

3

Sequential Narrative in the Shield of Achilles

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This chapter proposes that comics and verbal description share some fundamental principles in how they tell stories. Comics, defined by Will Eisner, are “the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea” (Eisner 1990, 5). Likewise, Murray Krieger finds sequence in ekphrasis, understood as literary description of a work of art:

Every tendency in the verbal sequence to freeze itself into a shape . . . is inevitably accompanied by a counter-tendency for that sequence to free itself from the limited enclosure of the frozen, sensible image into an unbounded temporal flow. (Krieger 1992, 10)

Comics and ekphrasis are both pictures in sequence. This chapter explores what theoretical studies of these two means of description may offer one another. Taking Homer’s Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.483–608) as a test case, it offers a novel perspective on the famous ekphrasis.¹ First, the Shield is demonstrated to be constituted of many discrete and fragmentary images. In that the Shield has discrete visual segments that form narrational relationships with one another, it resembles the comics medium’s primary method of organizing images in panels for storytelling purposes. Next, to further refine the analogy, Thierry Groensteen’s *System of Comics* (2007) is introduced. Groensteen offers a methodology for a more precise understanding of the relationships of images to narrative in sequential art. Though most of the Shield’s images are static fragments, when approached diachronically in the reading process, they create an impression of narrative action. The rest of the chapter exhibits how the three major thematic sections of the ekphrasis (the cosmology, cities, and rustic episodes) have distinctly different organizations of sequential images.

1. Standard works on ekphrasis include Hamon (1981), Fowler (1991), and Krieger (1992). For an accessible overview of ekphrasis in the discipline of classics, see Goldhill (2007b). Good introductions to the concerns of comics scholars are D’Angelo and Cantoni (2006) and Groensteen (2007, 12–20). The bibliography on the Shield is staggering. The most important works, in English, include Muellner (1976), Atchity (1978), Hardie (1985, 11–31), Edwards (1991, 200–232), Westbrook (1992), and Becker (1995). See Edwards (1991, 200–211) for a succinct overview of scholarship. Becker (1992) and Becker (1995, 9–22) have good summaries of the Shield’s reception in, respectively, antiquity and the 18th century.

The Shield occupies the last third of book 18 of the *Iliad*, when Achilles, waiting for Hephaestus to forge new arms, is on the verge of returning to battle. This ekphrasis describes at length the god's embellishment of Achilles' shield. The narrator articulates its imagery by introducing nine sections with the adverb ἐν [in] and a verb of fabrication, such as ἔτευξ' or ποίησε [he made]. There are four thematic sections: the cosmology (483–489), cities at peace and war (490–540), rustic scenes (541–606), and Ocean (607–608). For a complete translation of the Shield's description, see the appendix to this chapter.

Significant debate arose during the 18th century concerning how the Shield conveys narrative.² Interpretations often boil down to two related questions: the number of images the Shield contains and how these work in relation to narrative time. To the former question, Jean Boivin de Villeneuve, in the essay “Le bouclier d'Achille, divisé par cercles et par tableaux” (Boivin de Villeneuve 1715, 262–280), imagines the Shield to contain numerous small pictures that depict fixed moments in time.³ For example, Boivin de Villeneuve divides the city at war into three separate paintings. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing devotes the nineteenth chapter of his *Laocoon* to refuting Boivin de Villeneuve's position and writes that the Shield has only nine images in total (Lessing 1766/1853, 133–134). Moreover, Lessing holds, these images need not represent fixed moments in time or even be at all representable in the visual arts (Lessing 1766/1853, 132).⁴ For an idea of how some have conceived of the Shield, see the drawings accompanying Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad* (1715–1720; Pope follows Boivin de Villeneuve), John Flaxman's early-nineteenth-century bronze sculpture, and figure 3.1 for a simple schematic from Willcock (1976, 210). This chapter's analogy to the comics medium shares Boivin de Villeneuve's and Lessing's interest in the number of images in the ekphrasis, in locating temporality, and in how images and temporality interact to create stories.

This chapter identifies as many discrete images as possible, arranges them in an outline, and observes how these images, like panels in a comic strip, work to form a narrative. Discrete images are determined, as explained later, according to meter, adverbs, syntax, sense, and visuality. Then each item is arranged in a tabular outline. An image lies in parataxis if it describes a scene or an object equal in status to what comes before or in hypotaxis (nested one tab) if the fragment elaborates on an antecedent object.⁵ Observe this operation applied to the cosmology:

2. Some contemporary scholarship has also sought to unravel the relationship between image and narrative in the Shield. Becker (1992, 1995) and Byre (1992) argue that the narrator moves between levels of representation while describing the ostensible object. Becker holds that the narrator variously refers to his own reaction to the imagined object, the material images on the shield, Hephaestus in the act of creating, and, by dramatizing what is seen, the shield's actual referents (1995, 41–50). Byre observes a dynamic relationship between narration and description in the Shield, writing that the narrator at times describes static objects and at other times “narrates their development through time” (1992, 37). That is, some descriptions remain close to the object's images, while others drift so far from these that they become narrativized stories.

3. Alexander Pope would later follow Boivin de Villeneuve in his “Observations of the Shield of Achilles,” 1715–1720, vol. 5, 104–125.

4. For more on Boivin de Villeneuve and the Shield in 18th-century France, see Moore (2000).

5. Hamon (1981) notes that rhetoricians have observed something like this breakdown. “The stylistician,” he writes, “does not move from detail to detail, but rather from the particular to the general, and from the general to the particular” (11). For more on decomposition and rearrangement of text, see Barthes (1972b).

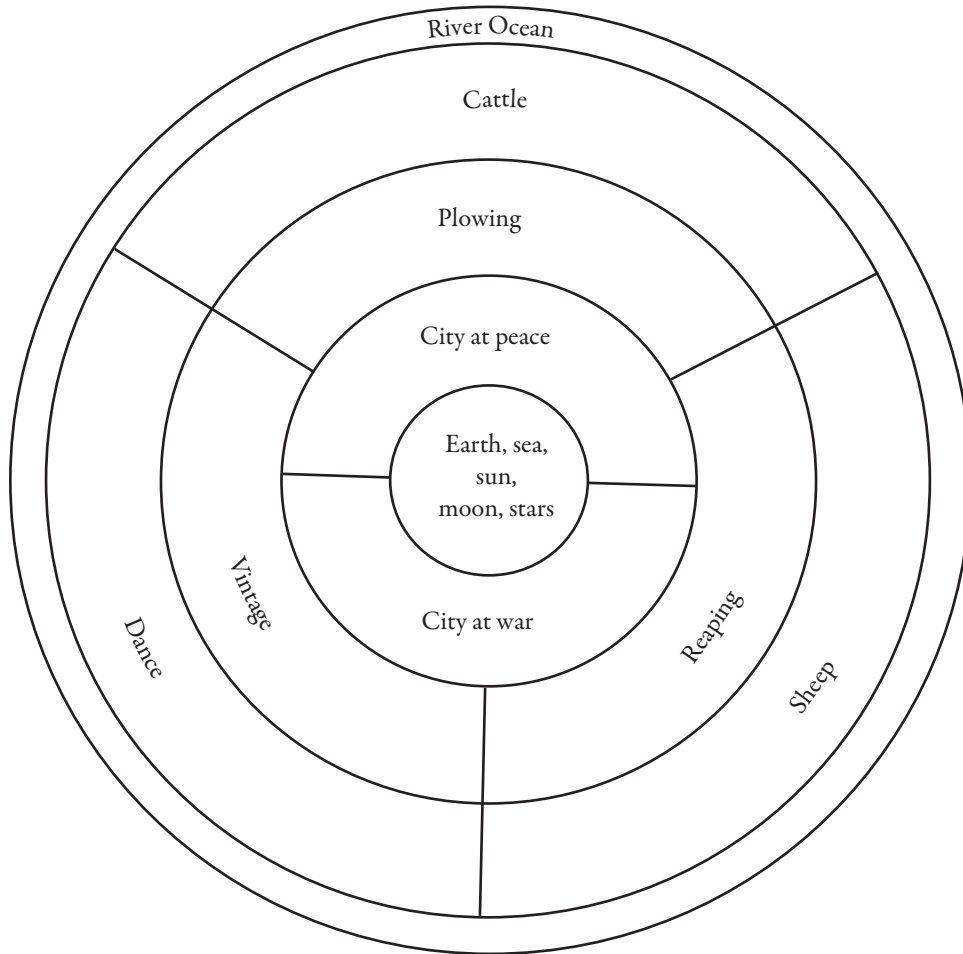


FIGURE 3.1 One possible configuration of the Shield of Achilles, from Willcock (1976, 210).

- I. (483) ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ' |
 II. ἐν δ' οὐρανόν,
 III. ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν, ||
 A. (484) ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα |
 B. σελήνην τε πλήθουσας, ||
 C. (485) ἐν δὲ τὰ τεῖρεα πάντα, |
 1. τὰ τ' οὐρανὸς ἔστεφάνωται, ||
 2. (486) Πληγιάδας θ'
 3. ὕδαας τε |
 4. τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος ||
 5. (487) Ἄρκτόν θ'
 a. ἦν καὶ Ἄμαξαν | ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσαι, ||
 b. (488) ἢ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται |

- c. *καί τ' Ὀρίωνα δοκεύει,* ||
 d. (489) *οὐη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι | λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο.* ||⁶
- I. (483) On it he made the earth
 II. and on it the sky
 III. and on it the sea, ||
 A. (484) and the untiring sun
 B. and the full moon ||
 C. (485) and on it all the constellations,
 1. and the sky is crowned by these, ||
 2. (486) and the Pleiades
 3. and the Hyades
 4. and the might of Orion ||
 5. (487) and Ursa Major,
 a. which they also call by the name “Wagon,” ||
 b. (488) and it revolves in the same place
 c. and watches Orion ||
 d. (489) and she alone has no share in the baths of the Ocean. ||

Four nested units result, being all of creation (I.–III.), objects in the sky (III.A–C.), constellations in the sky (III.C.1.–5.), and Ursa Major (or “Bear,” III.C.5.a.–d.). One inconsistency must be noted, that the description of the sky follows III., the sea, and not II. This is the only instance of such irregularity in the entire Shield. Particles and meter play a central role in the description’s division into discrete segments. As elsewhere in Homer, *μέν* [indeed] (though here untranslatable, 483) introduces a new episode, thought, or idea.⁷ Correlative *τε . . . τε* [both . . . and] join words and phrases that are syntactically parallel and “mutually dependent.”⁸ Meter also works hand in hand with segmentation. Twelve of the fifteen fragments end with caesura or a line-end. In addition to particles and meter dividing the description into discrete units, segmentation corresponds to discrete visual units.

Each segment, except for the narrator’s verbal comment at III.C.5.a., is itself a succinct visual image, such as of the earth, Pleiades, or Ursa Major. In the cosmology, these segments are the smallest meaningful units in terms of visibility. That is, they cannot be broken down into smaller segments and still communicate visual meaning. The segments are meaningful in and of themselves and also with respect to those that precede and follow. For example, when the Pleiades are mentioned at III.C.2., one thinks of the constellation. The Pleiades, though, are part of a list elaborating constellations in general (III.C.). When considered together, linguistic and

6. | marks caesura and || line ending. Text from Allen (1931). All translations are my own.

7. On *μέν* establishing discourse in Homer, see Bakker (1997, 80–85), Denniston (1959, 359–64, §I. A. [1]–[9]), Cooper (2002, 3039, §2.29.44.4 [A]), and Monro (1891, 313–315, §345).

8. Monro (1891, 301, §331). See also Cooper (2002, 3101–3102, §2.29.70.1[A]). In Homer, *τε . . . τε* connects words or phrases, rarely clauses; see Denniston (1959, 503, §I.[2]), while at III.A.–C. (484–485) and III.C.5.b.–d. (488–489) we find *τε . . . τε . . . δέ*, which operates the same as *τε . . . τε . . . τε* (Cooper 2002, 3101–3103, §2.69.70.1[D]). Denniston (1959, 513, §I.[6]) differs, explaining *δέ* as adding contrast. For a general critique of this latter view of *δέ* as a particle of contrast in Homer, see Bakker (1997, 62–71). Here (and in the description of Ursa Major, lines 487–489) *τε . . . τε . . . δέ* mark mutually dependent image fragments.

metrical segmentation clearly work in unison for the creation of discrete visual segments. This outline and brief analysis of the cosmology reveal three things: First, the cosmology comprises visual segments; second, these segments are discrete and meaningful in and of themselves; third, they lie in relation to one another. Discrete visual units, from which the Shield is constructed, are remarkably similar to comics panels, for comics panels, too, are discrete and relational and form narrative through sequentiality.

Turning, therefore, to comics is only natural for insights into how to come to terms with segmentation in the Shield. Groensteen's *System of Comics* (2007) develops an interpretive framework for understanding narrative in comics and is rooted in several principles. First, the smallest significant unit, thinking semiotically, is the panel and not individual elements of the drawing within (Groensteen 2007, 3–7). Second, he argues that comics are in essence a visual (not verbal) medium (7–12). Third, narrative meaning arises from the relationships of panels to one another (21–23). From this latter principle in particular, *The System of Comics* becomes a study of “joints” between panels. Groensteen terms the study of such joints “arthrology” (Greek: *arthron* = “joint of a limb”).⁹

Groensteen posits three conceptual levels to comics. First is the “spatio-topical system,” which accounts for things like the physical shape of the page, the shape and size of frames, and the organization of frames on a page. For the purposes of this chapter, the most pertinent aspects of the spatio-topical system are the six functions of the frame, which explain how frames inform the meaning of their contents (Groensteen 2007, 37–57).¹⁰

The *function of closure* contains an image, enclosing “a fragment of space-time belonging to the diegesis, to signify the coherence” of a drawing (Groensteen 2007, 40). The *separative function* accounts for how a self-contained image is distinct and independent. The frame's *rhythmic function* advances narrative but also delays it. The *structuring function* pertains to how a frame “is a determinant element of the composition of the image” (46). A frame's *expressive function* conveys information about the meaning of an image inside a panel. Last is the *readerly function*, which calls one to look at the image. These six functions structure the composition of comics, as well as readers' interpretation.

The other two levels of Groensteen's system are devoted to understanding how panels interact with each other locally and globally, restrained arthrology and general arthrology, respectively.¹¹ Restrained arthrology determines and explains temporal connections between panels (Groensteen 2007, 103–143). After a reader has interpreted a panel in and of itself

9. It goes without saying that there are significant difficulties in applying *The System of Comics* to literature. Chief among them is the status of space in the two media, for *mise en page* is irrelevant to the printed text of Homer; in comics, an artist painstakingly crafts the space of panels for a page of particular dimensions. The same applies to the form of comics panels. The size of comics panels and their situation to others inform the way in which readers interpret individual fragments and create narrative. Descriptive fragments in literature do not operate in this visual manner, though their length (the closest equivalent of text to space) is relevant to a reader's production of meaning. While the *Iliad* is obviously not composed in a visual medium, it does construct visually in an important way. See Bakker (1993) and (1997, 54–85) on how the poet's narratological stance is essentially “a verbalization of things seen” (Bakker 1997, 55). Narratology is an example of another semiotic approach that has enjoyed widespread success in the study of Homer since the publication of de Jong (1987).

10. See also Eisner (1990, 38–99) for an artist's discussion of comics panels.

11. Groensteen's terms are *arthrologie restreinte*, perhaps better translated as “restricted arthrology,” and *arthrologie générale*.

according to the functions of the frame, one then places the panel in relation to that which immediately precedes and follows.¹²

General arthrology studies the joints (e.g., thematic, iconic, diegetic) between disparate panels beyond those of linear temporal sequence (Groensteen 2007, 144–158). This final level of Groensteen's system accounts for the larger leaps that a reader makes when reading a comic in its entirety.¹³ In its dissection of the fundamentals of narrative in the comics medium, *The System of Comics* is a comprehensive yet flexible apparatus for discussing comics in all their diversity.

Groensteen's system offers also a framework for understanding discrete units in descriptive and narrative text. In the outline of the cosmology provided, each fragment may be considered analogous to a comics panel.¹⁴ In this outline, as in comics, narrative meaning is constructed arthrologically—from one fragment to the next.¹⁵

Looking back to the breakdown and recomposition of the cosmology, the framing of the cosmology's images hinders narrative within them, as their brevity prevents storytelling. For example, the first two functions, that of closure and of separation, can be seen in each verbal fragment's clear distinction from others. For example, all three fragments describing the sky at III.A.–C.5.A.–D. end with caesura or line ending, and connectives clearly divide them. The rhythmic function here makes for a rather fast description whose complexity is not marked by ornamentation but by an abundance of parallel individual units. The structuring function (how the frame limits representation) and the expressive function (how the frame influences interpretation of its contents) affect narrative. As to the former, the short clausulae allow only for brief, clipped combinations like the subject-noun pairs of III.A.–C. (484–485). As to the latter, the brevity of these fragments contributes to the finitude and discreteness of the objects of description. The readerly function indicates how a frame leads one to consider its contents.

12. The term for the organization of temporal coordinates is *breakdown*, which explains how any given narrative or discourse is transformed into comics form (117–121). For a more hands-on approach to breakdown in comics, see Harvey (1996, 9 and passim). See also Carrier (2000) on sequence. Readers of *Understanding Comics* will call to mind Scott McCloud's analysis of panel transitions (1993, 60–93), where the gutter is the primary interpretive site for comics readers “to connect moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality” (67). Groensteen finds fault with this emphasis on the gutter (2007, 112–115).

13. In the way that breakdown governs the sequential distribution of images into panels, “braiding” (*tressage*) joins sequentially and nonsequentially related panels; see Groensteen (2007, 22, 145–147, 156–158).

14. A fascinating area of inquiry would be sequentiality in Archaic and early Classical metopes. Though ancient art falls outside the scope of this chapter, it offers valuable evidence of Greek ideas of events in time and space. See Hanfmann (1957) on the Parthenon and the deeds of Theseus at the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, as well as Hurwit (1977) on how metopes frame images.

15. There have been some noteworthy approaches to segmentation in narrative and descriptive text. See Iser (1978, 111) on the sentence, which prefigures a horizon of expectation, yet also introduces indeterminacies. Fowler (1995) writes about segmentation as a concept central to Lucretius' poetics in the *De rerum natura*. For further reading on discontinuity and fragmentation, see Henry (1994), an edited volume that builds on Barthes (1964, 1972a). Scholars have approached Homer with numerous ideas of segmentation. Auerbach (1968) writes that in Homer “the separate elements of a phenomenon are most clearly placed in relation to one another.” These elements define persons and things, yet with these elements, claims Auerbach, Homer fashions “a continuous rhythmic procession of phenomena” (6). Kahane (1994, 17–42) looks at the correspondence of sense units with metrical units. See Bakker (1997, 54–85) on the role of connective particles in the temporal progression of narrative and Minchin (2001, 100–131) on brief descriptive segments.

The most important result of the cosmology's brief segments is that narrative within the fragments is highly limited, save for a modicum of movement in ἢ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται [and revolves in the same place] (III.C.5.b., 488).¹⁶ These small frames prevent action from occurring inside them. As will be seen, this preponderance of small descriptive fragments in the cosmology is unique in the Shield.

Looking at III.C.5.c. (488), there is more suppression of narrative. Ursa Major watches Orion (Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει) but does not actively flee from him. Flight, though, was common in ancient descriptions of constellations, such as the Pleiades' fleeing Orion in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 619–620.¹⁷ Further, δοκεύειν [to keep a good lookout for] is usually applied to an aggressor, not a victim.¹⁸ Thus, the viewing relationship is the inverse of what is expected, as one would instead expect Orion to look aggressively at Ursa Major. Further, even in places where Homer's audience might expect action, it is remarkably absent. The sum of these frames is a very compartmental and orderly representation, which seems to reflect an idea of the heavens as themselves having these qualities.

Restrained arthrology, unlike the spatio-topical system, produces an impression of narrative due to the order of the described items. For while there is little or no development of actors from panel to panel, a requirement for narrative as conventionally construed, the order in which objects are narrated nevertheless offers an impression of a story by virtue of being similar to expected narratives.¹⁹ For example, the order in which Earth, sky, and sea are mentioned reflects that, in Hesiod's *Theogony* 126–132, where Gaia [Earth] begets Ouranos [Sky] and then Pontos [Sea]. In part due to similarity to Hesiod's cosmogony, the general arthrology of the first three segments in the Shield gives the impression of this, too, being a creation of the universe. If this order of creation was conventional and considered unchangeable by the poet, then the slightly off subordination between II. and III. may be explained. Philippe Hamon, explaining Lessing on Homer, elaborates this sort of implied narrative as “a movement of characters” that “takes charge of them in a ‘natural’ successivity of a motivated prescription” (Hamon 1981, 17). Another example of implied narrative is in the interaction between Orion and Ursa Major (486–489). First Orion is mentioned, then Ursa Major, then Orion. Since flight of constellations is a common motif in Archaic Greek poetry, a logical inference is that there will be a pursuit by the aggressive Orion. There is none, however. When the segments are approached diachronically, though, Ursa Major's watching appears to be a reaction to Orion.²⁰ Reading from panel to panel, the fabrication of narrative is possible, if not probable, even in the stillness of the cosmology.

The cities at peace and war (490–540) differ from the cosmology in descriptive style. The frames of the segments vary in length, some short, as in the cosmology, others long, allowing for more storytelling potential. These frames' restrained arthrology strongly implies narrative. The

16. See Becker (1995, 101n184, 145–148) on the difference between movement and action.

17. See Edwards (1991, 212) and West (1978, 314), who lists numerous instances of constellations' flights from one another.

18. See Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth (1988, 278) on *Odyssey* 5.273–275, identical to *Iliad* 18.487–489.

19. McCloud (1994, 99–106) illustrates rich narrative possibilities in not following convention regarding comics panels' successive development of actors.

20. Leaf and Bayfield (1962).

complicated parataxis and hypotaxis of segments in the outline reflect the subject of the passage. That is, a busy city cannot be illustrated with only one paradigmatic example, as in the cosmology, but with multiple smaller ones. In the second episode in the city at peace, the trial in the agora (497–508) is organized in outline form as follows:

- I. (490) ἐν δὲ δύο πόλιν ποιήσῃ | πόλεις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων || (491) καλὰς.
 A. ἐν τῇ μὲν ῥα |
 1. γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπίνας τε,
 a. ...
 2. (497) λαοὶ δ' εἰς ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθροοί· |
 a. ἔθθα δὲ νεῖκος || (498) ὠρώρει,
 b. δύο δ' ἄνδρες | ἐνείκεον εἴνεκα ποιότης || (499) ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου· |
 (1) ὁ μὲν εὐχετο πάντ' ἀποδοῦναι || (500) δῆμῳ πιφάσκων, |
 (2) ὁ δ' ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἐλέσθαι· ||
 (3) (501) ἄμφω δ' ἰέσθην | ἐπὶ ἱστορίαι πεῖραρ ἐλέσθαι. ||
 c. (502) λαοὶ δ' ἀμφοτέροισιν | ἐπήπυον ἀμφὶς ἀρωγοί· ||
 d. (503) κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον· |
 e. οἳ δὲ γέροντες || (504) εἶατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῶ ἐν κύκλῳ, ||
 (1) (505) σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων | ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἡεροφώνων· ||
 (2) (506) τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἦισσον, |
 (3) ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δικάζον. ||
 (4) (507) κείτο δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι | δύο χρυσοῖο τάλαντα, ||
 (5) (508) τῶ δόμεν ὄς μετὰ τοῖσι | δίκην ἰθύντατα εἶποι. ||
 B. (509) τὴν δ' ἐτέρην πόλιν ἀμφὶ |
 1. ...

- I. (490) And on it he made two cities of mortal men—(491) beautiful.
 A. And in one
 1. there were both weddings and nuptial feasts
 a. ...
 2. (497) And people were crowded into the agora.
 a. And there a quarrel (498) had arisen,
 b. and two men were quarreling on account of the blood price (499) of a dead man.
 (1) One man was asserting that he had paid all the ransom, (500) addressing the people,
 (2) but the other man was refusing to take anything.
 (3) (501) And both were eager for a judge to make a decision.
 c. (502) And the people, advocates to both, were applauding on either side.
 d. (503) And heralds were restraining the people.
 e. And elders (504) were sitting on smooth stones in an august circle,
 (1) (505) and they were holding the scepters of clear-voiced heralds in their hands.

- (2) (506) they then were leaping up with these <scepters>,
 - (3) and in turns they were giving judgments,
 - (4) (507) and in the middle were lying two talents of gold
 - (5) (508) to be given to him who among them should speak
the best judgment.
- B. (509) And around the other city
1. ...

As may be seen in the appendix, the rest of the cities show similar organization. The segments are less numerous (on average roughly one fragment per line) than in the cosmology (roughly two fragments per line). Here they also show greater variety in length, the panels having from three to ten words. For connective particles, the agora scene relies mostly on *δέ* [and]. Meter tends to coincide with panel segmentation; however, caesurae and line endings occur frequently here within segments, as in I.A.2.: *δύο δ' ἄνδρες | ἐνείκεον εἵνεκα πωυῆς* || *ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμέου* [and two men were quarreling on account of the blood price || of a dead man] (498–499). Two instances of dissonance occur between meter and segmented images at I.A.2.a. and I.A.2.b. (497–498), where the image ends in enjambment.

The longer, though variable, panels evoke the sense of a disorderly subject. Consider the structuring and expressive functions at I.A.2.e.: *οἱ δὲ γέροντες* || *εἴτα' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἰερῶ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ* [and the elders || were sitting on smooth stones in an august circle] (503–504). This discrete unit holds far more descriptive information—of people, what they are doing, and how they are arranged—than a smaller one could. According to the structuring function, the longer frames allow for greater detail within this fragment. The longer frame, through the expressive function, also conveys meaning about its image, perhaps that fragment I.A.2.e. is more important than others around it, especially since it introduces the next five images. Smaller frames are of presumably less importance. The agora scene, like the rest of the cities at peace and war, varies the descriptive units in a play of the rhythmic function. For example, the reader rushes through the brevity of some descriptive units, as at I.A.2.e.(2)–I.A.2.e.(3), then lingers over longer ones, such as I.A.2.e.(4)–I.A.2.e.(5). In the way that the text moves in and out of detail, the description is at moments advanced, at others delayed. The panels function to manipulate and perhaps destabilize one's sense of space and action in the cities.

Descriptive units move in and out of subordination in contrast to the increasing detail of the cosmology. Several times this selection moves into subordination on as many as five levels, as at I.A.2.b.(1)–(3) and I.A.2.e.(1)–(5). The effect of this is best understood in contrast to the cosmology. For while the cosmos can be exemplified by one example, Ursa Major, the cities cannot. Instead, the city at peace has two examples, the festivities and the agora scene. Further, descriptions of each unit have subordinated parts. The form of the cities' description seems to correspond to their subject matter—human beings. The activities of numerous people cannot be generalized but must be described with many small examples.

As in the cosmology, obvious sequentiality is limited, though the breakdown in this scene creates the impression of narrative. Judging by temporal adverbs, the episode appears to happen mostly at the same moment. Only two joints clearly advance the narrative: I.A.2.e.(1)–I.A.2.e.(2) and I.A.2.e.(2)–I.A.2.e.(3). In the former, the elders, who at line 503 are sitting, dart up: *τοῖσιν*

ἔπειτ' ἦϊσσον [they then were leaping up with these <scepters>] (506).²¹ The brevity of this segment and the unexpected shift of time in ἔπειτ' [then] give a sense of urgency to the administration of justice. Action occurs between this and the next segment with ἀμοιβηδὶς [in turns]: ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δίκασον [and in turns they were giving judgments] (506). Aside from these two adverbs, there is nothing that clearly communicates temporal development.

The impression of narrative, on the other hand, might reasonably be found in the arrangement of actors and events, for they are introduced in an expected order: a quarrel arises, one man speaks, the other refuses, and judges deliberate. Principally, narrative lies in a reader's diachronic movement through descriptive segments. To various degrees, segments individually lend themselves to narrative, but primarily narrative emerges from their juxtaposition. It is precisely this ability to be read both ways—as static and narrational—that allows for the poet's pretension that a fixed object is being described. Byre is correct in writing that the trial scene has “a high degree of narrativity” (Byre 1992, 39), though this has very little to do with straightforward sequentiality in the story. Likewise, Becker's statement that the Shield is a “description of a . . . complex *experience* of images” (Becker 1990, 140) may be refined. There are, instead, at least three different sorts of narrative: that within discrete panels (as coordinated by the spatio-topical system), that clearly marked by adverbs and movement of actors, and that created in the reading process through restrained arthrology.

A series of scenes from the countryside make up the third major section of the Shield (541–606; see appendix, sections 3 through 8). These episodes show strong similarity to each other in thematics and their creation of narrative. Further, these six sections show a spatio-topical system and arthrology distinctly different from the cosmology and cities. The rustic scenes consistently have rather long fragments, nearly all of which lie in parataxis. A representative example is the reaping episode (550–560).

- I. (550) ἐν δ' ἐτίθει τέμενος βασιλῆϊον· |
 A. ἔνθα δ' ἔριθοι || (551) ἦμων ὄξειας δρεπάνας | ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες. ||
 1. (552) δράγματα δ' ἄλλα μετ' ὄγμον | ἐπήτρυμα πίπτον ἔραζε, ||
 2. (553) ἄλλα δ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες | ἐν ἔλλεδανοῖσι δέοντο. ||
 3. (554) τρεῖς δ' ἄρ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐφέστασαν· |
 4. αὐτὰρ ὄπισθε || (555) παῖδες δραγμαεύοντες | ἐν ἀγκαλίδεσσι φέροντες ||
 (556) ἀσπερχές πάρεχον· |
 5. βασιλεὺς δ' ἐν τοῖσι σιωπῇ || (557) σκῆπτρον ἔχων ἐστήκει | ἐπ' ὄγμου
 γηθόσωνος κῆρ. ||
 B. (558) κήρυκες δ' ἀπάνευθεν | ὑπὸ δρυὶ δαῖτα πένοντο, ||
 1. (559) βοῦν δ' ἱερεύσαντες μέγαν ἄμφεπον· |
 2. αἰ δὲ γυναῖκες || (560) δεῖπνον ἐρίθουσιν | λεύκ' ἄλφιτα πολλὰ πάλυνον. ||

21. Leaf and Bayfield (1962, 458) interpret γέροντες as the subject of ἦϊσσον. The subject of the first half of 506 might be the litigants; see Edwards (1991, 217). Looking at how the breakdown of images tends to work in the cities at peace and war, Edwards's solution creates a relation between fragments that is unparalleled in the Shield, for nowhere else do the subjects of the panels change with such rapidity.

- I. (550) And on it he made a king's estate:
- A. and there reapers, || (551) holding sharp sickles in their hands, were reaping. ||
 1. (552) And some thick handfuls they were making fall to the ground along the furrow, ||
 2. (553) and other <handfuls> binders were binding with straw bands. ||
 3. (554) And three binders stood by;
 4. but behind <the reapers> || (555) boys, gathering the handfuls, carrying them in their arms, || (556) were tirelessly at hand;
 5. and a king, among them, in silence, || (557) holding a scepter, stood among them at the furrow, rejoicing in his heart. ||
 - B. (558) And apart <from them> heralds under an oak were preparing a feast, ||
 1. (559) and, having slain a great ox, were busying about.
 2. And women || (560) were sprinkling the food for the reapers with much white barley.

The separative function is at its strongest in the rustic scenes since δέ [and] introduces nearly every fragment.²² Lacking particles that introduce complex series—like correlative τε . . . τε [both . . . and] or discourse-establishing μέν [indeed]—these lines are straightforward and paratactic. Compared to the previous two examples, segmentation and meter here are most in coincidence since a line ending or a caesura separates every fragment. Furthermore, while this breakdown is very paratactic, like the other rustic scenes, several subordinating segments introduce it. Here, the narrator first declares the subject to be “a king's estate” (I.), next refines it to a scene of reapers on the estate (I.A.), and then describes their labor in detail (I.A.1.–I.A.5). The embedding of fragments achieves a different end than in the previous two examples, here putting the reapers' actions on equal representational footing.

The segments are uniformly of a medium length. In the harvesting episode there are ten panels for eleven lines (roughly one per line). While the city at peace has the same average of fragments per line, there is discrepancy between short and long. As noticed in the city at peace, longer panels allow for greater narrative within the panel than shorter ones. In their medium length, these panels accommodate (according to the structuring function) simple human action and one additional piece of information, such as setting or an accompanying object. For example, I.B. has people doing a simple action (preparing a feast) in a setting (under an oak tree): κήρυκες δ' ἀπάνευθεν ὑπὸ δρυὶ δαίτα πένοντο [and apart <from them> heralds under an oak were preparing a feast] (558). The absence of small frames prevents this description from turning into a series of lists, as in the cosmology. Thinking of the expressive function, these uniform fragments might reinforce an idea of the regularity and repetition of the rustic people's activities.

These long frames lie in consistent parataxis, not moving in and out of detail (as in the cities) or resorting to high levels of specificity (as in the cosmology). Events in the country, it seems, are neither so complex that they call for subordinated description nor so generalizable that they can be summed up by one example.

22. μέν introduces fragment I.H. (line 585) in the herd scene (573–586). The dance (590–606) shows somewhat more variation in segment-introducing particles: τῶ I.A. (591), μέν 585 I.H. (593); καί I.B.3. (597); and ὡς I.C.1. (600).

Restrained arthrology creates a clear and uncomplicated narrative of laborers harvesting and preparing a feast. There are no temporal linguistic markers, making for a piece that may be understood as static. Like the previous two examples, however, images are narrated in a specific order such that their juxtaposition creates a sense of action. The reapers follow the steps necessary to harvesting: They hold sickles, cut down the crop, bind it, and pass it along. After their labor, the workers will partake in the feast meant for them (I.B.–I.B.2.). When seen from this perspective, Becker’s observation that the scene lacks narrative because “the same figure does not perform consecutive actions” (Becker 1995, 132) is in error. Implied sequentiality here (and in fact in most of the rustic scenes) is especially strong.

Groensteen’s system of comics allows for a controlled discussion of the smallest meaningful units from which the *Iliad*’s famous ekphrasis is built. The Shield satisfies the oppositional demands of representing static images and narrativized referents with a careful use of spatio-topical and arthrologic principles. Even this brief overview of comics theory has demonstrated the Shield’s undernoticed (if not unnoticed) coordination of meter, particles, conjunctions, images, narrative, and thematics. Still unconsidered is Groensteen’s third major element of comics—general arthrology, narrative fashioned by readers connecting panels outside of the linear reading processes. Such an analysis is called for, certainly, though space (for this author space in the form of a word count) is coming to an end.²³

Appendix: The Shield of Achilles, *Iliad* 18.483–608

This appendix presents *Iliad* 18.483–608, the ekphrasis describing the shield forged for Achilles by Hephaestus, articulating the unit breaks employed in this chapter (due to its compression, the city at war [509–540] is uniquely difficult to organize). Line numbers are presented in a column on the right. Since the arthrological segments do not always correspond with line ends, line numbers here indicate where a line begins. The || symbol connotes a line ending.

1. The Cosmology	483–489
I. On it he made the earth	483
II. and on it the sky	
III. and on it the sea,	
A. and the untiring sun	484
B. and the full moon	
C. and on it all the constellations,	485
1. and the sky is crowned by these,	
2. and the Pleiades	486
3. and the Hyades	
4. and the might of Orion	
5. and Ursa Major,	487

23. Gratitude goes to Ann Bergren and Joy Connolly, in whose classes these ideas were first developed. I also give thanks to this volume’s editors, to the members of the IFA–GSAS Forum on Forms of Seeing at New York University, and to readers of earlier drafts: Joel Christensen, Michèle Lowrie, Rose B. MacLean, Jessie Owens, Benjamin Sammons, Amit Shilo, and Christos Tsagalis.

- a. which they also call by the name “Wagon,” ||
 b. and it revolves in the same place 488
 c. and watches Orion ||
 d. and she alone has no share in the baths of the Ocean. || 489
2. **The Cities at Peace and War** 490–540
- I. And on it he made two cities of mortal men ||—beautiful. 490–91
- A. And in one
1. there were both weddings and nuptial feasts, ||
 a. and from bridal chambers under blazing torches || 492
 they were leading maidens through the city, 493
 b. and a great wedding song arose; ||
 c. and dancing youths were spinning, 494
 (1) and among them flutes ||
 (2) and lyres were making a cry; 495
 d. and women, || each standing in her doorway, were admiring; || 496
2. And people were crowded into the agora. 497
- a. And there a quarrel || had arisen, 498
 b. and two men were quarreling on account of the blood price ||
 of a dead man. 499
 (1) One man was asserting that he had paid all the ransom, ||
 addressing the people, 500
 (2) but the other man was refusing to take anything. ||
 (3) And both were eager for a judge to make a decision. || 501
 c. And the people, advocates to both, were applauding on either side. || 502
 d. And heralds were restraining the people. 503
 e. And elders || were sitting on smooth stones in an august circle, || 504
 (1) and they were holding the scepters of clear-voiced || 505
 heralds in their hands.
 (2) they then were leaping up with these <scepters>, 506
 (3) and in turns they were giving judgments, ||
 (4) and in the middle were lying two talents of gold || 507
 (5) to be given to him who among them 508
 should speak the best judgment. ||
- B. And around the other city 509
1. two armies of men were sitting around || shining in arms; 510
 a. and they [the besiegers] were divided between two plans, ||
 whether to sack the city or to divide apart all, || 511
 however much property the lovely city held within; || 512
2. but the besieged were not yet persuaded, 513
 a. and they were secretly arming themselves for an ambush; ||
 b. dear wives and young children, at the wall || 514
 standing, were keeping guard; 515
 c. and with them men whom old age held; ||

3. and they went out; 516
 a. and Ares and Pallas Athena were leading them, || both gold, 517
 b. and they wore golden clothes, ||
 c. both beautiful and great with their arms, 518
 d. and as fit for gods || both were conspicuous; 519
 e. and the people were smaller in scale. ||
4. And when they arrived there it was opportune to lie in wait || 520
 on a river, 521
 a. and where there was a watering place for all beasts, ||
 b. there they were sitting, wrapped in shining bronze. || 522
5. And then apart from them two scouts of the 523
 <besieged> people were sitting, ||
 ooking for whenever they might see sheep and curved-horn oxen. || 524
 a. And soon these came, 525
 b. and two herdsmen were accompanying, || delighting in the syrinx; 526
 (1) and they did not foresee the trick at all. ||
 c. They [the scouts], catching sight of these, ran upon them, 527
 d. and then swiftly || they were cutting the herds of oxen and fat flocks || 528
 of white sheep, 529
 e. and they were killing the shepherds. ||
6. And as they [the besiegers] now heard a great clash among the cattle, || 530
 [the besiegers] sitting in front of their place of assembly, 531
 a. right away their swift horses || mounting, they followed after, 532
 b. and on a sudden they arrived. ||
7. And making a stand they were doing battle along the
 banks of the river, || 533
 a. and they were throwing bronze spears at one another. || 534
 b. and amid [them] Strife and Confusion and
 destructive Death were in the throng, || 535
 (1) [Death] who holds one man recently wounded, 536
 (2) another unwounded, ||
 (3) another, dead, she drags by the feet through the din of battle; || 537
 (4) and the garment about her shoulders was dark 538
 with the blood of men. ||
 (5) and like living mortals they were joining in and fighting, || 539
 (6) and they were dragging the dead corpses of one another. || 540
3. **Plowing Scene** 541–549
- I. And on it he made a soft field, rich earth, || broad, thrice plowed; 541–42
 A. and many plowmen in it, ||
 whirling the yokes of beasts, were driving here and there; || 543
 B. and when, having turned, they came to the end of the field, || 544
 and then to each in their hands cups of honey-sweet wine || 545
 a man pouring was giving; 546

- C. and they were turning back to the furrow, ||
 pressing themselves to come to the end of the deep field. || 547
- D. And it was black behind each, and it resembled a plowed field, || 548
 though being gold; 549
- E. he had fabricated a marvelous sight. ||
- 4. Reaping Scene 550–560**
- I. And on it he made a king's estate: 550
- A. and there reapers, || holding sharp sickles in their hands, were reaping. || 551
1. And some thick handfuls they were making fall 552
 to the ground along the furrow, ||
2. and other <handfuls> binders were binding with straw bands. || 553
3. And three binders stood by; 554
4. but behind <the reapers>, ||
 boys, gathering the handfuls, carrying them in their arms, || 555
 were tirelessly at hand; 556
5. and a king, among them, in silence, ||
 holding a scepter, stood among them at the furrow, 557
 rejoicing in his heart. ||
- B. And apart <from them> heralds under an oak were preparing a feast, || 558
1. and, having slain a great ox, were busying about. 559
2. And women || were sprinkling the food 560
 for the reapers with much white barley.
- 5. The Vintage 561–572**
- I. And on it he made a vineyard, very heavy with bunches of grapes, || 561
 of beautiful gold; 562
- A. and the grapes were black, ||
- B. and it stood up on silver poles throughout; || 563
- C. and around there was a ditch of dark blue, 564
- D. and about he drove a fence || of tin; 565
- E. and there was only one path to it, ||
 by which the carriers went when they would reap. || 566
- F. And maidens and young men, bearing the tender fruit, || 567
 in plaited baskets they were bearing the honey-sweet fruit. || 568
- G. And in the middle of them a boy with a clear-voiced lyre || 569
 was playing lovely, and was singing of beautiful Linus || 570
 in a delicate voice; 571
- H. and beating the ground together, ||
 skipping with their feet, they were accompanying with dance and shouting. || 572
- 6. The Herd 573–586**
- I. And on it he made a herd of straight-horned cattle || 573
- A. and the cattle were made of gold and tin || 574

- B. and with a bellowing from the cow-yard 575
they were hastening toward the pasture ||
alongside a sounding river, alongside a swaying thicket of reeds. || 576
- C. And golden herders were marching with cattle—|| four [cattle], 577–78
- D. and nine swift-footed dogs were following them. ||
- E. And two fearsome lions among the foremost cattle || 579
were holding a bellowing bull; 580
- F. and it, bellowing for a long time, || was being dragged away; 581
- G. and now the dogs and vigorous youths were pursuing it. ||
- H. The two <lions>, having burst open the hide of the great cow, || 582
were swallowing the entrails and black blood; 583
- I. and the herders || in vain tried to set on the dogs. || 584
- J. and <the dogs> shrank from biting the lions, || 585
- K. and they, standing very near, were barking and were fleeing. || 586
- 7. The Valley 587–589**
- I. And on it the famous one of crooked legs made a great pasturage, || 587
in a beautiful valley, of white sheep, || 588
and farms and huts and covered pens. 589
- 8. The Dance 590–606**
- I. And on it the famous one of crooked legs embellished a place for dancing, || 590
- A. similar to that which on wide Knossos || 591
Daidalos made for Ariadne of beautiful locks. || 592
- B. There young men and oxen-bringing maidens || 593
were dancing, holding their hands on the wrists of one another. || 594
1. And the maidens had smooth linen, 595
2. and the young men ||wore well-spun tunics, glistening slightly with oil; || 596
3. and the maidens had beautiful crowns, 597
4. and the young men daggers, || golden, hanging from silver straps. || 598
- C. And at one time they ran with skilled feet || very lightly, 599–600
1. as when a seated potter tries ||
a wheel fitted to his palms, whether it will run; || 601
- D. and at another time they ran back in rows facing each other. || 602
- E. And a great crowd was standing around the lovely dance, || 603
delighting; 604–05
- F. and two tumblers about them ||
were spinning through the middle, taking the lead in the dance. || 606
- 9. Ocean 607–608**
- I. And on it he strongly made the great might of the river Ocean || 607
along the outermost rim of the firm shield. || 608