*Linos* on the Shield of Achilles: A Perspective on Iliadic Poetics

Already since antiquity the ekphrasis of the shield of Achilles has invited significant scholarly interest. The inclusion of an elaborate ekphrasis filled with scenes that function as deviation to the general theme of war adds a different dimension to the iliadic poetics. The description of Hephaestus’s artifact has been approached from a variety of viewpoints. It has been read as an underlining of the human lot, a perspective on daily life, a contemplation of the variety of life with its activities, a reflection of didacticpoetry, an analogue of visual narratives, and as a microcosm in its own way. From the point of view of the Iliadic narrative, it offers a relief of emotional harshness and tension, a needed delay in what follows. Through this ekphrasis the time and space of the epic expand their horizons toward a world beyond the plot and storyline of the poem. Popular performances are carefully crafted and echoed, and in this way permeate the fabric of the epic. From dance performances to vintage song, the *Iliad*’s world is enriched with images and sounds. In this paper, I seek to contextualize the reference to the performance of the linos song (*Il.* 18.569-572) in both the tradition known as “Linos” (as evoked in classical texts and preserved through the *scholia*) and the narrative of the *Iliad*. I approach the entire vintage scene from the view point of iliadic poetics analyzing the function of lyric and folk song reflections within the narrative of the *Iliad*. In particular, I want to address how the reference to Linos and his mythology interacts with the narrative of the *Iliad*. From the perspective of oral poetics the reference to *Linos* becomes a reminder of traditions the Iliadic audience would have been possibly familiar with. More specifically, I argue that the reference to linos the song performed by a young singer stands as a reminder of the mythology and folklore of the hero Linos.

The *ekphrasis* emanates sound and dance with a performance tone that links to lamentation, alluding to the tradition of *Linos* the hero who died prematurely. Other than the names of the gods (*Il*. 18.516), no other reference is made to any specific character throughout the ekphrasis. In this reading, Linos becomes the only semi-mortal to whom specific reference is made in the shield. This paper analyzes the representation of the *linos* performance in the *Iliad* with a focus on the abbreviated narratives and allusions that the *linos* song offers to iliadic poetics arguing that the protagonist of the *linos* story, the performer of the *linos* song and the prospect bearer of the shield all meet to intensify the lugubrious undertones around this otherwise peaceful scene. In this particular scene, the performance of the *Linos* song appears as a registered reference to a well-known tradition. Linos the song is intertwined with the eponymous mythical figure. As I suggest, the reference to the *linos* song brings a well-crafted motif transference to Linos the hero, whose life presents intriguing similarities with the life of thebearer of the shield himself: Achilles.