Ekphrasis at the forge and the forging of ekphrasis: the 'shield of Achilles' in Graeco-Roman word and image

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Ekphrasis at the forge and the forging of ekphrasis: the 'shield of Achilles' in Graeco-Roman word and image

MICHAEL SQUIRE

The eighteenth book of the *Iliad* will be familiar to anyone interested in the history of Western visual–verbal relations. Achilles, the hero of the poem, sits on the Trojan shore, mourning his beloved Patroclus; as though Patroclus's death were not grievance enough, Hector has stripped Patroclus's corpse of its armour — the ancestral weapons which Achilles had lent him. Thetis, Achilles's divine mother, weeps at her son's distress. She cannot bring Patroclus back from the dead. But she can commission new armour for him: 'do not enter into the strife of Ares until you see me arriving here with your own eyes', she tells him; 'for in the morning, at the rising of the sun, I shall return bringing fair armour from the lord Hephaestus' (*Il.* 18.134–37).

What follows is not just a description of the epic armour crafted for Achilles by Hephaestus, but Western literature's earliest and most influential attempt at forging images out of words. After Thetis has arrived at Olympus and presented her case, the smith-god promises to fulfil her request (18.368–467). With hammer and tongs in hand, Hephaestus sets about making a work 'such that anyone among the multitude of men will marvel, whoever looks upon it' (vv.466–67). Towards the end of the description, the poet tells of a corselet, helmet and greaves (vv.609–13). But the bulk of the account is reserved for a 'great and mighty shield' (vv.478, 609), evoked in some 130 verses, and studded with a panoply of poetic-pictorial portrayals (vv.478–608).

Homer's grand evocation of the shield of Achilles has attracted a formidable bibliography.[1] Following Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's discussion in his 1766 essay *Laocoön, or An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (*Laokoön, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*), the passage has played a fundamental role in defining the proper post-Enlightenment '*Grenzen*' or 'boundaries' between painting and poetry.[2] The end of the twentieth century, and the rise of poststructuralist criticism about word–image relations in particular, brought about a new resurgence of interest. On the one hand, scholars of comparative literature looked afresh at the passage, casting it as the prototypical Western attempt at ekphrasis — that is to say, of a 'verbal representation of a visual representation'.[3] On the other, classical philologists have concentrated on the passage's place within the narrative texture of the poem, as well as its impact on classical traditions of set-piece literary description.[4]

For all their shared interest in the description of Achilles's shield, however, classical and comparative literary scholars have engaged in something of an academic tug of war. Both sides have acknowledged the significance of the Homeric passage. But some classicists have been suspicious of comparative literary claims about its status as prototypical 'ekphrasis' (literally a 'speaking out', according to its ancient Greek etymology).[5] In an influential article published in this journal fourteen years ago, Ruth Webb led the offensive to rethink the term and its use in antiquity.[6] Where 'word and image' studies have tended to stress the continuities between ancient and modern critical traditions, Webb argued, ancient rationalisations of ekphrasis had little to do with artistic subject matter, and everything to do with a culturally contingent 'set of ideas about language and its impact on the listener'. 'Not only is ekphrasis not conceived as a form of writing dedicated to the "art object", but it is not even restricted to objects: it is a form of vivid evocation that may have as its subject-matter anything — an action, a person, a place, a battle, even a crocodile'.[7]

Webb's comments have led scholars to rethink numerous aspects of ancient rhetorical theory, and in a host of stimulating and fruitful ways. In my view, however, there has been an unfortunate side-effect. While concentrating on the supposed gap between 'ancient' and 'modern' traditions of theorising visual and verbal representation, there remains a danger of overlooking certain proximities (and indeed continuities) between them. It is here that the present article intends to deliver its gentle corrective. Returning afresh to antiquity's paradigmatic attempt to capture vision in language, and rethinking the reception of the Homeric shield in both Graeco-Roman art and text, this article aims not only to describe the passage's intermedial complexity, but also to sketch its enduring influence. By forging in words its description of Hephaestus forging the shield, the poet of the *Iliad* also forged an intellectual paradigm for figuring visual and verbal relations — one that permeated ancient literary and literary critical traditions, and by extension the Western cultural imaginary at large.

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With this aim in mind, the article proceeds in four interconnected parts. First, I revisit the Homeric description itself, examining its various gestures towards intermediality. My specific aim will be to draw out the passage's nascent philosophy of both visual and verbal replication: on the one hand, to show how the passage theorises the making of poetic and pictorial objects as parallel acts of fabrication; on the other, to demonstrate the ways in which it suggests an incongruity between words and images. While purporting to unite different media in its marvellous make-believe frame, the description also posits an embryonic rivalry between them: as we shall see (or rather read), the shield of Achilles collapses the respective resources of words and images only to insist upon some sort of phenomenological distinction.

The second and third sections proceed to explore some subsequent Greek and Latin literary responses. My objective here is not to catalogue every literary engagement, nor to discuss different generic appropriations; indeed, the influence of the passage would make that an impossible task. Rather, my concern is with the rise of literary critical traditions for theorising visual and verbal replication and their respective debts to the Homeric description of Achilles's shield. I begin by returning to this term 'ekphrasis' itself, as defined among Imperial Greek handbooks of rhetoric, or *Progymnasmata*. Although these later critical analyses make only minimal reference to the shield of Achilles, discussing the phenomenon of ekphrasis in relation to a much broader set of examples and subjects, they nonetheless draw upon the Homeric critical frame. As rhetorical trope, ekphrasis has a Homeric lineage: the rhetorical dialectic between 'seeing' and 'hearing' around which the *Progymnasmata* define ekphrasis can only be understood in terms of the topos's literary archaeology, as ultimately crafted in *Iliad* 18.

To demonstrate the Homeric passage's influence on the rhetoric of ekphrasis, the article's third section broadens its perspective beyond the *Progymnasmata* alone. As we shall see, all manner of later Greek and Latin texts commented upon the underlying ekphrastic stakes of the Homeric description. At the same time, ancient authors make reiterative reference to the passage as the essential prototype for literary evocations of the visible, regardless of their subject. I focus here on one ultrasophisticated Greek example, probably written in the late third century AD, in the wake of the so-called 'Second Sophistic'. Amid the Younger Philostratus's descriptions of an alleged gallery of pictures (known as the *Imagines*, according to its Latin title), the author proceeds to evoke a make-believe painting after the Homeric text. The *Imagines* takes the Homeric paradigm of ekphrasis, in other words, and re-represents it within a second-degree recession of visual–verbal replication: words are used to figure a purported image which itself derives from an epic description of purported imagery.

While the article's first, second and third parts examine the actual text of the Homeric ekphrasis, as well as ancient literary responses to it, my fourth and final section examines Homer's verbal image of a visual image in reverse gear. Greek and

Roman artists delighted in turning Homer's words about images (back?) into images about words: by materialising the textual description, they wrestled with questions of what the shield and its ekphrasis might actually *look* like. Such replicative games showcase the amazing sophistication with which ancient artists and critics theorised visual–verbal relations. What strikes me as so significant about this phenomenon, though, is the knowing recourse to the Homeric prototype in the first place: ultimately, it was Homer who could be credited with forging questions about visual–verbal intermediality, and at the very dawn of the Greek literary tradition.

I. Ekphrasis forged: words on images

I begin, then, with Homer and the description of the shield itself (18.478–608), reproduced as an appendix at the end of this article. We should say from the outset that we are told remarkably little about the shield's spatial and figurative layout. Hephaestus is said to 'adorn the shield cunningly in every part … making many adornments with cunning skill' (πάντοσε δαιδάλλων … ποίει δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσιν, vv.479, 482). While the shield is described as comprising 'five layers' (πέντε … πτύχες, v.481), however, these hardly correspond to the description that follows: in visual terms, we are offered only the vaguest details as to what the shield might look like. As Michael Lynn-George concludes, 'the shield's structure combines a spatial indeterminacy with a fracturing of space into a multiplicity of different, separate sites — a plurality of places combined with a certain placelessness'.[8]

Despite the elusiveness of the shield's overall visual appearance, the poet proceeds to verbalise the individual images in elaborate detail. The whole world finds its counterpart within the fictitious fabric of the shield:[9] there are the earth and heavens (sea, sun, moon and the four constellations: vv.483–99); a city at peace (with wedding procession and a law-court scene: vv.490–508); a city at war (with siege, ambush and battle: vv.509–40); a series of agricultural vignettes (the ploughing of a field, a harvest, a vineyard, a herding of cattle and a sheepfold: vv.541–89); finally, there is a scene of joyful dancing (vv.590–606), before the closing description of the 'rivers of Ocean' that encircle the outermost rim, returning us to the opening image of the sea (vv.607–8).[10] Table 1 — adapted from Calvin S. Byre's analysis of the description in 1992 — provides one attempt to delineate the different parts.[11]

The structure and content of the description have been the subject of all manner of different literary analyses. Some critics have focused on the framing of the passage within the poem:[12] if the description provides a pause from the overriding narrative, the scenes emblazoned on the shield at once encompass war and figure an alternative to it (even as the shield itself serves as both a military and narrative instrument for the epic's bloody end). Other scholars, following Keith Stanley's landmark study of 1993, have analysed the passage's intricate substructure, using this to elucidate the oral composition of Homeric poetry at large.[13] Archaeologists, by contrast, have turned to the passage

Table 1. Structural framework of the Homeric description of the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.483–608).

The Homeric description of Achilles's shield:
1. Earth, sky, sea, sun, moon, and constellations (vv. 483–89)
2. Two cities:
   (a) A city at peace: wedding processions with dancing and music, a lawsuit in the agora (vv. 490–508)
   (b) A city at war: a siege, some inhabitants marching out to ambush their enemy's herdsmen, a battle (vv. 509–40)
3. A field being ploughed: the ploughmen are offered wine whenever they reach the end of the field (vv. 541–49)
4. A king's domain: labourers harvesting the crop, the king silently looking on, a meal being prepared (vv. 550–60)
5. A vineyard: young men and women gathering grapes to the accompaniment of a boy's music (vv. 561–72)
6. A herd of cattle: two lions attacking one of the bulls, herdsmen and their dogs pursuing them (vv. 573–86)
7. A sheep-pasture (vv. 587–89)
8. A dancing floor filled with joyful dancers (vv. 590–606)
9. The Ocean around the shield's rim (vv. 607–8).

to reconstruct visual modes in the Late Geometric and Archaic period: one approach has been to use the passage as evidence for the influence of 'Orientalising' iconography from the East;[14] another, to try to reconstruct the 'original' shield's appearance on the basis of the description.[15]

Rather than add to this general bibliography, or indeed compare this shield description to that of other objects in the *Iliad*,[16] my specific concern here is with the issue of visual–verbal replication. The point I wish to emphasise is that, through its inherently complex contemplation of poetry in relation to imagery, the Homeric description helped define intellectual agendas for conceptualising things seen in relation to things said. When approached from this angle, what is so striking about Homer's verbal evocation of purported visual prototype is its play with different levels of replication — its paradigmatic concern with what James Heffernan nicely labels 'representational friction'.[17] If image and text enshrine a promise of exact duplication, the very medium raises questions about replicative failure: the forged object both does and does not capture the subjects depicted, just as the forged verbal evocation of that object both does and does not capture its visual referent.

The overlaying of different representational registers is something that Andrew Becker discussed in his important 1995 analysis of the passage.[18] While the text offers a verbal representation of the visual representation of the shield, Becker argues, it is also emblazoned with a whole host of additional internal recessions. The concept of wonder, awe and amazement — *thauma* in Greek — is particularly important here. Right from the start, the shield is figured as a wonderwork and as a work of wonder. Itself intended to replace Achilles's old armour (a 'wonder to be seen', or *thauma idesthai*, according to v.83), the new shield is described by Hephaestus as something that will in turn inspire *thauma* among future generations (vv.466–67):

… οἶά τις αὖτε
ἀνθρώπων πολέων θαυμάσσεται, ὅς κεν ἴδηται.
(… such that anyone among the multitude of men will marvel, whoever looks upon it.)

What is so wondrous about this aesthetic framework of wonder is its own replication amid the shield's described scenes. In the description of the first city at peace, we hear of a group of women who are themselves said to marvel at the scenes before them (θαύμαζον, v.496). Later, in the context of the scene of ploughing, we hear about an additional wonder of replicative make-believe (vv.548–49):

ἣ δὲ μελαίνετ᾽ ὄπισθεν, ἀρηρομένη δὲ ἐῴκει
χρυσείη περ ἐοῦσα· τὸ δὴ περὶ θαῦμα τέτυκτο.
(And the field was growing dark behind them [the ploughmen], and it looked like earth that had been ploughed, even though it was of gold: such was the outstanding marvel that was forged.)

According to the poet's own vivid evocation here, it is the verisimilitude of the image that makes it so miraculous. The *thauma* of the wondrous description of the shield is not only its recession of replicative levels, but also its associated capacity to seem what it is not: although crafted in one medium, the (description of the) shield looks as though it has been forged from another.[19] 'By explicitly noting the difference between the medium of visual representation (gold) and its referent (earth)', as James Heffernan writes, 'Homer implicitly draws our attention to the *friction* between the fixed forms of visual art and the narrative thrust of his words'.[20]

This 'slippage' of medium and recession of replicative levels are of the utmost importance. For all the vividness of the described scenes, audiences are reiteratively reminded of the medium's metal materiality. Quite apart from the numerous verbs of melding and making, the verses recurrently emphasise the metallic mediation of the scenes depicted — the use of bronze, tin, silver and gold (e.g. vv.474–45, 480, 517, 549, 562, 563, 564, 574, 577, 598), and on one occasion even blue enamel (κυανέην, v.564). To my mind, the very emphasis on visual medium draws attention to the illusion and artifice that the replication involves — in terms of both the shield's own depictions, and the make-believe of poetic language as a medium for depicting that shield in words. 'Homer never forgets that he is representing representation itself', as James Heffernan writes; '… he bears continual witness to the Daedalian power, complexity, and verisimilitude of visual art even as he aspires to rival that art in language that both magnifies and represents it'.[21]

The Homeric interest in medium/mediality relates to a still more amazing aspect of its verbal description. For even within the metallic scenes described, second-degree representations abound: we encounter images within images, as indeed metals within metals. Take the following vignette of Ares and Athena, described as venturing into battle in the context of the 'city at war' (vv.516–19):

> … ἦρχε δ᾽ ἄρά σφιν Ἄρης καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
> ἄμφω χρυσείω, χρύσεια δὲ εἵματα ἕσθην,
> καλὼ καὶ μεγάλω σὺν τεύχεσιν, ὥς τε θεώ περ,
> ἀμφὶς ἀριζήλω· λαοὶ δ᾽ ὑπ᾽ ὀλίζονες ἦσαν.
> (. . . and they were led by Ares and Pallas Athena, both of them in gold, and gold too were the clothes which they wore. They were both fair and tall in their armour (as befits gods), conspicuous among the rest, and the people underneath were smaller.)

Not only are the two gods said to be rendered in gold on this part-golden shield, they are also described as wearing golden clothing. Within this poetic replication of a forged artistic object, then, exactly where are the boundaries between reality and replication? The fact that this detail comes in the context of two armed divinities only adds to that complexity. Achilles's part-golden armour is itself emblazoned with further images of armour in gold.[22]

To my mind, such a *mise-en-abyme within* the described object throws into relief the fictitious artifice of the description, which itself mediates the shield through the forged material of its language. This helps make sense of one of the most complex moments in the passage, in the context of its penultimate described scene (vv.590–606). The lines come towards the end of the description, evoking a dancing floor 'like the one which, in broad Knossos, Daedalus once fashioned for fair-haired Ariadne' (οἷόν ποτ᾽ ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ/Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ, vv.591–92).[23] Quite apart from the recourse to an associated mythological narrative, the very mention of Daedalus — Greek myth's prototypical artist and craftsman — is important within a passage which is itself concerned with artistry and craftsmanship. At the same time, such comparison with 'Daedalus' poignantly resonates with the poet's own 'daedalic' language for verbally delineating the visual nature of the shield. As we have said, the evocation begins with a statement about how the divine maker of the shield 'cunningly adorns it all over' (πάντοσε διαδάλλων, v.479), 'making many cunning things' (ποίει δαίδαλα πολλά, v.482); later, when Thetis delivers the armour to Achilles at the beginning of the next book, we encounter the same terminology once more (δαίδαλα πάντα, *Il.* 19.13). In each case, the language used to frame the description implies an additional comparison between the divine craftsmanship of Hephaestus in making the shield and the mythological craftsmanship represented on it: our 'daedalic' object is emblazoned with objects that in turn remind us of Daedalus's artifice. As if to underscore that significance, the following scene is compared to yet another act of visual making:

according to the description's sole poetic simile, the poet employs a make-believe verbal comparison to artistic production in order to represent what the shield visually looked like. For on the Daedalic dance-floor rendered on the daedalic shield, we find scenes of dancing that are themselves likened to the image of a potter at his wheel (vv.600–01):

> … ὡς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
> ἑζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἴ κε θέῃσιν.
> (. . . just as when a potter sitting by the wheel fitted between his hands makes trial of whether it would run smooth.)

We are dealing here with both literal and metaphorical circles: within a fabricated verbal description of a visual object in the process of fabrication, the poet evokes the scene by comparing it to further scenes of material production.

Examples could be multiplied. But even this preliminary sketch suggests something about the ontological complexity both of the described object, and of the poetic description that mediates it. The description of Achilles's shield, I suggest, materialises a set of concerns about the nature of representation, and about the nature of verbalising representation in words; indeed, the Homeric passage figures these issues within the very fabric of its own verbal replication of the replicated object.

Before proceeding, let me mention two other aspects of the Homeric description of the shield that will prove important to the discussions that follow. The first is a feature emphasised by Lessing in his 1766 essay on *Laocoön*: namely, the way in which the poem suspends the (represented) representation of the shield between something closed and complete on one hand, and something open and ongoing on the other.[24]

> Homer does not paint the shield as finished and complete, but as a shield that is being made [*Homer malet nämlich das Schild nicht als ein fertiges vollendetes, sondern als ein werdendes Schild*]. Thus here too he has made use of that admirable artistic device: transforming what is coexistent in his subject into what is consecutive, and thereby making the living picture of an action out of the tedious painting of an object. We do not see the shield, but the divine master as he is making it. He steps up to the anvil with hammer and tongs, and after he has forged the plates out of the rough, the pictures which he destines for the shield's ornamentation rise before our eyes out of the bronze, one after the other, beneath the finer blows of his hammer. We do not lose sight of him until all is finished. Now the shield is complete, and we marvel at the work. But it is the believing wonder of the eyewitness who has seen it forged.

For Lessing, this compositional aspect is fundamental to the distinction between pictorial space and poetic time.[25] But the point I wish to extract from the *Laocoön* is slightly different: that our understanding of the Homeric shield oscillates between infinite process and finite result. If the passage is structured around continuous action (Hephaestus in the act of making the shield), our view of it is also premised on the idea that the shield comprises a finished product (we look upon an already accomplished object).[26] There is a paradox here in that the

completed object endlessly defers its own completion. True, we hear how Hephaestus 'fashioned', 'forged' and 'made' the shield, a process unambiguously situated in the past. Look at the resulting scenes, however, and we find them projected into a sort of multitemporal limbo, one which encompasses past, present and future.[27] What will happen in the battle over the city at war? Do the herdsmen finally scare off the lions? Who will win the law-court scene in the city at peace?[28] The poet at once imposes time, and yet situates the scenes beyond that temporal imposition.[29]

This brings me to a second feature: namely, the visuality of the described aural object, no less than the aurality of its supposed seeable prototype. As we have said, the shield is defined around its capacity to be seen. Hephaestus talks of subsequent generations 'looking upon' the shield (ὅς κεν ἴδηται, v.467), and the poem later describes the epic reactions of Achilles as he does indeed gaze upon it (*Il.* 19.15–17). For all its recourse to vision, however, the poetic description of the shield encompasses not just things seen, but also things heard: if the words on the shield (promise to) appeal to our eyes, the images of the shield — as mediated through the verbal description — (promise to) speak to our ears.[30]

The shield — or at least the description of the shield — is nothing if not synaesthetic. Indeed, part of the shield's wonder derives from its synchronic appeal to different senses (an aspect that has received remarkably little scholarly attention): so it is, for example, that sickles are described as 'sharp' (ὀξείας, v.551), just as a meadow is depicted as soft (μαλακήν, v.541); by the same logic, the wine offered to the ploughmen is 'honey-sweet' (μελιηδέος, v.545), and there is also 'honey-sweet' fruit elsewhere on display (μελιηδέα, v.568). If the visual imagery appeals to the senses of touch, taste and smell, however, its aural aspects are emphasised above all others. The description evokes and represents all manner of different sounds: there are flutes, lyres and pipes (vv.493–95, 525–26, 569); there is cheering (v.502) and the proclamation of loud-voiced heralds (v.505); there is the tumult of cattle (vv.530–31), the lowing of cows (vv.575, 580), the barking of dogs (v.586), a babbling river (v.576). Within the poetic recitation of the picture, we even hear of pictures that recite poems: sat in the midst of a group of dancers, a boy is shown 'making delightful music with a clear-toned lyre, singing the Linos song with his delicate voice' (vv.569–71).[31] Perhaps most remarkable of all is the description of the *absence* of noise: we hear of (seeing) a king who stands 'in silence' amidst those harvesting his estate (βασιλεὺς δ᾽ ἐν τοῖσι σιωπῇ, v.556).[32]

This conceit of seeing noise and hearing pictures is foundational to the Homeric description and its intermedial fusion of words and pictures. As we shall see, however, it also proved of the utmost significance within subsequent Graeco-Roman concepts of words and images. The Homeric ekphrasis stands at the head of a tradition of theorising speakable sounds in terms of seeable sights, no less than seeable sights in the image of speakable sounds.[33]

II. Ekphrasis theorised: the Graeco-Roman critical tradition

Before proceeding, it is worth acknowledging the problem of talking about 'the poet' of the description, and indeed the folly of reconstructing any single coherent 'Homeric' philosophy of visual–verbal relations. Within a poem that derives from a multi-tiered process of oral composition, we cannot pass judgement on the 'self-referentiality' with which these ontological recessions were conceptualised: like the shield itself, oral poems were both completed product and ongoing process.[34] Whatever the mechanics of the text's production, though, we can nonetheless be sure about its impact in the Archaic Greek world. By at least the end of the sixth century BC, we find a full-scale imitation in an independent miniature hexameter poem, attributed to Hesiod, dealing this time with a 'shield of Heracles'. Not only does that poem imitate and respond to the Iliadic prototype, it also develops the interplay between word and image. Indeed, where the Homeric shield poses as a miracle of sight, the Pseudo-Hesiodic imitation revealingly transforms the Heraclean shield into a miracle of speech — 'a great wonder in the telling' (θαῦμα μέγα φράσσασθ᾽, *Sc.* 218).[35]

The pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield* demonstrates how, even in the Archaic world, the Homeric shield description was already giving rise to a certain tradition of conceptualising sight and sound. According to Plutarch (writing some seven centuries later), it was the sixth-century poet Simonides who first declared that 'painting is silent poetry, and poetry is talking painting'.[36] The sentiment certainly resonated throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, from the works of lyric poets like Pindar, to tragedians like Aeschylus and Euripides (and by extension to numerous philosophical schools).[37] To my mind, though, this 'Simonidean' tradition of theorising painting and poetry ultimately relates to the Homeric description of Achilles's shield. When Plato came to theorise visual–verbal relations in his *Phaedrus*, he had Socrates fall back on the same analogous-cum-rivalrous rapport between words and pictures, based on an ideology of sight and sound: 'the creatures that painting begets stand in front of us as though they were living entities', Socrates concludes; 'ask them a question, however, and they maintain a majestic silence' (καὶ γὰρ τὰ ἐκείνης ἔγγονα ἕστηκε μὲν ὡς ζῶντα, ἐὰν δ᾽ ἀνέρῃ τι, σεμνῶς πάνυ σιγᾷ, Pl. *Phdr.* 275d).

So much for ancient critical traditions of rationalising voice and vision. But what about ancient definitions of 'ekphrasis' specifically: to what extent did the Homeric description influence later definitions of this rhetorical trope?

For all the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Greek literary imitations and critical engagements with *Iliad* 18, the term 'ekphrasis' is not attested until much later in antiquity. The topos is first discussed in the Greek handbooks of rhetoric, or *Progymnasmata*, which circulated in the Greek-speaking Roman world.[38] We know relatively little about the four extant handbooks which analyse ekphrasis, attributed to Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus respectively; indeed,

scholars cannot even agree upon the dates of the most frequently cited examples.[39] Still, we can be sure that the earliest prototypes stretched back to at least the early Roman Empire. Many of the ideas with which the *Progymnasmata* associate ekphrasis were widespread among earlier Latin and Greek writers. Although he never uses the word 'ekphrasis' per se in his first-century AD *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian draws upon the rhetoric of ekphrasis (in particular associated ideas of *energeia*, or 'vividness'); earlier in the first century BC, moreover, we find parallels between the *Progymnasmata* and the writings of Cicero, upon which Quintilian himself certainly drew.[40]

While the authors of different *Progymnasmata* list different ekphrastic subjects, they each fall back on a recurrent rhetorical definition of the trope. Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus all cite the examples of 'deeds', 'characters' and 'places' as suitable material for ekphrastic description.[41] Ultimately, however, each handbook conceptualises ekphrasis in terms of its rhetorical results: the subjects of ekphrasis are of secondary importance to the trope's phenomenological effect. As one repeated formula has it, 'ekphrasis is a descriptive speech which vividly brings the subject before the eyes' (ἔκφρασίς ἐστι λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον).[42] The two 'virtues' of ekphrasis, according to Hermogenes, are *energeia* ('vividness') and *sapheneia* ('clarity'): through these qualities, a listener could arrive at the same inner vision — the same *phantasia* — that the visual stimulus originally brought about in the mind's eye of the artist, speaker or writer.[43] So it is, Hermogenes adds, that 'ekphrasis is an interpretation that almost brings about seeing through hearing' (τὴν ἑρμηνείαν διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς σχεδὸν τὴν ὄψιν μηχανᾶσθαι); the elements of ekphrasis, in the words of Nicolaus, 'bring the subjects of the speech before our eyes and almost make the speakers into spectators' (ὑπ' ὄψιν ἡμῖν ἄγοντα ταῦτα, περὶ ὧν εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι, καὶ μονονοὺ θεατὰς εἶναι παρασκευάζοντα).[44]

In her important discussions of the term and its history, Ruth Webb has drawn attention to the cultural remove between ancient and modern definitions of 'ekphrasis'. Where modern theory uses the Greek term to refer to descriptions of artworks, Webb argues, ancient writers made recourse to it in association with a particular rhetorical ruse, adducing numerous parallels that are far removed from the sorts of texts deemed 'ekphrastic' today: 'the ancient and modern categories of ekphrasis are thus formed on entirely different grounds, and are entirely incommensurate, belonging as they do to radically different systems'.[45] As for the description of artworks specifically, Webb notes that only one later author (Nicolaus) refers to ekphraseis of painting and statues.[46] Most damningly of all, a single handbook (by Theon) cites *Iliad* 18 as an example of ekphrasis, and even then the author adduces the 'Homeric making of arms' (παρὰ… Ὁμήρῳ Ὁπλοποιΐα) as an example of 'ekphraseis of manners' (τρόπων ἐκφράσεις).[47] Webb consequently advocates the 'wider advantages in removing the illusion of antiquity from what is essentially a modern coinage': 'for however divergent the modern definitions of *ekphrasis* are on the surface, they all

have in common the fact that they are modern and are predicated directly or indirectly on a certain set of assumptions about description in particular and about texts in general'.[48]

Webb is of course right to draw attention to the differences between ancient and modern ideas of ekphrasis. As with most correctives, though, there is a risk of going too far.[49] In my view, part of the problem lies in approaching ekphrasis on the basis of the *Progymnasmata* alone. Although the *Progymnasmata* reflect (and indeed helped to formulate) a rationalised view of ekphrasis, the examples they cite represent a particular set of concerns and ideas: their focus on rhetorical performance means that certain sorts of texts, subjects and genres are privileged over and above others.[50] At the same time, I would suggest that the overarching framework in which ekphrasis is discussed by Theon and others nonetheless descends from a literary tradition inaugurated by Homer. The *Progymnasmata* make light of ekphrasis's literary archaeology: as pragmatic rhetorical textbooks, they are hardly concerned with the origins of the phenomenon that they elucidate. Still, I think it impossible to make sense of their conceptualisation of ekphrasis *without* thinking back to the shield of Achilles.

I restrict myself here to three preliminary observations. The first concerns the *Progymnasmata*'s very framing of ekphrasis around the poles of 'hearing' and 'seeing'. As we have said, the Homeric description of Achilles's shield is structured around this same concern with sight and sound, giving rise to the understanding of painting and poetry as at once comparable and contrasting entities. In discussing how ekphrasis brings about seeing through hearing, then, the *Progymnasmata* define the trope according to an ideology that is ultimately indebted to Homer. Second, and no less revealing, is the way in which the *Progymnasmata* pay heed both to the capacity of words to function as images and to their illusory semblance of doing so. In the words of Hermogenes, ekphrasis 'almost' brings about seeing through hearing (σχεδόν), just as Nicolaus writes that ekphrasis 'all but' makes speakers into spectators (μονονού).[51] If, as Simon Goldhill writes, 'rhetorical theory knows well that its descriptive power is a technique of illusion, semblance, of making to appear', this tradition is ultimately descended from the ontological complexities of the Homeric paradigm — the promise and failure of both visual and verbal replication to match reality.[52] Third and finally, it strikes me as significant that at least one author conceptualised ekphrasis around the inexorable quality of *thauma*. After his rhetorical discussion of ekphrasis, Aphthonius ends with an impromptu example. Discussing the Serapeum of Alexandria, above all the 'unbelievable wonder' of its fountain, Aphthonius has recourse to the fundamental terminology of the shield description:[53]

> τὸ μὲν δὴ κάλλος κρεῖττον ἢ λέγειν· εἰ δέ τι παρεῖται, ἐν παρενθήκῃ γεγένηται θαύματος· οἷς γὰρ οὐκ ἦν εἰπεῖν, παραλέλειπται.

(The beauty [of the acropolis at Alexandria] is greater than speech allows. If anything is absent, this has been incidental to our wonder: for those things which are impossible to speak have been omitted.)

This 'thaumatic' framework for approaching ekphrasis arguably harks back to Homeric precedent — to the wonder of the shield's poetic evocation, no less than to the scenes of wonder depicted on the described object.[54]

Look beyond the *Progymnasmata*, and there can be no doubting that the Iliadic model established itself as prototype 'for all later ekphrases of works of art in ancient literature'.[55] Countless Greek and Roman poets had recourse to the shield in their set-piece poetic descriptions of visual objects.[56] But what is striking about so many of these imitations and discussions, at least from the first century BC onwards, is their simultaneous recourse to the *Progymnasmata*'s technical language for defining ekphrasis.

One of the most revealing examples comes in Virgil's description of Aeneas's shield in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* (vv.626–728), written in the 20s BC. Much has been written about this passage, its relation to the Homeric shield, and its larger significance within an epic composed for the Roman emperor Augustus.[57] But what is particularly interesting for our purposes is Virgil's knowing allusion both to Homer and to rhetorical ideas about verbal visualisation. By emphasising the 'non-narratable texture of the shield' (*clipei non enarrabile textum*, 8.625), Virgil begins his description with an apparent nod to rhetorical ideas about ekphrasis: the key word *e-narrabile* offers a sort of Latin adjectival counterpoint for the Greek noun *ek-phrasis*; but where the *Progymnasmata* emphasise the capacity of words to bring about seeing (or at least *almost* to do so), Virgil turns the idea inside out, thanks to his negative *non*. Virgil's evocation may be premised upon the failure of ekphrasis. Ultimately, though, his set-piece description of Aeneas's shield gains significance from the allusions to/diversions from the Homeric ekphrastic original.[58]

A wholly different Latin text, written later in the first century AD, sheds additional light on the literary critical stakes: a letter by Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 5.6.42–44).[59] In a moment of highly self-conscious self-criticism, the author pauses the description of his Etruscan villa to situate his attempt at verbal visualisation alongside other literary paradigms:

> *In summa — cur enim non aperiam tibi uel iudicium meum uel errorem? — primum ego officium scriptoris existimo, titulum suum legat atque identidem interroget se quid coeperit scribere, sciatque si materiae immoratur non esse longum, longissimum si aliquid accersit atque attrahit. Vides quot uersibus Homerus, quot Vergilius arma hic Aeneae Achillis ille describat; breuis tamen uterque est quia facit quod instituit. Vides ut Aratus minutissima etiam sidera consectetur et colligat; modum tamen seruat. Non enim excursus hic eius, sed opus ipsum est. Similiter nos ut parua magnis, cum totam uillam oculis tuis subicere conamur, si nihil inductum et quasi deuium loquimur, non epistula quae describit sed uilla quae describitur magna est. Verum illuc unde coepi, ne secundum legem meam iure reprendar, si longior fuero in hoc in quod excessi.*

(In sum — for why should I not state my opinion, be it right or wrong — I consider that it is a writer's first duty to read his title: to keep asking himself what it is he set out to write, and to realise that the text is not long when he sticks to his subject, but that it becomes too long when he drags in something extraneous to it. You see the number of lines in which Homer and Virgil describe the armour of Achilles and Aeneas; but each author is short, because he carries out what he intended. You see too how Aratus traces and tabulates the infinitesimal stars; but he keeps to the proper limits. For this is not a digression but the work itself. So it is with us — to compare little with large — when we try to set the entire villa before your eyes: provided that our conversation does not introduce anything like a digression, it is not the letter describing the villa but rather the villa described which is great. But to get back to where I began, so that I am not rightly condemned by the terms of my own law, if I linger any longer in this digression.)

There can be no denying Pliny's knowing recourse to rhetorical ekphrastic theory here: his self-declared aim is to 'try and set the entire villa before your eyes' (*totam uillam oculis tuis subicere conamur*), thereby recalling not only Cicero's description of the speaker who 'will put a matter before the eyes through speech' (*rem dicendo subiciet oculis*, *Or.* 139), but also Quintilian's description of rhetorically 'placing something before the eyes' (*illa … sub oculis subiectio*, *Inst.* 9.2.40).[60] But what is most striking about this gesture is the citation of different generic precedents. Pliny names three revealing Greek and Latin parallels for his own ekphrastic project: the Homeric description of the arms of Achilles, the Virgilian description of the arms of Aeneas, and Aratus's description of the stars in his third-century BC *Phaenomena*. As Christopher Chinn observes in his recent discussion, Pliny therefore turns to the shield of Achilles 'not simply as a rhetorical exercise that can draw on authors such as Homer for inspiration, but as a literary trope that begins with Homer'. Inasmuch as 'Pliny's synchronic account posits the Homeric shield of Achilles as the source of all ekphrastic types', he testifies to a 'conception of ekphrasis that is more "modern" than we might have expected'.[61]

III. Ekphrasis squared: words on images on words on images

This has been a necessarily broad-brush survey (and one that could be elaborated almost ad infinitum). Still, I hope to have demonstrated two overriding points about the shield of Achilles and its literary critical reception. First, that Homer's description established itself as antiquity's foundational text for thinking about 'seeing through hearing'. Second, that ancient writers and critics themselves recognised that importance, citing the Homeric shield as the ultimate example of what rhetorical theorists would explicitly label ekphrasis.

Of course, we are unable to call the likes of Virgil and Pliny to the witness-stand; we could never say whether or not they would have used or recognised the word 'ekphrasis' in connection with the Homeric passage. But the notion — now fairly

widespread[62] — that Greek and Roman writers *never* used the word in the context of the Iliadic shield description would be no less mistaken: surviving ancient scholia emphatically *do* refer to the passage in these terms.[63] 'Despite the correct insistence on the breadth of the term's ancient meanings', as Jaś Elsner concludes, 'there is little doubt that Graeco-Roman writers and readers would have recognised the description of art as a paradigmatic example of ekphrasis with a significance relatively close to modern usage'.[64]

This brings us to a larger point about the reception of the *Iliad*, and the reception of the shield of Achilles passage in particular. Ancient authors were in no doubt as to the way in which Homeric ekphrasis figured language after artistic craftsmanship (and vice versa). Discussing the shield of Achilles explicitly, one scholion even tells how the poet:[65]

> … δαιμονίως τὸν πλάστην αὐτὸς διέπλασεν, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἐκκυκλήσας καὶ δείξας ἡμῖν ἐν φανερῷ τὸ ἐργαστήριον.
>
> (… divinely forged the forger, wheeling him out as if onto a stage, and showing us his workshop in full view.)

Quite apart from the residual retreat to the sorts of language used to discuss ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata*,[66] such commentary knowingly collapses the 'forging' of material objects and the 'forging' of poetry. If the passage evokes the god Hephaestus as sculptor (*plasten*), it does so through its own poetic act of sculpting (*dieplasen*): in the hands of the Homeric 'wordsmith', the processes of making images and texts are conceived in parallel.[67]

Other critics went even further, evoking Homer as not only the greatest of poets, but also the greatest of artists.[68] Some, like Lucian in the second century AD, delighted in punning on the Greek verb *graphein* and its cognates, which could connote both writing *and* painting at once: according to this wordplay, Homer was a superlative author and artist alike — 'the best of scribes/painters' (ὁ ἄριστος τῶν γραφέων, *Im.* 8). When it comes to Homer, as Cicero put it a century later, 'we actually *view* his work — not as poetry, but as picture' (*at eius picturam, non poësim uidemus, Tusc.* 5.39.114).

One of the most sophisticated explications of Homer's combined visual–verbal artistry comes in a little-known treatise on the *Life of Homer*, written in the second century and (mistakenly) attributed to Plutarch. The writer tells how all literary genres descend from epic, and how all forms of human knowledge likewise flow from Homeric poetry. Painting, he continues, proves no exception (*Vit. Hom.* 216): [69]

> If one were to say that Homer was a teacher of painting as well, this would be no exaggeration, for as one of the sages said, 'poetry is painting which speaks and painting is silent poetry'. Who before, or who better than Homer, displayed for the mind's eye gods, men, places and various deeds, or ornamented them with the euphony of verse? He sculpted in the medium of language [ἀνέπλασε δὲ τῇ ὕλῃ τῶν λογῶν] all kinds of beasts and in particular the most powerful — lions, boars, leopards; by describing their forms and dispositions and

drawing on human matters for comparison, he demonstrated the special properties of each. He dared also to give the gods human shape. But Homer's Hephaestus, making the shield of Achilles and sculpting in gold the earth, the heavens, the sea, even the mass of the sun and the beauty of the moon, the swarm of stars that crowns the universe, cities of various sorts and fortunes, and moving, speaking creatures — what practitioner of such *techne* does he not seem to excel [τίνος οὐ φαίνεται τέχνης τοιαύτης δημιουργοῦ τεχνικώτερος]?

The appraisal once again delights in the image of Homer as artist as well as poet — as someone who forges objects through the medium of words. In doing so, the author explicitly draws out from Homer the Simonidean comparison of painting and poetry. At the same time, the text also has recourse to the *Progymnasmata* and their technical vocabulary for theorising rhetorical ekphrasis. Homer appeals not just to our physical eyes, we are told, but also to the mind's eye — 'to the imagination of our thoughts' (τῇ φαντασία τῶν νοημάτων). If this concept of *phantasia* recalls the philosophical hues with which ekphrasis is painted in the *Progymnasma*, Pseudo-Plutarch proceeds to elaborate the point explicitly, talking of Homer's ability to craft 'things that we seem to *see* rather than to *hear*' (ὁρωμένοις μᾶλλον ἢ ἀκουομένοις ἔοικε τὰ ποιήματα, *Vit. Hom.* 217). Such commentary only makes sense in connection with grander ancient theories about ekphrasis. What strikes me as so revealing about the analysis, though, is the emphasis on the shield of Achilles in the first place. The shield reads as the ultimate embodiment of a *techne* ('craftsmanship') that is both visual and verbal at once: true to a widespread wordplay in ancient Greek, whereby *techne* pertains to at once artistic and literary virtuosity, Homer's own poetic *techne* is said to parallel the practical *techne* of the smith-god Hephaestus.[70]

Such critical reflections on Homer pave the way to one of the most complex of all ancient literary engagements with the Homeric ekphrasis: namely, that of Philostratus the Younger's *Imagines* (*Im.* 10).[71] Critics and commentators had long drawn attention to the 'pictorial' quality of the Homeric description; indeed, one writer even talks about the 'picture-gallery character' of the description explicitly (πινακογραφικὸς χαρακτήρ), associating the style with that of other 'descriptive' authors (οἱ περιηγούμενοι).[72] But Philostratus goes one further: he evokes Homer's *poetic* evocation of the shield within a *pictorial* evocation of a purported gallery of paintings.

Philostratus the Younger seems to have been writing late in the third century AD. The author presents his 'Images' (*Eikones*, or *Imagines* according to their later Latin title) as an imitation of a work by his purported grandfather (*Im.* Pr.1–2) — a figure also named 'Philostratus', whose descriptions of paintings were likewise heralded as *Eikones*.[73] After painting that contextual backdrop, and paying tribute to the power of painting (painting and poetry as parallel arts of *techne* because of their common recourse to the imagination, or *phantasia*), Philostratus's preface explains how his tableaux amount to pretend discourses: like those of his eponymous ancestor, Philostratus's descriptions will serve as

make-believe conversations between speaker and audience (*Im.* Pr.7).[74] This self-referential background helps to make sense of the specific recourse to Homeric ekphrasis. For in describing a picture of the shield of Achilles, Philostratus knowingly plays with a recession of different replicative levels: his description moves backwards and forwards from the idea of the shield as hypothetical object, Homeric text, a painting crafted after that text, and indeed a prose description encompassing of all these ontological levels and more.

This is not the place for a full analysis of the Younger Philostratus or his *Imagines*. Focusing on the shield of Achilles tableau, though, I do want to draw out the described painting's significance for thinking about ancient responses to the Homeric prototype. If, as James Heffernan writes, 'Homer never forgets that he is representing representation itself',[75] Philostratus re-performs the conceit at second remove. What is more, he does so with the most astonishing self-reflexivity, taking Homeric games of verisimilitude to a whole new level of replicative make-believe, whereby words merge into images, and images into words.

The first thing to notice about Philostratus's description is his framing of the shield. Where Homer embeds his ekphrasis within the narrative of the *Iliad*, Philostratus's multilayered text situates the image within the description of yet another painting and story: the evocation of the shield comes rather unexpectedly amid an ekphrasis concerning 'Pyrrhus or the Mysians'. Pyrrhus was a later (non-Homeric) name for the Greek hero Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, and the story evoked here concerns an episode in the subsequent history of the Trojan war (when Pyrrhus drove back the Mysian troops and killed their leader, Eurypylus: *Im.* 10.21). In the context of this narrative and supposed painting, the evocation of the shield forms part of a description of the two youthful leaders. Both are dressed in the armour of their fathers: where Eurypolus's shield is simply said to be kitted out 'without signs' (ἀσήμοις, *Im.* 10.4), however, the shield of Pyrrhus, inherited from Achilles, is evoked in several pages of text.[76] Once introduced, the single detail quickly dominates the tableau, occupying some three-quarters of its total length (*Im.* 10.5–20). Indeed, only briefly does the speaker return to the overarching narrative at the end of his description (*Im.* 10.21), before moving onto the subsequent picture.[77]

Even as he describes this grand painted shield, Philostratus leaves us guessing as to its combined visual-cum-verbal medium. This description of a painting is derived from a text which has itself been forged after Hephaestus's manufactured object. So are we then looking at an image intended for viewing, or at a text designed for hearing (in turn transcribed for reading)? Philostratus has it both ways. On the one hand, his textual description of the shield is structured around numerous imperatives instructing the audience actually to *see* the painting.[78] On the other, the speaker uses every opportunity to emphasise the spoken-cum-written medium of this discursive text. The more the text compels us to look, the more it in fact disappears behind oblique textual precedent: if we are to see anything, we have first to hear the description and its various Homeric resonances.[79]

Needless to say, this fundamental game develops the critical framework for conceptualising ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata*. Indeed, the self-reflexivity with which words are said here to metamorphose into pictures (and vice versa) can only be understood in the light of such rationalised discussions of ekphrasis as rhetorical phenomenon. Not only is the speaker highly attuned to the ekphrastic sounds verbalised in Homer's poetic visualisation of the imaginary shield, he also adds numerous audible innovations.[80] The Homeric blurring of voice and vision is therefore made to prefigure Philostratus's own: like Homer's description of the shield, this painting (of the description) is said to summon up more than images, just as the description (of this painting of that description) is said to summon up more than sounds.[81]

It is the meta-ekphrastic complexity of this gesture that deserves emphasis here. Philostratus looks back to Homer in order to find an aetiology for his own games of visual–verbal replication. In this sense, the ekphrastic *mise-en-abyme* that Philostratus stage-manages — the described painting of the shield within the context of his pictorial description — replicates the Homeric ekphrasis's own verbal replication of the replicative strategies of the shield. Philostratus's knowingly refracted ekphrasis finds its stimulus in the Homeric 'original'.

The passage's self-referential recourse to the critical language of *techne* is best understood in a similar light. This tableau, the speaker tells us, amounts to a piece of *both* artistic and literary craftsmanship: 'were one to look at this armour, one will find none of Homer's impressions to be missing: instead, the *techne* reveals accurately everything that is there' (θεωρῶν δέ τις τὰ ὅπλα λεῖπον εὑρήσει τῶν Ὁμήρου ἐκτυπωμάτων οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἀκριβῶς ἡ τέχνη δείκνυσι τἀκεῖθεν πάντα, *Im.* 10.5). If Homer's verbal 'impressions' of the shield mirror the sculptural 'impressions' that were quite literally forged by Hephaestus, this painting is in turn said to give a full 'impression' of Homer, just as the description of the image in turn gives a full 'impression' of it.[82] The added detail that 'the *techne* reveals accurately everything that is there' draws attention to the perfection and imperfection of these recessional replications. After all, it is left poignantly unclear whether such talk of pictorial-poetic *techne* here refers to the *techne* of Hephaestus's shield, the *techne* of Homer in describing it, the *techne* of this painting in turning that description back to an image, the *techne* of the speaker in evoking it, or indeed the *techne* of Philostratus in smiting all of these levels within the 'images' of his written text (which itself claims to imitate the words and pictures of Philostratus's purported grandfather). Addressing both the supposed viewer and reader alike, Philostratus expresses the point with typical concision: just what *is* the *techne* of this painting-description (τίς δ' ἡ τέχνη; *Im.* 10.18)?

IV. Ekphrasis inverted: images on words on images (and words on images on words on images...)

As we have said, the Younger Philostratus was writing in the late third century AD, and his concerns with voice and vision have therefore to be contextualised within a particular set of cultural

and intellectual parameters.[83] But it is also clear that such playful readings of the Homeric ekphrasis form part of a much longer literary and literary critical tradition. What is more, we have suggested that that tradition is itself bound up with grander theories about ekphrasis in both the Greek and Roman worlds.

At this point, I turn in the fourth and final part of this article to ancient artistic mediations of Achilles's shield. For whatever the 'reality' of Philostratus's purported gallery and painting, we can be sure that certain painters and sculptors really did engage with the Homeric description.[84] In doing so, moreover, these artists inverted the direction of Philostratus's written description, no less than the prototypical attempt at verbalising vision from which it derives. Responding to the legendary ekphrasis, different artists came up with different ways of pictorialising the shield. But all reacted to the same fundamental question: how could images *visually* (re)present the prototypical Homeric *verbal* trial of (re)presenting pictures through words?

From Archaic Greece right through to the late Roman Empire, we find ancient artists toying with that question, and in no less sophisticated ways than their literary counterparts. At the same time, the challenge painters and sculptors faced in engaging with the Homeric ekphrasis was different from the one faced by writers. The remit was no longer to bring about seeing through hearing, as the *Progymnasmata* conceptualise ekphrasis. Rather, the task was now to reverse the phenomenon: to turn the words on images back into the make-believe images that had evoked the words. In literalising literary ekphrasis — in materialising its lettered description as tangible object — the task was somehow to translate verbal artifice back into visual artefact.

This challenge appears to have been something upon which even Archaic vase-painters cut their teeth. There are numerous images of Thetis delivering Hephaestus's armour to Achilles which date from the seventh and sixth centuries BC:[85] although his identifications have been contested, Pausanias describes the scene on the Archaic chest of Cypselus encountered at Olympia (5.19.7),[86] and parallel scenes can be found on (for example) a Melian neck-amphora from Mykonos and an Argivo-Corinthian bronze relief from Olympia.[87] In Athens, the episode was particularly popular on black-figure vases from the first half of the sixth century BC.[88] But what is so interesting about all these objects is the remarkably different solutions they devise for visualising the shield's imagery: rather than follow or 'illustrate' any particular oral or written account, artists struck upon a variety of ingenious solutions, confronting head-on the essential problem of turning verbal description back into visual form.[89]

A brief survey can help clarify what I mean. Most Attic painters settled upon a deliberately archaising shape for the shield, choosing the elongated so-called 'Boeotian' form (with handles cut on two sides), as if thereby to signal the object's legendary status.[90] But the question was what to put on (or in?) the shield. Some painters simply left the pictorial field empty, or else added a floral device (one that sometimes recalled the decorative patterns of the ornamental friezes above or below, as in figure 1).[91] Others opted for some sort of animal device.

Figure 1. Attic black-figure neck-amphora in the British Museum, London (inv. 1922.6–15.1), attributed to the Painter of Berlin B 76, c.570–550 BC. Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 2. Attic black-figure lekanis from Rhodes, Rhodes Archaeological Museum (inv. 5008), attributed to the Komast Group, c.580 BC. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

While figure 2 transforms Achilles's helmet and shield into a make-believe alter ego that stares Achilles in the eye, for example, the shield's fantastic panther motif alludes visually to the

make-believe sphinxes at the periphery of the painted picture, as well as to the more believable animals depicted below.[92]

Still more significant was the decision to emblazon the head of the Gorgon Medusa at the shield's centre.[93] On one side of a neck-amphora in Boston, we see six 'ordinary' hoplite warriors, armed with geometrically-patterned circular shields, greaves and low-crested Corinthian helmets (figure 3a).[94] On the other side is a conspicuously grander, 'Boeotian' shield, this time emblazoned with the gorgoneion: Thetis and her fellow nymphs deliver it to Achilles, their names inscribed by their sides, and with additional details picked out in accessory white and red colours (figures 3b–3c). The Gorgon was a favourite emblem on Greek shields, both real and fictional; we hear of it, for example, at the centre of Agamemnon's shield, described at *Il.* 11.33–40. But there is no Homeric precedent for associating such a device with Achilles's armour. To explain its presence, we therefore have to think back to the underlying myth of the Gorgon Medusa, whose head was carried off as a talisman by the hero Perseus. As Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux has shown, the Gorgon had long been conceptualised and depicted as 'the representa-tion of the non-visible':[95] on the one hand, to look upon the Gorgon's literally 'petrifying' stare was to be turned to stone; on the other, the pictorial figuration of the Gorgon's head served to embody and reverse that objectifying gaze, appropriating the Medusa's all-consuming visual power though a second-degree representational remove. Perhaps this helps to explain the

choice of motif on the shield of Achilles. For what better emblem than the Gorgon for signalling the limits of looking — the impossibility of ever turning words on images back into images on words?

We should add an obvious word of caution here. With pots as early as these, it is of course difficult to judge how well (or if at all) painters and viewers knew their Homer; indeed, scholars still debate the extent to which *our* version of Homer corresponds with earlier versions circulating in the first part of the sixth century.[96] When it comes to the fifth century, and to images of Thetis at the forge of Hephaestus, however, there can be less room for doubting the Homeric resonance.[97] Of the four extant Attic red-figure pot-paintings which depicted Thetis with Hephaestus in the 480s BC, perhaps the most fascinating comes on a cup attributed to the 'Foundry Painter' (figure 4a).[98] In the cup's interior tondo, we see Hephaestus inspecting his handiwork, seated on a stool; Thetis stands with her legs crossed to the right of him, dressed in a well-to-do chiton and cloak which poignantly contrast with the humbler attire of Hephaestus. In this particular example, the heroic-looking 'Boeotian' shield carried in Thetis's left hand does seem to reflect a knowledge of the Homeric passage: observe, for exam-ple, the four star motifs, which may well be thought to allude to the four constellations with which Homer opens his account (*Il.* 18.483–89). At the centre of the shield is a different emblem,

(a) (b) (c)
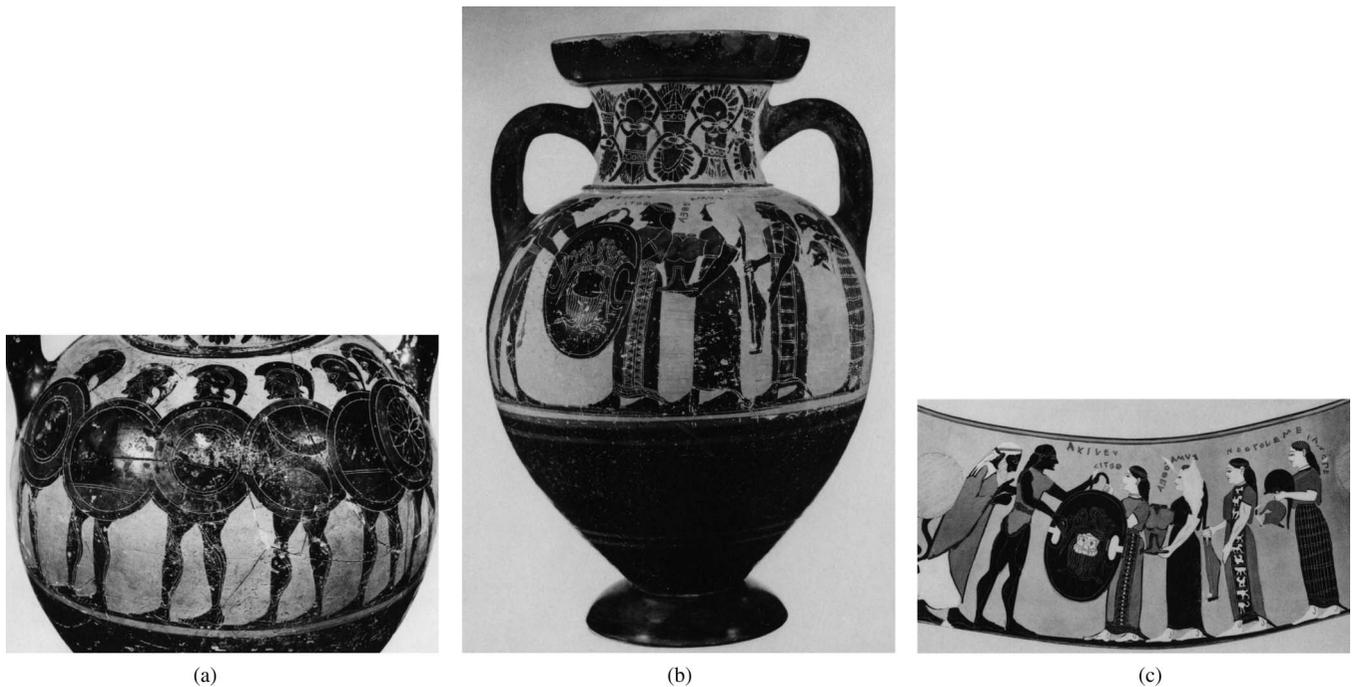
Figure 3. (a) Attic black-figure neck-amphora in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (inv. 21.21), attributed to the Camtar Painter, *c.*550 BC: reverse side. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. (b) Obverse of the same vase (see figure 3a). Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. (c) Drawing of the obverse of the same vase (see figure 3a). Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

(a)

(b)   (c)

Figure 4. (a) Attic red-figure cup in the Antikensammlung, Berlin (inv. F2294), attributed to the Foundry Painter, *c.*480 BC: interior tondo. (b) Exterior side of the same cup (side A) (see figure 4a). (c) Exterior side of the same cup (side B) (see figure 4a). © bpk – Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin: Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte.

one without mention in *Iliad* 18: we see the unmistakeable black-figure silhouette of an eagle and snake.[99]

What makes the depiction of Achilles's shield so significant on the 'Foundry Painter' name-vase is the framework of images that surround it. For the legendary scene of Hephaestus at his forge inside the cup finds a modern-day parallel in the scenes of bronze-casting on the two external sides (figures 4b–4c).[100] As Richard Neer has shown, these outside scenes do not simply present the process of making sculpted images. Rather, they interrogate the problematics of representation; they pose questions about what images are, inviting the viewer to contemplate those questions (themselves mediated by the images in hand) in the wine-soaked context of the Athenian symposium.[101] The ironies of mimetic make-believe are here clear to see: observe, for example, how the frontal face of the 'real' figure working the furnace on side A is echoed in the 'fictional' heads hanging above him (figure 4b), or how side B toys with the various illusions of scale (figure 4c). So too with the internal mythological scene, which is clearly designed to forge a connection with the exterior imagery: just as the hammer hanging in Hephaestus's workshop recalls that on each of the cup's external sides, Hephaestus's shield recalls the one held by the enormous sculpted statue on side B (figure 4c). Similarly the sculpted greaves which hang behind Hephaestus evoke the foreshortened legs of the real figure crouching beside the furnace on side A (figure 4b). Within a cup that so knowingly and playfully toys with the nature and artifice of replication (and of replicating three-dimensional replication in this two-dimensional, multi-sided cup), the pivotal recourse to Achilles's shield can perhaps not have been accidental. Contained at the centre of the cup, and surrounded with an ornamental border that matches the one surrounding the interior tondo as a whole, the round shield of Achilles is cited as the ultimate object for figuring figuration, encountered at the moment when viewers drain the cup and imbibe its intoxicating contents. In this capacity, the particular form of the shield imagery, with its simplified emblematic devices, is significant. While in one sense renouncing the challenge of materialising the Homeric description through pictures (for how could a human artist *ever* hope to rival a divine one?), the Foundry Painter nonetheless exploits the shield as an iconic emblem for iconicity itself.[102]

Already by the beginning of the fifth century BC, we therefore find artists interested both in the visual appearance of Achilles's shield and in its make-believe status. Later Greek and Roman artists returned to the mythological theme in equally self-referential ways. The subject of Thetis and Hephaestus was in all likelihood a popular theme among Hellenistic painters, and we know of numerous later (and no less original) Roman adaptations.[103] Six paintings survive from Pompeii (or are alternatively known from nineteenth-century drawings): as far as we can tell, all of them showed Hephaestus on the left (either sitting or standing) and Thetis on the right (always seated), with the shield propped up between the two.[104] In at least two related examples (figures 5 and 6), the shield is shown with zodiacal signs around
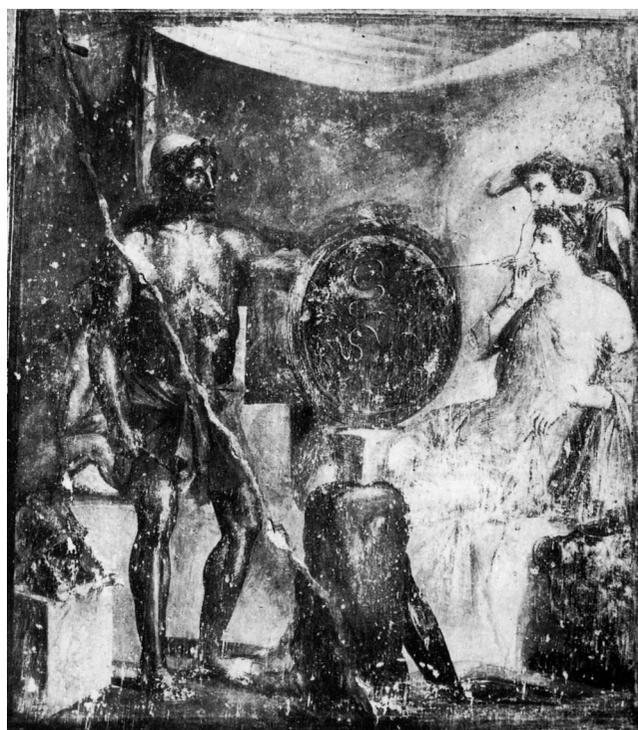

Figure 5. Wall painting from the Domus Uboni (Pompeii IX.5.2), first century AD. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

its rim, according to Hellenistic allegorical interpretations of its cosmic significance.[105] As for the rest of the shield, we see very little: vague impressions of busts, for example, schematic star shapes or winding snakes, all painted in semi-abstract form.[106] While the picture's external audience can only guess at the significance of all this, the figures inside the painting have a better literal and metaphorical view. What is more, the depicted characters seem to be *talking* about the image before them: rod in hand, the figure behind Thetis appears to explain what the images might mean.[107] All this returns us to the ekphrastic poles of word and image, playfully inverting the conceit of seeing through hearing. Because onlookers peer in at the pictorial representation from outside its visual frame — and because painting is only ever silent poetry — we are now able to *see* the shield, but we cannot *hear* the verbal conversations that surround it.[108]

One Pompeian painting goes still further in its replicative fictions (figure 7).[109] Compositionally speaking, the picture from the north wall of triclinium e in the Casa di Paccius Alexander (Pompeii IX.1.7) is similar to others from Pompeii: Hephaestus and Thetis dominate the foreground, each one in contrasting three-quarter view; this time there are three additional figures — one working at Hephaestus's side, another holding the shield, and a third standing behind Thetis. The shield itself is set diagonally to the picture plane, and the characters and armour form an additional ring around it, visually

Figure 6. Wall painting from the Casa di Sirico (Pompeii VII.1.25), first century AD. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

duplicating its circular shape. Inspect the rim of the central shield, and there are once again vague impressions of the emblazoned subject — perhaps scenes from the life of Achilles — comparable to other pictorial representations from Pompeii (figures 5–6).[110] Most striking about this shield, however, is the mirror image at its centre. Whatever we make of the peripheral scenes, it is the reflected image of Thetis at the centre which grabs our attention. This is an object which both looks and is looked at. As we join the internal spectators in gazing silently at the visualised shield, we find not the object 'originally' evoked by Homer, but rather the shield as Thetis sees it, herself engaged in the very process of seeing.[111]

This painting responds to the Homeric ekphrasis with the most wondrous self-reflection. The various refractions of the described shield (pictures within pictures and poems within the poems) are pictorially refracted anew: we look at the act of looking at the act of looking *ad infinitum*. Better perhaps, this self-consciously replicative pictorial 'copy' of Homer visually literalises the literary *mises-en-abyme* staged within the verbal description. But just how successful is this artificial duplication? Where the poem explored the promise and failure of images to represent reality, and indeed words to represent images, our painting employs visual means for similar intermedial reflection. Comparing the two facing pictures of Thetis, for example, we

find both similarities and differences between them. True, Thetis's dress looks the same in both images, displaying a similar palette of colours; indeed, so closely do the details of one correspond with those of the other that we even find matching golden hair-bands. But there can be no denying the replicative distortions that are also at work. Each picture flips the image of the other: observe, for example, the inverted gestures of the folded arm and hand placed on the chin, or else the numerous discrepancies between the size, shape and proportions of Thetis's body between the painted image and its reflection.[112] Like the ekphrastically evoked verbal representation of the visual representations of the shield, the (image of this) image is both totalising and incomplete: the shield holds up a mirror to the promise and failure of *all* representation, visual and verbal alike.[113]

To corroborate the metaliterary and metapictorial sophistication of all this, allow me to turn to two final objects, this time from the corpus of so-called 'Iliac tablets', or *Tabulae Iliacae* (figures 8 and 9).[114] Unlike the essentially flat images so far discussed, these two marble miniatures translate the 'great and mighty shield' described by Homer not into two-dimensional painting, but back into three-dimensional sculptural reliefs.[115] Altogether, there are twenty-two miniature marble reliefs conventionally classified as *Tabulae Iliacae*, dating from the late first century BC or early first century AD (with one certain exception from the second century AD); where provenances are known, everything points to the city of Rome and its environs.[116] Most treat literary themes, and many engage with the *Iliad* alongside other epic poems. Of the known or surviving fragments, four engage with the shield of Achilles, whether in the context of *Iliad* 18 and 19 (fragments 1A and 20Par), or else as an emblematic device (fragments 6B and perhaps 13Ta).[117] But our two tablets — conventionally labelled tablets 5O (figure 8) and 4N (figure 9) — go still further in substantiating the shield: they actually materialise what the Homeric verbal representation could only circumscribe, moulding words back into objectified pictures.

There is a common rationale to both of these tablets, and both associate themselves with the same 'Theodorean' (Θεοδώρηος) artist.[118] Both shields were also modest in scale, although tablet 4N, which is much better preserved than tablet 5O, seems to have been the smaller of the two: its diameter is a mere 17.8 cm, and the surviving fragment weighs just 1.29 kg (under three pounds; the original weight cannot have been much more than 2 kg).[119] A fragmentary inscription running across the centre of the tablet, dividing the reliefs into two symmetrical halves, confirms the subject. Depending on the reconstruction of the missing letters, it either reads 'Achillean shield: Theodorean, after Homer' (ἀσπὶς Ἀχιλλῆος Θεοδώρηος καθ᾽ Ὅμηρον) or 'Achillean shield: the *techne* is Theodorean' (ἀσπὶς Ἀχιλλῆος Θεοδώρηος ἡ τέχνη).[120]

As for the actual composition, this is also easiest to reconstruct on tablet 4N because of its superior state of preservation.[121] All the scenes find their counterpart in the Homeric ekphrasis (cf. table 1). Beginning in the upper section, we see to the left a depiction of the city at peace (*Il.* 18.490–508), represented in

Figure 7. Wall painting from the Casa di Paccius Alexander (Pompeii IX.1.7 = Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, inv. 110338), first century AD. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

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Figure 8. Obverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 5O (= Rome, Musei Capitolini, Sala delle Colombe, inv. 83b), late first century BC or early first century AD. Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut: DAI-Rom 1931.0056.

oblique bird's-eye perspective, with a city-gate at its symmetrical centre. In the upper part of the city, between the two wings of the three-sided colonnade, are a series of human figures, arranged above what appears to be an outstretched body: this can be related to the judgment scene (described as taking place in the city's agora), and below it we find an additional array of figures engaged in what vv.496–508 describes as a marriage procession. Although the right-hand side of the upper band is lost, we can be confident about its subject. Following the proportioned structure of the Iliadic ekphrasis, the tablet's composition was symmetrical, so that the city at war was surely juxtaposed to the right of the city at peace (vv.509–40).[122]

Moving now to the imagery underneath tablet 4N's inscription, we find a series of interconnected landscape scenes, pertaining to the Homeric descriptions of ploughing (vv.541–49), harvesting (vv.550–60 — the same scene that we see on tablet 5O),[123] gathering the vine (vv.561–72), pasturing (vv.573–86, 587–89), and dancing (vv.590–606). Unlike the Homeric text, which arranges the scenes in linear order,

proceeding from one vignette to the next, this visual representation denies any straightforward sequence. Rather, it uses its spatial layout both to replicate and to undo the temporal ordering of the verbal description. For anyone who knew their Homer, and who wanted to make sense of these scenes in strict Homeric terms, the images zigzag back and forth from the lower to the upper centre of the band (figure 10): we move first from the scenes of ploughing at the bottom of the circular zone to scenes of reaping at its upper left; we then proceed horizontally from the left to the vineyard scene at the centre, and horizontally again to the scenes of herding at the centre right; finally, we shift in reverse horizontal direction, so as to end with the scene of dancing (which occupies the upper middle register of the tablet's lower section, underneath the 'Theodorean' name of the inscription).[124] As we shall see, this combination of scenes poses a pictorial puzzle to peruse and ponder; at the same time, though, it also asks questions about the logic of arrangement — indeed, about how images necessarily structure ideas differently from words.

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Figure 9. Obverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (= Rome, Musei Capitolini, Sala delle Colombe, inv. 83a), late first century BC or early first century AD. Photo: Author, by kind permission of the Direzione, Musei Capitolini, Rome.
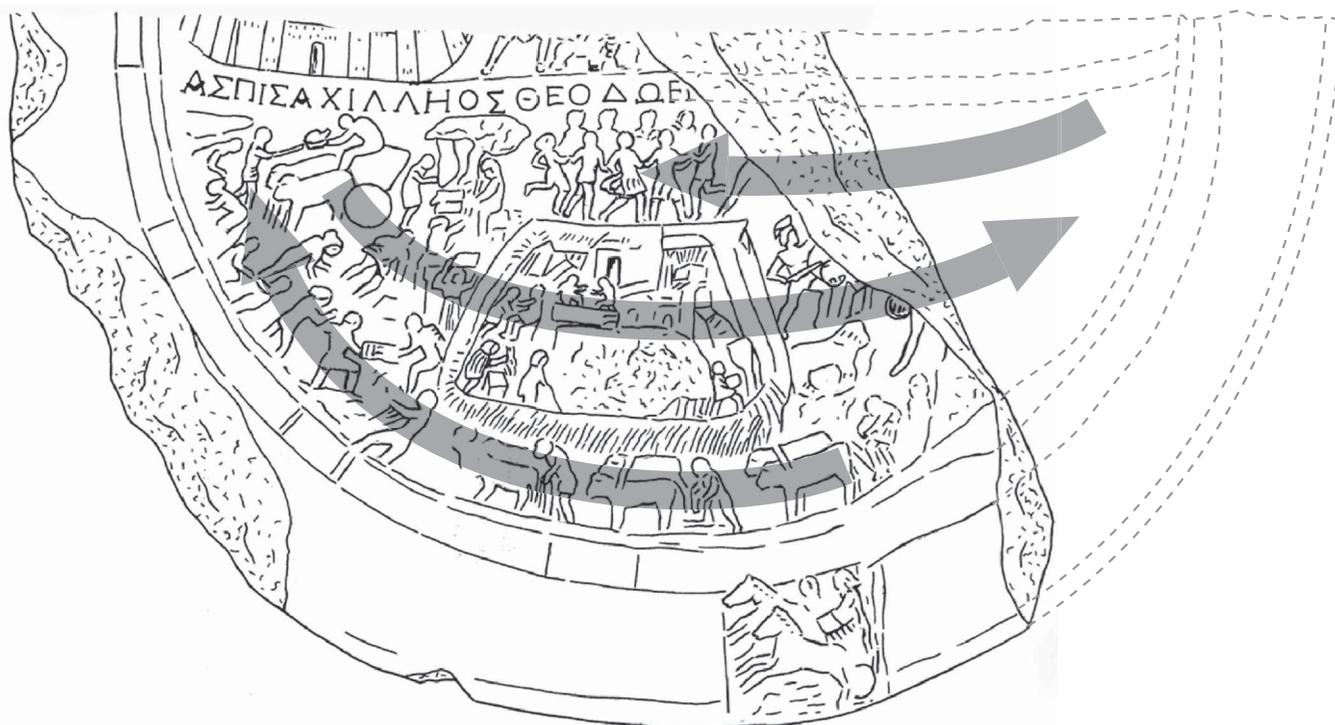
Figure 10. Drawing of the lower section of the obverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 9). Author, with the aid of Mike O'Malley.

If tablet 4N uses its curved frontal plane to figure the Homeric shield, the object's imagery is by no means restricted to its centre: in order pictorially to accommodate the narrative flow of the text, the tablet's images spill out into the tablet's three-dimensional rim. As we have said, the Homeric ekphrasis opens and closes by evoking a larger cosmological context: in a ring-composition of its own, the shield ends with the 'great might of the river Ocean, around the outermost rim of the strongly-made shield' (vv.607–08), thereby echoing the image of the sea with which the evocation begins. But that opening description also encompasses a much grander astrological sphere (vv.483–89):

> ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,
> ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσαν,
> 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.
>
> (On it he fashioned the earth; on it the heavens; on it the sea, and the indefatigable sun and the full moon. On it he fashioned all the stars and the things which crown the heavens: the Pleiades, the Hyades, the mighty Orion and the Bear which men also call by the name Wagon — circling around itself, watching over Orion, and which alone takes no part in the baths of Ocean.)

All this finds its counterpart on tablet 4N. Amid the tablet's sloping outer band, circling around the inner circle of scenes, we find two figures with horses, one at the tablet's top, the other at its bottom (figure 11): these are personifications of Helios and Selene — the Sun above, and the Moon below — each spinning around the object in (what we anachronistically call) clockwise order, embodying an infinite chronological-cum-geographical span.[125] As for all the constellations 'which crown the heavens', these are also rendered on the tablet in an additional oblique band between the outer rim and inner circle — albeit not by divine personifications, but rather by a more symbolic means. Just as in contemporary wall paintings (see figures 5–6), the artist turned to the signs of the Zodiac

Figure 11. Oblique side of the obverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 9). Photo: Author, by kind permission of the Direzione, Musei Capitolini, Rome.
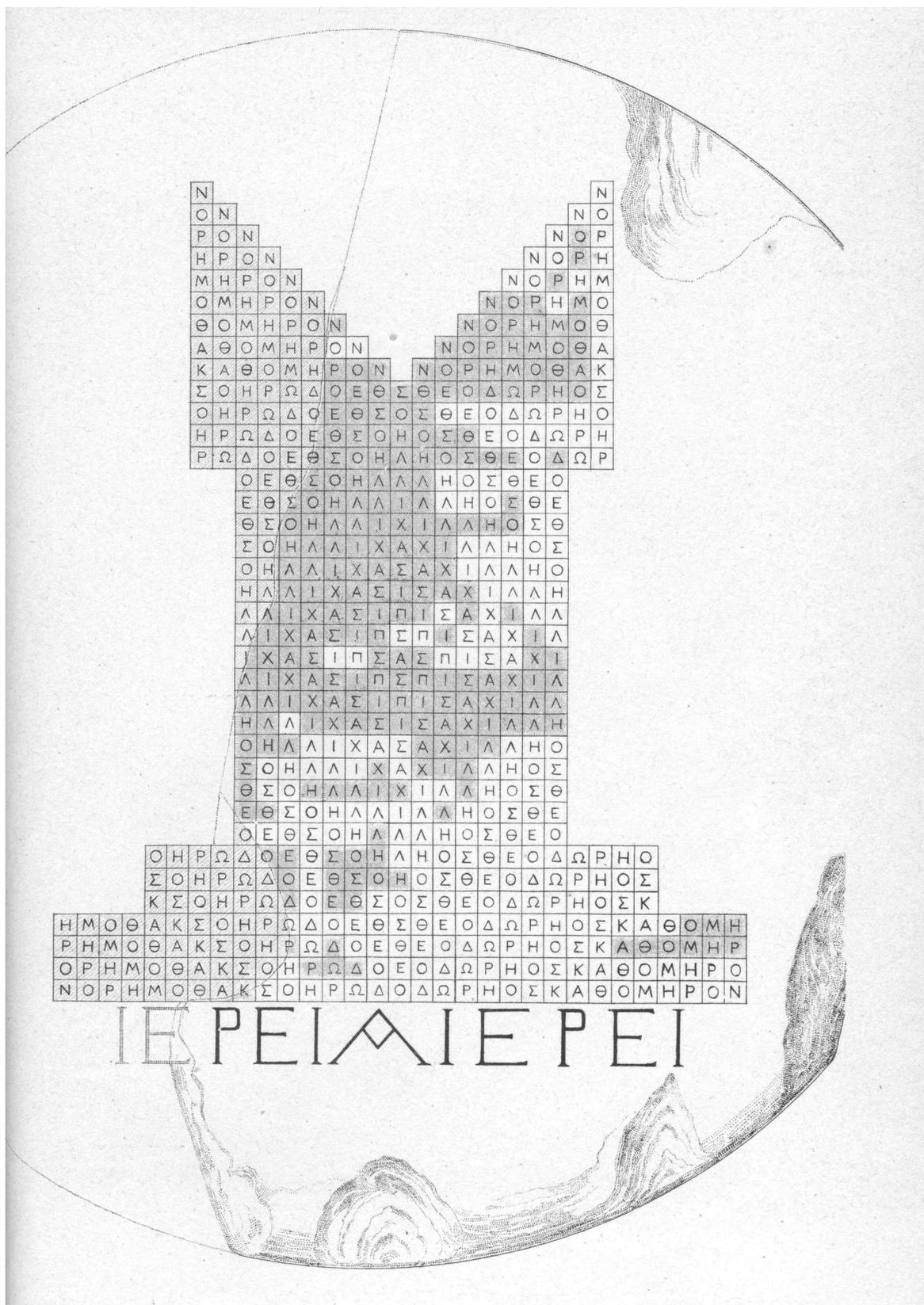
Figure 12. Drawing of the reverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 9). After Paolo Bienkowski, 'Lo scudo di Achille,' *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Römische Abteilung* 6 (1891): 183–207, Tav. V.
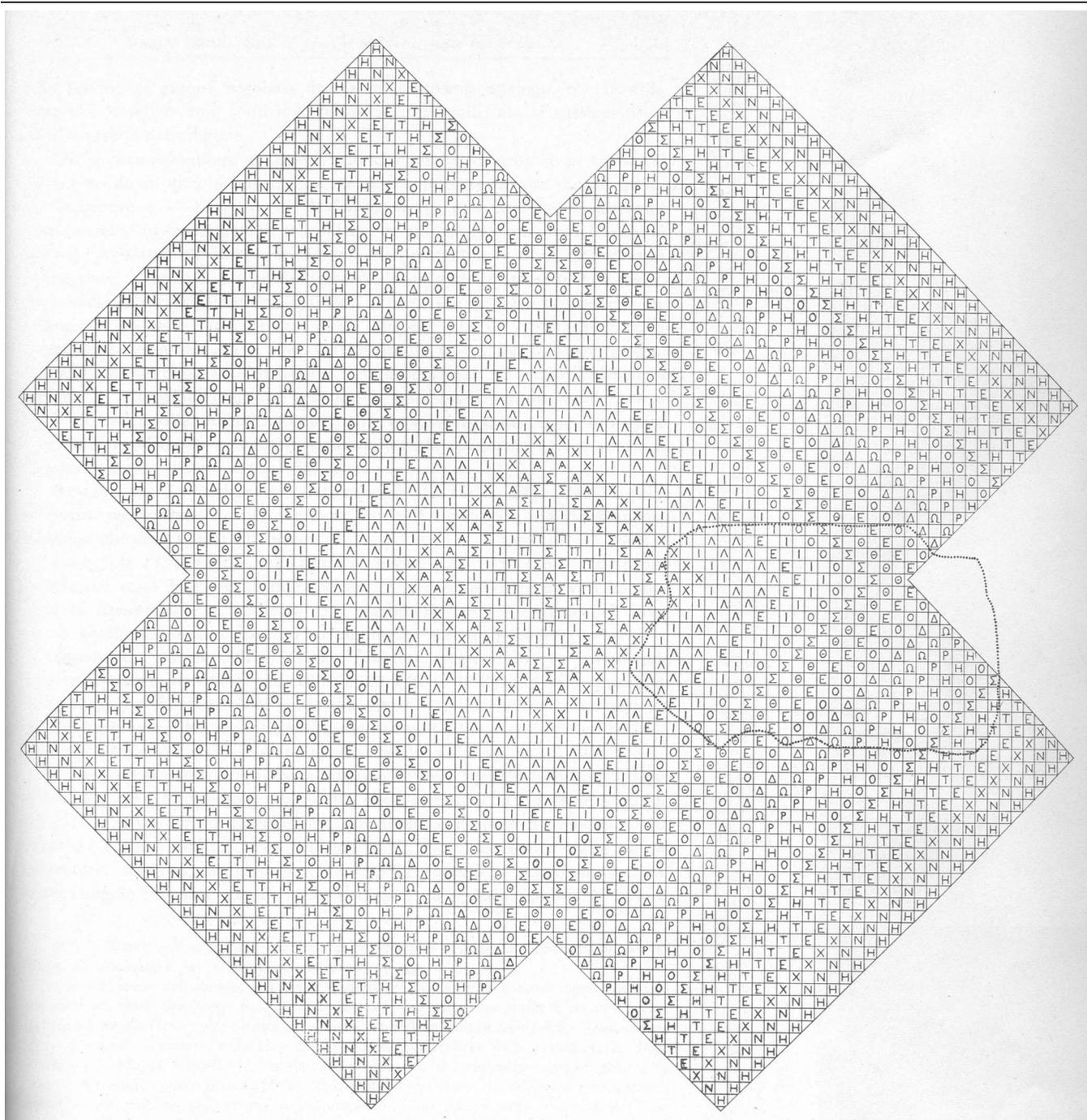
Figure 13. Reconstruction of verso 'magic square' on *Tabula Iliaca* 5O (see figure 8). After Maria Teresa Bua, 'I giuochi alfabetici delle tavole iliache', *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei. Memorie: Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 8, no. 16 (1971): 1–35, 10, fig.3.

to embody this aspect of the description, and six embossed square spaces survive on the fragmentary object (out of the original twelve).[126]

To my mind, there can be no doubt: the artists of the *Tabulae Iliacae* were fully were of the complex ontological stakes involved in reversing ekphrastic words on images back into imagery on words. What is more, he knowingly played with the different

resources of text and picture: the very layout of scenes — with the horizontal symmetry above, and the meandering zigzags below (see figure 10) — raises questions about the organisational principles of sequential text in relation to spatial image (and vice versa). Just as the Homeric ekphrasis toys with its capacity to materialise something *more* than words, a material object like this plays with the simultaneous promise and failure of reconstructing

the text from the pictures; better, perhaps, it provides a pictorial commentary on Homer's verbal commentary about the challenges of moving from text to image and back again.

The self-referential complexity with which these objects probed such questions is all the clearer on the verso of our two Iliac tablets (figures 12–13). Unlike the obverse of tablet 4N, the tablet's reverse side is flat. Like the recto, however, the verso is nevertheless inscribed with a symmetrical design (figure 12): we find 614 demarcated 'squares' arranged in the form of an altar, with a make-believe dedicatory text inscribed below (*IEPEIAIEPEI*, perhaps best deciphered as ἱερεῖα ἱερεῖ — 'holy things [dedicated] to the priest').[127] What is so interesting about this design is its further play with the boundaries between verbal language and visual imagery. The composition may *look* like an altar. Inspect the individual boxes that make up this collective design, though, and one finds that each and every square in fact contains an alphabetic letter. As long as one starts from the central *alpha* in the middle of the image-text and proceeds outwards, these inscribed *grammata* can be read in a variety of directions. However one proceeds — upwards, downwards, left to right, or right to left — the collective verbal sense holds fast, ending up with the same hexameter verse that was probably inscribed on the recto ('Achillean shield: Theodorean, after Homer', ἀσπὶς Ἀχιλλῆος Θεοδώρηος καθ' Ὅμηρον).[128] The verso of 5O does something similar (figure 13). Although only a smaller fraction of the verso survives, we are able to reconstruct a related (literal) 'diagram', this time arranged into a twelve-sided polygon, and punning on the visual–verbal nature of the object's *techne*: [ἀσπὶς] Ἀχιλλεῖος Θεοδώρηος ἡ τ[έχνη], 'Achillean shield: the *techne* is Theodorean'.[129]

As I have argued at much greater length elsewhere, the *Tabulae Iliacae* play out such meta-ekphrastic games about word and image with the most self-referential sophistication. If the recto takes words on images and transforms them back into images on words, the verso literally and metaphorically flips that gesture, providing a verbal title for the object that is in turn presented diagrammatically. In doing so, the spatial arrangement breaks the sequential conventions of verbal representation: these letters are intended to be viewed as much as read, and viewed in whatever direction the viewer should choose. The *IEPEIAIEPEI* palindrome inscription below the verso altar-text on tablet 4N confirms as much (figure 12). For one thing, it is readable from right to left as well as from left to right. For another, it can be understood both as visual representation and as verbal text: while the inscription is semantically independent from the altar picture-text above, it also functions as a make-believe replication — as part of a pictorial imitation of a *real* altar, complete with dedicatory text below. On recto and verso alike, our tablets blur the boundaries between the readable and the seeable; in doing so, moreover, the tiny tablets make recourse to the grandest of all epic paradigms.

It is in this capacity that we should make sense of tablet 4N's biggest — which is to say smallest — wonder of all. In the sloping outermost rim of the tablet, where Homer situates the

'great might of River Ocean', we find a series of almost imperceptible inscribed squiggles. As we have said, the whole diameter of the tablet is only 17.8 cm, and this outer rim occupies only a small fraction of that whole (around 2 cm). As we look more and more closely at the waving squiggles, however, we discover something remarkable: *the entire Homeric text written out from beginning to end in circulating columns*. Only six columns survive (either in part or complete), and each column is inscribed with between ten and fifteen verses (figures 14–16). Originally, there seem to have been ten such columns, wheeling around the object in anticlockwise order from its upper left-hand section.[130]

The position of the text must have had philological significance of its own. Ancient critics recurrently likened Homer to the Ocean, as the ultimate source from which all literature flows. How fitting, then, that we find the Homeric text at the very place where Homer himself situates the image of the sea.[131] But, at least to my mind, the ontological stakes are still more important. In a literal and metaphorical sense, this graphic presentation of the Homeric ekphrasis continues the circle from image to text and back again. Just as the Homeric description moves from object (Hephaestus's shield) to poem (the ekphrasis of book 18), we move here from image (the visualisation of that verbal portrayal) back to text (the verbalisation of that visual portrayal). It is a mind-bendingly complex manoeuvre, and one that recognises and critically responds to the proto-ekphrastic games of the Homeric 'original': this text is a *verbal* representation of a *visual* representation of a *verbal* representation of the *visual* representations of (and indeed in) the shield. But which comes first, the verbally-visualised text, or the visually-verbalised image? Is the 'original' object a text for reading, or an object for
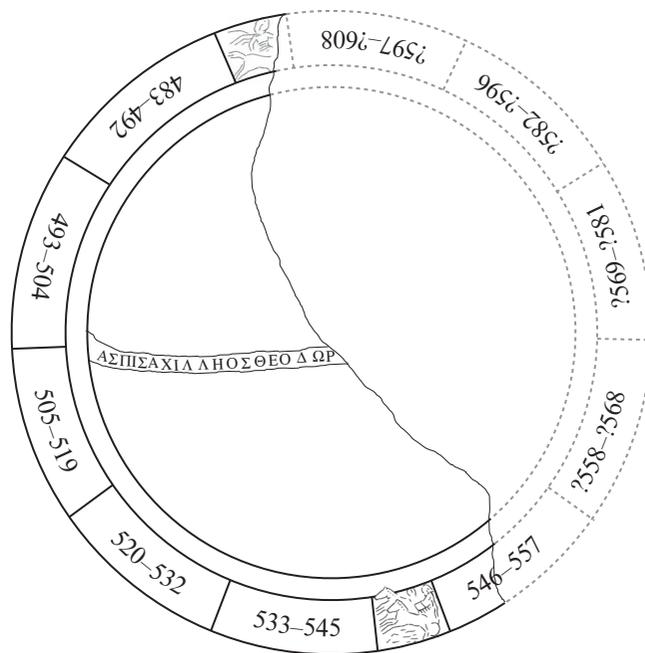

Figure 14. Reconstruction of text around the obverse of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 9). Author.

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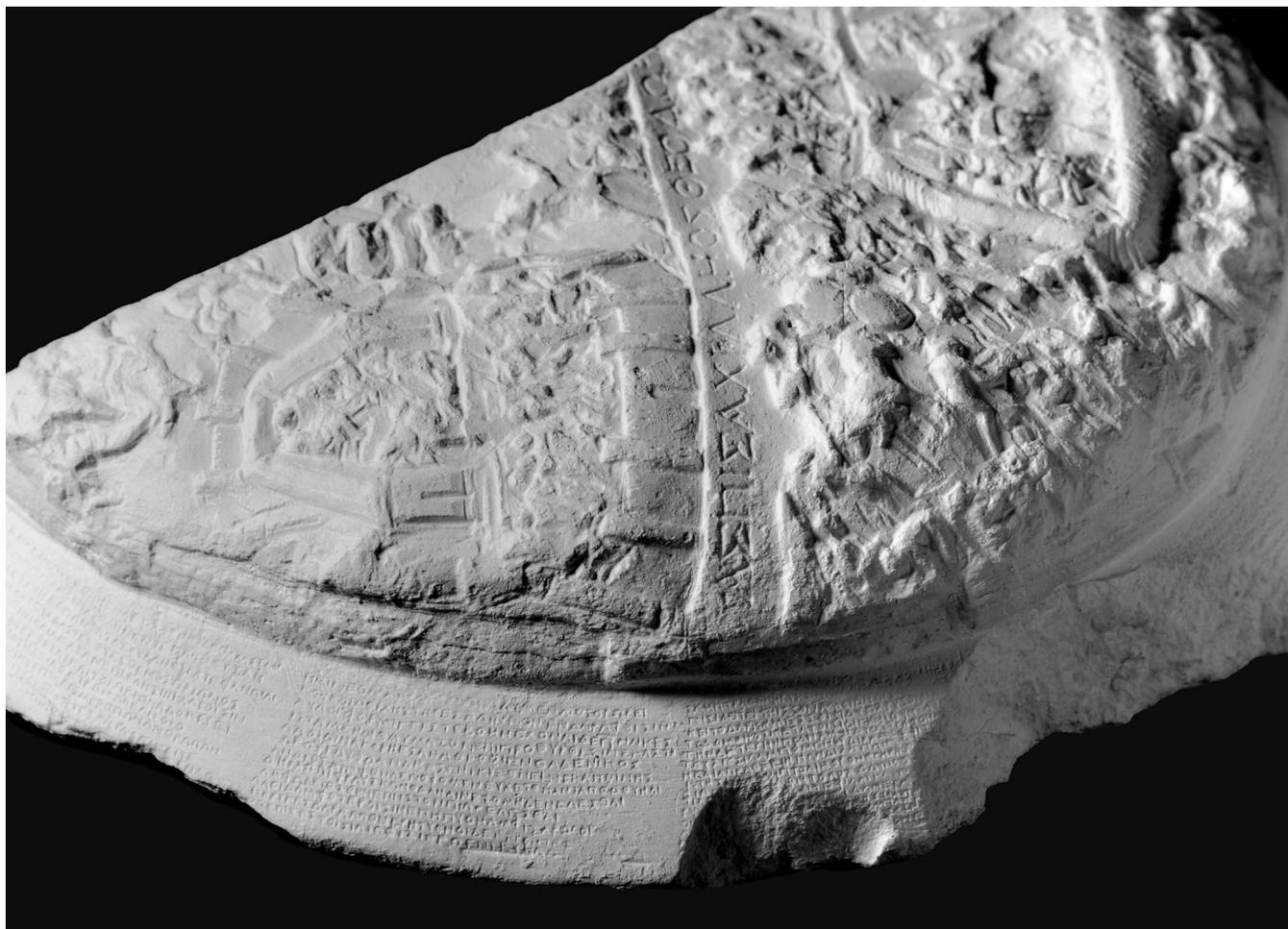
Figure 15. Photograph of text around the obverse rim of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 9). This detail is of a plaster cast of the tablet (Archäologisches Institut und Sammlung der Gipsabgüsse, Göttingen inv. A1695), showing the first three columns of text: *Il.* 18.483–92 (left), vv.493–504 (centre left), and vv.505–19 (centre right); a fourth column, to the right (on the damaged part of the rim to the right) was inscribed with vv.533–45. Photo: Stefan Eckardt.

viewing? Does the poem verbalise the object, or does the object visualise the poem?

In this connection, it is worth stressing just how small the object really is: the 'great and mighty shield' crafted by Homer (σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε, vv.478, 608) is here turned into something that is easily graspable in one hand (figure 17). The letters of this text are truly tiny — less than 1 mm in height, and indeed under 0.7 mm in the third column. We can just about *see* the text, in other words, but its size proves a veritable challenge to any attempt at actually *reading* the inscribed *grammata*; indeed, the more we try to make verbal sense of the squiggles, the more we lose visual sight of the juxtaposed pictures. Just as the Iliadic text tantalised readers with the promise of viewing the images described (ἴδηται, v.467) — of almost bringing about seeing through hearing — this reversed ekphrasis (of a reversed ekphrasis ad infinitum) teases viewers into thinking that they can actually read the poem that the material object visualises. By quite literally shrinking the text — making it all but illegible, and yet not quite invisible — the tablet's visual size-games parallel the 'ekphrastic hope', 'ekphrastic fear'

and 'ekphrastic indifference' of verbal language: where literary ekphrasis toys with our written access to a visual referent, this pictorial object plays with our visual access to the readable text.[132]

Given tablet 4N's sophisticated play with visual and verbal resources, one final aspect of this inscription deserves mention here. For what is arguably most remarkable about this object is what happens when viewers actually try to put the columns of inscribed text together, rotating the shield as they do so. As we have said, the columns are laid out in anti-clockwise order, so that the cycle of columns is at odds with the clockwise circuit of Helios and Selene (see figure 14). Try to make logical sense of the minute *grammata*, however, and something wondrous happens: the very act of reading the anticlockwise inscription restores the clockwise spatial circuit of Helios and Selene. Turning the object in our hands, we literally spin the 'tireless Sun' (ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα) and 'Moon at her full' (σελήνην τε πλήθουσαν, v.484) in their endless temporal orbits. Better, perhaps, the very act of reading these words re-inscribes the element of time which the images (*qua* images) lack: thanks to the ebb and flow of the sequential Homeric

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Figure 16. Detail of the second column of text (vv.493–504) on the Göttingen plaster cast (see figure 15), magnified to a scale of 3:1 (compare figure 17). Photo: Stefan Eckardt.

text, the object is transformed from static still into temporal animation. We might at first have thought that the material object brought verbal imagery to visual life. We now find the opposite scenario: is it not the flow of text that animates the imagery?

V. Ekphrasis modern and ancient

The complex image–text games of the *Tabulae Iliacae* return us full circle to the paradigmatic description of the *Iliad*. Like other Graeco-Roman artistic objects, from Greek vase-painting through to Pompeian frescoes, these sculpted reliefs develop and materialise conceits of visual–verbal replication that already inhere in Homer. Indeed, one of the marvels of the Iliac tablets is their recourse to Archaic precedent in the first place — the knowing association of their novel and miniature games of text and picture with the oldest and grandest poem of them all.

This has been an unabashedly selective survey. Needless to say, there is much more to be said — both about the Homeric shield of Achilles, and about its multifaceted ancient reception in word and image. But my aim here has been to take a deliberately diachronic view: not to trace the history of thinking about ekphrasis in Greece and Rome, but rather to show the complexity with which, right from the beginnings, ancient writers and artists conceptualised the relationship between words and images.

This seems to me important because of a growing divide between 'ancient' and 'modern' disciplinary perspectives. True, Graeco-Roman writers and artists did not have the same sorts of rationalised resources for discussing ekphrasis as readers of this journal today. But they nonetheless recognised the visual–verbal games of the Homeric paradigm, and indeed developed them in a series of sophisticated, self-referential and creative ways. If this article has consequently championed the modernity of ancient ekphrasis, it has also stressed the antiquity of our modern thinking: if we are to grapple with the collaborative and competing resources of word and image, we must first grapple with Homer.

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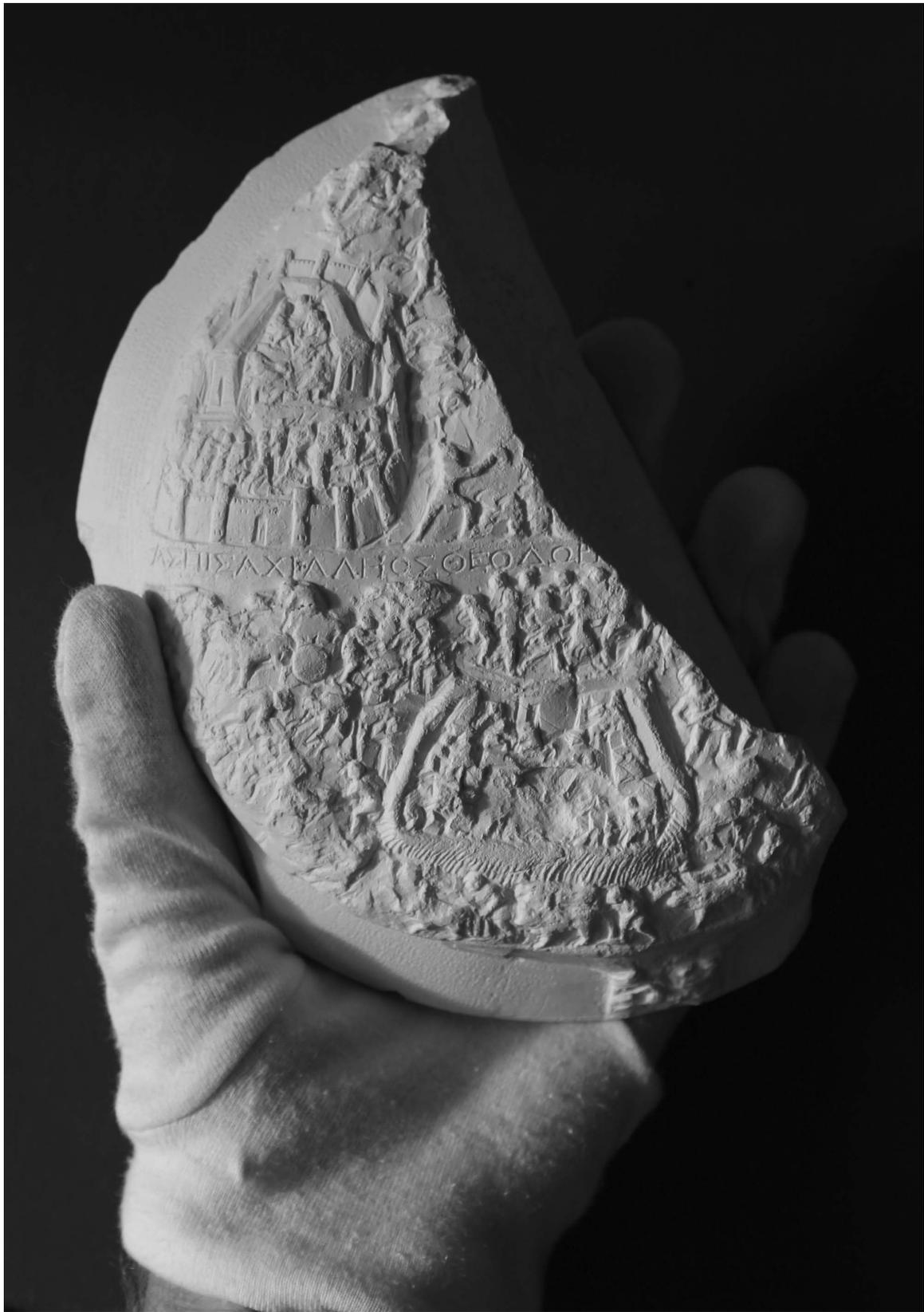
Figure 17. Göttingen plaster cast of *Tabula Iliaca* 4N (see figure 15), held in the hand of the author. Photo: Author.

Appendix: *Il.* 18.478–608 (Greek text after Martin L. West, ed., *Homeri Ilias*, two vols. [Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1998–2000], 2.190–8).

	ποίει δὲ πρώτιστα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε	First of all he made a shield both great and mighty, adorning it cunningly all
	πάντοσε δαιδάλλων, περὶ δ᾽ ἄντυγα βάλλε φαεινήν	over; he set around it a shining rim that was threefold and glittering, and
480	τρίπλακα μαρμαρέην, ἐκ δ᾽ ἀργύρεον τελαμῶνα.	from it a strap made of silver. The shield was composed of five layers: on it he
	πέντε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἔσαν σάκεος πτύχες· αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ	made many cunning things through his skilful craftsmanship.
	ποίει δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσιν.	

	ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ᾽, ἐν δ᾽ οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,	On it he fashioned the earth; on it the heavens; on it the sea, and the
	ἠέλιόν τ᾽ ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσαν,	indefatigable sun and the full moon. On it he fashioned all the stars and the
485	ἐν δὲ τὰ τείρεα πάντα, τά τ᾽ οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται,	things which crown the heavens: the Pleiades, the Hyades, the mighty Orion
	Πληϊάδας θ᾽ Ὑάδας τε τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος	and the Bear which men also call by the name Wagon – circling around
	Ἄρκτόν θ᾽, ἣν καὶ Ἄμαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν,	itself, watching over Orion, alone taking no part in the baths of Ocean.
	ἥ τ᾽ αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καί τ᾽ Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει,	
	οἴη δ᾽ ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο.	

490	ἐν δὲ δύω ποίησε πόλις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων,	On it he also made two fair cities of mortal men. In the one there were
	καλάς· ἐν τῇ μέν ῥα γάμοι τ᾽ ἔσαν εἰλαπίναι τε,	marriages and festivals: with flaring torches they were leading brides from
	νύμφας δ᾽ ἐκ θαλάμων δαΐδων ὕπο λαμπομενάων	their rooms through the city, and a loud wedding-song was arising. Young
	ἠγίνεον ἀνὰ ἄστυ, πολὺς δ᾽ ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει·	men were circling around in the whirl of the dance, and among them were
	κοῦροι δ᾽ ὀρχηστῆρες ἐδίνεον, ἐν δ᾽ ἄρα τοῖσιν	sounding flutes and lyres; the wives stood at their porches, and they each of
495	αὐλοὶ φόρμιγγές τε βοὴν ἔχον· αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες	them marvelled. The people were gathered in the place of assembly, where
	ἱστάμεναι θαύμαζον ἐπὶ προθύροισιν ἑκάστη.	an argument had arisen, and two men were quarrelling over the blood-price
	λαοὶ δ᾽ εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι· ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος	of a man who had died. The first man claimed that he had paid everything,
	ὠρώρει, δύο δ᾽ ἄνδρες ἐνείκεον εἵνεκα ποινῆς	declaring his cause to the people; but the second was denying that he had
	ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου. ὃ μὲν ηὔχετο πάντ᾽ ἀποδοῦναι	received anything. Both were therefore eager to reach a decision from an
500	δήμῳ πιφαύσκων, ὃ δ᾽ ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἑλέσθαι·	arbitrator. The people applauded both sides, advocating first this one and
	ἄμφω δ᾽ ἱέσθην ἐπὶ ἴστορι πεῖραρ ἑλέσθαι.	then that, and heralds were holding back the people. The elders were in
	λαοὶ δ᾽ ἀμφοτέροισιν ἐπήπυον ἀμφὶς ἀρωγοί·	session, seated on polished stones in their sacred circle. They were holding in
	κήρυκες δ᾽ ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον. οἱ δὲ γέροντες	their hands the sceptres of the loud-voiced heralds, and with them they were
	εἵατ᾽ ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῷ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ,	leaping up to their feet and passing judgement. In their midst lay two talents
505	σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ᾽ ἔχον ἠεροφώνων·	of gold, to be given to whichever among them should utter the straightest
	τοῖσιν ἔπειτ᾽ ἤϊσσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δ᾽ ἐδίκαζον.	judgement.
	κεῖτο δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐν μέσσοισι δύω χρυσοῖο τάλαντα,	
	τῷ δόμεν, ὃς μετὰ τοῖσι δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι.	

	τὴν δ᾽ ἑτέρην πόλιν ἀμφὶ δύω στρατοὶ εἵατο λαῶν	Around the other city, by contrast, were lying two armies of troops in
510	τεύχεσι λαμπόμενοι. δίχα δέ σφισιν ἥνδανε βουλή,	gleaming armour. Two plans found favour with them: either to sack it, or
	ἠὲ διαπραθέειν ἢ ἄνδιχα πάντα δάσασθαι	else to divide in two all the possessions that the lovely city contained within.
	κτῆσιν ὅσην πτολίεθρον ἐπήρατον ἐντὸς ἔεργεν.	But the men inside the city would not yet give way, and they were arming
	οἳ δ᾽ οὔ πω πείθοντο, λόχῳ δ᾽ ὑπεθωρήσσοντο.	themselves for an ambush. Their beloved wives and young children were
	τεῖχος μέν ῥ᾽ ἄλοχοί τε φίλαι καὶ νήπια τέκνα	standing on the walls and guarding them, and among them were those men
515	ῥύατ᾽ ἐφεσταότες, μετὰ δ᾽ ἀνέρες οὓς ἔχε γῆρας,	in the grip of old age. But the rest were proceeding out, led by Ares and Pallas
	οἳ δ᾽ ἴσαν· ἦρχε δ᾽ ἄρά σφιν Ἄρης καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη,	Athene, both of them in gold, and gold too were the clothes which they wore:
	ἄμφω χρυσείω, χρύσεια δὲ εἵματα ἕσθην,	they were both fair and tall in their armour (as befits gods), conspicuous
	καλὼ καὶ μεγάλω σὺν τεύχεσιν, ὥς τε θεώ περ,	among the rest, and the people underneath were smaller. But when these
	ἀμφὶς ἀριζήλω· λαοὶ δ᾽ ὑπ᾽ ὀλίζονες ἦσαν.	men had come to the place where it seemed most appropriate to set their
520	οἳ δ᾽ ὅτε δή ῥ᾽ ἵκανον, ὅθί σφισιν εἶκε λοχῆσαι,	ambush – in a riverbed, where there was a watering place for all the herds –
	ἐν ποταμῷ, ὅθι τ᾽ ἀρδμὸς ἔην πάντεσσι βοτοῖσιν,	there they sat down, clothed in ruddy bronze. Two men were then set apart
	ἔνθ᾽ ἄρα τοί γ᾽ ἵζοντ᾽ εἰλυμένοι αἴθοπι χαλκῷ.	from the troops: the men were to wait until they should catch sight of the
	τοῖσι δ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽ ἀπάνευθε δύω σκοποὶ εἵατο λαῶν	sheep and crooked-horned cattle. These soon approached, and two herds-
	δέγμενοι, ὁππότε μῆλα ἰδοίατο καὶ ἕλικας βοῦς·	men followed, playing on their pipes, with no foreknowledge of the ruse.
525	οἳ δὲ τάχα προγένοντο, δύω δ᾽ ἅμ᾽ ἕποντο νομῆες	When the ambushers saw this they attacked and quickly cut off the herds of
	τερπόμενοι σύριγξι, δόλον δ᾽ οὔ τι προνόησαν.	cattle and fair flocks of white sheep on both sides; they also slew the herds-
	οἳ μὲν τὰ προϊδόντες ἐπέδραμον, ὦκα δ᾽ ἔπειτα	men. As soon as the attacking army heard the great tumult among the cattle,
	τάμνοντ᾽ ἀμφὶ βοῶν ἀγέλας καὶ πώεα καλὰ	seated before the assembly places, they immediately mounted behind their
	ἀργεννέων οἰῶν, κτεῖνον δ᾽ ἐπὶ μηλοβοτῆρας.	quick-trotting horses and set out, speedily overtaking them. The others set
530	οἳ δ᾽ ὡς οὖν ἐπύθοντο πολὺν κέλαδον παρὰ βουσὶν	their battle in array and fought beside the riverbanks, and they were striking
	εἰράων προπάροιθε καθήμενοι, αὐτίκ᾽ ἐφ᾽ ἵππων	one another with bronze-tipped spears. Among them was Hate, among
	βάντες ἀερσιπόδων μετεκίαθον· αἶψα δ᾽ ἵκοντο,	them Confusion, and among them destructive Death, grasping one man
	στησάμενοι δ᾽ ἐμάχοντο μάχην ποταμοῖο παρ᾽ ὄχθας,	alive but freshly wounded, grasping another unhurt, and she dragged
	βάλλον δ᾽ ἀλλήλους χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείῃσιν.	another dead by the feet through the carnage: the raiment which she wore

(*Continued*)

535 ἐν δ' Ἔρις, ἐν δὲ Κυδοιμὸς ὁμίλεον, ἐν δ' ὀλοὴ Κήρ,
ἄλλον ζωὸν ἔχουσα νεούτατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον,
ἄλλον τεθνηῶτα κατὰ μόθον εἷλκε ποδοῖιν·
εἷμα δ' ἔχ' ἀμφ' ὤμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἵματι φωτῶν.
540 ὡμίλεον δ' ὥς τε ζωοὶ βροτοὶ ἠδ' ἐμάχοντο,
νεκρούς τ' ἀλλήλων ἔρυον κατατεθνηῶτας.

ἐν δ' ἐτίθει νειὸν μαλακὴν πίειραν ἄρουραν
εὐρεῖαν τρίπολον· πολλοὶ δ' ἀροτῆρες ἐν αὐτῇ
ζεύγεα δινεύοντες ἐλάστρεον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.
545 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.
ἣ δὲ μελαίνετ' ὄπισθεν, ἀρηρομένη δὲ ἐῴκει,
χρυσείη περ ἐοῦσα· τὸ δὴ περὶ θαῦμα τέτυκτο.

550 ἐν δ' ἐτίθει τέμενος βασιλήιον· ἔνθα δ' ἔριθοι
ἤμων ὀξείας δρεπάνας ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες.
δράγματα δ' ἄλλα μετ' ὄγμον ἐπήτριμα πῖπτον ἔραζε,
ἄλλα δ' ἀμαλλοδετῆρες ἐν ἐλλεδανοῖσι δέοντο.
τρεῖς δ' ἄρ' ἀμαλλοδετῆρες ἐφέστασαν· αὐτὰρ ὄπισθεν
555 παῖδες δραγμεύοντες, ἐν ἀγκαλίδεσσι φέροντες,
ἀσπερχὲς πάρεχον. βασιλεὺς δ' ἐν τοῖσι σιωπῇ
σκῆπτρον ἔχων ἑστήκει ἐπ' ὄγμου γηθόσυνος κῆρ·
κήρυκες δ' ἀπάνευθεν ὑπὸ δρυῒ δαῖτα πένοντο,
βοῦν δ' ἱερεύσαντες μέγαν ἀμφεπον· αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες
560 δεῖπνον ἐρίθοισιν λεύκ' ἄλφιτα πολλὰ πάλυνον.

ἐν δ' ἐτίθει σταφυλῇσι μέγα βρίθουσαν ἀλωήν
καλήν, χρυσείην, μέλανες δ' ἀνὰ βότρυες ἦσαν.
ἑστήκει δὲ κάμαξι διαμπερὲς ἀργυρέῃσιν·
ἀμφὶ δὲ κυανέην κάπετον, περὶ δ' ἕρκος ἔλασσεν
565 κασσιτέρου. μία δ' οἴη ἀταρπιτὸς ἦεν ἐπ' αὐτήν,
τῇ νίσοντο φορῆες, ὅτε τρυγόῳεν ἀλωήν.
παρθενικαὶ δὲ καὶ ἠίθεοι ἀταλὰ φρονέοντες
πλεκτοῖς ἐν ταλάροισι φέρον μελιηδέα καρπόν·
τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πάις φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ
570 ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε, λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄειδεν
λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ· τοὶ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἁμαρτῇ
μολπῇ τ' ἰυγμῷ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἕποντο.

ἐν δ' ἀγέλην ποίησε βοῶν ὀρθοκραιράων·
αἱ δὲ βόες χρυσοῖο τετεύχατο κασσιτέρου τε,
575 μυκηθμῷ δ' ἀπὸ κόπρου ἐπεσσεύοντο νομόνδε
πὰρ ποταμὸν κελάδοντα, παρὰ ῥαδαλὸν δονακῆα.
χρύσειοι δὲ νομῆες ἅμ' ἐστιχόωντο βόεσσιν
τέσσερες, ἐννέα δέ σφι κύνες πόδας ἀργοὶ ἕποντο·
σμερδαλέω δὲ λέοντε δύ' ἐν πρώτῃσι βόεσσιν
580 ταῦρον ἐρύγμηλον ἐχέτην· ὃ δὲ μακρὰ μεμυκὼς
εἵλκετο, τὸν δὲ κύνες μετεκίαθον ἠδ' αἰζηοί.
τὼ μὲν ἀναρρήξαντε βοὸς μεγάλοιο βοείην
ἔγκατα καὶ μέλαν αἷμα λαφύσσετον· οἱ δὲ νομῆες
αὔτως ἐνδίεσαν, ταχέας κύνας ὀτρύνοντες,
585 οἳ δ' ἤτοι δακέειν μὲν ἀπετρωπῶντο λεόντων,
ἱστάμενοι δὲ μάλ' ἐγγὺς ὑλάκτεον ἔκ τ' ἀλέοντο.

ἐν δὲ νομὸν ποίησε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
ἐν καλῇ βήσσῃ μέγαν οἰῶν ἀργεννάων,
σταθμούς τε κλισίας τε κατηρεφέας ἰδὲ σηκούς.

590 ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
τῷ ἴκελον, οἷόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.
ἔνθα μὲν ἠίθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι
ὠρχέοντ', ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες·

about her shoulders was red with the blood of men. Just like living mortals they joined in and fought, and they dragged away the bodies of the other's slain.

On it he also wrought a soft fallow – a fertile field that was wide and triple-ploughed. Many ploughmen were in it, wheeling their teams and driving them back and forth. Whenever, after turning, they would reach the end of the field, then would a man come and put into their hands a beaker of honey-sweet wine; the ploughmen would after this turn back along their furrows, eager to reach the final strip of the deep soil. And the field was growing dark behind them and it looked like earth that had been ploughed, even though it was of gold: such was the outstanding marvel that was forged.

On it he also wrought a king's estate. Here there were hired labourers reaping, holding sharp sickles in their hands. Some of the cuttings were falling to the ground in rows that followed the swath; others were tied up by the sheaf-binders in twisted bands of straw. There were sheaf-binders standing by, and behind them were boys who would gather the materials and carry them in their arms, eagerly passing them on. Among them, and in silence, was a king holding his staff: he stood at this point, rejoicing in his heart. At a distance from them, underneath an oak, heralds were preparing a feast, and they were dressing a great ox which they had slain; the women, meanwhile, were strewing abundant quantities of white barley for the reapers' meal.

On it he also wrought a vineyard heavily laden with clusters, one that was fair and golden; the grapes along it were black, and they stood on poles made row after row of silver. And about them he drove a trench of blue enamel, and around that a fence of tin. There was only a single path that led to the vineyard, along which the vintagers travelled whenever they were gathering the vintage. And young girls and young men, with light-hearted glee, were carrying the honeysweet fruit in wicker baskets. In their midst a boy was making delightful music with a clear-toned lyre, and he was singing along to it with a fine Linos song in his delicate voice: stamping and beating the ground with their feet, the others followed on with dancing and cries of joy.

On it he also made a herd of straight-horned cattle. The cattle were forged of gold and of tin, and with lowing they hurried out from the farmyard to the pasture beside the sounding river, beside the waving reed. Golden were the herdsmen who proceeded beside the cattle, four in number, and nine swift-footed dogs pursued them. But there were two fearful lions among the foremost cattle, both grasping a loud-lowing bull: the bull was being dragged away with a mighty mooing, and the dogs and young men followed after him. The two lions had torn open the hide of the mighty bull, and they were devouring the innards and black blood. The herdsmen were meanwhile setting the swift dogs on them, urging them on, but the dogs shrank away from biting: instead, they take a very close stand, bark, and then spring aside.

On it the famous strong-armed god also made a meadow in a fair valley – a great meadow of white sheep and folds and roofed huts and pens.

On it also the famous strong-armed god adorned a dancing floor like the one which, in broad Knossos, Daedalus once fashioned for fair-haired Ariadne. There were dancing young men and much-wooed women, holding one another's hands at the wrist. Of these the maidens wore fine linen, while the youths were clad in fine-spun tunics, and they glistened softly with oil. And

Appendix. (Continued)

595	τῶν δ᾽ αἳ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οἳ δὲ χιτῶνας
	εἵατ᾽ ἐϋννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ.
	καί ῥ᾽ αἳ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνας ἔχον, οἳ δὲ μαχαίρας
	εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέων τελαμώνων.
	οἳ δ᾽ ὁτὲ μὲν θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσιν
600	ῥεῖα μάλ᾽, ὡς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
	ἑζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἴ κε θέῃσιν·
	ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖ θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισιν.
	πολλὸς δ᾽ ἱμερόεντα χορὸν περιίσταθ᾽ ὅμιλος
604/605	τερπόμενοι· δοιὼ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ᾽ αὐτούς
	μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνευον κατὰ μέσσους.
	ἐν δ᾽ ἐτίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο
	ἄντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο.

the maidens wore fair garlands, and the youths had golden daggers hanging from silver sword-belts. Now they would run in circles with their compliant and very nimble feet, just as when a potter sitting by a wheel fitted between his hands makes trial of whether it would run smooth; then again they would run in rows towards one other. And a great multitude stood around the charming dance, delighting in it, while two tumblers circled up and down among them so as to lead the dance.

On it he also wrought the great might of the river Ocean, around the outermost rim of the strongly-made shield.

NOTES

1 – Of the many discussions of *Il.* 18.478–608, I have particularly benefited from the following: Walter Marg, *Homer über die Dichtung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1957), 20–37; Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werke*: *Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur homerischen Frage*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler, 1965), 352–74; Kenneth John Atchity, *Homer's* Iliad*: The Shield of Memory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 158–87; Oliver Taplin, 'The Shield of Achilles within the Iliad,' *Greece and Rome* 27 (1980): 1–21; Michael Lynn-George, *Epos: Word, Narrative and the* Iliad (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 174–200; Mark W. Edwards, ed., *The* Iliad*: A Commentary*, vol. 5, Books 17–20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 200–33; Calvin S. Byre, 'Narration, Description, and Theme in the Shield of Achilles,' *The Classical Journal* 88 (1992): 33–42; Thomas K. Hubbard, 'Nature and Art in the Shield of Achilles,' *Arion* 2 (1992): 16–41; James A.W. Heffernan, *The Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 10–22; John Henderson, 'Illuminatio mea: Hendanceson (Taplin's Shield),' *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 18 (1993): 58–62; Keith Stanley, *The Shield of Homer: Narrative Structure in the Iliad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993), 3–26; Andrew Sprague Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995); Erika Simon, 'Der Schild des Achilleus,' in *Beschreibungskunst — Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Gottfried Boehm and Helmut Pfotenhauer (Munich: W. Fink, 1995), 123–41; Danièle Aubriot, 'Imago Iliadis: Le bouclier d'Achille et la poésie de l'Iliade,' *Kernos* 12 (1999): 9–56; Maureen Alden, *Homer Beside Himself: Para-Narratives in the* Iliad (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 48–73; Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, '"Avec son diaphragme visionnaire: ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσι", *Iliade* XVIII. À propos du bouclier d'Achille', *Revue des études grecques* 115 (2002): 463–84; Oliver Primavesi, 'Bild und Zeit: Lessings Poetik des natürlichen Zeichens und die Homerische Ekphrasis,' in *Klassische Philologie Inter Disciplinas*: *Aktuelle Konzepte zu Gegenstand und Methode eines Grundlagenfaches*, ed. Jürgen Paul Schwindt (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), 187–2011, esp. 192–208; Luca Giuliani, *Bild und Mythos*: *Geschichte der Bilderzählung in der griechischen Kunst* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), 39–47; Stephen Scully, 'Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2003): 29–47; James A. Francis, 'Metal Maidens, Achilles' Shield and Pandora: The Beginnings of "Ekphrasis",' *American Journal of Philology* 130 (2009): 1–23, esp. 8–13; Anne-Marie Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille: un tableau qui borge* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2010); Alex C. Purves, *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46–55; Matteo d'Acunto and Riccardo Palmisciano, eds., *Lo scudo di Achille nell'Iliade: esperienze ermeneutiche a confronto* (Pisa: F. Serra, 2010).

2 – For an English translation, see Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), esp. 91–103 [chs. 18–19], along with discussion in Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 13–22.

3 – Following the definition of Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 3–4; cf. Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xv, labelling the shield of Achilles 'a verbal representation of a fictional visual representation, and thus representation at a second remove'. Typical of such approaches is Shahar Bram's article on 'ekphrasis as a shield', published in this journal, and concerned especially with the Homeric paradigm (Shahar Bram, 'Ekphrasis as a Shield: Ekphrasis and the Mimetic Tradition,' *Word & Image* 22, no. 4 (2006): 372–78): according to Bram, not only is the Homeric shield the paradigmatic example of ekphrasis, but it also figured its own figuratively 'defensive' role, offering 'sanctuary from the flow of time (and its concomitant, death) in the fleeting stillness of the depicted object' (375).

4 – For an excellent introduction, see Jaś Elsner, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis,' *Ramus* 31 (2002): 1–18, labelling the Homeric description 'the paradigm of a leisurely descriptive intervention about a work of art within a long narrative' (p. 3).

5 – On the word's derivation, cf. below, n. 58. The bibliography on ekphrasis in Graeco-Roman literature is too large to survey here: for some critical reviews, see e.g. Elsner, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis'; Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner, 'Introduction: Eight Ways of Looking at Ekphrasis,' *Classical Philology* 102 (2007): i–vi; Michael J. Squire, *Image and Text in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 139–46.

6 – See Ruth Webb, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre,' *Word & Image* 15, no. 1 (1999): 7–18, esp. 11–15. Webb develops her arguments elsewhere (e.g. eadem, 'Picturing the Past: Uses of Ekphrasis in the *Deipnosophistae* and Other Works of the Second Sophistic,' in *Athenaeus and his World: Reading Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David. Braund and John Wilkins [Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000], 218–26, at 221, and above all eadem, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* [Farnham: Ashgate, 2009], 1–38). For further discussions, see e.g. Shadi Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 10, n.10; M.D. Lauxtermann, 'What is an Epideictic Epigram?,' *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998): 525–37, esp. 528–29; Graham Zanker, 'Pictorial Description as a Supplement for Narrative: The Labour of Augeas' Stables in *Heracles Leontophones*,' *American Journal of Philology* 117 (1996): 411–23, at 412, n.5; idem, 'New Light on the Literary Category of "Ekphrastic Epigram" in Antiquity: The New Posidippus (col. X 7 — XI 19 P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309),' *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 143 (2003): 59–62, at 59–60; idem, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 6–7; Michael J. Squire, 'Making Myron's Cow Moo? Ecphrastic Epigram

and the Poetics of Simulation', *American Journal of Philology* 131 (2010): 589–634, esp. 592–93.

7 – Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 1; eadem, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern,' 13. Cf. ibid. 7: 'By a sort of etymological magic, the Greek word is even seen to bear its meaning inscribed within it'. Webb supposes that Leo Spitzer was the first to define 'ekphrasis as an essentially *poetic* genre' in his 1955 essay on Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (ibid., 10–11, and eadem, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 33–36, on Leo Spitzer, *Essays on English and American Literature*, ed. Anna Hatcher [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962], 72).

8 – Lynn-George, *Epos*, 178. Cf. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 14: 'Exactly what Hephaestus wrought on the shield is ultimately impossible to visualize'; John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 8: 'nowhere does the ecphrasis of the images indicate relative placement on the shield's disc'. Others have been rather more optimistic, as when Lessing, *Laocoön*, 94–95 [ch. 18] declares that 'Homer . . . has described his shield . . . so exactly and in such detail that it was not difficult for modern artists to produce a drawing of it exactly in every part [*eine in allen Stücken übereinstimmende Zeichnung darnach zu machen*]'.

9 – Some ancient readers certainly understood the description in these terms, interpreting it as cosmological allegory — a 'replication of the cosmos' (κόσμου μίμημα), as one scholion put it (ad Aratus, *Phaen.* 26: see Jean Martin, ed., *Scholia in Aratum Vetera* [Stuttgart: Teubner, 1974], 71). When Ovid has Ajax refer to the shield, he does so in similar terms — as 'a shield engraved with the image of the vast world' (*clipeus uasti caelatus imagine mundi*: *Met.* 13.110; cf. Philip Hardie, '*Imago mundi*: Cosmological and Ideological Aspects of the Shield of Achilles,' *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 [1985]: 11–23, at 16–17).

10 – On the Homeric ring-composition, with the figure of Ocean opening and closing the description, see e.g. Page DuBois, *History, Rhetorical Description and the Epic* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), 17; Stanley, *Shield of Homer*, 9–13; Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 147–48.

11 – See Byre, 'Narration, Description, and Theme,' 33–34. Of course, the actual structure is somewhat more complicated because of the numerous internal connections: see Stanley, *Shield of Homer*, esp. 9–13.

12 – According to Taplin, 'Shield of Achilles,' 12, 'it is as though Homer has allowed us temporarily to stand back from the poem and see it in its place — like a "detail" from the reproduction of a painting — within a larger land-scape, a landscape which is usually blotted from sight by the all-consuming narrative in the foreground'. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 200–09, provides a good survey of different perspectives, while Alden, *Homer Beside Himself*, 48–73, analyses how the passage serves as 'the nearest thing in the whole poem to the poet's view of the events he is describing' (p. 54). Frontisi-Ducroux, '"Avec son diaphragme visionnaire"', 481, n.60, nicely captures the point when she writes that 'le bouclier d'Achille serait ainsi à l'*Iliade* ce qu'est la lanterne magique à la *Recherche du temps perdu*.'

13 – See Stanley, *Shield of Homer*, esp. 3–26.

14 – Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, 'Reading Pictorial Narrative: The Law Court Scene of the Shield of Achilles,' in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 315–34, provides one of the best Anglophone discussions.

15 – Klaus Fittschen, 'Der Schild des Achilleus,' *Archaeologia Homerica* 2 (1973): N.1.1–28, lists some of the various attempts to reconstruct the shield from the sixteenth century onwards (pp. 3–4); cf. the more detailed discussion of Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 117–237. For a stimulating analysis of the rhetoric that underlies such material reconstructions of literary ekphrasis, see Jodi Cranston, 'Longing for the Lost: Ekphrasis, Rivalry, and the Figuration of Notional Artworks in Renaissance Painting,' *Word & Image* 27, no. 2 (2011): 212–19: Cranston relates the phenomenon 'to the longing for presence central to representation and foregrounded in the gap that exists between texts and images' (p. 217).

16 – Crucial here is Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 51–77, comparing the descrip-tions of other artworks in the *Iliad*; Becker argues that these 'establish the patterns and expectations for ekphrasis in the epic' (p. 51).

17 – Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 19. As Heffernan writes, the 'subtle and ambiguous instances of representational friction suggest that the mind of Homer — or at any rate the mind of the text — is continuously engaged in meditating, sometimes playfully, on the complexities of representation itself: on the startling oppositions and equally startling convergences between the media of visual representation and the referents' (p. 20).

18 – See Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, esp. 87–130. More generally on the Archaic phenomenology of 'wondering' before an artwork, compare Raymond Adolph Prier, *Thauma Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greece* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1989), along with Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. and trans. Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 164–85, and Richard T. Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), esp. 57–69.

19 – For discussion, see Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 128–30, who nicely compares scholion T ad *Il.*18.548–9 (Hartmut Erbse, ed., *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (Scholia Vetera)*, 7 vols [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969–1988], vol. 4, Scholia ad libros OT continens, 551): 'This is unbelievable, and Homer himself made it believable through his amazement' (ἄπιστον δέ, καὶ αὐτὸς διὰ τοῦ θαυμάζειν πιστὸν εἰργάσατο; cf. Andrew Sprague Becker, 'Contest or Concert? A Speculative Essay on Ecphrasis and Rivalry between the Arts,' *Classical and Modern Literature* 23 [2003]: 1–14, at 11). All this seems to reinforce the conclusion of Hubbard, 'Nature and Art,' 35: namely, that 'the *Shield* must be read/heard/seen as a pivotal moment of self-awareness for both the poem's hero and its creator'.

20 – Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 4 (his emphasis); cf. ibid., 19. There are other examples of things seeming other than they are in the description. Particularly interesting is the description of Hate, Confusion and Death at vv.535–40. These appear not as abstract entities, but rather as personifica-tions: as they fight on, they look as though they are living mortals (ὡμίλεον δ' ὥς τε ζωοὶ βροτοὶ ἠδ' ἐμάχοντο, v.539), even though they are not.

21 – Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 22. Cf. e.g. Francis, 'Metal Maidens,' 13: 'Although the god's skill makes the figures so realistic they (seem to?) move and speak, and although the poet aims at vivid realism, the audience is deliberately reminded that these are but images, representations in metal.' Ancient readers seem to have recognised the conceit. Recording the wise comments of the sage Apollonius on the subject of mimetic imitation, for instance, Philostratus records how Apollonius compared a set of bronze reliefs at Porus with those of the Homeric description; just as with the Homeric description, Apollonius is said to have added, one 'would say that the ground was smeared with blood, even though it is of bronze' (καὶ τὴν γῆν ἡματῶσθαι φήσεις χαλκῆν οὖσαν, *VA* 2.22).

22 – This recession of metallic armour is developed in two other places, both in association with the city at war: at v.510, we hear of warriors who are said to be 'gleaming in their armour' (τεύχεσι λαμπόμενοι, v.510); and at v.522, we encounter further warriors 'clothed in ruddy bronze' (εἰλυμένοι αἴθοπι χαλκῷ). In both cases, the detail raises the question: what in turn might have been represented on the armour depicted on the armour of Achilles? There are numerous other metallic objects forged within this metallic shield: talents of gold (v.507), for example, bronze-tipped spears (v.534), silver poles (v.563), a fence of tin (vv.565–66), gold daggers (vv.595–96), and silver baldrics (v.598). It is often left unclear whether these metals refer to the medium of the representation, or else more figuratively to the represented scenes them-selves: when a vineyard is said to be 'fair and golden' (καλήν, χρυσείην, v.562), for instance, does this refer to some figurative quality of the scene ('golden'), or else to its mediating material ('made of gold')?

23 – On the recourse to Daedalus and the 'daedalic' here, see Sarah P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3–35, esp. 12–14.

24 – Lessing, *Laocoön*, 95 [ch. 18]. Lessing develops the point most clearly in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters (ibid., 91–103), esp. when comparing the Homeric and Virgilian descriptions of the shield (ibid., 95–97). As Lessing himself notes, Servius's Virgilian commentary had also reached a related conclusion when comparing the Homeric and Virgilian shields in the

fourth century AD (ibid., 215–16; cf. Andrew Laird, '*Ut figura poesis*: Writing Art and the Art of Writing in Augustan Poetry,' in *Art and Text in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 75–102, at 78–79).

25 – On the underlying ideological stakes, see Squire, *Image and Text*, 90–113.

26 – Compare esp. Atchity, *Homer's Iliad*, 176–87; cf. Francis, 'Metal Maidens,' 9: 'the context of the description is not a static appreciation of the completed work but rather the dynamic process of the god fabricating it'. Oliver Primavesi also discusses this feature, arguing that the durative aspect of the description is reflected in its preponderance of perfect and imperfect tenses (Primavesi, 'Bild und Zeit,' 194–201; cf. Giuliani, *Bild und Mythos*, 40–42; Purves, *Space and Time*, 50). Primavesi counts eighty-eight verbs with a 'durativen oder perfektischen Aspekt', as opposed to just fourteen 'Prädikate im Aorist'. Of course, Homeric differentiations of tense were never quite as clear cut as they were for later Greek authors, but the general point nevertheless stands.

27 – Hence, we might think, the cosmological opening of the description, where we see both the sun and moon — and therefore day and night — simultaneously (vv.483–84). This establishes not just a universal spatial framework, but also one removed from the ordinary linearity of narrative time (and indeed the linear markers of narrative time within the poem): 'there are no trajectories telling time in the plenitude of this image of simultaneity and totality.... In its opening design … the shield offers a divine comprehension of all at once' (Lynn-George, *Epos*, 177). The description of the shield constructs an amazingly complex image of time, not only combining multi-temporal sequences of events in almost every evoked scenario, but also drawing attention to the processual and reiterative (e.g. the ploughmen going backwards and forwards before and after each cup of wine, vv.544–46).

28 – This early image of the judgment scene demonstrates the point with particular clarity: two talents sit on the floor ready to be assigned to the winner of the legal dispute; but they will be given to 'whichever among them should utter the straightest judgment' (ὃς μετὰ τοῖσι δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι, v.508). Within the *epos* of the poem, the prospective potential optative (εἴποι) speaks volumes about the picture and this verbal description's relationship to it: 'the action is suspended in a stillness which awaits that which is still to be spoken … both a scene on the shield and the epic itself are constructed in the expectation of what "someone will say"' (Lynn-George, *Epos*, 183–84). Something similar happens at v.524, when two scouts sit on the look-out until they should catch sight of the enemy (ὁππότε… ἰδοίατο).

29 – The best discussion is once again Lynn-George, *Epos*, 176–86, on scenes 'constructed as an anticipation of an end which is always still to come', 183; cf. Byre, 'Narration, Description, and Theme,' 38–40; Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 17–18; and Primavesi, 'Bild und Zeit', 200–01. I would only add that this aspect of the representation appears itself to have been represented within the narrative frame of the Iliadic description: the shield, we might say, is set up as something both with and without end — the Greek notion of *telos*. When greeting Thetis, Hephaestus promises to accomplish/bring to an end/fulfil [*telesai*] Thetis's request, 'if fulfil it I can, and if it is something that is able to be fulfilled' (τελέσαι δέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν / εἰ δύναμαι τελέσαι γε καὶ εἰ τετελεσμένον ἐστίν, vv.426–27). In his final words to Thetis before crafting the shield, however, Hephaestus characterises its effect not in terms of the past or present, but only ever the future: whoever sees the shield will marvel in the future (θαυμάσσεται, v.467). This paradoxical sense of something both completed and forever unfinished is developed in the description of Achilles's response at *Il.* 19.21–22: the arms that Hephaestus has given are necessarily the product of immortal gods, Achilles proclaims, 'such as no mortal man could fulfil' (μηδὲ βροτὸν ἄνδρα τελέσσαι v.22). To my mind, this framework is of the utmost relevance within the narrative and temporal structure of the poem. The timelessness of Achilles's armour serves as a figurative substitute for the timely mortality of Achilles himself: Thetis promises to commission it even though it will speed Achilles's demise (vv.127–37); moreover, Hephaestus promises to create the armour precisely because he cannot

protect him from the timeliness of death, when 'dread fate comes on him' (vv.462–67).

30 – For an excellent discussion, see Irmgard Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild: Zum Verhältnis der Künste in der hellenistischen Dichtung* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), 13–17: 'so wird in der Schildbeschreibung ausdrücklich geschrieen, gesungen, gebrüllt und musiziert' (p. 15). In this connection, note how, when Thetis delivers the armour to Achilles in the following book, it *sounds* before it is *seen*: as Thetis rests the armour before her son, the 'many adornments' evoked in the previous book 'clamour' (τὰ δ᾽ ἀνέβραχε δαίδαλα πάντα, *Il.* 19.13). Later epideictic epigrams would develop the conceit by making the shield speak: compare e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 9.116.

31 – For discussion, see esp. Maria Moog-Grünewald, 'Der Sänger im Schild — oder: Über den Grund ekphrastischen Schreibens,' in *Behext von Bildern? Ursachen, Funktionen und Perspektiven der textuellen Faszination durch Bilder*, ed. Heinz J. Drügh and Maria Moog-Grünewald (Heidelberg: Winter, 2001), 1–19. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild*, 13–14, compares the scene of the singer at (what she labels) v.604, although only Ath. 180c–d preserves the verse, and it is usually rejected (cf. Martin Revermann, 'The Text of *Iliad* 18.603–06 and the Presence of an *Aoidos* on the Shield of Achilles,' *Classical Quarterly* 48 [1998]: 29–38, esp. 34–35). Earlier, in the context of the city at peace, we hear the depiction of a bridal song (v.493).

32 – Cf. Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 131–32. As Francis, 'Metal Maidens,' adds, silence is a 'condition paradoxically easy to describe in words but difficult to do in mute images' (p.10).

33 – For a related conclusion, compare Francis, 'Metal Maidens,' 3, 16: 'The relationship between word and image in ancient ekphrasis is, from its beginning, complex and interdependent, presenting sophisticated reflection on the conception and process of both verbal and visual representation' (p.3); 'the very idea of representing a visual work of art with artistic words entailed a level of sophistication which had already begun to think abstractly about these modes of representation' (p.16).

34 – For comparison of the Homeric shield scenes with other Greek oral traditions, see Johannes Th. Kakridis, *Homer Revisited* (Lund: Gleerup, 1971), 108–24. Among the most important readings of Homeric poetry as products of oral composition are those by Gregory Nagy: e.g. *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), esp. 13–27. On the inadequacies of oralist approaches for understanding the shield description, on the other hand, see Taplin, 'Shield of Achilles,' 3–4, along with Hubbard, 'Nature and Art,' interpreting the passage as a 'focal point of Homer's poetic self-conceptualization' (p. 35).

35 – See esp. Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 23–40 on *Sc.* 139–320. Despite conspicuous (and knowing) adaptations, the passage is 'clearly written in imitation of Homer' (George Kurman, 'Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry,' *Comparative Literature* 26 [1974]: 1–13, at p. 2): cf. Elsner, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis,' 5–6.

36 – Cf. Plut. *Mor.* (*De glor. Ath.* 346f): πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν. As Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 79 rightly observes, the Simonidean 'définition... n'aurait sans doute pas pu voir le jour sans le grand exemple d'Homère'. Among the many discussions of the aphorism attributed to Simonides, I have particularly benefited from the following: Anne Carson, 'Simonides Painter,' in *Innovations of Antiquity*, ed. Ralph J. Hexter and Daniel Seldon (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 51–64; Alessandra Manieri, 'Alcune riflessioni sul rapporto poesia–pittura nella teoria degli antichi,' *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 50 (1995): 133–40; Michael Franz, *Von Gorgias bis Lukrez: Antike Ästhetik und Poetik als vergleichende Zeichentheorie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 61–83; Gabriele K. Sprigath, 'Das Dictum des Simonides: Der Vergleich von Dichtung und Malerei,' *Poetica* 36 (2004): 243–80; and Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild*, 20–22. On the evidence for the Simonidean dictum, and Plutarch's later re-interpolations of it, see Bravi's discussion in Luigi Bravi and Sara Brunori, 'Il racconto mitico fra tradizione iconografica e tradizione poetica: il pensiero dei moderni e il modello simonideo,' in *Tra panellenismo e tradizioni locali: generi poetici e storiografia*, ed. Ettore Cingano (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010), 451–81, at 463–69.

37 – Cf. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild*, 13–35.

38 – The *Progymnasmata* are conveniently collected and translated in George Alexander Kennedy, Progymnasmata: *Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). The most pertinent Greek passages concerning ekphrasis are collected (together with translation) in the appendix of Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 197–211: Theon, *Prog.* 118.6–120 (see Michel Patillon and Giancarlo Bolognesi, eds., *Aelius Théon*, Progymnasmata [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997], 66–69); Hermog. *Prog.* 10.47–50 (see Hugo Rabe, ed., *Hermogenis Opera* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1913], 22–23); Aphthonius, *Prog.* 12.46–49 (see Hugo Rabe, ed., *Aphthonius*, Progymnasmata [Leipzig: Teubner, 1926], 36–41); Nicolaus, *Prog.* (see Joseph Felten, ed., *Nicolaus*, Progymnasmata [Leipzig: Teubner, 1913], 67–71). There is a growing bibliography, of which the following are particularly important: Erich Pernice and Walter Hatto Gross, 'Beschreibungen von Kunstwerken in der Literatur. Rhetorische Ekphrasis,' in *Allgemeine Grundlagen der Archäologie*, ed. Ulrich Hausmann (Munich: C.H. Beck 1969), 395–496; Hans C. Buch, *Ut pictura poiesis: Die Beschreibungsliteratur und ihre Kritiker von Lessing bis Lukács* (Munich: Hanser, 1972), 18–20; Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, 7–14; Liz James and Ruth Webb, '"To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places": Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium,' *Art History* 14 (1991): 1–17, at 4–7; Sonia Maffei, 'La sophia del pittore e del poeta nel proemio delle *Imagines* di Filostrato Maggiore,' *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 21/2 (1991): 591–621, at 591–93; Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24–26; idem, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis,' 1–3; idem, 'Seeing and Saying: A Psychoanalytical Account of Ekphrasis,' *Helios* 31, no. 1 (2004): 157–86, at 157–58; Webb, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern,' 11–13; eadem, 'Picturing the Past,' 221–44; eadem, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*; Simon Goldhill, 'What Is Ekphrasis For?,' *Classical Philology* 102 (2007): 1–19, at 3–8. More generally on the function of these handbooks, see: Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 47–53; Ruth Webb, 'The *Progymnasmata* as Practice,' in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Yun Lee Too (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 289–316, esp. 294–95; and eadem, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 39–59.

39 – The earliest discussion is usually said to be that of Theon, sometimes dated to the first century AD. More recently, however, Malcolm Heath has argued for a later date, associating Theon with a known fifth-century rhetorician of the same name, and questioning the attribution of another *Progymnasmata* to Hermogenes ('Theon and the History of the *Progymnasmata*,' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43 [2002/2003]: 129–60). Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 14, n.3 may or may not be right 'to prefer to retain the earlier date because of the parallels with Quintilian and the unusual use of Hellenistic historians while acknowledging that these are by no means decisive criteria'.

40 – The best recent discussion is Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 87–130, on both Greek and Latin discussions of *enargeia* and *phantasia* and their connection to ideas about ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata*; cf. Italo Lana, *Quintiliano, Il 'Sublime' e gli 'Esercizi preparatori' di Elio Teone: ricerca sulle fonti greche di Quintiliano e sull'autore 'Del Sublimo'* (Turin: Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli Studi di Torino, 1951); Ian H. Henderson, 'Quintilian and the *Progymnasmata*,' *Antike und Abendland* 37 (1991): 82–99; Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Beth Innocenti, 'Towards a Theory of Vivid Description as Practised in Cicero's *Verrine Orations*,' *Rhetorica* 12 (1994): 355–81.

41 – For the subjects of ekphrasis, see Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 55–56, 61–86, together with her appendix on 213–14.

42 – Theon, *Prog.* 118.7 (see Patillon and Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon*, Progymnasmata, 66; for discussion, see ibid., xxxviii–xlv). Interestingly, Theon's definition is repeated *verbatim* in Hermog. *Prog.* 10.47 (see Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera*, 22); Hermogenes even qualifies the definition with the phrase ὡς φασίν ('as they say'), as if acknowledging its formulaic derivation.

43 – Hermog. *Prog.* 10.48 (see Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera*, 23). The bibliography on *enargeia*, especially in relation to Quintilian's comments (*Inst.* 8.3.64–65) and Stoic notions of *phantasia*, is substantial: see e.g. Fritz Graf, 'Ekphrasis: Die Entstehung der Gattung in der Antike,' in Boehm and Pfotenhauer, *Beschreibungskunst — Kunstbeschreibung*, 143–55, esp. 143–49; Sandrine Dubel, '*Ekphrasis* et *enargeia*: La déscription antique comme parcours,' in *Dire l'évidence. Philosophie et rhétorique antiques*, ed. Carlos Lévy and Laurent Pernot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 249–64; Alessandra Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi: phantasia ed enargeia* (Pisa: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1998); Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 87–130 (summarising e.g. eadem, 'Mémoire et imagination: Les limites de l'enargeia,' in Lévy and Pernot, *Dire l'évidence*, 229–48; eadem, 'Imagination and the Arousal of Emotion in Greco-Roman Rhetoric,' in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 112–27; eadem, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern,' 13–15; eadem, 'Picturing the Past,' 221–25).

44 – Hermog. *Prog.* 10.48 (see Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera*, 23; Nicolaus (= Felten, Progymnasmata, 70).

45 – Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 7–8.

46 – Cf. ibid., 46, 82–84 on Nicolaus (see Felten, Nicolaus Progymnasmata, 69), who introduces the example of 'a man made of bronze or painted/described in pictures/descriptions' [*graphais*] (ἄνθρωπον χαλκοῦν ἢ ἐν γραφαῖς). It is worth observing, though, how Aphthonius describes a Temple of Serapis on the acropolis at Alexandria as an example of ekphrasis — 'effectively an architectural paradigm' (Elsner, 'Seeing and Saying,' 181, n.1). Note too how, although much later (probably dating to the ninth century), John of Sardis's commentary on Aphthonius specifically adduces Philostratus's *Imagines* as an example of an ekphrastic text (see Hugo Rabe, ed., *Ioannis Sardiani Commentarium in Aphthonii* Progymnasmata [Leipzig: Teubner, 1928], 215). I think this a much older delineation: the Younger Philostratus talks of his grandfather's *Imagines* as 'a certain *ekphrasis* of works of painting' (τις γραφικῆς ἔργων ἔκφρασις, *Im.* praef.2); moreover, both the Younger and Elder Philostratus play upon the ekphrastic language of *sapheneia* and *enargeia* in their *Imagines*, as when, for example, the Elder Philostratus instructs his audience to interject 'if I were to say something that is not clear' (εἴ τι μὴ σαφῶς φράζοιμι, *Im.* 1.praef.5), or when the speaker distinguishes between a painting's *logos* and its 'vivid form' (τόδε δ᾽ ἐναργές, *Im.* 2.13.2).

47 – Cf. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 70 on Theon, *Prog.* 118.7 (see Patillon and Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon*, Progymnasmata, 67): 'Theon could hardly be further from treating it as a description of an "objet d'art", or even a work of poetry. . .. But his ability to place what is for us the seminal example of a description of a work of art in such company does show how different his preoccupation and organizing schemes were from those of a twentieth-century critic like Spitzer.'

48 – Webb, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern,' 18.

49 – As Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 3, explains, the author focuses 'on the rhetorical theory and practice of ekphrasis' because 'it is in the rhetoricians' schools that ekphrasis was defined, taught and practised and it is therefore in the domain of rhetoric that we can find a substantial explanation of what ekphrasis was, how it functioned and what its purpose was'. Webb offers a superlative review of the scope and rhetorical objectives of the *Progymnasmata*. But it seems misleading to reconstruct ideas about ekphrasis from these sources alone (for my own response here, in a review of Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, see Michael J. Squire, *Aestimatio* 5 [2008, published 2010]: 233–44).

50 – The point is best brought out by Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, 7–14, in the context of the Greek novel: 'The approach these handbooks take proves to be relatively dry and matter-of-fact; they provide guidelines for content and procedure rather than provide suggestions on function in a literary context, and their theory, if it deserves the name, strays within bounds too narrow to reveal how such passages might be manipulated for broader aims' (p. 9).

51 – For references, see above, n.44.

52 – Goldhill, 'What is Ekphrasis For?,' 3; cf. Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 28: 'The illusion in ekphrasis is not full enchantment. . .. But some texts downplay the mediating presence of the describer and the language of description, some call our attention to them, and some do both.'

53 – See Rabe, *Aphthonius*, Progymnasmata, 41.

54 – Cf. Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 29–30, using this example to show how 'although the handbooks suggest that one include several types of evaluations and judgments in a description, the most forceful of these, and that most appropriate to literary ekphrasis, is *thauma* (marvel, wonder, astonishment, or amazement)' (p. 29). More generally on the ekphrastic stakes of *thauma*, esp. as developed by Second Sophistic Greek authors, compare Zahra Newby, 'Testing the Boundaries of Ekphrasis: Lucian on the Hall', *Ramus* 31 (2002): 126–35, and eadem; 'Absorption and Erudition in Philostratus' *Imagines*,' in *Philostratus*, ed. Ewen Bowie and Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 322–42.

55 – Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 11. Compare e.g. Fittschen, 'Schild des Achilleus', N.1.1: 'die Fülle der Schilderungen anderer Gegenstände der Kunst oder des Kunsthandwerks ist von der Art der homerischen Beschreibung geprägt'; cf. Becker, *Shield of Achilles*, 3, labelling the Homeric example the 'touchstone for ekphrasis in ancient Greek and Latin literature'.

56 – There is a masterfully concise overview by Elsner, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis'.

57 – Among the many discussions of this Virgilian ekphrasis, I have found the following particularly insightful: Philip Hardie, *Virgil's* Aeneid*: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. 336–76; Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 22–36; Michael C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the* Aeneid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 119–88; and A.J. Boyle, '*Aeneid* 8: Images of Rome,' in *Reading Virgil's* Aeneid*: An Interpretive Guide*, ed. Christine G. Perkell (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 148–61. I return to the subject in a forthcoming article: Michael J. Squire, 'The *Ordo* of Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of *Ordo*,' in *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Michel Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

58 – As Graf, 'Ekphrasis,' 143 notes, the *ek-* of Greek 'ekphrasis' implies 'ein "völlig und restlos deutliches Machen"'; here, though, the *non* negativises the idea. Riemer Faber, 'Vergil's "Shield of Aeneas" (*Aeneid* 8.617–731) and the "Shield of Heracles",' *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000): 49–57, offers one of the best discussions of the phrase, reminding us of its debt to the pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles* (esp. e.g. *Sc.* 144: οὔ τι φατειός and ibid. 230: οὐ φαταί); compare also Laird, '*Ut figura poesis*,' 77–79, on Servius's late fourth-century gloss. As Shadi Bartsch, '*Ars* and the Man: The Politics of Art in Virgil's *Aeneid*,' *Classical Philology* 93 (1998): 322–42, at 327–28, argues, *textum* refers not just to the visual texture of the object, but also to the literary texture of this ekphrasis: Virgil, in other words, describes a *textum* adorned with stories which Aeneas can *see*, but which (unlike Vulcan, the poet and the audience) Aeneas is unable to make *readable*. As opposed to the maker of this shield (who is 'not ignorant of prophecy', *haud uatum ignarus*, 8.627), or indeed the Virgilian craftsman of the poem (able to characterise the ignorance or otherwise of his cast), Aeneas looks at the shield, but nevertheless remains *ignarus* of its narratives (8.730).

59 – The passage is discussed by e.g. Bettina Bergmann, 'Visualising Pliny's Villas,' *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8 (1995): 406–20, at 408; John Henderson, *Pliny's Statue: The* Letters, *Self-Portraiture and Classical Art* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002), 18–20; idem, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Figure of Style: P.L.I.N.Y's Letters,' *Arethusa* 36 (2003): 115–25, at 121–22; and Christopher M. Chinn, 'Before Your Very Eyes: Pliny *Epistulae* 5.6 and the Ancient Theory of Ekphrasis,' *Classical Philology* 102 (2007): 265–80, esp. 269–70, 276–78.

60 – On Pliny's debt to such theories here, see Chinn, 'Before Your Very Eyes,' 272–75.

61 – Ibid., 277–8, 265. Cf. ibid., 277: 'Thus Pliny construes the shield of Achilles as the tropological source of his villa description and perhaps of his

descriptive practice in general. . .. This implies a theory of description that is at the same time more specific (as a rhetorical term) and more encompassing (as a term applicable to various literary genres) than those of the *progymnasmata* or the other rhetorical handbooks by themselves.'

62 – E.g. Francis, 'Metal Maidens,' 8, n.22: 'such scenes are not specifically termed ekphraseis in antiquity'.

63 – E.g. Scholion T. ad *Il.* 18.610: see Erbse, *Scholia Graeca*, 4.570.

64 – Elsner, 'Introduction: The Genres of Ekphrasis,' 2–3.

65 – Scholion T. ad *Il.* 18.476–77: see Erbse, *Scholia Graeca*, 4.256.

66 – For ekphrasis as making something 'manifest' (*phaneron*), compare, the Byzantine commentaries on Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* cited by Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 205–07.

67 – On the philosophy behind such 'sculpted' *plasmata*, see e.g. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 168–69; cf. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild*, 90–92 on *Anth. Pal.* 9.713–42.

68 – The best Anglophone discussion of such passages and their literary critical history is Froma Zeitlin, 'Visions and Revisions of Homer,' in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, The Second Sophistic, and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 195–266, at 218–33; more detailed is Michael Hillgruber, ed., *Die pseudoplutarchische Schrift* De Homero, vol. 1, Einleitung und Kommentar zu den Kapiteln 1–73 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994–1999), 5–35 Cf. also, most recently, Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 65–87.

69 – For the passage, see Michael Hillgruber, ed., *Die pseudoplutarchische Schrift* De Homero, vol. 2, Kommentar zu den Kapiteln 74–218 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999), 435–38, and John J. Keaney and R. Lamberton, eds., *Plutarch, Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 306–09.

70 – As Keaney and Lamberton, *Plutarch*, 27, put it, discussing the final clause of the passage quoted above, 'the creator of Hephaestus and the shield is assimilated to his creation and the global and comprehensive artifact of Hephaestus becomes, implicitly, the Homeric *corpus*'.

71 – Despite the flurry of interest in the *Imagines* of his purported grandfather, there is remarkably little bibliography on Philostratus the Younger: the little that there is has been surveyed by Francesca Ghedini, 'Premessa,' in *Le immagine di Filostrato Minore: La prospettiva dello storico dell'arte*, ed. eadem, Isabella Colpo and Marta Novello (Rome: Quasar, 2004), 1–3. As for this particular passage, there are some pertinent comments in Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 89–93; there is also brief 'art historical' commentary in Rita Amedick, 'Der Schild des Achilleus in der hellenistisch-römischen ikonographischen Tradition,' *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Insituts* 114 (1999): 157–206 (with further references at 162–63, n.21), and Carlo Pasquariello, 'Pirro o i Misii,' in Ghedini, Colpo and Novello, *Le immagine di Filostrato Minore*, 105–15, but I am aware of no other commentary. My chapter references follow those of Arthur Fairbanks's edition (Arthur Fairbanks, ed., *Philostratus,* Imagines; *Philostratus,* Imagines; *Callistratus,* Descriptions [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931]), although translations are my own.

72 – See Eustathius ad *Il.* 18.607 (Marchinus van der Valk, ed., *Eustathii Archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes ad fidem codicis Laurentiani editi*, vol. 4, Praefationem et commentarios ad libros R - Ō complectens [Leiden: Brill, 1987], 272): '[The verse is] clearly imitating the manner of a painting/described picture — which the descriptive authors emulated — because Homer put the Ocean around his making of the cosmos in circular formation' (δῆλον δὲ ὡς πάνυ δεξιῶς πινακογραφικῷ χαρακτῆρι, ὃν οἱ περιηγούμενοι ἐζήλωσαν, τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν Ὅμηρος κοσμοποιΐᾳ κύκλῳ τὸν Ὠκεανὸν περιέθετο).

73 – After years of comparative neglect, Philostratus the Elder's *Imagines* has attracted much renewed interest over the last twenty years. In addition to the numerous discussions in this journal (above all, Michel Conan, 'The *Imagines* of Philostratus,' *Word & Image* 3, no. 2 [1987]: 162–71, and James A.W. Heffernan, 'Speaking for Pictures: The Rhetoric of Art Criticism,' *Word & Image* 15, no. 1 [1999]: 19–33, at 22–23 [reprinted in idem, *Cultivating Picturacy: Visual and Verbal Interventions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006),

44–48]), note the following recent surveys: Zahra Newby, 'Absorption and Erudition in Philostratus' *Imagines*'; Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 187–90; Michael J. Squire, 'Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*,' in *Art History: The Fifty Key Texts*, ed. Diana Newall and Grant Pooke (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 7–12; and idem, 'Apparitions Apparent: Ekphrasis and the Parameters of Vision in the Elder Philostratus' *Imagines*,' *Helios* 40 (forthcoming 2013). The Suda names three Philostrati, but the relationship between them is confused: see Graham Anderson, *Philostrati: Biography and Letters in the Third Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 291–96, with further comments in Jaap-Jan Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs, and Political Ideas in Philostratus* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995), 5–28, and Ludo de Lannoy, 'Le problème des Philostrate,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 2.34.3 (1972): 2362–449.

74 – For this trope in the context of the Elder Philostratus's *Imagines*, see esp. Duncan McCombie, 'Philostratus, *Histoi, Imagines* 2.28: Ekphrasis and the Web of Illusion,' *Ramus* 31 (2002): 146–57, at 151–52: 'His textual narration is an interpretation and therefore a representation, a mimetic process that produces from the painting another artifact. That artifact is his text and has its own hermeneutic requirement, of which in the device of the internal audience he shows an acute awareness'; cf. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 28–29; Eleanor Winsor Leach, 'Narrative Space and Viewer in Philostratus' *Eikones*,' *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Römische Abteilung* 107 (2000): 237–51.

75 – Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 22.

76 – Would it be far-fetched to posit a programmatic significance in this generational remove? Just as the son (Pyrrhus) inherits the shield from his father (Achilles), so too is Philostratus's description inherited not only from Homer (the father of all Greek literary production), but also from his purported grandfather, the Elder Philostratus.

77 – As often, the speaker starts his peroration by drawing attention to the picture's literary archaeology — the 'chorus of poets' who have treated the theme before him (ποιητῶν… χορός, *Im.* 10.1, echoing the 'chorus' with which the Homeric ekphrasis ends at *Il.* 18.604). In this case, though, we are left guessing whether the (description of the) tableau is an image derived from a text, or a text derived from an image: punning on the shared language of *graphe* as both something 'drawn' and 'written', Philostratus tells how the description/painting 'speaks' the same things as the poets (φησὶ δὲ καὶ ἡ γραφῇ ταῦτα, *Im.* 10.1).

78. E.g. ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.5; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.6; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.7; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.7; ἰδού, *Im.* 10.8; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.8; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.8; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.9; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.10; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.10; ἰδεῖν, *Im.* 10.10; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.11; ἰδού, *Im.* 10.12; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.13; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.17; ὁρᾷς, *Im.* 10.19.

79 – Cf. Pasquariello, 'Pirro o i Misii,' 112, on this 'meraviglioso caso di *ekphrasis* nell'*ekphrasis*' (with the list of allusions in n.10): 'Filostrato descrive lo scudo così come lo aveva rappresentato Omero, punto dopo punto'.

80 – Observe, for example, the women in the city at peace, not just marvelling at the sights but shouting for joy (*Im.* 10.7), and note how Homer's cheering in the agora and the 'loud-voiced' heralds (*Il.* 18.502, 505) are transformed back into silence (*Im.* 10.8). The whole passage is defined around the poles of seeing and hearing: while evoking a picture, the speaker at one point predicts that his audience will want to *hear* about depictions rather than simply see them (ἀκοῦσαι, *Im.* 10.6); at another, he asks us — in the context of a depicted group of herdsmen, and punning further on the visual–verbal language of *techne* — whether 'the simple and autochthonous aspect of their music reaches us, a highland strain without *techne*' (ἢ οὐ προσβάλλει σε τὸ λιτὸν καὶ αὐτοφυὲς τῆς μούσης καὶ ἀτεχνῶς ὄρειον, *Im.* 10.10).

81 – That Philostratus's description resonates with the rhetoric of theorising ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata* is most spectacularly demonstrated at *Im.* 10.17: the marvel of the picture's cows is not their colour (χρόας οὐχ ἂν θαυμάσειας, *Im.* 10.17), narrates the speaker, but rather the fact that you can 'as it were *hear* the cows mooing in the painting/description [*graphe*]' (τὸ δὲ καὶ μυκωμένων ὥσπερ ἀκούειν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ, *Im.* 10.17 — the

onomatopoetic verb reproducing that of *Il.* 18.580). In an amazing play on the technical language of the *Progymnasmata*, Philostratus asks whether it is not this *image*, but rather these *sounds*, that are the height of *enargeia* (πῶς οὐκ ἐναργείας πρόσω, *Im.* 10.17).

82 – Significantly, Philostratus the Younger returns to this opening pun when closing his own description of the shield — knowingly layering *his* 'impressions' onto the literal and metaphorical impressions of Hephaestus, Homer and the supposed artist of the picture (as well as those of the speaker): 'you have enough of the impressions' (ἱκανῶς ἔχεις τῶν ἐκτυπωμάτων, *Im.* 10.20).

83 – For the intellectual context, see esp. Maria Boeder, *Visa est Vox: Sprache und Bild in der spätantiken Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1996), and the essays in Michel Costantini, Françoise Graziani, and Stéphane Rolet, eds., *Le défi de l'art. Philostrate, Callistrate et l'image sophistique* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006); on the artistic context, compare e.g. John Onians, 'Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity,' *Art History* 3 (1980): 1–24, and idem, *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 217–78, arguing that 'as art becomes less and less descriptive, the accounts of art become more so' (p. 247).

84 – In the case of Philostratus the Elder's *Imagines*, at least, the issue of the gallery's reality has been one of the dominant (if most futile) subjects of scholarly debate: see esp. Norman Bryson, 'Philostratus and the Imaginary Museum,' in *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, ed. Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 255–83, and Luca Giuliani, 'Die unmöglichen Bilder des Philostrat: Ein antiker Beitrag zur Paragone-Debatte?,' *Pegasus* 8 (2006): 91–116.

85 – There is an introductory discussion (with further bibliography) in Karl Schefold and Franz Jung, *Die Sagen von den Argonauten, von Theben und Troia in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst* (Munich: Hirmer, 1989), 218–22; cf. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 1981–1997), 8 vols., vol. 1, 11–12, s.v. 'Thetis', nos. 47–54, with further references. Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 23–29 similarly surveys some of 'les premières représentations' from Archaic Greece onwards.

86 – Knud Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1967), 247–49, instead associates Pausanias's scene with an 'old legend, according to which Thetis and her sisters brought Achilles a suit of armour made by Hephaistos already when he left Peleus's house for the War against Troy'.

87 – See ibid., 106–7 (with further references).

88 – Frank Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*, 3rd ed. (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1973), 366–70, remains the most detailed catalogue. Compare the analyses in Steven Lowenstam, 'The Arming of Achilleus on Early Greek Vases,' *Classical Antiquity* 12 (1993): 199–218; Judith M. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 17–48; and Alexandra Alexandridou, *The Early Black-Figured Pottery of Attica in Context (c. 630–570 BC)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 57–58.

89 – Discussing the 'great number of devices' (p. 82) emblazoned on the shield of Achilles in vase-painting, George H. Chase, lists no fewer than thirty-one different choices of image (George H. Chase, 'The Shield Devices of the Greeks,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 13 (1902): 61–127, at 83, n.1).

90 – On the shield type, and its relation to 'Dipylon' prototypes, see Anthony M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 55, concluding that such shields 'are usually a sign that the scene is taken from heroic saga': 'in actual fact it can never have existed, even if its immediate predecessor did'.

91 – For the vase — an Attic black-figure neck-amphora in the British Museum (1922.6–15.1) — see J.D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1956), 86, no. 9 (attributed to the Painter of Berlin B 76). Especially interesting about this example is the way in which, above the shield, the helmet breaks the pictorial frame at the top: Achilles's armour, it seems, cannot be contained within the pictorial space assigned to it.

92 – For the vase — an Attic black-figure lekanis in Rhodes (inv. 5008) — see Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, 24, no. 1 (attributed to the Komast Group, and sometimes to the KX Painter). Cf. Semni Papaspyridi-Karusu, 'Sophilos,' *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Athenische Abteilung*

62 (1937): 111–35, at 133, no. 28, and Alexandridou, *Early Black-Figured Pottery*, fig. 40, for an image of the whole vase.

93 – Chase, 'Shield Devices,' 83, n.1 lists five examples — making this the single most common emblem depicted on Achilles' shield. The author proceeds to find some 39 parallels for the shield device (Chase, 'Shield Devices,' 106–07); ultimately, though, he associates the gorgoneion on Achilles's shield with 'the symbol of his patroness, Athena'. More generally on the recourse to the Gorgon and gorgoneion in Greek shield devices between the eighth and sixth centuries, see the thorough catalogue by Annelore Vaerst, *Griechische Schildzeichen vom 8. bis zum 6. Jh.* (unpublished PhD dissertation: Universität Salzburg, 1980), 536–47, citing over 60 examples in sixth-century Attic vase-painting. On the gorgoneion as a way of visually responding to the verbal complexity of the Homeric shield, see now the excellent discussion of François Lissarrague, 'Les temps des boucliers,' in *Traditions et temporalités des images*, ed. Giovanni Careri, François Lissarrague, Jean-Claude Schmitt and Carlo Severi (Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales: Paris, 2009), 21–31, esp. 22–24.

94 – For the vase — a black-figure neck-amphora in Boston (MFA inv. 21.21) — see Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, 84, no.3 (attributed to the Camtar Painter), and Herbert Hoffmann, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Attic Black-Figured Amphorae*, in collaboration with Dietrich von Bothmer and Penelope Truitt (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1973), 12–13; a similar vase, attributed to the same painter, can be found in the Louvre (inv. CP10521: Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, 84, no. 4, with discussion in Dietrich von Bothmer, 'The Arming of Achilles,' *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 47 [1949]: 84–90, esp. 85). Observe how, on the Boston neck-amphora, the helmeted and cuirassed forms of the hoplites are echoed in the figurative shapes of the decorative frieze above.

95 – Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage: aspects de l'identité en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 69. As Rainer Mack, 'Facing Down Medusa (An Aetiology of the Gaze),' *Art History* 25 (2002): 571–604, puts it, 'the image [of the Gorgon] sets up an unstable and ultimately uneven dialectic of subject positions' (p. 575).

96 – For the whole associated question of 'Homer and the artists' here — the extent to which artists may or may not have been familiar with Homeric poetry — see Anthony M. Snodgrass, *Homer and the Artists: Text and Picture in Early Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Steven Lowenstam, *As Witnessed by Images: The Trojan War Tradition in Greek and Etruscan Art* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). In terms of the vase-paintings already discussed, some have argued that these images refer to Achilles's original armour (the armour lost by Patroclus) rather than the subsequent arms described in *Iliad* 18: Lowenstam, 'Arming of Achilleus,' offers a full survey of the scholarship, concluding that these vases do depict the arming of Achilles at Troy after Patroclus' death, but do so 'with characteristic license' (p. 214).

97 – For the iconography, see *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, vol. 8.1, 10–11, s.v. 'Thetis', nos. 29–41 (with further cross-references); cf. ibid. vol. 4.1, 630, s.v. 'Hephaistos', nos. 1–10.

98 – For the extant depictions, see Johansen, Iliad *in Early Greek Art*, 178–84, along with 257, no. 13. The Attic red-figure 'Foundry Painter' name-vase (Berlin inv. F2294 = J. D. Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 3 vols., vol. 1, 400–1, no. 1) has attracted a substantial bibliography. But the best discussion is Richard T. Neer, *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting: The Craft of Democracy, ca. 530–460 B.C.E.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 77–85; more generally on the painter and his œuvre, see Martin Robertson, *The Art of Vase-Painting in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 107–09.

99 – See Johansen, Iliad *in Early Greek Art*, 18, labelling this 'doubtless a deliberate allusion to the beginning of the famous Homeric description of Achilles's new shield'. Neer, *Style and Politics*, 83–84 argues for a self-referential Homeric literary significance behind this central motif, comparing the famous portent of an eagle and snake at *Il.* 12.200–09: 'Can it be coincidence that the Foundry Painter chooses to set this enigmatic device on (of all things) the shield of Akhilleus? The bird-sign epitomizes the cup's irony: in place of

Homer's grand *ekphrasis*, the Foundry Painter shows us a sign that cannot be interpreted.'

100 – There is a good description of the various activities, and their relation to contemporary bronze-casting, by Carol Mattusch, 'The Berlin Foundry Cup: The Casting of Bronze Statuary in the Early Fifth Century BC,' *American Journal of Archaeology* 84 (1980): 435–44.

101 – Neer, *Style and Politics*, 77–85.

102 – Cf. ibid., 85: 'In good sympotic fashion, the Foundry Cup expressly thematizes the slips, swerves, and disruptions that characterize both pictorial and graphic metamorphoses. . .. The result is a dialectic of word and image, seeming and truth, blacksmith and deity.' We might add that the artist has gone out of his way to draw out visual parallels between the make-believe of his little cup and the prototypical fictions of the grand epic shield: so it is that the round form of the shield recalls the round frame of the cup's tondo, for example, and both shield and tondo alike are framed within corresponding ornamental borders. Intriguingly, the painter marks the recession of his first- to second-degree representations by switching from red-figure to black-figure technique: unlike the figures within the tondo, the figures within the shield are painted in black, with the space around them left unpainted, harking back to the painterly mode of a previous generation.

103 – On the supposed Hellenistic derivation of the surviving Thetis paintings from Pompeii, see e.g. Schefold and Jung, *Sagen von den Argonauten*, 219–20.

104 – For discussion, see: Otto J. Brendel, *The Visible Idea: Interpretations of Classical Art*, trans. M. Brendel (Washington, DC: Decatur House Press, 1980), 74–80; Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 18–20; Françoise Gury, 'La Forge du destin: À propos d'une série de peintures pompéiennes du IVe style,' *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité* 98 (1986): 427–89; Lilian Balensiefen, *Die Bedeutung des Spiegelbildes als ikonographisches Motiv in der antiken Kunst* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth, 1990), 56–59 (with extensive bibliography at 56, n.245); Jürgen Hodske, *Mythologische Bildthemen in den Häusern Pompejis: Die Bedeutung der zentralen Mythenbilder für die Bewohner Pompejis* (Stendal: Franz Philipp Rutzen, 2007), 216–18; Rabun Taylor, *The Moral Mirror of Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 137–68, esp. 152–58. The paintings which survive from Pompeii come from the Casa del Criptoportico (I.6.2), Casa di Meleagro (VI.9.2), Casa degli Amorini Dorati (VI.16.7), Casa di Sirico (VII.1.25), Casa di Paccius Alexander (IX.1.7) and the Domus Uboni (IX.5.2). Karl Schefold, *Die Wände Pompejis: Topographisches Verzeichnis der Bildmotive* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1957), 173 and 238, mentions additional paintings from the Casa delle Quadrighe (VII.2.25) and Casa di Epidius Sabinus (IX.1.22), although I omit these seventh and eighth images: the first is lost without trace; while the second does survive (cf. Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, *Pompei: pitture e mosaici* [Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1990–2003], 10 vols., vol. 6, 713, no. 56, *pace* Gury, 'La Forge du destin,' 432, n.25), it shows Hephaestus with two other male figures, and without Thetis (interestingly, however, Thetis does appear on the west wall of the same room, bearing Achilles's arms: Pugliese Carratelli, *Pompei: pitture e mosaici*, vol. 7, 715, no. 58). With one notable exception (the first-century BC 'Second Style' Iliadic frieze from the Casa del Criptotortico), most paintings appear on walls of either the late 'Third' or 'Fourth' Pompeian Style, dating to around the middle of the first century AD (for an introduction to this classificatory system of the 'Four Styles', see e.g. Jean-Michel Croisille, *La Peinture romaine* [Paris: Picard, 2005], esp. 31–102).

105 – Cf. Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 19: 'The feature of the zodiac-ring may derive directly from Crates's interpretation of the Shield, if the allegorization of the triple rim of the Shield as the zodiac goes back to him.'

106 – For the subjects of the shield in the less-well preserved paintings, see Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 19, n.60.

107 – Cf. Brendel, *Visible Idea*, 74–75 and Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 20 (with further bibliography in n.69): Hardie suggests that Thetis is reacting to a 'horoscope of Achilles'. Whatever the hypothetical conversation, it is worth noting Thetis's shock and surprise, reflected in the position of her right hand.

108 – On the two Pompeian pictures illustrated here, see Pugliese Carratelli, *Pompei: pitture e mosaici*, vol. 6, 279, no. 95, and ibid. vol. 9, 397, no. 57. Interestingly, the painting from the Domus Uboni was set against another image of Thetis bringing the arms to Achilles at the centre of the facing (west) wall of the same room (ibid., vol. 9, 397, no. 57, and ibid. vol. 9, 398, no. 58), as well as a painting of Achilles at Skyros on the north wall, shown clasping his *old* shield in his right hand (ibid., vol. 9, 393, no. 51). Were viewers invited to compare and contrast not only different moments in the hero's life, but also different representations of his armour?

109 – The painting is now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (inv. 9528). Previous discussions have somewhat downplayed the metaliterary-cum-metapictorial sophistication. Martin Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 585, for example, damningly concludes that 'the failure of the picture seems to lie in its theme': 'the tragic mother, trying to arm her son against a fate which she in fact knows he cannot escape, should not, one feels, sit looking at her reflection in the shield, or even just admiring its workmanship'.

110 – Cf. Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 20, n.64: 'I make out the following: at 7 o'clock a man on a rearing horse; at 9 o'clock a helmeted figure with a right arm outstretched; at 11 o'clock two figures; at 12 o'clock a series of squiggles which might be interpreted as a winged figure. Scenes of battle suggest themselves.' The best formal description of the painting is Robertson, *History of Greek Art*, 584–85.

111 – A parallel (albeit fragmentary) image is to be found in the Casa del Criptoportico (Francesca Aurigemma, 'Appendice: tre nuovi cicli di figurazioni ispirate all'Iliade in case della Via dell'Abbondanza in Pompeii,' in *Pompei alla luce degli scavi nuovi di Via dell'Abbondanza (anni 1920–23)*, ed. Vittorio Spinazzola [Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1953], 923); in this painting, though, it is another nymph (labelled Euanthe) who looks upon her own reflection, while Thetis is seated to the right. There is an interesting literary parallel in Apoll. *Arg.* 1.742–46, describing Aphrodite looking upon her reflection in Ares's shield, but within an ekphrastic description of Jason's cloak which is in turn clearly derived from the Homeric description of Achilles's shield.

112 – On the mirroring image within the painting, see Balensiefen, *Bedeutung des Spiegelbildes*, 56–59, 236–37 (K36), where there is also a concise overview of debates about the painting's date. More generally on Campanian painting's concern with 'reflected' second-degree representation, see esp. the work of Jaś Elsner on images of Narcisuss (Jaś Elsner, 'Naturalism and the Erotics of the Gaze: Intimations of Narcissus,' in *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, ed. Natalie Kampen [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 247–61; idem, 'Caught in the Ocular: Visualising Narcissus in the Roman World,' in *Echoes of Narcissus*, ed. Lieve Spaas [New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000], 89–110); compare also the forty-five painted mirror-images discussed by Balensiefen, *Bedeutung des Spiegelbildes*, 130–63, esp. her discussion of the reflected soldier in the 'Alexander mosaic' of the House of the Faun (45–48).

113 – In addition, the thick bordered line delimiting the tableau within the two-dimensional space of the painted wall itself contains a rectangular architectural surround within, framing the rectangular window at the painting's upper left-hand corner: as painted replication, our image both does and does not serve as a window onto the world. No less intriguing are the two additional shields displayed in the upper section of the painting, both cut off by the pictorial frame, but inviting further self-reflection in turn. Such replicative games are all the more striking in the context of the overarching 'Fourth Style' decoration in this room, which at once pretends to be authentic and delights in its replicative fictions (cf. Croisille, *La Peinture romaine*, 81–103). Not for nothing, moreover, are 'real' shields emblazoned with portrait images situated among the make-believe architectural frame (e.g. Pugliese Carratelli, *Pompei: pitture e mosaici*, vol. 8, 882, no. 21): shields abound, but do some look more 'real' than others?

114 – Both tablets are in Rome's Musei Capitolini (Sala delle Colombe, inv. 83a and 83b). For a full discussion, see Michael J. Squire, *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 303–70, and the appendix 385–410; cf. idem, 'Toying with Homer in Words and Pictures: The *Tabulae Iliacae* and the Aesthetics of Play,' in Μύθοι, κείμενα, εικονές. Ομηρικά έπη και αρχαία ελληνική τέχνη, ed. Elena Walter-Karydi (Athens: Κέντρο Οδυσσειακών Σπουδών, 2010), 305–46, esp. 332–39. There are three earlier catalogues: Otto Jahn, *Griechische Bilderchroniken, aus dem Nachlasse des Verfassers herausgegeben und beendigt von A. Michaelis* (Bonn: A. Marcus, 1873); Anna Sadurska, *Les Tables iliaques* (Warsaw: Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1964); and Nina Valenzuela-Montenegro, *Die Tabulae Iliacae: Mythos und Geschichte im Spiegel einer Gruppe frühkaiserzeitlicher Miniaturreliefs* (Berlin: Verlag im Internet GmbH, 2004). My system of referring to the tablets by number and letter is adapted from Sadurska, *Les Tables iliaques*. Although most Anglophone discussions of these objects interpret them as 'tawdry gewgaws intended to provide the illusion of sophistication for those who had none' (W. McLeod, 'The "Epic Canon" of the Borgia Table: Hellenistic Lore or Roman Fraud?,' *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 [1985]: 153–65, at 164, following in particular Nicholas Horsfall, 'Stesichorus at Bovillae?,' *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 99 (1979): 26–48), there seems to me no room for doubting the intermedial complexity of the Iliac tablets: tablets 4N and 5O demonstrate the point with particular sophistication.

115 – For the materials — which, in the absence of any isotopic analysis, are in fact debated — see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 305. One tablet seems to have been crafted from palombino (figure 8 = tablet 5O), the other from giallo antico (figure 9 = 4N).

116 – On the date, see ibid., 58–61. Our knowledge about archaeological provenance for the *Tabulae Iliacae* is limited (ibid., 65–67), but the two shield of Achilles tablets (discovered respectively in 1874 and c.1882) are known to derive from Rome: see Paolo Bienkowski, 'Lo scudo di Achille,' *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Römische Abteilung* 6 (1891): 183–207, at 183–84, 198–99.

117 – On these representations of the shield of Achilles, see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 357–60.

118 – For the 'Theodorean' attribution, found on six tablets in total, see Michael J. Squire, 'Texts on the Tables: The *Tabulae Iliacae* in their Hellenistic Literary Context,' *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 130 (2010): 67–96, at 84–90, and idem, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 283–302.

119 – Tablet 5O seems to have been somewhat bigger, with a probable diameter of around 45 cm: this estimate can be determined on the basis of its verso inscription (figure 13).

120 – Both readings have parallels, although the spacing of the surviving text is better suited to a total of 31 letters rather than of 28: cf. Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 239–40.

121 – The key publication on the iconography of the two tablets remains Bienkowski, 'Scudo di Achille,' now supplemented by Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 239–51. On tablet 4N, cf. Raffaele Garrucci, 'Insigne antico marmo rappresentante il clipeo di Achille secondo che lo ha descritto Omero,' *La Civiltà Cattolica* 11 (1882): 466–79; Henry Stuart Jones, *A Catalogue of the Ancient Sculptures Preserved in the Municipal Collections of Rome: The Sculptures of the Museo Capitolino* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 172–75, no. 83a; Sadurska, *Les Tables iliaques*, 43–46; Margherita Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca III: epigrafi di carattere private* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1974), 430–32; Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 20–21; Amedick, 'Schild des Achilleus,' esp. 159–69; Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 78–79; Pasquariello, 'Pirro o i Misii,' 113–15; Angelo Bottini and Mario Torelli, eds., *Iliade. Catalogo della mostra: Roma, Colosseo, 9 settembre 2006–25 febbraio 2007* (Milan: Electa, 2006), 244–45, no. 55. On tablet 5O, cf. Stuart Jones, *Catalogue of Ancient Sculptures*, 175–76, no. 83b; Sadurska, *Les Tables iliaques*, 46–47; Amedick, 'Schild des Achilleus,' 180–82.

122 – Perhaps the final battle of the scene (vv.530–40) was represented between the two cities, at the centre of this upper band (cf. Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 242–43): according to vv.516–40, the besieged city-dwellers lie in wait for their enemy, and then 'set their battle in array and

fought beside the riverbanks, and they were striking one another with bronze-tipped spears'.

123 – For the compositional relationship between tablets 4N and 5O, see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 324: the obverse fragment comes from the approximate centre of the recto shield, as confirmed by the reconstruction of the tablet's verso (figure 13).

124 – On this particular tablet, I think it no coincidence that the ring-composition of the Homeric ekphrasis culminates in a ring of dancers, whose own circular formation mirrors that of the object on which they appear. At the same time, the spatial games of these lower scenes, which at once circle and process in line (see figure 10), themselves replicate the described movements of the central dancers, described as running both in rings and in rows (vv.599–602). Other tablets draw explicit attention to their concern with 'order' (*taxis*). The most famous — also in Rome's Musei Capitolini (tablet 1A: Sala delle Colombe, inv. 316) — instructs its viewer-readers to 'understand the Theodorean *techne* so that, knowing the order of Homer, you may have the measure of all wisdom ([τέχνην τὴν Θεοδ]ώρηον μάθε τάξιν Ὁμήρου / ὄφρα δαεὶς πάσης μέτρον ἔχῃς σοφίας): for discussion, see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 102–21, 195–96.

125 – Cf. Bienkowski, 'Scudo di Achille,' 196–97. Amedick, 'Schild des Achilleus,' 165, identifies the figures in reverse order without explaining her rationale.

126 – Cf. Bienkowski, 'Scudo di Achille,' 186, 197; Hans G. Gundel, *Zodiakos. Tierkreisbilder im Altertum: Kosmische Bezüge und Jenseitsvorstellungen im antiken Alltagsleben* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1992), 108–09, 224, no. 56; Amedick, 'Schild des Achilleus,' 190–94; Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 241, 246. Similar signs of the Zodiac appeared around the shield of Achilles on tablet 6B: see Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 151, and Hardie, '*Imago mundi*,' 22.

127 – For the inscription and its significance, see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 307–10, 348–49, 369. Carlo Gallavotti, 'Planudea (IX),' *Bollettino dei Classici* 10 (1989): 49–69, at 51, suggests an intriguing alternative reading: ἱερείᾳ ἐρεῖ (i.e. the above inscription 'will speak to the priestess').

128 – Comparable 'magic square' inscriptions can be found on the reverse of seven tablets in all, mostly providing titles for the images on their obverse. A fragmentary inscription on two fragments (tablets 2NY, 3C) spelled out the principle explicitly: although the precise reconstruction is debated, a hexameter seems to have instructed reader-viewers to 'grasp the middle letter [*gramma*] and glide whichever way you choose' (γράμμα μέσον καθ[ελὼν παρολίσθα]νε οὗ ποτε βούλει): see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 197–246, along with Maria T. Bua, 'I giuochi alfabetici delle *tavole iliache*,' *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei. Memorie: Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 8, no. 16 (1971): 1–35. One of the best discussions is James Elkins, *The Domain of Images* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 241–44 — an exemplary excursus on the tablets' verso inscriptions within the 'domain of images', albeit one which ironically omits their relation to the recto reliefs.

129 – For the reconstruction, see Bua, 'I giuochi alfabetici,' 11; cf. Bienkowski, 'Scudo di Achille,' 200; Sadurska, *Les Tables iliaques*, 47; Valenzuela Montenegro, *Tabulae Iliacae*, 250. For the underlying rhetoric of visual-verbal *techne* here, see Squire, *Iliad in a Nutshell*, 102–21.

130 – Although the tablet provides the earliest testimony to these lines of the *Iliad*, there is as yet no reliable transcription of the Homeric text: such are the disciplinary divisions between scholarship on Graeco-Roman words and images. I am currently preparing an edition of the text, which will be published as a self-standing article (Michael J. Squire, Ἀσπὶς Ἀχιλλῆος Θεοδώρηος καθ᾽ Ὅμηρον: An Early Imperial Text of *Il.* 18.483–557,' *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 182 [2012]: 1–33. Although Lecoq, *Le bouclier d'Achille*, 28–29 mentions the two '*Tables iliaques*', she makes no reference to the text around this tablet's rim.

131 – See e.g. Frederick Williams, ed., *Callimachus,* Hymn to Apollo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 98–99, and compare David Petrain, 'More Inscriptions from the Tabulae Iliacae,' *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 174 (2010): 51–56, at 55.

132 – For the terms, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 151–81, adapted from W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Ekphrasis and the Other,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 (1992): 695–712.