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'UNBOUNDED VIEWS': INCOMPLETE EKPHRASIS AND THE VISUAL IMAGINATION IN VIRGIL

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> Our imagination loves to be filled with an object or to grasp at anything that is too big for its capacity. We are flung into a pleasing astonishment at such unbounded views and feel a delightful stillness and amazement of the soul at the apprehension of them.
>
> Joseph Addison, Essay 412

1. Introduction: *Enargeia* and the Ekphrastic Process

This paper concerns instances in the *Eclogues, Georgics* and *Aeneid* of what I will call 'incomplete ekphrasis': images the poet puts before his readers while withholding what is required for a complete visualization of the material object described.[1] Before turning to those texts, I will examine some critical approaches, ancient and modern, to ekphrasis in order to suggest a model for understanding how poetic imagery engages the visual imagination but also threatens to defy its 'capacity', as Addison puts it.

Ekphrasis has exercised the ingenuity of classical scholars for some time. The result is a rich body of important work, much of which is of special importance for students of Virgil.[2] One virtue of that scholarship, generally speaking, is the close attention it pays to ancient rhetorical practice, in which context ekphrasis is defined (for instance) as 'a descriptive speech that brings the thing shown vividly before the eyes'.[3] At the same time, the term is used also with a narrower emphasis on works of art within narratives: 'the verbal representation of a visual representation'.[4] The varied definitions enrich each other and push inquiry beyond works of art and even descriptions in the strictest sense.[5] Accordingly,

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2. The special issue of *Classical Philology* (vol. 102 no 1, 2007) edited by Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner is a fine place to begin; see also Zeitlin (2013). Lovatt and Vout (2013) is a recent collection of work on ekphrasis in the epic genre. For Virgil specifically see Putnam (1998), Barchiesi (1997), and Boyle (1986), 168-72. There are many important studies besides, a selection of which will be cited below.

3. A standard definition found in the ancient instructional materials (*progymnasmata*) dating from the first to fourth centuries CE, as cited and translated by Elsner (2002), 1; see Goldhill (2007) and Squire (2013) for further discussion.

4. The definition is Heffernan's (1993), 3f.

5. Cf. (*inter al.*) Webb (2009), 1-8, who treats the ancient source material as a rich 'set of ideas about language and its impact on the listener', reminding us that for classical authors 'the concepts of literature and art did not have their modern contours' (8); see also Francis (2009). Squire

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ekphrasis may serve as a point of entry for a broader phenomenon in which it must participate: the visual imagination as a constituent of the act of reading.

The importance of the visual imagination is a constant in the ancient sources: for instance, 'the special virtues of ekphrasis are clarity and visibility; the style should contrive to bring about seeing through hearing'.[6] Here 'visibility' is not so much a quality of language *per se* as its effect on the hearer or reader: an ekphrasis properly endowed with *enargeia* ('visibility' or 'vividness') makes its audience see.[7] For Quintilian (*Inst.* 8.3.61-62) and others, *enargeia* is that virtue by which narrative or representation transcends simple communication so as to activate the *oculi mentis* ('eyes of the mind') and thereby enhance nearly any kind of discourse.[8] Moreover, typical instances of ekphrasis (that is, elaborate descriptions of objects or events) reflect the completion of a process wherein the author deploys *ornamenta* (embellishments), such as *enargeia*, to activate visualization; Quintilian describes this as a sequence: *primi sunt gradus in eo quod uelis exprimendo, tertius qui haec nitidiora faciat* ('the first stages consist in expressing what you intend; the third makes it more splendid', 8.3.61).

In Virgil that process of visualization need not be provoked only by such 'classic' ekphraseis as the celebrated descriptions of the temple at Carthage or Aeneas' shield.[9] The 'hunt for ekphrasis' may range beyond works of art to any evocation 'in words of something seen'; when the Rutulians besiege the Trojan camp, a bare-headed Ascanius is compared to jewelry of gold or ivory (*Aeneid* 10.132-38), on which passage Anne Rogerson remarks, 'Virgil's direction of the reader's gaze at Ascanius is firstly an indication of the possible presence of ekphrasis and secondly, for the reader, the first step of the ekphrastic process.'[10] Thus Rogerson (who refers to Quintilian) conceives of ekphrasis not in terms of the nature of what is described but as a demand placed upon the reader. Whether or not one wants to call that description of Ascanius a proper ekphrasis, it surely initiates a visualizing mode of response: the poet impresses upon the reader, by adding detail (or *ornamenta*) or otherwise piquing the mind's eye, that there is something here to be seen. As Quintilian

(2013), 157, provides a 'gentle corrective', partially resynthesizing the ancient and modern traditions. Note, too, that description is fundamental to ekphrasis but not in such a way as to exclude narrative: 'Ekphrasis is as much a venture into descriptive narrative as into description *per se*' (Elsner [2002], 1); see also Fowler (1991).

6. Hermogenes 10.48, tr. Elsner (2002), 1. Translations below are the work of the present author unless otherwise noted.

7. Goldhill (2007), 2f.

8. Webb (2009), 87f.

9. A simile, for instance, can be read in much the same way as an ekphrasis: see Lonsdale (1990); Fowler (1991), 34f.; Putnam (1998), 11f.; Dinter (2013), 122-24. I do not venture to say to what extent Virgil or other ancients regarded the description of artifacts in poetry (ekphraseis on the model of Achilles' shield) as distinct from the rhetorical figure, but see Squire (2013), 157-63, for a lucid review of the issue.

10. Rogerson (2002), 51-54.

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insists, ekphrastic *enargeia* is more than *perspicuitas*: it is not required when the audience is to visualize something familiar or supply generic imagery; rather, its proper purpose is to make accessible to the audience what the speaker or writer imagines as s/he imagines it, that is, a *tota imago* ('whole image') that they have not or cannot have seen for themselves (8.3.61). Though Quintilian typically describes visualization and other effects from the perspective of a speaker rather than the audience, readers are not necessarily made to see precisely what the orator intends, even if that is his ideal.[11] Here, commenting on a passage from Cicero's *Verrines* (5.33.86), Quintilian describes his own distinctly active ekphrastic response:

> an quisquam tam procul a concipiendis imaginibus rerum abest, ut non, cum illa in Verrem legit, 'stetit soleatus praetor populi Romani cum pallio purpureo tunicaque talari muliercula nixus in litore', non solum ipsos intueri uideatur et locum et habitum, sed quaedam etiam ex iis, quae dicta non sunt, sibi ipse adstruat? ego certe mihi cernere uideor et uultum et oculos et deformes utriusque blanditias et eorum qui aderant tacitam auersationem ac timidam uerecundiam.
>
> (Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.64-65)

> Read the passage in the *Verrines* that runs, 'There stood the Roman praetor, in his slippers, with a purple cloak and a tunic down to his heels, leaning on one of his women on the beach…' Could anyone be so unimaginative as not to feel that he is seeing the persons and the place and the clothing, and to add some unspoken details for himself into the bargain? I certainly imagine that I can see the face, the eyes, the disgusting endearments of the pair, and the silent loathing and abashed fear of the bystanders.[12]

Quintilian stresses the power of the orator to make anyone see the scene depicted, but he also concedes the necessary activity of the hearer who may (or even must, if so capable an orator as Cicero desires) visualize details in excess of what is described explicitly, as Quintilian himself apparently does with enthusiasm.[13] To put it differently, what is described above is the happy completion of an ekphrastic process: the reader has visualized the intended image in a satisfactory way, quite possibly with the rhetorical impact the author intended but also with

11. As he puts it, *ut debet plene dominatur oratio*, 'a speech should attain total dominion' (8.3.62). See Webb (2009), 106: Quintilian's 'insistence on the imaginative engagement of both speaker and listener draws attention to…the modern critical neglect of imaginative response'.

12. Tr. Russell (2001).

13. Cf. Francis (2009), 3f. See also *Inst.* 6.2.29-33, where Quintilian praises Virgil's mastery of *uisiones* (or *phantasiai*, in Greek) so as to represent the 'images of absent things' (*imagines rerum absentium*) in such a way that they seem present to our eyes. On which passage see Syed (2005), 26-28, and Webb (2009), 94-97.

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his or her own interpretive contributions to the image and the scene evoked. Yet if it is right to say that ekphrastic response is an active process requiring effort, it follows that less satisfactory outcomes are possible, and not only due to incompetence on the part of the speaker or writer. While Quintilian revels in the power of ekphrasis, others stress the fragility of its artifice: 'ekphrasis is an interpretation that *almost* brings about seeing through hearing.'[14]

Below I will discuss moments at which Virgil activates ekphrastic response but engineers his imagery so that the reader feels that it is not possible to see all that is notionally there. As has been noted, there is an important sense in which any ekphrasis is incomplete, in as much as a verbal description of a visual phenomenon is necessarily selective.[15] Nonetheless, if an ekphrasis prompts readers to imagine a *complete* object, then reticence and omission may be significant, as they are, I argue, to Virgil. The Virgilian ekphrastic features both conspicuous omissions as well as prolepsis, which guides the reader's gaze forward in time and thus creates further uncertainty over what may be seen with confidence.[16] These effects should draw our attention to the materiality of Virgilian imagery, that is, to what can and cannot be imagined to exist tangibly in the worlds of his poetry. Accordingly, I offer here alternatives to reading the ekphraseis in question as metaphors only. The demand to visualize the objects of ekphrastic description as complete, I argue, further implicates ekphrasis in certain special concerns of Virgil's poetry, especially the *Aeneid*'s distinctive, polyvalent mediation of Augustan ideology through the lens of the mythic past.

2. *Eclogues* 3 and 10: Seeing the Trees

The *Eclogues* have drawn little interest from scholars of ancient ekphrasis, and fairly so.[17] The pastoral world as imagined by Virgil excludes such grand artifacts and edifices as described in the splendid ekphraseis of the *Aeneid*, nor does Virgil truly emulate the ekphrastic flourishes of Greek bucolic: the basket in Moschus'

14. Hermogenes 10.48; cf. Goldhill (2007), 3, on ekphrasis as 'illusion' and Platt (2011), 179-211, who notes, in a discussion of ekphrastic epigram, a naturally terse form, how ekphrasis may provoke but also frustrate the desire to see.

15. See, *inter al.*, Heffernan (1993), 4-20, who discusses 'representative friction', the sense, engendered by ekphrasis, that a static image must differ essentially from its description; also Barchiesi (1997), 278, on Virgilian ekphrasis: 'The textual medium explores the limits of visual communication as an indirect way of testing its own material limitations.' Ekphrasis naturally prompts comparisons of visual and verbal representation: see Laird (1996) and Fowler (1991), who stresses the fragility of the supposed distinctions between verbal and visual art—what Mitchell (1994), 154f., calls 'ekphrastic fear'; also Dinter (2013).

16. On prolepsis in ekphrasis more generally, see Harrison (2001).

17. But see Segal (1967), 289f.; Thomas (1999), 313f.; Farrell (2012), 288-90; and the thorough discussion of *Ecl.* 3 in Dufallo (2013), 76-92. Saunders (2008), 9-21, discusses the cups and the shield of Achilles as emblems of 'cosmological poetry'.

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Europa (43-62) and the ornate cup possessed by the nameless goatherd of Theocritus' First *Idyll* (27-56). Virgil does, in the Third *Eclogue*, allude to the latter when a pair of herdsmen make two sets of ornate cups the stakes in a singing-match:

> *M.* pocula ponam
> fagina, caelatum diuini opus Alcimedontis
> lenta quibus torno facili superaddita uitis
> diffusos hedera uestit pallente corymbos.
> in medio duo signa, Conon et—quis fuit alter,
> descripsit radio totum qui gentibus orbem,
> tempora quae messor, quae curuus arator haberet?…
> *D.* et nobis idem Alcimedon duo pocula fecit
> et molli circum est ansas amplexus acantho,
> Orpheaque in medio posuit siluasque sequentis.
>
> (Virg. *Ecl.* 3.36-42, 44-47)

> *Menalcas*: I will put up beech-wood cups, the engraved work of the divine Alcimedon. They have a pliant vine, laid on with a skillful chisel, that clothes berry-clusters scattered on pale ivy. In the middle are two figures (*signa*), Conon and—who was the other, the one who marked out with the rod the whole sky for people, and what seasons the reaper and the stooped ploughman should observe?…
> *Damoetas*: The same Alcimedon made two cups for me, too, and he entwined their handles with soft acanthus, and put Orpheus in the middle with the forest following him.

This is the only passage in the *Eclogues* that would qualify as ekphrasis by the most familiar standards. Though briefer and more restrained than the Theocritean model, it is of considerable detail: there are material objects here whose visualization demands a certain degree of readerly effort. Commentators have noted the 'difficulty' of lines 38f.: 'the reader will naturally take *hedera pallente* not as a local ablative with *diffusos*, but as instrumental with *vestit*'.[18] Nonetheless there is a fine, compelling image of intricate workmanship to be seen; for here, at the most overtly ekphrastic moment in the *Eclogues*, Virgil makes the act of seeing necessarily suppletive.[19] Menalcas withholds the name of the 'other'

18. Clausen (1994), *ad loc.*; also Conington (1963), *ad loc.*: 'Virgil cannot be acquitted of obscurity'; cf. Henderson (2008), 139: 'The simulation of plastic representation by glyptic processes is a marvel…because…the chisel cannot "clothe" one layer of relief detail with another…'

19. For us readers but also for the two herdsmen, who may be goading each other into imagining cups that do not exist independently of their 'well-turned discourse' or the 'affective power of their rhetoric': Henderson (2008), 138-42.

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(40),[20] but the omission does not terminate the ekphrasis; rather, he shifts into a more periphrastic mode of description as a way of testing or teasing his adversary (thus anticipating the riddles at the end of the poem). The actions that serve as clues also constitute the cup's decorative imagery, much as Damoetas' cup features Orpheus at its center, no doubt playing and singing as the forest stirs to life around him. Completing the image of the cup, then, is both a visual and a verbal matter.[21] As for the other's identity, several answers have been posed.[22] That the question remains open indicates a gap between what is there, notionally, to be seen (or the *tota imago* of the cup) and what readers have seen successfully. In that sense, the ekphrasis of the Third *Eclogue* is incomplete.

Moving from ekphrasis in a strict sense to the ekphrastic obviously expands the set of relevant passages, perhaps indefinitely, so it would be impossible to catalogue all that a reader might see or wish to see. The Tenth *Eclogue* will be our present concern: the trees on which Virgil's Gallus writes his *amores* are objects made all the more difficult to see by way of their position in the last of the ten *Eclogues*. That in turn imparts an air of frustration just as the book comes to what is in many ways an effective and even sublime conclusion.[23]

Many readings of this poem dwell on the relationship between the real Gallus and his pastoral figuration, an issue often posed in terms of literary genre, that is, as a question of the relationship between love elegy and pastoral. It is fair to say that the 'marriage' of Gallus to the pastoral genre and its milieu is a troubled one.[24] A sense of frustration attends the poem at large in as much as Gallus remains an outsider: not a true fellow of the pastoral contingent among whom he finds himself but rather an object of their pity and bewilderment. As such Gallus is also an object of ekphrastic interest, lying as he does *sola sub rupe* ('under lone crag', 10.14). Rather than Gallus' body, though, let us attend to another material focus, his writing:

> certum est in siluis inter spelaea ferarum
> malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores
> arboribus. crescent illae crescetis amores.
>
> (Virg. *Ecl.* 10.52-54)

> Certainly I prefer suffering in the woods amid the dens of beasts and carving my *Amores* into soft trees: they will grow; you, my *Amores*, will grow.

20. Though on some readings he simply forgets; e.g., Page (1965), *ad loc.* But see Henderson (2008), 140f., for a more penetrating discussion.

21. Saunders (2008), 41f., points out that *signa* (40), translated as 'figures' above, may also mean 'signs,' as in 'something…from which an inference may be drawn' (*OLD s.v. signum* 4a).

22. For discussion see Wormell (1960); Fisher (1982); Jones (2011), 31f.

23. On *Ecl.* 10 and the conclusion of the *Eclogue* book, see also Kania (2016), 144-55.

24. See, *inter al.*, Conte (1986), 100-29; Perkell (1996); Papanghelis (1999); Breed (2006), 117-35; Harrison (2007), 69-79.

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Here *amores* is understood to allude to Gallus' actual poetry.[25] But Virgil's Gallus had already reprised his work in a form more apropos to his pastoral milieu:

> ibo et Chalcidico quae sunt mihi condita uersu
> carmina pastoris Siculi modulabor auena.
>
> (Virg. *Ecl.* 10.50f.)

> I will go and play my songs composed in Chalcidian verse on the pipe of a Sicilian shepherd.

Gallus' second effort to 'pastoralize' his poetry is strikingly tangible, as the testimony of these inscribed trees is to preserve the pastoral Gallus' songs in a rather durable way. In the absence of detail, or even a rudimentary description, this is not a full ekphrasis. While an ekphrastic process may begin, in as much as there is the desire to see, or to read, Gallus' new pastoral *Amores*, that process cannot come to fruition in a fully satisfactory way. Gallus' trees pose a challenge to the imagination, first in that these new poems cannot be identical to any Gallan poems known to Virgil's readers, since they have been 'modulated' to take their place in pastoral (the fact that Gallus' poetry is now lost to us is not really pertinent). Much as Virgil makes it difficult to name the obliquely identified figure in Menalcas' cup, it is equally impossible to read the *amores* on these trees, even though we know that words are there. Moreover, whatever image of the trees does emerge is necessarily fleeting, given the assertion that they are growing, that is, changing continuously in a material way. Even if that change bears some figurative meaning, it is also true of the trees as they exist, and will continue to exist, within the world of the poem. That makes these new pastoral *amores* objects of interest not only as figures for Virgil's poetics of genre but also as concrete objects subject to readerly visualization.[26]

The sense that there is more here to see is both undercut and strengthened by the poem's position as the last in the book, for even as he concludes the collection, Virgil holds out the possibility of further engagement with his pastoral world:

> haec sat erit, diuae, uestrum cecinisse poetam,
> dum sedit et gracili fiscellam texit hibisco,
> Pierides: uos haec facietis maxima Gallo,
> Gallo, cuius amor tantum mihi crescit in horas
> quantum uere nouo uiridis se subicit alnus.

25. Servius, *ad Ecl.* 10.1, suggests that *Amores* was the title of Gallus' four books of elegies; see also Cairns (2006), 230-32.

26. Cf. Breed (2006), 132f., for whom Gallus' inscription 'reflects the referential density of Virgil's poem'; see also Henkel (2009), 154-58.

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> surgamus: solet esse grauis cantantibus umbra,
> iuniperi grauis umbra; nocent et frugibus umbrae.
> ite domum saturae, uenit Hesperus, ite capellae.
>
> (Virg. *Ecl.* 10.70-77)

> Pierian goddesses, it will be enough that your poet has sung these songs while he sat and wove a basket from slender hibiscus: you will make them great for Gallus, Gallus, my love of whom grows as much each hour as a green alder shoots up at the beginning of spring. Let us rise. Shade can be a heavy thing for singers, the shade of the juniper is heavy; those shadows harm the fruit, too. Go home sated, evening is coming, go home, my goats.

These final lines hint that desires for the Virgilian pastoral world should now, like the poet's goats, be sated. Yet the coming of evening, and with it shade that is no longer benign (*nocent umbrae*), makes the departure to some extent involuntary.[27] Even though the poem serves to end Virgil's book, it would be incorrect to read these lines only as the words of the author speaking from outside the poem.[28] By now the name 'Gallus' must be ambiguous: it refers both to the real Cornelius Gallus and to his pastoral instantiation in the fiction of the Tenth *Eclogue*. Therefore the speaker's continuing love for Gallus anchors him in the poem's world. Moreover, the simile, the speaker's love growing like an alder tree, responds to the growing trees that bear Gallus' *Amores* within the fiction.[29] Just as there is more for us to see of and on Gallus' trees, if only the poet would say more and the poem continue, so, too, is the ending of the book tinged with frustration, in the form of a tension between the speaker's task of bringing the book to a close and his new love for Gallus, which, far from complete or exhausted (*uere nouo*[30]), continues in the pastoral world that readers now (with Virgil) leave behind. Thus the Tenth *Eclogue* ends the book but does not wholly satisfy the desire to engage with the pastoral world imaginatively, an effect corroborated by the indeterminate image of Gallus' trees.[31]

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27. Cf. Theodorakopoulos (1997), 162f., on 'the dynamic of closure and continuation' in 'the Book of Virgil'; on *surgamus* and the end of *Ecl.* 10, she remarks on 'how easily an end may become a beginning', that is, the beginning of the *Georgics*.

28. The attribution of *amor* to both the first speaker and Gallus signals, as Rumpf (1996), 251f., observes, exceptional intimacy between the two poets (that is, between the 'Rahmendichter' and his framed subject).

29. Putnam (1970), 388.

30. *OLD s.v. nouus* 11b: '(of a period, condition in its early stages)'; cf. Virg. *Geo.* 1.43, *Aen.* 1.430.

31. So, too, the ending of the *Aeneid*, though in a very different way, as evinced by the various efforts to complete it with a 'sequel' detailing such events as Aeneas' marriage and apotheosis. The ending of the epic is famously challenging; Hardie (1997), 143, writes: 'the last scene both stresses its own finality and provocatively fails to meet expectations of a proper ending'; see also Mitchell-Boyask (1996). By contrast no critic (at least to my knowledge) finds *Ecl.* 10 to be anything but an entirely fitting conclusion to the book, nor am I aware of any Eleventh *Eclogues* composed by

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3. *Georgics* 3.1-48: Notional Monument, Notional Epic

In his study of ekphrasis in the *Aeneid*, Michael Putnam treats his material under the rubric of 'notional ekphrasis', meaning that all the objects entailed are 'works of art, which, however palpable in the text, are figments of Virgil's imagination'.[32] Of that much there is little doubt. Yet 'notional ekphrasis' may be more important for Putnam in that the term suits his preference for treating ekphrasis as synecdoche or metaphor for the text in which it is inscribed: 'one art as mirror for another'.[33] Such interpretations have been fruitful, yet this paper offers a caution against treating ekphrastic objects as metaphors only and thus overlooking not just their materiality but also their ontology, that is, the quality of their existence in the world of the poem.[34]

That warning applies even to the ekphrasis in the proem to *Georgics* 3, for which the label 'notional' is especially (if differently) appropriate. The poet speaks of his efforts to come, which will include a temple to be built in honor of Octavian:

> et uiridi in campo templum de marmore ponam
> propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat
> Mincius et tenera praetexit harundine ripas.
> in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.13-16)

> And in a green field I will place a temple of marble near the water, where the great Mincius wanders through its lazy bends and covers its banks with slender reeds. I will have Caesar in the middle and he will possess the temple.

Here the ekphrastic object is notional in the sense that it exists only in the mind of the speaker; unlike Gallus' trees, this temple does not yet stand in the world of the

dissatisfied readers. Of course, the *Eclogues*' evident design and formal polish make it unthinkable that Virgil left the book incomplete, while the *Aeneid*'s half-lines and his dying wish that the unfinished work be burned (whether or not the story is apocryphal) authorize, to a certain way of thinking, latter-day supplements.

32. Putnam (1998), 1. The idea of 'notional ekphrasis' is borrowed from Hollander (1988), 209-19. This is not to deny that Virgil's *ekphraseis* are in dialogue with real objects of art and architecture in any number of ways: e.g., Virgil's description of the baldric of Pallas (*Aen.* 10. 495-505), which apparently refers to the decoration (a representation of the Danaids, specifically) of a portico near the temple to Apollo dedicated in 28 BCE (see Prop. 2.31.3f.; Ov. *Am.* 2.2., *A.A.* 1.73f., *Tr.* 3.1.61f.; Keuls (1974); Putnam (1998), 198-202; Quenemoen (2006); Kirichenko (2013), 79-86. Hardie (1986), 97-103, 120-25, 355f., connects, aesthetically and ideologically, the shield of Aeneas to then-extant representations (including those of the Palatine temple of Apollo). For a reading of the shield as reflective of the 'Roman tradition of triumphal art', see McKay (1998). On the sympathies between the *Aeneid*'s mythology and the Augustan program of monumental myth-making more broadly, see Zanker (1988), 192-215, and Harrison (2006). For discussion of the non-literary antecedents of the temple in *Georgics* 3, see Meban (2008).

33. Putnam (1998), 2f.

34. Cf. Dufallo (2013), 2f., for a different critique of what he terms the 'standard view' of ekphrasis.

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poem, so it is imaginary, or notional, with respect to both Virgil and the poet of the *Georgics*. And this temple is notional for Virgil in another sense: it represents, at least according to many interpreters, a martial epic taking shape in his mind: *mox tam ardentis accingar dicere pugnas / Caesaris* ('soon I will gird myself to tell the fiery battles of Caesar', 46f.).[35]

Here I will consider the temple first and foremost as an instance of the ekphrastic rather than as a metaphor for the *Aeneid* or for anything else. Even though it does not exist tangibly in the poet's world, the vivid and detailed description of the temple initiates an ekphrastic process: the reader may imagine (or attempt to imagine) the material realization of what the poet envisions. There is all the more to see due to the fact that the poet does not merely describe a temple but sees himself presiding over it and an array of related activity:

> uictor ego et Tyrio conspectus in ostro
> centum quadriiugos agitabo ad flumina currus.
> cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi
> cursibus et crudo decerneret Graecia caestu.
> ipse caput tonsae foliis ornatus oliuae
> dona feram.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.17-22)

> I, a victor resplendent in Tyrian purple, will drive a hundred four-horse chariots along the stream. With me all Greece will leave the Alpheus and the groves of Molorchus and compete in races and with the brutal boxing glove. I myself, my head graced with leaves of cut olive, will award the prizes.

This is far from the straightforward description of a static object. Yet it is not only the richness of the image that provokes the visual imagination. This, too, is a frustrating or incomplete ekphrasis due to a conspicuous omission.

> iam nunc sollemnis ducere pompas
> ad delubra iuuat caesosque uidere iuuencos,
> uel scaena ut uersis discedat frontibus utque
> purpurea intexti tollant aulaea Britanni.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.22-25)

35. See Wilkinson (2008) and Thomas (1999), 68-100, who characterize Virgil's architectural metaphor as Pindaric and Callimachean respectively; Meban (2008), 150-52, reviews the issue. Of course it is not, strictly speaking, Virgil who announces the forthcoming poem, but the speaker or a persona: see Volk (2002), 150f. (though the reference to Mantua, via the river Mincius, all but insists that Virgil is speaking here). For discussion of how the temple may, or may not, be related to the *Aeneid* and epic poetry, see Kirichenko (2013), 1f.; Nelis (2004); Dyson (1994), 3f.; Morgan (1999), 50-101; Kraggerud (1998); Mynors (1994), *ad Geo.* 3.16; Farrell (1991), 314; Clausen (1987), 12-14; Buchheit (1972), 148-69; Wilkinson (1969), 172.

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> Even now it is a pleasure to lead the solemn procession to the shrine and see the bulls slaughtered, or how the sets rotate and the scene parts, and how the Britons woven into the purple curtain raise it.

This remarkable sentence demands close examination. First note the emphatic shift from future to present tense (*iam nunc iuuat*).[36] Projected events give way to a vision as the speaker sees (*uidere*) a procession, a sacrifice, and some kind of dramatic performance not as tangible occurrences but as 'notions' visible only to his mind's eye. But what does he see, and what, therefore, is the reader, aligning the ekphrastic response to his vision, to see? As the proceedings take a (literally) dramatic turn, the poetry becomes rather intricate. Like the ornate cups of the Third *Eclogue*, this is a notably difficult passage.[37] Line 24 appears to indicate the use of two kinds of scenery: a series of painted backdrops as well as prism-shaped devices at either end of the stage that could rotate to effect changes of scene; the next line refers to the curtain raised to conclude a show, which was sometimes decorated with an image or figures.[38] What transpires, in terms of the poet's vision, has been described as follows: 'Britons, woven on to the curtain, seem to lift it up.'[39] That may be the most straightforward interpretation, but it does not do justice to the uncanny quality of what the reader is called upon to see: figures woven so cunningly as not just to seem alive but even to act upon the medium in which they are represented (*intexti*), the curtain which they apparently have the power to raise.

Moreover, though the poet imagines himself as part of the audience to a complete dramatic performance, he fails to say anything about the show itself. If the intricacies of these lines tend to distract from that omission, there is nonetheless a curious blind spot at the heart of this ekphrastic passage.[40] It is possible to guess at the content of the performance. The best supposition may be that it relates somehow to the most proximate image, those Britons on the curtain. A dramatized conquest of Britain would be thematically consistent with the images of battle and victory to follow.[41] Perhaps the curtain, like an ekphrasis within the ekphrasis, serves to mirror the performance that it brings to a close. Yet such speculation does not to change the fact that Virgil has left a conspicuous gap in the image.

36. Nelis (2004), 86.

37. E.g., Mynors (1994), *ad loc.*: '[T]he poet has not tried to tell us enough to provide complete understanding.'

38. Mynors (1994), *ad loc.*; Ov. *Met.* 3.111-14.

39. Thomas (1988), *ad loc.*

40. The omission apparently does not interest most commentators, but see Erren (1985), *ad Geo.* 3.19-25: 'Die aufgeführte Schauspielhandlung wird merkwürdigerweise übersprungen…'

41. Note that an invasion of Britain, though planned for the years 34, 27, and 26, never materialized under Augustus (Dio 49.38.2, 53.22.5).

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As the ekphrasis, or ekphrastic vision, proceeds, the poet adds detail to his notional temple and figures himself as its future creator (*faciam*, 27). In addition to Roman conquests to be depicted on its doors, the temple will house *spirantia signa* ('breathing statues', 34). The excursus on the temple appears to end with what has been interpreted as a warning to any who would envy the successes celebrated by the poet:[42]

> Inuidia infelix Furias amnemque seuerum
> Cocyti metuet tortosque Ixionis anguis
> immanemque rotam et non exsuperabile saxum.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.37-39)

> Fruitless Envy will fear the Furies and the harsh stream of Cocytus and Ixion's twisted serpents, his huge wheel, and the unconquerable stone.

Still, as in the case of the ekphraseis of the Third *Eclogue*, it is not entirely clear where (or whether) descriptive, ekphrastic discourse ends. Richard Thomas assures us that 'these difficult lines do not refer to further statues in the temple'.[43] Others take the opposite view, though.[44] Yet it is not necessary, nor perhaps even possible, to adjudicate this dispute.[45] If these lines do act as an oblique warning to potentially invidious readers, they may still refer to statues notionally extant within the speaker's vision, and the preceding lines invite that reading:

> stabunt et Parii lapides, spirantia signa,
> Assaraci proles demissaeque ab Ioue gentis
> nomina, Trosque parens et Troiae Cynthius auctor.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.34-36)

> Parian marbles, breathing statues, stand there too, the offspring of Assaracus, and the notables of the race descended from Jupiter, father Tros and Apollo the founder of Troy.

As initially brought to the mind's eye in line 34, the uncanny statues already stand 'breathing' beside tangible spoils of war (*rapta manu tropaea*, 32). When line 37 begins with *Inuidia infelix Furias*, it is difficult on a first reading *not* to interpret

42. Mynors (1994) notes on *Inuidia* (*Geo.* 3.37): 'Servius thinks this is the ill-will inspired in the poet's rivals… But if *Invidia* is the latent opposition to the victor [Octavian]…this form of poetic punishment is…suitable to the ornament of the temple.'

43. Thomas (1988), *ad Geo.* 3.37-39.

44. E.g., Erren (1985), *ad Geo.* 3.37-39, who sees here a 'Bildgruppe auf die Tempelfassade'; also Kraggerud (1998), 4: 'a pediment group around Apollo'.

45. Dickie (1983), who provides a discussion of the problem with further bibliography.

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these as further additions to the temple's statuary, since, whether a statue or something else, Envy here is personified. Perhaps it is ultimately a misreading to make Envy, the Furies, and the whole Underworld scene part of another statue group (one might say that the verb of line 38, *metuet*, is not, strictly speaking, appropriate to a statue, though it might be taken to mean that Envy is made to *appear* to be afraid, just as the others seem to be breathing). Even so, that misreading is a consequence of the difficulty of the poet's phrasing. The effect is not accidental or inert but rather a product of the obscurity that characterizes this tantalizing ekphrastic vision, which implies distinctions between the animate and the inanimate, or the material and the merely notional, but does not permit its readers to see the differences or confidently translate the speaker's vision into an image for themselves.

Looking more closely at the triumphs depicted on the temple's doors reveals a combination of the specific and immediate, on the one hand, with hazier speculation:

> in foribus pugnam ex auro solidoque elephanto
> Gangaridum faciam uictorisque arma Quirini,
> atque hic undantem bello magnumque fluentem
> Nilum ac nauali surgentis aere columnas.
> addam urbes Asiae domitas pulsumque Niphaten
> fidentemque fuga Parthum uersisque sagittis
> et duo rapta manu diuerso ex hoste tropaea
> bisque triumphatas utroque ab litore gentis.
>
> (Virg. *Geo.* 3.26-33)

> On the doors I will make from gold and solid ivory a battle between the people of the Ganges and the arms of victorious Quirinus, and here the Nile billowing in war and flowing mightily, and columns topped with ships' bronze. I will add the conquered cities of Asia, and Niphates shaken, and the Parthian trusting in flight and arrows aimed behind him, and two trophies snatched from the hands of different foes, and peoples from both shores triumphed over again.

The allusion to Actium and its aftermath is clear; the 'columns topped with ships' bronze' may refer to the prows (*rostra*) of captured ships that were incorporated into the Temple of *Diuus Julius* completed and dedicated after the battle.[46] If this is a promise to cast the triumph at Actium into epic verse, then Virgil would, of course, keep his word, if in a surprising manner, by writing it into the prophetic imagery of the hero's shield in *Aeneid* 8 (to which we will turn below). By

46. In the form of *columnae rostratae*: see Thomas (1988), *ad Geo* 3.29.

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contrast, though, the other victories were yet to be, or never to be, or little more than fancy. 'Races from both shores' (35) is rather vague, and definitive victory over the Parthians was not achieved until 20 BCE.[47] If the reference to the 'people of the Ganges' may be taken literally, it predicts a victory for Roman arms that would never be won and could hardly have seemed imminent; if not (and it is all but impossible to take 'Quirinus' so), it, too, is obscure.[48] The poet looks to Actium and also beyond, but his vision becomes dimmer the farther it moves from that triumphant moment. The proem concludes with a promise that is specific yet evasive: *nomen fama tot ferre per annos / Tithoni prima quot abest ab origine Caesar* ('to bear [Caesar's] name along in fame for as many years as Caesar is distant from the first origin of Tithonus', 47f.). That would offer a precise figure expressing the commemorative power of the promised poem, if only we could fix the 'first origin of Tithonus' in time with certainty.[49] Just as it is impossible to see the temple in full, so, too, does Virgil promise a celebratory epic without defining its subject matter or temporal scope.

This reading has privileged the temple's (notional) materiality so as to demonstrate not merely the difficulty of the imagery but also the appealing strangeness of the passage, which is most fully felt in the attempt to visualize it, that is, to answer the question 'what do we see?'. This is meant also to counter the tendency to attribute such peculiarities only to figurative, poetic diction as such. For instance, Mynors glosses *agitabo* (18) as 'will cause to be driven', which threatens to elide the directly active role the poet assigns to himself as the victor he declares that he will be; on *tollant* (25) Mynors notes, 'the figures rise as the curtain on which they are depicted rises, and they can be said to raise, much as poets are said to do what they describe the doing of'.[50] Yet the poet's phrasing ought to be noted without dismissing or apologizing for the strangeness of the content, which suggests that, for the poet, description is a fully potent form of action. Ekphrastic objects like the temple demand, and reward, attention as something more than terms of metaliterary or political discourse. Nonetheless, the compelling, incomplete materiality on offer in the opening of the Third

47. Thomas (1988), *ad locc*.

48. Cf. *Aen.*1.292f.: *Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus / iura dabunt* ('Faith and Vesta, and Quirinus with his brother Remus will give laws'), which cannot be understood literally or even allegorically, but is rather an obscure 'image of reconciliation': O'Hara (1990), 153f.

49. Cf. Hardie (2005), 28: 'The poet is supremely confident of his control of the whole sweep of Roman time, seamlessly linking distant past to distant future.' But, as Nelis (2005), 73-77, details, Virgil's allusion to Tithonus has been variously explained: Servius understood *Tithoni prima origine* to mean 'the beginning of the world' (*mundi principium*), while DServius adds *ab infinito* [*ad*] *infinitum, quia Tithoni origo non potest comprehendi*. Thomas (1988), *ad loc.*, and Mynors (1994), *ad loc.*, connect Tithonus (the brother of Priam) with the royal house of Troy, which places his 'origin' before the Trojan War. Tithonus' immortality is a complication, as it suggests (defying the precise parallelism of *tot…quot*) eternal fame, though without the benefit of eternal, unchanging vigor (for the myth, see *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 218-38; cf. *Od.* 5.1f.); Nelis (*ibid.*) argues for allusion to the prologue of Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 1.29-38), which connection signifies that 'the immortality of Vergil's poetic voice will ensure the immortality of Caesar'.

50. Mynors (1994), *ad locc*.

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Georgic is constitutive of Virgilian poetics and correlative with the realities to which his poetry alludes—after all, the Augustan regime itself was rather inchoate at this juncture. It is plausible that the temple reflects a Virgilian epic in progress at some point circa 29 BCE,[51] a poem that would become the *Aeneid* but started its life in a (notional) form quite different from the poem we know, as something like 'an epic on Caesar with backward glances towards Troy, rather than the historical poem Virgil afterwards wrote, with its forward glances towards Caesar'.[52] If so, the temple, described in such a way as to resist complete visualization, is a very apt metaphor for a work that is neither finished nor even fixed, conceptually, in its author's mind.

4. The *Aeneid*: Ekphrasis, Narrative, Time[53]

In describing Aeneas' shield Virgil insists that his reader see it.[54] Nonetheless the shield, as do Gallus' trees and the temple of *Georgics* 3, alludes to what is not fully accessible to readers. In all three cases this is done in part by directing the reader's gaze forward in time. Of course, to speak of the future is always to speak of what is in a sense abstract; thus Virgil's proleptic ekphraseis effect a kind of dissonance as they call upon readers not merely to muse on things yet to be but even to *see* them made concrete. In the case of the *Aeneid*, that effect reaches special intensity due to the poem's temporal scope and narrative scheme: by setting divinely guaranteed prophecies within the poem's story, Virgil makes his historical epic speak also to and about his present. Yet such prolepsis need not stop at the author's or reader's moment in time. As I will argue below, Virgil's deployment of prophecy in the *Aeneid* opens a gap between the temporally limited perspective of the poet, or narrator, and the gods' supposedly limitless foresight. To illustrate, I will first discuss Jupiter's prophecy in *Aeneid* 1 (258-77), then the shield, which, as the reification of such a prophecy,[55] represents more than Virgil is willing or able to describe.

Jupiter's spoken prophecy in the poem's first book establishes the temporal scheme outlined above: the god looks ahead to the events of the latter half of the poem and beyond, to Aeneas' subsequent reign and the foundation of Rome (1.258-77). However, Jupiter goes further yet, beyond what was 'history' for

51. For the date I follow Thomas (1988), ii.36.

52. Mynors (1994), *ad Geo.* 3.16; see also Miller (2009), 140. Nelis (2004), 83-98, arguing to the contrary, demonstrates that the temple anticipates the *Aeneid*'s 'handling of Roman history and of the theme of time itself' (which will be discussed below), thus 'dramatizing the poetic choices facing' Virgil.

53. Important discussions of vision (or the gaze) and spectacle in the *Aeneid* include Syed (2005), chs. 3-4; Smith (2005); and Reed (2007). See Lovatt (2013) for a treatment of such themes in the epic genre writ large. See also Johnson (1976), 49-99, on such phenomena as 'deliberate failure', the depiction of 'what cannot be seen', and 'controlled imprecision' in the poem's imagery.

54. *Aspiceres* (8.650), *uideres* (676, 691), *cernere erat* (676). See also West (1990).

55. Kirichenko (2013), 80f. See also Zetzel (1997), 196-202.

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Virgil and his first readers to 'Trojan Caesar's' ascension to the heavens (286-90) and a subsequent age of peace:[56]

> aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis:
> cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus
> iura dabunt; dirae ferro et compagibus artis
> claudentur belli portae; Furor impius intus
> saeua sedens super arma et centum uinctus aenis
> post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento.
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 1.291-96)

> Then harsh times will become gentle as war is put aside: aged Faith and Vesta, and Quirinus with his brother Remus will give laws. The dire gates of war will be shut with tight iron bonds. Impious Rage, sitting on his terrible weapons, his hands bound behind his back with a hundred knots of brass, will groan horribly from his bloody mouth.

This is similar to what was observed above of *Georgics* 3: the speaker moves from what is known to speculation and in so doing employs increasingly figurative language. And Jupiter is most vague as he looks furthest ahead:[57]

> his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;
> imperium sine fine dedi…
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 1.278f.)

> On these [*sc.* the Romans] I set no limits either in space or time; I have given them empire without end.

While the phrase *finis imperii* might most readily denote a border or boundary in space, *sine fine* must, following *tempora*, also mean something like 'everlasting'.[58] In foretelling an everlasting Roman *imperium*, Jupiter claims an equally boundless awareness, which necessarily exceeds what Virgil (or any poet) could credibly possess. So the god is omniscient—in a literal sense, or so he claims—in a way the author or narrator (even one 'omniscient' in a narratological sense) cannot be.[59] If that is obvious, the implications may not be. Virgil could

56. On the question of which '*Caesar Iulius*' is meant, the dictator or Augustus, see O'Hara (1990), 155-63, who argues for a deliberate ambiguity.

57. Mack (1978), 68f., but, for reasons that will be made clear, I do not agree that Aeneas' shield is a prophecy narrower in 'temporal scope' than Jupiter's (*ibid.*).

58. *Inter al.*, Feeney (1991), 141, who notes the paring of Terminus and Iuventas ('Boundary' and 'Youth') in the cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus as 'guarantors…of Rome's limitless expanse and duration'.

59. Cf. the aside at *Aen.* 12.503f.: *tanton placuit concurrere motu, / Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futuras?* ('Jupiter, did it please you for peoples who were to live in eternal peace to clash

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have feigned (appealing to 'poetic license', as it were) such omniscience by predicting the post-Augustan future with any degree of confidence and specificity. There is more than caution or modesty at work here, though. The *Aeneid*, whatever its pretenses to history, surely takes considerable liberties in imagining the distant past.[60] By exercising restraint when his gaze strays to his own moment in time and beyond, Virgil insists that a historical epic differs significantly from a contemporary or prophetic one; writing an *Aeneid*, rather than a more Caesarian or Augustan epic, marks a contrast between the vividness of creative hindsight and the obscurity of the poem's forays into a vatic mode.

To elaborate that point, I turn now to the shield. Jupiter's prophecy consists of speech. The shield is prophetic and a material, plastic object.[61] In both respects it is divine, the work of Vulcan:

> illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos
> haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aeui
> fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae
> stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella.
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 8.626-29)

> There the fire-god, not unaware of the prophets and time to come, had made Italian history and the triumphs of the Romans, and all the stock of the race to come from Ascanius and the wars fought in order.

However Vulcan acquired his knowledge, Virgil insists that the divine craftsman possesses an awareness to match Jupiter's, which includes *all* the race to descend from Ascanius with no temporal limit.[62] Here it must be emphasized that the shield (and Jupiter's prophecy) is, in intradiegetic terms, *not* the work of Virgil or the poet, or narrator, of the *Aeneid*. A narrator can, of course, possess

with such great force?'). The poet might seem to participate in Jupiter's knowledge of 'eternal peace', though his question is a rhetorical one, perhaps even sincerely 'desperate', according to Johnson (1976), 14f.—but hardly anything so declarative as Jupiter's prophecy. Note, though, that not all gods in the *Aeneid* are necessarily omniscient: Conington (1963), *ad Aen.* 8.627. Moreover, O'Hara's important reading shows that Jupiter's prophecy is 'deceptively optimistic', as it is tailored to console an anxious Venus: O'Hara (1990), 128-63. Yet, however deceptively, selectively or vaguely Jupiter may speak, we may still regard the god as in possession of the truth. Of course, it is patently impossible that Virgil could be as certain as Jupiter in regards to prophecies that look far into his own future, as O'Hara (1990), 30, knows. Therefore we may contrast Jupiter's confidence, even near-omniscience, with the Virgilian misgivings that a reading like O'Hara's reveals.

60. DuBois (1982), 28f., 49-51; Feeney (1991), 34f.; Zetzel (1997), 194-96.

61. As West (1990), 295-98, argued (in a piece first published in 1975), against a traditional consensus that regarded the shield to be abstractly poetic, not even an *imaginary* object.

62. The pageant of heroes described by Anchises in Elysium (*Aen.* 6.752-892) is the poem's other great prophecy of the future (that is, Roman history). Though not a god, Anchises is able to survey *all* of his descendants (*omnem suorum numerum*, 681f.) and he alludes in a somewhat vague way to an extended *pax Augustana* (791-805). The passage certainly may be discussed under the rubric of the ekphrastic: see Johnson (1976), 107-11; Leach (1999); Farrell (2012), 290-94; Dinter (2013), 129f.

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knowledge that his speakers do not, but the converse can also be true. It is fair to take Vulcan as a possible focalizer for viewing the shield, one better informed than Aeneas. Virgil, too, knows more than his hero, but less than the god.[63] Therefore Vulcan's perspective differs from the perspectives of the author or his readers.[64] Then, as we try to look at the shield from the point of view of its maker, we realize that there is more, possibly far more, to see than the poet describes.[65] Vulcan is capable of depicting all Aeneas' descendants (that is, the Romans) interminably (*sine fine*) into the future.[66] That the image is contained within the spatial confines of a shield's surface poses a difficulty, but more for critics and readers than for its divine maker.[67] Oliver Taplin's comment on Achilles' shield is apropos: 'nothing really like this shield has ever been found nor ever will be'.[68] Virgil departs from the Homeric model in terms of historicity: the 'magic' of Aeneas' shield consists in its construction and also in its depiction of the future, not only Aeneas' future but that of Virgil and his Roman readers.[69] In other words, Virgil plays with space *and* time. As Philip Hardie has shown, the shield represents Roman history in terms of a universal cosmology.[70] While Hardie's emphasis falls on the spatial dimension of that cosmos and Rome's universality within it, it may be added that the shield is no less universal, or 'unbounded', in a temporal sense.[71]

63. Cf. Putnam (1998), 187f., Putnam (2001), 181; Lovatt (2013), 169. Lessing's famous criticisms are apropos here, even though he attributes Virgil's restraint to Vulcan as though it were a matter of mimetic decorum: 'Prophecies, which it would certainly have been unbecoming for the god to have uttered in our presence,…as such require a darker language' (Lessing [1853], 126f.); for discussion see Johnson (1976), 28f.

64. Cf. Harrison (2001), 89, who seems to conflate these perspectives by casually moving from Vulcan's prophetic knowledge to '"omniscient" viewpoint…of…the Roman reader'; see also Gransden (1976), 162, and Casali (2006).

65. Servius ad *Aen*. 8.625: *cum enim in clipeo omnem Romanam historiam uelit esse descriptam … carptim tamen pauca commemorat* ('though he means that all of Roman history is described on the shield, he relates just a few things selectively'). Cf. Farrell (2012), 307, who, looking at the shield from Aeneas' point of view, asserts that by contrast 'both the narrator and the reader are fully informed'.

66. As W.H. Auden caustically puts it in the poem 'Secondary Epic': 'What cause could [Vulcan] show why he didn't foresee / the future beyond 31 B.C. …?'

67. As McKay (1998), 202, says, the 'specific allocation of events and individuals has always been contentious', and no 'standard view' of the shield really exists.

68. Taplin (1980), 3. Cf. Laird's (1993) discussion of 'disobedient ekphrasis'; on Achilles' shield he remarks, 'the notion that it is a magic shield might help us imagine it' (20). For a contrasting view, see de Jong (2011), who emphasizes the narrator's verbal art over the shield itself (Hephaestus' art).

69. On the shield's materiality see Heffernan (1993), 23, with Putnam (1998), 152: 'Virgil seems to allow us to share in the impossible—to see for ourselves a snow-white marble temple on…a static artifact, capable of only a limited number of aesthetic variations.'

70. Hardie (1986), 336-69.

71. Hardie (1986), 368f., draws a parallel, in terms of symbolism, between the shield and the sphere atop the horologium of Augustus in the Campus Martius, a 'vast calendar' asserting 'the *princeps'* direction of time itself'; in both cases circularity (the *orbis*) 'is an emblem of universal empire'; see also Feeney (2007), 197. Yet Hardie (1986), 349, tends to see the shield's imagery as determined: 'The first scene on the shield, that of Romulus and Remus with the she-wolf, and the last scene, that of the universal triumph of Augustus…form the extreme limits of the Roman cosmogony'; cf. Hardie (1992), 69-71.

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The resulting narrative image forces linear chronology into a circular venue, which complicates its teleology.[72] Actium and Augustus' triumph occupy the center of the shield (*in medio*, 675) but conclude the ekphrasis.[73] The other events depicted may be understood to surround the central image in an orbital, so to speak, arrangement.[74] Virgil's account of those peripheral images ends with Catiline suffering in Tartarus and Cato governing the blessed: *hinc procul addit / Tartareas etiam sedes* ('far from here he [*sc.* Vulcan] added the places of Tartarus, too', 666f.).[75] Yet, given the shield's divine provenance, the sequence need not stop there. Vulcan remains free to add to his curvilinear narrative; Cato occupies a terminal position only vis-à-vis the Virgilian description, not as a necessary consequence of Vulcan's awareness or the shield's construction. Its center, which is occupied by Actium and Augustus, is a privileged location within a circular image;[76] however, that does not necessarily make it an end (or *telos*). Instead, it can be a midpoint chronologically as it is spatially. The temporal scope of the *Aeneid* (if not its plot) adumbrates a post-Augustan future, as Jupiter's prophecy reveals, so there is no reason that Vulcan need stop, chronologically speaking, his image-making with Actium.

In contrast to his gods, Virgil adopts a position of limited awareness, somewhere between Vulcan and Aeneas. For the poet, post-Augustan imagery would be as unintelligible as the whole is for his hero (730), which makes *clipei non enarrabile textum* ('the not-fully-narratable construction of the shield', 625) accurate, not to say honest: for Virgil the shield is literally indescribable.[77] Thus 'not fully narratable' is, if inelegant, the most correct translation on account of the prefix:[78] compare *enarro*, 'to relate or describe fully' (*OLD s.v.* 1). *Textum* is first and foremost the 'construction' of the shield but also denotes something woven ('fabric') and thence evokes writing or text.[79] It is not only the shield's wondrous construction that defies verbalization, though. Since its sequential imagery (*in ordine bella*, 629)[80] need have no temporal endpoint, it

72. 'Virgil's is a teleology without an end': Zetzel (1997), 200. Cf. Heffernan (1993), 32, and Putnam (1998), 121f. and 154-58, on circularity, repetition, and teleology in the shield's imagery.

73. Servius (*ad Aen.* 8.675) wondered of *in medio: utrum clipeo an mari?* ('whether of the shield or the sea?'). I follow (*inter al.*) Thomas (1999), 314f., in placing the Actium scene in the center of the shield.

74. Cf. Gransden (1976), *ad* 671-74; West (1990), 297f.; McKay (1998), 202.

75. On *hinc procul* Putnam (1998), 134, notes, 'this temporal jump [the ca. 300 years between this scene and the preceding one] is complemented by the distance the eye must travel on the shield itself'; on the chronology, cf. Feeney (2007), 102-04.

76. See Thomas (1999), 310-20, on 'ekphrastic centerpieces'.

77. Cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 144: *ou ti phateios* ('not at all expressible', on which see Faber (2000). See Fowler (1990) on problems of focalization in the *Aeneid*; my point is that *non enarrabile* need not be an instance of 'deviant focalization' (Fowler's term) since it holds true for Virgil as narrator and focalizer.

78. So translated by Zetzel (1997), 200f.

79. Bartsch (1998), 326-29. Weaving (see *OLD texo*) as a metaphor for poetic composition is well established: see Lyne (1978), *ad Ciris* 9.

80. Which phrase McKay (1998), 202, glosses as 'wars fought and victories won in chronological order'. Cf. Gurval (1995), 229, who sees an 'uneven' but still chronological progression; see also Hardie (1986), 347.

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would be impossible to verbalize the entire narrative within the text of the *Aeneid*; Virgil is obliged to end his description in order to resume his story and bring it to a conclusion. That reflects more general problems of ekphrasis: how it delays narrative, the question of focalization (who sees?), and the incommensurability of word and image.[81] Yet the shield is emblematic of the *Aeneid*'s characteristic concern with historical point of view, that is, its 'construction of an ideology for the present day through the narration of the legendary past'; in spite of that impulse toward 'continuity', though, the differences between narrating the past, present, and future remain palpable.[82]

Given the discrepancy between the limited awareness of Virgil *qua* narrator and Vulcan's knowledge, could we imagine that post-Augustan events are depicted on the shield? I believe that possibility exists by virtue of Virgil's technique, and I offer here a comparative illustration. In Jorge Luis Borges' 'The Aleph', a narrator tells of his encounter with a point 'in space that contains all other points', or 'the *multum in parvo*':

> I arrive now at the ineffable core of my story. And here begins my despair as a writer…. [How] can I translate into words the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass?… Really, what I want to do is impossible…. In that single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful…. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I write down will be successive, because language is successive.[83]

What follows in Borges' story is a list, or an ekphrasis, that relates, by necessity, only a selection of what is visible within the Aleph's 'gigantic instant'. So, too, the shield exhibits what Denis Feeney calls 'chronological flattening' as it composes a 'battery of events' locatable on the Roman calendar and in Roman history.[84] Borges' narrator makes explicit what the poet of the *Aeneid* leaves unsaid. At the 'core' of both stories is an 'ineffable' (*non enarrabile*) object on which description necessarily imposes a limiting, alien structure due to the linear or 'successive' nature of language.[85] Virgil is certainly more subtle, nor does he profess the 'despair' of Borges' narrator. Virgil's treatment of proleptic ekphrasis is a matter of ethical and aesthetic choice. The shield depicts more than readers can 'see' with confidence, for Virgil chose, pointedly, to prophesy

81. See n.15 above.
82. Hardie (1993), 1-3.
83. Trans. Di Giovanni (1970), 23-25.
84. Feeney (2007), 161-66; as Feeney notes, throughout *Aeneid* 8 Virgil, via proleptic description of the future site of Rome, layers the past and present with 'vertiginous' effect, as if in anticipation of their final collapse in the shield.
85. Cf. Lessing (1853): Homer, by 'painting' Achilles' shield in the process of its creation, transforms 'that which, in his subject, is coexistent into what is consecutive' (126). See also Fowler (1991), 28-30, on description and the 'linearization problem'.

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Rome's future with restraint even while boldly reimagining the past in Augustan terms. That contrast does not imply anything so strong as despair;[86] nonetheless, it does distance the poet from the confidence exhibited by Jupiter and other prophetic figures, though without diminishing the poem's power to invest quasi-historical events with the authority of myth and etiology.[87]

Indeed, because Virgil chose to adopt a temporally restricted point of view, it is in the power of his later readers to see more: the further we move past Actium the more may be imagined onto the shield over and above what is explicitly described in *Aeneid* 8. Thus, on an aesthetic level, the shield challenges our imaginative capacity. What, and how much, any given reader chooses to imagine will vary, depending, perhaps, on whether we allow that Jupiter is not wholly wrong in predicting a Roman *imperium sine fine*: James O'Hara, for one, defends Jupiter's prediction 'as obviously true' in terms of the influence of Roman 'institutions and cultural heritage', though to others it might ring false.[88] Thus the shield may perforce reveal, in cultural, political, or ideological terms, something about a reader's point of view.[89] As long as the god's prophecy remains valid, Virgil's poem retains the temporality that is reified in the shield, a temporality that extends into the future without limit but in a way that becomes less and less perspicuous. The shield, because it is a material artifact, is endowed with a structure, both physical and temporal, that Borges' Aleph lacks. That structure does not impose a temporal endpoint on its narrative imagery, but rather lends it a kind of movable fulcrum, that is, a point in time—any reader's present—beyond which seeing becomes more (or differently) difficult. Feeney's study of Roman time provides ample warning against imposing any single conception of time on the ancients; even within in the *Aeneid* time is conceived as both cyclical and linear.[90] Against the suggestion of unchanging eternity in Jupiter's ringing *sine fine* we must weigh Aeneas' unwitting repetition of the Trojan War (6.86-94) and the return, according to Anchises, of the Saturnian golden age under Augustus (6.792-94; cf. *Ecl.* 4.6, 30-36). In describing the Capitoline as *aurea nunc, olim siluestribus horrida dumis*, 'golden now, at one

86. Though it does project less of the 'self-esteem' that, according to de Jong (2011), 9f., Homer evinces by making himself a kind of equal partner to Hephaestus in the creation of the shield of Achilles.

87. See Feeney (1991), 186: 'The fiction of the *Aeneid* [is] asserted with so much power that it itself [becomes] a tradition.'

88. O'Hara (1990), 3. Augustine (*Serm.* 105.7.10) derides Jupiter and Virgil as liars; the passage is cited by O'Hara (*id.*), 126f., who rejects Augustine's judgment as 'crude and inadequate'. Mitchell-Boyask (1996), 305, adds 'Augustine might have avoided such claims had he been a better literary formalist'.

89. Fowler (1991), 35, is instructive: 'If the issues raised by formal analysis are pursued, we find we cannot escape the movement towards politics. The relationship between the aesthetic and the political is not a simple one: the analogies and contrasts drawn are precisely themselves figured…they can of course be interpreted in different ways. But the relationship is no more to be denied than ekphraseis are to be separated from their contexts—or reduced to them.'

90. Feeney (2007), 3f., 131-37, 167-70; cf. Rossi (2004), 36f.

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time bristling with thickets' (8.348), Virgil asks 'whether the destructive cycle of time can be brought to an end, whether Rome's history has a direction or a goal'.[91] Thus the *Aeneid* demands that we imagine Rome's future but not according to a single, definitive conception of time.[92]

In sum, I have endeavored to illustrate a recurring mode of ekphrasis in Virgil, which may be termed 'incomplete ekphrasis', effected by way of conspicuous reticence in concert with prolepsis. These ekphraseis provoke the visual imagination with special intensity, and responses to them have the capacity to intervene in our understanding of Virgil's technique and his poetry's polyvalence, which is unbound by time or space, that is, the reader's 'where' and 'when'. To conclude, I will show how other notable ekphrastic moments in the *Aeneid*, complete or incomplete in their own ways, play complementary roles in Virgil's handling of time and narrative.

The temple of Juno at Carthage and its scenes of the Trojan War (1.441-94)[93] represent, as does the shield, the history of a people; however, this is a story that has come to a definitive conclusion. The fall of Troy lies in the past for Aeneas, Virgil, and readers of the poem, all of whom may recognize the images (whether from personal experience or from poetry). In the *Aeneid* such historical ekphraseis, and the recognition they engender, threaten despair. Aeneas encounters another reification of the Trojan past among the refugees led by Helenus and Andromache, who have rebuilt their fallen city in the form of a counterfeit Troy, a paltry image of the original:

> procedo et paruam Troiam simulataque magnis
> Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine riuum
> agnosco, Scaeaeque amplector limina portae.
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 3.349-51)

> As I stepped forward I recognized a little Troy and a Pergamum modeled on the great one and a dry river named after the Xanthus, and I embraced another Scaean Gate.

There is not much by way of description here, but this is an instance of the ekphrastic, as there is something to be seen.[94] Aeneas, the narrator of Book 3, certainly saw Helenus' city, but for him there is no need to describe what is simply a copy of what he already knew so well (even if we, and Dido, too, might have found it interesting). These two ekphrastic objects, the Carthaginian

91. Zetzel (1994), 20f.
92. See Johnson (1976), 21.
93. A much discussed passage: see (*inter al.*) Johnson (1976), 99-105; Segal (1981); Clay (1988); Fowler (1991); Lowenstam (1993); Putnam (1998), 23-54; Beck 2007; Farrell (2012), 294-304.
94. Smith (2005), 71-77, examines the role of sight and the visible (or the ekphrastic) in this episode.

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temple and 'Little Troy,' mirror the limited destinies of the peoples who created them; *fortuna peracta* / *iam sua* ('your fortune is now complete', 3.493f.), says Aeneas as he leaves Helenus to sail for Italy.[95] From Virgil's perspective, Carthage's fortune is equally complete; though the temple there (like the city itself) is still under construction from Aeneas' point of view, the poem's temporal scheme does not impede the full description of either ekphrastic object. But since both represent historical dead-ends, there is little to be gained by lingering: doing so can only mire the hero in tears (*constitit lacrimans*, 1.459).[96]

Finally, the temple in Italy built and dedicated to Apollo by Daedalus (6.14-41).[97] Its decoration looks back on the craftsman's own past: the labyrinth, the Minotaur, and his escape from Crete. Yet the image is explicitly incomplete. Icarus would be included, but the father simply could not bear to take the narrative beyond his son's fatal fall:

> tu quoque magnam
> partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare, haberes.
> bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro;
> bis patriae cecidere manus.
>
> (Virg. *Aen*. 6.30-33)

> You, too, would have had a large part in this great work, Icarus, had grief allowed. Twice he [*sc.* Daedalus] had tried to fashion your fall in gold; twice a father's hands fell.

This ekphrasis looks to a point, both an event in time and a place within the image, made conspicuous by Icarus' absence. This is no fulcrum, though, but rather an obstacle or snare: as it brings Daedalus' work to a premature end, so, too, it brings Aeneas to a halt. The incomplete image, like the maze (*inextricabilis error*, 6.27) it depicts, forces Aeneas and his people into a frustrated, centripetal mode of looking, as they try to see the climax that is not materially represented there: *quin protinus omnia* / *perlegerent oculis* ('but they would have gone reading through it all with their eyes', 6.33f.).

That delay reflects how readers may experience ekphrasis as an interruption of, or even a distraction from, the host narrative. A proleptic ekphrasis like the description of the shield poses, as my argument suggests, the possibility of an

95. See Bettini (1997) for a reading of the episode that contrasts the attachment of Helenus and Andromache to an illusion with Aeneas' rejection of nostalgia and Trojan identity.

96. See Kirichenko (2013), 66-75, on how, because it activates memory and emotion (Aeneas' and ours), the temple in Carthage, though seemingly a 'triumphal monument', becomes a locus of 'mourning' without 'closure'; thus what image the reader can glean diverges from a notional linear, chronological order (*Iliacas ex ordine pugnas, Aen.* 1.456) and it is hard to know 'what the arrangement as a whole would look like *in situ*'.

97. For further discussion see (*inter al.*) Pöschl (1962), 149f.; Fitzgerald (1984); Casali (1995-96); Bartsch (1998); Erdman (1998); Putnam (1998), 75-96; Staley (2001-02); Syed (2005), 79-86.

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indefinite interruption, since the narrative imagery may stretch on into the future without end and so make us beholden to a sequence that must outlast our very lives, a fate like that of the sailors unfortunate enough to hear Homer's Sirens, whose song can relate 'all that happens on the earth' (*Od*. 12.184-91). Yet comparing these other ekphrastic moments in Virgil's poem reveals equal or greater danger in a narrative that, like the Cretan labyrinth, is non-linear in the extreme: reflection on the familiar past appears as emotionally fraught in a way that contemplation of the 'unbounded', non-cyclical, statically peaceful sort of future prophesied by Jupiter is not. The ekphrasis in *Aeneid* 6 is positioned early, as though it were the book's introduction. The Sybil's rebuke shakes Aeneas and the reader from the fascination of the image so that the hero's momentous *katabasis* may commence. By contrast, the shield of Aeneas, like Gallus' trees, concludes a book:

> miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet
> attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 8.730f.)

> He marvels and, ignorant of the content, takes pleasure in the image as he lifts upon his shoulder the fame and fate of his descendants.

Here Aeneas, though again fascinated, needs no spur to continue his mission—or, if he does, Virgil uses the end of Book 8 (and Book 9, in which Aeneas does not appear) to conceal it from us.[98] But perhaps it is because Aeneas simply does not know enough to recognize all that he sees. In as much as the shield promises him victory, it may be cause for 'elation'.[99] But the hero knows enough to know that he does not understand fully, and so, splendid as the shield is, he finds it easy enough to move on with a vague sense of glories to come.[100]

If it is not so easy for us somewhat better informed readers of Virgil, we may nonetheless appreciate, in Addison's words, the 'pleasing astonishment at such unbounded views'. If that does not satisfy all our desires, it may yet permit the story to continue and add a particular sort of pleasure to our reading as well.

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98. Note, too, that Virgil gives us Aeneas' more enthused response (*tanto laetus honore*, 'happy in such great honor') to his new arms before the ekphrasis (8.617-20); by contrast, Homer describes Achilles' very spirited, and satisfied, reaction (*Il*. 19.15-20) after describing the shield and thus 'aids us in understanding the response of Achilles' in a way that Virgil declines to reproduce; see Johnson (1976), 111-14; cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 8.625.

99. Farrell (2012), 307.

100. Cf. Lyne (1987), 208f., and Syed (2005), 70. See also Feeney (1991), 181, on the degrees of knowledge available to human characters in the poem, from Dido's 'ignorance of fate' (*fati nescia*, 1.299) to the better, though still incomplete, information made available to Aeneas.

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