



Similes in the Iliad

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SIMILES IN THE ILIAD

In Memoriam Adam and Anne Parry

The literary criticism of the Homeric poems has had something of a resurgence in the last fifteen years, but it has had to face difficult problems. Rigid oral theorists have contended that approaches suited to written texts are wholly inappropriate to oral poems, where the choice of a word or formula was determined solely, or principally, by metrical convenience¹. Recent studies, however, have focused on the tension between the 'traditional', i. e. the formulaic language and narrative components developed by a long line of singers, and the 'innovative', i. e. the ways in which the tradition was varied by Homer, or during the epics' 'monumental composition'², for aesthetic purposes. ARMSTRONG and RUSSO, in particular, have found convincing examples of such variation in the arming scenes of the *Iliad* and the deliberation scenes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*³. But the difficulty with this sort of criticism is that we can seldom distinguish between the traditional and the innovative, and we cannot do it at all with those elements in the poems that are not 'typical', or repeated, such as unique phrases or scenes, and many of the similes.

Criticism is also faced with the problem of determining which parts of the poems are likely to belong to their monumental composition, and which parts

¹ See, for example, F. COMBELLACK, *Milman Parry and Homeric Artistry*, CL 11, 1959, 193—208, and *Contemporary Unitarians and Homeric Originality*, AJP 71, 1950, 337—364. The latter is a pointed reaction to Unitarian excesses; COMBELLACK criticizes, among other fallacies, «that of equating poetic invention in general with Homeric invention in particular» (349). This point is relevant to my discussion of the similes, though it is of less general significance than COMBELLACK indicates. In what follows, one of the central concerns is the distinction between the traditional and the innovative; we may not, as COMBELLACK maintains, be able to credit the latter specifically to Homer, but this does not diminish the value of trying to see the relation of the tradition to individuals within it.

² For discussion of this phrase, see G. S. KIRK, *The Songs of Homer*, Cambridge 1962, 57—58; 95—98; 316 ff.

³ See J. ARMSTRONG, *The Arming Motif in the Iliad*, AJP 79, 1958, 337—354; J. A. RUSSO, *Homer Against his Tradition*, *Arion* 7, 1968, 275—295. For other recent work on this subject, see Anne Amory PARRY, *The Gates of Horn and Ivory*, YCS 20, 1966, 3—57, and *Homer as Artist*, CQ 21, 1971, 1—15; Adam PARRY, *Language and Characterization in Homer*, HSCP 76, 1972, 1—22; J. B. HAINSWORTH, *The Criticism of an Oral Homer*, JHS 90, 1970, 90—98; M. W. M. POPE, *The Parry-Lord Theory of Homeric Composition*, *Acta Classica* 6, 1963, 1—21, especially 13—18 (on the similes).

may be later interpolation. Even if some sections be very good interpolation, critics have seldom been happy with the notion of co-operative genius; it makes little sense to speak of a unified design in elements of the poems, as some Unitarians have, when some elements are likely to be spurious⁴. Archaeology offers little help here⁵; it is primarily the efforts of the linguists on which we must rely. But in considering whether 'late language' impugns the genuineness of certain passages, we must always keep a relative time scale in mind: late, relative to what? To the conventional date for a historical Homer? To Hesiod, viewed by some as Homer's contemporary⁶? Or to the tradition as a whole? Most have viewed Homer as the tradition's culmination; recent critical studies have strengthened the assumption that this last period was as innovative as some of the tradition's preceding stages. It is therefore not sufficient, as KIRK has pointed out, to label a passage ungentine by focusing on its 'untraditional', or unparalleled, elements. Only through the identification of the 'anti-traditional', where we can see that fixed elements of the tradition have been misunderstood, can we be certain of significantly late interpolation⁷.

In this paper, I propose to discuss some of the similes of the *Iliad*, parts of the text which have been subject to rejection by many scholars, largely because of unusual concentrations of 'late' or unparalleled language⁸. The validity of the arguments against these sections (and of some of the counter-arguments) has been poorly understood; I will aim at least to clarify the issues, and to contribute some suggestions to their solution.

I

First, some general remarks on the similes and questions of method. It would be a mistake by definition to require, as many have, the homogeneous integration of the similes in the *Iliad*. For they were plainly meant to stand out from the rest of the narrative to some extent. One of the most common explanations of the function of the Homeric similes is that of relief from the narrative, and this explanation has its element of truth⁹. For example, over three-fourths

⁴ For example, *Iliad* K; cf. below, p. 395 and note 63.

⁵ See G. S. KIRK, *Objective Dating Criteria in Homer*, *Mus. Helv.* 17, 1960, 189—205, especially 191—196.

⁶ See M. L. WEST, ed. *Hesiod Theogony*, Oxford 1966, 46—47.

⁷ See KIRK (above, note 2) 200—208, where he defends the similes and gives examples of anti-traditional language. Such examples include *Iliad* Ψ 806 (compare K 298), ἐπόρουσε at E 793, the phrasing at P 476, the ludicrous situation at K 199 ff., the phrase λαυκανίης καθέτηκα at Ω 642.

⁸ See G. P. SHIPP, *Studies in the Language of Homer*², Cambridge 1972, 221; 215; cf. T. B. L. WEBSTER, *Early and Late in Homeric Diction*, *Eranos* 54, 1956, 39—42.

⁹ See C. M. BOWRA, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, Oxford 1930, 114—128.

of the full similes¹⁰ of the *Iliad* occur in battle scenes; it is significant that in the *Aeneid*, which has roughly half the number of similes of the *Iliad*, less than half occur in battle scenes¹¹. That the *Odyssey* possesses only one-third the number of similes of the *Iliad* has been thought by most to reflect the diminished need for relief from the narrative, due to increased variety of geography, incident, and theme¹².

A search for typical elements in the language of the similes themselves yields little: very few full similes, or phrases within them, are repeated¹³. More successful efforts at typology have been made, however. The similes are drawn overwhelmingly from the world of nature: beasts, trees and plants, and scenes from inanimate nature (mountains, sun, moon, stars, fire, clouds, sea, snow, etc.) account for roughly five-sixths of the material in the similes of the *Iliad*¹⁴. Thus, although few actual phrases in similes are repeated, much of the material (or vehicles of the comparisons) can be regarded as typical, and very likely traditional¹⁵. It has also been shown that the occasions for the similes fall into a small number of categories, though these are subject to more numerous subdivisions¹⁶.

¹⁰ I have used the tabulations of D. J. N. LEE, *The Similes of the Iliad and the Odyssey Compared*, Melbourne 1964. For his definitions of "full" and "internal" similes, and for his method of counting, admitted not to be exact in all details, see *op. cit.* 3—4. In this paper, I shall use the term "full" simile in a somewhat wider sense than LEE to refer to developed similes extending over several verses, as opposed to short comparisons.

¹¹ See R. HORNSBY, *Patterns of Action in the Aeneid*, Iowa City 1970, 7. (The proportion of battle scenes to the rest of the poems is roughly similar).

¹² See C. M. BOWRA, *Homer*, London 1972, 60—66; H. FRÄNKEL, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse*, Göttingen 1921; on the *Odyssey*, see C. H. WHITMAN, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, Cambridge, Mass. 1958, 287—288. R. HAMPE, *Die Gleichnisse Homers und die Bildkunst seiner Zeit*, Tübingen 1952, 10—12, believes that some similes serve to give the narrative a new turn; for objections to his view, see SHIPP (above, note 8) 218—219.

¹³ The repetitions of developed similes are: *Iliad* E 782 = H 256; E 860 = Ξ 148; I 14 = Π 3; Z 506 = O 263; Λ 548 = P 657; N 389 = Π 482; *Odyssey* ζ 232 = φ 159; δ 335 = ρ 126. Short comparisons are repeated more frequently, sometimes in the same place in the hexameter; for a list, see the unpublished dissertation of W. SCOTT, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Princeton 1964, 175.

¹⁴ I have used the tabulations of LEE (above, note 10); other classifications for the similes' subject-matter include: objects (e. g. lead, ivory, cauldron); people and activities (e. g. reapers, shepherd, gods, shipwright, fishing); mental activity (thought, dream).

¹⁵ Russo has suggested that this is a violation of PARRY's theory of 'economy' in formulaic diction (see above, note 3, 287—288). For discussion of patterns in the content and placement of the similes, see the study of SCOTT (above, note 13); for similes in battle narrative, see B. C. FENIK, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad*, Wiesbaden 1968, and T. KRISCHER, *Formale Konventionen der Homerischen Epik*, Munich 1971, 36—75.

¹⁶ See SCOTT (above, note 13) and M. COFFEY, *The Function of the Homeric Simile*, *AJP* 78, 1957, 113—132. Some of COFFEY's types are: movement, appearance, noise, measurement, and psychological states (individual or mass emotions).

SHIPP's studies have shown a disproportionate concentration of linguistic anomalies in the similes and in certain other types of passage outside the narrative, e. g. digressions, descriptions, and generalizing comments¹⁷. He has concluded that the similes are thus the work of many poets, and were »in general composed later than the narrative «¹⁸. Though short similes may be of great age, the extended simile was probably a later development; sometimes the particularization of an original, brief comparison is betrayed by the repetition of a joining word (e. g. *Iliad* Γ 2 ff., κλαγγή)¹⁹. The vital question here is not whether the full simile's development succeeds original, one-phrase comparisons as SHIPP claims (it probably does), but whether the extended similes come after the monumental period of composition. Therefore, objections to SHIPP's view which center on the issue of detachability from the narrative cannot meet the problem squarely; for similes are quite likely, by nature, to be detachable²⁰. That a simile can be removed from its context without violence to the surrounding narrative proves absolutely nothing about the relative dates of composition. The presence of rare lexical items or ἀπαξ λεγόμενα proves little more, since we should expect the percentage of such in the similes to exceed that in the narrative. Only antitraditional language, or the presence of organic Atticisms²¹, can be regarded as significant.

SHIPP's mainly philological work has been accepted by D. J. N. LEE as a basis for his aesthetic criticism of the similes²². LEE denies that the full simile could have been traditional, and supposes that those of the *Iliad* are a later pastiche, added to the poem with the alteration of contexts where necessary²³. A number of LEE's assumptions are either unsound or not susceptible to proof, e. g. the idea that the audiences of the *Iliad* would have found the similes intolerable retardations of the action; that the traditional, as Homer found (and perhaps left) it, was necessarily primitive, or unsophisticated; that the 'expansion technique' (as in *Iliad* Γ 2 ff.) and the technique of successive similes should be regarded as excrescences²⁴. LEE makes much of the fallacious detachability argument, emphasizing that the similes can be excised without

¹⁷ See SHIPP (above, note 8) 3.

¹⁸ *ibid.* 221; 215.

¹⁹ *ibid.* 211 (compare νέφος at *Iliad* Δ 275). FRÄNKEL too (above, note 12) thought 'successive similes' a later development (77).

²⁰ See SHIPP 215 vs. P. CHANTRAINE, in *Revue de Philologie* 29, 1955, 73.

²¹ By organic Atticisms are meant forms which cannot be changed or replaced without destroying the meter. See KIRK, *Songs of Homer* (above, note 2) 193 for discussion and examples (e. g. ἐπειδάν at *Iliad* Ν 285, ἔωσφόρος at Ψ 226).

²² *The Similes of the Iliad and the Odyssey Compared*, Melbourne 1964, 2, referring to the first edition of SHIPP, *Studies in the Language of Homer*, Cambridge 1953.

²³ LEE 2—3; 30—31.

²⁴ *ibid.* 5; 10—14.

violence to context²⁵. And some of his requirements are curiously inconsistent. He believes, for example, that the similes of the *Odyssey* are far more varied and appropriate to their contexts than those of the *Iliad*, and would posit contemporaneous composition of narrative and similes in the *Odyssey*. However, some of the *Odyssey* similes draw on the same material as those in the *Iliad*, which LEE refuses to regard as traditional²⁶. And, as LEE admits, it is embarrassing to his thesis on the *Iliad* that some of the admittedly older portions contain many similes, while parts that are comparatively late have fewer similes, or possess similes mostly of the simple type²⁷. The problems posed here will be less significant for those who reject LEE's aesthetic judgment on the relative merits of the similes in the two poems²⁸.

It would be hard to demonstrate conclusively that the similes were orally composed, and it would not necessarily follow from such a demonstration that they were contemporary with the poems' monumental period of composition. W. SCOTT's unpublished dissertation, dealing with the placement of similes in the poems, did much to classify the occasions on which similes are used: e. g. the entrance of a hero, the journeys of gods, general scenes of the armies, and the illustration of emotions²⁹. But the convenience of the poet in employing similes at particular points can be far less rigorously defined than the metrical convenience in such units as noun-epithet formulae. There seem at this point, however, to be no persuasive arguments against oral composition of the similes.

It has been recognized that similes incorporate elements that are not likely to have belonged to the Mycenaean world of the narrative³⁰. This does not prove, of course, that the developed similes are later than the rest of the poem, since the narrative also contains anachronisms³¹. In one important way, a large majority of the similes is completely consistent with the narrative: even in the most elaborate similes, there is a concrete objectivity of style. Adam PARRY, discussing the famous description of the Trojan watch-fires at the end of *Iliad* Θ, suggested that this concrete objectivity proceeded from the formulaic

²⁵ *ibid.* 28ff.

²⁶ Compare *Od.* δ 335 with *Iliad* Λ 113, *Od.* τ 205 with *Iliad* Ε 523, etc. LEE's discussion of this point (24–25) is unsatisfactory, due to his assumption that 'copies' must be more elaborate than 'originals'. For a sensible presentation of some of the differences of the two poems in their similes, see M. COFFEY, a summary of a paper entitled 'The Similes of the *Odyssey*', *BICS* 2, 1955, 27.

²⁷ See LEE 33–34.

²⁸ For example, LEE 6–8; 22–23 (on *Iliad* Μ 299 and *Od.* ζ 130).

²⁹ See SCOTT (above, note 13).

³⁰ For example, the trumpet at *Iliad* Σ 219; see KIRK, *Songs of Homer* (above, note 2) 188.

³¹ *ibid.* 183–188. KIRK describes Homeric poetry as 'an artificial cultural amalgam of elements, derived from many different stages in the developing oral tradition' (181).

character of the poems³². I think that this style is maintained also in the largely non-formulaic simile passages. As we have seen, the material for the similes is drawn overwhelmingly from the concrete world of nature. And though an audience was doubtless meant to deduce psychological states from some of them, for example the fighting spirit of a warrior³³, similes almost never deal at length with psychological states in the comparison³⁴. This is to be partially explained, no doubt, by the concrete requirements of all types of imagery; similes demand a firm anchoring in concrete detail. Yet it is plain that the similes of the *Iliad* can almost never be taken as *ethical*, except in a very limited sense: the portrayal of an emotion at a particular moment³⁵.

As an illustration of this point, consider the following pair of similes used for the retreat of Ajax in *Iliad* Λ:

στῆ δὲ ταφῶν, ὅπιθεν δὲ σάκος βάλεν ἑπταβόειον,	545
τρέσσε δὲ παπτήνας ἐφ' ὀμίλου, θηρὶ ἐοικώς,	
ἐντροπαλιζόμενος, ὀλίγον γόνυ γουνὸς ἀμείβων.	
ὥς δ' αἴθωνα λέοντα βοῶν ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιο	
ἔσσεύαντο κύνες τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀγροιδῶται,	
οἳ τέ μιν οὐκ εἰῶσι βοῶν ἐκ πῖαρ ἐλέσθαι	550
πάννουχοι ἐγρήσσοντες· ὁ δὲ κρειῶν ἐρατίζων	
ἰθύει, ἀλλ' οὐ τι πρήσσει· θαμέες γὰρ ἄκοντες	
ἀντίον ἀτσοῦσι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν,	
καιόμεναί τε δεταί, τάς τε τρεῖ ἐσσύμενός περ·	
ἤῳθεν δ' ἀπονόσφιν ἔβη τετιηότι θυμῷ·	555
ὥς Αἴας τότ' ἀπὸ Τρώων τετιημένος ἦτορ	
ἦγε πόλλ' ἀέκων· περὶ γὰρ διέ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.	
ὥς δ' ὄτ' ὄνος παρ' ἄρουραν ἰὼν ἐβιήσατο παιῖδας	
νωθής, ᾧ δὴ πολλὰ περὶ ῥόπαλ' ἀμφὶς ἐάγη,	
κείρει τ' εἰσελθῶν βαθὺ λήϊον· οἳ δέ τε παῖδες	560
τύπτουσιν ῥοπάλοισι· βίη δέ τε νηπίη αὐτῶν·	

³² Adam PARRY, *The Language of Achilles*, TAPA 87, 1956, 1—7, especially 1—3.

³³ For example, *Iliad* E 161; E 299, etc.

³⁴ The most notable exception in the *Iliad* is at O 80 (the journey of Hera and the traveler's thought). Other similes, of course, indicate psychological states: e. g. the frightened man recoiling from the snake at Γ 33, the daring mosquito at P 570, the fearless leopard at Φ 573, the bewildered man before a great river at E 597, and the man in a dream at X 199. But these are comparatively few in number, and concrete detail nearly always receives as much emphasis as the emotion involved, if not more.

³⁵ I do not mean, of course, totally to deny characterization as a function of the similes. It is a very secondary function, however, and the characterization is at no profound, or symbolic, level; note, for example, the repetition of the horse simile for Paris and Hector at Z 506 and O 263. There is an exception, perhaps, in the simile that compares the flight of the Trojans from Patroklos to the storm of Zeus let loose upon unjust mortals at II 384—393; compare also O 586.

σπουδῇ τ' ἐξήλασαν, ἐπεὶ τ' ἐκορέσσατο φορβῆς·
 ὧς τότ' ἔπειτ' Αἴαντα μέγαν, Τελαμώνιον υἷόν,
 Τρῶες ὑπέρθυμοι πολυηγερέες τ' ἐπίκουροι
 νύσσοντες ζυστοῖσι μέσον σάκος αἰὲν ἔποντο³⁶.

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The similes are a good illustration of how conventional canons of criticism must be modified for Homeric poetry. Ajax's stubbornness in the face of superior force is the unifying theme; but it is viewed in two very different aspects: the lion is paralleled in heroic contexts, and is probably traditional, whereas the ass is unheroic, and surprising in this context³⁷. It seems doubtful that any later poet, especially one using writing, would use the successive simile technique this way; in fact, successive similes may be as easily part of oral technique as indications of embellishments after the main body of the poems was set down³⁸. But the oral nature of the similes, as we have seen, is not susceptible to proof. What is interesting here is the creation of two widely differing vehicles for the same tenor (or *tertium comparationis*): the simple trait of stubbornness³⁹. From an objective point of view, Ajax's behavior is like the behavior of the lion and the ass in the circumstances described; there is no attempt at strict logic, or aesthetic consistency as most would regard it, or at profoundly ethical characterization.

The similes of the *Iliad*, then, are not used for the portrayal of character in a systematic, highly structured fashion. The means for this function in similes of the *Aeneid*, even if briefly considered, will reveal great differences. Virgilian adaptation of Homeric similes has been well documented, along with the significant alterations⁴⁰. The ethical implications of the similes in the *Aeneid*

³⁶ Λ 550—555 = P 659—664; Zenodotus athetized 548—557. See LEAF's note ad loc., where the lines are defended. See also FENIK (above, note 15) for sensible conclusions on repeated lines in Homer (45).

³⁷ For the unheroic in similes, compare the mosquito at P 570 and the boys and wasps at Π 259. On the lion, see T. B. L. WEBSTER, *From Mycenae to Homer*, London 1958, 224; 233, where he hazards that «the comparison of warriors to lions or boars is probably old».

³⁸ Successive similes should be strictly defined as similes occasioned by the same event in the narrative, without more than one or two lines of recapitulation between them. It is interesting that about 70 of the roughly 330 similes of the *Iliad* are of this type; if the definition is not so strict, and one looks for similes concentrated within the narrative, the proportion is significantly higher: exactly half of the similes of the *Iliad* occur within ten verses of another simile (the figure is thirty percent in the *Odyssey*).

³⁹ For a contrast in the details of the similes, see below, p. 389 f.

⁴⁰ See, for example, V. PÖSCHL, *The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the Aeneid*, tr. G. SELIGSON, Ann Arbor 1962, 62—68 for an analysis of the Diana simile at Aen. 1, 498—502, borrowed from Od. ζ 102; particularly interesting are the quotations from Probus, criticizing Virgil for a breach of decorum, and Servius, on the idea that similes do not always require a one-to-one correlation in all parts (62—63).

are readily apparent. Consider the symbolic appropriateness of the pair of similes describing Turnus and Aeneas in VII and VIII:

*arma amens fremit, arma toro tectisque requirit;
saevit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli,
ira super: magno veluti cum flamma sonore
virgea suggeritur costis undantis aëni
exsultantque aestu latices, furit intus aquai
fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis,
nec iam se capit unda, volat vapor ater ad auras.*
(Aen. 7, 460—466)

*Talia per Latium. quae Laomedontius heros
cuncta videns magno curarum fluctuat aestu,
atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc
in partisque rapit varias perque omnia versat:
sicut aquae tremulum labris ubi lumen aënis
sole repperctum aut radiantis imagine lunae
omnia pervolitat late loca, iamque sub auras
erigitur summique ferit laquearia tecti⁴¹.*
(Aen. 8, 18—25)

The similes are obviously intended by the poet to be considered together (cf. *aestu* at 7, 464 and 8, 19, *auras* at 7, 466 and 8, 24, *aquai* at 7, 464 and *aquae* at 8, 22); the moral characterizations implied for Turnus and Aeneas are significant for the whole second half of the poem⁴². There is no comparable moral import in the similes of the *Iliad*⁴³.

⁴¹ The second simile is borrowed from Apollonius, Arg. 3, 754ff. (where it is applied to Medea); but, as T. E. PAGE notes (ed. *The Aeneid of Virgil*, London 1900), Aen. 8, 20—21 suggest the typical deliberation scene in Homer, and there may possibly be a reminiscence of the very unusual psychological simile at *Iliad* O 80. For discussion of the deliberation scene in Homer, see W. AREND, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer*, Berlin 1933, 106—115.

⁴² See R. HORNSBY (above, note 11) 100—101, and the mentions of Turnus' later *furor*. HORNSBY also connects the simile of Turnus to the simile of a man in a nightmare, applied to him at Aen. 12, 908—914 (op. cit. 136—137). One of HORNSBY's principal themes is the linking of the similes in the *Aeneid* to a moral judgment of the characters (12; 43—44; 74ff.; 111). The significance of the two similes in Aen. 7 and 8 for Turnus and Aeneas in the last book has been underestimated by M. C. J. PUTNAM in his treatment of the action and imagery of 12; see *The Poetry of the Aeneid*, Cambridge, Mass. 1965, where the conclusions are much overstated.

⁴³ See P. VIVANTE, *The Homeric Imagination*, Bloomington 1970, 83—96, who offers an excellent discussion of the style's concrete objectivity.

Concrete objectivity in Homeric similes cannot prove, of course, that they were orally composed, and cannot demonstrate conclusively that they are products of the monumental composition. But it does appear that the similes are consistent with the narrative in one important respect; if they are later embellishments, they must have been composed by someone steeped in the tradition and outlook of the narrative. There is no compelling reason to assume later addition of the similes, however, in the majority of cases. Once again, only anti-traditional language, or organic Atticisms, can solidly support this assumption.

II

Let us turn now to examine some of the similes in the *Iliad*, to illustrate these methodological considerations. It is often deceptive to claim any given portion of the text as representative. I will restrict this analysis largely to *Iliad* Λ. It presents more than the average number of similes; in fact, it has the highest number of similes, thirty-three, of any book in Homer, while only *Iliad* O, Π, and P surpass it in the number of developed similes⁴⁴. It is largely a battle book, and thus the similes' contexts are representative for the comparisons of the *Iliad*. Book Λ exhibits the successive simile technique; the substance of the comparisons, especially the fully developed ones, comes largely from nature; a few lines in similes are found elsewhere in the poem⁴⁵. The substance of twenty-eight similes has connections, in whole or in part, with other parts of the *Iliad*⁴⁶. (This does not necessarily imply exact repetition of lines, or parts of lines). FENIK, in his study of the narrative elements of the battle books, has shown that the occasions and the placement of the similes are also typical, in large part⁴⁷. What I would emphasize here are the exceptional cases, i. e. atypical elements in occasion or vehicle of the similes; the connection of the similes with the narrative structure of book Λ; and the thematic significance

⁴⁴ I have used LEE's tabulations. The similes in *Iliad* Λ are at 27, 58, 60, 62, 66, 67, 72, 86, 113, 129, 147, 155, 172, 237, 239, 269, 292, 295, 297, 305, 324, 383, 389, 414, 474, 485, 492, 545, 548, 558, 596, 604, and 747.

⁴⁵ Repeated lines, or parts of lines: Λ 66 = K 154; Λ 72 = Δ 471; Λ 175—176 = P 63—64; Λ 295 = M 130, N 802, Υ 46; Λ 485 = H 219; Λ 596 = N 673, Σ 1; Λ 747 = M 375; Λ 550—555 = P 659—664 (see above, note 36). Twenty-two similes of the thirty-three are drawn wholly, or predominantly, from the world of nature (a slightly lower percentage than usual); of the other eleven, only four are full similes by LEE's definition.

⁴⁶ Exceptions are: the reapers at 67 (though compare T 221, and the description on the shield at Σ 550ff., where a βασιλεύς is said to be watching the reapers), the woodcutter at 86, the lead at 237, the woman in labor at 269, and the donkey at 558.

⁴⁷ See FENIK (above, note 15) 78—114, passim. WEBSTER (above, note 37) considers the five similes at Λ 292, 324, 414, 474, and 548 as »variations on a single theme: wild beasts against dogs and men« (233). One might add to the list M 41, 146, and 299.

of some of the similes, at least, for the *Iliad* as a whole. Since the narrative of book Λ is not self-contained, it will often be necessary to refer to other parts of the poem.

SHIPP appears to identify only one Atticism in the language of the similes in book Λ : ἐάγη at 559 (though for full discussion, and alternatives to such identification, see LEAF's note ad loc.)⁴⁸. A search for anti-traditional language in the similes of this book produces nothing certain, although five comparisons have no exact parallel: the reapers at 67, the woodcutter at 86, the lead at 237, the woman in labor at 269, and the donkey at 558. Four of these are fully developed comparisons, and may, to a slightly varying extent, be classed as untraditional (with the reapers, compare *Iliad* T 221). I have discussed the donkey simile in connection with the lion simile that precedes it, though one may note further here that there is an interesting set of contrasts in the details of the two similes; in the first, the lion is said to be attacked with javelins (552) and to get none of the food he hungers for (551—552), while in the second the donkey is attacked with sticks (559), but is able to glut himself with food (562).

The simile of the woodcutter simultaneously illustrates *a*) the tendency of Homer to relieve battle narrative with scenes of peaceful activity (cf. the reapers at Λ 67, and also H 4; M 451; N 588; N 703; O 362; O 679; P 389; Y 495, etc.)⁴⁹ and *b*) the not infrequent inversion technique, providing a definite contrast between some aspect of the simile's occasion and vehicle (here, specifically, the woodman's stopping work contrasted with the renewed aggressiveness of the Greeks; cf. the snow simile at M 278). The short comparison of the lead to the spear point of Iphidamas (Λ 237) has no exact parallel, but LEAF compares μόλιβος here with the plummet of lead (μολυβδαίνη), used in a simile to describe the descent of Iris at Ω 80.

The similes of the reapers (Λ 67) and of the woman in labor (269) have suggestive implications for the narrative. In the first, the Greeks and Trojans are said to resemble two groups of reapers who work the field of a rich man; the ostensible connection with the narrative is that just as the reapers cut the swathes, so do the warriors cut each other down. The phrase 'rich man', however, does not capture the singularity of ἀνδρὸς μάκαρος (68): μάκαρ, as LEAF notes, is seldom used of anyone but the gods, though parallels for »the height of human happiness« occur⁵⁰. It is not said that the owner of the farm

⁴⁸ For SHIPP's discussion of *Iliad* Λ , see 273—277. Other examples are only 'suspected', e. g. λαφύσσω at Λ 176 (cf. SHIPP 91), φάνεσκε at Λ 64 (ibid. 89), and κριθῶν at Λ 69 (ibid. 14).

⁴⁹ This group may be distinguished from a group of similes involving scenes of peaceful activity which becomes violent, e. g. P 52, Φ 257.

⁵⁰ See LEAF ad loc. The other instances he lists for humans are: *Iliad* Γ 182, Ω 377; *Od.* α 217, ϵ 306, ζ 158, λ 483.

watches the reapers; but in the succeeding narrative we learn first that Eris attends to the action (73), and next that Zeus looks on, »watching the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Greeks, the flash of bronze, the slayers and the slain « (82—83)⁵¹. The mention of *μάκαρ* at 68 may be more than merely convenient; it may deliberately look forward to the mention of the immortals, and particularly of Zeus.

At Λ 252, Agamemnon is wounded by Koon, who is nevertheless killed and beheaded. Agamemnon continues to fight, but when the blood dries on the wound, he is compelled to retire from battle by the pain. A simile compares his distress to that of a woman in child-birth (269—272). Earlier, Agamemnon has been compared to a lion that seizes and devours the young of a doe, as he pounces in battle on Isos and Antiphos (113—119). This passage, in turn, is preceded by a narrative digression, which tells of Achilles' previous capture of Isos and Antiphos, and release of them for ransom. The juxtaposition of ransom of captives by another character and slaughter of them by Agamemnon perhaps recalls the incident in book Z in which Agamemnon dissuades Menelaus from ransoming Adrestos (Z 37—60). Now the connection of Achilles with the protection of the young is particularly strong in the imagery of the *Iliad*. In the only simile in his great speech in book I, Achilles compares himself to a mother bird finding food for her nestlings (I 323—327); at the beginning of book II, when Patroklos approaches him, Achilles compares his friend to a tearful girl running after her mother (II 7—10)⁵². When Achilles mourns over Patroklos' body, he is compared to a father grieving over the death of his newly married son (Ψ 222—224). In fact, there is a unique concentration of this type of imagery in book P, which describes the fight over Patroklos' body; Menelaus stands over it like a cow over her first-born (P 4—5), Ajax guards Patroklos like a lion protecting its young (P 132—136), the Achaean warriors scatter like birds whose young are threatened by a hawk when Hector and Aeneas approach (P 757). And later, when the body is recovered, Achilles grieves like a lion whose cubs have been stolen by a hunter (Σ 318—322)⁵³.

⁵¹ For inconsiderable objections to the consistency of these lines, especially Λ 76, see LEAF ad loc. For the lines as a typical 'summary scene', see FENIK (above, note 15) 80; 54—55 (where it is granted that such summary scenes may be »a regular stylistic feature or a regular kind of interpolation«).

⁵² Note also the connection (probably formulaic and accidental) of I 14—15 (Agamemnon) = II 3—4 (Patroklos).

⁵³ Compare also Thetis' simile for Achilles at Σ 56—57 (= Σ 437—438). Even Euphorbos, a Trojan and one of Patroklos' slayers, becomes involved: cf. the young olive tree at P 52—60. Two other examples of such imagery occur fairly near to each other: the simile used by Asios to describe the Greeks (compared to bees or wasps protecting their young at M 170), and the simile for the even balance of the battle, compared to the weaving balance used by a widow, who works to win a pitiful wage for her children (M 435).

It seems likely that the concentration of such imagery around Achilles and Patroklos is not accidental. In some ways, then, the most striking fact about the labor-pains simile for Agamemnon in book Λ is its inappropriateness, given both the poet's usual pattern and the earlier simile for Agamemnon in book Λ, that of the lion and the doe's young. But the pattern is not exclusive; there are two similes involving the young in book Μ (at 170 and 435) which have nothing to do with Achilles and Patroklos, and Diomedes mentions fatherless children in the narrative at Λ 394⁵⁴. Yet the proximity of the Achilles passage in book Λ to the first simile of Agamemnon (he is thrice more compared to a lion, at 129, 173, and 239) suggests that the pattern may have been in the poet's mind as he composed, and that he aimed at a particularly surprising effect with the labor-pains simile. Supporting this hypothesis, I think, is a structural consideration. Part of the action of this book of the *Iliad* will involve Achilles and Patroklos (Λ 597ff.), and the initiation of the long-range movement which will culminate in Achilles' sending Patroklos out to fight in book Π (Λ 794—803, Nestor's words to Patroklos, are repeated by him to Achilles at Π 36—45). And an inevitable entailment of this action is the wounding of the Greek chieftains in book Λ, first of whom is Agamemnon⁵⁵.

Several other similes in book Λ possess clear connections with the long-range movement of the action. The simile comparing the serpents on Agamemnon's corselet to rainbows, which Zeus exhibits as portents to mortals (27—28), may be compared to the simile at P 547, which compares Athena's cloud to the rainbow, also said there to be a *τέρας* from Zeus (P 548). But more important is the connection with the narrative of book Λ, where the plan of Zeus, giving the day's glory to Hector, is explicitly laid out at 186ff., and repeated by Iris at 202ff. Hector is, in turn, related to Patroklos in that each is compared to the war-god (Hector at 295 and Patroklos at 604), though the two similes differ slightly, and there is enough evidence to suggest that this formulaic comparison may be accidental⁵⁶. But what can be scarcely accidental is the first simile used to describe Hector in book Λ, the intermittently shining οὔλιος ἀστὴρ, or baneful star (62—64):

οἶος δ' ἐκ νεφέων ἀναφαίνεται οὔλιος ἀστὴρ
 παμφαίνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖτις ἔδου νέφεα σκιάοντα,
 ὧς Ἐκτωρ ὅτ' ἐμὲν τε μετὰ πρῶτοισι φάνεσκεν. . .

⁵⁴ See note 53, above. One can also compare Hector's concern for his son in the narrative at Z 476ff. and Andromache at Ω 726ff., or the similes at Δ 131, E 555, Θ 271, Π 265.

⁵⁵ It is no objection that many elements in the pattern stand *after* book Λ; on any hypothesis, oral composition or oral/written interpolation, this is acceptable.

⁵⁶ Hector is βροτολογιῶ ἴσος Ἄρηϊ at 295 (cf. M 130, N 802, and Υ 46, of Leonteus, Hector, and Achilles respectively); Patroklos is simply ἴσος Ἄρηϊ.

This is in all probability Sirius, the dog-star (cf. LEAF, ad loc.)⁵⁷; the dangerous brilliance of this star is paralleled only twice in the *Iliad*, once in a simile describing Diomedes, and in a simile for Achilles, the most fully developed comparison of the group:

ἀστέρ' ὀπωρινῶ ἔναλίγκιον, ὅς τε μάλιστα
λαμπρὸν παμφαίνῃσι λελουμένος Ὀκεανοῖο· (E 5—6)

παμφαίνονθ' ὡς τ' ἀστέρ' ἐπεσσύμενον πεδίοιο
ὅς ῥά τ' ὀπώρης εἶσιν, ἀρίζηλοι δέ οἱ αὐγαί
φαίνονται πολλοῖσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ·
ὄν τε κύν' Ὀρίωνος ἐπὶ κλησιν καλέουσι.
λαμπρότατος μὲν ὃ γ' ἐστί, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται,
καί τε φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν·
ὡς τοῦ χαλκὸς ἔλαμπε περὶ στήθεσσι θέοντος. (X 26—32)

In the simile applied to Diomedes in book E, the star is dangerously brilliant, but there are no explicit associations with destruction or fever, as there are in the similes for Hector and Achilles (Λ 62, X 31). WHITMAN has interpreted both these similes as instances of the 'poet's own work': variations of traditional material that »take their shape from the individual concern of the narrative in which they occur«⁵⁸. He connects the intermittent shining of the star in the Hector simile with Hector's intermittent glory, and the fiery star of Achilles with the concentration of fire imagery centered on him in the last books of the poem, the fire that is symbolic of the destruction of Troy⁵⁹. Regarding the first point, we may note again a connection with the narrative of book Λ: the grant of κράτος to Hector by Zeus for one day (Λ 192—194).

The similes of the *Iliad* provide some indication of deployment through the association of ideas. For example, when Achilles and Hector attack in book X, they are both compared to birds of prey (X 139; 308). This technique is more remarkable, however, when it leads to the juxtaposition in the poem of two similes related in content which are not prompted by the same occasion in the narrative. In these cases, neither the narrative itself, nor the tenor of the simile, appears to prompt the variation of a stock comparison. This technique is responsible for the astonishing effect at X 317, not long after Achilles has been compared to Sirius, the dog-star (X 26). Now his spear, about to kill Hector, is compared to Hesperus, the most beautiful of the stars that shine in the sky:

οἷος δ' ἀστὴρ εἶσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ
ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῶ ἴσταται ἀστήρ,

⁵⁷ The idea of Hector's intermittent shining is curiously echoed at M 463: νυκτὶ θεῶν ἀτάλαντος ὑπώπια· λάμπε δὲ χαλκῶ.

⁵⁸ See WHITMAN (above, note 12) 143.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 143; 137—139. WHITMAN's Unitarian conclusion is stated on 153.

ὧς αἰχμῆς ἀπέλαμπ' εὐήκεος, ἦν ἄρ' Ἀχιλλεύς
 πάλλιν δεξιτερῆ φρονέων κακὸν Ἔκτορι δίω. . . (X 317—320).

Perhaps we are again meant to recall the plan of Zeus: the evening star represents the end of Hector's day of glory⁶⁰ (literally, in fact, one day has intervened; cf. Σ 354 and T 1). At the same time, κάλλιστος (318) focuses attention on Achilles and his supreme heroism. There is a kind of balance in the application of the simile. Perhaps the net effect, and certainly the most concrete interpretation, is the extraordinary distancing from the action (an effect not unlike that of the star simile at the end of book Θ, though the tension there is less acute). At the climax of the poem, our attention is directed to the majestic movement of the beautiful evening star through the heavens⁶¹. This technique of variation in similes within a narrow compass of the text is far from the variation of stock material to produce related similes for related occasions; rather, it strongly suggests the innovative variation of traditional material by an individual poet for his aesthetic purpose.

Other examples of this type of deployment of similes occur in books Φ and X. For example, at Φ 257, the river Skamandros in its pursuit of Achilles is compared to the water from a spring that is guided by a man into a channel to irrigate his plants and gardens: the rush of the water is too strong to be controlled; at Φ 346, Hephaestus' fire is compared to the autumn wind that dries a man's freshly watered garden. Toward the end of book Φ, Achilles' rout of the Trojans is compared to the smoke ascending from a burning city, afflicted by the wrath of the gods (522—525); in an explicit foreshadowing of the fall of Troy, the lamentation of Priam and the Trojans at the death of Hector is compared to the burning of Ilion (X 410—411). This pair of similes, in turn, perhaps recalls the comparison applied to Achilles as he goes to shout at the ditch in book Σ: the flare around his head is like the distress signal of a beleaguered city, summoning the men of neighboring islands to its aid (Σ 207—214).

How much deliberate patterning is there in the similes of the *Iliad*? There is certainly less, as I have indicated, than in a work such as the *Aeneid*, and it is patterning of a different sort. On the other hand, the connections of simile with narrative, the concentrations of similes with significance for particular themes, and the dynamics of the similes themselves are anything but simple. The last point has long been appreciated; one might illustrate it once more with

⁶⁰ Compare *Iliad* O 613—614.

⁶¹ For the earlier star simile, see Θ 555ff. One can also compare the effect of θεοὶ δ' ἐς πάντες ὄρωντο at X 166, during the race around the city. That Tacitus knew the value of such distancing as a dramatic device is evident from his account of the burial of Agrippina, after the highly charged chapters relating her murder: *mox domesticorum cura levem tumulum accepit, viam Miseni propter et villam Caesaris dictatoris, quae subiectos sinus editissima prospectat* (Ann. 14, 9, 1).

the complex comparison applied to Odysseus at Λ 474—481, an example of a simile which seems to acquire a semi-independent existence; though Odysseus here is plainly equivalent to the stag, and Sokos to the huntsman, the equation of Menelaus and Ajax to the lion is problematical. The connections of simile clusters and theme have been touched on by H. FRÄNKEL and by WHITMAN, who in addition to his analysis of the fire imagery in the *Iliad* (particularly convincing and significant for Achilles), pointed to patterns dealing with wind and cloud⁶². It is perhaps suggestive that in book K, long agreed by most scholars to be a later interpolation, there is an atypically tight patterning of similes, basically involving only two vehicles. The first simile (Agamemnon's turmoil like the lightning and storm of Zeus, K 5—10) is balanced by the last (stolen horses like rays of the sun, 547), and complemented by the second (Diomedes' bronze like the lightning of Zeus, 154). In an interlocking pattern, the third simile compares the Greek sentries to dogs who hear a wild beast as they guard sheep (183—189), and the fifth shows Diomedes and Odysseus pursuing Dolon like two hounds who chase a deer or a hare (360—364); the fourth simile compares the Greek heroes to two lions (297—298), while the sixth shows Diomedes killing the Thracians as a lion attacks unguarded goats or sheep (485—488). This elaborate degree of structure is not typical of the epic as a whole⁶³.

I have tried to point to other connections of the similes with the narrative, primarily in book Λ , and to suggest some further concentrations of imagery related to the themes of the *Iliad*. It is difficult, however, to explain such series of unique similes as we have in book O: the thinking traveler at 80 (unparalleled for its comparison of a god's journey to the swiftness of a man's thought, i. e. in both occasion and content), the sandcastles at 362, the horse-jumper at 679. Book X also presents a series of surprises: the race-horses at 162, the man in a dream at 199, and the evening star at 317, though, as we have seen, the technique of association and creative variation applies to the last. The first of this series illustrates the difficulty of analyzing the logical relationship of some similes to their narrative contexts; this simile is probably the most puzzling instance in the *Iliad*. The narrative describes the pursuit of Hector by Achilles around the walls (X 158—161):

⁶² See WHITMAN 147—153; H. FRÄNKEL on storm, rock, sea, and clouds (above, note 12) 16—25; compare WEBSTER (above, note 37) 227—239, and J. T. SHEPPARD, *The Pattern of the Iliad*, London 1922.

⁶³ For a fuller treatment of the similes in Iliad K, see SCOTT (above, note 13) 119—135. I have omitted K 351, a measurement comparison, as not very significant, since I do not think it affects the pattern (or disturbs it). SCOTT notes the sophistication of the invader/invaded motif at K 183, 297, 360, and 485, and calls it uncommon (132—133); he also points to the atypical nature of the occasion for the lightning simile at K 5, distinguishing it from the stock comparison of Diomedes' arms to fire at K 154.

πρόσθε μὲν ἐσθλὸς ἔφευγε, δίωκε δὲ μιν μέγ' ἀμείνων
καρπαλίμως, ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήϊον οὐδὲ βοείην
ἀρνύσθη, ἅ τε ποσσὶν ἀέθλια γίγνεται ἀεδρῶν,
ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἔκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο.

But the simile, which immediately follows, compares the two runners to race-horses who run in games for a man's funeral to compete for a great prize, a tripod or a woman (X 162—164):

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἀθλοφόροι περὶ τέρματα μώνυχες ἵπποι
ρίμφα μάλα τρωχῶσι· τὸ δὲ μέγα κεῖται ἄθλον,
ἧ τρίπος ἢ γυνή, ἀνδρὸς κατατεθνηῶτος·

There may be a foreshadowing here of the games in book Ψ; the composer's mind may have flashed forward to Achilles setting up the contests at Patroklos' funeral (a woman and a tripod are said to be the first prize for the horse race at Ψ 262—265). Or, if the simile is an interpolation, a later poet, familiar with the passage in book Ψ, may have fashioned the comparison along the same lines. But it is difficult to believe that an interpolator would have chosen such an apparently unpromising context for this simile's insertion⁶⁴. It seems more likely that two different aspects of the scene are being stressed by the poet: first the gravity of the race (not for prizes but for life), and next its swiftness (as with race-horses who compete for prizes). A linear progression is the only method available for these emphases; here again, the modern critic may be forced to suspend his standards of logic and decorum.

Such a simile is plainly detachable from the narrative. But, as we have seen, detachability is no proper criterion for judging the genuineness of the similes. If we approach them, however, with the aim of trying to see to what extent they enrich the narrative, in ways beyond poetic color and relief, our critical judgment may be more firmly based. The patterns in similes in the *Iliad* that have so far been found (and the examination of them here lays no claim to being exhaustive) and the variations from those patterns point to two conclusions: a) the similes, in the absence of firmly dated linguistic evidence to the contrary, are not likely to have been created later than the monumental period of composition, and b) they may occasionally provide material for the critic who wishes to explore how the poet contributed from his own genius to his traditional inheritance. In addition, the examples of similes placed near each other and

⁶⁴ One may note that there is a slight difference: the narrative speaks of men running, the simile of horses. WEBSTER (above, note 37) 234 believes that the simile is prepared for by the earlier comparison of Achilles to the ἵππος ἀθλοφόρος that runs in a chariot race at X 22. But the prize is not emphasized in the earlier simile.

related in content where the narrative would not necessarily prompt repetition of a basic, stock comparison (such as warrior-lion) may sensibly be reconciled, at the least, with the hypothesis of oral composition. This last must remain speculative, since there is too little evidence to *prove* the oral nature of the similes along these lines⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ I am happy to thank Professors B. C. FENIK and J. J. KEANEY for helpful suggestions.

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ADDENDUM. As this essay goes to press, it is a pleasure to note the publication of W. SCOTT, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Leiden 1974 (see above, note 13).

ARREST AND MOVEMENT: PINDAR'S FIFTH NEMEAN

Like many a Pindaric ode, *Nemean* 5 proceeds in a rhythm of stops and starts. The confident invocation to 'sweet song' (2b) slows down to a halt (σάσομαι, 16b) after the disturbing allusions to Phocus' death (9—18), starts up with new confidence and new metaphors after silence (19—21), slows down again, after the first high point of the Muses' song (22—26) in Hippolyta's attempted seduction of Peleus, and then, with Peleus' resistance and consequent union with »the golden-spindled Nereid« (36), marches triumphantly to its end, closing with a full-voiced paean to the glories of Pytheas' clan (50—54).

This breaking off and starting up again is a conventional epinician device¹. Yet in *Nemean* 5 Pindar handles it with a self-consciousness and an insistence which unite narrative technique and meaning, form and content. He achieves this effect by contrasting two recurrent images: staticity and movement. With the motif of movement is linked another major motif, the

¹ E. L. BUNDY, *Studia Pindarica* = Univ. of Calif. Publ. in Class. Philol. 18, 1962, nos. 1 and 2; see E. THUMMER, *Pindar, Die isthmischen Gedichte*, Heidelberg 1968—69, I, 123ff. I am not concerned in this paper with the kind of rhetorical structure of encomiastic motifs studied by these authors, but rather with the latent, secondary structure created by contrasts and parallels between different sections of the ode.