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

My paper demonstrates that in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*, the poet manipulates the notions of narrative and *ekphrasis* to blur the distinctions between the featured shield-*ekphrasis* and the battle narrative in which it is embedded. Lamberton (1988) and Martin (2005) note that the *Aspis* exaggerates the vignettes on the Homeric shield of Achilles (*Il.*, 18.483-608) as well as draw attention to the noisier, more vivid, and longer *ekphrasis*. Scholars have also extensively analyzed the unity of the poem – namely that the violence and death on the shield foreshadow the actual battles of Herakles (Lamberton, 1988; Toohey, 1988; Heckenlively, 2004; and Chiarini, 2012). I agree with Bing (2012) that the description of the shield acts as a digression to delay the progressively less popular narration of heroic combat. In this paper, however, I analyze this relationship between the shield-*ekphrasis* and the battle narratives and propose that such a relationship is more complicated than previously thought. While references to sound and movement throughout the description of the shield create a dynamic *ekphrasis*, I argue that the battle narrative is rendered static through the frequent employment of similes.

The shield-*ekphrasis* continually infuses the static images with movement and sound, and each panel becomes more vivid. For example, the last major panel on the shield is transformed into narrative and spans nearly a hundred lines. Perseus literally breaks out of the panel, hovering slightly above it: "nor was he touching the shield with his feet or far from it" (217), and the shield itself shouts out: "with [the Gorgons] treading upon the pale adamant, the shield cried out (ἰάχεσκε) with a great din" (231-2). Both Perseus and the Gorgons interact with the shield directly as if they were characters outside the *ekphrasis* and in the narrative of Herakles. Perseus and the Gorgons, more than any previous image, are no longer engravings on the shield but vivid images that move and emit sound. These images take over the narrative of the *Aspis* and the later

battles of Herakles. The *ekphrasis* thus creates a dynamic, vivid narration and does not merely delay the action of the battle narrative but becomes the narrative focus of the *Aspis*.

Next, I build upon Chiarini's (2012) discussion of the influence of art on the shield-*ekphrasis* and Janko's (1986) observation that pictorial representations of Herakles and Kyknos influenced the entire poem. I show how the similes in the battle narrative halt the action and function as an *ekphrasis*. During the battle of Herakles and Kyknos, the use of similes and familiar imagery present in the shield distract from the actual fight; the conflict is delayed as the poet treats the battle as an *ekphrasis*. The first simile comparing Herakles and Kyknos to falling rocks (374-378) interrupts their fighting and, through verbal repetitions of sound, refers back to the shield-*ekphrasis*: "So they, shouting greatly, fell upon one another. | And the whole city of the Myrmidons and renowned Iolkos…sounded out (ἴαχον) greatly from the voice of them both: and they, with a divine | shout, came together" (379-383). The verb ἰαχέω also alludes to the *ekphrasis* when the shield cries out from the Gorgons walking upon it, a point where the characters on the shield become part of the outside narrative.

While the shield incorporates elements of the surrounding narratives, the series of similes (374-442) moves the audience away from the narrative "reality" of the fights between Herakles and Kyknos (the first five similes) and between Herakles and Ares (the last two similes). Most of the similes use vocabulary (particularly of sound) and descriptions found in the shield. By looking at the imagery of sound and movement in the *ekphrasis* of the shield compared to the "ekphrastic" moments in the battles of Herakles, where action and movement are continually delayed, I demonstrate that Pseudo-Hesiod manipulates narrative and *ekphrasis* to create a strong connection and a complex mirroring effect with the shield.

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