as 'the radio's unseen voices'. His unseen voices are the voices of the generations dead" (Saposnik 1982: 154). The story is "America! America!". It is these voices, then, that form a chorus from the past, which means from that ever haunting world of the Fathers that can revive – or be cancelled forever – thanks to the new technology: "And now he felt for the first time how closely bound he was to these people. His separation was actual enough, but there existed also an unbearable unity. As the air was full of the radio's unseen voices, so the life he breathed in was full of these lives and the age in which they had acted and suffered" (Schwartz 1978a: 32).

The world of the fathers also reappears in *Genesis* (1943), one of the most controversial and least appreciated among Schwartz's works. Not only is

it unfinished (only Book One was published), but when it came out after many years of hard work it resulted prolix, boring, and too recognizably autobiographical. It should have been epic, but was mock-biblical. Nonetheless this work has some elements of interest, among which the presence of a chorus which surrounds the protagonist, Hershey Green. It is, again, a chorus of ghosts who comment on each episode (as in a Greek Chorus) in blank verse (an English heritage), a contamination that provides a fertile ground "to accommodate the ruminative contributions of the ghosts" (Runchman 2014: 71). As it was argued in an early review, "what the chorus of presences say would avail nothing without the story, just as the story would have no direction and no final meaning without the activating powers of the chorus ... the final significance transpires exactly in what the presences of the dead bring from the story into voice" (Blackmur 1943: 469). Also the most recent readings agree that, though the ghosts are "far from omniscience, ... it is their universalizing perspectives that make it possible to accept the story as containing 'some truth about all human beings' (*G*, ix)" (Runchman 2014: 69).

The ghosts' function is in fact explained in the note "To the Reader" which opens the book:

> ... above all, the use of chorus of commentators ought to be seen as the same kind of thing as the chorus in Greek drama. Some authors are fortunate. They live in an age when their beliefs and values are embodied in great institutions and in the way of life of many human beings. These authors do not have to bring in these beliefs and values from the outside ... I cannot think of any author who has had this advantage and good fortune to the utmost ... For even Dante ... required a commentator to explain to him throughout the significance of what he saw. (Schwartz 1943: VII)

This task is, as anticipated, accomplished by ghosts. They speak blank-verse passages and are similar to those in "Coriolanus and His Mother", but unidentified: they are just "nostalgic old men given to soliloquizing" (Atlas 2000: 231), even though they "through various hints give the impression that they constitute Hershey Green's cultural forebears ranging from Socrates to Mozart to Santa Claus" (Deutsch 1996: 920). Among other themes, they touch upon literature, religion, history, popular culture, and philosophy. Their "long-winded speeches" often interrupt the plot, alternating eloquence with vaudeville, in a sort of journey "from ignorance to awareness" (Atlas 2000: 232).

According to some critics, what is best in *Genesis. Book One* is that it "contains the ghosts who function as a chorus ... old men who symbolize various tendencies of reflection and conscience overseeing the poet's life" (Zucker 1990: 155). The reader can "make one guess at possible identities – is this Rousseau? Freud? Augustine? Or is it just a Delmorean version of all three?" (ibid.: 157), and they can even be recognized "as psychoanalysts of

a kind, pointing out to Hershey truths about himself of which he was only partially conscious and helping him to become more aware of his relation to the world at large – that is to say, more internationally conscious" (Runchman 2010). Runchman offers some very nice images to describe this chorus, such as the metaphor "of the thought and speech bubbles in a cartoon that help to clarify a story whose main action is told through pictures", or the ghosts' resembling "an audience talking over a film or theatrical production" (ibid.). This is precisely the quality of Schwartz's project – its being all inclusive as regards performative arts. Nevertheless, the ambiguity remains and the reader can form their own ideas.

Another version of the ghosts finally appears in the poem "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve", included in *Vaudeville for a Princess*, a disquieting appropriation of the Christian trope of Pentecost. That the twelve Apostles (receiving the Holy Ghost) are ghost-like characters and form a chorus (Zucker 1990: 160-1) is stated by Schwartz himself, who writes that the twelve unnamed characters speak in turn, "and then the twelve in chorus" (Schwartz 1950: 49).

— 6 — *Kilroy's Carnival: A Poetic Prologue for TV*

The broadcast play *Kilroy's Carnival: A Poetic Prologue for TV* (1958, included in *Last and Lost Poems*) marks Schwartz's final shift from radio to television. However, he does not seem so interested in the visual possibilities offered by the new medium as he continues to be in the sound of the voice. The play opens with a Prologue, entitled "Night One", which is actually a long monologue spoken by disc jockey Orville: "nothing but his voice is heard: nothing is seen" (Schwartz 1989: 85). Here, too, we find a chorus: this time it is a group of angels wittily commenting on the Creation of the World.

By mixing erudite quotations (from Eurydice to Shakespeare, from Columbus to Bonaparte) with news and weather reports ("Charming news from near and far. The capitals of Europe predict there will be a cold war all summer long" (Schwartz 1989: 89), by mentioning Marlon Brando and Marilyn Monroe alongside Yom Kippur and Pocahontas, Schwartz creates a sort of talk show were many issues are slightly touched upon and soon forgotten, whose rhythm is fast and communication remains superficial. In the DJ's program entitled *News of the World*, for instance, Orville "does not give any real information but only wants to be reassuring" (Calanchi 2007: 216).

Through the blank screen and the voice of the disc jockey (which is sort of off-stage) Schwartz expressed his personal view and fears of what would become of the American Dream in a society characterized by such values

as "hamburger, Coca-Cola, and a brand new Buick" (Schwartz 1986b: 255) and of human identity at large, given the obvious project of a globalized yet increasingly fragmented world. Also, television in this period was especially meant "to entertain and isolate", as George Clooney's 2005 film *Good Night and Good Luck* reports, and Schwartz was a pioneer in understanding the enormous power of advertisements, billboards, and TV commercials: "Why not try America's super breakfast food? The panacea for every kind of melancholia and social failure", he reported in a short story called *The Track Meet* (included in *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*), where he also inserted the slogan "LIFE IS SWELL WHEN YOU KEEP WELL" (Schwartz 1978b: 132).

In the course of the play Orville predicts events, comments on the news, reads and answers the letters from the audience, and at intervals he broadcasts entire ballads – such as the exhilarant parody of the renown folk song "Oh Susanna", which begins with "O Nirvana / don't you wait for me" (Schwartz 1989: 91), or the piece where a group of angels comment on the Creation. It is important to underline that they speak in Orville's voice ("[*He speaks as one who is rehearsing in solitude, perhaps before a small looking-glass. But again only his voice is heard: nothing is seen*]", Schwartz 1989: 92). The first three angels that speak are called "A throne", "A Power", and "A Domination", whereas all the others who speak intervene "at random, at seeming random" (ibid.). Orville embodies both the nature of the ventriloquist and the quality of the radio (or television), which despite being one single object, or medium, can broadcast a multiplicity of voices. Also, the chorus of angels provides a new version of the commentators represented by old men or ghosts. True, they do not speak in unison; on the contrary, they express totally diverging ideas and opinions. But this is precisely what Schwartz wants to demonstrate: that in contemporary society no homogeneity is innocent, and only through diversity and dialogue can a human being become a completely responsible citizen and not just a passive spectator. "Only connect, only discriminate / For Life is dual and opposite", he wrote in his journal in 1942 (Schwartz 1986: 61). This is a lesson that is a pity to ignore and can be very valuable also for our own age.

— 7 —   Conclusion

Delmore Schwartz's re-visitation of the Greek chorus, as we have seen in these pages, is a recurrent item in his production and offers many interesting inputs for further research. Thanks to the technological and stylistic devices it employs, Schwartz's chorus – be it made of men, of ghosts, or other – embodies a powerful connection between the past and the present, interpreting the

author's own efforts to overcome his Jewish, intellectual, and existential sense of alienation through a deep focus on the new instruments of communication and an extraordinary insight both into their dangers and into their possibilities for the future. From this perspective one might even describe such re-visitation of a chorus as a re-semiotization, since it involves a meaning making process. Shifting from poetry to prose, drama, or burlesque, Schwartz tries in fact to represent the complexity of his own time, when the shadows on the cave wall were full of promises but could also prove very deceptive. Through the voice of the ghosts and of the old men on the one hand, and of the media on the other, Schwartz appropriates the spirit of the Greek chorus without forgetting his own (Jewish) American identity, thus creating a bridge between ages and cultures capable of curing "the long illness of time and history" (Schwartz 1992: 10).

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