

“And the Shield Cried Out”:  
Narrative and *ekphrasis* in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*

1. *Aspis* 154-165 (*ekphrasis*)

ἐν δὲ Προΐωξίς τε Παλίωξίς τε τέτυκτο, 154  
ἐν δ' Ὀμαδός τε Φόβος τ' Ἀνδροκτασίη τε δεδήει,  
[ἐν δ' Ἔρις, ἐν δὲ **Κυδοιμὸς** ἐθύνεον, ἐν δ' ὅλοῃ Κήρ  
ἄλλον ζῶν ἔχουσα νεούτατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον,  
ἄλλον τεθνηῶτα κατὰ **μόθον** ἔλκε ποδοῖν.  
εἶμα δ' ἔχ' ἄμφ' ὤμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἵματι φωτῶν,  
δεινὸν δερκομένη **καναγήσῃ** τε **βεβρυχύῃ**.] 160  
ἐν δ' ὀφίων κεφαλαὶ δεινῶν ἔσαν, οὗ τι φατειῶν,  
δώδεκα, ταὶ φοβέεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φῦλ' ἀνθρώπων,  
[οἷτινες ἀντιβίην πόλεμον Διὸς υἱὶ φέροιεν:]  
τῶν καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν **καναγή** πέλεν, εὔτε μάχοιτο  
Ἀμφιτρωνιάδης.<sup>1</sup>

And on it Pursuit and Rout were made,  
and on it **Battle-Din** and Murder and Man-killing blazed forth,  
[and on it Strife, and **Uproar**, and destructive Fate darted along,  
and she, holding one man living, recently wounded, another unwounded,  
and dragged another who had died by his feet throughout the **battle-din**;  
and she wore a cloak about her shoulders, dark with the blood of men,  
looking terribly and chomping greedily with **gnashing** teeth.]  
And on it were the heads of terrible snakes, unspeakable,  
twelve of them, who were terrifying the race of men upon the earth  
[whoever should bring battle against the son of Zeus.]  
There arose a **gnashing** of their teeth, whenever he would fight,  
the son of Amphitryon.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Aspis* 216-237 (*ekphrasis*)

ἐν δ' ἦν ἠκόμου Δανάης τέκος, ἰππότα Περσεύς,  
οὔτ' ἄρ' ἐπιψαύων σάκεος ποσὶν οὔθ' ἐκάς αὐτοῦ,  
θαῦμα μέγα φράσσασθ', ἐπεὶ οὐδαμῆ ἐστήρικτο.  
τῶς γάρ μιν παλάμαις τεῦξεν κλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις 220  
χρῦσεον: ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶν ἔχεν πτερόεντα πέδιλα.  
ὥμοισιν δὲ μιν ἀμφὶ μελάνδετον ἄορ ἔκειτο  
χαλκεύου ἐκ τελαμῶνος; ὃ δ' ὥς τε νόημ' ἐποτάτο:  
...  
αὐτὸς δὲ σπεύδοντι καὶ ἐρρίγοντι ἐοικῶς  
Περσεύς Δαναΐδης ἐτιταίνετο. ταὶ δὲ μετ' αὐτὸν 230  
Γοργόνες ἀπλητοὶ τε καὶ οὐ φαταὶ ἐρρώνοντο  
ἰέμεναι μαπέειν. ἐπὶ δὲ χλωροῦ ἀδάμαντος  
βαινουσέων **ἰάχεσκε σάκος μεγάλῳ ὀρυμαγδῷ**  
**ὀξέα καὶ λιγέως:** ἐπὶ δὲ ζώνησι δράκοντε 234  
δοιῶ ἀπρωρεῦντ' ἐπικυρτώνοντε κάρηνα.  
λίχμαζον δ' ἄρα τῷ γε: μένει δ' ἐγάρασσον ὀδόντας  
ἄγρια δερκομένα. ἐπὶ δὲ δεινοῖσι καρήνοισι  
Γοργείοις ἔδονεῖτο μέγας Φόβος.

And on it was the child of fair-haired Danae, the horseman Perseus,  
he neither touching the shield lightly with his feet or far from it,  
a great marvel to be shown, since in no place did he have sure footing.  
For thus famous Hephaestus had made him with his hands,  
golden; and about his feet were winged sandals. 220  
And about him on his shoulders like a sword bounded in black  
from bronze straps; and he flew just like thought;  
...  
He himself just like one hastening and shuddering,  
Perseus the son of Danae, stretched forth; but after him 230  
the Gorgons, great and unspeakable, rushed  
eager to seize him; with them treading upon the pale  
adamant, the **shield cried out with a great din,**  
**shrilly and clearly**; and upon the belts two serpents  
hung down suspended, bending their heads forward; 234  
they flicked their tongues, gnashing their teeth with force,  
looking fiercely; above their terrible heads  
great Fear drove about the Gorgons.

<sup>1</sup> ἐν δ' Ἔρις ἐν δὲ Κυδοιμὸς ὀμίλειον, ἐν δ' ὅλοῃ Κήρ, | ἄλλον ζῶν ἔχουσα νεούτατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον, | ἄλλον τεθνηῶτα κατὰ μόθον ἔλκε ποδοῖν: | εἶμα δ' ἔχ' ἄμφ' ὤμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἵματι φωτῶν (*Iliad* 18.535-538).

<sup>2</sup> All translations are mine.

### 3. *Aspis* 305-311 (*ekphrasis*)

πάρ δ' αὐτοῖς ἰππῆες ἔχον πόνον, ἀμφὶ δ' ἀέθλω  
δήριν ἔχον καὶ μόχθον. εὐπλεκέων δ' ἐπὶ δίφρων  
ἠνίοχοι βεβαῶτες ἐφίεσαν ὠκέας ἵππους  
ῥυτὰ χαλαίνοντες, τὰ δ' ἐπικροτέοντα πέτοντο  
ἄρματα κολλήεντ', ἐπὶ δὲ πλημναι μέγ' ἀύτευν.  
οἱ μὲν ἄρ' αἰδίων εἶχον πόνον οὐδέ ποτέ σφιν  
νίκη ἐπηνύσθη, ἀλλ' ἄκριτον εἶχον ἄεθλον.

305 And by them the horsemen had their labor, for the prize  
they had strife and toil. The charioteers, established upon  
the well-woven chariots, sent forth their swift horses,  
loosening the reins, the close-joined chariots flew,  
rattling as they went, and the naves of the wheels **sounded out greatly.**  
310 They kept this everlasting toil, nor would victory ever be achieved for  
them, but they had a contest that could never be judged.

### 4. *Aspis* 374-382 (Battle-Narrative)

ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀφ' ὑψηλῆς κορυφῆς ὄρεος μέγαλοιο  
πέτραι ἀποθρόσκωσιν, ἐπ' ἀλλήλης δὲ πέσωσι,  
πολλαὶ δὲ δρυὸς ὑψίκομοι, πολλαὶ δὲ τε πευκαὶ  
αἰγυροὶ τε τανύρριζοι ῥήγνυνται ὑπ' αὐτέων  
ρίμφα κυλινδομένων, εἴως πεδίονδ' ἀφίκωνται,  
ὡς οἱ ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι πέσον μέγα κεκλήγοντες.  
πᾶσα δὲ Μυρμιδόνων τε πόλις κλειτὴ τ' Ἴαωλκὸς  
Ἄρνη τ' ἠδ' Ἑλικὴ Ἄνθειά τε ποιήεσσα  
φωνῆ ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων μεγάλ' ἴαχον.

375 Just as when rocks break off from a high peak  
of a great mountain, they fall upon one another,  
and many towering oaks, and many pines,  
and poplars with outstretching roots are broken by them  
as they roll along quickly, until they come to the plain,  
thus they fell upon one another shouting greatly.  
380 And the whole city of the Myrmidons and renowned Ioclus  
and Arna and Helice and grassy Antheia  
**sounded out greatly from both their voices.**

### 5. *Aspis* 386-392 (Battle-Narrative)

οἷος δ' ἐν βήσσης ὄρεος χαλεπὸς προιδέσθαι  
κάπρος...  
ὅσσε δὲ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντι ἔικτον,  
**ὀρθὰς δ' ἐν λοφιῇ φρίσσει τρίχας ἀμφὶ τε δειρήν:**  
τῷ ἴκελος Διὸς υἱὸς ἀφ' ἰππείου θόρε δίφρου.

Just as it is difficult to see a wild boar in the glens  
of a mountain...  
his two eyes just like shining fire,  
and **he bristled in his hairs, straight on his ridge and about his back:**  
just like it the son of Zeus leapt down from the horse-chariot.

### 6. *Aspis* 168-171 (*ekphrasis*)

ἐν δὲ συῶν ἀγέλαι χλούνων ἔσαν ἠδὲ λεόντων  
ἐς σφέας δερκομένων, κοτεόντων θ' ἰεμένων τε.  
τῶν καὶ ὀμιληδὸν στίχες ἦσαν: οὐδέ νυ τῶ γε  
οὐδέτεροι τρεῆτην: **φρίσσόν γε μὲν αὐχένας ἄμφω.**

And on it were companies of gold boars and lions  
looking at them, angry and eager.  
And rows of these were going in groups: nor indeed  
did either one flee from fear: **but they bristled about their necks.**

## 7. Structure of the *Aspis*' Battle Narrative

1. 320-324: Battle Action – Heracles mounts chariot: εἵκελος ἀστεροπῆ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο (“just like the lightning of aegis-bearing Zeus, his father,” 322)
2. 325-340: Interruption – Athena’s Speech
3. 340-348: Battle Action – Rush towards one another: περιστονάχησε δὲ γαῖα (“and the earth groaned all around,” 344); ἵκελοι πυρὶ ἢ ἐθυέλλῃ (“like fire or a storm,” 345); τῶν ἵπποι...ὄξεῖα χρέμισαν, περὶ δὲ σφισιν ἄγνυτο ἠχώ (“their horses neighed sharply, and the echo spread around them,” 347-8)
4. 349-368: Interruption – Herakles’ Speech
5. 369-373: Battle Action – Dismount and run on foot: τῶν δ’ ὑπο σευομένων κανάχιζε πὸς εὐρεῖα χθῶν (“the broad earth rings out from their feet as they hastened,” 373)
6. 374-383: Interruption – **Simile 1**: Boulders down a mountain
7. 383-385: Battle Action – Zeus’ sign for battle: μέγα δ’ ἔκτυπε μητίετα Ζεὺς (“and wise Zeus crashed greatly,” 383)
8. 386-391: Interruption – **Simile 2**: Boars
9. 392: Battle Action – Herakles Dismounts
10. 393-400: Interruption – Season of battle
11. 401: Battle Action – “they fought during that season, and much din (ὄρυμαγδός) arose”
12. 402-412: Interruption – **Simile 3 (and 4)**: Lions (and Vultures): δεινὴ δὲ σφ’ ἰαχὴ ἄραβός θ’ ἅμα γίγνεται ὀδόντων (“and a terrible shout comes about together with the gnashing of their teeth,” 404)
13. 413-420: Battle Action – Death of Kyknos
14. 421-423: Interruption – **Simile (5)**: pine tree falling : ὧς ἔριπ’ : ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ βράχε τεύχεα ποικίλα χαλκῷ (“thus he [Kyknos] fell; his arms, varied with bronze, clashed about him,” 423)
15. 424-425: Battle Action – Herakles on lookout for Ares
16. 426-433: Interruption – **Simile (6)**: Lion on the prowl
17. 434-436: Battle Action – Ares appears and they rush towards one another
18. 437-442: Interruption – **Simile (7)**: Boulder down a mountain: ἦ δὲ τε ἠχῆ | ἔρχεται ἐμμεμαυῖα (“and it went with an echo in haste,” 438-439)
19. 443-480: Battle Action – Final stand-off and conclusion

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Words for Sound in the *Aspis*<sup>3</sup>:

Sound Word	A. Opening 1-143	B. <i>Ekphrasis</i> 144-320	C. Similes/Battle 320-480
αείδω			394
ἀλαλητός			382
ἀμφοραβέω	64		
αοιδή		205, 282	
ἀραβέω/ ἄραβος		249	404
αὐδή		278	396
ἀϋτέω/ἀϋτή		309	346, 433, 459
βοάω		243	
βραχεῖν			423
γελάω		283	
δριμύς		261	
ἐπικροτέω		308	
ἠχέτης			393
ἠπύω		316	
ἠχώ/ ἠχή		279	348, 438
ἰαχέω/ἰαχή		232	382, 404, 436, 441, 451
καναχίζω/ καναχή		160, 164	373
κιθαρίζω		202	
κλάζω	99		379, 406, 412, 442
κλέω			341
κτυπέω/ κτύπος	61, 98		383
κυδοιμός		156	
λαθίφθογγος	131		
μέλπω		206	
λιγυρός		278	
λιγύς		206, 234	
μαστιχάω			389
μόθος		158	
όζύς		232, 243	348
ᾠμαδος		155, 257	
ὀμοκλή			341
ὀρυμαγδός		232	401
περιστεναχέω			344
ὕμηναιος		274	
φύλοπις	23, 114	200	
φωνή			382
χρεμετίζω			348
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>

<sup>3</sup> Words for sound occur 12 times in the description of Achilles' shield (*Iliad*, 18.483-608); 6 of which are in the context of music (not counting the words for the instruments by themselves), another 5 for the sounds of animals, and 1 for the sound of a river. I do not count the speech actions during the quarrel scene, nor the disputed section (535-538).