# The Text as Labyrinth

Françoise Letoublon

**The Text as Labyrinth**

Françoise Létoublon

> Yet [Ts'ui Pen] abandoned all to make a book and a labyrinth. He gave up all the pleasures of oppression, justice, of a well-stocked bed, of banquets, and even of erudition, and shut himself up in the Pavilion of the Limpid Sun for thirteen years. At his death, his heirs found only a mess of manuscripts. […] As for that other enterprise of Ts'ui Pen … his Labyrinth … "Here is the Labyrinth," Albert said, pointing to a tall, laquered writing cabinet. – "An ivory labyrinth?" I exclaimed. "A tiny labyrinth indeed …! –" "A symbolic labyrinth," he corrected me. "An invisible labyrinth of time. […] At one time, Ts'ui Pen must have said; 'I am going into seclusion to write a book,' and at another, 'I am retiring to construct a maze.' Everyone assumed these were separate activities. No one realized that the book and the labyrinth were one and the same.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges, *The Garden of the Forking Paths*

The narratological theory flow inaugurated in France by Gérard Genette found with Irene de Jong a brilliant successor, as is well known since her first works and as her *Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* has confirmed. Leaning on her articles on *metalepsis*, we will return to the study of some ancient and modern features through which self?-reflexivity appears in the texts and artworks. In this essay, I intend to show that beside the mirror and its reflections, the labyrinth is another adequate symbol for reflexivity, still more convenient for the expression of vertigo so well expressed by Jorge Luis Borges, in his critical essays as well as in his literary œuvre.[1] The mirror and the labyrinth are sometimes combined in modern visual arts or literature, and we might even find some examples of this in antiquity, in the Greek novel and perhaps even in Achilles' shield, as I shall argue (?).

The frequency of ekphrases in our ancient? examples shows in any case that reflexivity often implies taking another kind of art as a good way of looking at oneself, for instance by using painting or sculpture as an image of literature, as in the Shield in the *Iliad*. This also happens in modern art, at least in the visual ones: theater is often included into movies-- as well as movies into movies or theater into theater, as is remarked about

[1] See particularly *The Garden of Forking Paths* with the passage quoted here as epigraph, and in the essays the famous and often cited passage of *Partial Magic in Quixote.*

Shakespeare's plays in Gide's famous passage on the literary technique of mise en abyme, which will be discussed below.[2] Mirrors included into paintings are the best symbol of this reflexive technique.[3]

## *Metalepsis and* mise en abyme *as Reflexive Processes*

De Jong was for her part first drawn to the narratological concept of metalepsis in the history of storytelling (2009, 2014). Thereafter (2011), she came back to analyze the description of Achilles' shield as metalepsis, bringing it closer to the notion of *mise en abyme*, a term itself borrowed from André Gide's *Journal* and analyzed by Lucien Dällenbach with reservations on terminology that I share.[4]

De Jong first analyzes 'the ekphrasis of the shield as metalepsis' (2011: 7–9), then 'the ekphrasis of the shield as mise en abyme' (9–10), and develops a conclusion (11) which accurately shows the common point between both of the poetic devices:

> Looking at this passage in terms of metalepsis and mise en abyme helps us to see the typically Homeric ways of implicit self-advertisement and *poetological reflection*: via cooperation with a god (metalepsis) and via the presentation of a work of art within his own poem (mise en abyme). The quality of his narrative art that he wishes to bring to the fore is its enargeia/energeia: its ability to bring people and events from the past alive and put them 'before the eyes' of the narratees. After Homer poets will become openly *self-conscious* and explicitly start *to reflect on their own poetic art*.[5]

Let us return to the very inventor of the *mise en abyme*, Gide in his *Journal* in 1893:

---

[2]See G. Woods' "*Hamlet*: the play within the play".

[3] Stoichita 1999: 249–250.

[4] Dällenbach [1977] 1989: the English translation of the book preferred the notion of mirror as I did in my article (Létoublon 1983), and as De Jong still did in the title of her 1985 "*Iliad* 1.366–392: A Mirror Story" (*Arethusa* 18, 1–22).

[5] De Jong 2011: 11 (my emphasis).

> J'aime assez qu'en une œuvre d'art on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette œuvre … par comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à mettre le second en abyme.

The phrase "mise en abyme", is linked to heraldry as the French word *blason* ("coat of arms") proves . In my opinion, the language of heraldry appears to be a trap, through a confusion of *abyme* with *abîme* and *abyssal* as noted above: when a reduced version of the image is reproduced in a coat of arms, the reproduction is very flat, whereas Gide himself gives – with reservations, to be honest – examples taken from Flemish painters and the *Meninas* by Velasquez. In those cases, the presence of a mirror, a witch mirror in Van Eyck, Memmling or Metsys, or a flat one more generally, gives a reduced image of the space shown in the painting. But it is in no case the same image in a smaller form, as is the case in the mise en abyme.[6]

The mirror on the contrary, beside its advantage through the link it provides between several kinds of arts, also offers an important symbolic value, starting from Antiquity with the myths of Perseus using his shield as a mirror in order not to cross the Gorgon's gaze when killing her,[7] and of Narcissus trying to seduce the image of himself he sees in the reflecting water.[8] For me, it also has the double advantage of recalling "the mirror and the loop" of my former study and preparing the introduction in this paper of another symbol, that of the labyrinth. Therefore, I propose to adopt the language of mirrors instead of "mise en abyme": the words *specular*, *specularity*, *reflection*, *reflexive*, *reflexiveness* should be enough for our needs.

## *The Aesthetic Emotion and its Problematization from Archaic Greece*

[6] Stoichita 1999 about a painting by L. de Jongh, ill. 30, p. 251, which he calls a 'specular labyrinth'.

[7] Borel 2002: 95–105 about the mirror in the myth of Perseus.

[8] Borel 2002: 37–43 about Narcissus.

The difficulty of defining 'aesthetic' and 'aesthetic emotion' is generally recognized, even in modern periods,[9] and all the more so in antiquity, where no word is known to describe it or refer to it.[10] However, in the classical period Socrates and Plato and others devoted much of their research to seek for the nature of τὸ καλόν, which allows us to speak of 'Plato's Aesthetics' if we trust the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.[11]

Long before Plato however, we may quote the eloquent silence of the Phaeacians after Odysseus' narration, which seems to express a strong aesthetic shock before there was a name for it (*Od.*13.1–2):

> ῞Ως ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ,
> κηληθμῷ δ' ἔσχοντο κατὰ μέγαρα σκιόεντα.
> His tale was over now. The Phaeacians all fell silent, hushed,
> His story holding them spellbound down the shadowed halls (transl. Robert Fagles).[12]

Words actually existed in the epics for referring to beauty, more precisely to beautiful objects or persons, but the abstract notion of beauty does not seem to have been thought of. The objects qualified as beautiful are pieces of furniture or means of transport. Apart perhaps from Nestor's cup (δέπας περικαλλές *Il.* 11.632), the adjective καλός is not used for what we call pieces of art in contemporary language. Besides, no word existed for the category 'art' itself, although τέχνη is often translated as such.[13]

In the *Odyssey*, Alcinous seems moved by some aesthetic pleasure when he gives a sensitive appreciation of Odysseus telling tales (*Od.* 11.363–9):

---

[9] Perlovsky 2014: 1.

[10] Halliwell 2012: 16.

[11] See Pappas 2016. On the birth of a terminology for art in Greece, see Sörbom 1966, Pollitt 1974.

[12] See De Jong's commentary *ad loc.*: 'The same reaction as after Odysseus stopped narrating the first time: 11.333–4. For the 'enchanting effect (κηληθμῷ) of storytelling, cf. 8.83–92n.'

[13] Though often translated as 'art', τέχνη rather means 'craft', 'skill' or 'technical knowledge', see Roochnik 1998.

ὦ ’Οδυσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὔ τί σ' ἐΐσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
ἠπεροπῆά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπίκλοπον, οἷά τε πολλοὺς
βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους
ψεύδεά τ' ἀρτύνοντας, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο·
σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφὴ ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,
μῦθον δ' ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,
πάντων ’Αργείων σέο τ' αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά.

Odysseus, we do not think, to look at you, that you are
A braggart and rogue, like many men the black earth
feeds, far-scattered fellows, fabricators of lies, lies that
no one could ever see to test. In your case, there is a shape
to your words, and you show sound sense:
you have spoken a tale knowingly like a poet.[14]

It seems to me that the aesthetic *emotions*[15] generally linked to reflexivity play an important although most often underground and spurned role in ancient literature, be it the serene emotion given by the peaceful beauty with its frequent vocabulary (adj. καλός, abstract neutral noun κάλλος), often associated with the effect called θαῦμα,[16] or the more ambiguous

[14] Passage quoted by Simon Goldhill 1991: 47; cf. de Jong’s commentary, 2001: 286. Both authors aptly insist on the importance of reflexivity in the passage.

[15] In his 2017 study of the Greek *phrike*, Douglas Cairns gives a large analysis of negative emotions in ancient Greek aesthetics (mainly horror), and his remarks include many general insights. He insists on the power of *phantasia* (Cairns 2017: 64).

[16] Chantraine 2008, see Hunzinger 1994 and 2010.

emotion of the *sublime*, once more without a specific term in the Archaic period,[17] but provoking an effect close to Homeric θάμβος.[18]

One of the most striking examples – curiously not taken into account in Semenzato's analysis of this effect – might consist in the sudden apparition of the old king Priam in Achilles' tent/camp in Book 24 of the *Iliad*:

> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἄνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ, ὅς τ' ἐνὶ πάτρῃ
> φῶτα κατακτείνας ἄλλων ἐξίκετο δῆμον
> ἀνδρὸς ἐς ἀφνειοῦ, *θάμβος* δ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντας,
> ὣς ’Αχιλεὺς *θάμβησεν* ἰδὼν Πρίαμον θεοειδέα·
> *θάμβησαν* δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι, ἐς ἀλλήλους δὲ ἴδοντο.
>
> As when dense disaster closes on one who has murdered
> a man of his own land, and he comes to the country of others,
> to a man of substance, and wonder (θάμβος) seizes on those who behold him,
> so Achilleus wondered (θάμβησεν) as he looked on Priam, a godlike
> man, and the rest of them wondered (θάμβησαν) also, and looked on each other.

This unexpected apparition of Priam is compared to that of a "despised migrant" a suppliant blood on his hands arriving in a foreign country in order to be purified.[19] In reality, Achilles is

[17] The word comes from Ps.-Longinus *Peri Hypsous* through Latin influence. On the notion of the sublime, see Porter 2016, who puts Longinus' treatise in its intellectual context and clearly shows that the word *hypsos* was used before Longinus about 'sublimity of language' (p. 27). The text of the treatise well implies that the notion was already existing before getting nominated, since he obviously considers Homer as his master. Longinus does not try to define the sublime, but Porter thinks a modern definition ('wherever "a positive, material object [is] elevated to the status of [an] impossible Thing"', p. 5) can be extended to antiquity. See also Doran 2015 for a general view on the Sublime until the modern period.

[18] Chantraine 2008; Aubriot 1989; Semenzato 2005 ou 2015; Brouillet 2017.

[19] See on this simile Alden 2012, Heiden 1998, Létoublon 2018.

the murderer, and particularly the killer of many of Priam's sons.[20] Since the simile reverses the roles, it provokes a kind of reciprocity such that I referred to the passage with the phrase "seeing each other in a mirror". I moreover referred to θάμβος as 'mix of admiration and stupor'. In the article that she devotes to this concept Manon Brouillet concludes that it is linked to a 'divine presence', and in this case to the fact that Hermes guided Priam to Achilles' tent.[21] Moreover, this emotional reaction does not generally concern art, but rather nature or natural phenomena, such as the sublime landscapes shown in Caspar David Friedrich' pictorial œuvres.[22] The face to face of Priam and Achilles is a spectacle, described as such in what can be considered an ekphrasis, at the heart of which is this image of reciprocal stupor.[23]

## *Entering the Labyrinth*

If the mirror with its various shapes and materials seems an adequate symbol for reflexivity, as it has been in history since Plato,[24] the labyrinth might be that for the sublime and for vertigo or dizziness[25] such as the one defined by Jorge Luis Borges in his critical essays and

[20] On the echoes in *Iliad* 22 and 24 between Hector's last words, Priam's and his wife's discourse and Achilles himself, see Létoublon and Montanari 2004.

[21] It is worth to remark that ekphrasis in antiquity is not at all restricted to art, it often concerns persons: see Webb 2009.

[22] The passage of the Alps is generally considered the main occasion of feeling it by British travelers in the 19th century: John Dennis first in 1693 described his impression as delight 'mingled with horrors, and sometimes almost with despair'. For Caspar David Friedrich's painting, see for instance *Wanderer above the Sea of Frog* of 1817 (Kunsthalle Hamburg), *Cross in the Mountains* of 1808 (Galerie Neue Meister, Dresden), or *Rocky Landscape in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains* (1822–1823, Vienna Belvedere).

[23] Létoublon 2018.

[24] Plato seems to have thought that the first mirror in nature is the eye of another person, hence a model for knowing his soul, see *Alc.* 132e–133a. See Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant 1997: 121–2.

[25] In "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*", Borges describes several occasions in world literature when a character reads about himself or sees himself in a play, including episodes from

implemented in several of his own works.[26] Borges particularly disagrees with the heraldic definition of 'mise en abyme', the success of which is probably due to a lexical confusion in French with *abîmes* and *abysses* (notion of unfathomable depth incompatible with the very flat nobiliary coats of arms).

The labyrinth takes its origin from the myths surrounding Minos, the Minotaur and Theseus:

> a complex building constructed by Daedalus for king Minos of Crete and commonly identified with the Minoan palace of Cnossus. […] The labyrinth's confusing system of passages, from which no one could escape (Plut. *Thes.*15), concealed the Minotaur which fed on human victims until destroyed by Theseus (Paus. 1.27.10; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.1.4, *Epit.* 1.7–11). The hero imitated its twists and turns in a ritual dance on Delos (Plut. *Thes.* 21).[27]

The labyrinth of Cnossus is never specifically referred to as Daedalus' construction needed for shutting away the Minotaur before Callimachus, according to Gantz.[28] Pherecydes of Syros – 'reputed to be the first writer of Greek prose'[29]– told the story in the fifth century, as appears from a scholion on the mention of Minos in the Odyssean *Nekuia*.[30] However,

---

Shakespeare's plays, the epic poem *Mahabharata*, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* and *The One Thousand and One Nights.*

[26] In the miscellany *Fictions*, see particularly *The Garden of Forking {aths* quoted above, and the beginning of *Tlón Uqbar orbis tertius*. Some of Borges' tales do have labyrinthic features, and four of the last narratives from *Fictions* have been published again separately with the title *Labyrinth.*

[27] *OCD*, Hornblower and Spawforth eds., 1996[3] at the entry 'Labyrinth'.

[28] Gantz 1993 refers to Call. *HymnDel.* 311 γναμπτὸν ἔδος σκολιου λαβυρίνθου. The whole story is given in Diodorus of Sicily 4.77, 1–4, but it seems to have been already known in Mycenaean times, see thereafter.

[29] *OCD*, entry 'Pherecydes'.

[30] Pherec. *FrHist* 3F148 = schol. *Od.* 11.322 Dindorf: Θησεὺς ὁ Αἰγέως λαχὼν μετὰ τῶν ἠϊθέων εἰς Κρήτην πλεῖ τῷ Μινωταύρῳ παρατεθησόμενος πρὸς ἀναίρεσιν. ἀφικομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐρωτικῶς πρὸς αὐτὸν διατεθεῖσα ἡ τοῦ Μίνωος θυγάτηρ Ἀριάδνη δίδωσιν ἀγαθίδα

Hephaestus' representation of a place of dance on the Homeric shield of Achilles does seem to allude to it, at least if we trust the explicit mention there of Daedalus, Cnossus, and Ariadne:[31]

> ’Εν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
> τῷ ἴκελον οἷόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
> Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ ’Αριάδνῃ.
> ἔνθα μὲν ἠΐθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι
> ὀρχεῦντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες.
> τῶν δ' αἳ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οἳ δὲ χιτῶνας
> εἵατ' ἐϋννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ·
> καί ῥ' αἳ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνας ἔχον, οἳ δὲ μαχαίρας
> εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέων τελα τελαμώνων.
> οἳ δ' ὁτὲ μὲν θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι
> ῥεῖα μάλ', ὡς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἅρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
> ἑζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἴ κε θέῃσιν·
> ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι.
> πολλὸς δ' ἱμερόεντα χορὸν περιίσταθ' ὅμιλος τερπόμενοι·
>
> And the renowned smith of the strong arms made elaborate on it
> a dancing floor, like that which once in the wide space of Knossos
> Daidalos built for Ariadne of the lovely tresses.[32]
> And there were young men on it and young girls, sought for their beauty

---

μίτου λαβοῦσα παρὰ Δαίδαλον τοῦ τέκτονος, καὶ διδάσκει αὐτὸν, ἐπειδὰν εἰσέλθῃ, τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ἀγαθίδος ἐκδῆσαι περὶ τὸν ζυγὸν ἄνω τῆς θύρας καὶ ἀνελίσσοντα ἰέναι μέχρις ἂν ἀφίκηται εἰς τὸν μυχόν, καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὸν καθεύδοντα μάρψηι < >, κρατήσαντα τῶν τριχῶν τῆς κεφαλῆς τῷ Ποσειδῶνι θῦσαι, καὶ ἀπιέναι ὀπίσω ἀνελίσσοντα τὴν ἀγαθίδα. ὁ δὲ Θησεὺς λαβὼν τὴν Ἀριάδνην εἰς τὴν ναῦν ἐμβάλλεται καὶ τοὺς ἠϊθέους καὶ τὰς παρθένους οὐδέπω φθάσαντας τῷ Μινοταύρῳ παρατεθῆναι. See Matricon-Thomas 2014: 182 for a French translation. Note that the name of the Labyrinth does not occur there.

[31] See the commentary by Edwards 1991: 229.

[32] To be honest, the name *Ariadne* is not sure in the text, Zenodotus read Ἀριήδη, unexplained form (Edwards, *ibid.*).

> with gifts of oxen, dancing, and holding hands at the wrist. These
> wore, the maidens long light robes, but the men wore tunics
> of finespun work and shining softly, touched with olive oil.
> And the girls wore fair garlands on their heads, while the young men
> carried golden knives that hung from sword-belts of silver.
> At whiles on their understanding feet they would run very lightly,
> as when a potter couching makes trial of his wheel, holding
> it close in his hands, to see if it will run smooth. At another
> time they would form rows, and run, rows crossing each other.
> And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great multitude
> happily watching. (*Il.* 18.590–604, transl. Lattimore).

At first sight, this dance does not seem to bring with it the Borgesian vertigo we are looking for, but the reference might contain more depth than it seems, to begin with the recurring mention of turning, particularly in the simile of the potter turning his wheel.[33]
If we follow Philippe Borgeaud, the labyrinth, the Minotaur's jail, served for the initiation of Theseus and the young Athenians, and disappeared after their return:

> There only remained the memory of a route which the crafty Daedalus eagerly impressed on the minds of the initiates in teaching them a dance which imitates the paths they must travel. This dance would be danced first in Crete itself, at the exit of the labyrinth, and then again around the altar of horns at the port of Delos on the way home. It would serve as a mythological model for the dance of the cranes which the young Athenians performed periodically at Delos. In this dance –the only 'real' manifestation of the Cretan labyrinth 'reactualized in history'– we attain a second degree of artificiality. What remained was the image of an image. The ancients had only meager

[33] See this medical description found on internet: "Dizziness is a term used to describe a range of sensations, such as feeling faint, woozy, weak or unsteady. Dizziness that creates the false sense that you or your surroundings are spinning or moving is called vertigo." Please give a more precise reference than 'found on internet' (e.g. use OED/Webster-Merriam). Better yet, cite Borges on vertigo.

> reflections of the labyrinth which they attempted to capture by dance or in fantastic architecture, among other ways.[34]

Moreover, it might be that the materiality of the labyrinth has no actual importance for us, beside the pure idea of the labyrinth as a prison without doors, which hides a secret in its centre and prevents anyone who entered it to exit.[35] Therefore, the *idea* of the labyrinth might appear more important than its material reality and existence. Which leads to the metaphoric value of the labyrinth and the thread,[36] beginning with Socrates, according to Borgeaud:

> Socrates addresses his questioner: 'We find ourselves? as if fallen into a labyrinth. We think we are at the end, but, turning a corner, we find ourselves always at the beginning of our search, always lacking what we sought at the beginning.'[37]

In this description of the dialogical *aporia* as the impression of a fall (ἐμπεσόντες) into a labyrinth, don't we encounter the Borgesian discomfort ? In Borgeaud's first passage referred to above, let us note the expression 'What remained was the image of an image\ , i.e., the dance as an image of the labyrinth, updated every time the ritual dance was performed by the young Athenians, while the actual labyrinth had disappeared.

But the text of the *Iliad* is actually still more complicated, since Hephaestus has made on the shield an image of the dance floor *similar to that* (τῷ ἴκελον, οἷόν ποτ᾽ …) made once in Knossos by Daedalus. Thus, we reach the fourth degree of the image of an image, and we could feel as if trapped in a labyrinth. A scholiast found it strange that the god Hephaestus imitated the human Daedalus[38] Could we interpret this discomfort as a mark of the dizziness caused by the interlocking of i[39] We see here a (description in a poem of a) dance mimicking a travel into a labyrinth and back, an image of a ritual dance forged by a god on a shield and mimicking the image of the structure once made by the mortal craftsman, the passage into the labyrinth. It might be that the scholiast felt a kind of vertigo at such an interlocking of images

---

[34] Borgeaud 1974: 21.

[35] Borgeaud 1974: 23. See also the notion of *regressive progression*, p. 24: 'the spiral returns to itself and one only approaches the center in going away from it.'

[36] On metaphor in art, see the second chapter of Goodman 1976.

[37] Borgeaud 1974: 26, quoting Plat. *Euthyd.* 291b.

[38] Schol. *Il.* 18.590, see Edwards 1991: 229: 'The ancient scholars, however, argued much over whether it was ἀπρεπές to have Hephaistos imitating the work of a mortal (AbT).'

[39] Elsner 2002: 5, contrary to the scholia, thinks it is a 'wonderful double-take'.

that one cannot distinguish what reality the image is really mimicking. All this comes strangely close to Borges' wording. Needless to say that the monster shut in the heart of labyrinth justifies the vertiginous horror, but the tours and twists also contribute to a kind of fascination: a mixed emotion typical of the sublime felt by British travelers. Moreover, if we remark that the turns of the dancers are compared to the wheel of the potter, still another level of included dizziness imagery could be reached.

## *The Labyrinths of* Ekphrasis

In Antiquity, it seems as if including at least one *ekphrasis*[40] of a mythological painting into the novel as a typical feature for an effect of mirroring were a necessity for a novelist.[41] A painting with the myth of Europa is staged at the beginning and triggers the narration in *Leucippe and Clitophon*,[42] or pretends to compete with it as in *Daphnis and Chloe.*[43] In *Leucippe and Clitophon*, other paintings invite several points of view on the plot and dramatize the narration with mythological parallels: Andromeda and Prometheus in book 3, Philomela and Procne in book 5; the most interesting to my opinion.[44] In Alexandria, Leucippe is struck by the sight of a hawk pursuing a swallow and the characters do not know how to interpret the omen, but turning around, Clitophon sees a painting exhibited in a shop (5.3.4):

> Φιλομήλας γὰρ εἶχε φθορὰν καὶ τὴν βίαν Τηρέως καὶ τῆς γλώττης τὴν τομήν. Ἦν δὲ ὁλόκληρον τῇ γραφῇ τὸ διήγημα τοῦ δράματος, ὁ πέπλος, ὁ Τηρεύς, ἡ τράπεζα.

---

[40] On *ekphrasis* see mainly Elsner 2002, Webb 2009, Zeitlin 2013.

[41] The genre of the novel does not exist in antiquity, it is never referred to by theorists nor practicians of literature and it was virtually unknown in modern times until Amyot's translation of the *Aithiopica* in French in 1547. See Hägg 1983: 3; Winkler 1994; Holzberg 1996, 11; Ruiz-Montero 1996: 29; Futre-Pinheiro 2014.

[42] Meriel Jones 0000.

[43] Kestner 1974 sees rather the opening *ekphrasis* as a 'frame' for the novel, but the notion of inclusion of a work into another is well present. See also Lefteratou forthcoming.

[44] Dubel 2004 shows how ambiguous the text appears, and hence how difficult it is to establish the myth, since names of Philomela and Procne differ in Greek and Latin versions?; see also Behmenburg 2010.

> It showed the rape of Philomela, Tereus attacking her, her tongue cut out. The plot of the drama was there in every detail – the robe, Tereus, the banquet.

The image on the robe is then described with more details, and Clitophon sees Philomela on the painting, showing herself on the woven picture. Once more a painting inserted into the narrative contains an image on a robe,[45] and both of the images referring to the myth touch upon the problems encountered in the novel, mainly by Leucippe,[46] Leucippe in fact asks for a comment and explanation on the painting, 5.5. and Clitophon repeats the explanation, brilliantly turning the story of Philomele' tongue cut by Tereus into an allusion to Simonides' aphorism on painting as silent poetry and poetry as speaking painting:[47]

> ἡ γὰρ Φιλομήλας τέχνη σιωπῶσαν εὗρηκε φωνήν. Ὑφαίνει γὰρ πέπλον ἄγγελον καὶ τὸ δράμα πλέκει ταῖς κρόκαις, καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν μιμεῖται ἡ χείρ καὶ Πρόκνης τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὰ τῶν ὤτων μηνύει καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἃ πέπονθε λαλεῖ.
>
> Philomela's skill discovered voiceless speech. She wove, you see, a robe as messenger, and she threaded the drama into her embroidery, hand imitating tongue; she conveyed the ear's message to Prokne's eyes, telling her what she suffered by means of her shuttle (transl. Winkler).

The double inclusion of the image woven on the robe into the ekphrasis of the painting, and its ultimate decipherment appear as features of the labyrinthine reflexivity of the text. The impression of horror comes of course from the representation of the rape and Tereus' violence,[48] but it is mixed with admiration for Philomele's skill.

---

[45] 5.3. Nimis 1998: 114.

[46] Their friend Menelas explains the events seen on the painting which may be interpreted as signs: Ὁρᾷς ὅσων γέμει κακῶν ἡ γραφή· ἔρωτος παρανόμου, μοιχείας ἀναισχύντου, γυναικείων ἀτυχημάτων· "You see then how full of miseries is this drawing –unlawful love, shameless adultery, women's woes'.

[47] This famous maxim is quoted by Plutarchus, *Ath. Glor.* 3.1. It is considered the foundation of the *paragone*, the classical parallel between the arts.

[48] Nimis 1998: 113.

The highest degree of success in this regard is attained, to my mind, by Heliodorus, who among other brilliant ekphraseis,[49] includes in the *Aethiopica* two allusions to a painting which shows Perseus delivering Andromeda who is tied to a rock, from a marine dragon without any description of this painting.[50] The first allusion to the painting in book 4.7.8 lies in a letter written in the hieroglyphic characters of Ethiopia which the young heroine keeps with her among her identity tokens, although she cannot read it. It is deciphered by the Egyptian priest Calasiris who reveals that Chariclea is the daughter of Persinna, queen of Ethiopia, who saw the painting during the conception of her child and was 'impregnated' by this picture so that the girl took the resemblance to Andromeda.[51] The image is not described at all, but one understands that the story of this birth discovered through a patient decipherment played a role in making Chariclea the very image of Andromeda with her white skin.[52] Andromeda, then, is the image of an image, hidden in an encrypted message. The painting comes again to the forefront in book 10 when king Hydaspes intends to sacrifice both Theagenes and Chariclea to the Sun, the supreme god of the Ethiopians. They are on the pyre, and Chariclea tries to draw the recognition from her father, without success until Sisimithres and Persinna ask the painting of Perseus and Andromeda to be brought up to the sacrificial place, and everyone can then ascertain the astonishing resemblance between living Chariclea and painted Andromeda.[53] To give an absolute and undisputable proof of her origin, Chariclea even uncovers her arm and the king can see 'the ebony bracelet soiling her ivory arm' (ἔβενος περίδρομος ἐλέφαντα τὸν βραχίονα μιαίνων), i. e. the black birth mark on her skin.[54] The success of this non-existent (or implied?) ekphrasis may be connected to the fact that many representations of Andromeda

[49] See particularly the ring with sheep trying to get out of the frame, 5.14.4: Debray-Genette 1979, Whitmarsh 2002: 114, who qualifies it after Andrew Laird's phrase a 'disobedient description', "one that flouts the rules of the game".

[50] On this painting as the model for Charicleia in an 'allusive ekphrasis', see Zeitlin 2013 and 2013b: 81, who explains why no description is possible.

[51] Olsen 2012.

[52] Persinna had to abandon her child, fearing the accusation of adultery since herself and her husband were black.

[53] See Whitmarsh 2002: 115–116.

[54] *Aeth.* 10.15.2. This birth mark can be compared with other *semata* in ancient literature, see Létoublon 1991 and 2010. The word μιαίνων seems here to refer to interbreeding as a pollution (*miasma*).

delivered by Perseus were known in antiquity,[55] so that a mere allusion would have been immediately acknowledged by any cultivated person, at least a 'knowing eye(d)' one, as Goldhill calls it.[56]

Ekphrases in the novels appear as textual labyrinths in the sense that the decipherment of their more or less encrypted meaning (be it through a foreign scripture, a mythological painting or both as is the case in the *Aethiopica*) refers to the main text and explains it, at least partially. In the case of *Daphnis and Chloe*, the initial ekphrasis refers to the happy end of the romance and the dedication of an ex voto which seems to be the very painting the novel was trying to compete with. In *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the image of the rape of Europa which evoked Clitophon's narration at the start does not return at the end, and the presence in Sidon of a lonesome Clitophon makes us think that their story knew no happy end.[57] In both cases, the attentive reader is required to think about the image and its relation to the whole.

The fascination for textual labyrinths has not failed in recent times; see for instance: *Dans le labyrinthe* by Robbe-Grillet, where there is actually no labyrinth, but where the title refers metaphorically to the vagrancy of a mysterious soldier (anonymous, wearing the hood and military badges of another, no more identified one) in a snowy town after a severe military defeat. He has an appointment with a man whom he does not know either, with the mission to give him a package he received from another soldier before dying. But he does not know anything about the man he must meet near a lamppost at a crossroad: locations are as indefinite as persons, and the time seems to go around endlessly, except that the soldier dies before the last line, without having delivered his parcel.

It is the writing of the text itself which establishes the labyrinth, and reserves the good surprise of mixing metalepsis with labyrinthic reflexivity. Several times in the narrative, the soldier stays in a room where on the wall a painting is seen accurately described. And on the painting, several of the characters of the novel are found, a woman in housedress with an apron, a child whom the soldier follows several times through the snowy streets etc. The descriptions of the painting liven up more and more in a vein which reminds us of the shield

---

[55] Mariana Starke (1824, 1828) mentions a famous Roman fresco from Pompei, L. and M. Roman an Apulian vase in the Getty Museum, Malibu. Closer to our subject, an ekphrasis on *Andromeda* occurs in *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3, in symmetry with a *Prometheus*, and Goldhill 1994: 213–214 quotes an epigrammatic ekphrasis by Antiphilus.

[56] Goldhill 1994: 223.

[57] Fusillo 1997, Morales 2004: 144, Repath 2005.

of Achilles, and the characters of the painting seem to get out of it, obviously less dramatically so than the protagonist of the movie in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen (please give year of production), to take the example often quoted, by Genette, de Jong and others. Thus, the metalepsis breaks into the labyrinth and contributes to the reader's bewilderment.

Another example could be taken from the hall of mirrors in the movie *The Lady from Shanghai* by Orson Welles (1947). A sailor (Welles himself) is hired by a very beautiful woman (Rita Hayworth) and her rich husband (Everett Sloan) for steering? their luxurious yacht. Alhough at the beginning she seems to be the victim of this husband (a disabled man with a jerking walk) one understands at the end that it might be she who pulls the strings and manipulates everyone. In any case, the three characters meet up at the end of the movie in the "magic mirror maze" fairground, the disabled husband and the fatal woman shooting at one another and breaking the mirrors with their diffracted images; in the last shots, they both lie dead and one sees the sailor going away, shutting off the movie in a loop, while in the mirrors of the gallery, is seen the fragmented image of Mrs Bannister, symbolizing her very ambiguous role.[58]

*Bibliography*

Alden M. 2000. *Homer Beside Himself.: Para-narratives in the Iliad*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Alden M. 2012. "The Despised Migrant (*Il.* 9.648 = 16.59)", in *Homeric Contexts. Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral* Poetry, Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos and Christos Tsagalis eds, Berlin, De Gruyter, TCSV 12, 115-132.

Aubriot D. 1989. "Remarques sur l'usage de θάμβος et des mots apparentés dans l'*Iliade*", *Orpheus* 10, 249-260.

Bachelard G. 2011. *Earth and Reveries of Repose: An Essay on Images of Interiority*, transl. by Mary McAllester Jones, Dallas Institute Publications.

[58] Ishaghpour 2001.

Bartsch S. 1989. *Decoding the ancient Novel. The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Behmenburg L. 2010. "Le mythe comme signe. *Ekphrasis* et le jeu de la préfiguration dans le *Roman de Leucippé et Clirophon* d'Achille Tatius", in *Mythe et fiction* [online], Danièle Auger et Charles Delattre eds. Nanterre, Presses universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 239-255: http://books.openedition.org/pupo/1828

Borgeaud P. 1974. "The Open Entrance to the Close Palace of the King: The Greek Labyrinth in Context", *History of Religions* 14, 1, 1-27.

Borges J. L. 1948. *The Garden of Forking Paths*. *Ellery Queens Mystery Magazine,* repr. In *Fictions.*

Borges J. L. 1962. *Partial Magic in the Quixote.* In *Labyrinths. Selected Stories & Other Wrintings.* New York, New Directions.

Brouillet M. 2017. "*Thambos* et *kharis* : constructions sensorielles et expériences du divin dans les épopées homériques", *Mythos* n. s. 11, 83-93. https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01756646/document

Cairns D. 2017. "Horror, Pity, and the Visual in ancient Greek Aesthetics", in *Emotions in the Classical World. Methods, Approaches, and Directions*. Douglas Cairns and Damien Nelis eds, Stuttgart, Steiner.

Dällenbach L. 1977. *Le Récit spéculaire. Contribution à l'étude de la mise en abyme.* Paris, Seuil.

Debray-Genette R. 1979. "La pierre descriptive", *Poétique* 43, 293-304.

Dubel S. 2006. "L'hirondelle et l'épervier, le rossignol et la huppe (Achille Tatius, *Leucippé et Clitophon*, V, 3-5) : notes sur la difficulté d'établir un mythe", in *Philomèle. Figures du rossignol dans la tradition littéraire et artistique*. Véronique Gély, Jean-Louis Haquette and Anne Tomiche eds, Clermont-Ferrand, Presses de l'Université Blaise Pascal, 37-52.

Edwards M W. *The Iliad : A Commentary*, general editor G. S. Kirk, vol. V: books 17-20. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Elsner J. 2002. "The Genres of Ekphrasis", *Ramus* 31, 1-18.

Frontisi-Ducroux F. and Vernant J. P. 1997. *Dans l'œil du miroir*. Paris, éditions Odile Jacob.

Fusillo M. 1997. "How Novels End: Some patterns of Closure in Ancient Narrative", in *Classical Closure. Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*. Deborah H. Roberts, Francis M. Dunn and Don Fowler eds, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 209-227.

Futre-Pinheiro M. P. 2014. “The Genre of the Novel. A Theoretical Approach”, in *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*, Edmund P. Cueva and Shannon Byrne eds, Malden, Wiley Blackwell, 201-216.

Gantz T. 1993. *Early Greek Myth. A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources.* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Genette G. 2004. *Métalepse.* Paris, Seuil, coll. Poétique.

Goldhill S. 1991. *The Poet’s Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Goldhill S. 1994. “The naive and knowing eye: ecphrasis and the culture of viewing in the Hellenistic world”, in *Art and Text in ancient Greek culture*, Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne eds, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 197-223.

Goodman N. 1976. *Languages of Art*. *An Approach to a Theory of Symbols.* [1968], The Bobbs Merrill Company.

Hägg T. 1983. *The Novel in Antiquity.* Oxford, Blackwell (Swedish original ed. 1980).

Halliwell S. 2012. “*Amousia*: Living without the Muses”, in *Aesthetic Values in Classical Antiquity*. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen eds, Leiden, Brill, Mnemos. Suppl. 350, 15-45.

Hogan P. C. 2011. *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln-London,

Hogan P. C. 2018. *Literature and Emotion.* Abingdon-New York,

Holzberg N. 1996. “The Genre: Novels proper and the Fringe”, in *The Novel in the Ancient World*. Gareth Schmeling ed., Leiden, Brill (Mnemosyne suppl. 159), 11-28.

Hunzinger C. 1994. Le plaisir esthétique dans l’épopée archaïque: les mots de la famille de θαῦμα, *BAGB* 1, mars 1994, 1-30.

Hunzinger C. 2010. Entre séduction et déception: l’ambiguïté de la beauté du merveilleux dans l’épopée grecque archaïque, in *La beauté du merveilleux*, Aurélia Gaillard et Jean-René Valette eds., Bordeaux, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 21-41.

Ishaghpour Y. 2001. *Orson Welles, cinéaste, une caméra visible : les films de la période américaine*, tome II, Paris, éditions de la Différence,

Jones M. 00000?. “The Lover in the Painting. (Meta)fiction from Art in Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*”, https://www.academia.edu/367252/The_Lover_in_the_Painting_Meta_fiction_from_Art_in_Achilles_Tatius_Leucippe_and_Cleitophon

Jong I. J. F. de, ‘*Iliad* 1.366-392: A Mirror Story’, *Arethusa* 18, 1-22.

Jong I. J. F. de, 1985. A Narratological Commentary on the *Odyssey*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Jong I. J. F. de, 2009. 'Metalepsis in Ancient Greek Literature', in *Narratology and Interpretation. The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature*, J. Grethlein and A. Rengakos eds, Berlin, De Gruyter, TCSV 4, 87-115.

Jong I. J. F. de, 2011. The Shield of Achilles: From Metalepsis to 'Mise en Abyme', *Ramus* 40, 1-14.

Kestner J. 1973. "Ekphrasis as Frame in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*", *CW* 67.3, 166-171.

Konstan D. 2006. *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks. Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature.* Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Lefteratou A. "Novelistic opening ekphrasis", preprint draft: https://www.academia.edu/35588734/Lefteratou_Novelistic_opening_ekphrasis

Létoublon F. 1983. 'Le miroir et la boucle', *Poétique* 53, 19-36. Reprint in *Homer. Critical Assesments*, I.J.F. de Jong ed., London, Routledge, 1998, vol. III, 460-471.

Létoublon F. 1992. "Un bracelet d'ébène sur son bras d'ivoire", in *Métissages.* J.-M. Racault et al. eds, Saint-Denis de la Réunion, L'Harmattan, 83-97.

Létoublon F. 1993. *Les lieux communs du roman : stéréotypes grecs d'aventure et d'amour*. Leiden, Brill (Mnemosyne Suppl. 123).

Létoublon F. 2010. "Des traces sur la peau", in *Les rites de passage. De la Grèce d'Homère à notre XXI^e^ siècle.* Grenoble, Musée dauphinois, Le Monde alpin et rhodanien, 259-268.

Létoublon F. 2013. "Mythological Paradigms in the Greek Novels", in *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel.* Michael Paschalis and Stelios Panayotakis eds, Groningen, Barkhuis (*ANS* 17), 127-145.

Létoublon F. 2018. "War as spectacle in the *Iliad*", in *Gaze, Vision and Visuality in ancient Greek Literature: Concepts, Contexts and Reception* (Freiburg/Br. 4-6 December 2014), eds Alexandros Kampakoglou and Anna Novokhatko, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, Trends in Classics Suppl. 54, 2018, p. 3-32.

Létoublon F. & Montanari F. 2004. "Les métaphores homériques. L'exemple du cœur de fer." In *Skhèma / figura: formes et figures chez les Anciens. Rhétorique, philosophie, littérature*, edited by M.S. Celentano, P. Chiron, and M.-P. Noël. Paris: Éditions rue d'Ulm, pp. 31–46.

Matricon-Thomas E. 2014. 'Le Fil d'Ariane et la traversée du Labyrinthe', *Gaia* 17, 181-207.

Morales H. 2004. *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius'* Leucippe and Clitophon, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Nimis S. 1998. “Memory and Description in the Ancient Novel”, *Arethusa* 31, 99-122.

Oatley, K. “Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact: Fiction as Cognitive and Emotional Simulation,” *Review of General Psychology* 3.2 (1999): 101-117.

Olsen S. 2012. “Maculate Conception: Sexual Ideology and Creative Authority in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*”, *AJP* 133,2, 301-322.

Olson G. 2007. *Abyssmal: A Critique of Cartographic Reason.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Pappas N. 2008, 2016. “Plato’s Aesthetics”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-aesthetics/

Perlovsky L. 2014. “Aesthetic emotions, what are their cognitive functions?”, *Frontiers in Psychology* 5(98): 98.

Petroff M. 1999. *Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). La Bibliothèque e(s)t le Labyrinthe.* Genève, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire. Online: https://doc.rero.ch/record/260963/files/Petroff_1999.pdf

Pollitt J. J. 1974. *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology*. (initial publ. Yale Russian and East European Yale publications in the history of art 25), Yale University Press.

Porter J. I. 2016. *The Sublime in Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Repath D. 2005. “Achillles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*: What Happened Next?”, *CQ* 55,1, 250-265.

Robbe-Grillet A. 1959. *Dans le labyrinthe.* Paris, Minuit.

Roochnik D. 1998. *Of Art and Wisdom. Plato’s Understanding of Techne.* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State University.

Ruiz-Montero C. 1996. “The Rise of the Greek Novel”, in *The Novel in the Ancient World*. Gareth Schmeling ed., Leiden, Brill (Mnemosyne suppl. 159), 29-85.

Selden D. 1994. “Genre of Genre”, in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*. James Tatum ed, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University, 39-64.

Sörbom G. 1966. *Mimesis and Art. Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an Aesthetic Vocabulary*. Uppsala, Svenska Bokforlaget Bonniers.

Stoichita V. I. 1999[2] *L’instauration du tableau. Métapeinture à l’aube des temps modernes.* Genève, Droz.

Van Groningen B. 1960. *La Composition littéraire archaïque grecque. Procédés et réalisations.* Amsterdam, 2ème éd.

Van Otterlo W. W .A. 1944. *Untersuchungen über Begriff, Anwendung und Entstehung der griechischen Ringkomposition.* Amsterdam, Meded. D. Nedeland. Akad. V. Wiss. Akad. Letterkunde. N. R. 7, n° 3.

Webb R. 2009. *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*. Farnham, Ashgate.

White J. J. 2001. "The semiotics of the *mise-en-abyme*", in *The motivated sign. Iconicity in language and literature* 2, Olga Fischer and Max Nänny eds, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 29-53.

Whitman W. 1958. 1965. *Homer and the Heroic Tradition.* New York.

Whitmarsh T. 2002. "Written on the Body: Ekphrasis, Perception and Deception in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*", *Ramus* 31, 1-2, 175-187.

Winkler J. J. 1989. Achilles Tatius. *Leucippe and Clitophon* translated by John J. Winkler, in Bryan P. Reardon ed, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Winkler J. J. 1994. "The Invention of Romance", in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, James Tatum ed, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 23-38.

Woods G. 2016. "*Hamlet*, the play within the play", online: https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/hamlet-the-play-within-the-play

Zeitlin F. 2013. "Figure: Ekphrasis", *G&R* 60, 1, 17-31.

Zeitlin F. 2013b. "Landscapes and Portraits: Signs of the Uncanny and Illusions of the Real", in *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel.* Michael Paschalis and Stelios Panayotakis eds, Groningen, Barkhuis (*ANS* 17), 61-87.