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DANCING WITH STESICHORUS

The unfortunate John Malalas, the sixth-century chronographer whose errors formed the target of Richard Bentley's first major work of scholarship, at one point makes a reference to "Stesichorus and Bacchylides, who were inventors of the dance and poets".¹ Bentley's response is not encumbered by understatement:²

Quid narras? nimirum nostra nos opinio fefellit, qui credidimus te Antiochiae esse natum. Siquidem auctor est Lucianus Antiochenses de saltatoribus optime omnium iudicare potuisse: te autem cum aliarum omnium, tum huius artis imperitissimum videmus. Rogo te, homo hominum ignavissime, numquam Sacras Scripturas lectitasti? nonne ibi frequens Saltationis mentio diu diuque, antequam Stesichorus nasceretur? quid? ne Homerum quidem per transennam aspexisti? iam ergo eum audias licet:

Ὅρχητὺς μολπή τε, τὰ περ τ' ἀναθήματα δαιτός.³

Ἄλλω μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκε θεὸς πολεμήϊα ἔργα,

Ἄλλω δ' ὀρχητύν, ἑτέρω κίθαριν καὶ ἀοιδήν.⁴

I am grateful to Dr Laura Gianvittorio for the invitation to contribute to this volume, to her and to the anonymous referee for helpful comments, and to the Leverhulme Trust for the award of a Philip Leverhulme Prize during the tenure of which this chapter was written. For a briefer discussion of this topic see Finglass 2014a, 30-2. The fragments of Stesichorus are cited from Finglass 2014b.

¹ John Mal. 6, 27 (p. 131, 7-8 Thurn) Στησίχορος καὶ Βακχυλίδης, οἱ ἦσαν ὀρχήσεως εὐρεταὶ καὶ ποιηταί.

² Bentley 1691, 70, translated by Haugen 2011, 97 (slightly adapted).

³ Hom. *Od.* 1, 152, where the text is actually μολπή τ' ὀρχητὺς τε τὰ γὰρ τ' ἀναθήματα δαιτός; Bentley's version gives an equally good hexameter.

Scio tamen, quid in fraudem te impulit; nempe nomen Stesichori, tanquam si primus ἐπέηατο χορούς· & poemata quaedam Bacchylidis, quae Ὑπορχήματα inscripta sunt, & a Stobaeo citantur & Athenaeo lib. XIV. Ἡ δ' ὑπορχηματική ἐστίν, ἐν ἧ ᾄδων ὁ χορὸς ὀρχεῖται. φησὶ γοῦν ὁ Βακχυλίδης· Οὐχ ἔδραα ἔργον οὐδ' ἀμβολᾶα. Locus aliquanto integrior est apud Dionysium Halicarnassensem. Οὐχ ἔδραα ἔργον, οὐδ' ἀμβολᾶα, ἀλλὰ χρυσαίγιδος. Ἴτωνίας χροῖ παρ' εὐδαίδαλον ναὸν ἐλθόνταα ἀβρόν τι δεῖξαα. Omnes Cretici praeter unum pedem qui in Paeonem solutus est; adeo ut, cum hunc locum lego, coram oculis videre videor⁵ ὑπορχουμένους & subsultantes. Nec tamen princeps inventor hyporchematum Bacchylides; sed, ut quibusdam videtur, Pindarus; ut alii volunt, Xenodamus. Vide Clementem, Athenaeum, & Plutarchum περὶ Μουσικῆα.

What are you saying? Clearly we were misinformed, because we thought you were born at Antioch. At least according to Lucian, the Antiochians should have known better about dancers than anyone else. You, however, along with all the other arts, we find grossly ignorant of this one. May I ask, you most lazy of men, did you never peruse the Holy Scriptures? Is there not frequent mention of dancing long, long before Stesichorus was born? So? Did you never look at Homer even “through a lattice”? Well, you might as well hear him now:

Dancing and music, which are the delights of a feast

God gives to one man the deeds of battle,

To another dancing, to another the lyre and song.

⁴ Hom. *Il.* 13, 730-1.

⁵ Corrected to ‘videar’ in later editions.

But I know what drove you to your imposture: the name of Stesichorus, as though he were the first who *estêsato chorous* [“instituted choruses”] and further, certain poems of Bacchylides called *Dancing Songs*, which are quoted by Stobaeus and also in Athenaeus book 14: “In the hypochematic, the chorus dances while singing: at any rate Bacchylides says ‘Chairs we need not, nor preludes’” [fr. 15, 1 S–M]. The passage appears in somewhat fuller form in Dionysius of Halicarnassus: “Chairs we need not, not preludes, but she of the golden aegis: we must go to the well-wrought temple of Itonia and perform something graceful.” The meter is cretics, except for one foot resolved into a paeon, so that as I read this passage, I seem to see them before my eyes dancing and leaping. However, Bacchylides was not even the originator and inventor of dancing songs; rather, as some say, it was Pindar, or as some others claim, Xenodamus. See Clement, Athenaeus, and Plutarch’s *On Music*.

Bentley is of course correct that Stesichorus, still less Bacchylides, was not the inventor of dancing. But he is perhaps excessively hard on Malalas, or on his source, since Stesichorus was nevertheless closely associated with that art. His very name Στηρίχορος means “he who sets up the chorus”, and a Greek χορός was primarily associated with song and dance; Ian Rutherford refers to archaic and classical Greece as a “song/dance culture”.⁶ We might think it an extraordinary coincidence that a choral poet should receive at birth a name that would so precisely reflect his occupation. According to the tenth-century Byzantine encyclopedia, the *Suda*, the poet’s name was given him as a sobriquet:

⁶ Rutherford 2001, 3 “Ancient Greece can be described as a song-dance culture, in so far as the performance of song and dance (translating the Greek μολπή) enjoyed an importance many times greater than what we find in any industrialized Western society today, but comparable to the position it still holds in some surviving traditional societies”.

ἐκλήθη δὲ Στηρίχορος ὅτι πρῶτος κιθαρῳιδίαι χορὸν ἔστησεν, ἐπεὶ τοι
πρότερον Τεισίας ἐκαλεῖτο.

He was called Stesichorus because he first set up a chorus to the accompaniment of
citharody, since before that he was called Teisias.

Suda c 1095 Adler = Stes. Tb2 Ercoles

This statement supports what we might have already have deduced, that Stesichorus
was not the poet's original name. We can be sure that the sobriquet was already
known in the sixth century, thanks to a precious testimony in Simonides:

(Μελέαγρος) ὄς δουρὶ πάντα
νίκαε νέους δινάεντα βαλὼν
Ἄναυρον ὑπερ πολυβότρουο ἐξ Ἴωλκοῦ·
οὔτω γὰρ Ὅμηρος ἠδὲ
Στηρίχορος ἄειε λαοίς.

(Meleager) who defeated all the young men with his spear, hurling it beyond the eddying
Anaurus out of Iolcus, rich in grapes. For thus Homer and Stesichorus sang to the peoples.

Simon. fr. 273 Poltera

Writing perhaps only a generation after Stesichorus' death, Simonides could not have
called our poet 'Stesichorus' unless that name was already widely associated with
him; it is easiest to assume that this association had arisen because that was the name

used by the poet himself as he travelled around the Greek world. ‘Teisias’ is an unremarkable name, commonly found in many places and periods, and so “probably preserves a genuine tradition, since it seems too unremarkable to be a fiction”.⁷

So a poet originally called Teisias was given, or assumed, the name ‘Stesichorus’. This fact on its own suggests a particular connexion with the χορός, a body of dancing singers, or singing dancers. Such a name was hardly isolated in archaic onomastics. As Furley and Bremer say, “to ‘set up a chorus’ (χορὸν ἰctάναι) for the performance of ritual songs became the standard term for the inauguration of hymns in performance [...] Names such as Stesichoros, ‘Chorus-Trainer’ or Hagesichora, ‘Chorus-Leader’, Terpsichora (one of the Muses), ‘Chorus-lover’, point to the familiarity of the concept”.⁸ Consequently, it is a natural enough inference, from Stesichorus’ name alone, that the performance of his poetry primarily involved singing and dancing, just as Hagesichora in Alcman’s *First Partheneion* (fr. 1 *PMGF*) was one of the leaders of a singing and dancing chorus. Consistent with that inference, Stesichorus’ own poetry contains references to song and dance, expressed through the term μολπή, which stands for both.⁹ So we are told by Chamaeleon that one of Stesichorus’ *Palinodes* began

δεύρ’ αὐτε θεὰ φιλόμολπε

⁷ Finglass 2014a, 15, citing the evidence for the name Teisias.

⁸ Furley and Bremer 2001, 19-10; see Finglass 2007, on *Soph. El.* 280 for parallels for χορὸν ἰctάναι.

⁹ See Cingano 1993, 349-53, with many examples from epic onwards referring to both song and dance. Lloyd-Jones 1995, 420 = 2005, 402 claims that “μέλω and its derivatives often connote song still more than they do dance”, but in none of the passages cited below does the context exclude the sense ‘dance’.

Come here once more, goddess who delights in song/dance

fr. 90, 8-9 F.

This was not the only time that Stesichorus associated his Muse with μολπή, since Athenaeus tells us that he called her

ἀρχεσίμολπον

she who begins the song/dance

fr. 278 F.¹⁰

In addition, Plutarch records the following snatch of Stesichorean lyric, combining the terms χόρευμα and μολπή:

<χορεύ>ματά τοι μάλιστα
παιγμοσύνας <τε> φιλεῖ μολπὰς τ' Ἀπόλλων,
κάδεα δὲ στοναχὰς τ' Αἴδαο ἔλαχε.

Apollo loves especially dance, play, and song, but Hades has grief and laments as his allotted portion

fr. 271 F.¹¹

¹⁰ For other instances cf. Alc. fr. S1 PMGF χρυσοκόμα φιλόμολπε (if addressed to a Muse), Bacchyl. 6, 10-11 ἀναξιμόλπου | Οὐρανίας; also Pind. *Pyth.* 3, 90 μελοπομενῶν . . . Μοιρῶν. The noun is found at Pratinas fr. 708, 1 PMG, with reference to dancing, and perhaps sound too.

All these passages would have an attractively metapoetic significance if accompanied by song and dance. It is conceivable that the reference in each case is to song alone, but seeing that the term regularly denoted both song and dance the onus of proof is on those who would exclude the latter sense. Moreover, the combination of χορεύματα (if correctly restored) and μολπαί in the last passage seems especially striking, linking as they do song and dance together, with the latter term probably standing for both. And παιγμοσύνη too is frequently found in the context of dancing.¹²

Aside from μολπή, we might also note δαμώματα in the opening to Stesichorus' *Oresteia*:

τοιάδε χρῆ Χαρίτων δαμώματα καλλικόμων
ύμνειν Φρύγιον μέλος ἔξευρόντα<c> ἀβρῶς
ἦρος ἐπερχομένου.

Such are the songs of the fair-tressed Graces that we must sing, devising a Phrygian melody in refined comfort, at spring's approach.

fr. 173 F.

¹¹ <χορεύ>ματα is a relatively safe supplement/conjecture by Wilamowitz 1905, 128 = 1935-72, IV 181 in place of the μάλα found in the manuscripts of Plutarch.

¹² CEG I 432, 1, Athens, c. 740 ἡὸς νῦν ὀρχεσθῶν πάντων ἀταλότατα παίζει, Hom. *Od.* 23, 134 φιλοπαίγμωνος ὀρχηθμοῖο, [Hes.] fr. 10a.19 M–W φιλοπαίγμωνες ὀρχητῆρες, cited by Cingano 1993, 352.

Defined by the Aristophanic scholia (which preserve the lines) as τὰ δημοκίαι αἰδόμενα, “songs sung in public, sung for the people”,¹³ the term “suggests both choral performance and a notion that the narrative is public property”.¹⁴ It does not give any particular pointer about the place of dance within that choral performance (ὑμνεῖν . . . μέλος refers to song alone), though, we might think, it is preferable to imagine that the Stesichorean chorus was energetically mobile rather than staidly static as it described the coming of spring. Certainly, the Aristophanic chorus whose lyrics are here so influenced by Stesichorus was a dancing entity; might even the choreography, like his language, have evoked the Sicilian master?¹⁵ But this latter point is no secure inference, since imitation of one aspect of an earlier work does not entail imitation of anything else.

A choral Stesichorus would not be an isolated or unusual phenomenon among archaic and classical poets from the Greek west. His younger contemporary Ibycus, from Rhegium on the toe of Italy, is said to have composed dithyrambs.¹⁶ So too did Cleomenes, who was also from Rhegium.¹⁷ These dithyrambs, which presumably contained relatively long heroic narratives, involved choral singing and dancing; it may be that Philoxenus of Cythera in the fourth century was the first to introduce

¹³ Σ Ar. *Pac.* 796-9 (p. 125 Holwerda); cf. Hesych. δ 212 (l 403 Latte) δαμόματα· κοινώματα, δημοκίωματα. Cf. δαμόομαι, attested at Pind. *Isthm.* 8, 8 γλυκύ τι δαμωόμεθα καὶ μετὰ πόνον and Pl. *Tht.* 161 e.

¹⁴ Thus Morgan 2012, 43; see further Cingano 1993, 354 with note 28; D’Alfonso 1994, 105-19.

¹⁵ For the influence of Stesichorus on that Aristophanic chorus and on Greek drama more generally see Finglass, forthcoming.

¹⁶ Cingano 1990; 215-19; D’Alessio 2013, 121 note 38. Ibycus’ dithyrambs are not mentioned by Davies 1988, 53-4 in his argument that Ibycus was solely a monodic poet.

¹⁷ Cleomenes (fifth century): fr. 838 PMG, Kassel and Austin on Chionides fr. 4 PCG.

monodies into this genre.¹⁸ The works of another western poet, Xenocritus of Locri, were alternatively classified as paeans or dithyrambs;¹⁹ this too suggests choral performance.

Evidence for chorality in the Greek west is not limited to individual named poets, either.²⁰ A grave in south-east Sicily yielded up a lead curse tablet from the earlier fifth century, which provides evidence for choral performances, probably theatrical in nature, from that region.²¹ Pausanias provides evidence, probably originating in the fifth century, for a chorus of thirty-five boys, a trainer and an aulos-player, sent every year by the people of Messana across the strait to a local festival at Rhegium.²² A lead tessera from Camarina dating to the middle of the fifth century preserves the boast of Thrasys the Emmenid, who claims to be the “best singer of all the Doristomphoi”; this may indicate some kind of singing competition involving the community as a whole.²³ All this evidence comes from the fifth century, but that more probably reflects the better documentation of the classical period in our sources than a shift towards chorality after Stesichorus’ time.

¹⁸ Thus [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142 a = Ar. fr. 953 PCG, although that depends on a far from certain supplement.

¹⁹ See Finglass 2014a, 22-3.

²⁰ See Finglass 2014a, 29-30.

²¹ For the tablet see Jordan 2007; Wilson 2007b; Eidinow 2007, 156-63.

²² Paus. 5, 25, 2-4. After the loss at sea of one contingent, Callon of Elis (active late fifth century) was commissioned by the Messenians to produce a statue of the deceased troupe, for which Hippias (presumably the sophist Hippias of Elis, again from the late fifth century) was subsequently asked to compose an elegiac couplet.

²³ SEG 42 § 846 (p. 245), Δοριετόνφον ἀπάντων ἐκτὶ ὑπέρτατος αἰείδων (I owe this reference to Simon Hornblower); for a different text see SEG 44 § 758, and for discussion see Hornblower 2004, 191-2; Fisher 2010, 92 note 55.

Stesichorus' name, poetry, and the culture of his homeland all point towards choral performance of his work, and such choruses would have involved both singing and dancing. Nevertheless, over the years various arguments have been made against this view, in support of the idea that Stesichorus was a solo singer and that his poems were designed for this medium, to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre. The first scholar known to me to take this latter position was Otto Kleine, nearly two centuries ago.²⁴

iudicia illa et testimonia de Homeri et Stesichori similitudine quae in antecedentibus collegimus ut conferas cum ipsis huius reliquiis, sponte credes magnam partem ea lata esse de illis Stesichoriis odis, quibus lyricus – μελοποιός – data potius temporis vel loci opportunitate, ex veterum rhapsodorum more, festis diebus vel in publicis ludis vel intra privatos denique parietes, rerum a diis heroibusque gestarum laude, lyra adsonante, audientes oblectaverit, quam ad proprios certosque deorum cultus in templis celebrandos quae choro adiuvante a veteribus poetis docebantur.

Those judgments and testimonies concerning the similarity of Homer and Stesichorus which we gathered in the previous pages so that you could compare them with Stesichorus' actual fragments – of your own accord you will believe that, to a great extent, they were taken from those Stesichorean poems, with which the lyric poet, given a suitable time or place, according to the custom of rhapsodes of old, on festival days or at public contests or indeed within private dwellings, by praising the achievements of gods and heroes, to the accompaniment of the lyre would delight his audiences, rather than with a view to celebrating the particular and fixed cults of the gods in temples, which were narrated by ancient poets with the assistance of a chorus.

²⁴ Kleine 1828, 53.

Kleine is prompted by the similarity of Homer and Stesichorus, something often remarked on in antiquity, to posit that the performance of their poetry must have taken a similar form, by a soloist, although in the case of the lyric verse of Stesichorus the performer would have been accompanied on the lyre, something not found with epic recitation. Yet as noted above, similarity of content does not entail similarity of performance style.²⁵ Nor should we overestimate the dependence of Stesichorus on the epic poetry recited by the rhapsodes; indeed, often “the alignment with the hexameter heroic tradition ... pointedly draws attention to the distinctiveness of the lyric offering.”²⁶

Moreover, Kleine’s view depends in part on the view that choral lyric is suited only for cultic performance, which is not necessarily true (choral performance of Pindar’s epinicia, something accepted by the great majority of scholars today, would disprove it); even if it was, there is no reason not to think that some or all of Stesichorus’ poetry was indeed performed at festivals for the gods.

Later Wilamowitz too challenged the choral hypothesis, but in a more limited way and on different grounds:

Wenn Στησίχορος erst Beiname ist, besagt es nicht, daß dieser Mann Reigen gestellt hat, sondern der, nach welchem er benannt war. Darin braucht noch nicht die Abfassung von Liedern für den Chorgesang zu liegen, wie die Scene im θ lehrt. Denn die Muse Στησιχόρη ist sicher in einer Rolle gedacht wie Demodokos bei Homer θ 264. Den Namen hat ja Klitias in seinem Hesiod Theog. 78 gelesen oder doch

²⁵ Cf. Curtis 2011, 24-6.

²⁶ Carey 2015, 62. Careful consultation of Davies, Finglass 2014, should reveal many places where Stesichorus is pointedly doing something different from what he found in epic poetry.

geglaubt, dort gelesen zu haben, ohne von einem Dichter Stesichoros zu wissen. Der Name beweist also durchaus noch nicht die Existenz der späteren chorischen Lyrik. Die Suidasvita hat einen Nachtrag ἐκλήθη δὲ Στησίχορος ὅτι πρῶτος κιθαρωιδία χορὸν ἔστησεν, ἐπεὶ τοι πρότερον Τεισίας ἐκαλεῖτο. Darin ist eben jene homerische Art der Verbindung von Kitharodie und Reigen gut bezeichnet.²⁷

If “Stesichorus” is in the first place an epithet, it does not mean that this man invented circular dancing, but rather signifies the practice after which he was named. The name does not require the composition of lyrics for choral song, as the scene in *Odyssey* book 8 shows. For the Muse ‘Stesichore’ is certainly imagined as taking on a role like that of Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8.264. Clitias read the name, or thought that he had, in his copy of Hesiod’s *Theogony* at line 78, without knowing about a poet called Stesichorus. So the name certainly does not prove the existence of choral lyric as known in later times. The *Life* in the *Suda* contains the postscript “He was called Stesichorus because he first set up a chorus to the accompaniment of cithara-playing, since before that he was called Teisias”. There the Homeric phenomenon of the combination of singing to the accompaniment of the lyre and circular dancing is well indicated.

Like Bentley before him, Wilamowitz rightly emphasises that Stesichorus did not invent dancing. His mention of Clitias refers to the painter of the François vase of c. 570, where one of the Muses is given the name “Stesichore” instead of the “Terpsichore” found in Hesiod’s *Theogony*;²⁸ but we cannot rule out the possibility, as Wilamowitz does, that Clitias had heard of the poet Stesichorus, since Stesichorus’

²⁷ Wilamowitz 1913, 238.

²⁸ See Wachter 1991, 107-8.

career could have been ongoing or even over by that date.²⁹ Wilamowitz’s most important point is his reference to the portrayal of Demodocus in book eight of the *Odyssey*, something that we need to examine in greater depth.

During Odysseus’ stay among the Phaeacians, the bard Demodocus delivers three songs. The first, an account of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, is sung after a banquet at Alcinous’ house (8, 72-82); the second takes place in the agora, immediately after some games in which Odysseus was a participant, and narrated the affair of Ares and Aphrodite (266-366); and the third described the sack of Troy, after the Phaeacians had returned to the house of Alcinous (499-520). It is the second of these songs that concerns us, involving as it does dancing as well as singing. The following words spoken by Alcinous lead into the bard’s narration of the divine affair:

“οὐ γὰρ πυγμάχοι εἰμὲν ἀμύμονες οὐδὲ παλαιταί,
ἀλλὰ ποσὶ κραιπνῶς θέομεν καὶ νηυσὶν ἄριστοι,
αἰεὶ δ’ ἡμῖν δαίς τε φίλη κίθαρίς τε χοροὶ τε
εἵματά τ’ ἔξημοιβὰ λοετρὰ τε θερμὰ καὶ εὐναί.
ἀλλ’ ἄγε, Φαιήκων βητάρμονες ὄσσοι ἄριστοι, 250
παίσατε, ὥς χ’ ὁ ξείνος ἐνίσπη οἴκι φίλοισιν,
οἴκαδε νοστήσας, ὄσσον περιγυγνόμεθ’ ἄλλων
ναυτιλίῃ καὶ ποσσὶ καὶ ὄρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ.
Δημοδόκῳ δέ τις αἶψα κίων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν
οἰκέτω, ἣ που κεῖται ἐν ἡμετέροισι δόμοισιν.” 255
ὥς ἔφατ’ Ἀλκίνοος θεοείκελος, ὦρτο δὲ κήρυξ
οἴκων φόρμιγγα γλαφυρὴν δόμου ἐκ βασιλῆος.

²⁹ Stesichorus’ poetic activity can be dated to some period between 610 and 540; see Finglass 2014a, 1-6.

αἰκυμνήται δὲ κριτοὶ ἐννέα πάντες ἀνέεταν,
 δῆμοι, οἳ κατ' ἀγῶνας εὐὸ πρόησεσκον ἕκαστα,
 λείηναν δὲ χορόν, καλὸν δ' εὐρύνηαν ἀγῶνα. 260
 κῆρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθε φέρων φόρμιγγα λίγεια
 Δημοδόκῳ· ὁ δ' ἔπειτα κί' ἐς μέσον· ἀμφὶ δὲ κούροι
 προθηῆβαι ἴεταντο, δαήμενες ὀρχηθμοῖο,
 πέπληγον δὲ χορόν θεῖον ποδῖν. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 μαρμαρυγὰς θεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ. 265
 αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀεῖδειν
 ἀμφ' Ἄρεος φιλότητος εὐεεφάνου τ' Ἀφροδίτης κτλ.

“For we are not good boxers or wrestlers
 But we run swiftly on our feet and are most able in ships,
 And always the feast is dear to us, the lyre, and choruses,
 Changes of clothes, warm baths, and beds.
 But come, you who are the best dancers among the Phaeacians, 250
 Begin your sport, so that the stranger may tell his people,
 When he returns home, how much we surpass others
 In sailing, with our feet, in dancing, and in song.
 And let someone go and bring the clear-voiced lyre
 To Demodocus, which lies somewhere in our palace.” 255
 Thus spoke the godlike Alcinous, and a herald rose
 To bring the hollow lyre from the house of the king.
 All nine chosen umpires stood up,
 Men from the people, who performed each of the tasks well in the
 competitions;
 They smoothed the dancing space, and cleared the fair arena. 260
 A herald came from nearby bringing the clear-voiced lyre

To Demodocus. He then came into the centre. Around him, young men
 In the prime of youth stood there, knowledgeable in dancing,
 And beat out the divine dance with their feet. But Odysseus
 gazed on the flashings of their feet, and was amazed in his heart. 265
 But Demodocus, as he played the lyre, struck up a beautiful song
 About the love of Ares and fair-crowned Aphrodite.

Then comes the tale of Ares and Aphrodite, after which the poem goes on as follows:

ταῦτ' ἄρ' αἰοῖδος ἄειδε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 τέρπετ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀκούων ἠδὲ καὶ ἄλλοι
 Φαίηκες δολιχῆρετμοι, ναυικλυτοὶ ἄνδρες.
 Ἀλκίνοος δ' Ἴλιον καὶ Λαοδάμαντα κέλευσε 370
 μουνάξ ὀρχήσασθαι, ἐπεὶ σφισὶν οὔ τις ἔριζεν.
 οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν σφαίραν καλὴν μετὰ χερσὶν ἔλοντο,
 πορφυρέην, τὴν σφιν Πόλυβος ποίησε δαΐφρων,
 τὴν ἕτερος ῥίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα κιόεντα
 ἰδνωθεὶς ὀπίω· ὁ δ' ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὑψός' ἀερωθεὶς 375
 ῥηϊδίως μεθέλεσκε, πάρος ποσὶν οὐδας ἰκέσθαι.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ σφαίρη ἄν' ἰθὺν πειρήσαντο,
 ὀρχείσθην δὴ ἔπειτα ποτὶ χθονὶ πούλυβοτείρη
 ταρφέ' ἀμειβομένω· κούροι δ' ἐπελήκεον ἄλλοι
 ἑσταότες κατ' ἀγῶνα, πολὺς δ' ὑπὸ κόμπῳ ὀρώρει. 380

That was what the famous singer sang; but Odysseus
 Delighted in his mind as he listened, as did the other
 Long-oared Phaeacians, men famous for the ships.

Alcinous ordered Halios and Laodamas 370

To dance on their own, since nobody rivalled them
 And so when they took up a beautiful ball in their hands,
 A purple ball, which wise Polybus made for them;
 One of them would throw it at the shadowy clouds
 Twisting backwards; the other, picking it up from the ground from above 375
 Easily took it, before reaching the ground with his feet.
 But when they had made trial of the ball up aloft,
 Then they danced on the fertile earth
 Frequently changing their movements; the other young men clapped
 As they stood in the competition area, and a great shout arose. 380

What sort of performance is envisaged here? Many scholars have assumed that Demodocus sings to accompany the dancers.³⁰ This was also the view of Athenaeus:

οἶδε δὲ ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ τὴν πρὸς ὤδῃν ὄρχησιν· Δημοδόκου γοῦν ἄδοντος
 κοῦροι προθηβῆαι ὠρχοῦντο· καὶ ἐν τῇ Ὀπλοποιίᾳ δὲ παιδὸς κιθαρίζοντος
 ἄλλοι ἐναντίοι μολπῆ τε ὄρχηθμῶ τε ἔκκαιρον.

The poet is also familiar with dancing to the accompaniment of song. At least, youths dance as Demodocus sings; and in the Making of the Arms a boy plays the cithara while others opposite him frolic in song and dance.

Ath. 1, 15 d

This has been contested, however, since it is not explicitly stated by the poet; according to Garvie, for example, “Demodocus’ song . . . should be seen as an

³⁰ So e.g. Franklin 2013, 220: “the combination of *kitharoidia* with narrative content accompanied by dance is already attested in the Demodokos songs of *Odyssey* 8”.

interlude in the dancing.”³¹ He argues that “ἀνεβάλλετο (266) suggest that Demodocus’ song marks a new beginning, after the dance has ended”, and that “at 367-8 Odysseus is said to enjoy Demodocus’ song, but there is no mention of the dancers, whereas at 382-4 it is the other way round.” One the other hand, nothing in the text says that the dancers stop when Demodocus begins to sing; and Odysseus’ appreciation of the song at 367-8 does not illuminate the issue either way, since his appreciation of the dancers has already been expressed (264-5) and the poet might want at this juncture to emphasise his particular wonder at Demodocus. On the other hand again, if the dancing did continue during the song, it presumably was less exciting than the dancing before the song, which is described in dramatic terms; such high intensity dancing does not seem (at least to my aesthetic) suitable for the kind of narrative that we find in Demodocus’ tale. Yet no shift of tempo is indicated, and it would be strange for something like this not to be mentioned at all.³²

The point remains unclear, and so we must be on our guard against the frequent references to this passage that simply state that the dancing accompanies the song without indicating that this is not stated explicitly and is a far from compelling inference. Whether or not the singing accompanies the dancing, there is nevertheless a strong association between them, since they take place in the same place as part of the same occasion, and both excite Odysseus’ wonder. Alcinous himself twice connects the two, in his phrases κίθαρίς τε χοροί τε (248) and καὶ ὄρχηστῶν καὶ ἀοιδῶν (253).

In the days of analytic scholarship it was once argued that Demodocus’ song is an interpolation, although I am unaware of any scholars who entertain such a

³¹ Garvie 1994, 291. So also West 2014, 135: Demodocus’ song “does not combine with the dancing, as if the dancers were accompanying it with mimetic movements.”

³² Thus D’Alfonso 1994, 45.

possibility today.³³ More recently Martin West has argued that this episode is an interpolation by the poet himself.³⁴ It is a fascinating idea that we may be in a position to observe the compositional process of the poet of the *Odyssey*. If West is right – though his case would be hard to prove – we learn more about the creation of the *Odyssey* as we have it. But it makes no difference to how we interpret the performance that takes place in the episode. Even if the song had originally been conceived by the poet as a separate work, we do not know how he envisaged its performance should be imagined in that different context. And once he slotted it into the Demodocus episode, he would have known that the manner of its performance as understood by the audience of the poem would be determined by the poem as it was now fashioned; he could not have expected an audience to deduce that a part of book eight was a later addition, and on that basis to come to a conclusion about an aspect of the work that was not evident from the text as a whole.

West goes on to say: “So evidence for a soloist with a cithara accompanying non-singing dancers but singing himself reduces to that sentence in the *Suda* about the origin of Stesichorus’ name”,³⁵ but that is far from the only possible interpretation of the *Suda* passage.³⁶ Nevertheless, he does not rule it out as the medium of

³³ Thiersch 1821, 63–9. For subsequent discussion see D’Alfonso 1994, 42–8.

³⁴ West 2014, 135 (the *Odyssey* poet “has seen fit to prolong the entertainment by inserting a complete song from his own repertoire”), 2015, 79–80; Finglass, Kelly 2015b, 14 remark that this idea is “bound to elicit further discussion”.

³⁵ West 2015, 80.

³⁶ So in the view of Power 2010, 236, the *Suda*’s statement “communicates, in reductive terms, the fact that Stesichorus had ‘choralized’—or, given its distant origins in choral song and dance, ‘rechoralized’—the *kitharôidia* of his day. That is, he was among the first to marry the ambitious musical techniques, including the use of a technically advanced concert *kithara*, as well as the more

performance used by Stesichorus, pointing to the χοροί that he mentioned as a feature of Sparta, and noting that this may therefore have reflected the occasion when he performed there. He refers, however, to fr. S166, 31 PMGF, which is generally regarded as a poem by Ibycus, not Stesichorus.³⁷ West has recently restated his case in favour of attributing this poem to Stesichorus, and has persuaded Simon Hornblower³⁸ and (at least in part) Christopher Pelling,³⁹ but in my view the evidence remains on the side of Ibycean authorship.⁴⁰ Whatever view we take of that question, the mention of χοροί does not imply choral performance for that poem; nor does West place weight on the point.

We turned to *Odyssey* book eight because Wilamowitz believed that it provided a model for the delivery of Stesichorus' poems. We now see that it is not clear which style of performance is actually described there; and although other passages in epic certainly portray dance accompanied by a singer, they do not involve narrative myth, and so are not comparable to Stesichorus' case.⁴¹ So if we do posit that Stesichorus was a solo singer of mythological narrative accompanied by a silent,

Panhellenically oriented, long-form heroic narratives of the citharodic *nomoi* to the triadic song-and-dance format of choral *mousikê*, which previously had drawn largely from epichoric heroic and cultic traditions, as we see in the fragments of Alcman.” At any rate, we do not need to take the *Suda*'s statement as an uncontested claim that Stesichorus was a citharode who sang to the accompaniment of dancers.

³⁷ West 1969, 142-9 = 2011-13, II 98-106 (with supplementary note on p. 106). See West 2015, 70 with note 19 for an account of the positions taken by scholars, which I supplement in the next two notes below.

³⁸ Hornblower 2015, 234 (on 503-68); 196 (on 354).

³⁹ Pelling 2015 (“the odds seem to me about 50-50” between the two authors).

⁴⁰ I hope to discuss the authorship of this fragment more fully elsewhere.

⁴¹ For the passages in question see D'Alfonso 1994, 46-7.

dancing chorus, we must admit that there is no archaic parallel for such an arrangement. This is not an enticing prospect, and it seems preferable to retain the hypothesis that his poetry was performed by a chorus that both sang and danced.

Over the past couple of generations, the case against choral performance has been made from a different angle, stimulated by the publication of P.Oxy 2617 in 1967.⁴² That papyrus revealed that Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* contained at least 1,300 lines.⁴³ This information should have been less remarkable than it was, since it was already known from the quoted fragments that both Stesichorus' *Helen* and his *Oresteia* contained (at least) two books, and thus quite possible a line total somewhere in the low thousands.⁴⁴ But it prompted Spencer Barrett, in an influential paper delivered the following year at the Triennial conference of the Hellenic and Roman Societies, to make the following declaration:

And now I would like first to say very briefly something that I have felt for a long time and become convinced of after working on these fragments: that I do not believe for a moment that this was choral lyric, as it has so often been said to be. Choral presentation of a work of this kind and this length would surely be intolerable. It will have been delivered, surely, like the epic on which it is based, by a single performer, accompanying himself doubtless on the lyre.⁴⁵

⁴² Lobel 1967.

⁴³ We know this thanks to a stichometric letter N opposite one of the lines of the papyrus (= Stes. fr. 25, 36 F.).

⁴⁴ See Finglass 2014a, 19.

⁴⁵ Barrett 1968, 22-3. Although Barrett's paper was not published until 2007, it had, and has, a great impact on all subsequent Stesichorean scholarship by influencing the ideas of those who did disseminate their ideas in writing.

So too Martin West a little later argued as follows, in the context of a longer discussion of how Stesichorus' poems were performed:

Modern writers assume almost universally that since Stesichorus composed in triads, he wrote for a chorus. The assumption is groundless . . . , and our new knowledge of the length of his poems makes it all the more troublesome.⁴⁶

Malcolm Davies in his discussion of choral and monodic poetry took a similar view:

Perhaps the most important consequence of our increased knowledge of this poet is the growing perception that in the light of his epic-style and immensely long narrative poems he is unlikely to have been a choral lyric <poet>. The perpetual association of him with Homer in antiquity points in the direction of monody.⁴⁷

In the course of her discussion of Pindaric performance, Mary Lefkowitz argues that Stesichorus' poetry was delivered by a soloist accompanied by dancers:⁴⁸

The type of performance in which a bard's song is accompanied by dancing seems particularly suitable for longer poems that could not easily be recited by a choir, like Stesichorus' long lyric poem about Oedipus' family, or his *Geryoneis*. Since ancient scholars characterize Stesichorus as a soloist in the Homeric tradition, the *choros* in his name . . . signifies not choir, but *dance* . . . That the term *stesichoros* refers to the

⁴⁶ West 1971, 309 = 2011-13, II 89. I agree with West that triadic composition proves nothing about performance either way.

⁴⁷ Davies 1988, 53.

⁴⁸ Lefkowitz 1988, 2-3 = 1991, 192-3.

dance is shown by a verse inscription on a red-figured vase, where Muses or Graces are said to be “leading ... a hymn that sets that dance going” (στηρίχορον ὕμνον ἄγοικαι),⁴⁹ Beazley, in his notes on this inscription, compared the opening lines of Pindar’s *Pythian* 1, where dancers listen to the *phorminx*, and the singers (*aidoi*) obey the opening bars of the “preludes that lead the dance” (ἀγησιχόρων προοιμίων).⁵⁰

Another voice was more sceptical of this trend, however:

Stesichorus’ name itself might make you think that his songs were choral. However, late twentieth-century opinion is sceptical about choral performance for long Stesichorean narratives such as the *Geryoneis*, and imagines the poet as a *kitharodos*, singing and accompanying himself, while the rôle of the chorus, if there was one, would have been limited to dancing. This position should never have come to dominate, and D’Alfonso’s *Stesicoro e la performance . . .* treats it with the scepticism it deserves.⁵¹

Rutherford is referring to D’Alfonso 1994, a book-length discussion of the question of Stesichorean performance which favours the choral hypothesis; this publication and

⁴⁹ This phrase is found on a papyrus roll from a school scene on an Attic kylix from Naucratis in the style of Duris, from the first half of the fifth century (Lyr. Adesp. fr. 938 (c) PMG), a colour image of which can be found on the dust jacket of Finglass, Kelly 2015. But the translation “leading the hymn that sets up the chorus” (as given on the back flap of that dust jacket) seems equally possible, with the hymn personified as the leader not just of one aspect of the chorus’s activity, but of the whole chorus itself.

⁵⁰ Beazley 1948, 338.

⁵¹ Rutherford 1999, 555.

Cingano 1993 have been influential on subsequent Italian scholarship, but have not yet had as wide an impact as they deserve, especially in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, which regrettably often overlooks works in languages other than English.

Nearly half a century has passed since Barrett delivered his paper, and yet in the meantime scholars who agree with him have not attempted to flesh out exactly why and how it is impossible for a chorus to coordinate the performance of a long sung lyric. So much is uncertain here that it seems inappropriate to pronounce a sure verdict. How many performers were there? A relatively small group might have been easier to coordinate; on the other hand, a larger body would have afforded more opportunities for performers to rest, as different subsections took over the singing and dancing to provide respite for their fellows and variation for the audience. Perhaps a non-dancing soloist – maybe Stesichorus himself – was involved in the delivery; perhaps individual parts corresponding to the words of different characters were assigned to individual chorus-members. Was Stesichorus accompanied on his travels⁵² by a troupe of professional chorus-members who would learn the lyric and dance moves for each song, or did he train (‘set up’) a local chorus in each city that he visited?⁵³ Or did he have with him a few professional choral performers who embedded themselves among a predominantly local group to raise the overall level of performance while keeping Stesichorus’ expenses lower than if he had brought an entire chorus with him? Did Stesichorus’ practice in this regard change over time, as he became more of a star and more wealthy, and thus better able to afford to transport

⁵² For Stesichorus as a travelling poet see Finglass 2014a, 23-9.

⁵³ Burkert 1987, 51-2 = 2001-11, 1 209-11 = Cairns 2001, 106-8 argues for mobile choruses; Carey 2015, 51 note 24 calls this “an unnecessary refinement”, claiming that “with the exception of theoric performance the norm seems to be a combination of external poet and local chorus.” Note however the travelling chorus from Messana referred to by Pausanias, mentioned above.

his own chorus? How complicated were the dance moves and (if the choruses sang) the lyrics that had to be mastered by the performers?⁵⁴ How long did they have to learn them? Were there pauses between sections of the song, and if so, how long were they?

We cannot answer any of these questions for certain. Yet all of them impact on the ability of a chorus, whatever its composition, to undertake the performance of a substantial lyric song. The one genre where lengthy choral song did feature is not promising for those who would deny choral performance of Stesichorus' poetry, as Anne Pippin Burnett points out:

we are . . . ignorant about the limits of choral endurance. We are told that 1,500 lines would have been beyond the performance powers of a group of moving singers, but this is mere assertion. What we know is that an Attic chorus could dance up to 2,000 lines in a tragic day, and then go on to the exertions of the satyr band . . . Indeed, given a very long song, it is as easy to suppose moving performers as a single stationary one, for an untrammeled dancer . . . whose voice had only to join those of his companions, would hardly have envied a citharode who had to stand or sit for hours, singing at the top of his voice and playing on his heavy instrument. And, finally, we know of no occasion in the early West to which an extended static aria would have been appropriate, whereas there were many Western festivals demanding the danced music associated with public cult.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The metres, at least, are on the whole much less complicated than those of Pindar and the tragedians (see Finglass 2014a, 47-52); it is a plausible if unprovable hypothesis that the lyrics and dance moves were simpler too.

⁵⁵ Burnett 1988, 132-3.

We might add that although the chorus of tragedy was not singing for a thousand lines and more at a time, they had far more metrical forms to memorise for their songs, and consequently far more choreography to master.

All these imponderables render unsatisfactory the claim that because Stesichorus' poems were long, they must have been performed by a soloist, either without choral participation or with a silent, dancing chorus. To make that confident an assertion, we would need answers to the above questions that clearly excluded the possibility of choral involvement. Without such answers, we are left with the evidence discussed at the beginning of this chapter – evidence that existed long before the discovery of the papyri, and which retains its value today. And among this evidence is the name that is perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the choral dance and choral song through which, in my view, his poetry was depicted: Στησίχορος.

Abbreviations and Literature

Adler	Adler A. (ed.), 1928-38: <i>Suidae Lexicon</i> , 5 vols., Leipzig.
CEG	Hansen P. A. (ed.), 1983-9: <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> , 2 vols., Berlin, New York.
Ercoles	Ercoles M. (ed.), 2013: <i>Stesicoro. Le testimonianze antiche</i> , Bologna.
F.	Finglass P. J. (ed.), 2014: <i>Text and critical apparatus</i> , in Davies, Finglass 2014, 93-205.
Holwerda	Holwerda D. (ed.), 1982: <i>Scholia in Aristophanem, Pars II. Scholia in Vespas</i> ,

- Pacem, Aves et Lysistratam; Fasc. II, continens Scholia vetera et recentiora in Aristophanis Pacem*, Groningen.
- Latte Latte K. (ed.), 1953-66: *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* [A–O only], 2 vols., Copenhagen.
- M–W Merkelbach R., and West M. L. (eds.), 1967, 1990: *Fragmenta Hesiodica*, Oxford, supplemented in *Fragmenta selecta*, ap. F. Solmsen (ed.), *Hesiodi Theogonia Opera et Dies Scutum*³, Oxford.
- PCG Kassel R., Austin C. (eds.), 1983-2001: *Poetae Comici Graeci*, 8 vols., Berlin, New York.
- PMG Page D. L. (ed.), 1967: *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962, corrected reprint.
- PMGF Davies M. (ed.), 1991-: *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 1 vol. to date, Oxford.
- SEG Hondius J. J. E. *et al.* (eds.), 1923-: *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 61 vols. to date, Leiden, Amsterdam, Boston.
- S–M Snell B., Maehler H. (eds.), 1987-9: *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis*, 2 vols., Leipzig, and *idem* (eds.), 1970: *Bacchylides*, Leipzig.
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