The Shield of Achilles
Iliad 18.478-608

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October 2005

The construction of the shield of Achilles is one of the most fascinating sections of the Iliad. Here, while Achilles and everyone else awaits the unfolding of his fate, the poet suspends the narrative to describe the decoration of the shield by Hephaestus. The adornment consists not of the frightening images seen on other Homeric shields, but rather the everyday scenes which comprise his vision of earthly life. It is a long departure from the usually rapid movement of Homer, and as such makes up our oldest example of extended ekphrasis, the verbal description of an object or work of art. In ancient times, this lengthy digression led Zenodotus to eliminate the passage from his edition altogether. Other readers, however, have perceived the powerful narrative effect of an extended pause just at the crucial turning point of the story, as though it were — as Oliver Taplin called it — the calm before the storm.

At the beginning of the eighteenth book, Achilles receives the news that Patroclus has died, and the great armor which Achilles had lent him has been stripped by Hector. Achilles is devastated, and his anger at Agamemnon suddenly seems insignificant, as grief for his friend swells into an intense rage directed at himself and at Hector. While he is waiting for his mother, Thetis, to deliver new armor from the smith-god Hephaestus, he goes out before the ships, with flames encircling his head, and frightens the Trojans with three terrible screams. Throughout the poem we see fire as a symbol of anger, heroic passion, war, and even death (for more, see Whitman, Chapter 7); so, when the bellows of Hephaestus kindle the fires of his forge, it leads us naturally to think of the rekindling of Achilles’

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anger and heroic passion for war, and also of his inevitable death. Hephaestus laments that he cannot protect Achilles from his fate, and then begins work on the shield, knowing that it will not save his life, but only serve him long enough to take revenge. The shield, then, is the instrument necessary for returning to battle and winning glory, but it is also Hephaestus’ reflection on the life that Achilles has exchanged for the immortality of his legend.

It is widely thought that the poet conceived the shield to be round (for a contrary suggestion, see Leaf, Appendix I). There is some uncertainty about the relationship between two epic words for shield: the epithets of ἀσπίς clearly indicate that it was circular, while σάκος is the word used of the tower-like body shield of Ajax. And yet σάκος is also used of several shields which nevertheless seem to be round shields. In the case of the shield of Achilles (which is always called σάκος except once at 18.458) it is often noted that at 19.374 it is compared to the moon, and at 20.261 Achilles holds the shield out in front of himself in his hand, a maneuver, according to Lorimer, only possible with the central handle of the round shield. On the surface of the typical round shield, layers of hide were placed in concentric circles, progressively smaller toward the front, so that it was thinnest around the rim; then a layer of metal was hammered out overtop (Edwards). The decoration of concentric bands has parallels in Cretan shields, and Phoenician bowls, some of which show scenes similar to those on Achilles’ shield. For more about Homeric shields, see especially Edwards, Lorimer, and Wace.

Following this introduction is the text for the shield section, along with the notes I took in order to enjoy it myself. Included is a list of the abbreviations used, and a bibliography alphabetized by author’s last name, which can be used to reference names cited in the notes, and as a further reading list for the curious. I owe a great deal to William Annis, not only for publishing this document, but for his helpful notes on prosody, and for answering questions on matters which were over my head. Thanks also to Chad Bochan for reading through the document and making helpful suggestions.
Vocabulary and Prosody. In the vocabulary notes we have marked doubtful vowels long when that seems necessary. If the long vowel bears a breathing mark or an accent, we note the long vowel in parentheses after the word, χρύσειος -η -ον (υ), but where possible the long mark goes over the vowel in the headword, δινέω. If a word began with digamma, and it matters for the meter of the line, we mark it so: ἄστυ -εος τό (ϝ). Synizesis is marked with a tie, ἕγινεο.

About the text. The main source for the text is Allen, but we have also followed West in some matters. The nominative forms of demonstrative which became the definite article in later Greek are accented: ὅ, ἥ, τό, οἵ, αἵ, τά.

When a word with an acute accent on the penult is followed by an enclitic there are certain cases where the final syllable also gets an accent: ἀρά σφυν. This happens when the consonant following the penultimate vowel is a resonant (μ, ν, λ, ρ, but sometimes σ). It appears that the resonant consonant was pronounced barytone, allowing then another acute to follow. This is the practice of many manuscripts, which West follows in his edition, and which we follow here.

See the last two pages for the works referred to in the notes and vocabulary.
483. Line 483 begins the description of the shield’s decoration with a summary division into three parts by the triple repetition of the adverb ἐν: the earth, with the heavens at the middle of the shield, and the ocean around the rim. The use of the adverb ἐν with verbs of creation becomes a theme, thereby dividing the shield into scenes; cf. lines 485, 490, 541, 550, 561, 573, 587, 590, and 607.
485 ἡ δὲ τὰ τείρεα πάντα, τὰ τ’ οὐρανὸς ἐστερφάνωται,
Πλησίόδας τ’ Ὕάδας τε τὸ τε σθένος Ὡρίωνος

486. Πλησίοδες: seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione who were placed in
the heavens as a constellation by Zeus, for different reasons in various
myths. They were used to mark different periods of the farming and sailing
seasons. | Ὅδας: five daughters of Atlas and Pleione (Atlas and Aethra
in some versions), placed as a constellation near Orion, along with their
sisters, the Πλησίοδες.

"Ἀρκτόν θ’, ἥν καὶ Ἀμαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν,
ἡ τ’ αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καὶ τ’ Ὡρίωνα δοκεῖει,
οὐδ’ ἀμμορός ἔστι λοετρῶν Ωκεανοῖο.

490 ἡ δὲ δύο ποιησε πολλὰς μερόποις ἀνθρώπων
καλάς. ἐν τῇ μὲν ὡς γὰρ τ’ ἔσαν εἰλαπίναι τε,
νῦμφας δ’ ἐκ θελάμον δαίδον ὅποι λαμπομενανόν

485 ἐν adv. therein, with ἔτευξε from line 483. τέρας -εος τὸ acc.pl. (epic for τέρας; found only
here in Homer) signs, portents; here, stars. πᾶς πᾶσα πᾶν acc.pl.n. all. τά ie. with which;
internal acc., Smyth §1573-4. ὄφρανος ὁ nom.sg. sky, heavens. στεφανοῦ perf.pass.ind. 3rd
go. has been crowned.

486 Πληίαδες αἱ acc.pl., the constellation Pleiades. ῾Υάδες αἱ acc.pl., the constellation Hyades.

487 Ὄριων ὁ gen.sg. one of the giants, and a mighty hunter from Boeotia, transformed
into a constellation.

488 Ὅριων ὁ gen.sg. δοκεύω pres.act.ind. 3rd sg. watches.

489 ὁ/ιοταλενισχιρχυµος -η -ον nom.sg.f. alone.

490 καί adv. also. Ἀμαξα ἡ acc.sg. wagon (as opposed to the war chariot, ἅρμα).

487 ἡ ᾿Αρκτος ἡ acc.sg. the Bear: the constellation Ursa Major). ἦν adv. also.

488 ἦν ἄριεν ὁ nom.pl. alone. ἀμμορός -ον nom.sg.f. having no share in, not entering + gen.

491 μέρος -οπος ὁ gen.pl. dividing the voice, ie. articulate,
divided with speech; only in pl. as epithet of men, LSJ. ἀνθρώπος ὁ gen.pl. of men.

492 γάμος ὁ nom.pl. weddings. εἰμί impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. there were, Pharr §964. ἑλαπίνη ἡ nom.pl.
feasts, banquets.

493 νύμφη ἡ acc.pl. brides. θάλαμος ὁ gen.pl. women's chambers. ἀνθρώπος ὁ gen.pl.
torches. ὅποι under; by the guidance of, Monro, + gen.; accent recessive when it follows its
noun. λάμπω pres.mid.pple. gen.pl.f. shining, flashing.
491-492. The enjambment of καλάς creates an emphatic afterthought. || The fem. pronoun τη refers to the first city, indicating that we have shifted from the neut. shield surface further into the depictions.

ηγίνειν ἀνά ἀστυ, πολὺς δ' ὑμέναιος ὁρόφει·
κούροι δ' ὀρχηστήρες ἐδίνεον, ἐν δ' ἄρα τούσιν
αὔλοι φόρμιγγες τε βοη ἐχον α' δε γυναικες
ιστάμεναι θαυμάζον ἐπί προσθοροσίσιν ἐκάστη.
λαιο δ' ειν ἀγορη ἐσαν ὕθρον ενθα δε νείκος
ὡρόφει, δύο δ' ἀνδρες ἐνείκεον εἶνεκα ποινής

498. Recall that ὁρόφει (unaugmented) was used in line 493 of a wedding song; here it is used of a dispute, balancing the two scenes of the city in peacetime. || ποινή is the compensation paid to the relatives of a slain man. There is disagreement concerning the nature of the quarrel: the scho-liasts, among others, maintain that the dispute is about whether or not the ποινή has been paid; more recently, Raymond Westbrook has suggested that the defendant is claiming the right to pay a ποινή, presumably because of mitigating circumstances, while the relative of the slain man is claiming the right to revenge, and refusing to accept the money.
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499-500. Chantraine §490 says that ἐυχετο seems to mean he was asserting rather than he was promising, where we would expect it with the future infinitive instead. || The use of μηδὲν instead of οὐδὲν implies that the will is involved (Smyth §2688): in other words, it is not a matter of the fact of payment, but of the desire to refuse, which is also the sense of ἀναίνετο. After a verb of negative sense, the negative idea is sometimes expressed again with the infinitive in a phrase that would seem redundant to us (Chantraine §490).

501. It might be that the ἱστωρ is the judge who eventually wins the two gold pieces (see lines 507-8); the term has also been supposed to refer to the γέροντες as a body, or perhaps the person who decides between their various judgements. || Westbrook understands πείραρ as the decision as to the limit of action: whether the relative of the slain man is limited to pοινή or revenge, and, if revenge, then to what extent. This brings the term slightly closer to its usual meaning (Edwards).

503. Notice the balance between ἐπήτυουν and ἐρήτυου, in sound, line placement, and meaning.

499 ἀνήρ ὁ gen.sg. man. ἀπο-φθίω aor.mid.pple. gen.sg.m. having died. ὃ μὲν ie. one man, the killer, opposed to ὃ δὲ in line 500. ἐδοξοῖαι impf.mid.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., was asserting, was claiming, πᾶς πᾶσα πᾶν acc.pl.n. everything. ἀπο-δίδωµι aor.act.infin. to pay, to have paid.

500 δήμῳ ὁ dat.sg. to the people, among the people (locative dat., Smyth §1531, Pharr §657, 1009). πιφαύσκω pres.act.pple. nom.sg.m. declaring, stating his case. ὃ δὲ ie. the other man, a relative of the man killed. ἀν-αίνοµαι impf.mid.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., was refusing to + infin. μηδὲς µηδεµία µηδὲν neut. absolute, nothing, Smyth §1869, 1991, 1998, 2719, 2739-40. αἱρέω aor.mid.infin. to accept, LHD.II.8.e.

501 ἀμφοῦ ὁ gen.pl. both. ἵμμι (i-) impf.mid.ind. 3rd dual were desiring to + infin. ἐπὶ at the hands of, LHD.II.1.f., + dat. ἱστωρ ὁ (f-) dat.sg. one who knows. πείραρ τῷ acc.sg. limit, decision, αἰρέω aor.mid.infin. to get, to obtain, LHD.II.6.

502 λαὸς ὁ nom.pl. people. ἀμφότερος -η -ον dat.pl.m on both sides. ἐπ-ηπύω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were supporting, were assenting. ἀμφός adv. separately, dividedly. ἀρωγός ὁ nom.pl. partisans, supporters; in apposition to λαοί.

503 κηρυκτικός -τικός ὁ nom.pl. officials regulating an assembly. λαὸς ὁ acc.sg. people, crowd. ἐρητύω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were restraining. γερών ὁ nom.pl. elders; here, as judges.
505. The plural *skēπtra* may indicate that the *γέροντες* took one staff in turn when speaking (Edwards).

509. The *δύω ἀρχάγγελοι* are probably two divisions of the same besieging army; perhaps the division is one of opinion.

510. *teύχεσι* λαμπόμενοι: δίχα δὲ σφισιν ἠνδάνει βουλή, ἡ δὲ διαπραθείς ἡ ἁνδικαί πάντα δάσαθαι κτήσιν ὅσην πτολείθρων ἐπήρατον ἐντὸς ἔργεν.
511-512. Later, while facing Achilles, Hector contemplates offering Helen and half of Troy’s wealth as ransom (22.111-21).

515 ὢδὲ οἷά ποι ἐπιθοντο, λόγῳ δὲ ὑπεθωρήσοντο. τείχος δὲι οἳ ἁλοχοὶ τε φῆλαι καὶ νήπια τέκνα ῥύστε ἐφεστάτοτες, μετὰ δὲ ἀνέφες οὕς ἐχε γῆρας; ὢδὲ ἰςαν ἦρχε δὲ ἀρά σφιν Ἄρης καὶ Παλλᾶς Ἀθήνη ἄμφω χρυσεία, χρύσεια δὲ εἴματα ἔσθην, καλῶ καὶ μεγάλῳ σὺν τεύχεσιν, ὡς τε θεόν περ ἄμφις ἀριζήλω λαοὶ ὢδέ ὑπ’ ὀλίζονες ἦσαν.

516-519. When the persons (or gods) are of different gender, predicate adjectives take the masculine, Smyth §1055.

520 ὢδὲ ὕτε δέ ῥ’ ἰκανον οὕθα σφίσιν εἰκε λοχήσαι ἐν ποταμῷ, οὕθα τ’ ἀρδόμος ἐπὶ πάντεσι βοτοίσιν.
ἐν’ ἵππ’ ἐν’ ἵπποι φόροντ’ εἰλήμενοι σκόπου χαλκῷ.
τούτω δ’ ἐπείτ’ ἀπάνευθε δῶς σκοποὶ εἰς ἄπαντα λαῷν
dέμενοι ὑπὸ μῆλα ἰδούτα καὶ ἀλλικαὶ βοῦς.
525 οἱ δὲ τάχα προγένοντο, δῶς δ’ ἀμ’ ἐποντὸ νομίζεις
tερπόμενοι σύργηξα· δόλον δ’ οὐ τι προνόησαν.
oἱ μὲν τὰ προιδόντες ἐπέδραμον, ὁδα δ’ ἐπείτα
tάμυντ’ ἀμφὶ βοῶν ἀγέλας καὶ πῶς καλὰ
ἀρχενεῶν οὐὼν, κτέινου δ’ ἐπὶ μηλοβότηρας.
530 οἱ δ’ ὡς οὖν ἐπίθυντο πολὺν κέλαδον παρὰ βουσὶν
eἰράνσει προπάροιθε καθήμενοι, αὐτίκ’ ἐφ’ ἵππων

522 ἐνθα there. τοῖς. The citizens of the besieged city. ἵππω impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were crouching, were posted. ἐπέδω (ὁ) perf.pass.pple. nom.pl.m. having been covered. ἀθοφ -σος dat.sg.m. bright, flashing. χαλκός ὁ dat.sg. with bronze, i.e. armour.
523 τοῖς for them i.e. to warn the men in ambush of the approaching cattle. ἐπείτα then.
ἀπάνευθε apart, at a distance; detached from + gen. σκοπός ὁ nom.pl. lookouts. ἤμαi plupf.mid.ind. 3rd pl. had posted themselves. λαός ὁ gen.pl. people, hosts.
524 ἄγαμαι pres.mid.pple. nom.pl.m. waiting, watching. ὅπερ for the time when, until. μῆλον τῷ acc.pl. sheep. ἐπείτα (Ἑ̅) aor.mid.opt. 3rd pl. they might see. ἐλεύς -ίας (Ἑ̅) acc.pl.f. with twisted horns. βοῦς βοῦς ὁ ἀπ’ acc.pl.f. cattle. Pharr §701.
525 οἱ ὁμιλίαι adv. soon. Ὑπ-γλυγωμένοι aor.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., appeared, came into view. ἤμα adv. along with; at the same time. ἐπω impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were accompanying. νομέοις ὁ nom.pl. herdsmen.
526 ἐρπω pres.mid.pple. nom.pl.m. entertaining themselves. σύργηξ ὁ dat.pl. with wind instruments. δόλος ὁ acc.sg. trap, strategy. οὐ τι adv. not at all, LHD.8.e.β. Ὑπ-γλυγωμένοι aor.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., they detected beforehand.
527 οἱ ὁμιλίαι adv. the citizens in ambush. τα ὁμιλίαi the animals. προ-είδω aor.act.pple. nom.pl.m. having seen. ἐπι-τρέχου aor.act.ind. 3rd pl. they attacked. ὕποις adv. immediately. ἐπείτα then, thereafter.
528 τελευτεῖον (ταλαιπώρα) impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., with ἀμφι, they surrounded and cut off. LHD.9. ἀμφι adv. around. βοῦς βοῦς ὁ ἀπ’ gen.pl.f. of cattle. ἀγέλη ἡ acc.pl. herds. πῆλον τῷ acc.pl. flocks. καλὸς -ή ἀπ’ acc.pl.m. beautiful, lovely.
529 ἀργεννὸς -ή -όν gen.pl.f. white. ὡς ὁμιλίας ὁ gen.pl. sheep. κτεῖνοι impf.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., they killed, they were killing. ἐπὶ adv. in addition, too, LHD.1.5. μηλοβοτήρ -hpox ὁ acc.pl. shepherds.
530 οἱ δ’ ἡμῖν εἰς gen.pl.m. speaking place. προπάροιθε in front of, before. κάθ-τείμοι pres.mid.pple. nom.pl.m. sitting. αὐτίκα at once, immediately. ἐφ’ = ἐφι, the π becoming φ before the aspirated ἵππων. ἵππωι ὁ gen.pl. horses, chariots.
The besieging army is sitting in assembly presumably to discuss whether to ravage the city, or accept half of its wealth as ransom. It is unclear whether the besieging army will propose terms, or whether the citizens of the city have already offered terms, perhaps to buy time for an ambush.

Perhaps máχη should be understood with στησάμενοι, which is always transative (Willcock), but it could also be taken as a cognate acc. with μάχοντο.

βάλλον δ’ ἀλλήλους χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείησιν.

535 ἐν δ’ Ἐρις ἐν δὲ Κυδωμὸς ὀμίλευον, ἐν δ’ ὅλῃ Κήρ, ἄλλον ζωόν ἔχουσα νεούσατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον, ἄλλον τεθνήματα κατὰ μόθον ἐλκε ποδοῦιν εἴμα δ’ ἐχ’ ἀμφ’ ὁμοία δαφνεινόν αἵματι φωτόν.
540 νεκροὺς τ’ ἀλλήλουν ἔρυσαν κατατεθνητότας. ἐν δ’ ἐτίθηνεν μεμακάτην, πιέραν ἀρουραν εὐρειὰν τρίπολον, πολλοὶ δ’ ἀροτηρίες ἐν αὐτῇ ζεύγηα δινευόντες ἐλάστρευον ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα. οἴ δ’ ὅποτε στρέψαντες ἱκνεύοντο τόσον ἀροῦρης, τοῖσι δ’ ἐπετι’ ἐν χερσὶ δέπασα μελιθέος οἰνοῦ δόσκεν ἀνήρ ἐπιόν· τοι δὲ στρέψασκον ἀν’ ὅγμους.

544-546. Past general conditional relative clauses have the optative in the relative clause, and the imperfect indicative (or its equivalent) in the main clause, indicating a customary or habitual action, Pharr §1149, Smyth §2335-6, §2568. Also see line 566.

ιέμενοι νειόι βαθείης τέλσον ἱκέσθαι.

539’ ὀπλαίῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖῳ ἰμπλαῖiterals.
η ἰ δὲ μελαίνετ' ὀπισθεν, ἀρηρομένη δὲ ἐφοκεί,
χρυσείη περ ἐνοῦσα τὸ δὴ περ θαύμα τέτυκτο.

548-549. Notice the shift from the fem. field back to the neut. shield, as the poet steps back to praise the craftsmanship of Hephaestus.

550 ἐν δὲ ἐτίθει τέμενος βασιληίον· ἐνθα δ' ἐριθοὶ
ήμοι ὀξείας ὀξεπάνας ἐν χερσίν ἐχοντες.
δράγματα δ' ἄλλα μετ' ὄμοιν ἐπηρήμια πῖπτον ἔραξε, ἄλλα δ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐν ἐλλεδανοῖς δέοντο.
τρεῖς δ' ἂρ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐφεστασαν' αὐτὰρ ὀπισθεν
παῖδες δραγμεύοντες ἐν ἀγγαλίδεσσι φέροντες
ἀσπερχές πάρεχον· βασιλεὺς δ' ἐν τοῖς σιωπή

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548. η ἰε. the field. μελαίνω impf.mid.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., was growing black. ὀπισθεν adv. behind. ἄρω perf.pass.pple. dat.sg.f. having been ploughed. ἔραξε plupf.act.ind. 3rd sg. it had seemed, it was like.
549. χρύσειος -η -ον nom.sg.f. golden. περ although, here contrasting dark earth with its golden representation on the shield. εἴμι pres.act.pple. nom.sg.f. being. τό i.e. the shield. περί adv. exceedingly, outstandingly. θα/υπσιλονχιρχυµµα -ατος τό acc.sg. wonder. τεύχω plupf.pass.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., had been made, was fashioned. Pharr §925.
551. ἄµαω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. were reaping. ὀξύς -ε/ιοταχιρχυµα -ύ acc.pl.f. sharp. δρεπάνη ἡ acc.pl. sickles. χείρ χε(ι)ρός ἡ dat.pl. hands. ἔχω pres.act.pple. nom.pl.m. holding.
552. δραγμα -ατος τό nom.pl. swaths of corn, bundles of cut corn. ἄλλος -η -ο acc.pl.n. some (swaths). μετά along the line of. LHD.II.2.g., + acc. ὄγµος ὁ acc.sg. the line of reaping. ἐπ-ήτριµος -ων acc.pl.n. adv. in succession, one after another. πίπτω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were falling. ἔραξε adv. to the ground. Pharr §788.4, Smyth §342.
553. ἄλλος -η -ο acc.pl.n. other (swaths). ἀμαλλοδετήρ -/εταχιρχυµπος ὁ nom.pl. sheaf-binders. ἐλλεδανός ὁ dat.pl. in bands for binding corn sheaves. δέω impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., were binding.
554. τρεῖς τρία nom.pl.m. three. ἀμαλλοδετήρ -/εταχιρχυµρος ὁ nom.pl. sheaf-binders. ἄφι-στηµι plupf.act.ind. 3rd pl. had stood at work, were working, LHD.2.f., Smyth §1952.a. αὐτάρ while. ὀπισθεν(ν) behind.
555. παιδός ὃ nom.pl.m. children. δραγμεύω pres.act.pple. nom.pl.m. picking up felled swaths. ἄγκαλε ἡ dat.pl. in bent arms; in armfuls. χεῖρ ἡ pres.act.pple. nom.pl.m. carrying.
556. ἀσπερχής -ές acc.sg.n. adv. without pause. παρ-έχω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. they were supplying, they were providing. βασιλεύς ὁ nom.sg. king. ἐν among + dat. τοῖς i.e. the laborers. σιωπή ἡ dat.sg. in silence.
σκήπτρον ἔχον ἑστήκει ἐπ’ ὅγμου γηθόσυνος κήρ.
κήρυκες δ’ ἀπάνευθεν ὑπὸ δρῦι δείχτα πένοντο,
βοῦν δ’ ἱερεύσαντες μέγαν άμφεπον’ αἱ δ’ γυναῖκες
560 δείπνων ἔρθοισιν λεύκ’ ἄλφιτα πολλὰ πάλνυν.
ἐν δ’ ἐτίθει σταφύλψις μέγα βριθουσαν ἄλωνην
καλὴν χρυσεῖν μέλανες δ’ ἀνὰ βότρυες ἠσαν,
ἑστήκει δὲ κάμαιε διαμπερές ἀργυρέσσιν.
ἀμφὶ δὲ κυναῖνε κάπετον, περὶ δ’ ἐρκὸς ἐλασσῇ
565 κασσίτερόν: μία δ’ οἰη ἀταρπιτὸς ἦν ἐπ’ αὐτὴν.

557 σκήπτρον τὸ acc.sg. sceptre. ἔχω pres.act.pple. nom.sg.m. holding. ἔστημι plupf.act.ind. 3rd sg. had stood, was standing, Smyth §952.a. ἐπὶ at, by + gen., LHD.II.3.b. ὁγμος ὅ gen.sg. reaping line. γηθόσυνος -η -ov nom.sg.m. joyful, happy. κήρ κήρος τὸ acc.sg. heart, acc. of respect, happy at heart.
558 κήρος -οσ ὅ nom.pl. attendants. ἀπ-ἀνευθεν adv. apart, aside. ὑπὸ under, beneath + dat. δρῦς δρῦς ὧ dat.sg. oak tree. δαῖς δαιτὸς ὃ acc.sg. meal, feast. πένοια impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl. they were attending to, were preparing.
559 βοῦς βοῦς ὃ ἡ acc.sg.f. ox, cow. ἵπποισ ἐπὶ act.pple. nom.pl.m. having killed, having sacrificed. μέγας μεγάλη μέγα acc.sg.n. great, large. ἀμφὶ-ἐπὶ impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. they were busy with, they were tending to. γονὴ γυναῖος ὅ nom.pl. women; female workers, Smyth §285.6.
560 δείπνον τὸ acc.sg. the principal meal of the day; here, as a meal, in apposition to the whole sentence, Edwards, Smyth §991-4. ἐρᾶθος ὃ dat.pl. for the laborers. λευκὸς -ῆ -ῶν acc.pl.n. white, pale. ἀλωθὸν τὸ acc.pl. barley. πολλὸς -ῆ -ῶν acc.pl.n. much, LHD.5. παλώνω (ὐ) impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. they were sprinkling.
561 τῆθημι impf.act.ind. 3rd sg. he placed, he set. σταφύλῃ ὃ dat.pl. clusters of grapes. μέγας μεγάλη μέγα acc.sg.n. adv. greatly. βρῖθω pres.act.pple. acc.sg.f. being heavy with, being loaded with + dat. ἀλωθὴ ὃ acc.sg. vineyard. ἐν δ’ ἐτίθει σταφύλῃς μέγα βριθουσαν ἄλωνην | καλὴν χρυσεῖν and he placed therein a beautiful, golden vineyard greatly loaded with clusters of grapes.
562 κάλος -ῶν acc.sg.f. beautiful, goodly. χρύσος -η -ov (ὐ) acc.sg.f. golden. μέλαις μέλαναι μέλαν nom.pl.m. dark purple; black. ἀνὰ adv. throughout, all over, LSJ.D.2. βρῖθος -οσ ὅ nom.pl. clusters of grapes. ἐλώι impf.act.ind. 3rd pl. there were.
563 ἄμφω plupf.act.ind. 3rd sg. was standing, was supported, Smyth §952.a. κάμαξ -ακος ὃ dat.pl. with vinepoles, Instrumental Dat. δι-αμπερές adv. right around. ἀργυρός -η -ov dat.pl.f. silver.
564 ἀμφὶ adv. around, about (the vineyard). κοῦνος -ον acc.sg.f., adj. form of κοῦνος, a dark-blue enamel often used to decorate armour. κάπετος ὃ acc.sg. ditch; for drainage, irrigation, or both, Edwards. περὶ adv. around, about (the vineyard). ἕρκος -εος τὸ acc.sg. fence, wall. ἀλώνιον aor.act.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., he formed, he hammered out.
565 κασσίτερόν ὃ gen.sg. of tin. ἐς μία ὃ nom.sg.f. one, LHD.3. ὁλος -η -ov nom.sg.f. only, alone. ἀταρπιτός -η nom.sg. = ἀταρπός, epic for ἀταρπός, a path, literally, a path without turnings. ἐλώι impf.act.ind. 3rd sg. there was, Pharr §964. ἐπὶ towards, leading to + acc, LHD.II.2.a. αὐτὸς -η -ο acc.sg.f. it, ie. the vineyard.
όμοιοι δὲ καὶ ἤθεοι ἀταλά φρονέοντες πλεκτοῖς ἐν ταλάροις φέρον μελιηδέα καρπόν.

τοῖς δὲ ἐν μέσοισι πάις φόρμιγγι λιγεῖς

570 ἰμερόν κιθάριζε, λίνον δὲ ὑπὸ καλὸν άείδε λεπταλέη φωνή· τοι δὲ ρήσοντες άμαρτή

μολὴ τ’ ἵνυμῳ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἐποντο.

ἐν δὲ ἀγέλην ποιήσει βοών ὀρθοκοιράων·

αἳ δὲ βοῖς χρυσόι τετεύχατο κασσιτέρου τε,

μυκηθμοὶ δὲ ἀπὸ κοπροῦ ἐπεσεῖόντο νομίζοντε

566 τῇ on which, i.e. the path. νισομαι impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl. they were going, they used to go.

φορεύς -ης ὁ nom.pl. bearers, carriers.

φορεύς -/εταχιρχυµος ὁ nom.pl. bearers, carriers.

567 παρθενική ἡ nom.pl. young unmarried women.

ἡρός ὁ nom.pl young unmarried men.

568 πλεκτός -ή -όν dat.pl.m. plaited, twisted, woven.

τάλαρος ὁ dat.pl. in baskets.

569 το/ιοταχιρχυµσιν i.e. the young men and women.

µέσ(σ)ος -η -ον dat.pl.m. middle, in the midst of.

573 µυκηθµός ὁ dat.sg. with a bellowing.

κόπρος ἡ gen.sg. farmyard.

ἐπισ(σ)εύω impf.pass.ind. 3rd pl. they were hastening.

574 βο/υπσιλονχιρχυµς βοός ὁ gen.pl.f. oxen, cattle.

χρυσός ὁ gen.sg. of gold.

575 µυκηθµός ὁ dat.sg. with a bellowing. κόπρος ἡ gen.sg. farmyard.

ἐπισ(σ)εύω impf.pass.ind. 3rd pl. they were hastening.
πάρ ποταμόν κελάδωντα, παρά ῥοδανόν δονακήμα.  
χρύσειοι δὲ νομεύς ὑμί’ ἐστικόντων βόεσσι 
τέσσαρες, ἐννέα δὲ σφὶ κύνες πόδας ἄργοι ἐποντο.  
σμερδαλέω δὲ λέοντε δῦ’ ἐν πρότησι βόεσσι 

580 ταύρον ἐρύγμηλον ἐχέθην ὁ δὲ μακρὰ μεμυκώς ἐλκτεὺ τὸν δὲ κύνες μετεκιαθον ἤδ’ αἰξημ.  
τὸ μὲν ἦν αὐτρήξαντε βοῦς μεγάλου βοεῖν ἐγκατα καὶ μέλαν αἷμα λαφύσσεον ὁ δὲ νομεύς 
αὐτῶς ἐνδίεσαν ταχέας κύνας ὀτρύνοντες.  

585 οἱ δ’ ἦτοι δικαίεντε μὲν ἀπετροπόντῳ λεόντον,

586 ἔγκατα τὸν ὄντενα λαφύσσεον ὁ ἡλίκων ἀργῶν ἀβεβ’ ἐνδίημι. ἀποτρώπαι τοῖς ἔργοις ὁ ὑμεῖς ἀποτρώπαι 
ἀργὸν ὁ ἀκρός μεγάλη μέγα γεν. ἲραχαν ἐνδίημι ἀποτρώπαι. 

587 ἔγκατα τὸν ἀγνό τοῖς ἐνεπεκίννοις ἀργῶν ἀβεβ’ ἐνδίημι. ἀποτρώπαι τοῖς ἔργοις ὁ ὑμεῖς ἀποτρώπαι 
ἀργὸν ὁ ἀκρός μεγάλη μέγα γεν. ἲραχαν ἐνδίημι ἀποτρώπαι.
The similar sounding line endings emphasize the μέν...δέ contrast.

At 18.161-4, the two Ajaxes, wishing to scare the unintimidated Hector from the body of Patroclus, are compared to herdsmen trying in vain to chase lions from a carcass. Lion attacks are a common theme in vase painting.

585-586. The similar sounding line endings emphasize the μέν...δέ contrast.

587-588. With ἵστηµι, pres.mid.pple. nom.pl.m. standing, μάλα adv. very, exceedingly. ἐγγύς adv. near; with ἴστάµενοι, drawing near, approaching, LHD.3. ὑλακτέω impf.act.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., they were barking. ἓκ adv. away from. ἀλέοµαι impf.mid.ind. 3rd pl., unaug., they were keeping out of reach.

589-590. 590 νοµός ὁ acc.sg. pasture. ποιέω aor.act.ind. 3rd sg., unaug., he made, constructed, fashioned. περικλυτός -ή -όν nom.sg.m. famous, renowned. ἀµφι-γυήεις ὁ nom.sg. one bent on both sides, a cripple. ἀργεννός -ή -όν gen.pl.f. white.

591-592. Δαίδαλος was the legendary artist who built the labyrinth for King Minos on Crete (see Morris). Ἰδέ and. σηκός ὁ acc.pl. pens for sheep. 

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dance in a circle that mimicked the turns of the labyrinth, called the crane dance” (Powell 401).

595 τῶν δ’ οἱ μὲν λεπτάς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οι δὲ χιτόνας
εἰτα’ ἐννήτους, ἥκα στιλβοντας ἑλαίων
καὶ ρ’ οἱ μὲν κάλλας στεφάνας ἐχον, οι δὲ μοχαιρας
ἔχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέον τελαμόνων.

595-598. Notice the structural balance of lines 595-6 and 597-8 (Edwards).

600 μεθα μάλ’, ὡς ὥς τις τροχόν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμησιν
ἔξομενος κεραμεύς πειρήσεται, οι κε θέσθιν:
607-608. ποταμός Ὀκεανός: the river Ocean, which was supposed to encircle the earth, as it does the shield; see 18.399-402. | | σθένος is used of the vital force, or the life force of somebody or something personified, as of Orion in 486; at 17.751 it is used of the force of a stream.

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603 ἄλλοτε δέ other times, at another time. | | τρέχω aor.act.ind. 3rd pl., Past Iterative, used to wheel in concentric circles. | | ἐπί with reference to being in a formation, LHD.II.2.c. | | στίχος ἡ acc.pl. rows, lines. | | ἀλλήλων -ον -ων dat.pl.m. with one another.

604 πολλός -ή -όν nom.sg.m. | | large, with many people, LHD.2., take with ὀμιλος. | | ἰμερόεις -εσσα -εν (ι) acc.sg.m. lovely, charming, pleasing. | | χορός ὁ acc.sg. a company of dancers. | | περι-ίστηµεν (περιίστατο) impf.mid.ind. 3rd sg. was standing around, were surrounding + acc. ὀμιλος ὁ nom.sg. a crowd, a gathering.

605 ἐξάρχω pres.act.pple. nom.pl.m. taking the lead of + gen. | | κυβιστητήρ -εταχιρχυµρος ὁ nom.dual, tumblers, acrobats. | | κατά among, throughout; within + acc., LHD.II.2.c. | | αὐτός -ή -ό acc.pl.m., ie. the surrounding crowd.


607 ἀντύξ -υγος ἡ acc.sg. rim. | | πάρ = παρά along + acc., in reference to action or existence in a region alongside of something, LHD.II.2.c. | | πύκα ἡ acc.sg. edge, extremity. | | σάκος -εος τό gen.sg. shield. | | σάκος -ή -όν gen.sg.n. made, created.
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