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THE CHORAL STRUCTURES IN ARISTOPHANES AND THEIR REPRESENTATION ON THE MODERN STAGE

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In 1975, I published a translation of four comedies by Aristophanes (Editora Nacional, Madrid): *The Wasps*, *Peace*, *The Birds* and *Lysistrata*. Except for *The Birds*, these were new translations, *The Birds* being a re-elaboration of a much older one. This volume has been re-published this year by "Cátedra, Madrid". On the other hand, I would add my translation of *The Assembly of Women*, published in 1982 within a volume entitled *Teatro griego*, by "Círculo de Lectores, Barcelona". Moreover, my translation of *The Thesmophories* appeared this year in non-purchasable form, given by "Coloquio, Madrid" to the participants in the VIIth Spanish Congress of Classical Studies.

This is a series of essays on translating Aristophanes into colloquial, and at times even vulgar, Spanish: at others, into a parodic of lyrical style. It is an endeavour to understand Aristophanes by translating his work into a modern idiom in a variety of styles and rhythms: an endeavour, for example, parallel to that carried out by Marzullo in Italy. On the other hand, it is closely related to attempts I have made to stage the Athenian comic dramatist in a way that is at one and the same time faithful to the original as far as possible and also stimulating for the modern public. In fact, three of the six translations mentioned above have been staged in Spain with a minimum of alterations.

More precisely, I would refer to *Lysistrata*, staged by a group of students in the Faculty of Philology in Madrid and in several Spanish universities in 1980; likewise, the *Assembly of Women*, also staged by students under a professional stage-director, Manuel Canseco, in 1982, first in the above-mentioned faculty, then in the Mérida Festival and later in a commercial theatre in Madrid; finally, *The Thesmophories*, which has been staged in Madrid this

year by a professional company under Canseco's direction on the occasion of the above-mentioned Spanish Congress of Classical Studies.

This communique has as its sole aim to make a few comments on the treatment given to the choruses of these performances of Aristophanes, a treatment that is closely related to that given to them in the translations upon which they are based. I have tried to apply procedures to the comedy that I had formerly applied to tragedy, in performances of *Oedipus Rex* and *Hippolytus* on the basis of my translations in the fifties and sixties. In sum, it is an attempt to maintain as far as possible the choral and musical nature of the works, with an alternance of song and recitation, which was typical of Greek drama. A long tradition was responsible for the fact that in Spain there was a tendency to de-formalize ancient drama (to an adaptation of same to later forms, somewhere between the baroque and the nineteenth-century), within which the role of the choruses, dance and music tended to be lost.

Naturally, the details are open to discussion, but I think that I have at least broken with the conventional translations of the Greek comic dramatist as likewise with conventional stagings that were adapted to other styles. I also think this experiment was worth-while, as may be seen from the success in sales of the translation and the many thousands of spectators at the performances.

Of course, these experiments of mine are parallel to others that have been carried out in diverse places. I mentioned above the Italian translation directed by Marzullo and others should be added to this. As for performances, one should, among others, mention those by the Greek directors Koun, Evangelatos, Dufexis and others, and the Italians ones by the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico, which were so numerous and valuable. But it is not merely a question of performances but of efforts by scholars to reconstruct the form of handling the staging by the Athenian comic writer. How can we forget, not to mention former works, *The Stage of Aristophanes* by C.W. Dearden (London, 1976), or *Interpretazioni musicali sul teatro di Aristofane* by M. Pintacuda (Palermo, 1982)? One must also add the fact that successive analyses of the traditional structures above all the choruses and epirrhematics, are essential to understanding the comic drama, as from Zielinski, by the work of Gelzer, Newiger and others. The analyses that I myself have carried out in my book *Fiesta, Comedia y Tragedia* (Barcelona 1972, 2nd. ed. Madrid 1983, Engl. trans. Leiden 1975) to a great extent determine the translations and stagings of the poet that I have done. However, diverse bibliography as to his ideas, his wielding of parody, etc., has also influenced me.

Thus, I would not like what I am now going to say to be taken out of context: it is no more than a part, doubtless a small one, of all the efforts that

are being made by scholars and theatre men to bring the values of the Athenian comic writer to the modern public and stir up an interest in him among this public. I think that the time is now ripe for this. With the new freedom in language, the current openness towards sexual matters, to literary and political parody, etc., with the diffusion of diverse types of "musical", etc., this type of drama can, I believe, be better understood than before.

Within it, the chorus is absolutely fundamental. The women A, B and C of the *Assembly* and A and B of the *Thesmophories* are chorus-members who momentarily separate from the chorus: I have represented them in this way. The Relative of Euripides in *Thesmophories* dances with the chorus dressed as a woman in my staging of the work and then separates from it to deliver his speech in a similar way to women A and B. But even characters with a name of their own like Lysistrata or Philocleon function as chorus-leaders; in fact, like the coryphaeus of *The Birds*, who launches the attack against the Athenians Evelpides and Pisthetaerus.

Moreover, in the *agones* in which the chorus, directed by the coryphaeus or by a Chorus-Leader such as those mentioned above, attacks a second character (Cleon or both Athenians, for example), the total should be understood as a dance in which all take part: as a battle based on mime and parody, a sort of carnivalesque confrontation between members of the two choruses or of one and the same chorus.

In my above-mentioned book, I have stressed the concept of *agon* and the fact that it cannot be reduced to the narrow confines assigned to it by Zieliński: the epirrhematic *agon*, which I call canonical, in which the ode of the chorus is followed by the coryphaeus's κατακελευσμός and this latter by the epirrheme of one of the actors, this schema being multiplied by two. No, at times in the πάροδος itself, at others after it, there appear a series of *agones* of violent confrontation, albeit parodical, which constantly change form. Their culmination is the canonical *agon*, when there is one (in other instances, in *Clouds*, there are canonical *agones* and not *agones* of violent aggression). In other cases, it simply gives way to an *agon* by actors. However, I think that what I call an aggressive *agon*, that in which the chorus attacks a character (or another chorus, as in *Lysistrata*) in an attempt to beat or throw stones at him, is the original *agon*: I have discussed this in my book.

This *agon* is, as I said, fundamentally a parodic dance, unified with diverse actions, not merely that of fleeing and persecution or comic battle in which roasters substitute lances: Philocleon tries to escape by sliding down a rope, the women in *Lysistrata* throw water on the men's fire.

However, it is very rare in Aristophanes that in the *agones* one strophe should be directly opposed to another strophe of the chorus or opposite cha-

racter. Rather the strophes answer each other from a distance and are followed by interventions from the coryphaeuses or characters in longer verses. All this tends to a symmetry that is often irregular: it is broken by the events of the action.

This must forcibly be reflected in the translation and in the staging. Therefore, a strict differentiation between the chorus's parts and those of the coryphaeus is absolutely essential; it is essential that the long verses of this latter and, more often, those of the actors, that is, the catalectic tetrameter (whether this be iambic, trochaic or anapestic, to mention the three main types), should be delivered in a totally different way to the lyrical strophes of the chorus. I always translate these long verse into long Spanish non-rhyming passages, but with a well marked final pause and approximate number of syllables. The choral strophes, on the other hand, are made up of short verses in the lyrical tradition. And the music envelops the whole, and the whole makes up a unified ensemble as far as dance and mime are concerned.

Knights, 247 ff. could be an elementary example. Here it is not the chorus of knights, as some editions state, but the coryphaeus who enters reciting the catalectic trochaic tetrameters: "beat, beat the wrong-doer...". It is a stichic *agon* between this coryphaeus and Cleon: he is then substituted by the Sausage-maker and the *agon* Cleon/Sausage-maker continue in the πνῖγος. However, there follows a lyrical strophe by the chorus, which likewise attacks Cleon: it is really strophes *a*, *a'*, *b* and *b'*, each of which is followed by a stichic *agon* more or less irregularly. Now, these strophes and anti-strophes by the semi-choruses are not restricted to pinpointing the debate: the chorus must shield its champion, support him and pretend that it is also attacking Cleon in a ballet movement.

Not only in cases such as this, which are simple ones, but also in other more complex ones, should the autonomy of the strophes be maintained, I believe. Let us see what happens, for example, in *The Wasps* 273 ff., in which the chorus enters in search of Philocleon who, strangely enough, has not yet got up to go to the Heliaea: they will end by finding him a captive, entering into dialogue with him and trying to free him. The two initial strophes are of a very different rhythm and content. In the first, the chorus asks in surprise about Philocleon's absence and makes several conjectures; in the second, it makes another guess: Philocleon is annoyed about an incident in the former trial. The chorus begs him to forget it and come with them. It is clear that a division between strophes must be maintained.

As may be seen, the intervention of the chorus in these *agones* is highly varied. In the one we are discussing here, there follows an interval in which a slave dialogues with one of the chorus-leaders in strophe and anti-strophe:

this is a song indeed. Music must follow and the anti-strophic schema must be maintained throughout this debate in which the plight of the chorus-members is made plain for they need the trials to be held if they are to eat. Over this anti-strophic schema, on the other hand, there stands out the astrophic dirge of Philocleon (316 ff.), who is prisoner to his own son.

The play of opposition between lyrical and long, recited verses, albeit included within the general context of chorus and music, may be seen from what follows. The dialogue between chorus and Philocleon, which ends with this latter's attempt to escape, takes place:

a) in strophes *a* and *a'*, in which the chorus sings, Philocleon sings and the coryphaeus, at a certain point, recites a long verse.

b) in a stichic debate, which follow *a* and *a'*, between the coryphaeus and Philocleon.

To destroy this delicate play is to destroy the whole ethos of the work. In *a* and *a'*, the long, long verses of Philocleon, lamenting the offence he suffers at the hands of his son, and speaking in a normal tone of voice, albeit scared and afflicted, are in marked contrast to the confidence and security of the chorus.

Naturally, in translation and dramatic and musical staging, it is impossible to approach the Greek original completely. Without going any further, the distinction between the trochaic, iambic and anapestic rhythms of the tetrameters cannot be achieved. But even so, one perceives a clear distinction from the iambic trimeters, which we translate into prose, except for certain parodical tirades by the messenger (we use here hendecasyllables, for example).

The maintaining of the strophes, both when they merely belong to the chorus and when they alternate between the song of a chorus and that of a character, and even when they contain recited verses, is of great importance. For the whole comedy is dominated by double structures, not only in the agonal parts, but in others, too.

Obviously, we cannot know accurately what the execution of strophes and anti-strophes was like. We have resorted to two procedures. One, the above mentioned one of attributing the strophe to a semi-chorus and the anti-strophe to the other. The second, that of attributing the whole to the whole chorus, the movement of the strophe being repeated in the anti-strophe.

This latter is obviously the procedure that underlies the parody of the first scene of *Thesmophories* in which Agathon lends his voice to the coryphaeus and the female chorus to sing alternatively: it is, therefore, a lyrical dialogue. It is clear that Agathon carries out both parts: in our staging of this, he wears a male mask facing backwards and a female face: the actor alternatively turns

round and sings as a man and then turns around to behave and sing like a woman. One must suppose that at this moment he is equivalent to a female chorus that would sing all together.

As may be seen, the problem of performing the strophes and anti-strophes (or a series of identical strophes, as in the case we have just discussed) not only occurs in the *agones*, but far more frequently. In fact, the double, symmetrical scenes, as we have stated in our *Fiesta, Comedia y Tragedia*, are characteristic of Comedy. Thus in the parabasis, in the canonical *agon* (ode and anti-ode) and in diverse lyrical passages: songs of reprobation, choruses in honour of diverse deities (even cyclical choruses), others for mere commentary, etc. How far one should interpret that it is the whole chorus that carries out strophe and anti-strophe and how far one should think in terms of two semi-choruses, is a matter for the stage-director at each moment. For example, I think that in the canonical *agon*, one should procede with semi-choruses: each of them addresses itself to one of the characters it is confronting. The type of round-dances in which strophe and anti-strophe continue with one and the same subject may be attributed to the whole chorus: a different movement that reverses the meaning of the dance, could underline the symmetry. But there are also other means: thus, the chorus sings the strophe standing still, then turns and stops once more to sing the anti-strophe, then turning again.

On occasion, it is a highly doubtful matter. Let us see, for example, the passage from *Lysistrata* 254 ff., in which the male chorus confronts the female one. The first couple of strophe and anti-strophe are preceded by the catalectic iambic tetrameters of the coryphaeus, who then intervenes once more between the two strophes and later once more at the end: this is the part of the men and their coryphaeus. The strophe shows surprise that the women, that misfortune which the men had fed in their own homes, should have taken power over the Acropolis; the anti-strophe displays indignation, the women are not to get off unscathed. That is, it is an A - a - A' - a' - A' structure: in it the coryphaeus is always the same one, the men's coryphaeus; the chorus is also perhaps the same, strophe and anti-strophe have practically the same content doing no more than introducing some finer shade of meaning. The same may be thought of the symmetrical part as from 319, in which the female coryphaeus, the female chorus, the coryphaeus, the chorus once more and then the coryphaeus intervene successively.

These are always small strophes: those of the men are iambic and those of the women choriambic, that is, dissimilar to each other, as are likewise dissimilar the long verses of the coryphaeuses, their rhythm being close to the respective choral parts. This means that one must introduce different musical

motifs. However, after the above-mentioned passage carried out by the man, there are two long strophes *a* and *a'*, in which the rhythm changes: the iambic is combined with the trochaic, which for the rest had already appeared in the clauses. The music has to vary its motifs. Singing these strophes, the old men climb the steep slope up to the Acropolis carrying logs of wood, drop them on the ground, set fire to them and on both occasions end with "oh, oh, oh, what a lot of smoke". It would seem logical to think that we have here a strophe and an anti-strophe sung by two semi-choruses: the end is closed by an intervention from the coryphaeus. In any case, there is no doubt that this is the more plastic and attractive staging: two groups of chorus-members climb up, one after the other, with their logs and fire carried in a pot and set fire to the wood.

As we said before, double structures dominate the whole of Comedy: really, the whole of drama, including Tragedy, is constructed on structures of this type, but here to a much high degree. They must be preserved. But irregularity must also be preserved, this often being notorious. As we said above, in the passage mentioned, the initial part of the men and that of the women are symmetrical. But the men's part that follows the first and which we have just described, is not symmetrical to the women's second part: this is a small choriambic strophe similar to the former and should therefore be carried out by the whole of the female chorus. It is certainly closed by an intervention from their coryphaeus.

We said before that the direct confrontation between two agonal strophes is rare. The indirect confrontation is frequent: for example, in the canonical *agon*, in which ode and anti-ode are addressed to each of the two confronted characters. Also in passages such as the one we have just analysed: the strophes of the men against the women are answered by those of the women. They, too, come forward and oppose their water to the men's fire.

Only by following the original schema can the movement and dramatic force of Aristophanes' work be reconstructed. To confuse recitation by the coryphaeus with singing by the chorus (or by actors), to eliminate the separation between the strophes, to dispense with dance and music, gives rise to perfectly banal passages.

Of course, all this demands good choreography, including the cyclic dances, or the dance movements of confrontation accompanied by mimic elements; one must pay attention to the ancient playwright's stage directions, which are abundant, although one cannot avoid conjecture. The same must be said of the music: the key to it lies in pointing out the parallelisms in strophes and anti-strophes, in extending the passages of long, recited verses with the musical themes of the choruses, in changing the musical themes

when the rhythm of the Greek verse varies. I was fortunate in being able to count upon a good stage-director, Manuel Canseco, and also on good music from Elias Danelis, who is also — and this is a great advantage — a good classical philologist, who has written a doctoral thesis, directed by me, on the compositional structures of Euripides' plays.

One may draw a conclusion. Just as we classical scholars must learn from music, dance and modern staging in order to pinpoint what is most suitable within this broad repertoire, even its most popular elements, if one is to give life to the spirit of Aristophanes, so must stage-directors, choreographers and modern musicians who wish to give new life to and stage ancient drama, in this case, that of Aristophanes, study this drama from the available bibliography and from the scholars. Both they and we must put any excessive pride to one side and help and listen to each other. Naturally, there are many ways of doing this and I have only given a few small examples. But a minimum of conceit and a maximum of humbleness in following the ancient writer and bringing him to our public of today are, to my mind, the correct way to go about this.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Σκοπός της ανακοινώσεως είναι να σχολιάσει την παρουσίαση των χορικών, όπως έγινε στις παραστάσεις του Αριστοφάνη, που δόθηκαν στην Μαδρίτη από Ισπανούς φοιτητές και στηρίχθηκαν σε δικές μου μεταφράσεις. Γενικώς προσπάθησα να διατηρήσω την χορευτική και μουσική φύση των έργων με εναλλαγή τραγουδιών και απαγγελιών, η οποία είναι τυπική για το αρχαίο δράμα.

Δεν πρόκειται όμως απλώς για το ζήτημα των παραστάσεων, αλλά για τις προσπάθειες των φιλολόγων να ανασυγκροτήσουν την μορφή των παραστάσεων, καθώς τώρα οι καιροί είναι ωριμότεροι για την προσέλκυση του ενδιαφέροντος του κοινού.

Ο ρόλος του χορού για τον σκοπό αυτό είναι βασικός, αφού και πρόσωπα, που δεν φαίνεται να ανήκουν στον χορό, ουσιαστικά είναι μέλη του χορού, που πρόσκαιρα μόνο αποχωρίζονται απ' αυτόν (π.χ. οι «γυναϊκές τινες» στις *Ἐκκλησιάζουσες* και στις *Θεσμοφοριάζουσες* ή ο «συγγενής του Ευριπίδη» στις *Θεσμοφοριάζουσες*). Ακόμη και συγκεκριμένα πρόσωπα, όπως η Λυσιστράτη ή ο Φιλοκλέων δρουν ως μέλη του χορού.

Επίσης σε μερικούς αγώνες, στους οποίους συμμετέχει ο χορός, το σύνολο γίνεται αντιληπτό ως όρχηση, στην οποία παίρνουν όλοι μέρος.

Στους διάφορους αγώνες, που υπάρχουν στις κωμωδίες του Αριστοφάνη χωρίς να έχουν πάντοτε την τυπική μορφή *ωδή-κατακελευσμός-επίρρημα* (με τις αντίστοιχες απαντήσεις), σπανίως η μια στροφή αντιτίθεται αμέσως εν συνεχεία στην άλλη. Συνήθως οι αντιστροφές δίνουν απάντηση στις στροφές, αφού πρώτα παρεμβληθούν στίχοι από τον κορυφαίο ή άλλο πρόσωπο.

Τα στοιχεία αυτά πρέπει με πειστικό τρόπο να αποδίδονται στην μετάφραση και ακολούθως στην παράσταση. Είναι βασικό οι μεγάλοι στίχοι του κορυφαίου και των άλλων προσώπων να αποδίδονται με τελείως διαφορετικό τρόπο απ' ό,τι οι λυρικές στροφές του χορού. Αυτό ακριβώς προσπάθησα να επιτύχω στις μεταφράσεις μου στα ισπανικά.

Χαρακτηριστικά παραδείγματα μπορώ να αναφέρω τους στ. 247 εξ. των *Ίππέων*, όπου δεν ομιλεί ο χορός, όπως πιστεύουν μερικοί εκδότες, αλλά ο κορυφαίος, καθώς και οι στ. 273 εξ. των *Σφηκῶν*, όπου το παιχνίδι της αντιθέσεως μεταξύ λυρικών και μακρών απαγγελλομένων στίχων είναι φανερό. Αν διαταράξουμε αυτή την λεπτή εναλλαγή είναι σαν να καταστρέφουμε όλο το ήθος του έργου. Βεβαίως δεν είναι δυνατόν να διατηρήσουμε την τελειότητα του αρχαίου κειμένου, αλλά τουλάχιστον πρέπει να γίνει φανερή η διάκριση των ιαμβικών τριμέτρων από τους άλλους ρυθμούς.

Μόνο αν ακολουθήσουμε το αρχικό σχήμα της εναλλαγής λυρικών και απαγγελλομένων στίχων μπορούμε να ανασυνθέσουμε την δραματική δύναμη του Αριστοφάνη, ούτε επιτρέπεται φυσικά να καταργούμε τον χορό και την μουσική.

Ως συμπέρασμα πρέπει να τονίσουμε ότι, όπως οι φιλόλογοι πρέπει να λαμβάνουν υπ' όψη τους την μουσική, τον χορό και το σύγχρονο θέατρο, έτσι και οι σκηνοθέτες, χορογράφοι και μουσικοί που ασχολούνται με την αναβίωση του Αριστοφανικού θεάτρου πρέπει να μελετούν την σχετική φιλολογική βιβλιογραφία, γιατί μόνο έτσι θα γίνει δυνατόν να καθορισθεί επακριβώς αυτό που είναι κατάλληλο να δώσει ζωή στα έργα του Αριστοφάνη.

