

The Homeric description of the new shield made by Hephaestus for Achilles (*Il.* 18.478–608) after his decision to return to the battlefield is one of the most influential passages of the *Iliad*, but also one of the most criticized. The locus classicus of the negative attitude towards the Shield is found in the comparison between Virgil and Homer in the fifth book of the great Renaissance literary theorist Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetice* (1561: 232). Here the "plebeian" Homeric description is highlighted as one of the strongest arguments for the evident superiority of the Roman poet as Scaliger compares it to the "divine words" of the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.626–728). What seems to have bothered Scaliger most is the impossibility of imagining what some of the scenes described by Homer actually would have looked like on the static surface of the shield, since the Homeric account is full of effects of movement and sound.

This critique was adopted as one of the main arguments of the "Moderns" against Homer in the famous "Querelle des anciens et des modernes" or "Battle of the Books" that raged in France and England at the turn of the eighteenth century, but later famously refuted by Lessing in the nineteenth chapter of his seminal work *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* (1766). Instead, he praised Homer of reinterpreting the static artistic composition into a narrative, thus making fitting use of the particular advantages of his own art form. As the debate carried on into the present day a wide range of different approaches have evolved, which now constitutes a rich foundation for any discussion of the Homeric passage as well as a fascinating history of ideas in itself. Yet, despite the paramount importance given to the effects of movement and sound in the Shield throughout the modern era, very little attention has been paid to how this aspect of the description was conceived by ancient and Byzantine Homeric scholars.

In this paper I therefore explore discussions on the effects of movement and sound in the Shield found in pre-modern sources, taking as my starting point a rather tantalizing entry in the exegetical scholia to the *Iliad* (schol. T *Il.* 18.483–606), where it is reported that the school of Dionysius Thrax claims that the figures on the shield move by themselves just like the tripods made by Hephaestus (*Il.* 18.373–379), but that the school of Aristonicus argues against this point of view. This conception of the shield as self moving or even ensouled appears elsewhere in the sources, and so I will examine the concepts of literary criticism and rhetorical theory as well as the views on magic and the illusory nature of art that guided ancient and Byzantine interpreters of this passage.