UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

The Shield of Achilles: from metalepsis to mise en abyme

de Jong, I.J.F.

Link to publication

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES:
FROM METALEPSIS TO MISE EN ABYME

Irene J.F. de Jong

1. Introduction: Who creates the scenes on the Shield?

The Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.478-608) can easily be qualified as 'the mother' of all ekphraseis, and scholarly interest in this passage has been massive.[1] Scholars have mainly discussed three issues: the relation between the Shield and real shields;[2] the relation between the scenes on the Shield and the *Iliad*;[3] and the method of description.

In this article I will focus on the third point. As noted famously by Lessing, the description of the Shield is dynamic, both in the sense that we see Hephaestus making the shield and that the scenes depicted become stories, with characters speaking and thinking and events following one after the other. My central question is: who is responsible for these narrativised scenes, Hephaestus or the Homeric narrator? Or to put it more poignantly: who *creates* the scenes on the Shield? I note the following positions. It is the *divine artist Hephaestus* who either creates figures which (1a) can really move, like his tripods and handmaids: 18.376f., 418-20 ('the figures are not merely lifelike, they really live!'),[4] or (1b) at least suggest movement, a suggestion to be decoded by the narrator ('the consistent transformations of gold into natural image, of image into action, give us to understand that the qualities of sound and movement and emotion come into being through the responsive participation of the spectator in the work').[5] Or, it is the *Homeric narrator* who either (2a) cannot suppress a 'youthful pleasure in animated narration'[6] and himself narrates stories instead of describing the figures which Hephaestus makes, or (2b) subtly blends description and narration ('a cycle of scenes wrought in metal—or in words? This description of the shield actually is a poem').[7]

In my view position 1a is untenable: it might explain how the figures on the shield can move, but it does not account for the movement in time the scenes display. Laird's solution ('perhaps we might conceive of it as a kind of mosaic of little video scenes') shows the difficulties this position runs into.[8] Position 2a either underestimates Homer or is too radical, playing down the obvious elements of description and the vital role of Hephaestus.[9] Positions 1b and 2b are close to each other: both talk about a form of collaboration between Hephaestus and the Homeric narrator. There is a difference in emphasis, however: position 1b puts the primacy with the divine artisan, position 2b with the mortal narrator. The position I am going to defend in this article is 2b. But before turning to it, I would like to pay some attention to the monograph devoted to the Shield by Andrew Becker,[10] who takes up position 1b.

2. Becker: The Homeric narrator in admiration for Hephaestus (and visual art)

Becker introduces a very helpful set of four elements which play a role in any ekphrasis of a work of art: the *res ipsae* or events and characters represented, the *opus ipsum* or physical medium, the *artifex* or creator, and the *animadversor* or eyewitness who reacts to the work of art. Let me give an example of each category from the ekphrasis of Achilles' Shield:

> ἐν δὲ δύω **ποίησε** πόλεις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
> καλάς. **ἐν τῇ** μέν ῥα γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπίναι τε.
>
> <div align="right">(Iliad 18.490f.)</div>

> And on the Shield **he made** two cities of mortal men,
> beautiful. **In one city** there were marriages and feasts.

Here we may detect the *artifex* in ποίησε and the *res ipsae* in the clause ἐν τῇ ..., since the festivities are *in* the city rather than *on* the shield.

> ἡ δὲ μελαίνετ' ὄπισθεν, ἀρηρομένη δὲ ἐῴκει
> **χρυσείη περ ἐοῦσα·** τὸ δὴ περὶ **θαῦμα** τέτυκτο.
>
> <div align="right">(Iliad 18.548f.)</div>

> The field darkened behind, and it looked like earth that is ploughed,
> **though it was made in gold**. And it was very much a **wonder to
>   behold**.

Here we have the *opus ipsum* in χρυσείη περ ἐοῦσα and the *animadversor* in θαῦμα.

So much for the four elements. According to Becker, the most important element of all is the *res ipsae*. If we take for example

> μυκηθμῷ δ' ἀπὸ κόπρου ἐπεσσεύοντο νομόνδε
> πὰρ ποταμὸν κελάδοντα, παρὰ ῥοδανὸν δονακῆα.
> χρύσειοι δὲ νομῆες ἅμ' ἐστιχόωντο βόεσσι...
>
> <div align="right">(Iliad 18.575-77)</div>

> Mooing they [the cows] hurried from the farmyard to their pasture
> by a purling river, beside the beds of swaying reeds.
> Four herdsmen in gold walked along with the cows...

Becker (n.10 above, 139) gives the following analysis:

> These lines, now focusing on *res ipsae*, have moved from naming to interpretation... Here attention to the status of these images qua images

does nothing to detract from their referential value: despite attention to the medium, the line [577] accepts, recognizes, and interprets the world suggested by the image: golden herdsmen move and golden cows bellow...the description does not suggest that the metal cowherds actually move along the surface of the shield as Achilles goes into battle; it does not ask us to imagine that these are gold and tin robots that can move and moo. They are wonderful images that are given a response that honors their wonder; *the art of Hephaestus*, we are asked to imagine, elicits this reaction from the describer [my italics].

From this and other passages in his book it becomes clear that Becker is an adherent of position (1b): the narrator/describer interprets the images made by Hephaestus, but the primacy lies with the god. Thus, in his view, the ekphrasis of the Shield first and foremost is a celebration of the visual arts: 'the focus on *res ipsae* can be read as respect for the illusionistic qualities or the evocative powers of the work of visual art' (152).

I largely agree with Becker's analysis and his conclusion that in the Shield the *res ipsae* are central. I only part company with him as regards the evaluation of this conclusion. Does Homer really insert the Shield as a celebration of Hephaestus and the visual arts? Or, as Marg puts it: 'Does the poet want to illustrate what the art of iron-working was capable of or could produce? Certainly not.'[11] Might it not be that via a celebration of Hephaestus' visual art he wants to say something about his own art? In order to answer this question it is necessary first to take a closer, narratological look at the presentation of the ekphrasis.

3. The presentation of ekphraseis

While the presentation of narrative events involves the interaction of a narrator and narratees, in the case of an ekphrasis more parties play a role, as has been set out clearly by Don Fowler: apart from narrator and narratees, there are the artist and—usually—a watching character.[12] Taking as an example the Shield of Aeneas in Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 617-731, we have (1) the narrator Virgil, (2) the artist Vulcan, (3) the viewer Aeneas, and (4) the narratees, all of whom may be highlighted in the text:

> (617f.) ille [Aeneas] ...
> expleri nequit atque **oculos** per singula **uoluit** (3)**...**
>
> (630) **fecerat** [Vulcanus] (2) et uiridi fetam Mauortis in antro procubuisse lupam...
>
> (642f.) haud procul inde citae Mettum in diuersa quadrigae distulerant (**at tu dictis**, **Albane**, **maneres**! (1))...

(649f.) illum indignanti similem similemque minanti
aspiceres (4)...

He [Aeneas] could not be sated and turned his eyes from piece to piece...

He [Vulcan] had fashioned, too, the mother-wolf outstretched
in the green cave of Mars...

Not far thence speedy four-horse carts had torn
Mettus apart (but you, Alban, should have stood by your words!)...

Him you might have seen resembling an angry one, resembling
a threatening one..

The crucial question is of course who is responsible for what: is an aspect of a scene depicted to be ascribed to the artist, the narrator, or the viewing character? Who is it that calls the rape of the Sabines *sine more,* 'lawless'? Who is it that fills in the names of the figures, who chisels, interprets, or even projects Roman history? Different ekphraseis give priority to different parties in the coming about of the work of art, and it would be worthwhile to write a history of ekphrasis from this perspective.

Returning to the first ekphrasis of all it is highly relevant to note—and this has not been stressed enough so far—that of the four possible parties Homer includes only two: the artist and the narrator. Though elsewhere he does introduce the narratees into his text (e.g. ἔνθ' οὐκ ἂν βρίζοντα ἴδοις Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον, 'there you would not have seen godlike Agamemnon slumbering', *Il.* 4.223), he does not do so in the Shield-episode.

But far more striking is his explicit exclusion of the potential viewer Thetis: Hephaestus leaves her behind in the *megaron* or wherever she was received by Charis and goes (back) to his forge to make the armour (18.468);[13] only at the end of the episode, when he has finished making the armour, does the god return to her (18.615). Characters will look at the shield, but only later: at 19.14-18 the Myrmidons react with 'fear', Achilles with 'delight' at its sight. It may be noted in passing here that later artists did not always follow Homer's model. There are vase-paintings which show Thetis next to Hephaestus while he is making the armour (though many more show him handing it over to her, which might represent the moment described by Homer at 18.615 and hence need not imply her watching him at work).[14] And there is of course the beautiful but haunting poem *The Shield of Achilles* by W.H. Auden, which starts 'She looked over his shoulder/For vines and olive trees...'.

What Homer does, however, —and this is vital for my argument—is turn the narrator into the viewer, or in Becker's terminology, the *animadversor*. Indeed, the narrator, a mortal, is the first admirer of Hephaestus' Shield (cf. 18.549: τὸ δὴ περὶ θαῦμα τέτυκτο, 'and it was very much a wonder to behold'), thus fulfilling the god's promise to Thetis that the armour will be such 'that all the many men who see it will marvel (θαυμάσσεται) at it' (18.466f.). Throughout

the *Iliad* the narrator, though living long after the events recounted, is turned into an eyewitness of these events as a result of his collaboration with the Muses, who are eyewitnesses of all that happens in history (2.485: ὑμεῖς γὰϱ θεαί ἐστε, πάϱεστέ τε, ἴστε τε πάντα, 'for you are goddesses, are present, and know everything as witnesses'). In the case of the Shield, he is *the only one* witnessing Hephaestus. It is his position of single eyewitness of a divine act of creation that gives him very special powers. It allows him to share in the creative process of Hephaestus: he can combine and blend description of what the god makes with his own narration.[15] Indeed, and this is my defence of position 2b (rather than 1b), the extent of narration is high, as the next section will show.[16]

4. Extent and forms of narration in the ekphrasis on the Shield

A first form of narration is the reference to sounds: ὑμέναιος ὀϱώϱει ('a wedding-song rose', 493), βοὴν ἔχον ('kept up their sound', 495), ἐπήπυον ('shouted their support', 502), δίκαζον ('gave their judgment', 506), πολὺν κέλαδον ('the great din', 530), σιωπῇ ('silently', 556), κιθάϱιζε, ἄειδε ('was playing on a lyre', 'was singing', 570), λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ ('in a delicate voice', 571), μολπῇ, ἰυγμῷ ('with singing', 'with shouting', 572), μυκηθμῷ ('with bellowing', 575), κελάδοντα ('purling', 576), μακϱὰ μεμυκώς ('roaring loudly', 580), ὑλάκτεον ('they barked', 586).

A second form of narration is the use of indirect speech—εὔχετο πάντ' ἀποδοῦναι ('he claimed to have paid all', 499), ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἑλέσθαι ('he denied to have received anything', 500)[17]—and of embedded focalisation: 'both were eager to take a decision' (501), 'two different plans were supported, to destroy the city or to agree with the inhabitants to divide up their property' (510-12), 'two scouts were posted to wait for the sight of the sheep and cattle' (524), 'the herdsmen did not expect an ambush' (526), '[the ploughmen] were eager to reach the headland again' (547), 'the potter tries his wheel, to see if it will spin smoothly' (601).

A third form of narration is the introduction of comparisons: 591f., 600f.

A fourth form of narration is the reference to the real-life properties (*res ipsae*) of the entities depicted rather than to the precious metals of which they are made: ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ('polished stone', 504), κηρύκων...ἠεροφώνων ('loud-voiced heralds', 505), ἀϱγεννέων οἰῶν, 'white-woolled sheep', 529, 588), εἷμα...δαφοινεόν ('a deep-red cloak', 538), νειὸν μαλακήν ('a field of soft fallow', 541), πίειϱαν ἄρουϱαν ('rich ploughland', 541), τρίπολον ('triple-tilled', 542), μελιηδέος οἴνου ('honey-sweet wine', 545), ὀξείας δϱεπάνας ('sharp sickles', 551), λεύκ' ἀλφίτα ('white barley', 560), μελιηδέα καρπόν ('honey-sweet crop', 568), φόϱμιγγι λιγείῃ ('clear-sounding lyre', 569), κύνες πόδας ἀργοί ('quick-footed dogs', 578), ταχέας κύνας ('quick dogs', 584), κατηρεφέας...σηκούς ('covered huts', 589), λεπτὰς ὀθόνας

5

('dresses of fine linen', 595), χιτῶνας...ἐϋννήτους ('closely-woven tunics', 595f.).[18]

There is also quite a large number of expressions which suit both description and narration, *opus ipsum* as well as *res ipsae*: πόλεις...καλάς ('beautiful cities', 490f.), δαΐδων...λαμπομενάων ('glittering torches', 492), χρυσοῖο τάλαντα ('talents of gold', 507), τεύχεσι λαμπόμενοι ('glittering because of their arms', 510), πτολίεθρον ἐπήρατον ('a lovely city', 512), χρύσεια εἵμα-τα ('golden clothing', 517), καλώ ('beautiful', 518), αἴθοπι χαλκῷ ('shining bronze', 522), χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείῃσιν ('bronze-tipped swords', 534), μελαί-νετ' ('was black', 548), μέλανες...βότρυες ('black vines', 562), καλῇ ('beaut-iful', 588), καλὰς στεφάνας ('beautiful garlands', 597), μαχαίρας...χρυσείας ('golden knives', 597f.), ἀργυρέων τελαμώνων ('belts of silver', 598). Here the cooperation between divine smith and mortal narrator, about which I will come to speak, is at its most effective.

A methodological point to be made here is that most expressions of this fourth category are formulaic and occur elsewhere in the narrative parts of the *Iliad*.[19] One might therefore argue that the narrator simply had no choice but to describe certain entities in terms of *res ipsae* rather than *opus ipsum*. However, here I would counter in the first place that there is abundant scholarship on Homeric epithets which shows that a singer did not need to insert an epithet. In the second place a coinage like κυανέην κάπετον ('a ditch of dark glass', 564), instead of a 'deep ditch' (καπέτοιο βαθείης, 15.356) or a 'hollow ditch' (κοίλην κάπετον, 24.797), shows the narrator very well able to make new epithets suited for description rather than narration.

The fifth and perhaps most important form of narration is the representation of different moments of time. For instance in the scene of the dispute between two men (497-508), we get the men pleading their case, the reaction of the excited bystanders, the litigants' deferral of the case to the elders acting as arbitrators, and the elders voicing their opinion. Now in this case it could, perhaps, still be argued that Hephaestus is employing what art historians call the 'synoptic' method, whereby several successive actions are compressed into one scene. However, when we turn to the scene of the ambush (18.516-40), I draw attention to the abundance of adverbs of time: the spies await the arrival of the animals; they 'soon' (τάχα, 525) show up; unsuspecting herdsmen follow; the attackers 'quickly' (ὦκα, 527) surround the herds and kill the herdsmen. The people in town hearing the noise 'immediately' (αὐτίκα, 531) jump on their chariots and 'quickly' (αἶψα, 532) arrive.[20] Here we are dealing not merely with a succession of actions but with a speedy succession of actions, and to express such speed is a property of a narrative not of a picture.

There is one final aspect of the Shield passage which merits discussion in this context: the tenses of the verbs. We may observe the following structure:

imperfect: heads off the scene of Hephaestus making the shield as a whole (ποίει, 'he made', 478, 482; βάλλε, 'he threw', 479)

    aorists and imperfects: announce the individual scenes on the Shield
        (ποίησε, 'he made', 490, 573, 587; ἔτευξ', 'he made', 483; ἐτίθει,
        'he put on', 541, 550, 561, 607; ποικίλλε, 'he wrought [in the style
        of a frieze?]', 590)
    imperfects: describe/narrate the scenes (ἔσαν, 'there were', 491;
        ἤγίνεον, 'they led', 493; etc.)[21]

My analysis of this structure would be as follows. The imperfect ποίει at the
opening creates a framework, with the aorists expressing a series of actions
undertaken within that framework.[22] The imperfects which describe/narrate the
scenes are either scenic[23] or they 'could represent the necessary incompleteness
of a depicted action that is frozen in a metallic representation'.[24] In other words,
they suit both description and narration. Only at 525-30 and 544-47 do we find
aorists, which in particular fit the extreme narrativisation of the first scene with
its many adverbs of time, as discussed above.

    Worth mentioning, finally, are the two pluperfects τέτυκτο ('was' ['had
been made'], 549) and τετεύχατο ('were' ['had been made'], 574): the use of
this tense seems due to the passive (cf. active ἔτευξ', 'he made', 483) and at
549 perhaps also suggests that the narrator evaluates the *finished* work of art.
Anyway, the tense belongs to description rather than narration. Such pluper-
fects will become a hallmark of ekphraseis: cf. e.g. Ps.-Hes. *Scutum* 154, 208
(τέτυκτο, 'was [made]'); A.R. *Arg*. 1.742 (ἤσκητο, 'was' ['had been made in
elaborate fashion']), 752 (πεπονήατο, 'were' ['had been made with care'], 759
(ἐτέτυκτο); Mosch. *Eur*. 43 (τετεύχατο), 44 (τετυγνένη), 47 (ἐτέτυκτο);
Virg. *Aen*. 8.628 (*fecerat*, 'he had made'), 637 (*addiderat*, 'he had added').

    I conclude that narration plays a major role in the presentation of the Shield.
Yet unlike the scholars mentioned earlier as taking position 2a, I would not
contend that the ekphrasis is *pure* narration. It is a highly subtle combination
and blending of narration and description. The next question is, of course, how
to evaluate this phenomenon. It is here that the notion of metalepsis mentioned
in my title—finally—makes its entrance.

5. The ekphrasis on the Shield as metalepsis

    Metalepsis, literally 'sharing', is a term of ancient rhetoric which was given
a new narratological meaning by Genette in his *Discours du récit* from 1972.[25]
He introduces the term in order to describe a situation where the boundaries
between narrative universes are violated or the hierarchy between narratologi-
cal levels subverted. Normally a narrator belongs to a different narrative uni-
verse than the characters, since his narration takes place at a different time and
often a different place than those of the events recounted. Sometimes, however,
the two universes merge, and the narrator enters ('shares') the world of his

characters or the characters enter the world of the narrator. Let me give two examples:

> You shall see them, reader. Step into this neat garden-house on the skirts of Whinbury, walk forward into the little parlour—there they are at dinner.... You and I will join the party, see what is to be seen, and hear what is to be heard. At present, however, they are only eating; and while they eat we will talk aside.
>
> (Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ch. 1)

Here a narrator enters, together with her narratees, the world of the characters.

> He eyed them [his legs] with obvious dissatisfaction. After examining them he spoke out aloud: 'Holy God! Wot are these den? Eh?' He looked around for an answer. 'Wot are dey?' he repeated angrily. 'Legs.' 'Legs? LEGS? Whose legs?' 'Yours.' 'Mine? And who are you?' 'The Author.' 'Author? Author? Did you write these legs?' 'Yes.' 'Well, I don't like dem. I don't like 'em at all at all...'
>
> (Spike Milligan, *Puckoon*, ch. 1)

Here a character enters the world of the narrator.

In a recent article I have discussed various forms of metalepsis in ancient Greek literature and argued that the device is less modern or post-modern than scholars who, in the wake of Genette, have worked on metalepsis have suggested.[26] Interestingly enough, Genette himself, in his monograph devoted entirely to metalepsis, also came up with an example from antiquity: the Shield of Achilles. He compares what happens in the Shield passage, with the figures moving and talking, to a film like Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo*, where a character from the film leaves his own world and enters the world of a person watching the film.

Though I would also call the Shield of Achilles an instance of metalepsis, I would analyse it somewhat differently from Genette: although the figures on the Shield are depicted as talking, they do not address the narrator, as happens in *Puckoon,* or one of the characters in the story, as happens in *Purple Rose of Cairo*. I would rather connect the Shield to one of the other ancient forms of metalepsis which I discussed in my article and which consists of 'the blending of narrative voices'. A clear and for my present discussion highly relevant example is provided by the songs of Demodocus. In *Odyssey* 8 the Homeric narrator three times represents a song of the singer Demodocus. Rather than turning Demodocus into a secondary narrator by quoting his words in direct speech, as he does in the case of the story-teller Odysseus in Books 9-12, the narrator presents those words in indirect speech. However, the dependent indirect speech construction is quickly given up in favour of the independent one:

αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀείδειν
ἀμφ' Ἄρεος φιλότητος ἐϋστεφάνου τ' Ἀφροδίτης,
ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μίγησαν ἐν Ἡφαίστοιο δόμοισι
λάθρῃ· **πολλὰ δ' ἔδωκε**,...

<div align="right">(Odyssey 8.266-69)</div>

Playing the lyre he started to sing beautifully
about the love-affair of Ares and Aphrodite,
how they mingled in love for the first time in Hephaestus' house
in secret. And he [Ares] gave many things...

From line 269 (πολλὰ δ' ἔδωκε) onwards the Homeric narrator more or less takes over the narration, and it is only at the very end of the song that we are reminded that the song was Demodocus' after all: ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός ('those things the famous singer sang', 367). The metalepsis consists in the blending of the voices of the Homeric narrator and Demodocus.

Returning to the Shield of Achilles, I suggest that we here find a very similar metaleptic blending, this time not of narrative voices but of creative forces: Hephaestus makes a shield, the Homeric narrator an ekphrasis. Scholars have so far tended to compare the ekphrasis of the Shield with other descriptive passages in Homer, and rightly so,[27] but I think the comparison with the songs of Demodocus is just as relevant.[28] While in *Odyssey* 8 the Homeric narrator makes his own voice merge with that of the famous singer from the heroic past, in *Iliad* 18 he pulls off perhaps an even greater trick, since he merges his own creative activity with that of the divine artisan Hephaestus. As Marg puts it: 'Like shield and poem, the creators, smith and poet, stand close to each other, so close that they almost merge together. The one speaks and creates for the other.'[29]

The final question is of course what the narrator intends to achieve by this trick.

6. The ekphrasis on the Shield as mise en abyme

Since metalepsis involves the blurring of boundaries and the merging of worlds, its effect also seems to be of a double nature. Thus in the case of the songs of Demodocus I would suggest that the Homeric narrator very shrewdly has his cake and eats it: by merging his own voice with that of the divine singer from the heroic past he both leans on the prestige and authority of his illustrious predecessor and demonstrates his self-esteem and confidence as Demodocus' present-day successor.[30]

In the same way I would suggest that merging description and narration in his ekphrasis of the Shield of Achilles the Homeric narrator both leans on the prestige of the divine artist and confidently takes his share in the divine process

of creation.[31] Participating in the creative process of making a Shield together with Hephaestus is a sign of the self-esteem of the Homeric narrator.[32]

Pursuing this idea a little further I would like to suggest that we can read the ekphrasis of the Shield as a (poetological) mise en abyme: a work within another work which in one way or another resembles the outer work (or part of it). The concept of mise en abyme was coined by the novelist Gide and introduced into literary theory by Dällenbach.[33] Several scholars have pointed at *the last scene* on the shield, depicting artists, the architect Daedalus, a potter, and, perhaps, a singer,[34] as in some way referring to Homer himself[35] and hence as a mise en abyme. Becker looks at *the entire Shield* as a mise en abyme and reasons as follows: the Shield gives us the bard's response to visual art which is the model for our own response to Homer's verbal art.[36] I would prefer to telescope the two arts and responses: portraying himself as working together with a *visual* artist like Hephaestus allows the Homeric narrator to make clear to us an important aspect of his own *verbal* art:[37] its *enargeia*/*energeia*, its ability to put events 'before the eyes' of the narratees (πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν, Arist. *Rh*. 1410b27-36).[38] This quality of Homer's narrative has been discussed in detail by Ford in his book *Homer: The Poetry of the Past*. He writes:

> Though epic is by definition poetry of the past, it is poetry that claims to transport us to an *au delà*, not a beyond buried in the vault of recollection but a place as present as our own, though elsewhere. According to Homeric eschatology, after death the heroes' bodies are destroyed in one way or another, and their souls fly off to Hades, the realm of the unseen. The fundamental promise of his poetry is the paradox of restoring through mere voice these vanished heroes and rarely appearing gods to visibility.[39]

Aligning himself with a visual artist like Hephaestus but showing at the same time how it is his narration which makes the figures on the Shield come alive, speak, move and think, the narrator exemplifies the way in which his narrative style manages to make the people from the past come to life.[40]

In this connection I would like to draw attention to the word θαῦμα at 549. In a very rich discussion Hunzinger[41] argues that this word is used in Homer and Hesiod to indicate aesthetic pleasure at the sight of works of art (next to marvel at the sight of a beautiful person or scenery). This aesthetic pleasure does not reside in *mimesis*, the exact reproduction by art of life, but in the capacity of art to suggest life: 'animate the inanimate, produce life in lifeless material'.[42] Although it is clear that *thauma*, with its obvious connection to θεάομαι, 'behold', belongs to the aesthetics of visual art, I would like to contend that Homer in the ekphrasis of the Shield with its conspicuous blurring of boundaries between narration and description is not only celebrating Hephaestus' 'marvellous' visual art but at the same time his own 'marvellous' narrative art, which presents people and events in an 'enargetic'/'energetic' way.

7. Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the presentation of the ekphrasis of the Shield. Looking at this passage in terms of metalepsis and mise en abyme helps us to see the typically Homeric ways of implicit self-advertisement and poetological reflection: via cooperation with a god (metalepsis) and via the presentation of a work of art within his own poem (mise en abyme). The quality of his narrative art that he wishes to bring to the fore is its *enargeia/energeia*: its ability to bring people and events from the past alive and put them 'before the eyes' of the narratees. After Homer poets will become openly self-conscious and explicitly start to reflect on their own poetic art. A poet like Pindar springs to mind here, who without any qualms advertises the grace and immortalising power of his poetry. The conventions of his genre forbade the Homeric narrator any such explicit self-advertisement, but self-consciously joining forces with Hephaestus in creating a work of art is his way of achieving much the same effect.

Universiteit van Amsterdam

NOTES

1. For an overview, see M. Arpaia, 'Bibliografia sullo Scudo di Achille (1945-2008)', in M. d'Acunto and R. Palmisciano (eds.), *Lo scudo di Achilles nell' Iliade: esperienze ermeneutische a confronto* (Pisa-Roma 2010), 233-45.

2. See for this question K. Fittschen, *Der Schild des Achilleus* (Göttingen 1973) and M. Cultraro, 'Echi del passato: lo Scudo di Achille e la grecia della tarda Età del Bronzo', in d'Acunto and Palmisciano (n.1 above), 125-44.

3. See on the one hand W. Schadewaldt, 'Der Schild des Achilleus', in *Von Homers Welt und Werk: Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur Homerischen Frage* (Stuttgart 1959, first ed. 1938), 352-74, W. Marg, *Homer über die Dichtung: Der Schild des Achilleus* (Münster 1971, first ed. 1957), K. Reinhardt, 'Der Schild des Achilleus', in *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen 1961), 401-11, O. Taplin, 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*', *G&R* 27 (1980), 1-21, and P.R. Hardie, 'Imago Mundi: Cosmological and Ideological Aspects of the Shield of Achilles', *JHS* 105 (1985), 11-31, who argue that the scenes are not connected to the rest of the *Iliad* but form a contrast and complement to it; and on the other hand Ø. Anderson, 'Some Thoughts on the Shield of Achilles', *SO* 51 (1976), 5-18, who discusses many points of contact between scenes depicted and the *Iliad*. A kind of middle position is taken by H.A. Gärtner, 'Beobachtungen zum Schild des Achilleus', in H. Görgemans and E. Schmidt (eds.), *Studien zum antiken Epos* (Meisenheim 1976), 46-65, C.S. Byre, 'Narration, Description and Theme in the Shield of Achilles', *CJ* 88 (1992), 33-42, and S. Dubel, 'L'arme et la lyre: remarques sur le sens du boucher d'Achille dans l'*Iliade*', *Ktema* 20 (1995), 245-57, who argue that the Shield shows the world which Achilles stands to lose, having chosen to fight and die young.

4. F. Müller, *Darstellung und poetische Funktion der Gegenstände in der Odyssee* (diss. Marburg 1968), 19 (my translation). And cf. S. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley 1938), 95 ('the poet has carefully prepared his hearers for accepting the divine artificer's power to give life and movement to objects of metal'), F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Dédale: mythologie de l'artisan en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1975), 136 ('la description "cinétique" du décor ciselé par Héphaïstos'), R. Friedrich, *Stilwandel im homerischen Epos* (Heidelberg 1975), 51 ('Hephaestos bereits erzählt: was er in Bildern erzählt hat, wird vom Dichter nur in Worten nacherzählt'), and A. Laird, 'Sounding out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64', *JRS* 83 (1993), 18-30, at 20 ('The Shield of Achilles in the end inclines towards obedience—we could just about visualize how it would be. And the notion that it is a magic shield might help us imagine it, even if there is some sequence and movement in the scenes it contains—perhaps we might conceive of it as a kind of mosaic of little video scenes.').

11

5. E.W. Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton 1988), 33. Cf. Schadewaldt (n.3 above), 357 ('ein Gott, kein irdischer Mensch ist der Meister dieses Schildes'), 360 ('Die Aufgabe, einen Bilderkreis so zu formen, dass die einzelnen Bilder bedeutungsvoll zu einem Ganzen zusammenklingen, meistert auch für Homer nur der Gott').

6. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Berlin 1912), 2 ('der Dichter ist einfach nicht imstande, eine bildmässige Vorstellung, von der er ausgeht...dauernd festzuhalten, sondern er wird von einer durchaus jugendliche Freude an belebter Erzählung beherrscht'). E. Minchin, 'Describing and Narrating in Homer's *Iliad*', in E.A. Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality* (Leiden 1998), 49-64, argues that narration is easier for an oral poet than description. Cf. also J.A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago 1993), 12f. ('the picture or pictures said to be wrought on the shield... have been turned so thoroughly into narrative that we can hardly see a picture through Homer's words').

7. Marg (n.3 above), 26. And cf. Reinhardt (n.3 above), 404, and G.E. Lessing, *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), XIX.

8. See n.4 above.

9. That the Shield passage is not *pure* narration becomes also clear from the fact that, as scholars have pointed out, the stories depicted in the scenes do not come to an end but are frozen before there is resolution. Thus, to give an example, we do not know who wins the lawsuit. Cf. section 4 below, on the use of the imperfect.

10. A.S. Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (London 1995).

11. Cf. Marg (n.3 above), 25f.: 'Aber will denn der Dichter aufzeigen wessen die Schmiedekunst fähig war oder sein könnte? Doch wohl nicht.'

12. D. Fowler, 'Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis', in *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford 2000, original from 1991), 64-85.

13. On account of 18.388, where Thetis is 'led forward' by Charis from the forge (πρόσω ἄγε), 392, where Charis calls Hephaestus to come here (Ἥφαιστε, πρόμολ' ὧδε), and 416, where he cleans himself and leaves his forge (βῆ δὲ θύραζε), it seems plausible that the room where Thetis is received and the forge are separate places.

14. See *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich 1981-1999), s.v. Thetis VI F.

15. Becker (n.10 above) also connects the *animadversor* to the bard, e.g. pp. 43, 108, but is not radical enough in the implications which this connection has.

16. Not everybody has noted the extent of the narration. Cf. e.g. M. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary V, Books 17-20* (Cambridge 1991), 207: '*sometimes* he [the poet] looks beyond the materials employed, and mentions the stone seats of the elders...and the soft, finely spun clothing of the dancers...' (my italics).

17. As Heffernan (n.6 above), 13, aptly points out, Homer might have opted for a gesture which could have visualised the refusal or promise but instead he inserts a reference to the speech act itself. In other ekphraseis the issue will be raised more than once that the figures depicted cannot speak (e.g. A.R. *Arg.* 1.765f. or Shakespeare *The Rape of Lucrece* 1457-67). In Hellenistic epigrams and Catullus 64 the figures in the ekphrasis do speak in *oratio recta*; see Laird (n.4 above).

18. For references to the *opus ipsum*, cf. 517, 549, 562, 574, 577 (gold); 565, 574 (tin); 564 (glass), 519 (size), 539 (lifelikeness).

19. For details see Edwards (n.16 above), *ad locc*.

20. Cf. also the frequency of ἔπειτα ('thereupon') in the whole Shield passage: 506, 523, 527, 545. Cf. also ὁπότε ('whenever', 544), ὁτὲ μὲν...ἄλλοτε δέ ('at times...at others', 599-602), and the iterative forms in 546 and 566.

21. The pluperfects ὀρώρει/ὠρώρει ('arose') at 493 and 498 equal imperfects. Becker (n.10 above), 109, 111, in my view incorrectly, interprets them as 'had arisen' and suggests that for a brief moment we are transported back in time.

22. Cf. A. Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Semantics of the Greek Verb* (Amsterdam 2002, first ed. 1984), 11: 'Often one or more states of affairs expressed in the aorist indicative are located within a framework given by the imperfect.' The imperfects in this series seem due to metrical factors: ποικίλλε is a hapax, ἐν δ' ἐθῆκε does not scan.

23. Cf. Rijksbaron (n. 22 above), 12: 'We also find series of imperfects, describing a number of more or less simultaneous states of affairs; a "scene is painted" so to speak.'

24. Becker (n.10 above), 108f. Similarly, K. Lynn-George, *Epos: Word, Narrative and the Iliad* (Atlantic Highlands NJ 1987), 181.

25. See G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, tr. J.E. Lewin (Ithaca 1980; orig. publ. as *Discours du récit*, Paris 1972), 234-37, and *Métalepse: de la figure à la fiction* (Paris 2004).

26. I.J.F. de Jong, 'Metalepsis in Ancient Greek Literature', in J. Grethlein and A. Rengakos (eds.), *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of the Form in Ancient Literature* (Berlin 2009), 87-115.

27. E.g. Friedländer (n.6 above), Müller (n.4 above), and Becker (n.10 above).

28. Cf. T.K. Hubbard, 'Nature and Art in the Shield of Achilles', *Arion* 3 ser. 2 (1992), 16-41, at 26f. ('The point-by-point parallellism between Hephaestus' metallurgical art and the verbal art of Demodocus (and by implication Homer) suggests strongly that Homer had a generalized concept of art').

29. Marg (n.3 above), 26 ('Wie Schild und Gedicht, so stehen auch die Schöpfer, Schmied und der Dichter, eng nebeneinander, so eng dass sie fast ineinander übergehen. Einer spricht, schafft für den ander.'), and cf. 32 ('Der Schild und seine Wiedergabe im Gedicht gehen ineinander über'); cf. Reinhardt (n.3 above), 410 ('...das Werk des Gottes [wird] eins mit dem des Dichters') and R. Palmisciano, 'Il primato della poesia sulle altre arti nello Scudo di Achille', in d'Acunto and Palmisciano (n.1 above), 47-64.

30. This suggestion puts a slightly different spin on the idea already advocated by the scholia that Homer has created an image of himself in Demodocus. See e.g. B. Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge 2002), 138-46.

31. Genette in his book on metalepsis (n.25 above), 82, is remarkably cautious at this point, suggesting that the metalepsis might be simply conventional rather than significant: 'Il est difficile de savoir quelle est ici l'intention de l'aède, qui laisse peut-être simplement courir un *topos* descriptif déjà conventionnel sans plus se soucier de son prétexte plastique.'

32. Hubbard (n.28 above), 35 ('Although seldom treated as a focal point of Homer's poetic self-conceptualization, the Shield must be read/heard/seen as a pivotal moment of self-awareness for both the poet's hero and its creator'). In general on Homer's self-consciousness, see I.J.F. de Jong 'The Homeric Narrator and his own *kleos*', *Mnemosyne* 59 (2006), 188-207.

33. L. Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, tr. J. Whiteley and E. Hughes (Chicago 1989; orig. publ. as *Le récit speculaire*, Paris 1977). See also J.J. White, 'The Semiotics of the Mise-en-abime', in O. Fischer and M. Nänny (eds.), *The Motivated Sign: Iconicity in Language and Literature 2* (Amsterdam 2001), 29-54. Dällenbach (76-81) discusses specifically the poetological use of a mise en abyme, i.e. when the embedded work of art is itself a literary text, e.g. in Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, which deals with a character writing a novel.

34. Lines 604b-605a, in which a singer is mentioned, are not in the MSS. Wolf advocated to put them in the text, believing Athenaeus 180d-181d that Aristarchus had removed them from here and inserted them at *Od*. 4.17b-18a. Modern editors, notably Allen and West, do not consider the story about Aristarchus plausible and keep the lines out of their texts.

35. Schadewaldt (n.3 above), 357; S.M. Lonsdale, 'Simile and Ecphrasis in Homer and Virgil: The Poet as Craftsman and Choreographer', *Vergilius* 36 (1990), 7-30, at 16; Hubbard (n.28 above), 33; D. Aubriot, 'Représentation plastique et récit poétique: le bouclier d'Achille ou les oeuvres d'art en miroir', in M. Chefdor (ed.), *De la palette à l'écritoire* (Nantes 1997), 17-24, at 33.

36. Becker (n.10 above), 139-41.

37. Cf. Marg (n.3 above), 20 ('die Selbstaussage über Dichtung'); Reinhardt (n.3 above), 411 ('so ist doch nicht zu leugnen, dass das gedichtete Kunstwerk auf das Dichten selbst zurückweist, eingegeben und beschwingt durch die geheime Sympathie des Dichters mit dem wunderwirkenden Gott').

38. For the confusion between *enargeia* and *energeia*, see N. Otto, *Enargeia: Untersuchung zur Charakteristik Alexandrinischer Dichtung* (Stuttgart 2009), 71-76.

39. A. Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (Ithaca and London 1992), 49-56, at 55. Another scholar who has shown, mainly on a linguistic basis, the vividness of Homer is E.J. Bakker, *Poetry in Speech: Orality and Homeric Discourse* (Ithaca and London 1993).

40. Cf. Hubbard (n.28 above), 17 ('there is a sense in which the divine artisan Hephaestus stands as a figure for the poet as he sees himself') and Lonsdale (n.35 above), 12 ('the poet implicitly compares himself to a visual artist, whose creation, while it may be narrative in content, can be visually apprehended in a glance. The finely worked creation of the artist is a metaphor or analogy for poetic devices such as simile and ecphrasis with which the poet displays his ability to

ornament the narrative'). I would not restrict the analogy to simile and ekphrasis but extend it to Homer's narrative style as a whole.

41. C. Hunzinger, 'Le plaisir esthétique dans l'épopée archaïque: les mots de la famille de *thauma*', *BAGB* (1994), 4-30.

42. Hunzinger (n.41 above), 14 ('rendre vivant l'inanimé, produire de la vie dans la matière inerte').