Choral Performance and Geometric Patterns in Textual and Iconographic Representations

Jesús Carruesco

(Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain – Institut Català d'Arqueologia Clàssica)

The aim of this paper is to consider the relationship between some descriptions of choral performances in Greek archaic epic, on the one hand, and the pictorial patterns and functions of artistic artifacts, mainly pottery, of the Geometric period[1]. A fundamental assumption here is, of course, that the epic passages I am analysing are functional in the Geometric and Orientalizing periods (8th-7th c. BC), most probably, but not necessarily, in the context of the poems more or less as we have them today.

The relationship between Homeric and Hesiodic epic and Greek Mycenaean or Geometric art has been a frequent subject of research[2]. As a general methodological point, I wish to state from the beginning that I am not concerned here by the finding of influences one way or another, trying for example to individuate specific mythic representations from the epic poems in some vases, as illustrations of certain passages from the poems which the artist might have had in mind. I view text and art as parallel ways of expression, in this case of a cultural pattern fundamental for Greek culture, especially in the Archaic and Classical periods, which I would call "chorality". By this term I mean a symbolic construction, which finds various expressions in actual performances, with different combinations of dance, music and song, eventually crystallizing into specific genres or subgenres of choral lyric, but which exists also as a cultural paradigm which informs different fields of the community's experience, such as

---

[1] This analysis is part of an ongoing, more general research on textual and iconographical representations of chorality in Archaic and Classical Greece. Cf. Carruesco 2009.

[2] Cf. Snodgrass 1998, among others.

agonistic or juridical procedures, or, in the present case, other artistic discourses as epic poetry or pictorial art. As Barbara Kowalzig puts it in her recent book on performances of myth and ritual, "the chorus [...] supplies the fundamental communal aspect of religious ritual, and perhaps of many other aspects of Greek religion *and* history...without the chorus, neither community nor communal re-enactment could exist"[3].

Obviously, the very definition of chorus implies a communal aspect, in that it involves a plurality of people taking part in it, but also, as performance, in that it implies a community of spectators watching it. The public is a fundamental part of the performance; accordingly, it appears in all the epic descriptions of choral song and dance, and each time it is the visual dimension of the watching what is emphasized. But what is the nature and the object of this looking, which establishes the essential bond between the chorus and its public, the canal through which the performative action of song and dance operates on the onlookers? And how can this be compared to the iconographic record that has come to us?

Let us consider in the first place the description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*[4]. As for its shape and layout, we must safely assume it is a round shield, with concentric circles that are iconographic bands. There are three choral performances represented on it, all of them combining song and dance: a wedding procession, a vintage song and, in the final, most detailed scene, a mixed boys-girls choral performance. The first two are processional choruses, and the description of them is embedded in the overall description of their respective occasions, the wedding and the vintage. The last one, however, constitutes a scene in itself, surely occupying an independent band of the shield, the last one before the outermost ring (ἄντυγα), with the representation of Okeanos, probably in the form of a

---

[3] Kowalzig 2007: 394-395. For the chorus in Archaic Greece, cf. Calame 1977, Lonsdale 1993, Kowalzig 2007.

[4] Cf. Duethorn 1962, Taplin 1980, Becker 1995, Nagy 2003.

snake. This layout is suggested by the introduction of the word marker ἐν δ'ἐποίκιλλε at the beginning of the scene, with ἐν δ'ἐτίθει introducing the next – and last- ring. These markers are repeated six times (with some further internal repetitions in the third and fourth rings) in the course of the description, delimiting the iconographical bands of which the shield is made up:

1. ἐν μὲν...ἔτευξε: earth – heaven - sea / sun - moon / constellations: Pleiades – Hyades – Orion - Bear.
2. ἐν δὲ...ποίησε: City at Peace [chorus A: wedding-song – judicial scene] / City at War.
3. ἐν δ'ἐτίθει (3 times): works of the seasons: ploughing – reaping – vintage [chorus B].
4. ἐν δὲ...ποίησε (2 times): cattle: oxen (+ dogs + lions) – sheep.
5. ἐν δὲ...ποίκιλλε: chorus C.
6. ἐν δ'ἐτίθει: Okeanos (ἄντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην).

We find in these markers different verbs which allude to the making of the shield and the scenes put there by its maker: τεύχω, ποιέω, τίθημι. But ποικίλλω, used only for the choral scene, brings in some additional meaning: the concept of ποίκιλμα/ποικιλία. In other epic passages, weapons, chariots, jewels and textiles are qualified as ποικίλα[5]. In the processual sense suggested by the imperfect tense (the representations on the shield are being wrought by Hephaistos under our very eyes), it is surely the last two ones, jewels and specially textiles, that are most relevant in this case, as in describing them the attention is often brought upon the representations (ποικίλματα) wrought or woven on them[6]. The term carries also a

[5] *Il.* 3.327 (weapons), 4.226, 5.239 (chariots), 6.289 (peploi), etc.
[6] Cf. the peplos offered to Athena by Hecuba: αὐτὴ δ' ἐς θάλαμον κατεβήσετο κηώεντα, / ἔνθ' ἔσάν οἱ πέπλοι παμποίκιλα ἔργα γυναικῶν / (...) τῶν ἕν' ἀειραμένη Ἑκάβη φέρε δῶρον

connotation of attraction, seduction, even deceit, surely relevant to the presentation here of the chorus as a variegated creation designed to make a visual impact on those watching it. In this sense, the chorus, too, is conceptualized as an ἄγαλμα, a precious artifact itself, just like the shield whereon it is represented, the beautiful robes of the dancers and the garlands and daggers they carry. The chorus is an ἁρμονία, in the physical sense of an ensemble made up of several pieces artfully assembled through the interlocking hands of the dancers (18.594: ὀρχεῦντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες)[7].

This constructed character of the chorus is brought out from the beginning by a simile, a typically choral rather than epic simile, as it provides not a parallel scene in everyday life, but a mythical paradigm, by comparing this figured χορός to the one Daidalos fabricated for Ariadna. It is normally observed, and rightly so, that the allusion is here primarily to the χορός as a space, the dancing-floor, an architectural space where the dance takes place[8]. However, the passage is better understood in all its richness by not separating the two senses of the word χορός, as it is precisely through the choral performance that the space is defined as a χορός (a fact that has its counterpart in the overall description of the shield not as the final product but as it is being made by Hephaistos).

But this comparison carries another ambivalence, also intrinsic to the choral performance, as it refers at the same time to the making of the shield and to the dance itself, for both of which the Cretan χορός functions as a mythical model. The first aspect, the chorus as a δαίδαλον, a technical, constructed reality, is brought out by the first part of the comparison, Δαίδαλος ἤσκησε, which recalls in a

---

Ἀθήνῃ, / ὃς κάλλιστος ἔην ποικίλμασιν ἠδὲ μέγιστος, / ἀστὴρ δ' ὣς ἀπέλαμπεν· ἔκειτο δὲ νείατος ἄλλων (*Il.*, 6. 288-95).

[7] Cf. *Hymn. Hom. Apoll.* 164, where the ensemble is that formed by the voices of the chorus of Delian girls, which constitutes in turn the condition to its extraordinary mimetic powers: οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή.

[8] For the spatial dimension of χορός (and its relationship to χῶρος) cf. Boedeker 1974: 85ss.

personified form the terms δαιδάλλω and δαίδαλα πολλά, used at the very beginning of the ekphrasis of the shield to describe respectively the fabrication of the object and the representations wrought on its surface by Hephaistos (18. 479-82: Ποίει δὲ πρώτιστα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε / πάντοσε <u>δαιδάλλων</u> (.../...) αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ / ποίει <u>δαίδαλα πολλὰ</u> ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσιν)[9]. But the second part of the comparison, through the allusion to Ariadne as the maiden who is to dance in Daidalos' chorus, refers to the χορός as performance, and to its function as the mythical archetype re-enacted by the boys and girls represented on the shield (note the chiastic correspondence between καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνη and παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι, in the same metrical position in the next line), which of course are themselves the paradigm for *any* choral performance in the *polis*. So, on the one hand the construction of the χορός of Ariadne by Daidalos is the model imitated by Hephaistos fabricating his shield, which in turn, as it has repeatedly been noted, constitutes the model for the Homeric singer composing his poem; on the other hand, the beautiful Ariadne dancing in her χορός is herself the model for the boys and girls dancing in the chorus on the shield of Achilles, which, given its status as an ideal representation of the *polis* at peace, constitutes itself the paradigm for every choral performance in the real world. In this way, this pattern defines, in a kind of *mise en abîme*, a multiple mimetic relationship, both inwards and outwards from the chorus.

Thus, in the initial comparison of the chorus on the shield of Achilles the mimetic nature of the choral performance comes out (note ἴκελον). The chorus is a mimetic reality, in the active, performative sense that it endlessly bridges the divide between the inside world of the representation and the outside world of the public watching it, projecting the one unto the other, and making them interchangeable in a mirror-like way. We may find an example of this pattern

---

[9] On the values attached to the δαίδαλα in Greek thought, cf. Frontisi-Ducroux 1975, Morris 1995.

being explicitly worked out in a true choral lyric text, at the end of Pindar's *Pythian 9*[10]. There, the chorus greeting Telesicrates returning home victorious from Delphi re-enacts the victory of his homonymous ancestor in a wedding contest set up by a Lybian king, who in turn was imitating the competition designed by Danaos to marry his daughters -who are explicitly called a χορός-, bringing out the mimetic relationship between the Panhellenic mythical event, the local ancestral past and the present choral performance[11]. This makes the chorus not only a synchronic chain of performers but also a diachronic chain of successive re-enactments imitating each other, a symbolic model that, following this mimetic logic, projects into and fashions the future chain of reperformances. In the same way as, here, the heroic myth (Danaos) and its imitation by Telesicrates' ancestor have functioned as paradigms for Telesicrates' victory, the description of this victory and the allusions to the occasion of the first performance of the poem will function as symbolic paradigms for future reperformances and their eventual occasions (which may not necessarily be epinician, as Telesicrates' Pythian victory is not a *gámos*).

A further example of this mimetic *mise en abîme* of the choral performance is provided by the description of the dances of the Ionians gathered at Delos in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* [12]. By setting up the ἀγών, which includes song and dance, they give pleasure (σε τέρπουσι) to Apollo, but as they gather to watch these performances, which of course include hymns to Apollo and all the gods (where they may be shown taking part in the dance themselves, as they are later in this

---

[10] On *Pythian 9*, see Carey 1981, Carson 1982. For a choral reading of the Danaides' myth in this ode, cf. Myers 2007.

[11] Pind. *Pyth.* 9.111ss.: πατὴρ δὲ θυγατρὶ φυτεύων / κλεινότερον γάμον, ἄκουσεν Δαναόν ποτ' ἐν Ἄργει / οἷον εὗρεν τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ὀκ/τὼ παρθένοισι πρὶν μέσον ἆμαρ, ἑλεῖν / ὠκύτατον γάμον· ἔστασεν γὰρ ἅπαντα χορόν / ἐν τέρμασιν αὐτίκ' ἀγῶνος· (...) / οὕτω δ' ἐδίδου Λίβυς ἁρμόζων κόρᾳ / νυμφίον ἄνδρα·

[12] *H. H. Apoll.*, 149ss.: οἱ δέ σε <u>πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηθμῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ</u> / μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν ὅταν στήσωνται ἀγῶνα. / φαίη κ' ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρως ἔμμεναι αἰεὶ / ὃς τότ' ἐπαντιάσει' ὅτ' Ἰάονες ἀθρόοι εἶεν· / πάντων γάρ κεν <u>ἴδοιτο χάριν, τέρψαιτο δὲ θυμὸν</u> / ἄνδρας τ' <u>εἰσορόων καλλιζώνους</u> τε γυναῖκας / νῆάς τ' ὠκείας ἠδ' αὐτῶν κτήματα πολλά.

6

hymn, ll.189ss.), the Ionians are in turn being watched, as if they had become gods themselves, by anyone (*in primis* the public of the Homeric Hymn, through the voice of the blind man from Chios) who looks at them (εἰσορόων), sees their beauty (ἴδοιτο χάριν) and, like Apollo himself, takes pleasure in this contemplation (τέρψαιτο θυμόν). Thus, the choral gaze acts both ways, by giving and taking pleasure (τέρψις) through the generation and contemplation of beauty (χάρις), and not only in a dual relationship, but in a chain of successive links that is also a chain of successive performances, as implied by the different levels involved: the gods, the Deliades, the Ionians and, through the appropriation of the choral model by the epic singer which is at work here (like in the Iliadic passage), the successive publics of the present poem[13].

But let us return to the chorus on the shield of Achilles. If we now proceed from the mythical model (Daidalus' and Ariadne's chorus) to the description of the performance itself and focus our attention on the perception of it by the spectator, which is precisely the position in which the describing voice of the poet puts itself and its audience, we can observe two relevant aspects: (i) as we have just seen in the Homeric hymn, the beauty of the chorus impresses itself upon the community watching it through the desire it awakes in them (ἱμερόεντα χορόν), a force of attraction which in turn provokes a general state of pleasure (τερπόμενοι); and (ii) this beauty is perceived at two levels: on the one hand, through the contemplation of the physical beauty of the dancers, of their robes and of the objects they carry (garlands and daggers); on the other hand, through the contemplation of what we might call the syntax of the chorus, which manifests itself in two ways: (a) in the

---

[13] It may be noted, of course, that, being an epic poem, these performances can only be choral in a metaphorical sense, unlike in Pindar's previous example. Chorality functions here as a symbolic paradigm, transferring to other media the articulating and self-repeating dynamics of choral mimesis. This observation, in turn, could help us understand the symbolic mechanism at work in the reperformance of choral lyric in non-choral (e.g. sympotic) contexts.

interlocking hands forming a string (ὀρχεῦντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες), which elsewhere can be described as a σειρά or a ὅρμος, and in some cases even doubled by an actual rope; and (b) in the patterns their movements trace on the ground. These are basically geometric, abstract patterns, namely: (i) the circle, compared here to a potter's wheel (and κύκλος will become almost a by-word for chorus, particularly, but perhaps not exclusively, dithyrambic choruses); (ii) the straight lines (στίχες), which by intersecting form a grid or a web (θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι); or (iii) the sinuous or rotating lines traced by the tumblers evolving in the middle of the space, whether circular or quadrangular, which has just been defined by the chorus in the previous lines (κυβιστητῆρες ἐδίνευον κατὰ μέσσους).

To these two levels of the visual projection of the choral performance upon the spectators, namely the beauty of the dancers and the patterns they define with their movements, we must still add a third one, which is also conceptualized as a visual aspect of the performance: the song itself and especially the images, symbolic or narrative, which it evokes in the public. The song is here alluded by the term μολπή, which is introduced by the tumblers (μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες) and which, depending on whether we accept as genuine (in whatever sense of the word) the problematic line 604-5, is to be assigned either to the ἀοιδός, singing the μολπή and playing the φόρμιγξ, or else, implicitly, to the chorus itself —unless, as Revermann proposes, we postulate a *lacuna* here, a musical instrument being necessary in this context[14].

As for the images the choral song and performance can bring before the eyes of the public, they can be found in the other, non-choral scenes of the shield, at two

---

[14] Revermann 1998. The absence of an ἀοιδός in this chorus wouldn't be perhaps out of place in a text where the epic singer is appropriating the choral model, if we take into account other such cases like the proem to *Theogony*, where the chorus of the Muses, without a solo singer, gives to Hesiod and to all epic ἀοιδοί their voice, or the meeting of the girls at Delos and the blind man from Chios, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

levels: on the one hand, in the description of the very occasions for the choral performance in the life of the community (the wedding, the war and its outcome, be it the triumph song or the mourning for the dead, and the main events of the agricultural year); on the other hand, in some symbolic motifs very frequent in choral song as self-referring images, particularly the astral and the animal imagery. A cursory glance at Alcman's *partheneion* is enough to provide us with representative examples of both, with the girls comparing themselves or the *choregoi* now to the Pleiades, now to racing horses[15]. Thus, the two aspects of the visual perception of the choral performance we have defined, the beauty of the dancers and the movements of the chorus, can function also at a second level, that of metaphoric imagery. On the shield, this is brought out in a whole series of textual parallels that link in a mimetic way the three choral scenes to other passages of the poem, particularly those within the shield itself, where they can be resumed by the following diagram:

Level A	Level B (imagery)	
Dancers	Astral bodies: sun, moon, Pleiades, Hyades, Orion, Arκtos (485ss.) > hymenaios (imagery: Orion attacking the Bear, cf. Alcman, fr. 1.60,	
	Animals: cows (573 βοῶν > 593 παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι) dogs (579 ἕποντο < 572 κόραι/κοῦροι σκαίροντες ἕποντο)	
Patterns of dance	κύκλος	στεφάναι: κόραι...καλάς στεφάνας ἔχον (597) οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται (485) cf. ὅμιλος ἐστεφάνωτο (*H.H.Aphr.* 118)
	στίχες	line pattern: νομῆες ἄμ' ἐστιχόωντο βόεσσι (578) web pattern: ἀράχνια λεπτά (*Od.* 8,280); Ariadne's chorus = λαβύρινθος (schol. *Il.* 18.590)
	δίνη (= στροφή)	ὀρχηστῆρες ἐδίνεον (494) > ζεύγεα δινεύοντες...στρέψαντες...στρέψασκον (543-6) κυβιστητῆρες ἐδίνευον κατὰ μέσσους (605s.) > Ἄρκτος στρέφεται (488)

---

[15] For the importance of astral references in Alcman's work, cf. Now Ferrari 2008.

On the shield, the astral band precedes immediately the ὑμέναιος, where astral images are a regular feature (Hesperos, the stars, the moon, the sun), while the animal band, which is composed of two scenes, one narrative and the other emblematic, is framed, significantly, by the second and third choral scenes, which contain terms that allude to the link between dancers and animals (572: σκαίροντες ἕποντο, a verb usually applied to animals; 593: παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι, that stresses the equivalence of the maids and the cattle).

These links between the choral and the non-choral scenes on the shield apply not only to the beauty of the dancers, but also to the second visual level mentioned above, that is to the geometric patterns defined by the movement. Being at the end of the ekphrasis, the public of the poem couldn't fail to perceive in the description of these patterns some verbal echoes from previous scenes, which are also relevant here. Thus, the verb δινέω has already appeared twice: in the first choral scene, where it is applied to the dancing boys in the wedding procession (494: κοῦροι δ' ὀρχηστῆρες ἐδίνεον); and later on, in the ploughing scene, where it describes the change of direction of the team when the ploughman arrives to the end of one furrow and turns on to go down the next (ζεύγεα δινεύοντες)[16]. The pattern described here is the meander, which is precisely known, when applied to writing, as βουστροφηδόν, and indeed δινεύω is in this passage associated with στρέφω, used twice in the frequentative form στρέψασκον. Στρέφω, in its turn, had appeared in the first, astral scene of the ekphrasis[17], applied to the movement

---

[16] *Il.* 18. 542ss. : πολλοὶ δ' ἀροτῆρες ἐν αὐτῇ / ζεύγεα δινεύοντες ἐλάστρεον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα. / οἳ δ' ὁπότε στρέψαντες ἱκοίατο τέλσον ἀρούρης, / τοῖσι δ' ἔπειτ' ἐν χερσὶ δέπας μελιηδέος οἴνου / δόσκεν ἀνὴρ ἐπιών· τοὶ δὲ στρέψασκον ἀν' ὄγμους, / ἱέμενοι νειοῖο βαθείης τέλσον ἱκέσθαι.

[17] *Il.* 18.485ss.: ἐν δὲ τὰ τείρεα πάντα, τά τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται, / Πληϊάδας θ' Ὑάδας τε τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος / Ἄρκτόν θ', ἣν καὶ Ἄμαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν, / ἥ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καί τ' Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει, / οἴη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο.

of the Bear, as a maiden turning round always in the same place, from fear of an assault by Orion, an erotic scenario that is a characteristic choral motif, as analyzed most recently by S. Langdon, in her study of Geometric iconography: the abduction from the chorus (cf. *Il.* 16.180ss.; *HHAphr*. 117ss.)[18]. As for her endlessly circular movement, the mention of her alternative name, the Chariot, calls forth the image of the wheel, which in its turn anticipates the potter's wheel to which the circular dance of the last scene will be compared. Furthermore, this circular motif echoes the previous image of the stars forming a heavenly garland (485: ἐστεφάνωται), at the centre of which we must picture this revolving maiden, which never gets to bathe in the Ocean (another choral motif: the girls bathing in the spring or the river before going to the χορός; cf. Hes. *Th*. 5s.). The garlands will also reappear in the final choral scene, worn or carried by the dancing girls, just as the mention of the Ocean in this innermost band announces its final appearance as the outermost ring of the shield. The pertinence of this pattern of concentric circles, one of the most usual motifs in the contemporary iconographic repertoire, in relation to the perception of the choral performance is confirmed by the description of a similar scene in the longer *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (117s.: πολλαὶ δὲ νύμφαι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι / παίζομεν, ἀμφὶ δ' ὅμιλος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωτο·). Here, the outer circle of spectators watching the chorus becomes itself a garland through this contemplation, a clear example of the articulating power of choral performance to project the images it creates upon the surrounding space -physical and social space alike-, fashioning it into the articulate order those images evoke. In this sense we may interpret the placing of the first choral scene after the description of the heavenly bodies, projecting this image of cosmic order upon the following scene, the judicial scene in the agora, to which it is inextricably linked through the opposition κοῦροι/γυναίκες - ἄνδρες (493/5 –

---

[18] Langdon 2008: 197-233.

497). Here, we find again the spatial order of the inner sacred circle where the elder sit, surrounded by the outer circle of the community watching and taking part in the proceedings. The polarity of the circular disposition here, with two semicircles of supporters to each of the contenders, reflects the νεῖκος of the occasion, but at the same time the two talents which are to be the prize of the victor announce, at the outcome of the agonistic procedure, the resolution of this polarization into a renewed unity for the community, a process already prefigured in the choral celebration of the wedding scene, overcoming the sexual tension previously alluded to in the Bear's fear of abduction and rape by Orion.

Let us leave now the circular pattern of the dance and consider the straight line. In the first two choral scenes this constitutes the very structure of the performance, as they are processional dances defining important spatial axes, the first inside the city, linking the οἶκοι brought together by the wedding (ἠγίνεον ἀνὰ ἄστυ, opposed to the static scene ἐν ἀγορᾷ that follows); the second from the extraurban space of the vineyard (itself defined by an ἕρκος) back to the city. Elsewhere, we find two paradigmatic examples of these processional dances and of the foundational power attributed to their movement: (i) at the beginning of the *Theogony*, the chorus of the Muses marching (στεῖχον, *Th.* 10) from Mount Helicon to Olympus while they sing the divine order of the cosmos, which is of course the poem itself to which this choral scene is the prelude; and (ii), at the end of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, the processional paean of the Cretans turned Delphians as they follow the god from the shore at Chrysa to the place of Delphi in Mount Parnassos, a movement repeating (and geographically inverting) Apollo's previous itinerary from Olympos to Telphoussa to Parnassos. In the description of the shield of Achilles, the στίχες traced by the final chorus recall the previous scene, where the shepherds (578s.: χρύσειοι δὲ νομῆες ἅμ' ἐστιχόωντο βόεσσι / τέσσαρες, ἐννέα δέ σφι κύνες πόδας ἀργοὶ ἕποντο) march alongside the cattle while the

dogs follow them, an appropriate image for the processional chorus, lead by the *choregoi*, as it has been described in the previous scene, the vintage song (579 = 572: ἕποντο). On the other hand, in the final chorus, being a static dance, the στίχες intersect each other, defining a space (probably quadrangular, as opposed to the previous wheel) which we can picture as a grid, a web or a maze. This last form would be specially convenient for a dance that has as its model Ariadne's chorus in Crete, and we can perhaps suppose here, as the scholiasts point out, an implicit allusion to the labyrinth, as it was traced at Delos by the dancers of the γέρανος.

As for the web image, we can mention the dance of the Phaeacian boys accompanying Demodocos' song of the adulterous union of Ares and Aphrodite, caught in a web fabricated by Hephaistos under the view of the rest of the gods. I would argue here[19] that the swift, sparkling movements of the feet of the dancers, which are the object of Ulysses' admiring gaze (*Od.* 8.265: μαρμαρυγὰς θηεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ), are to be related to the image of the web imprisoning the two divine lovers in Demodocos' song. The description of the web makes it clear that it defines a circular space (*Od.* 8.278: ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ἑρμῖσιν χέε δέσματα κύκλῳ ἀπάντη), like that where the performance takes place, the Phaeacians' agora, described as a χορός for the occasion (*Od.* 8.260,264; for the ideal circular form of the agora, cf. *Il.* 18.504). Bearing in mind the description of the final chorus on the shield of Achilles, we may perhaps visualize the pattern of this dance as the intersecting στίχες evoking the unbreakable bonds of the web (ἄφυκτοι δεσμοί), which, like the shield of Achilles, is in itself an artifact δαιδαλέος, made by Hephaistos himself. Being at the same time a circle, as we have seen, this web can provide us with a clue to the understanding of the alternating forms, κύκλος and intersecting στίχες, of the dance in the last choral scene on the shield.

---

[19] A more detailed analysis of this passage from the perspective of chorality will be pursued elsewhere. Cf. Burkert 1960, Braswell 1982, Brown 1989.

On the other hand, the web's bonds (δέσματα), invisible even to the gods, merely constitute an abstract underlying pattern to the sexual bond (μῖξις, φιλότης, δεσμός) of Ares and Aphrodite, paradigmatic κοῦρος and κόρη in their beauty, contemplated by the rest of the gods summoned there by Hephaistos himself, an aspect that is strongly emphasized by the wealth of visual terms in this passage. This whole scene being a performance in the Phaeacians' agora, with a dance of youths accompanying the song, we can observe a mirroring motif in this disposition, with the Phaeacians and their guest, Ulysses, gathered around and looking with admiration at the dazzling movements of the boys' feet just as the gods are watching with pleasure beautiful Aphrodite caught in the web with Ares —and, by implication, just as we admire the whole scene as narrated by the singer of the *Odyssey*, another example of the pattern of *mise en abîme* characteristic of the choral performance.

As for the actual effect this contemplation has on the viewers, we can single out three reactions among the gods watching the two caught lovers:

a) a general reaction among the gods, which remarks how the transgressor, however beautiful or strong, gets caught in the end, a moral reaffirming of social values, albeit expressed in a humorous way;

b) the playful dialogue between Apollo and Hermes, two handsome κοῦροι themselves, with Hermes watching Aphrodite's naked beauty and wishing he were Ares embracing the goddess[20], a wish full of desire which corresponds to the reciprocal mimesis of choral performance, achieved through the *himeros* that the contemplation of the beauty both of the dancers and of the dance arises in the spectator;

---

[20] It is highly interesting to note here the exact inversion of this wish -again in the positive moral sense- in Alcman's *partheneion*, with the warning against a mortal aspiring to lie with the golden Aphrodite, or the narratization of this choral motif in Anchises' story, as told on the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, where the hero accepts to lie with the goddess believing her to be a maiden abducted from the chorus.

c) finally, Posidon's reaction takes us to the judicial aspect of the scene, where the χόλος and the potential νεῖκος the adultery has provoked is solved by an acceptance of the payment of compensations.

It is difficult not to remind us here of the sequence, in the shield of Achilles, of the wedding-scene, with the singing of the hymenaios, where the two first reactions to Ares' and Aphrodite's predicament would not be out of place, followed by the judicial scene in the αγορά, where the νεῖκος can be avoided by the acceptance of ἄποινα by the lessee party, a procedure held under the active contemplation of the community. In the Phaeacian occasion, we find a similar social function, as Demodocos' performance, like the dance of the βητάρμονες that follows, solves the νεῖκος which had arisen between the guest and Euryalos and integrates the guest into the community by the gift of ξένια, consisting here of richly woven robes and a talent of gold. As for the crowd watching the dance, this contemplation defines collectively the communal identity of the Phaeacians, excelling in dancing, in the highly agonistic context of the whole episode; individually, it provokes a pleasure that ranges from the image of youth and dexterity projected upon each spectator, who identifies with the dancers to the point of ideally exchanging places with them, to the satisfaction of the parents looking at their sons creating a better image of them and their οἶκος for all to see and admire, enhancing thereby their social status and preparing an advantageous marriage[21]. Thus, Demodocos' song and its accompanying dance in the *Odyssey* provide an useful parallel, at several levels, to the description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, and particularly to the meaning and function of its choral scenes.

Let us now return to the description of the shield. In the context of these

---

[21] This feeling has previously been described in Odysseus' praise to Nausicaa's beauty (*Od.* 6.154ss.), and finds its divine paradigm in Zeus and Leto watching their sons dancing in the χορός (*Hom. Hymn. Apoll.* 204ss.).

abstract patterns created by the dancers and enjoyed by the viewers, we find the second comparison of the passage, which regards also, like Daidalos' χορός, the spatial dimension of the performance, namely the round form of the dance compared to the potter's wheel (600s.: ὡς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν / ἑζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἴ κε θέῃσιν). Through the epithet ἄρμενον, the wheel, like the shield and the chorus, is itself presented as a complex artifact, made up of well-adjusted pieces. But the wheel is at the same time a tool for the production of other artful objects, the vases which are the potter's works. Thus, like in the case of Daidalos, here too the comparison bears as much on the fabrication of the shield as on the choral performance being described (as brought up by the use of the agonistic terms πειράομαι, "to test", and θέω, "to run"). But by introducing the potter's work as a valid counterpart to the metalwork of Hephaistos, by putting both in a symmetrical relationship to the chorus and the patterns it defines, as read by the watching spectators, the poet invites his audience, and us, to draw a parallel between the visual aspects of this representation and the reading of the iconographical language of contemporary artifacts. The shield being a piece of metalwork, iconographic comparisons have frequently been drawn with similar objects, notably the two series of Cretan shields and Cypro-Phoenician bowls, which are, no doubt, the closest parallels[22]. However, taking the cue from the comparison of the patterns of the dance to the wheel of the potter, we can now try to read the iconography on vases from the Geometric period from the perspective opened up by the previous analysis of the scenes on the shield[23].

In the extratextual world, the specific relationship between the potter himself and the chorus lies in the need for him to supply vases which will be used

---

[22] Edwards 1991: 203ss.
[23] On the iconography of Geometric pottery, cf. Coldstream 1968, Himmelmann-Wildschutz 1968, Schweitzer 1971, Ahlberg 1971, Carter 1972, Whitley 1991, Rystedt – Wells 2006, Langdon 2008.

on the occasions where choral performance takes place, like weddings, funerals, even the banquet, or which are destined to be the votive offerings or the prizes awarded to the best dancers in agonistic festivals. This is precisely the case for the famous Dipylon oinochoe bearing what may be the oldest inscription in Greek alphabet we have (c. 740 BC), and it is significant in this respect that it alludes to the dance in a self-referential manner, through the deictic τόδε: hoς νῦν ὀϱχεστôν πάντον ἀταλότατα παίζει, / τô τόδε κλ[.]μιν[...] (cf. *Il.* 18.567: παϱθενικαὶ δὲ καὶ ἠΐθεοι ἀταλὰ φϱονέοντες) [1]. Equally noteworthy is the display of the inscription around the vase, which, by the form and direction of the letters and by echoing the movement of the geometric bands below, seems to be trying to imitate the movement of the dance itself it is alluding to. A later, more explicit example of this choral layout of the letters on a vase may be seen in a Corinthian aryballos with a dancer and a flute-player, [2] where the movement of the dancer is suggested by the sinuous direction of the letters of the inscription, which alludes to the dance itself. It could be objected, of course, that the primitive, temptative character of such an early example of writing as that on the Dipylon oinochoe (the inscription seems even to been unfinished) would be at odds with a conscious symbolic meaning of its spatial layout. On the contrary, I would argue that *precisely* because of this being a pioneering effort, it would be all too natural that the writer should have borne in mind a visual, not purely textual, parallel, familiar to him from the reading of the geometric patterns he is accustomed to, namely a choral reading, as we will try to argue in what follows, particularly as it is naturally evoked here by the content of the inscription. The name βουστροφηδόν applied to a particular (and specially early) layout of an inscription bears witness to a similar apprehension of the visual aspect of writing through a metaphoric image, one which, as we have just seen, provides a model also for the reading of dance movements (δινεύω, στρέφω). But let us return to our main argument.

The high frequency of representations of choral performances on Geometric pottery, setting a trend that will continue in later periods, testifies to the importance accorded to the chorus in that cultural context, a point I hardly need to develop here. But the point I would like to make is that the multiple levels of the visual apprehension of the performance by its public, as we have seen in the epic texts, may have a close parallel in the reading of the iconography of the Geometric period (1000-700 BC), specially of Late Geometric (second half of the 8th c.), where the figured image coexists with the geometric decoration. We have seen that the spectators of the dance took pleasure in the simultaneous contemplation of (i) the physical beauty of the dancers and their robes and ornaments, and (ii) the abstract patterns traced by the dancers, and that both levels could also be contemplated through a limited range of fixed symbolic images (which, at least in the case of choral lyric, are often evoked in the song as self-referential metaphoric allusions): the astral bodies, some specific animals and their movements, the form or decoration of a precious object, e.g. a necklace, or a mythical place, like the labyrinth, or, in Demodocos' song, Hephaistos' web imprisoning Ares and Aphrodite. If we now apply this perception to a particular case, like a Late Geometric krater from Argos [3], we can observe a similar relationship between the figured panels, with representations of a female chorus, and the central one, which occupies a privileged iconographic position, as the representation of a dance pattern. Similarly, in the bands of birds framing the dancing women a parallel can be drawn based on the bird imagery common as well in textual descriptions of choruses as in the texts of choral lyric. These bands have their counterpart in the zigzag lines framing the central panel, which in turn recall the zigzag line of the dancer's arms, forming a ὅρμος or a σειρά. The rest of the space is filled with similar strings of linear motifs that become circular through their continuous display around the vase. We may mention in this context the name δῖνος for a

specific form of vase, where this layout of the decoration, perfectly matching the tectonics of the object, is most frequent, and this is precisely the point of the comparison of the shield to the potter's wheel. In the Argive krater, the fact that the central panel could be interpreted also as a water meadow or a pond, presenting the dancers as a chorus of nymphs, does not exclude the interpretation I propose, since, as we have seen, the geometric patterns of the dance were open to representational imaged readings, which were, nevertheless, neither compulsory nor necessarily restricted to one fixed meaning. I would argue that the decoration of the vase, with its different visual levels encouraging an equally multilayered reading, could be looked at and read in a similar way as we are told by the epic text the choral performance was, appropriating and transposing its efficacy and portability to another medium and to shifting contexts, like marriage, ritual performance, the banquet and, ultimately, the grave. But let us now consider some methodological and cultural implications of this interpretation and test its viability (and thence its validity) for the reading of a large, if not the whole *corpus* of vases.

The sources of the iconographical motifs of Geometric art can be fairly easily traced to Bronze Age Greece in some cases, to the Near East in others. What is specific to Greek Geometric art, as its very name implies, is the extraordinary development of the geometric patterns, which tend to occupy all the available space, and the rigour with which they are displayed over the surface of the vase, with an exceptional sense of spatial articulation. I think it is no coincidence that this is precisely a fundamental feature of choral performance as a very powerful cultural tool to articulate the physical as well as the social space, particularly at the beginning of the polis, as numerous studies have pointed out[24]. As for the origin of the motifs, the importance of textiles and weaving patterns has often been pointed

---

[24] Cf., e.g., de Polignac's analysis of the importance of processional choruses in defining the main organizing axes of the territory, especially those linking the extraurban sanctuaries to the ἄστυ: de Polignac 1995 *passim*.

out, and it is surely significant that this is also an essential symbolic, mythic, even etymological (cf. ὕμνος, λίνος,...) referent for choral song and dance.

The attribution of a meaning to this all-important geometric decoration in Dark Age Greece -and not only on vases- has frequently occupied the scholars. Thus, Himmelmann-Wildschutz has interpreted the geometric patterns, like the ubiquitous *Kreisornamente*, as vegetal motifs, with, for instance, the meander as a stylized rendering of the wreaths crowning sympotic vessels. Similarly, Ahlberg, in her important study of the iconography of *prothesis* and *ekphora*, sees every motif as representational. According to her, for example, 'the emblem zones denote a locality outside the house and the circular motifs may be curtains, or some kind of drapery or belonging to the architectural domain'[25] [4]. On the opposite extreme, Whitley has argued for a purely social, non-iconographic interpretation, a non-representational code whose meaning lies in the conferment of status to the owners of the object[26]. Though I totally agree with the necessity of a social approach, and not a purely iconographic one, from an analysis of the texts I am not willing to exclude at least the possibility of a level of representation in the contemporary reading of these motifs, in the same way as the patterns of the dance could be read sometimes as imitating some element of reality or simply as an abstract image of *kósmos* or *harmonía*, beautiful in its own structural complexity. It is not, however, a naturalistic representation, albeit stylized, but a ritualized one. If we largely acknowledge the importance of ritual in the figured scenes when they appear, I don't think it can be denied to the object when it is purely geometric, and the chorus provides, as B. Kowalzig has recently argued, the main model for ritual as performative action in Archaic Greece.

If we now look briefly to the repertory of geometric decoration, we find a

---

[25] Ahlberg 1971: 146.
[26] Whitley 1991: 17-19.

striking correspondence to the patterns we have found in the epic passages just analyzed, especially in the shield of Achilles. The disposition of the patterns can be either linear, frieze-like, or arranged in closed panels, in the manner of a metope or an emblem, a polarity which is paralleled in the distinction between processional (e.g. the two first dances on the shield of Achilles) and stationary choruses (like the third and final one). In the first type, we find straight lines, sinuous lines, zig-zags, meanders or frieze-like repetition of the same motifs, often all the way round the vase. The main motif is the meander, in its simplest expression tracing a βουστροφηδόν or sinuous pattern (like a river or the movements of the ploughman), in the most complex forms giving the impression of a maze or a watery surface [5], but in either case suggesting a movement based in the abstract principles of δινεύειν and στρέφειν, which are essentially choreographic concepts. Sometimes in the form of a key or a knot, they can also refer to the interlocking hands of the chorus, the δεσμός that is a defining feature in its figured iconographical representation. Also very common are the circular motifs, often in the form of concentric circles, which sometimes encircle a different element in the centre, like a dot, a cross or a figured motif, like an animal. Sometimes these circles are linked by tangential lines [6, note the bands under the animals], giving at the same time the impression of movement, like the meander, and of a combination of pieces, like a necklace or, indeed, a dancing chorus. In other cases these circles adopt a quasi-representational form, like a flower or, in a characteristic motif, at the same time a wheel and an astral body, like the sun or the star-crowned heaven of the innermost band of the shield [7]. Stars are also frequent, as is the swastika, probably also an astral motif. As for the frequent grid patterns, made up of straight or diagonal lines, chequered or filled with dots, we have already encountered them in the intersecting στίχες of the dance, which could be read, for instance, as a web or a military or ritual formation [8].

It is hardly necessary to point out here to the choral character of these patterns. In this respect, we may compare all these geometric motifs and their dazzling display over the whole round surface of the vase to the μαρμαρυγαί ποδῶν of the dancers, which in the textual descriptions are said to attract and fascinate the gaze of the spectator and provoke in him a sense of θαῦμα and τέρψις. I would like to insist, however, that this is not necessarily a stylized representation of the dancers, a figured motif, but rather a visual rendering of the same abstract patterns the dance traces on the ground for the brief duration of the ritual occasion, representing and fixing down the ritual action in images as the poet of the *Iliad* does in words. That these patterns could eventually be read as evoking some choral images within a fixed and codified repertoire, is suggested by the texts and by those images where figures and geometric motifs echoing each other are juxtaposed, but this attribution of meaning was not compulsory and could vary according to the occasion and even perhaps the individual spectator. Thus, there is no point trying to assign a single specific meaning to each of the motifs, though on the other hand neither are they to be considered as having no iconographic meaning at all.

When it comes to figured but still non-narrative motifs, the most frequent are animals, often repeated to form a continuous band [6]. Here also the correspondence with the animal imagery of the chorus is significant: the bird, the horse, the cow, the deer and the goat are the main species represented, frequently grazing, suckling, marching or even jumping. We may note here the verb σκαίρω used to describe the movement of the dancers in the vintage song on the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.572: μολπῇ τ' ἰυγμῷ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἕποντο), which is used elsewhere in a simile denoting the jumping of the young calves to their mothers after grazing in the meadow (*Od.*10.412), joining two very common iconographic motifs in the Geometric period: the grazing and the suckling animal.

It is interesting to note that when clearly figured motifs appear, whether in decorative layouts (like friezes or panels) or in complex narrative scenes, an effort can often be perceived to establish morphological parallels between the figured and the geometric motifs on the vase, as, in the Argive vase considered above [3], between the angular arms of the Argive dancers and the zigzag lines framing the panels or, in a funerary scene on an Attic Late Geometric Attic in the Metropolitan Museum [9], between the eyes of the mourners and the dotted circles filling the void space around them. The same parallel can be seen in a strange representation on an oinochoe in Boston of c.735-720 [10], which has been analyzed, rightly I think, as an acrobatic dance (like the κυβιστητῆρες δινέοντες on the epic texts)[27]. Here, the important feature of the open eye of the central inverted figure seems to correspond to the frame of dotted circles surrounding the scene.

It is highly tempting to read these cases as representations of the crowd watching the ritual, be it the *prothesis* or the dance, but in accordance to our analysis it is preferable to leave this reading as merely a possible one, for us as it probably was for the contemporary viewer. In any case, we can observe, already in the Geometric phase, the importance of the eye as an iconographical motif, which is well-known for later periods of vase painting, and link it to the choral performance where it primarily belongs [11]. Indeed, the reference to the eyes and the gaze are, not surprisingly, ubiquitous in the description of the chorus, as well those of the dancers as of the spectators, in epic as in lyric texts: expressions like ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδών are frequent in choral contexts (cf. e.g. *Il*. 16.182), and an excellent example from choral lyric is provided, in Alcman's big *partheneion,* by the apostrophe ἦ οὐχ ὁρῆις; (frg. 1.50). But we can further observe here how the mirroring and projecting power of the choral gaze is expressed through the attribution to the eye of the beholder of some images appropriate to the chorus

---

[27] Langdon 2008: 52.

itself: thus, the terms δίνω and στρέφω can be applied to the movements of the eye, even combined in a single verb to express the moment of Patroklos' death (στρεφεδίνηθεν δέ οἱ ὄσσε: 16.792; cf. Theseus' eyes in Bacchyl. 17.18: δίνασεν ὄμμα). Similarly, the epithet ἑλικοβλέφαρος, also denoting beauty, attributes to the eye and the gaze a spiral movement that we find often in the movements of the chorus. Most significantly, the two terms for the pupil have choral connotations: (i) the word γλήνη, which reappears in a derived form in the τρίγληνα ἕρματα (*Il.* 14.182s.), the three-eyed earrings worn by Hera to seduce Zeus, and (ii) the pupil can be simply called the κόρη, evoking the image of a maiden within a circular space that mirrors the κόρη in her θάλαμος (as in Empedocles, fr. 84 DK) or in the chorus. Similarly, the μαρμαρυγαί of the dancers' feet (*Od.* 8.265; *Hom.Hymn.Apoll.* 203) correspond to the μαρμαίροντα ὄμματα by which Aphrodite is recognized by Helen under her disguise as an old woman (*Il.* 3.397). Other images frequently used to describe the eye, based on its circular shape, include the astral bodies (sun, moon or stars) and the wheel. This verbal correspondences linking the eye and the chorus are also paralleled in the Geometric iconographic language, where visual links are established, for example, between the eyes, the chariot wheels and the shields, in the figured scenes [12], as well as with the geometric dotted circles just mentioned, in the purely abstract fields, suggesting a reciprocal mirroring, both within the iconographic space, between the different elements there, and without, between the image and its viewer. Thus, the importance of the eye motif in choral contexts, in texts as well as in iconography, implies a mirroring effect, a dynamic relationship that opens up the field of representation to reach out to the beholders surrounding it, at the same time drawing them into it and projecting itself upon them.

With the apparition and generalization in the Late Geometric period of complex figured and narrative scenes, the geometrical patterns tend to occupy the

margins of the iconographical space, often adopting the function of frames, but also, occasionally, placed inside specific panels, though now in a marginal position to the central scenes. When the chorus appears in the representation, it tends to occupy this same position, often in or near the neck of the vase, as a framing or encircling motif of the whole iconographic space. This disposition became a recurrent iconographic feature, running from the Late Geometric period (e.g. a Boetian LG pythoid jar [13]) through the Orientalizing (e.g. two Attic amphoras by the Analatos Painter, one in Athens [14], the other in the Louvre) to the Black Figure (e.g. the representation of the arrival of Theseus and his companions to Delos on the François Vase). A kylix from Tarquinia [15] offers a very interesting example, with Heracles and Triton at the centre and a chorus of girls (which can also and at the same time represent Nereids) surrounding them. The centre of the space is occupied by the clasped hands of Heracles imprisoning Triton in a wrestling hold, an ἄφυκτος δεσμός (like that of Hephaistos' web in the *Odyssey*) represented here as a labyrinthine meander which echoes the locked hands of the surrounding chorus. This becomes even more evident if compared to another Attic, red figure kylix with the battle of Thetis and Peleus [16]. Here, the place of the chorus is occupied by a geometric band, a περιπλοκή exactly reproducing the central clasped hands motif, which in this mythical context is a nuptial as much as a wrestling motif.

It is important to note that this liminar disposition of the chorus is precisely that of the choral scenes in the shield of Achilles, with the first chorus opening the band representing the City at Peace and the City at War, the second chorus closing the band with the three seasonal agricultural works, and the last choral scene at the same time occupying an independent space of its own and functioning as the closing band of the whole shield (with the exception of the non-narrative rim with the representation of the Ocean). We may also mention in this framing or liminar

position the chorus of the Muses in the proems to the Catalogue of Ships and to the Hesiodic poems, or the three choruses scanning the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (the Deliades at the end of the first, Delian part; the Olympians at the beginning of the Delphian volet; and the processional chorus of the Cretans turned Delphians at the end). As all these examples show, this liminar position is not a minor, marginal one, but it has a crucial importance as defining the place where mimesis takes place, where the exterior and the interior of the song, as of the iconographic space, meet and interpenetrate each other. This is, in our view, the main function of the choral mimesis, as presented in the well-known scene of the chorus of the Deliades in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (*HHAp.* 149ss.). Through the contemplation of their extraordinary, mimetic voice, the spectators enter the world of the chorus, believing they are the ones singing, and by this mirroring look they are conferred the quasi-divine beauty of the κόραι as well as their very collective identity as Ionians. But at the same time the chorus connects also the poet, the blind man from Chios, with its public, the Ionians to whom the girls will confirm his excellence and that of his poems.

I have argued elsewhere[28] that the epic passages I have just mentioned show how the epic poet needs to appropriate the chorus' voice and its mimetic force so that he can be able to order the world through the catalogic and genealogic mode of the discourse. The three choruses that rhythmically scan the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, for instance, are to be closely related to the prominence of the geographical catalogues in this work, just as the invocation to the chorus of the Muses in *Iliad* 2, as opposed to the single *theá* at the beginning of the poem, is what enables the poet to tackle the articulation of the Greek heroic world in the Catalogue of Ships, like Hesiod does in his works. Similarly, I would argue here that the potter too appropriates this active mimetic force of the choral performance, not only through

---

[28] Carruesco 2009b.

the frequent representations of choruses, often in liminar spaces, but more generally through the extensive use of geometric patterns, first exclusively, later in a framing relationship to the figured scenes. In this way, the chorus needs not to be actually represented to convey to the image its power of fascination, its ability to mirror the world surrounding it and project upon it its ideal images of order or heroic past (though it must also be stressed that, like in Demodocos' song, it can also do so in an inversed manner, as shown by the frequent representations of monsters, shipwrecks or scenes of violence). The κόσμος that is the ornamentation is at the same time the κόσμος as an ordered and articulated world. In this respect, the iconographic language of Geometric pottery is the first episode of a long series of sophisticated experimentations with the power and the limits of the image characteristic of Greek art. The analysis of these iconographic strategies, as deriving from the cultural model of chorality, can help us in turn understand better similar strategies in poetry, as they were "looked at" by the audience.

Bibliography

Ahlberg, G. 1971. *Prothesis and Ekphora in Greek Geometric Art. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology, 32*. Göteborg: Paul Aströms Forlag.

Becker, A.S. 1995. *The shield of Achilles and the poetics of ekphrasis*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Boardman, J. 1998. *Early Greek Vase Painting*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Boedeker, D. 1974. *Aphrodite's Entry into Greek Epic*. Leiden: *Mnemosyne Suppl.*, 32.

Braswell, B.K. 1982. "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to Odyssey 8", *Hermes* 110: 129-37.

Brown, Ch. G. 1989. "Ares, Aphrodite, and the Laughter of the Gods", *Phoenix* 43: 283-293.

Burkert, W. 1960. "Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite". *RhM* 103 : 130-44.

Calame, C. 1977. *Les choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque, I: Morphologie, fonction religieuse et sociale; II: Alcman*. Urbino.

Carey, Ch. 1981. *A Commentary on Five Odes of Pindar : Pythian 2, Pythian 9, Nemean 7, Isthmian 8*. Salem, NH: The Ayer Company.

Carruesco, J. 2009. "Prácticas rituales y modos del discurso: la coralidad como paradigma del catálogo en la poesía arcaica griega" in *Actas del Congreso Nacional de Estudios Clásicos*, Valencia [in print].

Carson, A. 1982. "Wedding at Noon in Pindar's *Ninth Pythian*", *GRBS* 29: 121-8.

Carter, J.C. 1972. "The Beginnings of Narrative Art in the Geometric Period", *BSA*: 25-58.

Coldstream, J.N. 1968. *Greek Geometric Pottery*. London: Methuen.

Duethorn. G.D. 1962. *Achilles' shield and the structure of the Iliad*. Amherst, Mass.: Amherst College Press

Edwards, M. 1991. *The Iliad: A Commentary. Vol. V: books 17-20*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferrari, G. 2008. *Alcman and the Cosmos of Sparta*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago University Press.

Frontisi-Ducroux, F. 1975. *Dédale. Mythologie de l'artisan en Grèce ancienne*, Paris.

Hägg., R. 1993. *The Greek renaissance of the eighth century b.c.: Tradition and innovation*, Stockholm.

Himmelmann-Wildschutz, N. 1968. "Über einige gegenstandliche Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten der frühgriechischen Ornaments", in *Abhandlungen der geistes- und socialwissenschaftlichen Klasse der Akademie der Wissenchaften und der Literatur in Mainz 1968 No7*. Wiesbaden: 259-346.

Kowalzig, B. 2007. *Singing for the Gods. Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Langdon, S. 2008. *Art and Identity in Dark Age Greece, 1100-700 B.C.E,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lonsdale, S. 1993. *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*. Baltimore-London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Morris, S.P. 1995. *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, Princeton.

Myers, M. 2007. "Footrace, Dance, and Desire: The Χορός of Danaids in Pindar's Pythian 9", *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics* Paper No. 120701. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1426931

Nagy, G. 2003. "The shield of Achilles: End of the Iliad and beginning of the polis", *in* Nagy, G. *Homeric Responses*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 194-207.

de Polignac, F. 1995. *La naissance de la cité grecque*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

Pòrtulas, J. 2008. *Introducció a la* Ilíada*. Homer, entre la història i la llegenda*. Barcelona: Fundació Bernat Metge.

Revermann, M. 1998. "The text of *Iliad* 18.603 and the presence of an ΑΟΙΔΟΣ on the shield of Achilles", *CQ* 48: 29-38.

Rystedt, E. – Wells, B. (eds.) 2006. *Pictorial Pursuits. Figurative Painting on Mycenaean and Geometric pottery. Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueci, Series in 4º, LIII*. Stockholm: Paul Aström Forlag.

Schweitzer, B. 1971. *Greek Geometric Art*. London: Phaidon [=Köln 1969].

Snodgrass, A.M. 1998. *Homer and the Artists: Text and Picture in Early Greek Art*, Cambridge 1998.

Taplin, O. 1980. "The Shield of Achilles within the Iliad", *Greece and Rome*, 27: 1-21.

Whitley, J. 1991. *Style and society in Dark Age Greece. The changing face of a pre-literate society 1100-700 BC.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.