

## INTERMEDIALITY AND EKPHRASIS IN LATIN EPIC POETRY\*

### Introduction

The concept of intermediality arose in the theoretical discourse about the relations between different systems or products of meaning, such as the relations between music and art, or image and text. The word gained currency in the 1980s in German- and French-language studies of theatre performance, and in scholarship on opera, film, and music, in order to capture the notion of the interconnections between different art forms.<sup>1</sup> For reasons of utility, the concept has been divided into three kinds: intermediality may refer to the *combination* of media (as in opera, in which music, dance, and song are conjoined into one aesthetic experience); the *transformation* or transposition of media (as in a film version of a book); and intermedial *references* or connections, whereby attention is drawn to another system of meaning, as in the references in literature to a work of art.<sup>2</sup> The term has entered the field of classics especially via the study of the relations between the narrative and inscriptional modes in literary epigram.<sup>3</sup>

The focus of this article is the third usage of intermediality, that of intermedial references or connections, known in the German

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief history of the concept see I. O. Rajewsky, 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality', *Intermedialités* 6 (2005), 43–4.

<sup>2</sup> I. Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen, 2002), 15–17. More precisely, by means of intermedial references a semiotic system uses the means specific to its own medium to refer to an individual work produced in another medium, or to another medium generally (Rajewsky [n. 1], 53).

<sup>3</sup> M. Dinter, 'Inscriptional Intermediality in Latin Literature', in P. Liddell and P. Low (eds.), *Inscriptions and Their Uses in Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford, 2013), 303–16; M. Dinter, 'Intermediality in Latin Epic: *en video quaecumque audita*', in H. Lovatt and C. Vout (eds.), *Epic Visions. Visuality in Greek and Latin Epic and Its Reception* (Cambridge, 2013), 122–38; M. Dinter, 'Inscriptional Intermediality in Latin Elegy', in A. Keith (ed.), *Latin Elegy and Hellenistic Epigram. A Tale of Two Genres at Rome* (Cambridge, 2011), 7–18; M. Squire, 'Ekphrasis at the Forge and the Forging of Ekphrasis: The "Shield of Achilles" in Graeco-Roman Word and Image', *Word and Image* 29 (2013), 157–91; M. Squire, *Image and Text in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009).

scholarship as *intermediale Bezüge*. This use of the term concerns the engagement of at least two distinct media in signifying an artefact in which only the dominant medium, with its typical signifiers, is present.<sup>4</sup> Instead of transposing another medium, an intermedial reference ‘thematises, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means’.<sup>5</sup> The medium of the text, for example, can absorb another medium into its own system of meaning and mode of communication; but while the other medium is subsumed under the textual one, its own semiotic and aesthetic functions remain active.

The study of intermediality was developed in part upon the theory of intertextuality, which explains how meaning is created through a dynamic mosaic of quotations that includes absorptions and transformations of other texts.<sup>6</sup> Intermedial reference differs from intertextuality by connecting two entirely different systems of meaning; it employs allusions not to another text but to another semiotic system.<sup>7</sup> An intermedial reference uses signifiers integral to its own medium; the aesthetic features of another medium may be denoted only when these can be conveyed by the referring medium.<sup>8</sup> In the case of literature and art, the point of contact between the different media products also allows the reader to perceive the features of another system, that is, features which are literary and visual. By seeking to replicate in text the altermedial product, the literary medium alerts the reader to the material properties of the other medium. As will be made clear from the instances of intermedial references discussed below, intermedial narratives ‘put new demands on the reader’s involvement with the text’.<sup>9</sup>

Ekphrasis, the literary representation of a visual representation, seeks to describe in literary form what appears, or is imagined to appear, to the eyes.<sup>10</sup> Within ekphrasis, intermediality concerns the point at

<sup>4</sup> W. Wolf, ‘(Inter)mediality and the Study of Literature’, *Comparative Literature and Culture* 13 (2011), 44. Rajewsky (n. 1), 59, observes that in intermedial references only one conventional distinct medium is present.

<sup>5</sup> Rajewsky (n. 1), 53.

<sup>6</sup> J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. T. Gora, A. Jardine, and L. S. Roudiez (New York, 1980), 66.

<sup>7</sup> Rajewsky (n. 2), 60.

<sup>8</sup> Wolf (n. 4), 5.

<sup>9</sup> L. Eilittä, ‘Introduction’, in L. Eilittä, L. Louvel, and S. Kim, (eds.), *Intermedial Arts: Disrupting, Remembering and Transforming Media* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012), ix.

<sup>10</sup> On ekphrasis as literary figure generally, see F. I. Zeitlin, ‘Figure: Ekphrasis’, *G&R* 60 (2013), 17–31, and bibliography there.

which the text strives to intersect or coincide with art. In theoretical terms, ekphrastic intermediality concerns the blending, blurring, or slippage of the unique properties of text and image.<sup>11</sup> While it is the dominant medium, the ekphrastic text employs intermediality in order to minimize the gap or distance that exists between literature and the plastic arts. Thus, rather than approaching the relationship between art and text according to the traditional theoretical model of competition between the arts in which one seeks to displace or destroy the other, intermediality in ekphrastic texts draws attention to the junction of distinct media in order to construct new meanings.<sup>12</sup>

This article seeks to illustrate how intermediality in Latin epic ekphrasis employs ambivalence and ambiguity in order to identify and articulate the place at which the different media merge or converge. In ekphrastic texts the explicit mention of the material, physical qualities of the object introduces the intermedial reference. Words expressive of the act of viewing also draw attention to the (imagined) object and thus heighten the reader's awareness of the other medium. The two media fuse when the text assumes the function of signifying the other medium as well as its own. It is through the use of equivocal diction, ambivalent grammar and syntax, and ambiguity in meaning that the text is able to produce meanings for two media simultaneously. The most well-known type of ekphrasis, that of shields in epic poetry, involves a three-dimensional object (the shield), the scenes depicted or engraved upon it, and the text which represents them. By fusing object, image, and text, intermediality produces a plane of meaning which enhances the thematic concerns of the text.

### Intermediality and ekphrasis in Augustan epic

Although the term was not used in antiquity, intermedial reference was exercised by ancient writers and was known to their commentators. This is shown, for example, in the well-known description of the shield

<sup>11</sup> Dinter (n. 3 [2013]), 128, uses the term 'contamination' to describe the mixing of the two semiotic systems in ekphrasis, while Squire (n. 3 [2013]), 161, speaks of 'intermedial fusion'.

<sup>12</sup> An example of an approach to ekphrasis which privileges a model of competition between systems of meaning is W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL, 1994), 156, who states that ekphrastic texts highlight the 'oppositions of semiotics: symbolic and iconic representation; conventional and natural signs, temporal and spatial modes; visual and aural media'.

of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8.<sup>13</sup> Depicted at the centre of the ekphrasis of the shield is the battle of Actium, a vignette the poet invests with contemporary political and social implications:

*In medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,  
cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte videres  
fervere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus.* Verg. *Aen.* 8.675–7

In the centre were shown the bronze ships at the battle of Actium, and you could see all Leucata glowing in the array of war, and the waves shimmering with gold.<sup>14</sup>

In these lines two expressions of viewing – namely *cernere erat* (emphatic in its archaic form) and *videres* (addressing the putative reader) – foreground the presence of the shield-object, and so alert or remind the reader of the presence of its semiotic system.<sup>15</sup> The conflation of media is suggested first by the adjectival phrase *in medio*, itself suggestive of the place where the semiotic systems intersect. For as Servius Auctus, the late fourth-century commentator, points out, *in medio* may modify the understood noun *clipeo* ('shield'), or *mari* ('sea') in the image on the shield.<sup>16</sup> This ambivalence in the referent of *in medio* is also revealed by the differing interpretations of Virgil's modern editors. Peerlkamp assumes an understood *maris*, but Henry, noting that the position of the phrase in the first *sedes* of the hexameter line parallels other locative phrases in the ekphrasis such as *nec procul hinc* (8.635) and *atque hic* (8.655), holds that the phrase means *in summa clipei parte*, 'at the top of the shield-object'.<sup>17</sup> The absence of a specific noun to denote the shield as physical object creates

<sup>13</sup> For recent treatments of this ekphrasis, and further bibliography, see A. Feldherr, 'Viewing Myth and History on the Shield of Aeneas', *CLAnt* 13 (2014), 281–318; A. Kirichenko, 'Virgil's Augustan Temples: Image and Intertext in the *Aeneid*', *JRS* 103 (2013), 81–3; S. Casali, 'The Making of the Shield: Inspiration and Repression in the *Aeneid*', *G&R* 53 (2006), 185–204.

<sup>14</sup> Translations from the *Aeneid* are amended versions of those in H. R. Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, *Virgil. Aeneid. Books 7–12, Appendix Vergiliana* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> See Dinter (n. 3 [2013]), 128. A strong case for the representation of the scenes as reflecting the plastic arts is made by D. A. West, 'Cernere erat: The Shield of Aeneas', *PVS* 15 (1975–6), 1–7, reprinted in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1990), 295–304.

<sup>16</sup> G. Thilo and H. Hagen (eds.), *Servius. In Vergilii Carmina Commentarii* (Leipzig, 1881), 298, ad *Aen.* 8.675.

<sup>17</sup> J. Henry, *Aeneidea. Critical, Exegetical and Aesthetical Remarks on the Aeneis. Vol. 3* (Dublin, 1889), 764–5, ad *Aen.* 8.652–8. Peerlkamp's interpretation is cited from Henry's commentary. Henry's reading is followed by R. F. Thomas, 'Virgil's Ekphrastic Centerpieces', *HSP* 87 (1983), 179. Cf. K. W. Gransden, *Virgil. Aeneid 8* (Cambridge, 1976), 170: 'there is a double meaning implied, since Manlius is also depicted as being on top of the Capitol'.

grammatical uncertainty, thus making the reader sensitive to different materials – the shield, the painted picture, and the text which refers to them. This ambivalent signification is reinforced further by the adjective *aeratas* ('bronze', 8.675), used of the fleets of ships (*classes aeratas*, 8.675). For while it is an ordinary epithet for ships, in the context of these lines it may also indicate the material of which Vulcan fashioned them upon the shield.<sup>18</sup> In the same manner, the golden shimmer of the waves (*auroque effulgere fluctus*, 8.677) may refer to the effect of the precious metal in which they are displayed or to the reflection of the sun in the scene. The ambiguities regarding the things signified cause the reader to reflect on the medial qualities of the shield and of shield design.

The text's participation in intermediality is enhanced further by the fact that *in medio* occurs at the exact midway point of the description in the text (lines 628–728). As R. F. Thomas has shown, in ekphrasis the centre is often the *locus* of a key theme in the poem.<sup>19</sup> While denoting the middle of the shield-scene, the equivocal reference *in medio* grants access to a construction of meaning wherein the adjective may be applied to the ekphrastic text itself. In other words, the expression forms also a self-reflexive, metaliterary indication of the convergence of the text medium with the artistic ones: the picture of the ships on the middle of the sea, the entire scene in the middle of the shield, and the very middle of the descriptive passage itself. In these lines, then, the medial scene of Augustus' defeat of Marc Antony and the forces of the East at the Battle of Actium, which involved even the Olympian gods in a struggle against the theriomorphic Egyptian deities, celebrates a critical event in the ascent of the Augustan Principate. The central importance of the thematic concerns is expressed by the centrality shared by the three media of object, scene, and text.

The Augustan poet Ovid develops Virgil's intermedial references in the description of the palace of the sun god which opens the second book of the *Metamorphoses* (2.1–18). Interplay between reality, art, and textual representation is evoked by the description of the universe depicted on the palace doors (2.5–18), which, as A. Feldherr has recently pointed out, recalls the account of the creation of the cosmos

<sup>18</sup> J. Conington and H. Nettleship, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera. Vol. 3* (London, 1871), 145, ad *Aen.* 8.675.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas (n. 17), 175–84.

in 1.5–68.<sup>20</sup> The palace description also bears political overtones, reminding contemporary readers of the temple of Palatine Apollo.<sup>21</sup> In the broader story of Phaethon's rash determination of his divine parentage in *Metamorphoses* 2.1–234, the dominant theme is that of accepting the limitations of human capability. This theme is broached in the ekphrasis by the description of Sol's palace located high above the mortal realm: 'the palace of the sun-god stood tall on lofty pillars' (*regia solis erat sublimibus alta columnis*; 2.1). It is noteworthy that in order to thematize their function the intermedial references are placed not at the centre but the top of the described scene:

...*ebur nitidum fastigia summa tegebat,*  
*argenti bifores radiabant lumine valvae.*  
*Materiam superabat opus: nam Mulciber illic*  
*aequora caelarat medius congenita terras*  
*terrarumque orbem caelumque, quod imminet orbi.*  
 ...  
*haec super imposita est caeli fulgentis imago,*  
*signaque sex foribus dextris totidemque sinistris.* (Ov. *Met.* 2.3–7, 17–18)

...polished ivory covered the pediment above and  
 the folding double doors shone with silver.  
 The craftsmanship was of higher quality than the material,  
 for on the surface of the doors Vulcan had engraved the water  
 that surrounds the lands in the middle, the globe of earth and  
 the heavens that overhang the earth.

...  
 Above these was set an image of the gleaming heavens and  
 six signs of the zodiac on the right door and as many on the left.<sup>22</sup>

The phrases introducing the ekphrasis stress the material quality of the palace, especially the heights from which Phaethon is destined to fall: the 'topmost pediments' (*fastigia summa*) and 'the heavens that look down on earth' (*caelum quod imminet orbi*) tower over the 'seas below' (*illic aequora*). Even the craftsmanship is 'far beyond the quality of its

<sup>20</sup> A. Feldherr, 'Nothing like the Sun: Repetition and Representation in Ovid's Phaethon Narrative', in L. Fulkerson and T. Stover (eds.), *Repeat Performances. Ovidian Repetition and the Metamorphoses* (Madison, WI, 2016), 28–9.

<sup>21</sup> Thus B. Dufallo, *The Captor's Image. Greek Culture in Roman Ecphrasis* (Oxford, 2013), 163–4.

<sup>22</sup> Translation (with amendments) from F. J. Miller, rev. G. P. Goold, *Ovid. Metamorphoses. Volume 1. Books 1–8* (Cambridge, MA, 1977, repr. 1984).

construction' (*materiam superabat opus*).<sup>23</sup> The intermedial reference occurs in the ambivalent expression *haec super*, which may refer to the scenes of earth, sea, and sky (2.6–7), or to the doors (2.4).<sup>24</sup> Drawing attention to itself by the *hysteron–proteron* arrangement, the neuter plural pronoun *haec* lacks a specific grammatical antecedent and so locates the shining heavens in a position beyond the pictures and the doors. Surpassing Virgil's ekphrastic centrepiece by 'going over the top', Ovid employs intermedial reference to advance the theme of mortal risks in transgressing the limits set by nature.<sup>25</sup>

### Intermediality and ekphrasis in Latin imperial epic

Intermedial fusion was developed by the poets of the Imperial period into more extended correlations between the material object, the represented image, and the thematic concerns of the text. Such convergence is exemplified by the description of Hannibal's shield in Silius Italicus' *Punica* 2.395–456. A gift from the people of Spain (2.395–405), the shield which Hannibal bears into the battle at Saguntum displays events in the history of Carthage from the time it was founded until the Punic Wars. The pro-Roman narrator visualizes the conflict between Rome and Carthage by presenting two groups of images on each side of the shield (2.406–31, 432–45), while another encircles the outer rim (2.449–52).<sup>26</sup> Whereas Hannibal interprets the scenes as justifying the Punic attack upon Rome and its ally Saguntum, the narrator employs literary allusion to undermine the apparently positive imagery.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The twofold function of the words *materia* and *opus* as terms of literary criticism as well as fine art, noted by A. Barchiesi, *Ovidio Metamorfosi Volume 1 (Libri I–II)*, trans. L. Koch (Milan, 2005), 239, intimate the interplay between art and text in the ekphrasis.

<sup>24</sup> The intermediality is reinforced by the expression *caeli fulgentis imago*, which, as Barchiesi (n. 23), 240, observes, applies equally to the depicted image of the sun and to the shiny metal of the shield.

<sup>25</sup> On the thematic relevance of the ekphrasis to the narrative, see H. Bartholomé, *Ovid und die antike Kunst*, PhD thesis, Münster (1935), 17–20, 74–8. The portrayal of the zodiac (2.18) anticipates Helios' warning to Phaethon to avoid the zodiac (2.78), and Phaethon's fear of it (2.195).

<sup>26</sup> J. Küppers, *Tantarum causas irarum. Untersuchungen zur einleitenden Bücherdyade der Punica des Silius Italicus* (Berlin, 1986), 157–61; similarly, D. W. T. Vessey, 'Silius Italicus: The Shield of Hannibal', *AJP* 96 (1975), 392. Other, more recent, treatments of the shield description include R. T. Ganiban, 'Virgil's Dido and the Heroism of Hannibal in Silius' *Punica*', in A. Augoustakis (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus* (Leiden, 2010), 84–90; B. Tipping, *Exemplary Epic. Silius Italicus' Punica* (Oxford, 2010), 95–7; and C. Stocks, *The Roman Hannibal. Remembering the Enemy in Silius Italicus' Punica* (Liverpool, 2014), 90–1.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent reading of the description of Hannibal's shield, see R. A. Faber, 'Literary Allusion and Unity of Thought in the Description of Hannibal's Shield in *Punica* 2.403–452', *Phoenix* 70 (2016), 302–16.

Coursing around the shield's outer edge is the Iberian river Ebro, and the Carthaginian general is shown crossing this geopolitical boundary:

*Extrema clipei stagnabat Hiberus in ora,  
curvatis claudens ingentem flexibus orbem.  
Hannibal abrupto transgressus foedere ripas  
Poenorum populos Romana in bella vocabat.* (Sil. *Pun.* 2.449–52)

On the outer rim of the shield flowed the Ebro,  
enclosing the vast sphere with its curves and  
windings. And there was Hannibal, having broken  
the treaty by crossing the river, and he was calling  
the Punic nations to battle against Rome.<sup>28</sup>

This passage adapts the final scene of the river Oceanus at the edge of the globe in the archetypal ekphrasis of Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18.607–8 to the historical context of the Punic Wars and so heightens the relevance of the scene to the thematic interests of the narrative.<sup>29</sup> Silius modifies Homer's map-like shield-scene for an intermedial connection between the orb of the earth and the sphere of Hannibal's shield.

The convergence between image and object commences with the phrase *extrema clipei in . . . ora*, as the word *ora* can denote the extremity of the earth (*OLD*, s.v. 3) as well as a brim or border.<sup>30</sup> Cicero, for example, uses the word to convey 'the outer edge and boundary of the world' (*extrema ora et determinatio mundi*; *Nat. D.* 2.40.101). Like Oceanus, the river Ebro courses around the globe and the shield. These intermedial extremities are illustrated at the textual level by the separation of the adjective *extrema* from the noun *ora* which it modifies, and by the position of *ora* in the final *sedes* of the hexameter line. Meanwhile, *clipeus*, the proper word for a Roman military shield, may stand metonymously for any round object: the vault of heaven, the sun, or even the world.<sup>31</sup> In similar fashion, *ingens orbis* ('the vast circuit'; 2.450) may denote simultaneously the circle of the globe and

<sup>28</sup> Translations of the *Punica* (with one amendment in this instance) are from J. D. Duff, *Silius Italicus. Punica. Volume 1. Books 1–8* (Cambridge, MA, 1934).

<sup>29</sup> On intermediality in Homer, see A.S. Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (Lanham, MD, 1995), 96–100; and Squire (n. 3 [2013]), 159.

<sup>30</sup> The use of *ora* to mean 'shield-edge' appears in Silius' model, Verg. *Aen.* 10.242–3: *clipeum quem dedit ipse / invictum ignipotens atque oras ambiit auro* ('the invincible shield that the fire-lord gave you himself, that he circled with rims of gold').

<sup>31</sup> As vault of heaven, Ennius fr. xcvi.188–9 (Jocelyn): *in altisono / caeli clipeo* ('on the lofty orb of the sky'); as the disk of the sun, Ov. *Met.* 15.192: *dei clipeus, terra cum tollitur ima* ('the god's orb, as it rises from beneath the earth').

that of the shield.<sup>32</sup> Virgil, Silius' model, in the ekphrasis of Aeneas' shield likewise infuses *orbis* with dual, intermedial meaning: *et circum argento clari delphines in orbem / aequora verrebant* ('round and round shiny silver dolphins were skimming over the waters in a circle'; *Aen.* 8.673–4). Servius takes the word *orbem* in *Aen.* 8.673 to mean *in circuitu*, that is, the outer edge of the shield.<sup>33</sup> In the description of Hannibal's shield the words *curvatis...flexibus* ('the curves and windings'; 2.450) may thus refer equally to bends in the river Ebro in the scene or to the rounded rim of the shield.

The purpose of these intermedial references is to thematize the boundaries fixed in the depicted scene and in the shield-object in order to characterize Hannibal, who bears the shield, as one who purposefully crosses physical, political, and moral limits. By crossing the Iberian river, Hannibal intentionally broke the Ebro Treaty of 226 BCE, which had determined this geographical marker as the boundary separating Roman from Carthaginian control. In fact, throughout the *Punica* Hannibal is portrayed as a perfidious man who breaks treaties by transgressing boundaries.<sup>34</sup> Jupiter sums up the character of Hannibal as that of 'a ferocious man who knows no limit' (*sine fine feroci... / viro*; *Pun.* 12.694–5).<sup>35</sup> Here, on the very weapon he bears into battle, Hannibal is shown as breaking the treaty (*abrupto...foedere*; 2.451), crossing the depicted river (*transgressus...ripas*; 2.451), and transgressing even the physical boundary of the shield. In sum, the intermedial references which blur the distinctions between text, art scene, and physical object advance the thematic point in the scene description.

As was also noted for Virgil and Ovid, the phrases *ora*, *orbis*, *curvatis flexibus*, and *clipeus* in this passage of the *Punica* show that intermediality in epic ekphrasis brings about correlations between object, art, and

<sup>32</sup> Virgil uses *orbis* to denote shield: e.g. *Aen.* 8.448–9: *septenosque orbibus orbis / impediunt* ('they fasten sevenfold shields to shields'); 10.783–5: *Aeneas hastam iacit; illa per orbem / aere cavum triplici... / transiit* ('Aeneas hurls his spear, and it pierces through the curved shield of triple bronze'). Cf. the parallels noted in N. Horsfall, *Virgil. Aeneid 2. A Commentary* (Leiden, 2008), 205, ad 2.227. See also Statius *Theb.* 4.232: *flammeus orbis*, 'the fiery orb' of Hippomedon's shield. Similarly, Petronius: *gladios retractant, commovent orbis manu / bellumque sumunt* ('they draw their swords, take up their shields in their hands and engage battle'; *Sat.* 88.60–1). The interpretation of Virgil's shield description as icon for the entire cosmos is advanced by P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid. Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), 336–76.

<sup>33</sup> Thilo and Hagen (n. 16), 297.

<sup>34</sup> On this, see Tipping (n. 26), 65.

<sup>35</sup> On the figurative limits imposed on the scenes by the shield's outer circle of Oceanus, see S. Scully, 'Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight', *HSCPh* 101 (2003), 42.

text by means of ambiguous language not only for scene location but also for the object's material construction.<sup>36</sup> This effect of blurring the distinction between scene and material surface is produced most remarkably in the fourth book of Statius' *Thebais*, by the intermedial references in the description of the shield borne by the impious Argive warrior Capaneus in the attack upon Thebes. His weapon displays a single scene of Hydra, the multi-headed monstrous serpent, recently slain by Hercules. Surrounding this central picture and adorning the edge of the shield is the swamp river Lerna:

*At pedes et toto despectans vertice bellum  
quattuor indomitis Capaneus erepta iuvenis  
terga superque rigens iniectu molis aenae  
versat onus; squallet triplici ramosa corona  
Hydra recens obitu; pars anguibus aspera vivis  
argento caelata micat, pars arte reperta  
conditur et fulvo moriens nigrescit in auro;  
circum amnis torpens et ferro caerulea Lerna.* (Stat. *Theb.* 4.165–72)

But Capaneus, on foot and looking down by a whole head's height upon the battle,  
wields the burden of four hides torn from the backs of wild steers  
and its surface made hard with a covering of massy bronze. There lies  
the Hydra with triple-branching crown, lately slain and foul in death:  
part, embossed in silver, glitters fierce with moving snakes, part by means  
of clever skill is sunken, and as it dies grows dark against the tawny gold;  
around, in dark-blue steel runs the torpid stream of Lerna.<sup>37</sup>

This ekphrasis begins with an emphatically periphrastic expression alerting the reader to the presence of the three-dimensional medium: 'the burden of four hides torn from the backs of wild steers and its surface made hard with a covering of massy bronze' (166–8).<sup>38</sup> The last line intimates a conflation of scene with material object, as the Lernaean river encircles the shield's steel rim (172). The preposition *circum* (172), as it governs no stated grammatical object, may apply equally to the shield's rim and to the internal image. Moreover, in these lines there are no conventional scene-dividers such as *in medio*, *super haec*, or *in alia parte*, so that the depicted scene and the shield

<sup>36</sup> Dinter (n. 3 [2013]), 128.

<sup>37</sup> Translation (with amendments) from J. H. Mozley, *Statius. Silvae. Thebaid 1–4* (Cambridge, MA, 1928).

<sup>38</sup> The physicality of the object is reinforced by the burdensome bulk suggested by the words *molis* and *onus* (R. Parkes, *Statius. Thebaid 4* [Oxford, 2012], 127).

proper are identified more closely. The language describing the Hydra in the scene applies equally to the materiality of the shield: the verb *squalet* (OLD, s.v.: ‘cover with a rough or scaly layer’) suits the embossed weapon as well as the Hydra by its popular etymology from *squama* (‘scale’).<sup>39</sup> The word *corona*, the serpent’s coil, may also denote the enclosing ring on a shield’s surface.<sup>40</sup> The verb *micat* aptly expresses the flashing glitter of the snakes in *pars anguibus aspera vivis / . . . micat*, ‘part . . . glitters fierce with moving snakes’ (4.169–70), but it performs the double duty of also depicting the light that gleams from Capaneus’ weapon, as elsewhere in the *Thebais* the verb *micare* is used mainly of armour.<sup>41</sup>

This interplay between text, artefact, and image is further corroborated by the repetition of the word *pars* in *pars anguibus aspera vivis / argento caelata micat, pars arte reperta / conditur* (‘part, embossed in silver, glitters fierce with moving snakes, part is sunken by means of clever skill’; *Theb.* 4.169–71). *Pars* is a conventional marker for the relative position of a scene depicted in literary ekphrases, beginning with Catullus 64, in which it introduces a new tableau on the coverlet of Peleus’ wedding couch: *at parte ex alia* (‘but in another part’; 64.251).<sup>42</sup> In the ekphrasis of *Thebais* 4, the repeated *pars* hints strongly at the conventional arrangement of the images on the shield, although it applies properly to the Hydra within the scene. This blurring effect is reinforced by the word *conditur* in *pars arte reperta / conditur et fulvo moriens nigrescit in auro* (‘part by means of clever skill is sunken, and as it dies grows dark against the tawny gold’; 4.170–1), for, as Håkanson has observed, *condere* is a nearly technical term for putting a scene in the background of a picture.<sup>43</sup> In terms of the theory of intermediality, it is in relation to the artistic medium that the textual medium constitutes itself.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Again Statius’ model for intermedial convergence is Virgil’s *Aeneid*: *tunicam squalentem auro* (‘tunic of scaly gold’; *Aen.* 10.314; cf. 12.87). Moreover, *aspera* suits the engraved artefact and scaly monster, as Parkes (n. 38), 127, observes.

<sup>40</sup> Thus S. J. Harrison, ‘The Arms of Capaneus: Statius, *Thebaid* IV.165–77’, *CQ* 42 (1992), 249.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *ferroque micantia tela* (‘steel-flashing arrows’; *Theb.* 2.589); *enses / triste micant* (‘swords flash sorrowfully’; 4.153–4); *fulva metallo / parma micet* (‘the shield flashes golden’; 11.398–9).

<sup>42</sup> See also Verg. *Aen.* 8.682; Sil. *Pun.* 2.426 (*parte alia*, ‘in another part’).

<sup>43</sup> L. Håkanson, *Statius’ Thebaid. Critical and Exegetical Remarks* (Lund, 1973), 22.

<sup>44</sup> The expression *arte reperta* (‘with clever skill’), in line 170 reinforces the metaliterary tone of this passage, for as Parkes (n. 38), 127, observes, *arte* may be taken as ‘a reference to the composition of the shield . . . or as alluding to the craft of Hercules in devising a way to halt the Hydra’s growth of heads’.

The purpose of the intermedial references in the description of the scenes on Capaneus' shield is to diminish the gap between the media of the shield-object, the shield-scene, and the descriptive text in order to reinforce the thematic relevance of it to the surrounding narrative of the attack upon Thebes generally and to Capaneus' actions in particular. The depiction of the Hydra as slain recently by Hercules' fiery darts (*Theb.* 4.168–71) foreshadows the death of Capaneus by thunderbolt, as told in *Theb.* 10.927–39. Just as the Hydra 'grows dark in death against the tawny gold' (*fulvo moriens nigrescit in auro*; *Theb.* 4.171), so too Capaneus' shield, struck by Zeus's lightning bolt, grows black against the warrior's glistening limbs: *clipei niger umbo cadit, iamque omnia lucent / membra viri* ('the shield, its boss blackened, falls to the ground while all the hero's limbs glow'; *Theb.* 10.929–30). The intermedial references remove the gap between image and shield, and so apply the import of the scene more closely to Capaneus.

The description of Hannibal's shield in *Punica* 2, discussed above, presents a similar fusion of object and painted scene through ambiguous language. The phrases *extrema...ora*, *clipeus*, *orbis*, and *curvatis flexibus* draw attention to the outer rim of the shield on which the scenes appear. Locative phrases are also employed elsewhere in the ekphrasis to distinguish diverse scenes: *has inter species* ('among these images'; 2.412), *hinc* ('here'; 416), *nec procul* ('not far away'; 420), *parte alia* ('in another part'; 426), and *nec non et laevum* ('and on the left side'; 432). In light of the significance of medial scenes in Virgilian shield descriptions, it is remarkable that the central scene – that of the city of Saguntum faithful to Rome – lacks an explicit signpost:

*eminet excelso consurgens colle Saguntos,  
quam circa immensi populi condensaque cingunt  
agmina certantum pulsantque trementibus hastis.* (Sil. *Pun.* 2.446–8)

Conspicuous on the shield was Saguntum, rising on its lofty eminence;  
and round it swarmed countless hosts and serried ranks of fighters,  
who assailed it with their quivering spears.

A locative adverbial phrase such as *in medio* to indicate the central position of this scene is absent, but several intermedial references show that this scene is located upon the rounded boss at the centre of the shield. The first word, *eminet*, literally means 'to stand out against a background', as in art (*OLD*, s.v. 2). The participle *excelso* is defined literally

as ‘extending to a great height’ (*OLD*, s.v. *excelsus*). And the noun *collis*, or ‘hill’, means any physical ‘eminence’ (*OLD*, s.v.), so that it may stand as synonym for the *umbo*, or raised mound, of the shield.<sup>45</sup> The locative expression *quam circa* (2.450) may refer to an understood *urbem* (that is, Saguntos) or to the protruding central boss, while the verb *cingo* (2.450) may be used as a technical term for embossing or setting metal, and so underscores the materiality of the raised steel rim upon the shield.<sup>46</sup>

The significance in the conflation of the object with the scene of lofty Saguntum is that it illustrates the moral superiority of the city’s inhabitants. In the historical narrative around the ekphrasis Saguntum is represented as a strong ally of Rome, a city characterized by *fides* – ‘a symbol of moral grandeur’.<sup>47</sup> This quality is conveyed by the figurative sense in the verb *eminet*, which is to stand out for one’s good qualities (*OLD*, s.v. *emineo* 3). The participle *excelso*, which depicts the hill whereon the city is located, figuratively means ‘lofty, sublime, noble’ (*OLD*, s.v. *excelsus* 2 A). Thus the intermedial references foreground the thematic concern of the narrative: the moral pre-eminence of the Saguntine people faithful to Rome. The theme of *fides* versus *perfidia* that courses throughout the poem is demonstrated here by the Romans and their allies over against the Carthaginians.<sup>48</sup> The people of Saguntum, faithful allies of Rome, stand out like the central boss of Hannibal’s shield from the enemies who surround and attack them.

### Conclusions

Intermedial references in Latin epic ekphrases promote new levels of meaning through the connections they establish between two or more semiotic systems. Such intermedial references are effected in literary ekphrases by ambivalent language and ambiguous grammatical constructions which permit the distance between different systems of meaning to be diminished or even removed. Consequently, altermedial

<sup>45</sup> *OLD*, s.v. 2, notes that *umbo* is also used for hill; Statius employs it in this sense in *Theb.* 6.257 and 7.15.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Stat. *Theb.* 2.276–7: *ibi arcano florentes igne smaragdus / cingit* (‘he there sets a ring of emeralds fluorescent with hidden fire’); Plin. *HN* 33.23: *ferrum auro cingunt* (‘they emboss an iron ring with gold’).

<sup>47</sup> Vessey 1975 (n. 26), 404.

<sup>48</sup> M. von Albrecht, *Silius Italicus. Freiheit und Gebundenheit römischer Epik* (Amsterdam, 1964), 55–6.

qualities may be transferred into the medium of the text. Employing, in particular, factors of materiality, form, structure, and colour, intermediality in Latin epic ekphrases increases the reader's consciousness of the presence of altermedial products and so incorporates these products into the thematic concerns of the text.

The preceding examination of representative descriptive passages in the poetry of Virgil, Ovid, Silius Italicus, and Statius has revealed that intermediality is an essential quality, or constitutional element, of Latin epic ekphrasis.<sup>49</sup> It may be concluded, moreover, that the textual medium's consciousness of intermedial convergence occurs especially at junctures of heightened thematic importance. The sharpened awareness in the text to the borders, periphery, and centre of the physical object indicates that these structural elements form points of significant contact between the diverse systems of meaning. Thus intermedial references not only generate the illusion of practices in other media but also co-opt them into the narrative strategies of the text. By imitating or reproducing the features peculiar to other media and thematizing them, intermediality contributes to the overall signification of ekphrasis. In sum, the theory of intermediality may function profitably in the analysis of the interconnections between literary ekphrasis and works of art.

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<sup>49</sup> For the debate on whether intermediality is a fundamental condition or a critical category of analysis, see Rajewsky (n. 1), 47–8.