

## 17. Stefano Fanucchi

### Female choral voice and Spartan song tradition in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

*Lysistrata* is unique in Attic theatre insofar as it features two choruses with almost equal dramatic weight, competing with each other and eventually merging into a single mixed chorus: the main plot is flanked by a choral one, with a happy ending due to the Chorus of Women. This paper aims to show how the play gives authority to the female choral voice by reworking Spartan song tradition.

During the *agōn*, the Women declare their willingness to help *Lysistrata* and her acolytes (539- 548). The passage probably reworks traditional female work songs; however, it has gone unnoticed that it seems to echo a lyric *topos* as well, attested in Alcman (26 *PMGF* = 90 Calame) and Sappho (58c Neri), concerning the characterization of an old lyric 'I' contrasted with the agility of a girl chorus. Alcman's fragment is alluded to in *Birds* 298-300 as well, and Aristophanes' intertextual interactions with Alcman's text were debated in antiquity (*Sch. Ar. Av.* 250b; P.Oxy. 2737). Here, the motif is reversed: the women, although elderly, are not hampered by their old age, so as to gain superiority on the Chorus of Men, who on the contrary emphasize their own weakness. Spartan song culture reappears in the *exodos*, when the Spartan ambassador celebrates Spartan girl choruses by explicitly referring to Laconian ritual (1296-1321).

Therefore, while proudly asserting their own role in Athenian ritual (638-647), the Women are characterized via some references to Spartan song tradition, which is a recurrent motif in *Lysistrata*'s lyric sections. The resolution of the political and military contrast between Athens and Sparta is also achieved through a fusion of Athenian ritual and Spartan song culture; and the voice of the Chorus of Women plays a crucial role in this process.

### **Bibliography**

Benuzzi, F. 2021. 'Il cerilo di Alcmane tra Aristofane, Antigono, Eufonio e Didimo'. In *ΦΑΙΛΙΜΟΣ ΕΚΤΩΡ. Studi in onore di Willy Cingano per il suo 70° compleanno*, edd. E.E. Prodi, S. Vecchiato, Venezia, 519-533.

Bierl, A. 2001. *Der Chor in der alten Komödie. Ritual und Performativität (unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusen und der Phalloslieder fr. 851 PMG)*. München-Leipzig.

Bierl, A. 2007. 'L'uso intertestuale di Alcmane nel finale della *Lysistrata* di Aristofane. Coro e rito nel contesto performativo'. In *Dalla lirica corale alla poesia drammatica. Forme e funzioni del canto corale nella tragedia e nella commedia greca*, edd. F. Perusino, M. Colantonio, Pisa, 259- 290.

Bierl, A. 2011. 'Alcman at the end of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*: ritual interchorality'. In *Archaic and Classical Choral Song. Performance, Politics and Dissemination*, edd. L. Athanassaki, E. Bowie, Berlin-Boston, 415-436.

Carey, Ch. 2011. 'Alcman: from Laconia to Alexandria.' In *Archaic and Classical Choral Song. Performance, Politics and Dissemination*, edd. L. Athanassaki, E. Bowie, Berlin-Boston, 437- 460.

Foley, H.P. 1982. 'The "Female Intruder" Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*'. *CJ* 77: 1-21.

Henderson, J., ed. 1987. *Aristophanes. Lysistrata*. Oxford.

Karanika, A. 2014. *Voices at Work. Women, Performance, and Labor in Ancient Greece*. Baltimore.

Kousoulini, V. 2017. 'P. OXY. XXXV 2737 and Alcman's Ancient Reception'. *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 22: 119-124.

Perusino, F., S. Beta, edd. 2020. *Aristofane. Lysistrata*. Milano.