

*Performing the Fabric of Song.
Textile Technology and Imagery in Ancient Greek Poetry and Poetics.
An Interdisciplinary Study in Terminology and Metaphors.*

Project by Giovanni Fanfani

This research project attempts a systematic investigation of the relevance of textile technology and crafts in shaping the archaic Greek conception of poetry-making, one that combines the double dimension of performance and composition.

The lexicon of archaic Greek epic and choral lyric poetics (7th-5th centuries BC) displays a significant textile background which, beyond matters of etymology, seems to convey the idea of the conceptual analogy drawn between the weaving of a fabric and the performance of poetry.

This project will apply to a selection of poetic samples the (metaphorical) frame of the (archaeologically reconstructed) ancient weaving technology, in order to test the hypothesis of the textile-like structure of the archaic Greek song.

The structure of this project is threefold; the three blocks aim at providing:

1. a 'textile-philological' analysis of the structure of some patterns of Greek epic and choral lyric poetry as mirroring the structure and the processes of ancient weaving;
2. a systematic investigation of a significant sample of ancient Greek textile terminology – namely, the lexicon related to the warp-weighted loom and its implements: the analysis of textile terminology will shed light on the figurative meanings and on the metaphors for song-making, that this lexical series has produced;
3. a reassessment of the repertoire of textile imagery in archaic Greek poetry through the creation of a typology, i.e. different textile metaphors associated with specific crafts (weaving, spinning, plaiting), each conveying the idea of a different poetic performance or compositional structure (epic, lyric).