A Survey of the Functions of Similes in Homer's *Odyssey*

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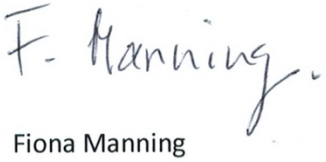
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.



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Abstract

Occurring in various forms and lengths in Homer's *Odyssey*, similes have been viewed as superfluous, mostly decorative, devices that have only a limited connection to the surrounding narrative. Consequently, attention to any other functions of similes has been limited. In my thesis I draw on a list of functions adapted from metaphor theory in order to investigate the similes of the *Odyssey.* My aim is to determine what types of functions each simile performs. My examination reveals that no two similes necessarily perform the same functions; rather, similes in the *Odyssey* perform a range of functions in the narrative. Similes may assist in explaining events, and they may fill lexical gaps in the story. Some shorter similes spotlight particular moments. Similes may emphasise parallels and contrasts in the narrative. Through carefully chosen comparands similes also assist in maintaining the audience's engagement with the story. Their function is rarely limited to that of decoration.

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Introduction

Homeric Similes

The poems of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the oldest substantial extant works in Western literature, are enhanced by a range of diverse literary and poetic devices. These include the use of long lists, type scenes, epithets and direct speech. One poetic device that is used to a significant degree is the simile.

Similes occur in various forms and lengths in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; the *Odyssey* contains significantly fewer similes than the *Iliad*. Some similes are very short, such as 'Agamemnon sprang at them like a lion' (*Iliad* 11.129) [1]. There are also longer similes that are expanded with descriptive phrases and, in a significant number of cases, further clauses.[2] These longer similes are often referred to as 'Homeric' similes or 'epic' similes because, from a modern perspective, they are unusual and distinctive owing to their length and the manner in which they set a scene and draw a likeness.

Similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are especially renowned not only for their length but also for their *enargeia*—the vividness and energy of the image created in just a few lines. They are much admired and as a consequence have been imitated and adapted by subsequent writers.[3] Whereas the aesthetic attributes of similes have been well studied, little cohesive attention has been paid to

[1] Rieu 2003: 184.

[2] The short and longer similes are sometimes referred to respectively as 'closed' or 'nuclear' similes and 'open' or 'extended' similes. See Tsagalis 2012: 351. See Ben-Porat (1992: 745–748) for a detailed discussion of open and closed similes and the 'transferable attribute' (the *tertium comparationis*).

[3] These include Hesiod, Apollonius Rhodius, Virgil, Milton, and Pope.

the functions of similes, to what it is that they contribute to the poem. Greater attention has been directed to the similes of the *Iliad*, probably because of their much higher number.[4]

In this thesis I examine the similes of the *Odyssey*, individually and sequentially, to determine their various contributions to the poem. In this introduction I summarise what scholars have observed about the functions of Homer's similes in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In Chapter One I describe some important elements of similes, I outline a range of functions of similes from a broader narratological perspective, and I set out the methodology of my study. In the following chapters I examine each simile in turn. In my conclusion I identify significant aspects of Homer's practice with regard to his deployment of similes in the *Odyssey*.[5]

Attention to Homer's similes can be traced back as far as Aristotle, who examined theories of comparison in his work on rhetoric; he regarded similes as a genus of metaphor.[6] More recent views on some aspects of similes have contributed, as I show below, to the lack of enquiry into other aspects, notably the functions of similes.

One approach to the Homeric similes was a tendency to dismiss them as somewhat superfluous devices, possibly even diachronic interpolations and certainly unnecessary to the narrative. The question of the age of Homeric similes and their place of origin occupied scholars until well into the

[4] See Bassett (1921: 133–135) for a summary of the views of Eustathius of Thessalonika and of other pre-and early 20th century commentators. Simile functions identified include their use to mark out crises in the narrative, to depict the indescribable, to convey the mood of the moment and to emphasise a certain point in the text. There was no general agreement upon these functions.

[5] For the purposes of this thesis I shall refer to the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as 'Homer' or 'the poet' although I hold the view that the works were composed by different poets.

[6] Aristotle, Rhetoric 3.4.1. See Kirby (1997) for a discussion of Aristotle's views on metaphor, including similes. See McCall (1969) for a detailed analysis of early rhetorical theories on metaphor and simile. See also Levin 1982.

twentieth century. Some scholars adopted the view that the similes were later interpolations while others pointed to a specific period encompassed in the similes.[7]

Another possible reason for the limited attention to the question of the functions of similes was a view prevalent in nineteenth century German scholarship that there was generally only one point of correspondence (*Vergleichungspunkt*) between a simile and the surrounding narrative.[8] Therefore, the function of any simile was viewed as quite limited.

There has, however, been an intermittent increase in interest in the subject of simile function since the early twentieth century. In 1921, Samuel Bassett identified a limited role for similes. He pointed to the contrasts between many aspects of the simile vehicles and the surrounding narrative in a number of respects—time, place, the role of man, social status, political situation, and the contrast of emotions.[9] He noted that similes tend to include an element of the universal and concluded that the lyric nature of similes contributes to making the mind of the listener 'more responsive to the mood or action of the narrative'.[10]

Hermann Fränkel, a contemporary of Bassett, adopted a broader approach, which enabled him to appreciate the flexibility of similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He identified several different functions for similes. These include the reinforcement of the effect of the narrative moment through the doubling of the narrative's image by use of simile, and the capacity of similes to express mood and other abstract features of images, to 'spatially unify confused elements' such as groups of troops, or to compress time elements. Furthermore, he concluded that similes may be deployed to

[7] For example, Shipp (1972: 212) claimed that longer similes probably developed later than the short comparisons and through them 'the world of the poet and his audience asserts itself'.
[8] Bassett (1921: 135) comments that German editors have made much of the *Vergleichungspunkt*, 'the essential point of the comparison'.
[9] Bassett 1921: 136–138.
[10] Bassett 1921: 147.

provoke or convey emotion, to embellish the performance, or to add a touch of exaggeration to the moment.[11] He observed that few similes perform only one function.[12]

Fränkel commented that different subject groups of similes dated from different times.[13] He observed that the similes reflect an unaffected natural world unlike that depicted in the main narrative of the *Iliad*. He assumed that the fewer number of similes in the *Odyssey* was due to a greater presence of powers of nature and naturalistic animals in the main narrative.[14]

Cecil Bowra described several discrete functions. These include the use of similes to provide variation in the narrative in a fighting scene, to signal pauses and changes in the action, and to end scenes.[15] He noted that an accumulation of similes may create emphasis on a scene or mark a crisis, and that different similes may be used to illustrate different aspects of a single scene.[16]

In 1957 Michael Coffey supported earlier views that similes may have more than one function.[17] He states that 'the primary function of the Homeric simile … is to illustrate either a concrete action in the narrative or a series of actions … in which abstract qualities are important to a greater or lesser degree'. Coffey recognised that some similes may vary the 'tension of the narrative' and advised that each simile should be examined individually and on its own terms.[18]

[11] Fränkel 1997: 103–105.
[12] Fränkel 1997: 105.
[13] Fränkel 1997: 122–123. For example, Fränkel views agricultural similes as less developed and unified than weather similes.
[14] Fränkel 1997: 110.
[15] Bowra 1977: 123–125.
[16] Bowra 1977: 125.
[17] Coffey 1957: 117.
[18] Coffey 1957: 132.

The similes of the *Odyssey* were the subject of particular attention by Anthony Podlecki. He noted that several similes, including some short similes, are used to underscore themes in the *Odyssey*.[19]

Informed by the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory, William Scott examined Homer's similes as oral poetry.[20] In his comprehensive study, he identified at least 16 families of traditional subject matter,[21] and examined their use in similes at customary points in the narrative.[22] Scott proposed that the poet's reliance on traditional subject matter would have allowed him to concentrate on composing the expanded similes.[23]

A marked difference between the two epics, according to Scott, is the presence of continuing themes in similes in the *Odyssey* such as that of family relationships and the use of similes to foreshadow revenge.[24] With particular reference to the similes of the *Odyssey*, Scott noted that similes that may appear to the modern audience to be unique in terms of subject matter may have actually been frequent in epic tradition.[25] Scott argued that any perceived difference between the epics in the use of similes is due to the different nature of the plot with its varied settings and range of characters.[26]

In 1977 Carroll Moulton explored the association between similes within each of the Homeric epics.[27] He focused on certain elements that may create associations between similes: for example, simile sequences connected by repeated imagery, patterns of integration between similes and

[19] Podlecki 1971: 82.
[20] Scott 1974.
[21] The traditional families identified by Scott are lion similes, wind and sea similes, fire similes, gods and goddesses similes, tree similes, wolf similes, deer similes, stele similes, diver similes, hunting similes, similes of children, similes of swarms of insects, fish similes, river similes, bird similes, and farm animal similes. See Scott 1974: 56–95.
[22] Scott 1974: 12–55.
[23] Scott 1974: 88.
[24] Scott 1974: 122–123.
[25] Scott 1974: 57.
[26] Scott 1974: 121.
[27] C. Moulton 1977.

narrative, and the use of consistent imagery for characterisation.[28] He concluded that similes may be linked in these ways for a range of purposes, including to intensify a narrative moment, to balance it or contrast it, or to highlight narrative themes.[29] He observed that there is less use of this associative technique in the *Odyssey*.[30]

Helene Foley focused on the similes of the *Odyssey* alone. In a work that reflects developments in gender politics, she observed that the unexpected point of view or 'role reversal'— 'an inversion of social role or theme'—in some similes in the *Odyssey* occurs mostly in similes concerning Phaeacia and Odysseus' family.[31] She suggested that these inversions reflect the loss of a sense of identity and the sexual roles of the characters and, therefore, the loss of social stability—a situation that needs to be remedied before societal order is restored in the story.[32]

Irene de Jong has drawn attention to the importance of examining Homer's similes from a narratological perspective for a greater appreciation of their role in the surrounding narrative.[33] Richard Martin, on the other hand, has claimed that the poet adopts a 'rhythmic' approach with regard to the placement of similes.[34] He asserts that past commentators have taken too narrow an approach to similes by adopting either a rhetorical or a thematic approach in isolation from each other.[35] He claims that similes mark out narrative segments, like transition shots in a movie, and are not positioned in the middle of the narrative action.[36]

[28] C. Moulton 1977: Chapters 1–3.
[29] C. Moulton 1977: 27.
[30] C. Moulton 1977: 120.
[31] H. Foley 1978: 7.
[32] H. Foley 1978.
[33] De Jong 1985.
[34] Martin 1997: 144.
[35] Martin 1997: 144.
[36] Martin 1997: 146.

Elizabeth Minchin has introduced a new perspective to Homeric studies from the field of cognitive science. From a mind-based perspective she shows how similes are generated as image and word in response to a narrative moment. Drawing upon Andrew Goatly's list of functions for metaphor,[37] she presents a list of nine functions for similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[38]

Richard Buxton (2004) has noted that the *Iliad* is concentrated and limited by location, time and action and even the social group of characters. In his view, Homer uses similes to individualise and to add poignancy to the fates of otherwise insignificant warriors.[39] The similes of the *Iliad* cumulatively build up a picture of the world outside the narrative.[40] Buxton observes, however, that the *Odyssey*'s similes do not construct a comparable outside dimension to the main narrative, which already depicts a world that is rich, complex and diverse.[41]

Building upon his earlier findings concerning traditional subject matter and simile placement, Scott has more recently hypothesised that, in order to compose similes, the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* relied upon a mental process of decision trees, which he describes as 'similemes', and which are based on traditional referentiality.[42] He has argued that the audience must have had a comprehensive understanding of the traditional alternatives available to the poet.[43] He suggests that series of similes composed in this manner were used to delineate character, plot or narrative theme.[44]

[37] Goatly 1997: 148–167.
[38] Minchin 2001: 138–139. I outline these functions in detail in Chapter One.
[39] Buxton 2004: 149–151.
[40] Buxton 2004: 153.
[41] Buxton 2004: 149.
[42] Scott 2009: 14–31.
[43] Scott 2009: 31–37.
[44] Scott 2009: 42–126.

Jonathan Ready identified another function for some similes in the *Iliad*—that similes in both character-text and narrator-text may be deployed as linguistic mechanisms of competition.[45] He concludes, however, that there is less opportunity in the *Odyssey* for competitive dynamics in simile use. He attributes this to the reduced competition between characters for the spotlight in the *Odyssey* and the greater attention on Odysseus as the poem's one protagonist.[46]

Christos Tsagalis introduced a new perspective to Homer through his study of the importance of space in the *Iliad* in both the main narrative and in similes. He identifies a close association between the spaces in which events are located in the main narrative and the spaces envisioned in similes and asserts that '*the storyteller uses homologous visual mappings for the space of narrative scenes and corresponding similes*' (author's emphasis).[47] Tsagalis concludes that some similes in the *Iliad* may function as mnemonic devices for the poet—'similes are the spatial hooks on which visual imagery is hung, making memory recall "on the run" a reality of performance'.[48]

From this brief survey of similes and their functions it can be seen that there has been a range of disparate views on the functions of similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Scholars have tended to view the similes of the *Odyssey* as performing somewhat different functions to those of the *Iliad*. There is some consensus that Odyssean similes are more likely to have thematic associations and some scholars view its similes as more intrinsic to the work as a whole. Although there has been a number of studies of individual or groups of similes in the *Odyssey*, there has not been a comprehensive examination of the corpus of similes in the *Odyssey* to determine their functions. The aim of the present project, an examination of the functions of the similes of the *Odyssey*, is to fill this gap in the scholarship.

[45] Ready 2011: 261.
[46] Ready 2011: 264–272.
[47] Tsagalis 2012: 277.
[48] Tsagalis 2012: 345.

In Chapter One I summarise significant aspects of similes, discuss possible functions, and outline the methodology of my study.

Chapter One

The Simile: Nature and Functions

In this chapter I explore what a simile is, its form and its essential elements, then I outline possible functions of similes. To conclude I describe the methodology of my study.

Nature and Form of Similes

In terms of literary theory, a simile has been defined as follows:

> An explicit comparison between two different things, actions, or feelings, using the words 'as' or 'like'.[1]

The most easily identifiable simile occurs in the form '*a* is like *b*', although many similes occur in other less frequent forms.[2] A simile differs in form from a metaphor.[3] For example, the metaphor equivalent of 'the boy is like a lion' would be in the form 'the boy is a lion', that is, without the similarity marker 'like' or 'as'.[4]

Terminology

In this thesis I maintain a clear distinction between metaphor and simile unless noted otherwise but I draw on the cognitive science of metaphor theory where that theory has been applied to similes.[5] I

[1] Baldick 2015.

[2] For other possible simile constructions in English, see Israel 2004: 125.

[3] Metaphors occur in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but I shall not examine them unless they occur within a simile that is under discussion.

[4] Veale (2009: 1376) notes that similes are always marked so that they will be construed as comparisons.

[5] There is ongoing disagreement as to whether a simile is a type of metaphor or a separate device. There are two main schools of thought—the *comparison* theory that acknowledges the differences in form of the two figures of speech but views similes and metaphors to be essentially equivalent in meaning, and the *categorisation* theory which does not view similes and metaphors as equivalent. See Addison (1993: 402–403) for a concise summary of the development of the two schools of thought and their ancient and modern proponents. See also Glucksberg 2006: 360–61.

use the terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle' when discussing the properties of similes.[6] In the simile 'the boy runs like a lion', the tenor refers to the part of the simile that contains 'the boy', and the 'vehicle' refers to the part of the simile that contains 'the lion'. I use the term 'comparand' when more generally discussing the tenor or the vehicle.

Essential Properties of Similes

Although every simile is a comparison of some sort, not every comparison is a simile.[7] The comparison 'the boy walks like his brother' is a simple comparison but not a simile, but the comparison 'the boy runs like a lion' is a simile because of the dissimilarity of the comparison of the boy with a lion.

An essential element of a simile is that there must be a significant element of dissimilarity between the tenor and vehicle (the comparands) as well as some properties in common. This element of dissimilarity in a simile contributes to the distinction of a simile from a simple resemblance.[8] There must, however, be some feature of similarity that can be mapped from the vehicle onto the tenor to effect the understanding of the tenor. Therefore, to enable the common elements to be understood but to engage interest and understanding, the level of dissimilarity must operate within limits.[9] If the comparands are very similar the simile will not engage the listener in a constructive and memorable

[6] Other terms are sometimes used in metaphor and simile theory to describe the components of metaphors and similes. Alternative terms for tenor are 'target domain' and 'standard'. Other terms for 'vehicle' are 'source domain' and 'base domain'. I have chosen to use the pair of terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle', terms that Ready (2011) borrows from Richards (1936). I shall use the more general term 'comparand' to denote each of the entities involved in the comparison and the term 'simile' when discussing both parts of the comparison as a whole unit, that is, both tenor and vehicle together.

[7] Ready (2011: 11–26) comments that similes lie on a spectrum of comparison with simple comparisons towards one end of the spectrum and similes towards the other end.

[8] Some scholars argue a simile must contain a figurative element: see Miller 1993: 371–375. For an opposing view see Addison 1993: 402–419.

[9] Minchin (2001: 134) succinctly sums up this requirement stating, 'Certain specific aspects of target domain and vehicle *must* be similar; others are of necessity dissimilar'.

way; if they are very dissimilar the listener may become distracted from the narrative in which the simile occurs or may not even draw the requisite link between the tenor and vehicle.[10]

Forms of Homer's Similes

Homer's similes occur in several forms but they most frequently consist of a comparison connected by the linking word 'ὡς'.[11] In some similes the vehicle precedes the tenor.[12] This vehicle/tenor construction is rare in English but occurs frequently in similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[13]

Aim of Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to examine each simile in the *Odyssey* to ascertain its function(s). I have chosen to apply the list of possible functions adapted by Minchin from Goatly's list of functions of metaphors because it encompasses most of the disparate functions identified by scholars up to the present.[14]

Functions

Below I outline the ten functions. Although each of these is a separate function, any simile that we encounter in any context may perform more than one function simultaneously.

[10] Minchin 2001: 134.

[11] See Lee (1964: 17–21 and 62–64) for details of the range of words or phrases introducing similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

[12] I refer to these as 'pre-positioned' similes.

[13] One famous example used for rhetorical effect in a British legal judgment is the simile 'As a moth is drawn to the light, so is the litigant drawn to the United States': Lord Denning, Master of Rolls, in *Smith Kline & French Lab Ltd v Bloch* (1983) 2 All ER 72, 74.

[14] These include the use of similes to embellish or decorate the narrative, to add emphasis to an event, choice of subject matter to illustrate an event, associative technique and narrative placement of similes. I shall not consider the function proposed by Tsagalis—that the similes help guide the poet through the main narrative— nor Scott's theory of simileme usage to construct similes. My examination is limited to functions that directly affect the audience's reception of the simile.

1. Similes as Explanation and Modelling

The simile may guide the listener to interpret the narrative in the way the poet wishes. Essentially a simile may be used to clarify the exact nature of the narrative moment that the poet wants to communicate, especially where there may be alternative interpretations. For example, at *Iliad* 3.2 when the Trojans enter the battlefield with much noise and many cries, they are compared to cranes fleeing wintry storms that make much noise as they fly towards the ocean.[15] The reference in both comparands to the noisy cries (κλαγγῇ 3.2/κλαγγὴ 3.3) indicates that the poet is explaining the din made by the advancing Trojans.

Although we do not have comprehensive information about ancient audiences, we can assume that many experiences narrated in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* would have been unfamiliar to listeners.[16] Therefore, a simile might be used to explain an unfamiliar concept in terms familiar to the listener.[17]

2. Reconceptualisation

A simile may also be used to reconceptualise the tenor so that the subject in the tenor is seen in a new and surprising light. Edwards brings his own definition to the function of reconceptualisation—proposing that 'the independent life of the simile contributes a new idea to the vividness and color of the main tale'.[18] One example is the simile where Ajax the Greater's resistance to the Trojans' attack upon him is illustrated by his comparison to a stubborn donkey in a cornfield resisting the boys' beatings (*Iliad* 11.558).

[15] I use the simile line numbering in Scott 1974: 190–205. I prefix Iliadic simile references with '*Iliad*'.
[16] See Tsagalis (2018) for a survey of the information known about rhapsodic recital events.
[17] Goatly (1997: 150) notes that metaphor is frequently used in science to explain abstract principles in concrete terms.
[18] M. Edwards 1987: 107.

3. Filling Lexical Gaps

A simile may be used to fill a lexical gap where there is no other sufficiently concise way of describing the event. For example, the simile describing Menelaos standing guard over the body of Patroklos, as a cow stands over her first-born calf (*Iliad* 17.4), clearly conveys the protective nature of Menelaos' guarding of Patroklos' body, and his hostility towards any person who might try to remove the body from his protection.

Pairs of similes may be deployed to illustrate different aspects of a scene. For example, the similes that compare Ajax first to a vexed lion driven away from the cattle despite his courage (*Iliad* 11.548), and then to the stubborn donkey mentioned above (*Iliad* 11.558), convey some of his different emotional responses as he fights the Trojans.[19]

4. Expressing Emotional Attitude

This is considered by Goatly to be one of the major functions of metaphor.[20] With reference to similes Minchin comments that the 'impact derives from the tension … between the notable similarities and dissimilarities between it and the target domain and the emotional associations of each'.[21] The simile guides the audience towards the emotional interpretation the poet wishes to communicate.

This function encompasses the situation described by Edwards where there is another tacit but significant meaning contained in a simile.[22] He gives an example of this—the simile illustrating Achilles' gleaming armour, armour that gleams like the dog-star, a sign of evil for mortals (*Iliad*

[19] M. Edwards 1987: 109.
[20] Goatly 1997: 158.
[21] Minchin 2001: 138.
[22] M. Edwards 1987: 104.

22.26). The simile points to the fact that Achilles too will eventually bring evil to Priam, who at this moment is watching him. The armour itself arouses fear and apprehension, like the emotions aroused by the dog-star. This simile foreshadows events to come in the narrative and conveys the threat to the Trojans of Achilles in his armour. The audience experiences the emotions at second hand that would be felt by the characters *within* the simile.

5. Decoration and Hyperbole

The use of a simile for adornment—as a decorative element adding pleasing grace notes to the narrative—was in the past a common reason given for the function of Homer's similes and reflected a widely-held view of the main function of similes.[23] This function of the simile was often invoked to account for the frequent use of similes in battle scenes in the *Iliad.* This function was, however, usually cast in the negative light of providing relief from the boredom of the battle scene, rather than as providing positive adornment.[24]

The use of a simile to illustrate an event may make the text more engaging and in certain circumstances may enable the listener to have both a mental and physical break from the narrative.[25]

Decorative elements may include hyperbole as, for example, in the simile that describes the robe Hecuba offers to Athene as shining like a star (*Iliad* 6.295).

[23] For example, see Shorey 1922: 256.

[24] Shorey (1922: 256) states that the simile's chief purpose was to provide relief from the monotony of battle.

[25] For example, Hadas (2008: 184–5) comments on the audience's reaction at an *Iliad* recitation marathon to the similes at the beginning of Book 3. 'The spate of similes … seemed to come as a distinct relief to us hearers, supplying as it did a change of texture and pace at what amounted to a brief break in the action …. People felt free to smile, shift their weight in their seats, perhaps even get up and resettle themselves'.

6. Cultivation of Intimacy

Minchin describes this function as one that emerges from 'the mutual understanding between speaker and listener'.[26] The listener has to draw upon his own knowledge to understand the poet. The choice of content of many similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* supports this function. Many of the longer similes comprise unique wording on unique subject matter, that is, wording and subject matter not found elsewhere in the poems.[27] Edwards notes that the worlds of most of the longer similes are everyday familiar worlds, full of ordinary people, in a universal setting, taking part in everyday activities.[28] An example of a simile that requires the listeners' comprehension to understand it is the poet's comparison of the Achaeans as they pour out of their ships to wasps that have been stirred up in their nests by boys (*Iliad* 16.259).

This use of the simile works in several ways. It aligns the listener with the point of view of the poet by creating a bond of understanding between the two of them but it also works to the poet's advantage by promoting a sense of cohesiveness amongst his audience. By drawing upon shared knowledge or experiences the poet is creating a common basis of understanding and interest in the story between members of his audience—a sense of shared intimacy in the moment among them that may continue once the story finishes as the listeners revisit the story amongst themselves, sharing their understanding and appreciation of the narrative.

[26] Minchin 2001: 138.

[27] M. Edwards 1987: 103.

[28] M. Edwards 1987: 103. Redfield (1975: 186), commenting on the narrow, enclosed nature of society presented in the *Iliad*, a society based upon fighting and which is neither viable nor complete, points out the role of the similes in opening the narrative to the wider world of peace: 'each simile is a kind of window through which we glimpse a world beyond the battlefield of Troy. Through the device of the simile, the wider world is included in the narrower'.

7. Textual Structuring

Similes may be used in a number of different ways to structure the narrative. They may be used to emphasise certain points of the action, to join scenes, or to emphasise certain contexts.[29]

In some parts of the narrative in the *Iliad,* the poet slows down and even creates pauses in the narrative by using certain devices, such as descriptors of family background, or a succession of similes to engage the listener's attention. Thus he is able to build up suspense in his audience. For example, before the first battle in the *Iliad* the poet deploys a series of similes to illustrate the marshalling of the opposing armies (*Iliad* 2.455; *Iliad* 2.459; *Iliad* 2.469).

Textual structuring encompasses foreshadowing or anticipation of narrative action. The inclusion in a simile of such material may create a firmer tie to events in the main narrative. Foreshadowing in itself increases tension and emotion in an audience.[30] It is one important way of signposting the direction of the narrative to come, for example, by creating a sense of foreboding.[31] Another method of textual structuring is by way of including thematic references in similes. These may reinforce the thread of the main narrative and act as signposts early in the story to important narrative themes.

8. Enhancing Memorability, Foregrounding and Informativeness

A simile may be used to make the subject matter of the tenor more memorable or more noteworthy for the listener. This may be achieved through a combination of aspects—the choice of striking

[29] Scott (1974: 12–41) identifies nine thematic contexts in which similes often occur. These include the journeys of the gods, measurement, actions of divine beings, themes of specific emotions, similes for variation of standard themes, general scenes of armies, summary scenes before battle, entrance of the hero, and withdrawal of the hero. Scott (1974: 42–55) identifies four contexts of simile placement as poetic technique—emphasis on anticipated meetings, the joining of two scenes, emphasis in short episodes and emphasis of continuing motifs throughout the larger narrative.

[30] M. Edwards 1987: 105.

[31] Dué (2012: 4) suggests that Achilles' comparison of himself to a mother bird going without for the sake of its chicks (*Iliad* 9.323) potentially foreshadows his deep emotions when Patroklos is killed. See Duckworth (1966) for an examination of forecasting and suspense in Homer.

subject matter for the vehicle, the momentary delay of narrative progress by inclusion of a simile, and as a marker by the poet of the importance of the moment. For example, Odysseus' movement as he patrols his troops is compared to that of a bellwether ranging though his flock of white, woolly sheep (*Iliad* 3.196). A longer simile may draw more attention from the listener because of the greater attention it draws to the subject of the tenor.

A simile may foreground the particular point of comparison that the poet wishes to emphasise. An example of this is the simile in which Paris, running swiftly towards the battle in his gleaming armour, laughing aloud, is compared to a stallion which, having broken out of its stable, runs towards the field of mares glorying in its strength and beauty. Homer is emphasising Paris' joy in his strength and beauty rather than his speed (*Iliad* 6.506).[32]

The inclusion of a simile inevitably will enhance memorability of the narrative moment that it describes.[33] The vehicle of the simile is in effect a repetition of the subject matter in the tenor in a different form.[34] The repetition itself emphasises the subject's importance.

9. Prolonging the Audience's Pleasure

The deployment of a simile at a particular point may also give the listener opportunity to linger on that particular moment in the narrative. For example, a brief simile that allows the audience to linger just a little longer on the moment is that when Hector's son, Astyanax, is compared to a shining star (*Iliad* 6.401).

[32] M. Edwards 1987: 107.

[33] Minchin 2016: 24–26.

[34] Fränkel (1997: 104) comments that similes were a means of allowing the poet to double the narrative's impact by dwelling on the subject.

10. Other—Competitive Dynamics

A function of similes that is not covered in the nine functions outlined above is that of competitive dynamics. Ready argues that at least some Homeric similes function as mechanisms and sites for competition.[35] He states that similes are used by the narrator and characters as an agonistic mechanism to compete for narrative attention, with characters seeking not only to outdo each other through spoken similes but also to outdo the narrator. Ready focuses most of his examination upon similes in the *Iliad*. With regard to the *Odyssey* he concludes that the nature of the *Odyssey* with its central figure of Odysseus as a man without any competitor of similar standing does not lend itself to the competitively oriented simile sequences of the *Iliad*.[36] Nevertheless, I shall look for this function in the *Odyssey*'s similes.

Methodology

I shall examine each simile in narrative order. This may seem to be a mechanical approach but it allows for consideration of each simile against its surrounding narrative.[37] This reduces the risk of commenting upon similes with little or no regard to their context or speaker, a practice that is not uncommon in some older scholarly works.

Earlier in this chapter I noted Ready's argument that similes, likenesses and comparisons lie upon a spectrum of comparison.[38] This raises the issue of determining when is a simile a simile and when is it not. For simplicity I have chosen to use the list of similes identified by Scott but I acknowledge the

[35] Ready 2011: 4.

[36] Ready 2011: 270.

[37] My decision to adopt this approach was influenced by Fenik (1968) who chose to present his commentary on battle scenes in the *Iliad* in order of narrative. I found this system of presentation very efficient and informative, especially with regard to his comments on similes.

[38] Ready 2011: 11–26.

validity of Ready's argument.[39] When I use the term 'comparison' in this thesis I mean the concept of comparison between the two comparands that is embodied in a simile.

For forms of Greek words and names I have chosen to use those in the 'List of Entries' in *The Homer Encyclopedia*.[40]

I have chosen to exclude five groups of similes from individual examination. The first group comprises similes that may be transformations.[41] There is nothing that I can contribute to this discussion. The second group is that of similes comparing characters to unspecified gods,[42] and the third group comprises similes that I consider to be mostly decorative.[43] The fourth group comprises similes of measurement or extent.[44] There is a small group of other similes that for a range of reasons I shall not examine individually.[45] I list any similes that will not be examined individually in my introduction to each book.

In the following chapters I explore the functions of the similes in the *Odyssey*. In my conclusion I draw together by function my observations on the individual similes of the *Odyssey*.

[39] See Scott 1974: 200–205.

[40] See Finkelberg 2011: vi–xvi. I use the spelling in Murray (1995a) and Murray (1995b) for any other names or terms not included in the list.

[41] For example, Athene is compared to a bird as she flies upwards (1.320).

[42] For example, Telemachos is compared to a god in looks when he rises for the day (2.5), and he is compared to the immortals after he is bathed in Nestor's palace (3.468).

[43] For example, the women working in King Alkinoos' palace twist yarn, their hands fluttering like the leaves of a tall poplar (7.106).

[44] For example, Odysseus compares the level of Skylla's voice to that of a newborn pup (12.86).

[45] For example, I will not examine some repeated similes, such as 23.158 and 23.159.

Chapter Two

Books 1–4

In this chapter I examine the similes in Books 1–4 of the *Odyssey*, the section known as a whole as the Telemachy.[1] These four books describe Telemachos' meeting with the disguised Athene (Book 1), the meeting of the Ithacan Assembly (Book 2), and Telemachos' voyage to Pylos and Sparta to learn news of his father (Books 3 and 4).[2]

Book 1 sets the scene for the story. Odysseus has not returned to Ithaca from the Trojan War. His whereabouts are unknown and his home is being exploited by a group of young men, the suitors, who are eager to marry his wife, Penelope. They have been depleting the household's resources through constant feasting and Odysseus' son, Telemachos, who is on the cusp of adulthood, is powerless to deter them.

Book 1

There are, at most, three similes in Book 1. I shall examine the first simile, which is spoken by Telemachos to the disguised Athene (1.308) but not the other two. The second simile compares Athene's departure to that of a bird (1.320).[3] In the third simile Telemachos likens the bard Phemios to the gods in voice (1.371).[4]

[1] Book 1 commences with the Prologue in which Athene requests Zeus' approval to assist Odysseus's return home. This is not part of the Telemachy. The final part of the Telemachy is contained in Book 15. See Bertman (1966) for an analysis of the structure of the Telemachy.

[2] H. Clarke (1963: 141) comments that the Telemachy has been considered to be a sort of *Bildungsroman*. See Alden (1987) for a discussion of Telemachos' story in the *Odyssey*.

[3] This may be a transformation rather than a simile: Pulleyn 2019: 191. See Pucci (1987: 114 n7) for a bibliography on the issue of transformation versus simile. See also Bushnell 1982: 8–10.

[4] Pulleyn (2019: 214) comments that the simile means that Phemios is 'excellent—on account of his voice'. His voice is not literally like that of a god.

1.308

τὴν δ’ αὖ Τηλέμαχος πεπνυμένος ἀντίον ηὔδα·
ξεῖν’, ἦ τοι μὲν ταῦτα φίλα φρονέων ἀγορεύεις,
ὥς τε πατὴρ ᾧ παιδί, καὶ οὔ ποτε λήσομαι αὐτῶν.[5] 308

And in turn wise Telemachos answered him, ‘Stranger, indeed you have spoken these kind thoughts, like a father to his child, and I shall never forget them.’[6]

This short simile is spoken by Telemachos in reply to Athene-Mentes.[7] This is the first of four parent/child similes spoken by Telemachos.[8] The primary function of the simile, for Telemachos as internal narrator, is to express his appreciation of Athene-Mentes’ encouraging words advising him to call an assembly to tell the suitors to leave his house (1.269–278) and then to travel to Pylos and Sparta to learn news of Odysseus from Nestor and Menelaos (1.279–286).

This comprehensive advice is unexpected but obviously welcome to Telemachos.[9] Telemachos’ candid expression of thanks to Athene-Mentes, likening her advice to that of a father, underscores his preoccupation with his fatherless state.[10] He accepts the advice of someone who shortly before was a total stranger to him, an approach that differs markedly from his father’s cautious behaviour towards strangers that we see later in the narrative.

For the external audience the simile performs further functions. The poet has already told us about Telemachos’ morose thoughts and wishful daydreams about his father’s return (1.113–117). His

[5] Greek passages have been downloaded from www.scaife://perseus.org.
[6] Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. I have aimed for accuracy rather than elegance.
[7] When it is necessary to clarify that a character is disguised, I shall refer to him or her by their own name hyphenated with the name of their disguise. For example, in this scene Athene has disguised herself as Mentes so I refer to her as Athene-Mentes.
[8] In Book 2 Telemachos compares his father’s rule over Ithaca to that of a gentle father. He describes Nestor’s welcome in parent/child terms when telling his mother about his visit to Pylos (17.111). He sarcastically describes Antinoos’ care for him in similar terms (17.397).
[9] See Murrin (2007) and Belmont (1969) for discussions of Athene’s relationship with Telemachos.
[10] Telemachos also lacks maternal male relatives to guide him in Odysseus’ absence. See Bremmer (1983) for a discussion of the important role of those relatives in ancient Greece.

direct speech forcefully conveys the extent of his need and longing for his father and highlights the pathos of his situation.[11] Furthermore, these words illustrate that he has been lacking the guidance and support that a father should provide. Although very brief, Telemachos' words are emotional and memorable.[12]

By allowing Telemachos to demonstrate his feelings through the simile, that is, to focalise his situation through his own words, the external audience becomes invested in the character. This simple simile is loaded with emotional implications of what he is lacking—protection, security, guidance, companionship and family—concepts which the audience would comprehend.

Telemachos' candid conceptualisation of Athene-Mentes as a father, when we know her to be a female goddess in disguise, provides an element of surprise and amusement to the external audience. The external audience may recall that in the *Iliad* Athene was compared to a mother of Odysseus and may understand the natural extension of Athene's parental concern to Odysseus' son.[13] There is irony in the fact that Telemachos likens Athene-Mentes to a father, thanking her for advice on what action to take in the absence of his actual father.[14]

[11] Telemachos acts more like an illegitimate child than Odysseus' son when we first see him. He is closely associated with his mother, remains inside the home and, in terms of maturity, is closer to a child than a man. See Ebbott (2003) for a comprehensive discussion of illegitimacy in Greek literature. Telemachos himself expresses a degree of uncertainty about his parentage (1.215–220) even after Athene-Mentes' reassurance that he resembles his father (1.206–211). Helen also recognises Telemachos as Odysseus' son (4.138–144). Austin (1975: 164) states succinctly that 'Telemachos is a young man of undefined status, undefined purpose, undefined role'. See Christensen (2018: 132–137) for an examination of Telemachos' 'learned helplessness'.

[12] D. Beck (2008: 163) notes Tannen's 1986 finding that quoted dialogue in a story increases the story's drama and therefore the listeners' involvement.

[13] *Iliad* 23.783. The relationship between Odysseus and Athene is somewhat different in the *Odyssey*. At times it is more akin to an uneven partnership. This is most evident in Book 13 when Odysseus arrives back on Ithaca.

[14] H. Clarke (1963: 138) comments that Telemachos' experiences have, until this moment, been mostly vicarious in that 'he listens, observes, absorbs'. In this respect the simile form itself reflects that vicariousness in Telemachos' life.

The simile, although short, raises the theme of parent/child relationship in the context of a narrative which introduces a guest in disguise (a hint of later developments) and which takes as its focus Telemachos' maturation.

Telemachos' conversation with Athene-Mentes introduces us to several themes in the *Odyssey*—*nostos*, family reunion, *xenia*, theoxeny, and the importance of long-standing family friendships, associations that can be resumed even after long intervals. Telemachos' thanks are both sincere appreciation of her advice and an acknowledgement of the long-standing ties of friendship and hospitality that allow such advice to be offered and accepted.[15]

The placement of the simile marks a significant moment—Telemachos accepts Athene-Mentes' advice and therefore decides to change his life. This simile marks the conclusion of Telemachos' and Athene-Mentes' private conversation. After this Telemachos reverts to the role of hospitable host, offering Athene-Mentes a bath and guest-gifts (1.309–313).[16]

[15] Murnaghan (1987: 157) observes that Telemachos' words demonstrate his acknowledgement that other people can assist him to claim his birth right.

[16] See Mari (2016) for an analysis of Telemachos' and Athene's conversation as a paradigm of good Greek hospitality. Race (1993: 82) notes that in the *Odyssey* the way in which a character provides hospitality reflects his ethos. Telemachos distinguishes himself from the suitors by noticing the guest at the door and greeting her in an appropriate manner.

Book 2

In this book we see Telemachos follow Athene's advice. After Athene's visit Telemachos orders the suitors to leave his house for good and to cease courting his mother. The suitors refuse and resume feasting (1.368–423). Telemachos calls the assembly of the Ithacans together (2.6–7) to seek their support to oust the suitors from his house.

It is unclear from the *Odyssey* how the kingship of Ithaca was supposed to work, but the lack of direction caused by the absence of an authority figure becomes clear when the assembly meets.[17] This leadership vacuum stands in stark contrast to Zeus' leadership seen at the beginning of Book 1.

There are only three similes, all short, in Book 2. I shall not discuss the first simile. It is a short simile likening Telemachos to a god in appearance as he rises for the day (2.5). The other two similes are discussed below.

[17] See Geddes (1984: 28–36), Cairns (2015), Cairns (2018), and Silvermintz (2004) for discussions of the concept of kingship in Homer.

2.47

τὸ μὲν πατέρ’ ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα, ὅς ποτ’ ἐν ὑμῖν
τοίσδεσσιν βασίλευε, πατὴρ δ’ ὡς ἤπιος ἦεν·
νῦν δ’ αὖ καὶ πολὺ μεῖζον, ὃ δὴ τάχα οἶκον ἅπαντα
πάγχυ διαρραίσει, βίοτον δ’ ἀπὸ πάμπαν ὀλέσσει.

First, I have lost my noble father who once ruled among you and who was gentle as a father, but now in turn [there is something] even greater by far which will presently entirely destroy my household and deprive me of my livelihood.

This simile is the first of two similes in Book 2 that reconceptualise Odysseus as a leader who was like a gentle father to his people.

This is the first assembly on Ithaca since Odysseus left for Troy.[18] Before Telemachos begins to speak, the poet gives us an indication of the type of assembly member that Telemachos is facing by describing the details of one member, Aigyptios, who queries the calling of the assembly (2.25–34). The poet informs us that Aigyptios is a hero and the father of four sons: one son accompanied Odysseus to Troy, one is a suitor of Penelope, and two others assist him on the farm (2.15–24). From this we, the external audience, can deduce that Telemachos is facing a group of mostly mature men of his father’s generation or older, some of whom have conflicting interests. The fact that this assembly meeting is the first since Odysseus departed suggests that no other person has taken over his leadership role.

The simile spoken by Telemachos early in his speech to the assembly must be examined in the context of his internal audience. Telemachos tells the audience that two evils have afflicted his household—his father’s non-return and the depletion of his household by the suitors (2.45–49).

[18] Dobel (2006: 218) blames Laertes’ self-imposed exile for the societal problems of Ithaca in the *Odyssey* story. His view, however, overlooks the fact that Odysseus was king before he departed for Troy so Laertes must have given up his kingship before Odysseus left Ithaca.

Telemachos begins by invoking his own loss of his father. In deploying the simile vehicle of family relationship he cleverly extends his loss to the assembly members by pointing out that they share his loss in the absence of Odysseus' gentle, fatherly leadership.[19] This connection is emphasised by the adjacent placement of the words βασίλευε, πατὴρ (2.47). Through this extension of the concept of kindly parent to the assembly, Telemachos attempts to cultivate the men's intimacy as a group with past shared interests.

Furthermore, by conceptualising Odysseus as a kindly father to the entire Ithacan community, Telemachos attempts to awaken within the audience a sense of familial responsibility towards himself as Odysseus' son, calling on them to control their own suitor sons (2.50–58).

Telemachos' deployment of the simile at the beginning of his speech allows him to build quickly upon the positive feelings engendered towards his family before he requests assistance.

This simile performs several functions for the external audience. Through Telemachos' direct speech the poet emphasises the grief of his fatherless state. This is the second spoken simile where Telemachos invokes a comparison with a father.

From Telemachos' conceptualisation of his father as a fatherly ruler, the external audience learns that Odysseus ruled Ithaca fairly and well. This extends the detrimental effect of Odysseus' absence to the whole of Ithaca through the absence of his good leadership. The assembly's subsequent failure to act upon Telemachos' appeal proves the existence of this void. The external audience would appreciate the benefits of good governance as well as good parenting. This amplifies the relevance of the story of Odysseus' return.

[19] West (1988: 133) notes that such a degree of concern for his people should not be taken for granted by a community.

The placement of the simile at the beginning of Telemachos' speech harnesses the primacy effect of memory—that the first point or item of information is more memorable than those that follow. Telemachos continues by trying to invoke a sense of guilt and responsibility for the behaviour of his listeners' sons, or a promise of action from those without suitor sons.

This simile touches on two major themes of the *Odyssey*—the importance of good family relationships and of good governance.

2.234

κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἴπω·
μή τις ἔτι πρόφρων ἀγανὸς καὶ ἤπιος ἔστω
σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς, μηδὲ φρεσὶν αἴσιμα εἰδώς,
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ χαλεπός τ' εἴη καὶ αἴσυλα ῥέζοι·
ὡς οὔ τις μέμνηται Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο
λαῶν οἷσιν ἄνασσε, πατὴρ δ' ὣς ἤπιος ἦεν.

Now, listen to me, Ithacans to what I shall say. No longer let one who is a king bearing a staff be eager to be kind and gentle, with honest zeal, knowing just things in his heart. But let him always be harsh and do unjust things as nobody remembers divine Odysseus who was ruler of his people and was gentle like a father.

This simile is identical to that spoken by Telemachos earlier in Book 2 (2.47). This time it is spoken by Mentor who addresses the Ithacan assembly.

Despite initially garnering sympathy from assembly members, Telemachos receives a hostile response from two of the suitors, Antinoos and Eurymachos, and no support from the Ithacan assembly. Mentor, to whom Odysseus had entrusted the safe care of his household when he left for Troy, addresses the assembly (2.229–241).

By contrast with Telemachos' first polite speech to the assembly, Mentor's speech comprises a strong rebuke to the assembly as a whole for not agreeing to take action against the suitors. Mentor's speech is not a reply to the denials, excuses and accusations from the suitors but a criticism of the assembly's failure to support Telemachos. It is telling that most other members of the assembly have remained silent. His conceptualisation of Odysseus as a gentle, fatherly ruler comes at the most emotional point of his speech as he finishes telling them that they deserve a cruel ruler because they have forgotten the gentleness of Odysseus. His use of the same words as Telemachos for the vehicle of the simile is a verbal reminder of Telemachos' initial appeal for assistance. Mentor is trying to shame his audience into action. His strident speech is based on a hope that the assembly will be frightened into assisting Telemachos. He dwells on the consequences

for the assembly members in the future—poor governance, and a dire fate for the suitors—because of their lack of action. This contrasts with Telemachos' speech, whose pleas drew on the past.

To the internal audience Mentor's conceptualisation of Odysseus as a fatherly ruler explains his anger at their lack of action. Mentor focusses on the qualities of a good king—they have forgotten his kindness and therefore deserve nothing good. His use of the same phrase as Telemachos (2.47) to describe Odysseus affirms Odysseus' qualities as a ruler. In Mentor's eyes Telemachos' characterisation of Odysseus was neither an exaggeration nor a misconception.

The simile performs several functions for the external listener. Mentor's deployment of the same simile confirms Telemachos' claim that his father was a gentle, fatherly ruler. The poet's use of direct speech for Mentor's words lends emotional depth and urgency to his address.

The similes spoken by Telemachos and Mentor 'bookend' the speeches made at the assembly and affirm Odysseus' leadership qualities. The assembly's failure to act paves the way for an unhappy outcome for the suitors and their relatives at the end of the story.

Book 3

Telemachos, accompanied by Athene disguised as Mentor, arrives at Pylos (3.1–12). Nestor and his sons welcome them and provide appropriate hospitality (3.29–68). In reply to Telemachos' request for information about his father, Nestor tells about his own homecoming. He touches briefly upon the fate of some other Achaeans (3.102–200), including Agamemnon, whose murder by Aigisthos was avenged by Orestes (3.301–312).

There are only three similes in Book 3. I shall discuss the first below. I shall not examine the second, where Athene departs like a bird as she leaves Menelaos and Nestor (3.372),[20] nor the third simile, where Telemachos is compared to the immortals after he has been bathed (3.468).

[20] It is unclear whether Athene transforms into an eagle or whether she just departs like an eagle, for example, swiftly: Jones 1988: 31. See also Thumiger 2014: 390–391.

3.290

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ καὶ κεῖνος ἰὼν ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον
ἐν νηυσὶ γλαφυρῇσι Μαλειάων ὄρος αἰπὺ
ἶξε θέων, τότε δὴ στυγερὴν ὁδὸν εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
ἐφράσατο, λιγέων δ’ ἀνέμων ἐπ’ ἀυτμένα χεῦε,
κύματά τε τροφέοντο πελώρια, ἶσα ὄρεσσιν. 290

But when he too, having travelled over the wine-faced sea in the hollow ships, came [swiftly] to the steep mountains of Malea, far-sounding Zeus devised a hateful path and poured down gusts of shrill winds. And the waves grew enormous in size, like mountains.

This short simile is narrated by Nestor who is describing Menelaos’ voyage home from Troy. An important function of the simile for both the internal audience, Telemachos, and the external audience is to explain the size of the waves encountered by Menelaos’ ships. This measure is indicative of the ferocity of the storm that destroys some of the ships. The simile adds elements of hyperbole and decoration to the description of the waves.

This simile is one of two similes in the *Odyssey* that refer to mountains to convey the height of waves.[21] It is also one of four similes where the size of something is explained by reference to mountains.[22]

Scott comments that the comparisons of waves to mountains ‘do not lend any ascertainable atmospheric touch to the narrative but merely express size’.[23] This may be true with regard to other similes of this group, but in my view the location of the storm, near Cape Malea, explicitly referred to by Nestor (287), lends a more ominous, individualised note to the simile. Cape Malea with its steep slopes, located at a southern point of the Peloponnese, had to be rounded by ships travelling

[21] Scott 1974: 21. The other simile is at 11.243.
[22] The Cyclops Polyphemos is compared to the wooded peak of high mountains (9.191) and the wife of Antiphates, the Laestrygonian, is likened to a mountain (10.113). Scott (1974: 21) notes that all these similes are of indefinite measurement. He suggests (at 81) that the use of this comparison may stem from a system of traditional usage in epic poetry for this combination.
[23] Scott 1974: 120–121.

from one side of the Greek peninsula to the other. The area is known for its changeable and dangerous weather.[24] Nestor's mention of the Cape gives specificity and authenticating detail to his second-hand telling of Menelaos' voyage home. Cape Malea must have been an important nautical landmark because it is mentioned in the tales of several heroes' returning sea voyages as the point at which they are blown off-course.[25] At least some of the ancient Greek audience would have known of the dangers of this area, if only by its notoriety for mariners.

Mountains themselves had negative associations for the Greeks. Buxton comments that 'mountains were outside and wild'.[26] Rood refers to them as 'a wild, undomesticated area'.[27] For the external listener the comparison of the waves to mountains, with their implicit association with danger, magnifies the threat of the waves.

The simile itself effectively places Menelaos' audience—Telemachos and the external audience—at the same geographical level as the ship's crew. The waves are huge and through the comparison we, the audience, experience the waves towering above.

[24] Romm 2011: 496. Stanford (1996a: 260) refers to Cape Malea as 'the Cape Horn of Greek navigators'. Georgiou (2012: 527) notes that even today experienced sailors are cautious around Cape Malea.

[25] Proteus tells of Agamemnon reaching Cape Malea (4.514). Odysseus mentions to the Phaeacians that he reached Cape Malea on his voyage homeward (9.80–81). In his lying tale to Penelope, when claiming to be a Cretan named Aithon, he tells Penelope that Odysseus rounded Cape Malea (19.187).

[26] Buxton 1994: 88.

[27] Rood 2008: 33. See also Felton 2012: 105 n12.

Book 4

Book 4 begins with the arrival of Telemachos and Peisistratos at Menelaos' palace. In response to Telemachos' request for news of his father, Menelaos tells of various heroes' voyages home, including that of his brother, Agamemnon, and his subsequent murder, and passes on Proteus' report that Odysseus was captive on an island. The scene shifts back to Ithaca where the suitors plan Telemachos' death. Penelope is upset when she learns of their plans and that her son has travelled across the sea.

There are nine similes in this long book (847 lines). I shall examine six similes. I shall not discuss line 310, where Menelaos' appearance is likened to that of a god (4.310).[28] Nor shall I discuss the simile where Proteus with his seals is likened to a shepherd among his flock (4.413),[29] or the simile where Antinoos' eyes are likened to a blazing fire (4.662).[30] These similes seem confined to the moment of the narrative.

[28] This simile marks Menelaos' entrance.

[29] This short simile is spoken by Proteus' daughter Eidothea to Menelaos, and repeated by Menelaos to Telemachos. The reconceptualisation of Proteus as a shepherd efficiently explains Proteus' protective attitude towards his seals.

[30] Antinoos becomes very angry when he learns that Telemachos has travelled overseas (4.656–662). Scott (1974: 67–68) notes that fire similes occur in the context of anger in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Other examples are at *Iliad* 1.104, *Iliad* 12.466, *Iliad* 19.17, and *Iliad* 19.366. Lateiner (1995: 43) observes that 'the eyes index the spirit'. See, more generally, Cairns (2005: chapter 6) for an examination of ocular interaction in ancient Greek culture.

4.32

τὸν δὲ μέγ’ ὀχθήσας προσέφη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος·
οὐ μὲν νήπιος ἦσθα, Βοηθοΐδη Ἐτεωνεῦ,
τὸ πρίν· ἀτὰρ μὲν νῦν γε πάϊς ὣς νήπια βάζεις.
ἦ μὲν δὴ νῶι ξεινήια πολλὰ φαγόντε
ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων δεῦρ’ ἰκόμεθ’, αἴ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς
ἐξοπίσω περ παύσῃ ὀιζύος. ἀλλὰ λύ’ ἵππους
ξείνων, ἐς δ’ αὐτοὺς προτέρω ἄγε θοινηθῆναι.

And, exceedingly angered, fair-haired Menelaos spoke to him. ‘You were not foolish before, Eteoneus, son of Boëthoos, but now indeed, like a child, you say foolish things. Without doubt many times the two of us on returning here consumed food and drink as guests of other men. May Zeus in time halt our pain. But release the guests’ horses and bring the guests in to be feasted.’

This short simile is spoken by Menelaos as a reprimand toward his attendant Eteoneus for not immediately inviting Telemachos and Peisistratos into his (Menelaos’) house. The tone of Menelaos’ rebuke strongly conveys the intensity of his displeasure at his attendant’s unwelcoming behaviour.[31] The subject matter of the simile vehicle—reconceptualisation as a child—occurs several times in similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[32] This frequent use in similes to imply inappropriate or immature behaviour indicates that it must have been easily understood by the audience.[33]

Eteoneus’ aberration at this point in *xenia*-practice, marked by the simile, forms a strong contrast to the warm welcome that Telemachos and Athene-Mentor received from Nestor when they arrived at Pylos. Menelaos’ own warm reception of the young men is appropriate and in line with accepted

[31] There is no doubt that Eteoneus’ behaviour is rude. The poet tells us that Telemachos considers it shameful for a stranger to be left standing at the gate (1.119–120) and he goes to greet Athene-Mentes.
[32] For example, the wailing of the Achaean army longing to go home is compared to the wailing of children or widows (*Iliad* 2.289). Nastes’ unwarlike mode of dress is compared to that of a girl (*Iliad* 2.872). Hector tells Ajax not to try to frighten him as if he were a puny boy or woman (*Iliad* 7.235). Other examples of similes that draw unflattering comparisons of heroes to children include *Iliad* 13.292; *Iliad* 16.7; *Iliad* 20.200; *Iliad* 20.244; and *Iliad* 20.431. These similes are mostly found in direct speech. In the *Odyssey* Athene-Mentes tells Telemachos to set aside his childish ways (1.296–297) and Penelope refers to Telemachos as *nēpios* (4.818): Heitman 2005: 52.
[33] See Edmunds (1990) for a comprehensive examination of the concept of *nēpios* in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. She suggests (at 5) an alternative translation for this simile—that of ‘without foresight, blind’—but the severity of the reprimand remains the same. See also Ingalls 1998: 32–34.

practice of guest friendship. Eteoneus' reluctance to admit the young men suggests that he is more cautious; possibly he recalls the poor outcome of hospitality when Menelaos and Helen entertained Paris twenty years previously.[34] This simile is the obverse in content to Telemachos' simile when he thanked Athene-Mentes for speaking to him like a father to his son (1.308).

[34] Dimock (1989: 47) comments that ancient commentators proposed this reason for Eteoneus' reluctance to admit Telemachos and Peisistratos. Reece (1993: 78) canvasses several possible reasons for Eteoneus' rudeness.

4.45

οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες
θαύμαζον κατὰ δῶμα διοτρεφέος βασιλῆος·
ὥς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης
δῶμα καθ' ὑψερεφὲς Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο.

And on seeing it they gazed in awe as they went through the palace of the king cherished by Zeus. For there was a radiance as of the sun or of the moon throughout the high-roofed house of glorious Menelaos.

This is the second simile in Book 4. The simile, narrated by the poet to the external audience, marks Telemachos' and Peisistratos' entry into Menelaos' palace.

The simile illustrates the semi-divine quality of Menelaos' palace as perceived by Telemachos and Peisistratos.[35] The poet prepares us for the young men's reaction by describing the outside walls as 'shining' (4.42) and the building as 'divine' (4.43).[36] The poet's placement of the word ἰδόντες early in the sentence (4.43) introduces a subjective element to the description, enabling the listener to see everything through the eyes of Telemachos and Peisistratos. Through this focalisation we, the audience, are invited to share their wonder as they walk through the palace.

The comparison of the radiance of the palace to the sun or the moon is not unusual. Amphimedon's shade deploys the same comparison to illustrate the brilliance of the shroud woven by Penelope (24.148).[37] The poet deploys the same simile later in the narrative to illustrate the radiance of King

[35] See Nagy (2016) for a discussion of Telemachos' arrival at Menelaos' palace, and, more generally, of bronze in ancient Greek verbal and visual art.

[36] De Jong (2001: 92) comments that these words provide the cue for focalisation from the boys' perspective.

[37] Scott (1974: 66–67) includes this phrase in the family of fire similes found in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He identifies three main contexts—gleaming objects, warriors in battle, and anger. Examples in the *Iliad* of gleaming objects illustrated by simile include Achilles' shield, which gleams like the moon (*Iliad* 19.374), and his helmet which shines like a star (*Iliad* 19.381).

Alkinoos' palace (7.84) when Odysseus is standing on the threshold.[38] Odysseus' reaction, however, is very different to that of Telemachos.[39]

[38] West (1988: 195) comments that Telemachos' reaction to Menelaos' palace foreshadows Odysseus' reaction to King Alkinoos' palace. In my opinion it does not foreshadow Odysseus' reaction; rather, the second deployment (7.84) invites the audience to compare the arrivals of Odysseus and Telemachos and to take note of their different reactions in similar situations.

[39] See Roisman (1994) for a discussion of these and other 'mirror image episodes' in the *Odyssey*. See also Reece 1993: 197–201.

4.122

ἦος ὁ ταῦθ’ ὥρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
ἐκ δ’ Ἑλένη θαλάμοιο θυώδεος ὑψορόφοιο
ἤλυθεν Ἀρτέμιδι χρυσηλακάτῳ ἐικυῖα.
τῇ δ’ ἄρ’ ἄμ’ Ἀδρήστη κλισίην εὔτυκτον ἔθηκεν,
Ἀλκίππη δὲ τάπητα φέρεν μαλακοῦ ἐρίοιο,
Φυλὼ δ’ ἀργύρεον τάλαρον φέρε, τόν οἱ ἔθηκεν
Ἀλκάνδρη, Πολύβοιο δάμαρ, ὃς ἔναι’ ἐνὶ Θήβῃς
Αἰγυπτίῃς, ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται·

While he pondered this in his mind and in his heart Helen came out from her fragrant, high-roofed room, like Artemis with her golden distaff, and with her (came) Adraste, who immediately positioned a well-made chair for her, and Alcippe who was carrying a rug of soft wool, and Phylo who was carrying a silver basket, which Alcandre had given her [Helen]. She was the wife of Polybus, who lived in Egyptian Thebes, where there is a great amount of wealth stored in the houses.

This simile marks out the first appearance of Helen in the *Odyssey*. Her entrance is seen from the point of view of Menelaos, Telemachos and Peisistratos. The comparison of Helen to Artemis is one of numerous comparisons with gods (usually not specified by name) that mark the first entrance of some characters in the *Odyssey.*[40] The comparison to a god is particularly apt in view of Helen’s divine parentage.[41] The simile shines the spotlight firmly on Helen;[42] every item that accompanies her is precious, rare and beautiful, implying the same qualities in Helen herself.[43] The list of her handmaidens suggests the nymphs that accompany Artemis.

[40] Scott 1974: 69.

[41] The sea god Proteus tells Menelaos that when he (Menelaos) dies he will go to the Elysian plain because he is the husband of the daughter of Zeus (4.561–569).

[42] Karanika (2014: 31) observes that Helen’s entrance, accompanied by her maids and her precious objects, is almost theatrical.

[43] This scene of almost divine opulence and comfort is counteracted, to some extent, by Menelaos’ expression of grief at the deaths caused by the Trojan War and its aftermath, and by the conflicting representations of Helen’s behaviour at Troy that Helen and Menelaos respectively later offer Telemachos and Peisistratos. See Doyle 2010.

The poet's choice of Artemis for the simile, rather than Aphrodite, suggests that Helen's role in the *Odyssey* is different from that in the *Iliad*.[44] There she was represented as the 'scarlet woman' who caused the war.[45] In that epic she was actively watched over by Aphrodite (*Iliad* 3.385–417) who is commonly associated with illicit passion, not marital love.[46] In the *Odyssey*, in the simile under discussion, the poet deftly fashions an image of a semi-divine, serene wife who devotes herself to constructive wool-work (thereby contributing to the household economy) joining her husband to entertain guests in their magnificent home.[47] Yet the irony of comparing Helen, once a disloyal wife, to Artemis, a virgin goddess who assists unmarried girls in their transition to marriage,[48] and who is the goddess of childbirth,[49] must have been evident to most adult, ancient listeners who had common knowledge of Artemis' characteristics and roles.

[44] Burkert (1985: 221) notes the frequent articulation of the opposition between the virgins Athene and Artemis, and Aphrodite in the polytheism of ancient Greece.

[45] See Blondell (2010) for an examination of Helen's characterisation in the *Iliad*.

[46] Saïd (2011b: 318) refers to Aphrodite as 'the embodiment of infidelity'.

[47] Felson-Rubin (1994: 170 n39) suggests a more restrictive interpretation of this passage. She proposes that Helen may have manipulated her image to present the appearance of chastity to Menelaos, Telemachos and Peisistratos. In my view there is no evidence to support this proposition.

[48] Sourvinou-Inwood 1985: 127.

[49] Hjerrild 2009: 41. The poet specifically tells us that Helen was not able to bear any more children (4.12–14).

4.335

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ κρατερόφρονος ἀνδρὸς ἐν εὐνῇ
ἤθελον εὐνηθῆναι ἀνάλκιδες αὐτοὶ ἐόντες.
ὡς δ’ ὁπότ’ ἐν ξυλόχῳ ἔλαφος κρατεροῖο λέοντος
νεβροὺς κοιμήσασα νεηγενέας γαλαθηνοὺς
κνημοὺς ἐξερέῃσι καὶ ἄγκεα ποιήεντα
βοσκομένη, ὁ δ’ ἔπειτα ἐὴν εἰσήλυθεν εὐνήν,
ἀμφοτέροισι δὲ τοῖσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφῆκεν,
ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς κείνοισιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσει.

And, very sorely angered, fair-haired Menelaos spoke to him: For shame, indeed, these people who are weak wish to lie in the bed of a stout-hearted man. Just as when in the thicket of a mighty lion a doe has laid her newborn tender fawns to sleep, and she has gone off to mountain ranges and grassy valleys grazing, and then the lion re-enters its lair and sends each of them (the fawns) to a grievous fate, so Odysseus will send them (the suitors) to a grievous fate.

This simile is spoken by Menelaos in response to Telemachos’ explanation for his visit to Sparta. Telemachos has explained how the suitors’ inappropriate behaviour is ruining his home and estate. This is the first long simile in the *Odyssey* and the first of its seven lion similes.[50] It is spoken by Menelaos in his shocked response to Telemachos’ description of the suitors’ behaviour at Ithaca. The simile has two audiences—Telemachos and the external audience. Menelaos’ direct speech heightens the emotional impact of the simile upon the external listener.

The simile performs several functions. It explains Menelaos’ outrage at the situation in Ithaca and his hopes for Odysseus’ revenge upon the suitors. His prediction of the suitors’ murder by Odysseus is emphasised by the near repetition of the phrase τοῖσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφῆκεν (4.339)/κείνοισιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσει (4.340) in the simile vehicle and the resumptive clause.

[50] The simile is repeated by Telemachos to his mother when he tells her about his visit to Sparta (17.126). That repetition is included in the total number of lion similes.

Menelaos' reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a lion and the suitors as fawns contributes to the vigour of his prediction.[51] The simile draws upon the audience's knowledge of epic imagery.[52] In the *Iliad* warriors are mostly heroic; those who are compared to lions are rarely defeated and those who are compared to deer are always defeated.[53] The conceptualisation of Odysseus as an apex predator and the suitors as fawns leaves no doubt that Menelaos believes that the suitors will meet a violent end at Odysseus' hands.[54] Menelaos' choice of this particular reconceptualisation of Odysseus reminds us that they were fellow warriors in the *Iliad*.[55]

The simile is located at the beginning of Menelaos' reply to Telemachos (4.333), which makes it memorable for the listener. The simile's lengthy vehicle precedes the short tenor. The events described in the simile have received valid criticism owing to their inaccurate portrayal of animal behaviour.[56] Scholars have also noted that, unlike the suitors in the narrative, the fawns themselves are not to blame for their situation.[57] The reference to the fawn's mother leaving her young in the

[51] It is noteworthy that Odysseus is compared to a lion only once in the *Iliad* (together with Diomedes [*Iliad* 10.297]).
[52] There are over 40 lion similes in the *Iliad*: Brelinski 2015: 7 n19. Von Glinski (2012: 84) comments that the lion in the Iliadic similes exalts heroic prowess. See Lonsdale (1990: Chapter 3) for an overview of lion similes in the *Iliad*. Greek knowledge of lions may have been limited. Burkert (1992: 19) comments that most Greeks would not have encountered a live lion—their familiarity with lions would probably have derived from seeing images. Alden (2005: 336–337) notes that lions, although rare, were to be found in northern Greece until the fourth century AD but were extinct elsewhere in Greece before the Classical period.
[53] Deer and fawns are always depicted as vulnerable or as prey in similes in the *Iliad*. For example, see *Iliad* 4.243; *Iliad* 21.29; *Iliad* 22.1; and *Iliad* 22.189. Keith (1914: 20) notes that the deer is always 'stricken with terror'. The simile under discussion is somewhat similar to that at *Iliad* 11.113 when Agamemnon is compared to a lion killing fawns in their lair but the mother is unable to protect her young and she flees. Aside from the repetition of the simile under discussion when Telemachos repeats Menelaos' prediction to Penelope (17.126), there are no other similes with deer or fawns in the *Odyssey*. The brooch that Penelope gave to Odysseus before he left for Troy features a fawn being strangled by a dog (19.225–231).
[54] The lion was viewed by ancient writers of natural history as powerful, fierce and brave: Kitchell 2014: 110. The deer commonly represented swiftness, fearfulness and defencelessness in Greek and Roman imagery, and was widely hunted: Kitchell 2014: 46.
[55] Fenik (1968: 24) notes that in the *Iliad* the lion is the most common subject to illustrate fighting men. Saïd (2011b: 70) comments that the lion in this simile is 'very close to the Iliadic tradition'. Cf. Poivre (2006: 112), who argues that there is nothing heroic about this lion because it neither attacks nor defends itself.
[56] West 1988: 213. The doe's behaviour in leaving her fawns in the lion's lair has been criticised as bizarre and absurd in terms of animal behaviour. Clayton (2011: 263) suggests the simile is memorable due to its implausibility with regard to animal behaviour and its pathos. Pache (2016: 6) adopts a more generous view, interpreting the simile as a vehicle to highlight themes in the *Odyssey*.
[57] West 1988: 213.

lair of the lion alludes to the earlier actions of the suitors' parents who rejected Telemachos' plea for assistance to restrain their sons.[58] The simile simultaneously foreshadows the outcome of the final confrontation between the suitors and Odysseus.[59]

Menelaos' outraged reaction to Telemachos' news and his wish for a victorious outcome for Odysseus are understandable given his brother's sad fate. Yet his very positive prediction for Odysseus is at odds with the reality of his brother's murder. His own brother could not evade death at the hands of one man, yet Menelaos expresses such certainty that Odysseus will overcome a large pack of suitors. This optimistic prediction may have a dual purpose—it provides narrative foreshadowing to the external audience and it may reflect the reality of Homeric manners—that it would be unseemly not to reassure Telemachos about his father, despite Telemachos' earnest request to hear the unvarnished truth (4.326–331).

The simile emphasises Menelaos' strong emotional response to Telemachos' news. This does not, however, amount to hyperbole in view of Menelaos' own experiences and the fate of his brother. Against this background his highly charged, indignant response is to be expected.

The simile touches on four main themes of the *Odyssey*—*xenia*, *nostos*, parental/child relationships, and revenge. As well as being the first lion simile in the *Odyssey*, it is also the first of a pair of lion similes in Book 4.[60]

[58] The poet specifically tells the listener in Book 2 that some of the suitors are the sons of local men, who, presumably, should know better than to allow their sons to indulge in such inappropriate conduct towards another man's wife and property.

[59] Foreshadowing is not confined to similes but occurs in a range of devices in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Duckworth (1966: 6) identified five ways of foreshadowing used by the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: 1) proemium and invocation, 2) direct statement or hint, 3) revelation of the effect of a prayer, 4) reference to the folly or blindness of a character, and 5) comparison.

[60] Feeney (2014: 200) comments that this simile and the simile at 4.791 answer one another.

4.535

τὸν δ’ οὐκ εἰδότ’ ὄλεθρον ἀνήγαγε καὶ κατέπεφνεν
δειπνίσσας, ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ. 535

And he (Aigisthos) led him, not knowing his doom, up from the sea and, having entertained him at dinner, he slaughtered him, as a man slaughters an ox at the manger.

This short simile spoken by Proteus, old man of the sea, to Menelaos during his voyage home from Troy, is repeated by Menelaos to Telemachos. Menelaos recounts Proteus’ description of the death of Menelaos’ brother, Agamemnon.[61] The simile fills a lexical gap about the nature of Agamemnon’s death—a quick and unexpected slaughter without honour in a domestic setting.

Proteus’ choice of animal to conceptualise Agamemnon is telling. In *Iliad* 2.480, Agamemnon, the supreme leader of the Achaean army, is compared to a bull, preeminent among cattle.[62] Elsewhere in the *Iliad* there are several instances of a dying warrior being compared to a stricken bull—images which create pathos for the warrior.[63] But Proteus reconceptualises Agamemnon as an ox or cow, not a bull.[64] Although the word βοῦς can refer to a bull, cow or an ox,[65] the ease with which the animal is killed as it stands at a feeding trough clearly suggests that it is an ox or a cow.[66] Very few bulls were kept uncastrated because they are aggressive and difficult to manage.[67] Apart from their

[61] The story of Agamemnon’s death is told several times in the *Odyssey* by different characters with different emphases. See D’Arms 1946, Olson 1985: 24–42, and Hölscher 1999. Thornton (1970: 2) comments that the poet’s placement of the story of Aigisthos’ crimes at the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.29–43) indicates the moral and religious theme which pervades the story.

[62] In most other similes in the *Iliad* the bull is usually a victim: Scott 2005: 35.

[63] Fenik 1968: 144. Examples include *Iliad* 13.571, *Iliad* 16.487, and *Iliad* 20.403.

[64] An ox is a castrated male bull: Kitchell 2014: 35.

[65] Cunliffe 2012: 73.

[66] In support of my translation, I point to the simile at *Iliad* 17.520. Aretos’ movement as he is killed is compared to that of ‘an ox of the fields’ when a man strikes it with an axe: Murray 1999b: 267. I note also that the poet does not use the term ταῦρος in this simile. See Ekroth (2014: 155) for a discussion of ancient Greek terminology for sacred laws and sacrificial calendars for cattle. Ekroth notes (at 167) that in myth, castration robbed one of all power.

[67] Most bulls were castrated when quite young: Jameson: 1994: 315. Castrated animals produce better quality meat and are easier to manage: Ekroth 2014: 154.

ability to sire offspring, bulls were of limited use. Oxen, however, were valuable working animals, used to plough fields and haul loads.[68]

The conceptualisation of Agamemnon as an ox or cow counters his characterisation in the *Iliad* as a unique individual, the supreme leader, and as a warrior. In this simile drawn from the everyday world he is likened to a common domestic animal dependent upon its owner for feed.[69] The slaughter lacks any higher purpose—there is no indication that the animal is being sacrificed to the gods.[70] His reconceptualisation as an ox of no further value alive can be seen as a reflection of Agamemnon's diminished status and powerlessness on return from Troy.[71]

Hospitality is an important theme in the *Odyssey*. The feast is supposed to be a time of replenishment, socialisation, and relaxation in a safe environment.[72] Even warriors expect to be safe when being entertained by a host—guests set aside their weapons as a matter of etiquette.[73] The location of the killing of the ox—at the manger, with its association with food, comfort and safety—parallels Agamemnon's situation. A survivor of both the Trojan war and of the perilous sea voyage home, he has achieved his physical homecoming and would expect to be safe back in his home country, yet he is killed at dinner by his own relative.

68 Kitchell 2014: 35–36; Lewis 2018: 32–33; Lonsdale 1990: 20.

69 Scott (2005: 36) notes that in the *Iliad* comparisons of warriors to farm animals imply that they are 'weak, helpless or pathetic'. This interpretation is consistent with Agamemnon's vulnerable situation as a guest of Aigisthos.

70 Saïd (2011b: 33–35) summarises the pattern of sacrificial banquets—the animal is sacrificed at an altar. As Henrichs (2000: 181) comments, 'the unheroic death of Agamemnon is compared with the equally anomalous killing of an animal at its manger, an action that violates the sacrificial code'.

71 Generally, cattle are of great value in Homer. Peacock (2011: 49) notes that cattle are depicted as a measure of value in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For example, Laertes bought Eurykleia for twenty oxen (1.431). It would be very wasteful to kill a valuable, working animal. The ox may be of no further use alive due to age or infirmity.

72 Ford (1999: 112) comments that in the *Iliad* Agamemnon uses feasts to promote solidarity among his leaders. In this regard Hunter (2015: 20–21) notes that Achilles' refusal to eat is a demonstration of his withdrawal from Achaean society. In the *Odyssey* feasts may present a risk to successful *nostos* either by causing delay, or through poor behaviour, as seen in Aigisthos' feast. A range of hospitality episodes is presented in the *Odyssey*, from the paradigm of good hospitality such as that of Nestor, through to Aigisthos' murder of Agamemnon: Bakker 2013: 42–43. Edwards (1993: 35) comments that 'the preparation of a meal [is] the strongest expression of community and reciprocity for Homeric society'.

73 For example, Telemachos takes Athene-Mentes' spear and puts it in the spear-rack when she arrives at his home (1.126–128).

The poet highlights the irregular aspect of Agamemnon's murder by the placements of δειπνίσσας at the beginning of line 535, of φάτνῃ at the end of the line, and of κατέκτανε in the middle. Aigisthos' crime is underscored by the difference in order between a normal feast and that held for Agamemnon. Hospitality comprises several elements performed in a fixed order including the animal killing, making offerings to the gods and sharing a feast.[74] Aigisthos' actions take place in the reverse order—dining and then killing.

The irony of comparing Agamemnon's sudden killing to that of a domestic animal is underscored by the reference two lines earlier to him as 'shepherd of the people' (4.532), an epithet frequently used for Achaean leaders in the *Iliad*.[75] The ox is neither aggressor nor protector of others as it stands at its manger. Proteus' comment immediately following the simile, that both Agamemnon's and Aigisthos' men were also killed (4.536–537), increases the irony of this epithet, because Agamemnon was unable to prevent his companions' death even in their homeland.

Proteus' report of Agamemnon's murder is embedded in Menelaos' narration of his own successful homecoming. The third-hand (rather than first- or second-hand) report should reduce the emotional impact of Agamemnon's death.[76] But it acquires authenticity and delivers significant emotional impact because Agamemnon's brother is narrating it. Moreover, Menelaos' source of information is a god; therefore, its accuracy is unquestionable.

[74] Hitch 2009: 67–68.

[75] For example, with regard to Agamemnon see *Iliad* 2.243, *Iliad*, *Iliad* 2.254, *Iliad* 2.772, *Iliad* 4.413, *Iliad* 7.230, *Iliad* 10.3, *Iliad* 11.187, *Iliad* 11.202, and *Iliad* 14.22. Examples of other warriors with this epithet are at *Iliad* 1.263, *Iliad* 2.85, *Iliad* 2.105, *Iliad* 4.296, and *Iliad* 5.144.

[76] Presumably Proteus, being a sea god, did not witness Agamemnon's murder himself. He does not reveal his source of information.

For Telemachos this is a cautionary tale—a paradigm of an unsuccessful homecoming without *kleos* that his father and even Telemachos himself may suffer.[77] The story of Agamemnon's murder adumbrates the suitors' ambush planned for Telemachos, which, like Aigisthos' ambush, takes twenty men to prepare it (4.669–672).[78]

The simile touches on several themes and motifs already encountered in the *Odyssey*—those of (disrupted) family reunion, hospitality, unlawful killing and *nostos*.[79] The simile is repeated by the shade of Agamemnon to Odysseus (11.411).

[77] Telemachos has also been told, by Athene-Mentes, of Agamemnon's murder. In that conversation she places the emphasis on Orestes' *kleos* earned from killing Aigisthos as a means of encouraging Telemachos to follow her advice (1.298–300).

[78] De Jong (2001: 110) suggests that the simile points to Odysseus' eventual slaughter of the suitors during a meal. See also Davies 1997: 107.

79 Felson-Rubin (1994: viii) notes that *nostos* is either successful or unsuccessful. An unsuccessful *nostos* offers three alternatives—'death at Troy, death at sea, death upon arrival'. Agamemnon's death is an example of the last alternative. Lateiner (1995: 191) refers to Aigisthos as 'the paradigm of *xenic* treachery'.

4.791

ἡ δ’ ὑπερωίῳ αὖθι περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
κεῖτ’ ἄρ’ ἄσιτος, ἄπαστος ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος,
ὀρμαίνουσ’ ἤ οἱ θάνατον φύγοι υἱὸς ἀμύμων,
ἦ ὅ γ’ ὑπὸ μνηστῆρσιν ὑπερφιάλοισι δαμείη. 790
ὅσσα δὲ μερμήριξε λέων ἀνδρῶν ἐν ὁμίλῳ
δείσας, ὁππότε μιν δόλιον περὶ κύκλον ἄγωσι,
τόσσα μιν ὀρμαίνουσαν ἐπήλυθε νήδυμος ὕπνος·

Thoughtful Penelope lay (in her room) upstairs, without food or drink, fasting, turning over in her mind whether her noble son would escape death or whether he would be overpowered by the arrogant suitors, just as a lion frets, fearing the crowd of men as they craftily encircle him. In just such a way she turned things over in her mind until sweet sleep came upon her.

This simile is located at the point in the narrative after Penelope has learnt that her son has left Ithaca seeking news of his father, and that the suitors are planning to kill him upon his return (5.696–714). At Eurykleia’s urging, she goes upstairs to pray to Athene for Telemachos’ safe return.

This is the first simile in the *Odyssey* to illustrate Penelope. The simile explains Penelope’s psychological state as she worries about her son.[80] She feels anxious about her son (ὀρμαίνουσε 4.789) just as the lion frets about its situation (μερμήριξε 4.791). The repetition of ὀρμαίνουσαν (4.793) in the resumptive clause reinforces Penelope’s anxious thoughts. The simile vehicle does not map neatly over the tenor—the lion is in grave danger surrounded by hunters but Penelope is not at immediate risk of harm from the suitors.[81] The image of a besieged lion could be seen as illustrating Penelope’s general situation in the story so far—the suitors are out to snare her and one of them may capture her to be his wife.[82] But the immediate threat at hand at this point in the narrative is to

[80] Russo (1968: 487) comments that ‘the image of the lion carries the burden of making vivid and easily graspable to the audience the rather complex state of Penelope’s feelings …. This method of portraying the inner workings of the mind is characteristically Homeric’.
[81] I agree with Pache (2016: 4) that ‘we need to consider the simile’s immediate context in *Odyssey* 4, the larger narrative of the *Odyssey*, and more broadly, lion similes in Homeric epic’.
[82] Hamilakis (2003: 240) notes that hunting in early farming societies symbolises masculinity and was often represented as power over women.

Telemachos, who is overseas and unaware of the suitors' plans for him. In my view the image illustrates both situations—Penelope's general situation with regard to her suitors and her current state of mind with regard to her son—Penelope is worrying about her child's safety just as much (if not even more so) as any potential victim would worry about itself when threatened.[83] She is an anxious mother powerless to avert the danger to her child.

The simile cultivates intimacy between the external listener and Penelope by creating psychological insight into her fears.[84] Penelope is a mostly remote character in the *Odyssey* so this insight marks out the importance of the moment.[85] The poet expects the listeners to draw upon their own emotional experiences to appreciate Penelope's emotions.

The poet's choice of a male lion for the simile has been variously interpreted as 'unbecoming' or as a means of endowing Penelope with masculine heroic virtues.[86] This latter interpretation relies upon the fact that lions in similes in the *Iliad* are mostly deployed for men in martial contexts.[87]

In my view Penelope's reconceptualisation as a lion is carefully chosen.[88] The *Odyssey* is a story of a different kind of battle from that in the *Iliad*—a battle between the suitors, whose behaviour is disrespectful and destructive towards Odysseus' household, and Odysseus and his family, who seek to maintain the established social and political structure. Penelope is actively pursued by the suitors

[83] Turkeltaub (2015: 288) offers a much narrower reading of Penelope's emotions, suggesting that she 'sympathizes with what she fears will happen to her son'.

[84] I disagree with Turkeltaub (2015: 288), who claims that Penelope 'mourns Telemachos as though he were already dead …'. In my view she is worried sick that he *will* be killed. Saïd (2011b: 71) views the lion as 'a vulnerable creature who is afraid'. This interpretation undervalues Penelope's strength of character.

[85] Nieto Hernández (2008: 43) notes that, unlike Odysseus, who tells his story in detail and at length to the Phaeacians, Penelope never tells her story in public.

[86] Shorey (1922: 245) comments that the simile has been thought of as 'unbecoming'.
Podlecki (1971: 84) rightly views this simile as a reminder of the close unity between Penelope and Odysseus.

[87] C. Moulton 1977: 124; Saïd 2011a: 365.

[88] Lonsdale (1990: 106) notes that there is a broad range of variation in lion similes 'from attack to flight in battle episodes'. He comments that 'lion similes … tend to be more psychological in emphasis than hunting similes …'.

but she subversively fights back in the only way available to her as a woman and a wife—resisting the suitors and deploying her devious scheme to delay completion of Laertes' shroud.[89] In this way she is just as much a warrior as Odysseus, albeit a warrior who has to resort to clandestine action.[90] At this moment in the narrative, however, she has no means of action available to her.[91] Her reconceptualisation aptly illustrates Penelope's situation at that moment and is not inconsistent with the varied usage of lion similes in the *Odyssey*.[92]

The inclusion of the simile creates a pause at this point in the story—a pause that forces the listener to take particular notice of Penelope's feelings. The pause contributes to the perception of the time she spends anxiously pondering.

The simile under discussion has been seen as a pair to the lion simile at 4.435, when Menelaos compares Odysseus to a lion returning to its lair and killing two fawns.[93] This simile, however, is more powerful than the simile at 4.435. That simile merely illustrates Menelaos' *hope* that Odysseus will be able to take revenge upon the suitors. This simile expands upon the significant and real danger for Penelope and Telemachos and casts her in the role of 'beleaguered lion'.[94] Magrath views the two similes as providing 'a parallel, through antithesis, in Penelope as the passive mate for Odysseus as the active lion'.[95] I agree that there is an association between the two similes, but I

[89] Penelope's trick was narrated angrily by Antinoos to the Ithacan assembly (2.85–128).
[90] Kundmueller (2018: 53) comments that Penelope's maintenance of her fidelity to Odysseus, by drawing on her intelligence to fend off the suitors, is just as demanding as the strength required by Odysseus to defeat enemies in battle. Felson-Rubin (1994: 21) describes Penelope as 'a ferocious potential victim, besieged but strong and resourceful'. Dimock (1989: 61) adopts a different view, regarding Penelope as bait in a trap set by the gods for the suitors.
[91] Montiglio (2016: 77–78) describes Penelope as being at an impasse at this point. Turkeltaub (2014b: 10) comments that 'at this moment [the lion] can only roil impotently in its encircling trap, much like Penelope's mind, exacerbating the emotional turmoil both of them feel at their impending dangers'.
[92] R. Friedrich (1981: 129) notes a different usage of lion similes in the *Odyssey* from that in the *Iliad*. I agree with his view.
[93] C. Moulton (1977: 139) regards them as associated similes. See also Saïd (2011b: 71) who sees a 'subtle link' between Penelope and Odysseus through the simile. See also Pache 2014: 68.
[94] H. Foley 1978: 10. I disagree with Naiden (1999: 197) who views the Odyssean lions as 'unprepossessing' in contrast to the lions in the similes of the *Iliad*.
[95] Magrath 1982: 207.

interpret this link somewhat differently. Penelope's reconceptualisation as a lion places her on an equal footing with Odysseus.

Menelaos' simile concerning Odysseus presents an image of the ideal resolution to Odysseus' family's circumstances while Penelope's simile reflects her dismal reality at this point in the narrative. Between these two images the poet presents Proteus' simile of Agamemnon's death, a reminder of the hurdles that Odysseus will have to overcome to restore his home and society in Ithaca. These two preceding similes, both narrated by Menelaos, present alternative futures to Penelope's current situation.

The simile concludes the episode of Penelope's reaction to the news of the suitors' threat to Telemachos' life. Its inclusion makes it especially effective and memorable. The placement of the simile, immediately after a short scene describing the suitors as they put into action their plan to murder Telemachos, makes it even more striking because it highlights the fact that Penelope's fears are justified.

Comments on Similes in Books 1–4

The first four books of the *Odyssey* introduce most major characters and establish the important themes of the story. The poet deploys several similes in character text to explain characters' emotions. The use of similes in direct speech fills lexical gaps in the narrative and invites the listener to become emotionally invested in those characters. The poet also deploys similes to mark the entrance of characters and to spotlight the dangers of the sea and of the divine nature of Menelaos' palace.

Chapter Three

Books 5–8

These four books cover Odysseus' departure from Kalypso's island, Ogygia and his eventful sea voyage to Scheria (Book 5), his meeting with Nausicaa (Book 6), his trip to King Alkinoos' palace (Book 7) and his reception at the palace (Book 8).

Book 5

Book 5 commences with a change of scene from Ithaca at the end of Book 4 to Zeus' realm. This is a return to the council of the gods that we last saw at the beginning of Book 1. Athene resumes pleading Odysseus' case to her father (5.7–20). Zeus sends Hermes to Kalypso, ordering her to release Odysseus (5.28–115). With Kalypso's help, Odysseus constructs a raft and sails towards the Phaeacians' island (5.228–281).

There are twelve similes in Book 5. I shall discuss six similes in detail. Of the others, the first is a simile with which Athene reminds Zeus that Odysseus' rule was gentle like that of a father (5.12),[1] three similes illustrate gods' travel by comparisons with birds (5.51; 5.337; 5.353),[2] one is a simile of measurement illustrating the width of Odysseus' raft (5.249), and one is a short simile likening the appearance of Scheria to a shield upon the sea (5.281).[3]

[1] This simile is very close to a repetition of Mentor's words to the Ithacan assembly (2.234). It has been suggested that the beginning of Book 5 was the real beginning of the *Odyssey* before the addition of Books 1–4. See Olson (1985: 91) for a discussion of the chronology problems posed by the second divine Assembly.

[2] These are Hermes' flight to Ogygia (5.51), Ino's rise from the sea to assist Odysseus (5.337), and her return to the sea (5.353).

[3] The comparison of Scheria to a shield in appearance suggests its isolated, self-contained nature. Dimock (1989: 75) notes that its name has the root *sekh* meaning 'to have, hold'.

5.328

τὴν δ’ ἐφόρει μέγα κῦμα κατὰ ῥόον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ὀπωρινὸς Βορέης φορέῃσιν ἀκάνθας
ἅμ πεδίον, πυκιναὶ δὲ πρὸς ἀλλήλῃσιν ἔχονται,
ὣς τὴν ἅμ πέλαγος ἄνεμοι φέρον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα·
ἄλλοτε μέν τε Νότος Βορέῃ προβάλεσκε φέρεσθαι,
ἄλλοτε δ’ αὖτ’ Εὖρος Ζεφύρῳ εἴξασκε διώκειν.

The great swell carried it [the raft] along with the current, this way and that. Just as when in late summer the North Wind carries the thistle-tufts along the ground, and they stick tightly to one another, so the winds carried it here and there across the sea. At one moment the South Wind would toss it to the North Wind to carry it away, and at the next moment the East Wind would in turn leave it for the West Wind to chase.

This simile is located at the point in the narrative when Odysseus tries to remain upon his raft to avoid death. Poseidon had decided to hinder his homeward journey by employing the East Wind, South Wind, West Wind and North Wind to create a great storm (5.282–296).[4] Odysseus has been tossed off his raft by a huge wave but he manages to avoid death by scrambling back onto it (5.315–326).[5]

This simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience. It serves several functions. One important function is to explain the motion of Odysseus’ raft as it tossed, powerless and insignificant, about upon the waves.[6] This is suggested by the phrase ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα in line 327 immediately preceding the simile and in line 330. The rhythm of the phrase suggests the surging of the raft in every direction. The repetition of the word ἄλλοτε, at the beginning of the successive lines 331 and 332, accentuates the rhythm of the buffeting winds. The repetition of ἐφόρει

[4] Poseidon is the god of the sea in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: Burkert 1985: 136. Cerveny (1993: 1033) comments that ‘the *Odyssey* shows a remarkably credible set of weather observations’ although weather movement itself was not acknowledged; rather winds and storms were attributed to the whims of the gods. Miles (2016: 164–165) notes that Odysseus’ experience of violent seas and weather at sea is exemplary and not fully imaginary. See also Bowker 2011: 249.
[5] Dimock (1989: 70) observes that Poseidon, like Kalypso, seeks to hide Odysseus. Poseidon’s method is to try to drown Odysseus who is weighed down by the clothes given to him by Kalypso (5.319–23).
[6] De Jong 2001: 142. Purves (2010b: 327) notes that wind in epic similes denotes movement.

(5.327)/φορέῃσιν (5.328)/φέρον (5.330)/φέρεσθαι (5.331) in the simile and surrounding narrative stresses the actions of the winds carrying the raft, just as the North Wind carries the thistle-tufts.[7]

The simile enhances memorability by drawing upon an everyday natural occurrence familiar to all listeners. The thistle-tuft image is a potentially harmless, even positive picture of nature promoting the renewal of growth—the random distribution of plant matter by the season's prevailing wind is a natural method of furthering plant propagation.[8] The image is located on dry land, unlike the events in the main narrative which take place at sea, an environment viewed by man as especially variable and dangerous.[9] The poet's choice of a simile of weather is not unusual—there are numerous examples in the *Iliad* of battles between warriors illustrated by weather similes—but his use of weather on land to describe weather on the sea is unusual.[10]

The seasonal wind of the simile image contrasts with the winds of the main narrative—the four winds are personified and individualised. They are depicted as playing a potentially dangerous game with the raft at Poseidon's behest.[11] The vehicle (5.328) precedes the tenor and conveys the more benign, natural image of the seasonal North Wind first.[12] The severity of Odysseus' situation is magnified by the tenor in the following lines (5.331–332). The winds' behaviour in the main narrative is more dangerous and forceful because there are four winds, not just the North Wind of the simile. The description of their battle against Odysseus and his raft is reinforced by the word order in 5.331–332. The adjacent placement of Νότος and Βορέῃ in line 331 and of Εὖρος and

[7] Ready (2011: 246) observes that this is one of the few similes in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* where there is a singular item in the tenor of the simile likened to plural items in the vehicle.
[8] See Austin (1975: 103, 142, and 241–245) for a discussion of the time of year of Odysseus' voyage. He argues that it takes place in late summer/autumn—the same time of year as that specified in the simile vehicle.
[9] Odysseus expresses his fear of the sea to Kalypso when she suggests he leave Ogygia (5.172–179).
[10] For example, see *Iliad* 11.297 and *Iliad* 11.305. Redfield (1975: 190) comments, with regard to similes, that 'weather is even more violent than war'. Scott (1974: 63–64) notes that in the *Iliad* wind similes usually illustrate the actions of groups of people but for a single warrior it emphasises the force of his attack.
[11] Purves (2010b: 333) notes a close link in the *Odyssey* between wind and divine intervention.
[12] This is not to say that the North Wind is weaker than the other winds. Purves (2010b: 326 n7) comments that the North and West winds appear most often and are the most developed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Ζεφύρῳ in the same position in line 232 conveys the notion of all the winds equally contributing to the attack on Odysseus' raft. The winds' force under Poseidon's instruction highlights Poseidon's power over his own dominion, the sea.[13]

The simile enables the poet to enlarge and intensify his description, slowing down the narrative and dwelling on Odysseus' dangerous situation. The listener is invited to dwell upon Odysseus sitting on his unstable raft as it sweeps to and fro, unable to make progress in any one direction owing to the loss of the raft's mast, sail and rudder.

This pause allows the listener the opportunity to ponder how Odysseus might escape Poseidon's divine wrath. This simile is closely associated with a later simile at 5.368.[14]

[13] Redfield (1975: 259 n62) observes that 'the association of gods with weather and with the horizontal frontiers of the human world grants to the gods a *numen* and places them apart from man within the cosmic order'.
[14] C. Moulton 1977: 124–125.

5.368

ἦος ὁ ταῦθ’ ὥρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
ὦρσε δ’ ἐπὶ μέγα κῦμα Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,
δεινόν τ’ ἀργαλέον τε, κατηρεφές, ἤλασε δ’ αὐτόν.
ὡς δ’ ἄνεμος ζαὴς ἠΐων θημῶνα τινάξῃ
καρφαλέων· τὰ μὲν ἄρ τε διεσκέδασ’ ἄλλυδις ἄλλῃ·
ὣς τῆς δούρατα μακρὰ διεσκέδασ’. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἀμφ’ ἐνὶ δούρατι βαῖνε, κέληθ’ ὡς ἵππον ἐλαύνων,
εἵματα δ’ ἐξαπέδυνε, τά οἱ πόρε δῖα Καλυψώ.

As he [Odysseus] was turning these things over in his mind and in his heart, Poseidon the earth-shaker sent a huge wave towards him. Both terrible and violent, it arched over and struck him. Just as the strong wind blows around a heap of dry chaff and it scatters in every direction, so it scattered the thick planks. But Odysseus got astride one plank, as if riding a horse, and he took off the clothes that the goddess Kalypso had given him.

This simile is located after after Ino leaves Odysseus. She takes pity on Odysseus stuck on his damaged raft (5.336–338), and advises him to abandon it and swim towards land (5.339–353). He distrusts her, however, and decides to remain on his raft as long as it remains in one piece (5.356–364).

This simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience. The simile is considered to be the second of two associated similes, the first being the simile at 5.328 discussed above. In the earlier simile the raft, with Odysseus sitting upon it, was tossed around by Poseidon’s agents, the four winds. Now Poseidon exercises his mighty force to raise a giant wave to destroy the raft (5.366–367).[15]

As in the earlier simile, the simile vehicle depicts an image of nature at work on dry land. Images such as this draw on the audience’s everyday experiences. This is, however, a more destructive image than that of the earlier simile where the wind simply blew around the thistle heads. In this

[15] Vivante (1983: 99) compares the waves enveloping Odysseus to ‘blows of a warrior’.

simile the wind is strong, and the chaff dispersed from a heap suggests the destruction of mortals' work.[16]

The main function of the simile itself is to explain how the widely the wave scatters the raft's thick planks as if they are almost weightless. The repetition of διεσκέδασε in the tenor and the vehicle (5.369 and 5.370) marks this as an important point of comparison. The placement and rhythm of the words ἄλλυδις ἄλλῃ at the end of the line (5.369) emphasise the planks' wide dispersal.

The might of Poseidon in the main narrative and the disparity in strength in the simile vehicle between the heap of chaff and the strong wind blowing it are highlighted by the earlier description of Odysseus' careful craftsmanship of his raft.[17] Some scholars have commented that the description of the raft's construction is inconsistent with the realities of such a project.[18] Nevertheless, this does not detract from the poet's emphasis on its painstaking construction, which makes the raft's easy destruction and dispersal so much more remarkable. The poet does not describe the destruction of the raft itself; the devastation expressed in the simile vehicle fills this lexical gap. This simile marks Odysseus's second major set-back—the loss of his raft.

This and the previous simile at 5.328 'book-end' Odysseus' encounter with Ino.[19] The earlier simile marking Poseidon's first intervention to hinder Odysseus' voyage is immediately followed by Ino's arrival and departure (5.333–353). Commentators have suggested that the Ino episode could be an

[16] At *Iliad* 5.499 a simile depicts the threshing of grain upon the floor and the separation by the wind of the chaff into growing heaps. Unlike the simile under discussion, that simile image depicts a positive scene.
[17] The poet describes Odysseus' meticulous work over a three-day period (5.243–261), and details the quality of tools provided by Kalypso (5.234–236). Morrison (2014: 10 n3) astutely observes that Odysseus' shipbuilding skill anticipates his technological similes in Book 9.
[18] For example, Murray (1995a: 201 n1) comments that the poet seems to have drawn upon a traditional poetic description of shipbuilding. See Mark (1991) for a detailed reappraisal of Odysseus' shipbuilding technique.
[19] Saïd (2011b: 73) notes that these are parallel similes. She comments that 'similes can, in fact, help to articulate sections of the narrative.

interpolation.[20] It is not within the ambit of this thesis to consider this matter but it is worth noting that, in the absence of Ino's appearance and assistance, these two similes could comfortably comprise a successive pair illustrating Poseidon's actions against Odysseus. Each simile marks out a significant event that hinders his voyage to Scheria.

[20] Hainsworth 1988: 279.

5.371

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς 370
ἀμφ’ ἐνὶ δούρατι βαῖνε, κέληθ’ ὡς ἵππον ἐλαύνων,
εἵματα δ’ ἐξαπέδυνε, τά οἱ πόρε δῖα Καλυψώ.

But Odysseus climbed onto a plank, straddling it, as if riding a horse, and he took off the clothes that the goddess Kalypso had given him.

This short simile is located immediately after the simile that illustrated the scattering of the planks of Odysseus’ raft (368). Odysseus climbs upon one of the planks from his smashed raft in order to save himself. His action demonstrates his quick thinking in the face of danger. His decision to stay with the remains of his raft is consistent with mariners’ best practice in a shipwreck—remaining with one’s vessel (or its debris) because it provides something to cling onto.[21]

This simile is narrated by the poet for the external audience. The simile performs several functions. It draws upon the listeners’ everyday knowledge for ready understanding. Odysseus’ quick action in climbing upon the plank recollects an important principle of horsemanship—that one must mount a horse with confidence in order to control the animal. The simile vehicle explains how Odysseus remained on the plank. The comparison to a horse rider implicitly suggests the motion of Odysseus upon the plank. There is no explicit reference in the simile to the movement of the plank itself, but the previous two similes conveyed the raft’s violent movement upon the waves and its eventual disintegration (5.328; 5.368). The plank is still moving with the swell of the sea.

The reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a horse rider is unique in the *Odyssey*. This makes it memorable and decorative. This is the only reference in the *Odyssey* to horse-riding although horses are described drawing chariots.[22] Horses are high status animals in both poems and their use is

[21] A vessel or its debris is also easier for rescuers to spot.
[22] There are two passages in the *Iliad* that seem to suggest horse-riding—*Iliad* 10.499–529 and *Iliad* 15.679–84. In the *Odyssey* Telemachos and Peisistratos travel by horse-drawn chariot from Pylos to Sparta (3.482–417).

limited to aristocratic men.[23] In the *Iliad* we encounter horses in other contexts, including Achilles' divine horses (*Iliad* 19.399–417) and the four horses sacrificed on Patroklos' funeral pyre (*Iliad* 23.170–171).[24]

Odysseus has no special connection to living horses.[25] Poseidon, however, has a close association with horses and horsemanship.[26] The poet emphasises this association when, only a few lines later, Poseidon drives his horses back to his palace (5.380–381). The reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a horse-rider illustrates his struggle against Poseidon. The implication that he, like a rider, is in control of his mount, suggests that he will overcome Poseidon's obstacles.[27]

The previous two similes illustrated Poseidon's complete control of the winds and the seas. The narrative at this point shifts the focus to Odysseus. The simile illustrates his assertive actions in a challenging situation. Indeed, the simile marks a turning point in Odysseus' struggle against Poseidon, whose impending departure allows Athene to step in to assist Odysseus (5.382–387).[28]

[23] Gregory (2007: 195) states that horses were at the apex of the equine hierarchy in archaic Greek literature. She points out (at 208) that Nausicaa drives mules to the washing pools, not horses, despite her aristocratic background. In ancient Greece horses were a status symbol of the elite because of the expense required to maintain them in a landscape mostly unsuited to horses: Bell 2014: 478.

[24] See Mackie (2008: 61–90) for a detailed examination of the role of horses in the *Iliad*. There is some archaeological evidence that the horse was a symbol of death: Dietrich 1964: 18.

[25] The audience knows that Ithaca is not suited to horses—Telemachos politely declines Menelaos' offer of a gift of horses owing to Ithaca's hilly topography (4.601–608). Although Odysseus steals Rhesos' horses in *Iliad* 10.474 ff., as M. Griffith (2006: 314) notes, he is the only prominent hero in the *Iliad* who does not drive into battle in a chariot.

[26] Farnell 1907: 14–22. Horses and bulls were sacrificed to Poseidon by drowning: Mylona 2008: 71. See also Burkert 1985: 138.

[27] Maurizio (2016: 254) comments that the waves were sometimes perceived as horses rushing from the depths of the sea where Poseidon was supposed to live.

[28] This simile may remind the audience of both Athene's and Poseidon's connections with horses. Burkert (1985: 222) notes the cults of Athene Hippia and Poseidon Hippios. 'Poseidon sires the horse and Athena invents the bridle and bit, thereby placing the animal at the disposal of man'. See also Larson 2007: 55. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that this simile is located at the juncture of Poseidon's departure and Athene's arrival to assist Odysseus.

5.394

ἔνθα δύω νύκτας δύο τ᾽ ἤματα κύματι πηγῷ
πλάζετο, πολλὰ δέ οἱ κραδίη προτιόσσετ᾽ ὄλεθρον.
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἦμαρ ἐυπλόκαμος τέλεσ᾽ Ἠώς,
καὶ τότ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽ ἄνεμος μὲν ἐπαύσατο ἠδὲ γαλήνη
ἔπλετο νηνεμίη· ὁ δ᾽ ἄρα σχεδὸν εἴσιδε γαῖαν
ὀξὺ μάλα προϊδών, μεγάλου ὑπὸ κύματος ἀρθείς.
ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἂν ἀσπάσιος βίοτος παίδεσσι φανήῃ
πατρός, ὃς ἐν νούσῳ κεῖται κρατέρ᾽ ἄλγεα πάσχων,
δηρὸν τηκόμενος, στυγερὸς δέ οἱ ἔχραε δαίμων,
ἀσπάσιον δ᾽ ἄρα τόν γε θεοὶ κακότητος ἔλυσαν,
ὣς Ὀδυσεῖ ἀσπαστὸν ἐείσατο γαῖα καὶ ὕλη,
νῆχε δ᾽ ἐπειγόμενος ποσὶν ἠπείρου ἐπιβῆναι.

Then, for two days and for two nights he was tossed by strong waves and his heart forbode death many times. But when fair-tressed Dawn brought the third day to fullness, the wind stopped and both the sea and the air became calm. And then he saw land close by as he keenly looked ahead as he was lifted by a big wave. Just as when a welcome sign of life appears to the children of a father who lies bedridden with illness, suffering pain and who has been wasting away for too long a time with hated evil attacking him, and the gods release him, and he welcomes it, just so did the land and forest appear, a welcome sight to Odysseus, and he swam with all speed to set foot upon dry land.

This passage is located at the point in the narrative when Poseidon has departed for Aigai, leaving Odysseus to struggle alone in the sea (5.380–381). Athene takes pity on him and calms all the winds except the North Wind, which she summons to speed him towards Scheria (5.382–387).

This simile is the fourth in a series of similes in Book 5 that illustrates Odysseus' physical and emotional journey across the sea from Ogygia to Scheria. It is also one of several parent-child similes in the *Odyssey* and is an example of a 'reverse' simile.[29]

The simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience. The scene evoked in the vehicle—the relief of the children at the recovery of their sick father—may initially strike the listener as irrelevant

[29] H. Foley 1978: 7.

to Odysseus' situation as he struggles through the sea attempting to save himself from drowning.[30] Yet there are important links to the main narrative. For example, Odysseus' joy when he catches sight of land equates to the relief of the children in the simile and momentarily equates Odysseus to Telemachos.[31]

We have seen that Odysseus has been compared to a gentle father three times already in the story (2.47; 2.234; 5.12), so he could also be identified with the father in the simile.[32] This element of dual conceptualisation of Odysseus as both father or son has been noted by scholars. There are other similarities between Odysseus and the father—they are both suffering and both have been afflicted by a δαίμων, in Odysseus' case by Poseidon.[33] Ahern notes the syntactic parallels in that both the children (παίδεσσι 394) and Odysseus (Ὀδυσεῖ 398) are in the dative case, and life (βίοτος 394) and the land (γαῖα 398) are in the nominative case.[34] From a broader perspective the simile and its surrounding narrative have general thematic resonance with the story of the *Odyssey* through the themes of family reunion, suffering, and divine intervention.[35]

An important function of the simile is the expression of Odysseus' relief on seeing land.[36] The use of ἀσπάσιος/ἀσπάσιον/ἀσπαστόν three times,[37] twice in the vehicle (394 and 397) and once in the tenor (398), points to this.[38] The primary emotion of joy at the resurgence of life is underlined by the

[30] The association of rescue at sea with family reunion may be traditional because the combination of the two is also found in the simile at 23.233: Hainsworth 1988: 284.
[31] C. Moulton 1977: 128.
[32] Purves (2010a: 92) observes that, unlike the sick father of the simile, Odysseus only has one son although in other traditions he fathered more children.
[33] De Jong 2001: 144–145.
[34] Ahern 1989: 276.
[35] For example, Austin (1975: 141) comments that 'out of sight of land is to be reduced to the child's destitution when bereft of parents'.
[36] De Jong 2001: 144.
[37] Cunliffe (2012: 57) defines ἀσπάσιος as 'welcomed, welcome, giving gladness' or 'glad, well pleased'. See Taaffe (1990–1991) for an examination of the use of this term in the *Odyssey*.
[38] Many ancient Greeks would have understood Odysseus' relief. Lindenlauf (2003) comments that the sea was regarded as a place of no return (at 416)—a dangerous place of potential death (at 421). Austin (1975) 141 notes that death at sea was viewed as 'a particularly vile fate' due to the absence of funeral rites and a burial monument.

placement of the phrase ἀσπάσιος βίοτος immediately after the introductory words of the simile vehicle (394) and ἀσπαστόν at the beginning of the resumptive clause (398). There may also be a play on the verb κεῖται (395) which can mean 'lie down' or 'be idle', the latter reflecting Odysseus' mental and physical state when we first encounter him on Kalypso's island.[39] Similarly, the word κακότητος (397*)*, also used in the simile vehicle, can mean 'cowardice, want of spirit or enterprise' or 'evil, bane, harm, destruction, ill fortune, trouble, suffering misery'.[40] Want of spirit or enterprise and suffering misery reflect Odysseus' state when we first encounter him on Ogygia (5.151–158).

The reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a son in the simile alludes to the poem's important theme of family relationships. Besides identifying Odysseus with Telemachos, this conceptualisation reminds us that Odysseus himself is Laertes' son, with whom he may eventually be reunited. We have been told that Laertes is living in self-imposed miserable conditions on a farm because of Odysseus' failure to return to Ithaca (1.188–193; 4.735–741). His reunion with Odysseus will give him renewed reason to live.

The simile fills a lexical gap by conveying Odysseus' psychological state— his joy at the sight of land. This obviates any need for a spoken or mental monologue by Odysseus at a point in the narrative unsuited to such an intrusion. The simile requires the listener to draw upon his or her own life experiences to understand the nature of Odysseus' emotions.[41] This contributes to a feeling of intimacy between Odysseus and the listener as well as between the listener and the poet.

This long simile marks out the importance of the moment by creating a pause, allowing the listener an opportunity to appreciate Odysseus' feelings. The use of assonance through repetition of the sigma in line 398 coincides with the return to the main narrative and slows down the line, thereby

[39] Cunliffe 2012: 221.
[40] Cunliffe 2012: 208.
[41] Richardson (1990: 205) refers very aptly to the simile image as a 'timeless domestic situation'.

dwelling on Odysseus' joy. The pause allows the listener and Odysseus to linger on the crest of emotion and for Odysseus to linger on the crest of the narrative's wave before he plunges down into the next physical and metaphorical trough.

Although Odysseus faces more challenges in reaching land, he is at another turning point in his sea voyage. Previous similes deployed during the narrative of Odysseus' sea voyage have marked negative events—the storm that damaged his raft and then its destruction—and a simile marks out his positive action saving himself by clambering onto a plank. The simile under discussion here marks out the beginning of his transition from sea to land—a step closer to normal life. With this in mind, the assonance in line 398 may, for some listeners, call to mind the sound of surf.

The intensity of emotion in this simile will be heightened in the following passage when Odysseus will find it difficult to locate a suitable place to land.[42] It is during this struggle that the poet allows Odysseus an internal monologue to express his fears (5.408–423).

[42] This is not the first time in the *Odyssey* that land has been welcome to a character. Agamemnon's delight on arriving home was described in similar terms (4.521–523).

5.432

ἦος ὁ ταῦθ’ ὥρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
τόφρα δέ μιν μέγα κῦμα φέρε τρηχεῖαν ἐπ’ ἀκτήν.
ἔνθα κ’ ἀπὸ ῥινοὺς δρύφθη, σὺν δ’ ὀστέ’ ἀράχθη,
εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεά, γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·
ἀμφοτέρῃσι δὲ χερσὶν ἐπεσσύμενος λάβε πέτρης,
τῆς ἔχετο στενάχων, ἦος μέγα κῦμα παρῆλθε.
καὶ τὸ μὲν ὣς ὑπάλυξε, παλιρρόθιον δέ μιν αὖτις
πλῆξεν ἐπεσσύμενον, τηλοῦ δέ μιν ἔμβαλε πόντῳ.
ὡς δ’ ὅτε πουλύποδος θαλάμης ἐξελκομένοιο
πρὸς κοτυληδονόφιν πυκιναὶ λάιγγες ἔχονται,
ὣς τοῦ πρὸς πέτρῃσι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν
ῥινοὶ ἀπέδρυφθεν· τὸν δὲ μέγα κῦμα κάλυψεν.

While he turned these things over in his heart and his mind, a huge wave carried him towards the rugged shore. He would have had his skin torn off and his bones shattered if bright-eyed Athene had not put it in his mind to grab at a rock with both hands as he was carried in. Moaning, he held onto it while the huge wave passed by. But, having escaped that, he was struck by the backward rush again; he was struck with terror as he was carried along and it swept him far out to sea. Just as numerous pebbles cling to the suckers of an octopus[43] that has been dragged from its den, so his skin was torn from his strong hands against the rocks. And a great wave covered him.

This simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience. It is located after Odysseus’ monologue deliberating how he can reach land safely (5.408–423). This is the only simile in the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad* that refers to an octopus.[44] The unusual subject matter has been regarded as striking yet unpoetic.[45] The octopus is swept from its den without injury, clinging to pebbles torn away from the surface of its den; by contrast, Odysseus loses skin from his hands against the rocks as he is swept away. The simile’s main function is to explain the extent of Odysseus’ fortitude against the wave sweeping back past him.[46]

[43] The word πουλύποδος has been variously translated as ‘octopus’, ‘squid’, or ‘cuttle-fish’. Cunliffe (2012: 341) provides ‘sea-polypus’, ‘octopus’ or ‘cuttle-fish’. I have translated it as ‘octopus’. The octopus, squid and cuttle-fish all belong to the same class, Cephalopoda, and all have multiple arms and similar behavioural practices: Hanlon 2007.
[44] Muntz (1995: 3) comments that Skylla may represent an octopus or another cephalopod.
[45] Coffey 1955.
[46] De Jong 2001: 146.

The simile illustrates the tenacity with which he clings to the rock. This is emphasised by the use of πρός in line 433 for the octopus' tentacles, and by its repetition in line 434 for Odysseus' hands. The meaning of πρός differs in the two places—in line 433 its meaning is essentially 'to' as in 'cling to' but in line 434 its meaning is closer to 'against' because Odysseus loses the skin of his hands to the rock as he is swept away. Despite the difference in meaning, the repetition underscores the importance of the strength of physical contact.

The extent of Odysseus' struggle to hold on is reinforced by the phrase θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν (434) referring to Odysseus' hands. This phrase is usually used in battle descriptions.[47] The grasp of the octopus and of Odysseus—the desperation of their hold and the violence against them—suggests the attack and withdrawal movements of hand to hand combat on the battlefield. In this way the poet deploys the simile to direct the listener to interpret Odysseus' struggle as a battle against the sea. The poet's use of battle language could be considered ironic because death at sea, instead of at the hands of another warrior on the battlefield, was considered unheroic.[48] But this language is a reminder that Odysseus' struggle against the wind and the waves has been initiated by Poseidon.

The force of Odysseus' struggle is underlined by the choice of octopus for the vehicle. We do not know how the octopus is dragged from its den—whether by a natural predator or man, or by the force of the sea itself—but the fact that it is overcome and is now helpless despite its multiple tentacles and despite being in its native environment, emphasises the strength of the opposing force.[49]

[47] Eide (1986: 12) comments that the phrase in this simile gives it a freshness of use.
[48] Pucci (1987: 67 n11) states that to 'withstand the challenges of the sea is hardly considered courageous'.
[49] An octopus can exert a very strong pull: Muntz 1995: 4. They have approximately 200 suckers on each arm: Schweid 2013: 35.

This is the only simile in Book 5 where the poet draws upon the sea for the subject of the simile vehicle. This unusual reconceptualisation makes the simile especially memorable yet readily understandable to the listener.[50] The poet's choice demonstrates a significant knowledge of octopus traits. The octopus' characteristics of being very intelligent, stubborn, tenacious and hard to catch, and a predator, are attributes that would have been well-known to coastal dwelling Greeks.[51] The octopus is an appropriate comparison for Odysseus.[52] Octopuses are also masters of disguise, an attribute that Odysseus will demonstrate later in the narrative of the *Odyssey*.[53] Most importantly, octopus were known for their *mētis*—their cunning,[54] an attribute Odysseus displays on numerous occasions in the story. The use of this familiar subject matter cultivates intimacy with the audience through its reliance on their knowledge of the natural world.

The structure of the simile, with the word for octopus, πουλύποδος, placed at the beginning of the simile vehicle (432), suggests that the poet may have been teasing the listener by creating an expectation that he was about to use one of the several epithets beginning with 'poly' that are regularly used for Odysseus. In this way, the unexpected use of πουλύποδος contributes to the identification of Odysseus with the sea creature.

The simile, like the earlier similes in Book 5, occurs at a dramatic moment and slows the narrative, forcing the listener to contemplate Odysseus' failed attempt to reach land, even as he is being swept

50 Buxton (2004: 148) views this simile as an example of 'local graphicness'.
51 Octopus was a common foodstuff in ancient Greece, and is much represented in Classical art: Lewis 2018: 675–676.
52 Mather (2012) notes that cephalopods are solitary, can play, have personalities, can distinguish shapes, possess spatial memory, and are very intelligent. See also Mather (2008). Octopuses are accomplished hunters and deploy the 'parachute attack'—pouncing directly on their victim: Schweid 2013: 30, 37–40. They are quick to adapt to new environments, such as laboratories, have excellent eyesight, can navigate mazes, and anecdotes suggest they are masters of escape and theft: Godfrey-Smith 2016: 51–58. They have 'haphazard' sex lives: Godfrey-Smith 2016: 74.
53 Cephalopods are masters of rapid adaptive camouflage: Hanlon 2007: R400; Schweid 2013: 16; Amodio 2013: 293–294. Scodel (2014: 12) notes that the octopus in this simile is not hiding itself successfully but she ignores the fact that we are not told by what means the octopus is being dragged from its den.
54 Détienne (1978: 34) comments that in Greek thought two animals, above all, served as models for *mētis*—the fox and the octopus. For a comprehensive discussion of the features of *mētis* and the octopus see Détienne 1978: 27–54.

away. The poet does not tell us how Odysseus feels at this moment but the description of his failure to hold onto the rocks, illustrated by the simile, is sufficient for us to infer his psychological reaction. It counters his earlier relief at the sight of land. This simile concludes the series of similes in Book 5 that have illustrated his sea journey to Scheria.

5.488

ἄφαρ δ’ εὐνὴν ἐπαμήσατο χερσὶ φίλῃσιν
εὐρεῖαν· φύλλων γὰρ ἔην χύσις ἥλιθα πολλή,
ὅσσον τ’ ἠὲ δύω ἠὲ τρεῖς ἄνδρας ἔρυσθαι
ὥρῃ χειμερίῃ, εἰ καὶ μάλα περ χαλεπαίνοι.
τὴν μὲν ἰδὼν γήθησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἐν δ’ ἄρα μέσσῃ λέκτο, χύσιν δ’ ἐπεχεύατο φύλλων.
ὡς δ’ ὅτε τις δαλὸν σποδιῇ ἐνέκρυψε μελαίνῃ
ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς, ᾧ μὴ πάρα γείτονες ἄλλοι,
σπέρμα πυρὸς σώζων, ἵνα μή ποθεν ἄλλοθεν αὖοι,
ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς φύλλοισι καλύψατο· τῷ δ’ ἄρ’ Ἀθήνη
ὕπνον ἐπ’ ὄμμασι χεῦ’, ἵνα μιν παύσειε τάχιστα
δυσπονέος καμάτοιο φίλα βλέφαρ’ ἀμφικαλύψας.

Straightaway he scraped together a bed of leaves with his own broad hands. For there were enough leaves to protect two or three men during a winter storm, even if it were very bad weather. Odysseus, on seeing this, rejoiced in the middle of his bed, and covered himself with a heap of leaves. Just as when someone hides a firebrand in a heap of black ashes at the furthest edge of a field, distant from the neighbours, saving a seed of fire[55] so as not to have to get it from some other place, so Odysseus covered himself with leaves. And Athene poured sleep into his eyes in order for it to close his eyelids and free him quickly from his distressing troubles.

This passage concludes Book 5. Odysseus has managed to reach land safely with the help of a river deity. After a monologue of despair and deliberation he decides to seek shelter and rest under bushes despite the risk of attack by wild animals (5.465–473). He finds two dense, entwined bushes, one an unknown bush, the other a cultivated olive, both growing from the same stem, to shelter him from the wind, sun and rain.[56] Underneath he makes himself a thick bed of heaped up leaves.[57] This simile has been viewed as a pair to the octopus simile (5.432).[58]

[55] This simile is unusual for the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* because it includes a metaphor—σπέρμα πυρὸς: Silk 2004: 34.
[56] Some scholars have assumed that the wild bush that sprouts from the same stem is a wild olive, presumably because a domestic olive tree left untended sprouts wild olive suckers easily: T. Mueller 2012: 29; Boardman 1976: 189. The choice of olive tree is significant—Athene and Zeus were strongly associated with the olive: Deacy 2001: 225. See also Anghelina 2015a.
[57] De Jong (2001: 147) suggests that Odysseus’ actions in covering himself in leaves indicates that Odysseus has reached a very low point. See also Race (2014: 49) who views Odysseus as ‘completely stripped of all identity’. Yet we are told that Odysseus is pleased with the large heap of leaves (5.486–487). For him it is relief after his struggle for survival.
[58] C. Moulton (1977: 126) points to Odysseus’ ‘endurance in adversity’ as the common theme of both similes.

This simile does not map neatly from the vehicle onto the tenor in that Odysseus covers *himself* in leaves, yet the farmer hides a firebrand in a heap of ashes. The simile has been interpreted as representing Odysseus as the farmer caring for his own spark of continuing life. The hero, therefore, at different points, is both farmer and firebrand. A more extreme interpretation suggests the culmination of implicit 'rebirth' of Odysseus in Book 5.[59] The firebrand has been viewed as representing the rekindled spark of the heroic Odysseus of the *Iliad*, partly owing to the association in the *Iliad* between fire and battle and/or the army on the march.[60]

The simile performs several functions. A main function of the simile is to illustrate how Odysseus covers himself in leaves. This is achieved by the repetition of the similar concept between the vehicle and the tenor of hiding the firebrand and covering himself with leaves, although in this case the poet employs different verbs (ἐνέκρυψε 488/καλύψατο 491). The poet points to the similarity between Odysseus pouring leaves over himself and Athene pouring sleep into his eyes by the use of the same verb immediately before and after the simile itself (ἐπεχεύατο 487/χεῦε 492).

This commonality of human subject in tenor and vehicle suggests a *likeness* rather than a *contrast* in the simile.[61] This likeness of subject acts as a signpost of narrative direction for the listener—the agricultural setting suggests that Odysseus has not landed in total wilderness. The simile moves Odysseus from the littoral location of the coast, bordering the dangerous sea, to the liminal space of an agricultural setting with fields and neighbours. Although the farmer demonstrates the cultural practice of preserving fire for future use, showing foresight, the simile acknowledges that

[59] Levaniouk 2011: 99. See Holtsmark (1966) for a detailed analysis of this theory. In my view this point in the narrative is a turning point for Odysseus rather than a rebirth.
[60] Scott 2005: 38. This interpretation seems inconsistent with Odysseus' current situation. He has no immediate enemy at this point in the story.
[61] Martindale (1981: 226) notes that similes can also be effective because of the likeness of the comparison.

neighbourly cooperation is available if required—a further indication of civilised, human society, even if the assistance is spatially distant.

The agricultural practices in the simile suggest that Odysseus has arrived back in the real world of man; he does not find himself in another unnatural world like that of the goddess Kalypso.[62] The proximity of a more natural, human world has already been obliquely suggested in the main narrative by the combination of bushes that Odysseus settles under—one is an unknown wild bush, the other is an olive tree, a tree cultivated by man for its produce, its wood, and its oil.[63] The simile expands the spatial scene of Odysseus settling into his bed of leaves. This shift of location in the simile vehicle prepares the listener for the shift of scene in Books 6 and 7 to the domestic setting of the Phaeacian palace and its productive estate.

The worker's protective care of his firebrand suggests a man who is in control of his own life and able to make decisions affecting his future.[64] This is a far cry from Odysseus on Ogygia at the beginning of Book 5 who was a powerless, unhappy prisoner of Kalypso. It is also an improvement on Odysseus' situation at sea where he was at the mercy of Poseidon. Furthermore, the spark of fire of the simile vehicle reflects Odysseus' feeling of pleasure in his bed of leaves expressed in lines

[62] Karanika (2014: 48) notes that there is no indication of agriculture on either Kirke's or Kalypso's islands.
[63] E. Cook (1995: 107) comments that the olive was 'a developed symbol of agriculture, technology, communal life and social stability' for the ancient Greeks. The choice of olive as protective bush for Odysseus contributes to this interpretation because the wood signals the attributes of both endurance and quality: Lanza 2011: 8. Schultz (2009: 308) suggests that the intertwining of the wild and the cultivated bush 'may suggest that Odysseus' salvation depends on the interdependency of wild and cultivated'. Power (2011: 72) comments that it marks Odysseus' return to the real, Greek world. The olive tree has a role in Odysseus' return to society at several points in the *Odyssey*—the handle of Kalypso's axe used to construct his raft is made from olive wood (5.234–236), Odysseus uses a pole of olive wood to attack the Cyclops (9.378–388), he sits with Athene beside an olive tree upon arrival on Ithaca (13.372–373), and his bed is immovable because it is built around an olive tree (23.190–191). Sherratt (2004: 315) notes that olive oil is not mentioned in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* for culinary purposes although there is abundant archaeological evidence for its use in the Bronze Age. My interpretation of this simile is more positive than that of Silk (2004: 34) who comments that it 'articulates the apprehension of a bare life, and … the precariousness of Odysseus' solitary condition'.
[64] See Mackie (2008: 153–186) for a discussion of fire in Homer. He concludes that 'in the *Odyssey* … fire seems to have no single coherent significance'. See also H. Clarke (1962).

486–487.[65] The simile reinforces Odysseus' resting state, but suggests that he will be much more in control of his life now that he is back on dry land, protected from the wind, rain and sun.[66] The poet, as external narrator of the simile, is signalling a more positive future for Odysseus than Odysseus himself dares hope for. The seed of fire offsets any association of sleep with death at this moment.[67] The inclusion of the word καλύψατο and of the names Athene and Odysseus (491) reminds the listener that Odysseus has moved from captivity on Kalypso's island to control of his own situation, albeit with the aid of Athene (although at this point Odysseus is ignorant of her assistance).[68]

The simile slows the pace of the narrative, bringing Book 5 to a quiet conclusion. The assonance in 491 (ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς φύλλοισι καλύψατο) slows the verse and creates a pause before the concluding line. This slowing of the narrative through this quiet simile may have the effect of helping the external listener relax after the excitement of Odysseus' maritime challenges. The everyday human content of the simile brings the audience members back to their own human world after listening to Odysseus' sea perils at the hands of Poseidon. This point in the story would be well suited to an intermission or an overnight break in storytelling during a performance. In this way the simile—along with Odysseus asleep—helps to end the scene.[69]

[65] Murnaghan (1987: 27–28) notes the contrast between Odysseus' pleasure in his bed of fallen leaves by virtue of necessity, and his father's adoption of self-denying practices, including sleeping on a bed of leaves, as an expression of grief at his son's non-return (11.187–197). Austin (1975: 104) refers to Odysseus as 'a seed of fire' and Laertes as 'a dying ember'.

[66] Purves (2010b: 337) notes the connection between Odysseus' windless spot and other windless areas in the *Odyssey*, including the lair of the boar that attacked Odysseus when he was a boy. The language describing the lair (19.440–443) is very similar to the description of Odysseus' bed of leaves.

[67] Cf. *Iliad* 16.682, where Sleep and Death are referred to as twin brothers.

[68] Athene pours sleep over Odysseus' eyes, just as he pours leaves over himself.

[69] Jones (1988: 54) notes that similes often bring scenes to a close. Stewart (1986: 191) observes that in the *Odyssey* the poet uses sleep 'almost solely as a symbol of transition to new turns of direction in the hero's life and/or a new ordering of events'. Segal (1962: 32) notes that Phaeacian episode operates as a 'crucial transitional place' in the story and that it starts and ends with sleep.

Book 6

In Book 6 Odysseus encounters the Phaeacians on the island of Scheria[70]. Athene intervenes to ensure that Odysseus receives assistance by sending King Alkinoos' daughter, Nausicaa, down to the shore to do the family's washing. This timely visit to the washing pools is the means of providing food and clothing for Odysseus.

There are at least seven similes in this book.[71] I shall not discuss two similes that are comparisons to the gods (6.16; 6.309),[72] a pair of similes that illustrate Athene's beautification of Odysseus (6.231; 6.232),[73] and a simile illustrating Athene's entrance to Nausicaa's bedroom (6.20).[74]

[70] The Nausicaa episode has been viewed by some scholars as an old folktale originally about a wedding that has been subsumed into the *Odyssey*: Vallillee 1955. Cf. Austin 1975: 200–201.

[71] Scott (1974) omits Odysseus' comparison of Nausicaa to a young palm on Delos from his list of similes yet most scholars treat it as a simile. I have chosen to examine it because, in my opinion, it is closer to a simile than to a simple comparison.

[72] The narrator compares Nausicaa to the goddesses in appearance (6.16). This simile marks the first appearance of Nausicaa, introducing her in a positive manner to the audience. The second simile is spoken by Nausicaa to Odysseus, describing her father sitting on his throne quaffing his wine, like an immortal (6.309).

[73] The first simile of the pair compares Odysseus' newly coiffed locks to a hyacinth flower. In the second simile Athene's gift of grace and beauty is compared to the application of a gold overlay to silver by a man trained by both Hephaistos and Pallas Athene, the gods of handicrafts. These similes are decorative but also mark out the magic of Athene's handiwork as she transforms Odysseus into a very desirable man. See Irwin (1990) for a discussion of the meaning of 'hyacinthine hair'. Tsagalis (2008: 59) detects a Dionysian reference in Odysseus' long hair. Madondo (2013) examines the hyacinth's symbolic meanings. Levaniouk (2011:68) refers to the hyacinth's erotic associations. See also Brockliss 2019: 56–72. R. Friedrich (1981: 125–133) asserts that 6.231 and 6.232 form part of a sequence comprising lion simile/bath/artist simile that is related to Odysseus' return to the civilised world.

[74] This simile illustrates Athene's entry into Nausicaa's room—like a breath of wind—conveying both speed and ease of movement: Watson 2002: 47; Garvie 1994: 87. De Jong (2001: 153) suggests that it is closer to a literal description of Athene's entry than a figurative comparison.

6.102

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σίτου τάρφθεν δμῳαί τε καὶ αὐτή,
σφαίρῃ ταὶ δ’ ἄρ’ ἔπαιζον, ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι·
τῇσι δὲ Ναυσικάα λευκώλενος ἤρχετο μολπῆς.
οἵη δ’ Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ’ οὔρεα ἰοχέαιρα,
ἢ κατὰ Τηΰγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον,
τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείῃς ἐλάφοισι·
τῇ δέ θ’ ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι, γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ·
πασάων δ’ ὑπὲρ ἥ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα,
ῥεῖά τ’ ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι·
ὣς ἥ γ’ ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος ἀδμής.

But when both she and her servants had enjoyed their food, they threw off their veils and played with a ball. And white-armed Nausicaa led them in their play.[75] As when Artemis the arrow-pourer comes down from the mountains either from very high Taygetos or from Erymanthos, delighting in the boars and swift deer, and playing along with her are the nymphs of the countryside, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, and Leto rejoices in her heart: she [Artemis] easily stands head and shoulders above them, easily recognisable, although all are beautiful, so she, the unwedded maiden, stood out from her handmaidens.

This simile is located at the point in the narrative when Nausicaa and her handmaidens relax and dance around, playing ball by the river as they wait for their washing to dry. Meanwhile Odysseus sleeps nearby under the bushes. The simile is narrated by the external narrator.

The main function of the simile is to emphasise Nausicaa’s distinction. Like Artemis, she is by far the tallest and most beautiful of the girls.[76] The simile dwells on common aspects of Artemis’ and Nausicaa’s life—their fun with companions, their outstanding beauty and their virginity.[77] The simile highlights a second important element—Nausicaa and her handmaidens are not safely at home. This is crucial to the next scene when Odysseus, naked and wild looking, confronts them. The detailed description of Artemis’ home—the wild mountains—reconceptualises Nausicaa’s location from that

[75] The girls may have been both singing and dancing at this moment.
[76] Height was an essential element of beauty for the Greeks: Irwin 1990: 209–210.
[77] Watson 2002: 53.

of a domestic setting, somewhere they visit regularly, to a place of danger.[78] The reference to deer is a prolepsis to the girls' vulnerability when Odysseus suddenly appears from the bushes looking wild and threatening.

The simile reminds us that Nausicaa is not actually a goddess like Artemis; instead she is a mortal maiden and a member of the cohort that Artemis represents—young maidens. In this respect Nausicaa is more like the deer in the simile—prey who could come to grief in wild surroundings.[79]

The simile is very decorative in its beautiful description of Artemis roaming through the mountains with her companions. The poet relies on the audience's knowledge of her characteristics—daughter of Leto, beautiful, untamed virgin, hunter, goddess of wild places, who runs carefree with her nymphs.[80] This simile explains why Odysseus may be unsure as to whether Nausicaa is a goddess or a mortal when he encounters her.

The long simile slows down the narrative, creating suspense.[81] We know that Nausicaa has been sent by Athene to assist Odysseus, but the mechanism of meeting has not been revealed. Odysseus' meeting with Nausicaa will be his first interaction with another mortal in seven years; a hospitable reception will be important for his survival and progress towards home.

[78] Karanika (2014: 55–56) notes that the water's edge and the countryside are associated with danger for young girls.
[79] When the girls throw off their veils to play, they are symbolically removing some of their protection from predatory males (6.100). Olson (1985: 179) adopts a somewhat different view, stating that 'for the external audience [the throwing off of their head coverings] increases the voyeuristic character of the action enormously'.
[80] Budin 2015: 34–67; Maurizio 2016: 337–342; Skafte Jensen 2009: 51–60; Burkert 1985: 149–152.
[81] C. Moulton (1977: 120) notes that this is one of the *Odyssey*'s longest comparisons.

6.130

ὣς εἰπὼν θάμνων ὑπεδύσετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἐκ πυκινῆς δ’ ὕλης πτόρθον κλάσε χειρὶ παχείῃ
φύλλων, ὡς ῥύσαιτο περὶ χροΐ μήδεα φωτός.
βῆ δ’ ἴμεν ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος ἀλκὶ πεποιθώς,
ὅς τ’ εἶσ’ ὑόμενος καὶ ἀήμενος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε
δαίεται· αὐτὰρ ὁ βουσὶ μετέρχεται ἢ ὀίεσσιν
ἠὲ μετ’ ἀγροτέρας ἐλάφους· κέλεται δέ ἑ γαστὴρ
μήλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·
ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς κούρῃσιν ἐυπλοκάμοισιν ἔμελλε
μίξεσθαι, γυμνός περ ἐών· χρειὼ γὰρ ἵκανε.
σμερδαλέος δ’ αὐτῇσι φάνη κεκακωμένος ἅλμῃ,
τρέσσαν δ’ ἄλλυδις ἄλλη ἐπ’ ἠιόνας προὐχούσας·

Speaking thus, godlike Odysseus emerged from under the bushes and he broke off a branch of leaves from the dense thicket with his stout hand, so that he might draw it around his body to cover his private parts. And then he went like a lion exulting in its strength, which goes out in the wind and the rain, with blazing eyes. He goes among the cattle or sheep or goes after wild deer and his belly urges him to go even to a strongly-built fold and make an attempt on the flocks. So Odysseus, even though naked, was about to encounter the fair-haired maidens. For he went out of necessity. He appeared frightful to them, made ugly by brine. And they ran away in all directions over the jutting beaches.

This long simile is located at the point in the narrative when Odysseus, woken by the girls’ voices as they play,[82] emerges from the bushes hoping to obtain assistance. The simile is narrated directly by the poet to the external audience. It illustrates Odysseus’ physical situation and his appearance as seen through the eyes of the girls; it explains how he looks and why he frightens them so much that they run away.

The simile is similar to a simile at *Iliad* 12.299–306.[83] The lion is portrayed as a threat—strong and desperate. Because the lion is mostly associated with successful warriors in the *Iliad*, the poet’s

[82] Austin (2017: 17) comments that Nausicaa led the girls in song. He views this as a sacred ritual, ‘the prenuptial Game’. Karanika (2014: 56) argues that the song is a chorus accompanying religious rituals for Artemis or Apollo.
[83] Both similes commence with the same words but the lion in the Iliadic simile continues its attack upon the sheep-fold: Garvie 1994: 116.

choice of a lion for this simile has been seen by some as inappropriate.[84] Others have interpreted the simile as being mock heroic in tone because Odysseus' motivation is hunger and he emerges to the cries of maidens instead of to battle cries.[85]

In my view the choice of lion *is* appropriate. Odysseus is a hero returning from the Trojan War and he has endured a battle against Poseidon. He is battered and bruised from his ordeal but he has survived. We have already seen Odysseus conceptualised by Menelaos as a lion and predator (4.335–340). But the lion of this simile illustrates Odysseus' current circumstances. The image of the hungry, desperate lion is appropriate at this point in the narrative.[86]

In this simile the audience sees how Odysseus' sea trials have visibly transformed the hero into something not easily recognisable as a civilised human being. He appears to the girls as something closer to a wild animal and could, in their eyes, pose a threat to their safety. They may be prey, just like the fawns of Menelaos' simile and the deer that Artemis hunts. Their danger is magnified by their location—away from the safety of their home and near a river in the countryside—circumstances that are associated with danger to young girls.[87]

That Odysseus could be a real threat to the girls is evidenced by his nakedness—he is seen as a threat to their virginity. The audience may have forgotten that Odysseus has lost his clothes during his experience of shipwreck and has had to return Ino's veil.[88] The word γυμνός immediately follows

[84] The lion in this simile has been viewed as 'ludicrous' or 'affected': Garvie 1994: 115. M. Clarke (1995: 141) comments that 'the juxtaposition of man and beast seems to have a dislocating or even comic effect'.
[85] Garvie 1994: 115. De Jong (2001: 158) views this simile as a parody of the traditional lion simile due to his hunger. The lion's blazing eyes and predatory nature have also been seen as inappropriate to Odysseus' situation: Watson 2002: 55. See Glenn (1998: 107–112) for a comprehensive summary of the criticism and praise of the lion image in this simile.
[86] Lonsdale (1990: 17) comments, rightly, that Odyssean similes have a 'tailor-made quality' that distinguishes them from the simile families in the *Iliad*.
[87] Karakantza (2003: 11) comments that this scene 'is a classic *topos* of scenes of rape in iconography and literature'.
[88] Gutglueck (1987–1988) places a different—and unpersuasive—interpretation upon the scene. He asserts that Odysseus fears castration by Nausicaa.

the verb μίξεσθαι (136). One meaning of the verb—'to have sexual intercourse'[89]—is hard to ignore in view of its proximity to the reminder of Odysseus' unclothed state. Odysseus' approach towards the girls who have thrown back their veils is emphasised by the placement of the word Ὀδυσεὺς adjacent to κούρῃσιν ἐυπλοκάμοισιν (135). The girls' hasty departure in all directions is emphasised by the phrase ἄλλυδις ἄλλη (138).

For the external audience, the threat perceived by the girls does not exist. We know that Odysseus is feeling very vulnerable at this moment.[90] In our eyes he is more akin to a prey animal than to a predator.[91] Therefore, the simile has a comic element for the listener.[92]

The length of the simile creates a pause in the narrative, allowing the audience to linger on the moment and appreciate Odysseus' first contact with other mortals for seven years. It creates suspense, raising the question as to how Odysseus will overcome his frightening first impression on the girls. Whether he has lost all sense of how to behave appropriately in a demanding social situation remains to be seen.

The simile has an important role in textual structuring. It marks the entrance of the hero,[93] and anticipates the meeting of Odysseus and Nausicaa.[94] It forms a pair with the earlier simile at 6.102, which characterises Nausicaa.[95]

[89] Cunliffe 2012: 272.
[90] R. Friedrich (1981: 123) comments that the lion's strength stems from desperation rather than valour.
[91] Karakantza (2003: 17) comments that what we see is 'a relic of a hero'.
[92] E. Cook 1999: 157.
[93] Scott 1974: 38.
[94] Scott 1974: 42.
[95] It is unclear whether C. Moulton (1977: 120) regards these two similes as examples of associative composition. In my view they are closely associated with each other through their characterisation of Odysseus and Nausicaa, who are about to meet.

Finally, the simile raises a recurrent motif throughout *Odyssey*—that of hunger and the need for the basic necessities of life: these drive the lion of the simile and Odysseus to reveal themselves.[96]

[96] See Bakker (2013: 135–156) for an examination of the theme of hunger in the *Odyssey*.

6.151 AND 6.162

αὐτίκα μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον.
γουνοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις, ἦ βροτός ἐσσι;
εἰ μέν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
Ἀρτέμιδί σε ἐγώ γε, Διὸς κούρῃ μεγάλοιο,
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυήν τ’ ἄγχιστα ἐίσκω·
εἰ δέ τίς ἐσσι βροτῶν, τοὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσιν,
τρὶς μάκαρες μὲν σοί γε πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
τρὶς μάκαρες δὲ κασίγνητοι· μάλα πού σφισι θυμὸς
αἰὲν ἐυφροσύνῃσιν ἰαίνεται εἵνεκα σεῖο,
λευσσόντων τοιόνδε θάλος χορὸν εἰσοιχνεῦσαν.
κεῖνος δ’ αὖ περὶ κῆρι μακάρτατος ἔξοχον ἄλλων,
ὅς κέ σ’ ἐέδνοισι βρίσας οἶκόνδ’ ἀγάγηται.
οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἴδον βροτὸν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
οὔτ’ ἄνδρ’ οὔτε γυναῖκα· σέβας μ’ ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.
Δήλῳ δή ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῷ
φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα·
ἦλθον γὰρ καὶ κεῖσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἕσπετο λαός,
τὴν ὁδὸν ᾗ δὴ μέλλεν ἐμοὶ κακὰ κήδε’ ἔσεσθαι.
ὣς δ’ αὔτως καὶ κεῖνο ἰδὼν ἐτεθήπεα θυμῷ
δήν, ἐπεὶ οὔ πω τοῖον ἀνήλυθεν ἐκ δόρυ γαίης,
ὡς σέ, γύναι, ἄγαμαί τε τέθηπά τε, δείδια δ’ αἰνῶς
γούνων ἅψασθαι· χαλεπὸν δέ με πένθος ἱκάνει.

At once he spoke gentle and crafty words.
‘I entreat you by your knees, lady. Are you a goddess or are you a mortal? If you are a god, one of those who live in wide heaven, I liken you most to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus both in height and in stature. But if you are one of the mortals who dwell upon earth, then thrice-blessed indeed are your father and your lady mother, and thrice-blessed are your brothers. I suppose their hearts are always gladdened with joy on your account on seeing such a young shoot entering the dance. But he who is the happiest man of all in his heart is he who, laden with bridal gifts, leads you home in marriage. For I have never seen any mortal such as you, neither man nor woman. I am astonished as I gaze upon you. Once I saw such a thing, a young stem of a palm tree growing by the altar of Apollo at Delos. For I also went there and my large army accompanied me on that journey, which was going to cause much misfortune for me. And so, in the same way I was amazed for a long while on seeing that, since such a stem had never until that time sprung from the ground. So, lady, I both wonder and am astonished at you and I am dreadfully afraid to grasp your knees, although hard grief overcomes me.’

Odysseus ponders how best to approach Nausicaa, the only girl not to have fled from him, and decides to supplicate her with words while keeping his distance.[97] The poet prefaces Odysseus' speech with a comment on its quality, thereby influencing the listeners' assessment of its content (6.148).[98] This simile, comparing Nausicaa to a young palm tree on Delos, forms part of his supplication. The speech is the first opportunity for the external audience to see Odysseus interact with another mortal. His monologue is a triumph of courteous compliments, flattery and persuasion despite his ignorance of Nausicaa's background.[99]

The speech demonstrates that he is a civilised man—he refrains from approaching her in his naked and unkempt state and adapts the steps of supplication to his unusual situation.[100] His opening phrase of supplication is immediately followed by his suggestion that Nausicaa may be the goddess Artemis herself.[101] This may not be entirely flattery. Odysseus has had several encounters with goddesses and other divine beings—Kirke, Kalypso, and Ino, so he is cautious when he encounters in a remote place near water the tall, beautiful maiden who is accompanied by a group of other young, beautiful girls.[102]

[97] Odysseus chooses not to perform some of the ritual gestures of supplication due to his nudity. These include displaying a bough to Nausicaa and clasping her by her knees. Instead, he holds the bough to hide his genitalia. Pedrick (1982: 138) comments that it would be inappropriate for Odysseus to grasp Nausicaa's knees because he is dirty and naked. See Naiden (2006) for a comprehensive study of ancient Greek supplication practices.

[98] Richardson (2007: 137) comments that this speech is 'brilliantly controlled'—Odysseus 'flatters [Nausicaa] by treating her like an adult …'. Fenik (1974: 33) refers to Odysseus' 'shrewd flattery'. Austin (1975: 193) calls it 'a speech compounded of honey and profit'.

[99] Gross (1976: 312) describes Odysseus' and Nausicaa's initial meeting as 'charged with amatory potential' and Odysseus' address as 'a speech of studied ambiguity'.

[100] Hague (1983: 136–138) comments that the content of Odysseus' speech, especially his comparison of Nausicaa to a young palm, suggests that the poet was familiar with traditional wedding songs.

[101] C. Moulton (1977: 120) views this simile as associated with that of 6.102 because in both similes Nausicaa is compared to Artemis.

[102] Wohl (1993: 27) comments that Nausicaa 'bears a distinct resemblance to the "dread goddesses" [Odysseus] has just left behind, both in the help she may offer him and in her remarkable awareness of her own sexuality'. Deacy (2001: 281) comments rightly that at first Odysseus fears he may be in front of a goddess. Austin (2017: 22) views the entire speech as Odysseus' 'courtship'.

Nevertheless, Odysseus demonstrates an acute appreciation of mortal family values by praising Nausicaa's relatives' and her future husband's good fortune. His reference to bridal gifts provides assurance of his respect and knowledge of appropriate wedding procedure.[103] His words are designed to allay Nausicaa's fears about his intentions. His reference to seeing the palm tree on his trip to Delos, when he was leading a large army, communicates his high status, well-travelled past, and his honour for the gods, despite his current uncivilised appearance.[104]

Odysseus deploys his simile of the palm tree image to conclude the first section of his speech. It occurs at the apex of his reassuring and flattering introduction. The delivery of such a pleasing compliment allows him the chance to draw breath before changing the subject to his own sorry situation.

The comparison of a young person to a sapling is not unique in Homer.[105] The poet prepares us for the simile by using the word θάλος (157)—'young shoot'—used figuratively of a youthful person.

Odysseus' mention of the palm tree by Apollo's altar on Delos is a direct connection to Artemis, to whom a sanctuary on Delos was dedicated from the Late Bronze Age.[106] The poet relies upon the audience's knowledge of Delos as an important religious site.[107] There are no other references to palm trees in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.[108] The comparison itself to the young shoot is probably meant

[103] See Ingalls (2000) for a discussion of this and, more generally, of the recurrent motif of marriage and initiatory elements in the Phaeacian episode. See also Levaniouk 2011: 322–324.
[104] Fenik 1974: 19.
[105] Telemachos is compared to a tree in 14.175. There are two examples in the *Iliad*—*Iliad* 18.56, when Thetis talks about her son, Achilles, and *Iliad* 17.53, when the narrator describes the death of Euphorbos. Tree similes in the *Iliad* are often deployed for warriors about to die in battle and for those who stand unmoving in battle: Scott 1974: 71. There is, however, no suggestion of an untimely death in this Odyssean simile. Trees and bushes in similes in the *Odyssey* do not necessarily have the same significance as those in the *Iliad*.
[106] Budin 2015: 18. Burkert (1985: 144) comments that Artemis was 'the real mistress of the sanctuary' on Delos. See Sourvinou-Inwood (1985) for a discussion of iconography of altars, palm-trees and *parthenoi*.
[107] Marks (2016).
[108] Tsagalis (2008: 57), drawing on Alden (1995), views the palm tree as one of a number of covert Dionysiac associations.

to illustrate Nausicaa's appearance as tall, young and precious,[109] although scholars have noted that from a botanical perspective such an interpretation is inaccurate.[110]

This encounter is somewhat of an anti-climax.[111] The poet has teased us, raising the possibility of a challenging encounter through his choice of lion simile for Odysseus; instead we see Odysseus practising supplication as best he can, albeit providing an element of amusement for the external audience.

[109] De Jong 2001: 161. Riddehough (1955: 54) comments, somewhat breathlessly, that 'it is a wonderful, comparison, suggesting as it does youth, and slimness, and erectness, and exotic quality, and, above all, sanctity'.
[110] Hainsworth (1988: 304) notes that a young shoot of a palm tree is short and squat.
[111] Olson 1985: 181.

Book 7

Odysseus makes his way to King Alkinoos' palace. He is received by King Alkinoos and Queen Arete. Odysseus, choosing not to reveal his identity, tells of his journey from Ogygia to Scheria. King Alkinoos promises to provide assistance, offering Odysseus transport home to Ithaca.

This book contains several similes. I shall not discuss four similes. Nausicaa's brothers are likened by the poet to the immortals (7.5).[112] Odysseus tells the king and queen that when he first encountered Nausicaa she looked like a goddess (7.291).[113] Athene, disguised as a young girl, describes the Phaeacians' ships as swift as a bird on the wing or a thought (7.36).[114] Another simile compares the activity of the Phaeacian women twirling yarn to the flutter of leaves (7.106).[115] There is only one simile in this book that I discuss in detail (7.84).

[112] This is a formulaic comparison of the type that marks out the first appearance of characters favoured by the poet.
[113] This spoken simile is part of Odysseus' polite flattery of Nausicaa to her parents.
[114] This simile illustrates the speed of the Phaeacians' ships and suggests the magical quality of that speed.
[115] This very beautiful simile illustrates the movement of the Phaeacian women's hands as they work. It is also very decorative and in my view is the most beautiful of the shorter similes in the *Odyssey*.

7.84

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
Ἀλκινόου πρὸς δώματ' ἴε κλυτά· πολλὰ δέ οἱ κῆρ
ὥρμαιν' ἱσταμένῳ, πρὶν χάλκεον οὐδὸν ἱκέσθαι.
ὥς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης
δῶμα καθ' ὑψερεφὲς μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο. 85

But Odysseus went to the renowned palace of Alkinoos. And he stood and pondered in his heart before he reached the bronze threshold. For there was a radiance as of the sun or the moon from the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alkinoos.

This simile illustrates the magnificence of King Alkinoos' palace noted by Odysseus as he approaches it. It marks the transition from his walk to the town, with Athene's guiding presence, to his entry, now alone, into the palace. Although narrated directly by the poet to the external audience, the simile focalises Odysseus' impression of the richly decorated, almost divine palace as he is about to cross the bronze threshold.

At first glance this simile appears to be simply decorative hyperbole, in which a standard phrase (ὥς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης) is used to convey radiance.[116] The poet deploys the same phrase in the simile under discussion (7.84) as he deployed in at 4.45 to convey Telemachos' wonder at the gleaming grandeur of Menelaos' palace. Yet Odysseus' reaction is different from his son's. Odysseus halts and ponders, and marvels inwardly (134) while standing alone outside before entering. Telemachos, on the other hand, together with Peisistratos, marvels openly as they are led through the palace by the servants.

This difference in conduct between Odysseus and his son indicates the father's maturity, experience and self-control. The extent of Odysseus' self-control grows more evident as the poet expands upon

[116] In the *Odyssey* comparisons to the sun or the moon are employed to illustrate the gleam of various objects. These include Menelaos' palace (4.45) and the robe woven by Penelope (24.148). Sometimes an item is compared to the sun only: amber beads are as bright as the sun (18.296), and Odysseus' tunic, as described by Odysseus-Aithon to Penelope, glistened like the sun (19.234).

the semi-divine nature of the Phaeacian world. Through his omniscient description of the rich furnishings, the productive nature of the palace gardens, and utopian plant growth (7.86–132), the poet retards the narrative, allowing the listener to stand before the threshold with Odysseus as he contains his awe.

The poet's deployment of the same phrase in the simile vehicle for the arrival of both Odysseus at King Alkinoos' palace and Telemachos at Menelaos' palace draws attention to both the similarities and differences in their circumstances and personal situation (4.45). They each arrive as strangers in a new place but Telemachos is young, naïve and overawed. Odysseus is mature, wise, reserved, and has encountered several divine and semi-divine beings in the past. Even the magnificence of King Alkinoos' palace does not overwhelm him.

Book 8

King Alkinoos promises to transport Odysseus to Ithaca. In the meantime the Phaeacians hold games and assemble gifts for Odysseus who has not yet revealed his identity. At a feast Odysseus asks the bard Demodokos to sing about the Trojan horse. This moves Odysseus to weep intensely and King Alkinoos finally asks Odysseus to reveal his identity.

There are seven similes in this book. Four similes (8.14; 8.115; 8.174; 8.518) are comparisons with gods.[117] One simile is a simile of measurement (8.124).[118] In his tale about Ares and Aphrodite Demodokos compares the bonds trapping Ares and Aphrodite to spiders' webs (8.280).[119] I shall examine only the simile at 8.523.

[117] When Athene in disguise encourages the leaders of the Phaeacians to attend the place of assembly to see Odysseus, she compares him to the immortals in form (8.14). Euryalos is compared to Ares at the start of the Phaeacian athletic competition (8.115). This simile illustrates his aggressive attitude which later shows itself when he insults Odysseus. Odysseus comments that a man may look like the immortals but not speak in such a manner (8.174). He is replying to Euryalos who has insulted him. In his song about the Trojan War, Demodokos sings of Odysseus, like Ares, going to the house of Deïphobos (8.518). This simile illustrates his martial manner.

[118] Klytoneos wins the race by as far as the range of mules in fallow land.

[119] See Alden (1997) for an examination of the thematic relevance of the song of Ares and Aphrodite to the story of the *Odyssey.* See also Braswell 1982. In my view there is a subtle reference to both Penelope's weaving and unravelling of her work that she undertakes to delay having to make a decision about the suitors, and to Odysseus' general *mētis*, in the simile (8.280). The simile describes the bonds made by Hephaistos to trap Ares and Aphrodite as fine like spiders' webs. Hephaistos is similar to Odysseus in that he is cunning and outwits his opponent: Olson 1989: 137.

8.523

ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
τήκετο, δάκρυ δ᾽ ἔδευεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.
ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
ὅς τε ἑῆς πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσῃσιν,
ἄστεϊ καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ· 525
ἡ μὲν τὸν θνήσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα
ἀμφ᾽ αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγα κωκύει· οἱ δέ τ᾽ ὄπισθε
κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους
εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ᾽ ἐχέμεν καὶ ὀιζύν·
τῆς δ᾽ ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί· 530
ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ᾽ ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβεν.

The renowned bard sang these things. But Odysseus melted into tears and they ran down under his eyes, wetting his cheeks. Just as a woman cries, falling on her dear husband, who has collapsed dead before his city and his people, as he warded off the pitiless day from his town and his children. Seeing him gasping and dying, embracing him, she shrieks loudly. The other men strike her back and shoulders with their spears and lead her off into slavery to suffer toil and work. And her cheeks are wasted with her most piteous grief. So Odysseus shed piteous tears from under his brows.

This, the longest simile in Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, is much admired.[120] It is narrated by the external narrator. The subject matter of the war widow is unique in Homer's similes.[121] The unusual nature of the simile in a Homeric context is underlined by the use of a *hapax legomenon*—εἴρερον (5.529).

At a feast held by King Alkinoos for Odysseus, who has still not revealed his name, Demodokos sings of Odysseus' stratagem of the wooden horse and the Achaeans' subsequent victory over Troy. On hearing the song Odysseus weeps copiously.[122] This is not the first instance of Odysseus crying.[123]

[120] Buxton (2004: 148) calls it 'the most powerful comparison in the entire work'. Goldhill (1991: 53) describes it as 'remarkable'.

[121] In the *Iliad* there are several examples of what happens to women on the losing sides in war. Hector refers to the consequences of defeat for women in his speech to Andromache (*Iliad* 6.440–464). Briseïs and Chryseïs are paradigms of captured women.

[122] The purpose of emotional crying remains unknown. Theories include the cathartic effect of crying, known as the psychological recovery hypothesis, and the physiological arousal hypothesis: Trimble 2012: 24–41. See also Vingerhoets 2001.

[123] When we first see Odysseus on Ogygia he is crying. He cried during the first song sung by Demodokos but on that occasion only King Alkinoos noticed and he diverted attention away from Odysseus by suggesting sporting activities.

An important function of the simile is to explain the depths of Odysseus' grief.[124] This is achieved through the repetition of ἐλεεινοτάτῳ 530/ἐλεεινὸν 531 and through the choice of subject matter.

There is a range of theories as to why the poet deploys a 'role-reversal' comparing Odysseus to the female victim of the war.[125] These include the proposal that Odysseus feels more like a victim than a victor,[126] that he cries because of his reduced circumstances since the victory over Troy, or because he is moved to tears by Demodokos' expert storytelling.[127] It has even been suggested that the simile may reflect some sort of internal acknowledgement by Odysseus of the sorrow that he has caused to his victims in that war.[128] The poet does not supply an answer, leaving both internal and external audiences to speculate. In my view this scene should be viewed through the prism of the most important themes in the *Odyssey*—family reunion and *nostos*—both themes reflected in the simile, having regard to Odysseus' current situation. Clearly these themes have the greatest bearing on the story, and yet Odysseus has achieved neither, despite his current comfortable situation as a

[124] Stanford (1996a: 345) comments that it was not unconventional for Greek men to cry but they rarely cried out of self-pity. Heitman (2005: 35) states that 'in Homer tears are not always a sign of weakness'. Cairns (2009: 43) comments that the comparison in this simile does not imply that Odysseus is behaving in a shamefully feminine manner. See also Arnould 1990: 102. Monsacré (1984: 61–62) comments that women's tears belong in the private sphere but it is normal for men to weep in the open. Knight (2016: 183 n2) observes that there are 'display rules'—'societal norms that dictate how, when, where and to whom emotions should be displayed'. From the *Odyssey* it seems clear that crying at a feast is not normal—see Peisistratos' comment (4.193–198) and Odysseus' remark (19.118–122). Helen resorts to dispensing drugs to cheer up her husband and guests when they become morose while feasting (4.219–232). For a general discussion of tears in Homer see van Wees 1998: 11–16; Föllinger 2009; Cairns 2009.

[125] There has been much speculation as to why Odysseus weeps. See Race (2014: 55–56, 64 n31–32) for a survey of theories on the poet's choice of subject matter.

[126] De Jong 2001: 217.

[127] Crotty 1994: 122–127.

[128] De Jong 2001: 217. Buxton (2004: 149) comments that 'this simile refuses to allow Odysseus any escape from his memory of the Trojan past'. Pucci (1987: 222) suggests that Odysseus weeps *for* the woman as well, although he concedes that the simile is not constructed in this manner. In my view there is no basis for interpretations that Odysseus regrets his actions at Troy. The simile is narrated to the external audience by the poet and is not focalised by Odysseus himself. Furthermore, Odysseus had wept when Demodokos sang about the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles at Troy. Nor is there any evidence later in the narrative of any increased sympathy for his enemies' situation. Odysseus' actions in slaying the suitors when he returns to Ithaca, after rejecting offers of compensation, are not followed by any show of compassion for the suitors or their relatives.

guest of the Phaeacians and his victory in the Trojan War.[129] These thematic references reinforce the direction of the story of the *Odyssey*—towards family reunion and resumption of peaceful and productive home life.

For the external audience Odysseus is reconceptualised or, rather, reaffirmed as a victim rather than as a hero. The audience has heard about his seven-year imprisonment by Kalypso, and his persecution by Poseidon. His moments of relative pleasure, for example, sleeping comfortably under bushes, have been rare, and he is at the mercy again of strangers. The external audience has heard of the victorious warrior Odysseus only from third parties—Nestor, Menelaos and Demodokos. The internal audience of the Phaeacians has heard of Odysseus the victor only from Demodokos. At this point in the narrative he is as nameless as the captive woman.

An ancient Greek audience probably would have been uncomfortably aware of the consequences of war to the losers.[130] The simile might also remind the audience of Penelope's uncertain position at home, not knowing whether she is a widow or a wife, and the resulting uncertainty as to her future.[131]

As well as the victim/victor and gender role reversals between Odysseus and the unnamed woman, there is a difference in the chronological aspect of their respective situations. Odysseus is weeping for unspecified things connected to his past. He is, however, seated comfortably in a palace, well-fed, entertained and being treated respectfully. He is about to reveal his name, an essential step towards reclaiming his identity and station in life. Whatever Odysseus' reason for grief, it seems to

[129] H. Foley (1978: 20) comments 'the simile … perhaps suggests how close Odysseus has come in the course of his travels, and in particular on Calypso's island, to the complete loss of normal social and emotional function which is the due of women enslaved in war'. I prefer Alden's comment that 'the Sack of Troy is nothing without a successful νόστος …': Alden 2017: 17.
[130] Ahl (1996: 186) notes that sacking of cities was a common way of transition into slavery in the ancient world.
[131] Buxton 2004: 149.

lie in the past. The captive woman, however, is at the point of losing everything—her husband, home, freedom, safety, and place in society—all the essential components of identity—with no real chance of ever reclaiming them.[132] The use of the phrase πρόσθεν πόλιος (8.524) is noteworthy, at least for an attentive *reading* audience, because it occurred at *Iliad* 22.464 when Andromache first catches sight of Hector's body as it is dragged behind Achilles' chariot.[133] Andromache had foreseen her future in very similar terms to the events described in the simile under discussion, if Hector were to die and Troy to fall.

The simile marks the memorability of the moment. Its length forces the external audience to pause and dwell on Odysseus' crying. Odysseus' revelation of his identity paves the way for his comprehensive narrative in Books 9–12. It will shed light on the trials he has suffered so far, and possibly shed light on the reason for his immense grief.

[132] Karanika (2014: 91) notes that a person forced into slavery would suffer both the pain of geographic separation and the pain caused by their change of status.
[133] Garvie 1994: 340.

Comments on Similes in Books 5–8

Similes in these books perform a range of functions. In Book 5, for example, the poet deploys similes to illustrate the significant moments in Odysseus' battle against Poseidon. These assist in maintaining the audience's interest in Odysseus' voyage to Scheria and illustrate his challenges.[134]

Some similes in Book 6 introduce characters by illustrating their appearance, qualities and reactions. The poet lets Odysseus speak in his own words when he supplicates Nausicaa and later her parents, allowing him to demonstrate his tact and breeding. The poet deploys few similes during Odysseus' uneventful journey from the sea shore to King Alkinoos' palace. Demodokos' sparing use of similes during his final song enables the simile illustrating Odysseus' grief to stand out for the audience.

[134] I strongly disagree with Scott (2009: 122), who regards the wind similes as 'gentle' (5.328; 5.368), and the horse-rider simile (5.371) and the octopus simile (5.432) as minimising Odysseus' plight. Odysseus is the weaker opponent in his battle against Poseidon.

Chapter Four

Books 9–13

These books comprise the balance of Odysseus' stay with the Phaeacians, and his sea journey to Ithaca. Odysseus' narration of his travels, the Apologue, occupies Books 9–12.[1]

Book 9

In Book 9 Odysseus finally reveals his name to King Alkinoos and begins to give his Phaeacian audience a report of his own travels. After a brief description of his encounters with various non-mortals,[2] Odysseus tells of his encounter with the Cyclops.[3] This book contains ten similes. I omit five similes from discussion—Odysseus' praise of Demodokos, comparing his voice to that of the gods (9.4),[4] and four similes of measurement/quantity (9.51;[5] 9.314;[6] 9.322;[7] and 9.473[8]).

[1] Odysseus takes over as the primary narrator of these books. This is the longest story within the story of the *Odyssey*: Zerba 2009: 313. Odysseus narrates one-sixth of the *Odyssey*: Doherty 1992: 171. See Hopman (2012a) for an examination of narrative and rhetoric in the Apologue. See also D. Beck 2005b.

[2] See Atherton (2000) for an introduction to monsters in Greek culture. Clare (2000) provides an informative discussion of the representation of Polyphemos in the *Odyssey*. See Voicu (2013) for a discussion of the 'others' encountered by Odysseus, including the Phaeacians, the Lotus-eaters, the Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes. Voicu concludes (at 144) that these groups are 'either giants or privileged folk' who are restricted either by their diet (such as the Cyclopes) or their geographical location (such as the Phaeacians).

[3] The Cyclops episode has been interpreted as a contrast between various oppositions. See Pucci 1998: 113–130.

[4] Rutherford (1985: 141) comments that with this compliment Odysseus is acknowledging appropriately King Alkinoos' hospitality.

[5] Odysseus describes the Kikones arriving in numbers like leaves and flowers in spring (9.51). There is a similar simile illustrating vast numbers of men and horses at *Iliad* 2.468. Power (2011: 51) comments that this simile (9.51) is 'an astonishingly tender point of comparison for people whose sole aim is to kill'.

[6] Odysseus illustrates the ease with which Polyphemos moves the huge door stone to his cave back into place, trapping Odysseus and his men in the cave, by comparison to placing the lid back on a quiver. This simile alludes to Odysseus' own skill as an archer and is a reminder of the enclosed cave that they are trapped in. Brelinski (2015: 5) suggests that this simile 'looks forward to the slaughter of the suitors'. Power (2011: 59) views it as looking forward to the moment when Odysseus strings his bow. That moment is illustrated by a simile at 22.406 comparing his ease in stringing the bow to that of a bard stringing a lyre. Grethlein (2017: 134–135) suggests that this simile links the Cyclops' actions with Odysseus' use of arrows to kill the suitors, thereby raising the question 'How different, after all, is Odysseus from Polyphemos?'. Scott (1974: 27) comments that the poet uses similes from normal life, such as this simile, to 'enhance the realistic and awesome massiveness of the fantasy world of the *Odyssey*'.

[7] Odysseus draws upon a shipping comparison to describe the staff of olive wood that he and his men will use to attack Polyphemos, illustrating its size by reference to the mast of a merchant ship of twenty oars (9.322). Alden (2017: 226)

9.191

ἔνθα δ’ ἀνὴρ ἐνίαυε πελώριος, ὅς ῥα τὰ μῆλα
οἶος ποιμαίνεσκεν ἀπόπροθεν· οὐδὲ μετ’ ἄλλους
πωλεῖτ’, ἀλλ’ ἀπάνευθεν ἐὼν ἀθεμίστια ἤδη.
καὶ γὰρ θαῦμ’ ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον, οὐδὲ ἐῴκει 190
ἀνδρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι
ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων, ὅ τε φαίνεται οἶον ἀπ’ ἄλλων.

And there a huge man passed his nights, who tended his flocks alone and afar, and he did not mix with others, but lived far away and was lawless. For he was a huge wonder, not, indeed, like a food-eating man but [like] a wooded peak of lofty mountains, which is visible alone distant from the others.

This simile is spoken by Odysseus as he tells the Phaeacians about his journey back from Troy. Odysseus’ narrative is told from his own point of view, with the benefit of retrospective omniscience which enables him to paint a negative picture of the Cyclopes.[9]

This is one of two similes in the *Odyssey* in which a character is compared to a mountain.[10] This simile is unusual in that it specifies what the Cyclops is unlike, as well as what he is like.[11] The simile vehicle is introduced with ἐῴκει (190), which might suggest that it is closer to a resemblance than a simile but it performs some important simile functions. Immediately before the simile, Odysseus focusses on the Cyclops’ personal characteristics in lines (9.187–189), in particular his role as a

notes the unsuitability of an olive tree as a mast. Mills (1981) 98 comments that this simile suggests Odysseus’ knowledge of shipping and trade and commerce. For a comprehensive review of the methods of shipbuilding in ancient Greece and a discussion of Homeric ships, see Mark 2005.

[8] Odysseus describes how far away he was from the Cyclops when he taunted him by comparison to the distance a man’s voice carries when he shouts.

[9] The Cyclopes are insolent and lawless, do not hold assemblies or make laws and have no regard for each other (9.105–113) unlike the Phaeacians, who have already shown that theirs is a peacefully ruled, civilised society that observes the rules of hospitality.

[10] The other simile is at 10.113. The only other simile in which a character is compared to a mountain is that in the *Iliad*. Hector is compared to a snowy mountain as he sets out to range through the Trojans (*Iliad* 13.754). Bradley (1967), however, suggests that, by reference to the snow, the poet’s aim is to emphasise Hector’s movement rather than his size. See Phillips (2015) for a rebuttal of Bradley’s interpretation.

[11] De Jong (2001: 236) refers to this simile as ‘a double comparison’.

shepherd,[12] his huge size, his isolation, and his lawlessness. The tenor of the simile (190) highlights his size by referring to him as a huge wonder (θαῦμ' … πελώριον).[13] The fact that he is huge suggests that he is dangerous.[14] The first arm of the simile vehicle, cast in the negative, disassociates him even further from normal men[15]—the specific reference to a food-eating man (ἀνδρί γε σιτοφάγῳ 191) anticipates the differences soon to be seen between the diet of the Cyclops and that of mortal men. The second arm of the simile vehicle underlines his alien, dangerous nature by reconceptualising him as an isolated mountain peak.[16]

The description of the Cyclops as a huge wonder suggests hyperbole, but we later learn that he is indeed huge when he traps the men in his cave. Odysseus' reconceptualisation of him as an isolated mountain peak anticipates the Cyclops' final action hurling the top of a mountain towards Odysseus' ship (9.480–483).

The simile is positioned at the end of Odysseus' introduction to his Cyclops tale and is an example of the external poet (via Odysseus) taking advantage of the recency effect to make the simile memorable to the audience.[17]

[12] Despite Odysseus' list of negatives about the Cyclops, Polyphemos' routine activities are evidence that he lives an organised life producing food and caring for his flocks. Bowra (1988: 62) comments that Homer tries 'to bring his monsters as near as possible to humanity, to relate them to it, and even in some degree to humanize them'.

[13] Scott (1974: 23) considers this simile to be one of measurement but this interpretation is too narrow. The difference in size between the Cyclops and Odysseus is important because Odysseus and his men are trapped in the cave unable to move the boulder covering the entrance. Were the Cyclops to fulfil the requirements of hospitality, his size would be irrelevant.

[14] Felton (2012: 104) comments that Greek monsters tended to share certain traits, including being immense in size, having exceptional physical abilities, and being inherently destructive and hostile, especially towards humans.

[15] Pucci (1998: 119–120) comments that 'the text explicitly denies that the Cyclops has a human aspect, and instead assimilates him to a raw feature of the landscape'.

[16] As discussed earlier in this thesis, mountains signified danger and the unknown to the ancient Greeks. See Buxton 1994: 88; Olson 1985: 179–180.

[17] The recency effect causes a person to remember the last piece of information presented in a series better than the preceding information.

9.289

ὣς ἐφάμην, ὁ δέ μ’ οὐδὲν ἀμείβετο νηλέι θυμῷ,
ἀλλ’ ὅ γ’ ἀναΐξας ἑτάροις ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἴαλλε,
σὺν δὲ δύω μάρψας ὥς τε σκύλακας ποτὶ γαίῃ
κόπτ’· ἐκ δ’ ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέε, δεῦε δὲ γαῖαν. 290

So I spoke, but he did not reply at all from his pitiless heart, but rose quickly and shot forward his hands towards my companions. And he seized two and he dashed them upon the ground like puppies. And their brains flowed out upon the ground and saturated the earth.

This short simile is spoken by Odysseus. Odysseus and his men enter the Cyclops' cave and help themselves to the food they found there.[18] The huge Cyclops returns, closing the door stone securely so they cannot escape. When the Cyclops notices them, Odysseus supplicates him requesting appropriate treatment as guests. This simile, focalised by Odysseus, forms part of Odysseus' narration of the Cyclops' response to his supplication.[19]

The simile illustrates the ease and ruthlessness with which the Cyclops kills two of Odysseus' men. The Cyclops' huge size (9.187–192) is implicit in Odysseus' reconceptualisation of his men as puppies, rather than as fully-grown animals. It suggests the men's physical inability to avoid the Cyclops' brutality.[20] These two mature men, who have survived ten years of war, are small, insignificant, vulnerable and unsuspecting of what is about to happen to them. The choice of species magnifies the poignancy of their deaths: dogs were probably the earliest domesticated animals,[21]

[18] Naiden (2006: 139) comments that this scene is an extreme example of hypocrisy in the practice of supplication because Odysseus and his men have acted so poorly entering Polyphemos' house without invitation and helping themselves to his food (9.216–233). Bakker (2002: 144–145) comments that 'it is an act that is curiously reminiscent of the behavior of the Suitors'.

[19] The Cyclops bluntly demands to know who they are, then tries to find out where their ship is moored, before Odysseus supplicates him for hospitality. Greene (1986: 138) comments that the Cyclops' question as to the men's identity, before they have received appropriate reception, demonstrates his 'lapse of *savoir faire'*.

[20] De Jong 2001: 241.

[21] Morey (2006: 158) states that 'the relationship between people and dogs is an intensely social one and has been for thousands of years'. MacKinnon (2014b: 270) comments that 'dogs denote perhaps the most universal "pet" animal, spatially and temporally; people of antiquity were no exception in this regard'. See also Kitchell 2014: 47–53.

and therefore are very tame.[22] They are generally not regarded as predators.[23] The conceptualisation of the Cyclops as a man is ironic in that he is a creature closer to a wild beast, yet he is killing the men as a man might kill unwanted animals.

The result of the Cyclops' cruelty is efficiently conveyed through the description of the men's flowing brains, thereby filling a lexical gap; there is no need for Odysseus to tell us that the men are dead.

Through the image of the helpless pups, Odysseus conveys the poignancy of the slaughter.[24] The Cyclops' action is the antithesis of that of a good host and is the opposite to the Phaeacians' hospitable reception. The simile is calculated to arouse sympathy in the internal audience for Odysseus and his men, despite their earlier poor behaviour. This simile is the first of two similes illustrating the awful deaths of some of his men.

The simile, by so visibly illustrating their means of death, makes the two men's deaths memorable and shocking. This simile marks the first demonstration of the Cyclops' bestial behaviour. This simile is paired with the simile at 9.292, which illustrates the Cyclops' consumption of the men's bodies.

[22] Redfield (1975: 195) comments that 'the dog [in Homer] is the most completely domesticated animal'.
[23] Franco (2013: 29) notes that a dog's raw meat usually comes from other sources, not its own hunting. Otherwise it could not be used as a guard dog.
[24] W. Beck 1991: 164.

9.292

τοὺς δὲ διὰ μελεϊστὶ ταμὼν ὡπλίσσατο δόρπον·
ἤσθιε δ’ ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, οὐδ’ ἀπέλειπεν, 292
ἔγκατά τε σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα μυελόεντα.

And then he cut them limb from limb and prepared his evening meal. And, like a mountain-bred lion, he ate (them), and he left nothing—[eating] the entrails and the flesh and also the bones full of marrow.

This short simile forms part of Odysseus’ narrative to the Phaeacians concerning his encounter with the Cyclops, Polyphemos.[25] It is the only lion simile in the *Odyssey* that does not illustrate either Odysseus or Penelope. This passage follows the clause describing the brain matter flowing from the men’s heads after they had been dashed to the ground like puppies (9.290).[26] The simile explains the Cyclops’ bestial consumption of the men’s bodies—eating every part of them raw, without any sacrifice.[27]

In the *Iliad* many (but not all) lion similes illustrate positive attributes or successful actions of warriors.[28] Odysseus’ reconceptualisation of the Cyclops as a mountain-bred lion, however, is negative. The adjective ‘mountain-bred’ (ὀρεσίτροφος*)* is deployed in the *Odyssey* only when the

[25] Lonsdale (1990: 49) notes the absence of any linguistic correspondence between the vehicle and the tenor. He comments that the simile ‘functions almost like an adverb to emphasize the uncivilized manner in which the monster devours his human victim’.

[26] It is noteworthy that the poet compared the men earlier to puppies. Dogs were not normally consumed by humans in the ancient world: MacKinnon 2014b: 270.

[27] Alden (2017: 226 n20) notes that it is not explicitly stated that the victims are eaten raw although she concludes that they probably were. This is my interpretation. The simile evokes an image of the raw eating of wild beasts. Redfield (1975: 197) comments that in Homer ‘the eating of raw meat, since it bypasses a rule of culture, is a kind of impurity …’. Calame (1976: 319) states that, by eating Odysseus’ companions, Polyphemos is demonstrating his savagery. Wilson (2002: 247) observes that at this point Odysseus is confronted by a creature that ‘is characterized by unmitigated *biê*’. Saïd (2011b: 71) comments that ‘there is nothing heroic about this lion and the simile, which reduces the Cyclops to the status of a beast only serves to further emphasize his savagery and his monstrosity’. Bakker (2013: 57) argues that the Cyclops is probably a vegetarian and therefore does not practise sacrifice’. Yet, as some scholars have noted, Polyphemos is not entirely savage. He cares for his livestock and demonstrates methodical farming practices and is fond of his animals. See, for example, Austin 1975: 143–144; Schultz 2009: 305–306.

[28] For example, *Iliad* 5.161; *Iliad* 11.113; and *Iliad* 15.271. Scott (1974: 58) notes that lion similes in the *Iliad* are nearly always used to describe warriors.

poet wishes to emphasise the lion's beastly appearance or animal appetite.[29] As with other references to mountains, the use of the adjective 'mountain-bred' suggests wildness and danger. Any audience member unfamiliar with the behaviour of real lions would be left in no doubt as to their nature by Odysseus' explication of the Cyclops' meal. The conceptualisation of the Cyclops as a mountain-bred lion is consistent with Odysseus' earlier foreboding comments about the Cyclops' diet (9.190–191).[30]

This simile builds upon the pathos of the earlier simile, magnifying the Cyclops' cruelty. The similes' reconceptualisations of the victims and the perpetrator magnify the differences between the men and the Cyclops by threat, size, and, implicitly, by behaviour. The two similes form an especially memorable pair illustrating the ultimate breach of hospitality—eating one's guests.[31]

For the internal audience, the story of the Cyclops' inhospitable behaviour, illustrated by the similes, reinforces the message of the importance of hospitable relations among men.[32] This pair of similes may remind the external audience of Menelaos' prediction about Odysseus' likely behaviour upon finding the suitors in his house, expressed by way of a simile describing a lion killing fawns that had been left in its den by their mother (4.335). There are similarities between the fawns of that simile and Odysseus' men. Just like the fawns, the men here are in a situation beyond their control—it was

[29] The poet compares Odysseus to a mountain-bred lion when he emerges from the bushes on Scheria looking unkempt and dangerous (6.130). The word ὀρεσίτροφος is used in two similes in the *Iliad* (*Iliad* 12.299; *Iliad* 17.61). The lions in these similes are keen to consume meat. It is noteworthy that in the *Iliad* feeding lions never illustrate any creature, including man, eating: Watrous 1999: 169.

[30] Brelinski (2015: 7–8 n19) regards this as a 'marauding lion' type of simile. Magrath (1982: 208) comments that this simile 'is among the briefest and most terrifying lion similes in Homer. There is a stark voraciousness untempered in its savagery by any mention of hunger, need or deprivation. Devoid of strength, pride and courage this lion simply gorges himself on the prey'.

[31] The Cyclops shows himself as a man-eater—an indication of a lack of morality and disrespect of the gods: Burkert 1985: 247.

[32] The Cyclops' behaviour is an example in the *Odyssey* of another breach of *xenia*. We have been told about Aigisthos, the host, who kills his guest, but here we see the host go even further and eat his guest. Brown (1996: 15) refers to the Cyclops' treatment of Odysseus as 'a bizarre caricature of the practice of hospitality …'.

Odysseus' idea to meet the island's inhabitants and he decided to wait for the Cyclops despite his men's misgivings.

These two similes commence a series of narratives explaining how Odysseus lost his companions in tragic circumstances. They touch on the themes of failed *nostos*, untimely death without *kleos*, civilisation versus savagery, and reception.

9.384

οἱ μὲν μοχλὸν ἐλόντες ἐλάινον, ὀξὺν ἐπ’ ἄκρῳ,
ὀφθαλμῷ ἐνέρεισαν· ἐγὼ δ’ ἐφύπερθεν ἐρεισθεὶς
δίνεον, ὡς ὅτε τις τρυπῷ δόρυ νήιον ἀνὴρ
τρυπάνῳ, οἱ δέ τ’ ἔνερθεν ὑποσσείουσιν ἱμάντι
ἀψάμενοι ἑκάτερθε, τὸ δὲ τρέχει ἐμμενὲς αἰεί.
ὣς τοῦ ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ πυριήκεα μοχλὸν ἐλόντες
δινέομεν, τὸν δ’ αἷμα περίρρεε θερμὸν ἐόντα.
πάντα δέ οἱ βλέφαρ’ ἀμφὶ καὶ ὀφρύας εὖσεν ἀυτμὴ
γλήνης καιομένης, σφαραγεῦντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι.

Having seized the olive-wood pole, sharp at its point, they thrust it into his eye. And I, leaning from above, began to spin it. Just as when some man bores with a drill into timber for a ship. And they rotate it below with a leather strap, holding it from each side. And it turns, getting stronger and stronger unceasingly. So we seized and turned the pole with its fiery point in his eye. And blood, being warm, flowed around it. And the breath of fire singed all around his eyelids on both sides, and his eyebrow, with his eyeball catching alight and its roots swelled to bursting in the fire.

This is the first of a pair of technical similes that illustrate Odysseus’ attack upon the Cyclops. It is one of a small group of technical similes— similes concerning artisans or their procedures—in the *Odyssey*.[33]

Having tricked the Cyclops into becoming drunk, Odysseus and his men adapt a huge, olive-wood pole in the cave, and heat up its end in the fire, in order to disable him. This simile is narrated by Odysseus to his Phaeacian audience.

This simile illustrates the men’s attack upon the Cyclops with the stake; it explains how Odysseus and his men, working as a team, manage to pierce the giant’s eye. The detailed image graphically explains the procedure used to injure the Cyclops, enabling even listeners unfamiliar with shipbuilding techniques to visualise the image. The following narrative then shocks the audience

[33] Other technical similes in the *Odyssey* include 5.249; 6.232; 9.391; 19.574; and 21.406. There are three shipbuilding similes in the *Iliad* (*Iliad 3*.60; *Iliad* 15.10; *Iliad* 16.482).

back to the cruel reality of injury to Polyphemos' eye. The adjective θερμὸν (388) is a reminder that Polyphemos is a warm-blooded, living creature.

There are several possible reasons for Odysseus' choice of a shipbuilding simile at this point. Because Odysseus and his men are sailors, it is appropriate to draw upon a maritime image.[34] Alternatively, Odysseus' choice may be to emphasise the cultural differences between the Cyclops and himself.[35] Odysseus has specifically told his audience that the Cyclopes have neither ships nor craftsmen capable of building ships (9.125–127), suggesting their limited technical skills.[36]

Importantly, Odysseus' choice of a shipbuilding simile has significance for his internal audience, the Phaeacians, who are closely associated with ships.[37] Odysseus' deployment of the image could be seen as a means of cultivating intimacy with his internal audience on the basis of shared expertise.[38] Moreover, Odysseus' choice is a wily reminder to the Phaeacians of their promise to take him home.[39] Finally, Odysseus' choice of subject matter may reflect the poet's view of the event—as a

[34] The shipbuilding theme has already been introduced in Odysseus' narration when he compares the size of the pole to a mast (9.320–323). We have been told about Odysseus' shipbuilding skills in Book 5 when he constructs his raft. Odysseus will tell the Phaeacians of his adaptation of his ship's rudder to a raft later at 12.399.

[35] The use of two technical similes has been interpreted as a victory of Odysseus' cunning (*mētis*) over the Cyclops' physical strength (*biê*): Rood 2007: 113. Felton (2012: 131) comments on the association of monsters with the untamed forces of nature threatening orderly human society. Mills (1981: 99) interprets the similes more broadly stating 'the similes … become … by virtue of the connection between *technê* and civilization, part of the larger theme of conflict between civilization and barbarism'. An alternative interpretation of the importance of shipbuilding and seafaring in the Cyclops episode is that of colonisation versus cannibalism: Rinon 2007.

[36] The Cyclopes' lack of maritime skills may suggest a lack of cultural development. Hamilakis (2003: 240), citing Helms (1993), comments that 'it is common to find an association between long-distance travelling and acquisition, skilled crafting and hunting, since all those activities share some of the same qualities. They are all ventures to an outside realm signifying exceptional qualities'.

[37] King Alkinoos himself boasts to Odysseus of the Phaeacians' outstanding skills in seamanship (8.246–249). Nausicaa tells Odysseus about the importance of ships to the Phaeacians (6.261–272), and Athene, disguised as a young Phaeacian girl, also tells Odysseus about the Phaeacians' ships (7.34–36). Furthermore, most of the Phaeacians' names have nautical associations and they have seafaring epithets: Saïd 2011b: 181.

[38] King Alkinoos and his wife are both descended from Poseidon (7.54–66). Besides being the most important sea god, Poseidon is also the 'saviour of ships': Détienne 1978: 231.

[39] Louden (1997: 101) comments that Odysseus' narrative is 'designed to help secure Odysseus' homecoming … by convincing the Phaiakians that their guest does not want to stay …'. Most (1989: 30) states that Odysseus' message to the Phaeacians through the Apologue is 'let me go home now'.

battle of soldiers against an enemy—and therefore suited to illustration with a technical simile, just as some conflicts in the *Iliad* are illustrated by technical similes.[40]

Odysseus uses the introduction to this simile to build up his own prestige. He emphasises his position as leader by distinguishing his role from that of his subordinate men: a fact reinforced by their different physical locations—he leans on the pole above them (383) as they work below. This delineation of roles is underlined in the simile image where one man is in control of the procedure (384).[41] At the same time, however, the image of a successful team counters the reality of Odysseus' present situation in Phaeacia—crewless and alone. This tale of cohesiveness should set the Phaeacians' minds at rest about their visitor. Yet, the reality of Odysseus' cruel attack on the Cyclops is a reminder to them that he could be a threat should they not fulfil their promise to transport him to Ithaca.

This and the following simile at 9.391 foreground this moment when the men injure the mighty Cyclops.

[40] There are numerous technical similes in the *Iliad* illustrating combat. Redfield (1975: 190) explains that 'combat is not a productive activity, but it is technical, involving planning, skill, and the use of tools'. He notes (at 191) that when, in the *Iliad*, combat is compared to a technical activity, the effect of that comparison is usually shocking. Examples of this include the simile in which Menelaos' blood is compared to crimson dye on ivory (*Iliad* 4.141) and the simile in which a tug of war over a corpse is compared to people stretching out a hide (*Iliad* 17.389).

[41] See Mark (2005: 84–85) for details of the drill mechanism described in the simile vehicle.

9.391

ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἀνὴρ χαλκεὺς πέλεκυν μέγαν ἠὲ σκέπαρνον
εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰάχοντα
φαρμάσσων· τὸ γὰρ αὖτε σιδήρου γε κράτος ἐστίν
ὣς τοῦ σίζ’ ὀφθαλμὸς ἐλαϊνέῳ περὶ μοχλῷ.
σμερδαλέον δὲ μέγ’ ὤμωξεν, περὶ δ’ ἴαχε πέτρη,
ἡμεῖς δὲ δείσαντες ἀπεσσύμεθ’· αὐτὰρ ὁ μοχλὸν
ἐξέρυσ’ ὀφθαλμοῖο πεφυρμένον αἵματι πολλῷ.

And, just as a blacksmith plunges into cold water a great axe or an adze, tempering them—for this tempering is the strength of the iron, and they sizzle loudly—so his eye sizzled around the olive-wood stake. And he lamented terribly loudly and the stone echoed around him. And fearfully we moved away but he drew the stake out of his eye, the stake made wet by a lot of blood.

This is the second of a pair of technical similes, spoken by Odysseus, that illustrate his attack upon the Cyclops. This simile explains the sizzling sound caused by the stake entering Polyphemos’ eye through the onomatopoeic word σίζ' (394), by comparison to the spluttering sound (ἰάχοντα 392) caused when tempering an axe.[42]

The choice of subject matter—blacksmithing—draws upon the general knowledge of both the Phaeacians and the external audience. It has been noted that the blacksmith simile refers to Iron Age techniques rather than Bronze Age methods, an indicator that the poet had composed or, at least, updated the simile for his audience.[43] The reference to the effect of tempering (line 393) clarifies the procedure for the less knowledgeable audience yet simultaneously highlights the heating and cooling necessary in the procedure.

[42] Scott 1974: 82. Mills (1981: 97) points out that the noise of the axe blade could just as easily correspond with Polyphemos’ screams of pain as the pole enters his eye.
[43] Stanford 1996a: 361. E. Cook (1995: 109) comments that ‘a shepherd-staff has been made to represent the development of technology from the prehistoric dawn of the human race, which Polyphemos himself represents, to the contemporary society of Homer and his audience’.

The cruelty of Odysseus' actions is highlighted by the reference to the use of fire in the procedure. Man's use of fire in peaceful society is normally associated with cultural progress as demonstrated by the productive objects in the simile,[44] yet its use in the narrative transforms the Cyclops' staff into a means of torture.[45]

The two similes have been placed at a climactic moment in Book 9. They illustrate the means and the effect of a fierce attack on Polyphemos.[46] In conclusion, the deployment of a pair of unusual technical similes makes Odysseus' attack very memorable. The similes force the audience, both internal and external, to consider whether Odysseus' attack upon Polyphemos, is an attack stemming from *mētis* rather than brute force alone.[47]

[44] Von Glinski (2012: 111) suggests that this simile illustrates Odysseus' 'use of superior human skills in order to overcome a man-eating monster and emphasizes the divide between wilderness and civilization'.

[45] E. Cook (1995: 108) points out that the stick is effectively transformed into spear.

[46] Rood (2007: 112) interprets these similes more positively. She states that these two similes 'celebrate the moment when Homer's hero, Odysseus, accomplishes his important conquest of the monster Polyphemus'. In my view 'conquest' is too strong a word. Odysseus and his men are still trapped in the cave with a very angry Cyclops and still have to work out how to escape. That escape requires pure cunning on Odysseus' part.

[47] Clayton (2011) offers a challenging alternative interpretation of the attack upon the Cyclops. She canvasses (at 256) the interpretation that Odysseus is 'enacting a symbolic triumph of paternity over maternity' when he plunges the 'phallic stake' into Polyphemos' eyes, which allows him to escape the womb-like space of the cave, but suggests instead that Polyphemos' face with his one eye represents the nursing breast. Dimock (1989: 111) interprets the attack upon Polyphemos and Odysseus' subsequent revelation of his name as the sexual act and subsequent birth of a child. He concludes that 'the inference that, from the biological point of view, at least, we owe our existence to pain, is obvious, together with the secondary implication that to inflict pain is not to be born and therefore to be nobody'.

Book 10

In Book 10 Odysseus continues his description of his travels, including his initial visit to Aiolia, and his near-arrival at Ithaca, derailed by the misplaced jealousy of his crew. He then tells of their return to Aiolia, their hostile encounter with the Laestrygonians, and finally their reception and stay with Kirke.

There are five similes in this book. I shall not discuss the simile at 10.113 where the size of the Laestrygonian Queen is compared to a mountain peak,[48] nor the simile at 10.304 where Odysseus compares the flower of the *moly* herb to milk.[49]

[48] Saïd (2011b: 168–169) notes the similarity in language describing the Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes and some events in these encounters. She comments that 'in essence, the Laestrygonians are simply another set of Cyclopes'. This similarity is reflected in the similes at 9.191 and 10.113 which describe Polyphemos and the Laestrygonian queen in similar terms.

[49] This seems to be referring to the colour of the flower. The plant has not been identified: Stannard 1962. Berdowski (2008: 88 n67) notes that only the milk of sheep and goats is drunk in Homer except for the Hippemolgi, who are distinguished by their mare-milk drinking practice (*Iliad* 13.5). (Therefore, the colour of the moly flower is probably like that of sheep or goats' milk.)

10.124

οἵ ῥ’ ἀπὸ πετράων ἀνδραχθέσι χερμαδίοισιν
βάλλον· ἄφαρ δὲ κακὸς κόναβος κατὰ νῆας ὀρώρει
ἀνδρῶν τ’ ὀλλυμένων νηῶν θ’ ἅμα ἀγνυμενάων·
ἰχθῦς δ’ ὡς πείροντες ἀτερπέα δαῖτα φέροντο. 124

From the rocks they threw boulders large as a man could lift. And straightaway a terrible din arose through the ships from the men who were dying and, at the same time, from the ships that were breaking up. And piercing them like fish they carried them away for a gruesome meal.

This simile is located at the point in Odysseus' narrative when the giant Laestrygonians attack his ships as he and his men try to escape. This is the second simile deployed by Odysseus that illustrates the loss of some of his men to giant monsters.[50]

The main function of the simile is to illustrate the Laestrygonians' monstrous slaughter, which is immediately followed by their consumption of those of Odysseus' men whom they had killed.[51] Fish in their usual role as food for mortals are replaced here by men in an unnatural role, as food for monsters. The Laestrygonians' unnatural action is highlighted by the description of their meal as ἀτερπέα δαῖτα (124).

The reconceptualisation of the men as fish, a food not associated with the gods,[52] emphasises their defencelessness and underlines the cruelty of their deaths as the prey of the Laestrygonians—caught and consumed like the foodstuff of peasants. In the *Odyssey* fish is eaten only as a last resort

[50] The first simile is at 9.289 when the Cyclops kills two of Odysseus' men. There are strong parallels between the Cyclops and the Laestrygonians both physically and in character and behaviour: Hopman 2012b: 57.
[51] De Jong (2001: 253) refers to the Laestrygonians' meal as 'cannibalism' but this seems incorrect terminology in view of the fact that the Laestrygonians seem to be members of a different species.
[52] McInerney (2014: 254) notes that fish were not associated with either the divine or the heroic. Most species of fish were not ritual offerings to the gods: Berdowski 2008: 79.

and is not food for heroes.[53] From Odysseus' simile we must assume that fish are regarded with similar distaste by the Phaeacian audience.

For the external audience the reference to fish reflects the importance of fish to ancient Greek society as a food resource.[54] The poet draws upon general knowledge to understand the method of the men's death. Spearing was a common fishing method of the ancient Greeks,[55] and would have been easily understood by the audience. This is the first of two similes in which Odysseus' men are compared to fish.[56] The simile highlights the pathos of the men's deaths, unsanctioned by the gods.

[53] Odysseus' men only resort to fishing when there is no alternative (4.367–369; 12.329–332): Dalby 1995: 277 n57. No hero in the *Iliad* eats fish. Berdowski (2008: 87) comments that 'fish are for Homer a symbol of reality implying risk and uncertainty'. Combellack (1953: 260) notes that in Homer fish tend to be associated with grim events. Epic heroes fear becoming food for fish. The concern about fish eating human bodies is evinced in both the *Iliad* (*Iliad* 21.122–127; *Iliad* 21.203–204) and the *Odyssey* (14.133–136; 15.477–480; 24.291–292). The role of fish in Homer, including its absence from heroes' diets, has been of great interest since antiquity: see Berdowski 2008: 80–86.

[54] Lewis (2018: 651) notes the importance of fish to the Mediterranean region as a whole, both as a resource and symbolically. Fish were eaten in significant quantities by both ordinary and upper-class people in ancient Greece: Kron 2014: 193. Mylona (2008: 65) notes the widespread practice of fishing in ancient Greece, including in inland waters.

[55] Mylona 2015: 153.

[56] The second simile is at 12.251. The dead suitors are compared to fish at 22.384. In the *Iliad* Patroklos is compared to a man sitting on jagged rocks dragging a fish from the sea with a bronze hook when he spears Thestor and drags him out of his chariot (*Iliad* 16.406).

10.216

βῆ δ’ ἰέναι, ἅμα τῷ γε δύω καὶ εἴκοσ’ ἑταῖροι
κλαίοντες· κατὰ δ’ ἄμμε λίπον γοόωντας ὄπισθεν.
εὗρον δ’ ἐν βήσσῃσι τετυγμένα δώματα Κίρκης
ξεστοῖσιν λάεσσι, περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ·
ἀμφὶ δέ μιν λύκοι ἦσαν ὀρέστεροι ἠδὲ λέοντες,
τοὺς αὐτὴ κατέθελξεν, ἐπεὶ κακὰ φάρμακ’ ἔδωκεν.
οὐδ’ οἵ γ’ ὡρμήθησαν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ’ ἄρα τοί γε
οὐρῇσιν μακρῇσι περισσαίνοντες ἀνέσταν.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἂν ἀμφὶ ἄνακτα κύνες δαίτηθεν ἰόντα
σαίνωσ’, αἰεὶ γάρ τε φέρει μειλίγματα θυμοῦ,
ὣς τοὺς ἀμφὶ λύκοι κρατερώνυχες ἠδὲ λέοντες
σαῖνον· τοὶ δ’ ἔδεισαν, ἐπεὶ ἴδον αἰνὰ πέλωρα.
ἔσταν δ’ ἐν προθύροισι θεᾶς καλλιπλοκάμοιο,
Κίρκης δ’ ἔνδον ἄκουον ἀειδούσης ὀπὶ καλῇ,
ἱστὸν ἐποιχομένης μέγαν ἄμβροτον, οἷα θεάων
λεπτά τε καὶ χαρίεντα καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα πέλονται.

And he [Eurylochos] went off at once with twenty-two companions, [all] crying. And they left us behind weeping. In the wooded glens they found the house of Kirke, built of polished stone, conspicuous in a clearing. And around it were mountain wolves and lions whom she [Kirke] herself had bewitched for she had given them evil drugs. But they [the animals] did not set upon the men, but indeed, let me tell you, they stood up [on their hind legs], wagging their tails. As when dogs fawn about their master when he comes home from a feast, for he always brings titbits to please their hearts, so the strongly clawed wolves and lions fawned around them. But they [Odysseus’ men] were fearful when they saw the dread monsters. They stood at the front doors of the goddess with the beautiful locks and they heard Kirke singing inside in a beautiful voice as she went to and fro in front of her great, divine loom-work, such as is the product of goddesses, fine and beautiful and splendid.

This simile, the third of five similes in Book 10, is part of Odysseus’ continuing narration to the Phaeacians. He tells how a group of his men, led by Eurylochos, meet Kirke.[57] This episode is related by Odysseus, who is repeating information he subsequently learned from his men.

The simile forms part of the description of the men’s arrival at Kirke’s house. The narrative of arrival at someone’s home is part of a ‘type-scene’ comprising several standard elements deployed by the

[57] See Felson-Rubin (1997) for an analysis of Odysseus’ omniscient narrative of his men’s initial encounter with Kirke.

poet in recurring situations in the story.[58] The scene illustrated by this simile combines two elements of an arrival scene—that of the dog at the door and that of waiting on the threshold to supplicate the host—and it distorts them.[59] The dog at the door motif appears at several points in the *Odyssey* and each occurrence signifies the state of the household within.[60]

This simile is unusual because it compares animals in the tenor to different kinds of animals in the simile vehicle. The simile illustrates the strange behaviour of wild animals around a domestic home, explaining the nature of their excessively friendly conduct, conveyed by their fawning behaviour. Their fawning is emphasised through the repetition of σαίνωσ'/σαῖνον (10.217 and 10.219) in the vehicle and tenor, each in first position in the line. The repetition of ἀμφί immediately before the simile (10.212) and repeated in the vehicle and resumptive clause (10.216 and 10.219) conveys the sense that the men are being hemmed in by the animals. The simile fills the lexical gap of the wild animals' strange behaviour—they are not just tame but are remarkably friendly as if the men are their masters. There is implicit danger in this atypical friendliness of lions and wolves suggestive of immortal influence.

Odysseus' reconceptualisation of the wild animals as dogs is considered. Dogs were the most domesticated animals in ancient Greece and were used as guard dogs. We see several examples of this in the *Odyssey*. Yet the dogs of the simile do not act like guard dogs for the house, rather they

[58] Arend (1933) identified type-scenes. His ideas were subsequently taken up by Parry and Lord and termed 'themes': see Lord 1960: Chapter 4; J. Foley 1987: 404–407. Reece (2011: 905) describes a type-scene as 'an oft-repeated block of words and phrases arranged in a characteristic sequence that describes a commonly occurring activity in Homer'. Examples of type-scenes are supplication, libation, feasting, arrival scenes, assembly, and bathing. Not all possible elements of a type scene are included in every occurrence of the scene.

[59] Reece (1993: 6–8) lists thirty-eight common elements of Homeric hospitality scenes. (He counts the elements of arrival scenes as part of a broader type-scene of hospitality.)

[60] W. Beck (1991: 161) comments that the wild animals acting like tame dogs reflect to some extent Kirke's home—'a settlement on a wild island'. Goldhill (1988: 13) suggests that 'Circe's animals confuse the boundaries between domestic and savage worlds'.

are more akin to ornamental table dogs, not used for guarding or hunting.[61] This comparison makes the wild animals' behaviour even more unnatural and unsettling.

The animals' reconceptualisation as docile pets affirms the danger of the evil drugs used by Kirke (10.213) and anticipates the men's fate at her hands.[62] The external audience would appreciate the strangeness of the men's experience. The tension of the moment is increased by the main narrative's dissimilarity with the cosy scene portrayed in the simile vehicle.[63] This is confirmed by Odysseus' specific acknowledgment of the men's fear (10.219). The men are right to be fearful although they incorrectly fear the animals themselves rather than Kirke, whom they have yet to meet.[64]

The simile distinguishes this arrival from other more benign arrivals, by highlighting the men's peculiar situation.[65] By its inclusion the simile slows down the narrative, making the men linger amongst the wild animals. Their fear is inconsistent with the normal expectations of a guest waiting to be welcomed. The unusual situation is exacerbated in the following narrative when Kirke, who is the mistress of the animals, does not notice the men at the door but needs to have their presence drawn to her attention (10.229–231).[66]

[61] Rose (1979: 222 n23) notes that Odysseus' question to Eumaios about Argos' role implies that table dogs were inferior types of dogs.
[62] As Heubeck (1989: 55) observes, the entire passage is preparation for the men's encounter with Kirke. W. Beck (1991: 161) comments that 'these "dogs" reflect their magical mistress and give witness of her powers of while foreshadowing the transformation [of Odysseus' men] into swine …'.
[63] Franco (2013: 25) comments that Odysseus' reference to an owner bringing home morsels for his dogs must have been a normal occurrence.
[64] Pucci (1998: 159) comments that the animals 'embody the power and effect of Circe's magic *pharmaka'*.
[65] There are various arrivals throughout the *Odyssey* including that of Athene-Mentes at Odysseus' palace (1.103), Telemachos at Pylos (3.31) and then at Sparta (4.21), and Odysseus at King Alkinoos' palace (7.83) and then at Eumaios' hut (14.30).
[66] Pedrick (1988: 86, 91) notes that in the *Odyssey* a normal [mortal] noble household is headed up by a man and the men of the household would greet and feed the guest and the woman would arrange a bed for the guest. Kirke's reception of Odysseus' men is a perversion of this system—after greeting and feeding them she transforms them and puts them in a pigsty.

The simile and its surrounding narrative touch on several themes in the *Odyssey*—those of reception of guests, eating, loss of identity, and *nostos*. Odysseus is subtly reminding his Phaeacian hosts of his desire to return home.

10.410

ὣς ἔφατ', αὐτὰρ ἐμοί γ' ἐπεπείθετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ,
βῆν δ' ἰέναι ἐπὶ νῆα θοὴν καὶ θῖνα θαλάσσης.
εὗρον ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ νηὶ θοῇ ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους
οἴκτρ' ὀλοφυρομένους, θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντας.
ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἄγραυλοι πόριες περὶ βοῦς ἀγελαίας,
ἐλθούσας ἐς κόπρον, ἐπὴν βοτάνης κορέσωνται,
πᾶσαι ἅμα σκαίρουσιν ἐναντίαι· οὐδ' ἔτι σηκοὶ
ἴσχουσ', ἀλλ' ἀδινὸν μυκώμεναι ἀμφιθέουσι·
μητέρας· ὣς ἔμ' ἐκεῖνοι ἐπεὶ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
δακρυόεντες ἔχυντο· δόκησε δ' ἄρα σφίσι θυμὸς
ὣς ἔμεν, ὡς εἰ πατρίδ' ἱκοίατο καὶ πόλιν αὐτὴν
τρηχείης Ἰθάκης, ἵνα τ' ἔτραφεν ἠδ' ἐγένοντο.

So she spoke and my bold heart persuaded me. And I went to my fast ship and the sea shore. There I found my trusty companions by the swift ship, wailing piteously, shedding heavy tears. Just as in a farm shed when the cows of the herd return to the farmyard when they have eaten their fill of the pasture and all the calves frisk around them together and the pens are not able to hold them back, but lowing constantly they run about their mothers, so each one, when they saw me with their eyes, threw themselves around me weeping. And their feelings seemed to be just as if they had arrived at the homeland and the city itself of rugged Ithaca, where they were born and grew up.

Odysseus continues narrating his adventures to the Phaeacians. The rural image illustrates his reunion with the men who remained at his ships (416–417) after his return from Kirke's house.[67] Odysseus has persuaded her to change his other crew members back to men from swine. His description of his concern for his men—refusing to eat or drink at Kirke's house while they remain in the form of swine (383–387)—has already portrayed him as a man who cares for his crew.[68] The simile explains the depth of the other men's joy upon Odysseus' return, and implicitly suggests the long wait they endured. The image of the calves frisking around eagerly explains their joyous

[67] Lonsdale (1990: 31) comments that the high frequency of references to cattle in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* suggests that the cow would have been the most familiar domesticated animal to the epic audience. Osteological evidence supports this assumption. See Kitchell (2014: 35) for details of the range of uses for cattle in ancient Greece.

[68] In ancient Greece swine were bred only for food so Odysseus' refusal to eat had a practical motivation in that he would have wanted to avoid eating his own shipmates.

crowding around Odysseus.[69] This everyday image has been seen as a way of heightening the drama of Odysseus' reunion with his men.[70]

The reconceptualisation of his men as calves waiting for their mothers (presumably eager to be fed) reveals their reliance upon Odysseus. Odysseus' choice of subject matter—a herd of cows, a symbol of wealth in Homer[71]—alludes to his status in society as a landowner (rather than as a trader as suggested by Euryalos at 8.159–164).[72]

The simile is notable for its parent/child theme with specific equivalence of Odysseus to the calves' mothers.[73] Moulton notes that the parent/child motif is mostly used sympathetically in similes;[74] this simile is no exception. Odysseus' reconceptualisation of himself as a mother cow (μητέρας 415) reinforces the picture he has built up for the Phaeacians of a caring leader. There is an element of role reversal in his conceptualisation as a mother rather than a father.[75]

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[69] De Jong (2001: 264) notes several paired expressions in the vehicle and source domains that draw out particular aspects of the reunion—Odysseus' being surrounded by his men and their noise. She cites ἀμφιθέουσι (413) as corresponding with ἔχυντο (415), and μυκώμεναι (413) corresponding with both κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντας (in 409 before the simile commences) and δακρυόεντες (415).

[70] Heubeck 1989: 65.

[71] See Peacock 2011: 49–55. The role of cattle as money is referred to in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Peacock (at 55) comments that only nobles owned cattle. Bakker (2013: 36–52) states that the scenes in Homer of large herds of cattle probably did not reflect life in most places in ancient Greece owing to the terrain in the Aegean basin. See, more generally, Howe (2014b: 141–144) and Harden (2013: 141–155) for an overview of animals and wealth in Greek and Roman literature.

[72] In 14.95–102 Eumaios tells the disguised Odysseus that his master owns more herds than any other Achaean hero. The high status of owners of larger animals in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflects the reality in ancient Greece. Howe (2014b: 140) notes that in ancient Greece there were very high investment costs in raising large animals. Therefore they were symbols of wealth and high status.

[73] Several similes in the *Iliad* draw upon the parent/child theme in relation to warriors, including *Iliad* 8.271, *Iliad* 9.323 and *Iliad* 16.7. See Dué (2012) for an examination of the parent/child theme in similes that illustrate warriors' emotional bonds. See also Dué 2005; Gaca 2008. This theme in relation to warriors' relationships seems to have been traditional and therefore would have been easily understood by the audience. Odysseus' shipmates were also his fellow warriors at Troy so it is not surprising that he draws upon this theme.

[74] C. Moulton 1977: 142.

[75] H. Foley 1978: 20. Dimock (1989: 129) suggests that this simile is a reminder of Kirke's victims' dependence upon her; this idea has some merit but, in my view, is unrelated to Odysseus' reconceptualisation of himself as a maternal figure. The image of the natural behaviour of the calves, however, produces a strong contrast with the image of the unnatural behaviour of the wild animals surrounding Kirke's house fawning upon Odysseus' men.

The nature of the companions' tears changes during the simile. When Odysseus first sees his men they are wailing piteously (409). During the interval of the simile their tears are transformed to tears of joy, so much so that Odysseus compares the strength of their feelings to their feelings on arrival in their home country (415–417).[76] In this manner Odysseus augments the impact of the narrative with a simile that both advances the action of the narrative and fills a lexical gap, by specifying what the men did when they saw Odysseus—that they could not be held back from surrounding him in their excitement and relief upon his return. The narrative focusses upon the men's weeping but the simile explains how that weeping is transformed into joy.[77]

There is an element of pathos in this simile in that the external audience knows that Odysseus' men will never reach Ithaca. This very picturesque simile of reception and reunion, which gives a glimpse of the real world of Ithaca, is a striking contrast with the reception at Kirke's magical household.

The simile touches on several themes—successful *nostos*, family reunion, and separation, recognition and reunion. It also implicitly acknowledges the importance of solid hierarchical relationships,[78] and counters any suspicion on the part of the Phaeacians that Odysseus may have been abandoned by his crew or that he may have abandoned them.

[76] De Jong (2001: 264) comments that the comparison makes it clear that Odysseus' companions link him to their *nostos*. Lonsdale (1990: 126) interprets the men as imagining themselves 'at home in more habitual surroundings'. H. Foley (1978: 20) construes the companions' response to Odysseus' return as reflecting their symbolic recovery of Ithaca.

[77] The tears of pure joy of the men upon Odysseus' arrival differ somewhat from Odysseus' and Telemachos' tears upon their reunion in Book 16. That reunion is illustrated by a simile that reflects an element of loss, never to be regained (16.481).

[78] The men's behaviour at this point in the narrative contrasts with their poor behaviour at other times, which has dire consequences. For example, their release of the bag of winds given to Odysseus by Aiolos results in their being blown away from Ithaca and ultimately losing their *nostos*, and their consumption of the cattle of the Sun leads to their deaths.

Book 11

In Book 11, the first Nekyia, Odysseus continues his story of his voyage from Troy. He and his shipmates leave Kirke's island and visit the Underworld.[79] After appropriate sacrifice, Odysseus interviews several shades, including that of his mother, Antikleia, and those of Agamemnon and Herakles.

Book 11 contains seven similes. I shall not discuss five of these similes—the simile comparing a shade to a dream (11.222),[80] the simile comparing a wave to a mountain (11.243),[81] the simile with which King Alkinoos compliments Odysseus on his skilful storytelling by comparison to a bard (11.368),[82] the auditory simile comparing the clamour of the dead to that of frightened birds (11.605),[83] and the simile in which Herakles is compared to dark night as he glares around him (11.606).[84]

[79] The second Nekyia takes place in Book 24 when the shades of the suitors descend to Hades. See Heath (2005) for an overview of each Nekyia.

[80] Antikleia speaks this simile in response to Odysseus' question why he cannot embrace her, explaining that once a person is dead his or her shade slips away like a dream. Heubeck (1989: 90) comments that the similarity between the soul and the dream lies in their lack of any corporeal reality.

[81] This simile illustrates the size of the wave concealing Poseidon and Tyro: Scott 1974: 21. In my view this simile has a similar sense of impending danger as the comparisons to mountains in 3.290; 9.191; and 10.113.

[82] It is not unusual for a bard to be complimented on his performance. Odysseus compliments Demodokos at 9.4. King Alkinoos' compliment functions as a device to allow Odysseus to continue his long narration to the Phaeacians. This simile reminds the external audience of Odysseus' skills as an orator in the *Iliad* (his skill is illustrated by simile at *Iliad* 3.222). This is the first of three similes in which Odysseus is compared to a bard (17.518; 21.406). Richardson (1990: 185) views this compliment as the poet 'furtively referring to his own narrative', adding that 'the narrator of the *Odyssey* knows his worth, and [Odysseus as narrator] helps him comment covertly on his own excellence'. The issue of whether Odysseus is a bard or just a storyteller has exercised scholars. D. Beck (2005b: 226) views Odysseus as a superb storyteller but not a bard. Scodel (1998: 172) observes that 'bardic narrative … is essentially disinterested'. Redfield (1975: 30) referring to a bard's subject matter, comments that 'as specialists, the bards are the vehicles and custodians of high culture'. Ready (2018b: 17) notes that Odysseus is not inspired by the Muse. Cf. Clayton (2004: 21), who comments that at this point 'the poet explicitly calls attention to the conflation of hero and bard …'. Segal (1988: 139) views Odysseus as performing as a bard. See Goldhill (1991: 48–49) for a discussion of Alkinoos' assessment of Odysseus' storytelling. See also Macleod (1983: 4). See Doherty (1991) for an examination of the role of the break ('the intermezzo') in Odysseus' narrative in Book 11. See also Doherty (1992) for a broader discussion of audiences in the *Odyssey*. More generally, see Scodel (1998) for an overview of bardic performance in Homer.

[83] The reference to birds in this simile is echoed in the simile at 24.6 in which the sounds of the shades of the suitors are compared to those of bats. In ancient Greek thought bats were closely assimilated with birds. Lonsdale (1990: 33) notes that κλαγγή is used nine times in Homer to describe the cry of birds. See also Ready 2018a: 209–210.

[84] The shade of Herakles glares like dark night. Apollo is similarly described at *Iliad* 1.47. See Lonsdale (1989) for a discussion of the use of παπταίνω in Homer, including in the tenor of this simile.

11.411

ὣς ἐφάμην, ὁ δέ μ’ αὐτίκ’ ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπε·
διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ,
οὔτ’ ἐμέ γ’ ἐν νήεσσι Ποσειδάων ἐδάμασσεν
ὄρσας ἀργαλέων ἀνέμων ἀμέγαρτον ἀυτμήν,
οὔτε μ’ ἀνάρσιοι ἄνδρες ἐδηλήσαντ’ ἐπὶ χέρσου,
ἀλλά μοι Αἴγισθος τεύξας θάνατόν τε μόρον τε
ἔκτα σὺν οὐλομένῃ ἀλόχῳ, οἷκόνδε καλέσσας,
δειπνίσσας, ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ.
ὣς θάνον οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ· περὶ δ’ ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι
νωλεμέως κτείνοντο σύες ὡς ἀργιόδοντες,
οἵ ῥά τ’ ἐν ἀφνειοῦ ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο
ἢ γάμῳ ἢ ἐράνῳ ἢ εἰλαπίνῃ τεθαλυίῃ.

So I spoke and he immediately answered me:
‘Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, neither did Poseidon overpower me on my ships by stirring up dreadful gusts of violent winds, nor did hostile men injure me upon the dry land. But Aegisthus plotted both my death and my fate with my accursed wife and he killed me after he had invited me to his home and entertained me, just as someone slays an ox at the manger. Thus did I die a most pitiable death.’

This simile is spoken by the shade of Agamemnon to Odysseus, who repeats Agamemnon’s words to the Phaeacians in his narrative of his visit to the Underworld. After King Alkinoos asks about Odysseus’ dead companions from Troy. Odysseus tells of his meeting with Agamemnon’s shade.

The simile vehicle is identical to that of 4.535 spoken by Menelaos to Telemachos. Menelaos was repeating Proteus’ description of Agamemnon’s death. That narrative served as a warning to Telemachos of what could happen to his father and him if he was not on his guard against the suitors on Ithaca.[85] This simile, together with Agamemnon’s ensuing comments, serves to warn Odysseus about his arrival home.[86]

[85] Turkeltaub (2014b: 6) notes that Orestes is presented as a model for Telemachos. See also D’Arms 1946: 211.
[86] See Alden (2017: 77–100) for an examination of the differing presentations of the Oresteia story in the *Odyssey*. See also D’Arms 1946. The importance of achieving a successful *nostos* is reflected in its frequent mentions in the *Odyssey*. Austin (2010: 46) notes that the noun *nostos* occurs approximately 100 times and is usually associated with grief.

This simile affirms Proteus' description of the manner of Agamemnon's death. It explains that it was unexpected in a place and at a time that should have been safe: after a meal, an event that is normally is associated with the strengthening of social bonds.[87] Agamemnon cannot even blame the gods or the sea for his untimely death—it was solely through the action of another man aided by his (Agamemnon's) own wife.[88] This is a new element introduced to the story and paves the way for Agamemnon to give Odysseus advice about his arrival home and his treatment of Penelope.[89] Agamemnon's own comparison of himself to an ox at the manger conveys his own emotional response to his death, killed like a defenceless domestic animal, a pitiable death, as he describes it (412). The simile obviates any need for further detail as to the manner of his death—it succinctly fills the lexical gap guiding Odysseus to comprehend the pathos of Agamemnon's murder.

Agamemnon's speech, with the simile marking out the most emotional point of his narrative, serves as a warning to Odysseus about the risks of his own homecoming.[90] Odysseus' narration of the speech serves to inform the Phaeacians of his need to return home. He may claim that he would be prepared to remain a year on Scheria to accumulate guest-gifts but these words are not to be taken seriously. He wants to go home.

Agamemnon's version of his death, with details omitted from other earlier accounts, presents the external audience with the definitive negative paradigm of Odysseus' return, reminding us of the suitors on Ithaca.[91] The themes of good and bad hospitality, untimely death, failed *nostos* and lack of

[87] Hitch (2009: 52) refers to feasting as 'a symbol of social harmony'. Henrichs (2000: 181) comments that 'the point of comparison [an ox slaughtered at a trough rather than at an altar] is not an animal sacrifice proper but a non-ritual, unsanctioned slaughter'.

[88] Agamemnon's narrative of his death is far more detailed than any other character's version. Murnaghan (1987: 123) notes the importance of a wife's fidelity for a hero to achieve a safe nostos.

[89] Hölscher (1999: 423) comments that Agamemnon's version of his death 'unfolds to provide a foil to Penelope'. Cf. Katz 1991: 48–49.

[90] Agamemnon's post-Trojan future, as starkly portrayed by his shade, is vastly different from Odysseus' earlier description of Agamemnon to Polyphemos, which takes place before Odysseus learns of Agamemnon's untimely death (9.263–268).

[91] Nagy (2007: 73) comments that there are two parts to Odysseus' successful *nostos*—he must succeed in arriving home at Ithaca and then he must succeed in regaining his former status as king.

kleos are raised by Agamemnon's deployment of this simile.[92] This simile is the first of a pair spoken by Agamemnon that illustrate the outcome of his and his men's arrival home.

[92] Agamemnon's unfulfilled *nostos* and lack of *kleos* are strongly contrasted with Achilles' achievements. Achilles' shade has approached while Odysseus is still speaking with Agamemnon's shade. Although Achilles has achieved eternal fame through his heroic death at Troy, he has not achieved a successful homecoming; furthermore, *his* shade wishes he were still alive. Odysseus, of course, still has to achieve his successful homecoming. See Tsagalis (2008: 42) for a discussion of the underworld scene. See also Hölscher 1999: 425.

11.413

περὶ δ’ ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι
νωλεμέως κτείνοντο σύες ὣς ἀργιόδοντες,
οἵ ῥά τ’ ἐν ἀφνειοῦ ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο
ἢ γάμῳ ἢ ἐράνῳ ἢ εἰλαπίνῃ τεθαλυίῃ. 415

And all around me my other companions were killed unceasingly, like white-tusked pigs in the house of a wealthy man of great importance, or at a wedding or a joint meal or at a sumptuous private feast.

This simile, spoken by Agamemnon to Odysseus, who repeats it in his narrative to the Phaeacians, illustrates the death of Agamemnon’s companions. It follows Agamemnon’s simile illustrating his own death (11.411). This aspect of the Oresteia story had earlier been referred to only very briefly at 4.536–537.

The simile explains the nature of Agamemnon’s companions’ death—quick and brutal just like animals being slaughtered for a feast—and fills a lexical gap about the nature of their deaths. Their reconceptualisation as swine reduces them to common domestic animals raised for their meat.[93]

Domestic pigs are not uncommon in Homer. Eumaios cares for herds of swine. The poet mentions the consumption of pork.[94] The common use of pork for food is emphasised by Agamemnon’s reference to the different types of feasts where pigs might be consumed.[95] Agamemnon’s first choice—the house of a wealthy man is significant: Agamemnon’s men have just been entertained at such a place and they are the companions of another wealthy man, yet they are slain like the food that they have just consumed.

[93] Pigs were one of the earliest domesticated animals and were an important source of meat for many ancient societies because of they were easy to raise: Lewis 2018: 98. See also Kitchell 2014: 150–151.
[94] For example, white-tusked swine are consumed at Patroklos’ funeral feast along with other animals (*Iliad* 23.32).
[95] In ancient Greece swine were bred solely for food: Howe 2014a: 105. The range of events in the simile reflects the fact that pork would have featured prominently as a food-stuff.

Agamemnon's choice of simile suggests that the average audience member would understand his comparison. His list of occasions where swine are killed encompasses events celebrated by all levels of society.

There is pathos in the men's death. Like Agamemnon, their past victory over the Trojans is irrelevant, swept aside by their undeserved and unheroic deaths.[96] Despite having reached their home shores, their *nostos* is unsuccessful. Agamemnon's pairing of these similes magnifies the tragedy of *his* homecoming. Not only was his own death undignified and undeserved, his men have suffered a similar pathetic fate because they were his companions. The fact that Agamemnon could not achieve a successful *nostos*, even when arriving home with his men, highlights Odysseus' much greater danger as the sole survivor of his contingent.

The simile makes the men's death's memorable and, like the simile at 11.411, refers to the themes of untimely death, abuse of hospitality and unsuccessful *nostos*.

[96] D'Arms (1946: 213) suggests that the slaughter of Agamemnon's men at dinner is meant to contrast with Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors. See also Saïd 2011b: 176.

Book 12

In this book Odysseus narrates how he and his crew return from Hades to Kirke's island to perform funeral rites for their colleague, Elpenor. After departing from Kirke's island they encounter Skylla, who kills six of Odysseus' men. Zeus causes Odysseus' remaining men to drown as punishment for killing Helios' cattle but Odysseus alone survives, eventually reaching Ogygia.

There are seven similes in this book. I shall not discuss six of these. Two are similes of measurement/distance (12.86;[97] 12.181[98]), one simile compares the bubbling sea ejected by Skylla to a heated cauldron (12.237),[99] one simile illustrates the fall to death of the steersman by comparison to a diver (12.413),[100] one simile illustrates the movement of Odysseus' drowned shipmates upon the waves by comparison to seabirds bobbing on the water (12.418),[101] and the simile at 12.433 compares Odysseus to a bat as he clings to a wild fig tree after his ship has sunk.[102]

[97] The loudness of Skylla's voice is compared to that of a newborn puppy despite her being an evil monster. Skylla's name is derived from the Greek word σκύλαξ meaning 'puppy'. Bowra (1988: 63) notes the absurdity of Skylla's voice in view of her monstrous body. See Hopman (2012b: 73–74) for a discussion of Skylla's ambiguous nature.

[98] Odysseus illustrates how far distant his ship was from the Sirens by comparison to the distance a man's voice carries when he shouts. The simile vehicle is identical to that at 9.473. De Jong (2001: 302) comments that the literal meaning is 'within earshot' and its use is particularly apt at this point in the narrative in view of the power of the Sirens' song.

[99] This simile is very similar to that at *Iliad* 21.362.

[100] Scott (1974: 72) classifies this simile as a diver simile, one of three in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and surmises that this must be a traditional category of similes. The other two similes are *Iliad* 12.385 and *Iliad* 16.742.

[101] This simile is repeated at 14.308. C. Moulton (1977: 137) comments that in some cases bird similes illustrate movement. This is an example of one of those similes.

[102] P. Friedrich (1997: 315) observes that the simile illustrates Odysseus' manner of clinging to the tree—'with his arms and legs around the trunk'. Anghelina (2015a: 12–14) notes the poet's choice of fig tree, rather than an olive tree, and suggests several possible reasons for this choice—Athene's absence after the Cyclops episode, the fact that bats like figs, or because fig trees are more likely to grow on a rock face. Segal (1962: 45) links this simile to the simile comparing the suitors to gibbering bats at 24.6 as they are led down to Hades, but the vitality of the fig tree saves Odysseus from death. Dimock (1989: 172) suggests that this simile contrasts Odysseus' ability to endure discomfort with his crew's weakness in giving in to hunger and eating Helios' forbidden cattle. Morrison (2014: 18 n16) interprets this simile as an illustration of Odysseus' resolute determination to survive.

12.251

τόφρα δέ μοι Σκύλλη γλαφυρῆς ἐκ νηὸς ἑταίρους
ἕξ ἔλεθ’, οἳ χερσίν τε βίηφί τε φέρτατοι ἦσαν.
σκεψάμενος δ’ ἐς νῆα θοὴν ἅμα καὶ μεθ’ ἑταίρους
ἤδη τῶν ἐνόησα πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὕπερθεν
ὑψόσ’ ἀειρομένων· ἐμὲ δὲ φθέγγοντο καλεῦντες
ἐξονομακλήδην, τότε γ’ ὕστατον, ἀχνύμενοι κῆρ.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἐπὶ προβόλῳ ἁλιεὺς περιμήκεϊ ῥάβδῳ
ἰχθύσι τοῖς ὀλίγοισι δόλον κατὰ εἴδατα βάλλων
ἐς πόντον προΐησι βοὸς κέρας ἀγραύλοιο,
ἀσπαίροντα δ’ ἔπειτα λαβὼν ἔρριψε θύραζε,
ὣς οἳ γ’ ἀσπαίροντες ἀείροντο προτὶ πέτρας·
αὐτοῦ δ’ εἰνὶ θύρῃσι κατήσθιε κεκληγῶτας
χεῖρας ἐμοὶ ὀρέγοντας ἐν αἰνῇ δηιοτῆτι·
οἴκτιστον δὴ κεῖνο ἐμοῖς ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι
πάντων, ὅσσ’ ἐμόγησα πόρους ἁλὸς ἐξερεείνων.

Meanwhile Skylla seized from the hollow ship six of my companions, who were very strong-armed and the bravest. But, looking back on my fast ship and my companions, I saw their feet and heads already overhead as they were lifted up high. And they called out to me, yelling my name, then for the last time, distressed to their core. Just as when a fisherman with his long rod on a very high jutting point, throwing small bits of food as bait for fish, lets down the horn of an ox into the sea, and when he catches them he grabs them and hurls them gasping out onto land, so they gasped as they were carried off towards the rocks. And as she ate them in her doorway, they cried out, stretching out their hands to me in their grim struggle. This was indeed the most pitiable thing that I have ever seen with my own eyes of all that I went through, suffering on the pathways of the sea.

This is the third simile deployed by Odysseus to illustrate the loss of some of his men. It illustrates Skylla’s capture of six of his men. Odysseus narrates the passage as if from his physical location watching from his ship and he emphasises the pathos of his men’s and his own situation—he is powerless to save his strong, brave men from being whisked away by Skylla to shocking deaths, despite their pleas to him for assistance.

The simile explains his men's inability to breathe as they are hauled up by repetition of ἀσπαίροντα (254)/ ἀσπαίροντες (255).[103] It also explains Skylla's location high above the ship. The preceding phrase ὕπερθεν ὑψόσ' (248–249) underlines Skylla's physical lifting of the companions above Odysseus out of reach of his assistance, and the fisherman's position on a high ledge illustrates Skylla's location (251) high up a cliff-face.

As already noted, the reconceptualisation of predator and victim as fisherman and fish is not unique in Homer.[104] Odysseus illustrates the Laestrygonians' attack upon his ships and men with a similar simile at 10.124.[105] The men's comparison with fish does not trivialise their deaths. It suggests their small size and helplessness in Skylla's grip.

Skylla's reconceptualisation as a fisherman suggests that catching and eating men are routine everyday activities for her.[106] The everyday fisherman image contrasts with the shocking events in the main narrative.[107] The relevance of the comparison to a fisherman with a rod relies on the internal and external audiences' recollection of Kirke's detailed description of Skylla's form. She has twelve flexible legs and six necks, each with a head with three rows of teeth. She fishes by holding her heads out of her cave (12.85–100); no ship has escaped unscathed from her fishing.

Odysseus assumes that his audience will understand the procedure involved in line fishing. Presumably ancient external audiences would have understood the procedure described in the

[103] De Jong (2001: 305) interprets these repetitions as representing the convulsions of the men. In my view it is more likely that they have been overwhelmed by Skylla's tight grip as they are lifted higher and higher and therefore are unable to breathe properly and are gasping for air. See Cunliffe 2012: 57.
[104] Scott 1974: 75.
[105] A similar simile is also deployed at 22.384 to illustrate the dead suitors heaped up in the hall of Odysseus' house.
[106] The simile presents fishing as an everyday activity, reflecting life in ancient Greece. Pole and line fishing was a very important method of fishing for the Greeks: Kron 2014: 194. The location of the fisherman, by the sea, rather than out at sea, reflects the reality of fishing in ancient Greece because fishing was mostly coastal: Mylona 2008: 67.
[107] Hopman (2012a: 9) notes the 'provocative' comparison of a monster to an angler and the men to fish, thereby reversing the usual roles in fishing, which is usually seen as an activity where man dominates nature.

simile. Modern audiences, however, have had difficulty comprehending all the details. Scholars have speculated as to the exact nature of the procedure referred to in line 253.[108] This is an example of a simile where an audience lacks the knowledge required to understand the image completely.

By forcing the audience to pause to focus on Odysseus' loss of his men, the simile slows down the narrative in the same way that time can be perceived to slow down for a person witnessing an unpleasant event. The simile touches on the themes of untimely death and unsuccessful *nostos*.

[108] The purpose of the ox horn has been uncertain. Shewan (1927) presents 13 different options. The consensus of recent translations has been that the ox horn protects the fishing line from being bitten through by fish.

Book 13

Book 13 begins with King Alkinoos collecting more gifts for Odysseus before hosting a final feast for him. Odysseus is transported to Ithaca by the Phaeacians. Upon their return Poseidon punishes them for assisting Odysseus by turning their ship to stone. Meanwhile, Athene assists Odysseus to start considering how to defeat the suitors. This book contains only two similes. I shall not discuss the simile at 13.81.[109]

[109] This is a long simile illustrating the gentle motion of the Phaeacian ship that carries sleeping Odysseus to Ithaca by comparison to a four-horse chariot. The motion of the ship is emphasised by the repetition of ἀειρόμενοι/ἀείρετο (13.83–84). Anghelina (2015b) argues that the chariot of the simile refers specifically to the chariot driven by Poseidon across the sea. Borthwick (1988: 16) regards the moment marked out by this simile as 'perhaps the most romantic moment in all classical poetry'. In my view, it is a very calming simile that works effectively to slow down the narrative to reflect the fact that Odysseus is sleeping soundly on the ship. It also brings the Phaeacian episode to a close even as it simultaneously illustrates the progress of the ship. The ease and speed of this voyage, described in only 18 lines (13.76–94), is in stark contrast to Odysseus' dangerous voyage to Scheria. See Montiglio (2016: 64–68) for an analysis of this transitional passage.

13.31

μῆρα δὲ κήαντες δαίνυντ’ ἐρικυδέα δαῖτα
τερπόμενοι· μετὰ δέ σφιν ἐμέλπετο θεῖος ἀοιδός,
Δημόδοκος, λαοῖσι τετιμένος. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
πολλὰ πρὸς ἠέλιον κεφαλὴν τρέπε παμφανόωντα,
δῦναι ἐπειγόμενος· δὴ γὰρ μενέαινε νέεσθαι.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἀνὴρ δόρποιο λιλαίεται, ᾧ τε πανῆμαρ
νειὸν ἀν’ ἔλκητον βόε οἴνοπε πηκτὸν ἄροτρον·
ἀσπασίως δ’ ἄρα τῷ κατέδυ φάος ἠελίοιο
δόρπον ἐποίχεσθαι, βλάβεται δέ τε γούνατ’ ἰόντι·
ὣς Ὀδυσῆ’ ἀσπαστὸν ἔδυ φάος ἠελίοιο.

They burnt the thighbones and began to have a glorious banquet as they enjoyed themselves. Amongst them the godlike bard began to sing—Demodokos, honoured by the people. But Odysseus kept turning his head towards the bright sun, eager for it to set, because he was very eager to depart. Just as when a man longs for his dinner, a man whose two dark oxen drag the jointed plough up and down the fallow field all day, and the setting of the sun’s light is welcome to him, so that he can go home for his meal. And his knees are hurting as he goes. So the setting of the sun’s light was welcome to Odysseus.

This simile occurs when Odysseus is participating in his final banquet with the Phaeacians. The king and his court are enjoying the feast but Odysseus is anxious to depart from Scheria. The simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience.

The simile explains Odysseus’ eagerness for sunset so that he can proceed home.[110] This eagerness is highlighted by the repetition of ἀσπασίως (31)/ἀσπαστὸν (35).[111] The simile subject matter is not unique. In Book 5 Odysseus is compared to an isolated, lonely farmer when he settles under a heap of leaves after reaching Scheria (5.488).[112]

[110] Odysseus is so eager to depart from Scheria that he will thank King Alkinoos for his hospitality and inform him that he is ready to leave (13.36–46).
[111] De Jong 2001: 315.
[112] This simile shares a very similar line (13.32) with that in *Iliad* 13.703, a simile that also refers to the two oxen ploughing the field. That simile, however, emphasises the close fighting relationship between the two Ajaxes. These similarities suggest that farmers and working oxen were traditional subjects of similes that could be varied to suit the narrative.

At first the simile's subject matter, which reconceptualises Odysseus as a tired, hungry ploughman trudging home, appears to be a reversal of Odysseus' situation. Odysseus is dining at leisure in elite surroundings, but yearns to leave.[113] Indeed, different words emphasise Odysseus' meal of plenty (δαῖτα 26) and the farmer's meal (δόρπον 34). Yet Odysseus and the ploughman look forward to the same sunset,[114] highlighted by the repetition of φάος ἠελίοιο (33 and 35), which will release them from their obligations.

Odysseus' overall situation *is* similar to that of the farmer in that he longs to be home in Ithaca after a hard war and a long, exhausting sea voyage. Odysseus still has a long road ahead of him before he can sit down to dinner in his own home.[115]

The simile is very decorative, and easily understood. The detail of the ploughman's aching knees reflects the realities of physical work.[116] The everyday setting creates a sense of intimacy with the audience.[117] The description of the plough as jointed (πηκτόν 32) suggests the poet's (or the tradition's) familiarity with farming techniques. Most importantly, every audience member has at some point longed for something to be over: Odysseus' impatience is universally understandable.

[113] Bowie (2013: 101) comments that the differences between Odysseus' situation and that of the farmer contribute to the effectiveness of the simile.
[114] Austin (2010: 48) states that Ithaca lies to the west of Scheria, like the setting sun. Therefore, Odysseus would not just be looking towards the sunset but would be looking towards Ithaca.
[115] Taaffe 1990–1991: 135. Dimock (1989: 176) adopts a more restricted interpretation of the simile, equating the ploughman's exhaustion to Odysseus' 'mental anguish'. In my view, this is an overstatement of Odysseus' psychological state. He is not suffering mental anguish; he is just very keen to go home, just as the ploughman is keen to go home for his dinner.
[116] Bowie (2013: 103) notes the prevalence of osteo-arthritis in traditional agricultural societies. This particular aspect of the farm worker's description suggests that the poet himself may have been drawing on personal experience when he described the ploughman's hurting knees.
[117] Power (2011: 12) claims that the simile draws upon the landscape of Ithaca. In my view, the image of the farmer ploughing has been chosen to be a universal image reflecting the widespread crop cultivation of ancient Greece, and is designed to resonate with the audience.

By slowing the narrative, the simile lengthens Odysseus' wait for the setting sun. The simile moves the narrative focus away from the feast to Odysseus, who has now disengaged from Demodokos' stories of myth and from his own tale of his travels. This simile focusses on the issue of *nostos* and looks towards Odysseus' future.[118] This simile, together with the simile at 5.488, bookend Odysseus' stay on Scheria. The isolated farmer of that simile, who had to camp out overnight, is now looking forward to going home.

[118] Austin (2010: 48) interprets the simile much more pessimistically than most, commenting that Odysseus is facing 'his own setting sun' meaning that he is in his mature years.

Comments on Similes in Books 9–13

Odysseus' gift for storytelling is highlighted by his careful use of similes, designed to engage his internal audience.[119] These similes add elements of veracity to Odysseus' remarkable tale.[120] As sole survivor, he deploys vivid similes to mark out the pathos of the deaths of his men when they die through no fault of their own, and to underline the fact that he was a caring and careful leader who was not responsible for those deaths.

Odysseus uses pairs of similes three times, twice to illustrate attackers and victims, and once to illustrate the extent of the crime when Agamemnon *and* his men are killed. The doubling of images through these pairs makes these events especially memorable and moving. Odysseus' direct report of Agamemnon's and his crew's murders in their own homeland, illustrated by Agamemnon's similes, highlights Odysseus' own need to return home as soon as possible.

There are four main themes reflected in the similes—Odysseus' leadership, untimely death, and the importance of *xenia* and of a successful *nostos*. The last is perhaps best summed up by the saying 'East, west, home is best', a sentiment reflected in the poet's simile at 13.31 marking the end of Odysseus' stay on Scheria.

[119] Ready (2011: 264–265) comments that 'Odysseus exhibits a repertoire of similes that matches that of the narrator'.
[120] We do not know if all of Odysseus' narrative to the Phaeacians is true, and to what extent he shapes his narrative to appeal to the Phaeacians. See Zerba 2009; Carlisle 1999; Pache 1999; Felson-Rubin 1997.

Chapter Five

Books 14–19

These books, set on Ithaca, pave the way for Odysseus' final confrontation with the suitors. He meets his old swineherd, Eumaios, and he is then reunited with his son, Telemachos, before presenting himself, still disguised as a beggar, at his own house, only to be poorly treated by the suitors and their allies. Penelope questions him about Odysseus. These books set the scene for Odysseus' revenge upon the suitors.

Book 14

Odysseus, disguised by Athene as a beggar, is courteously received by Eumaios who provides him with appropriate hospitality and describes the dire situation in his master's home. Odysseus tells the first of his 'lying tales' claiming that he is a Cretan noble named Aithon, fallen on hard times, who has learned that Odysseus is on his way back to Ithaca.[1]

This book contains four short similes. I shall not discuss three similes—the simile where Eumaios describes Telemachos as having been reared by the gods, growing like a sapling (14.175),[2] the simile

[1] In the following books I shall refer to Odysseus, in his disguise as Aithon, as 'Odysseus-Aithon' where it is necessary for clarification.

[2] The simile economically conveys Eumaios' oversight of Telemachos' development over the years. As C. Moulton (1977: 143) notes, this is a tender image. The simile informs Odysseus, as the internal audience, how well Telemachos has grown, suggesting elements of growing quickly, and possibly becoming tall and slender. The comparison of a young person to a sapling is not unique—Odysseus flatters Nausicaa, telling her that she reminds him of a young palm that he saw growing at the altar of Apollo on Delos (6.162)—but Eumaios' deployment of this simile may have more sinister resonance in view of the suitors' plot to kill Telemachos. The situation of a child at risk, not Eumaios' real son but a young man nevertheless dear to him, may bring to mind Thetis' illustration of her son Achilles' development with the same phrase at *Iliad* 18.56 and *Iliad* 18.437. She predicts that he will never return home from Troy (*Iliad* 18.440–441). The association of misfortune with plants and trees is not confined to these similes. In some similes in the *Iliad* dead and dying heroes are compared to falling trees (for example, see *Iliad* 4.482; *Iliad* 5.560; *Iliad* 13.178; *Iliad* 13.389; *Iliad* 17.53), yet some tree similes are deployed in a more positive way to illustrate the inflexible, unmoving hero of a battle (for example see *Iliad* 12.132; *Iliad* 13.437): Scott 1974: 70–71. See also Kauffman 2016: 373–379. The external audience and Odysseus himself are better informed than

where Odysseus compares the sailors thrown from a ship onto the surrounding waves to sea crows (14.308),[3] and the simile with which he compares the snow falling and covering him with frost (14.476).[4]

Eumaios about Telemachos' safety because Athene has already informed Odysseus that Telemachos will not be killed by the suitors despite their having set up an ambush for him (13.425–428).

[3] Odysseus-Aithon, in his lying tale to Eumaios about his identity and background, claims that the crew of the ship upon which he was travelling were thrown from the ship during a storm. The simile illustrates the movement of the men's bodies as they float upon the waves: C. Moulton 1977: 137. The term 'sea crow' covers several types of sea-birds including cormorants and shearwaters: Arnott 2007: 115–116; Rood 2006: 4–8. Bowie (2013: 206) comments on the grim irony of Odysseus' lack of concern for the sailors because they were probably in on the plan to sell him. Bowie forgets, however, that this tale has been fabricated by Odysseus. Odysseus deployed the same simile at 12.418 to describe the loss of his crew after they feasted on the cattle of Helios. Admittedly on that occasion Odysseus was probably not as sympathetic as he otherwise might have been if their deaths had been undeserved. The poet's inclusion of a simile to illustrate the crewmen's supposed deaths by shipwreck may reflect the idea of shipwreck as a punishment for wrongdoing. For a discussion of this theme in ancient narratives, see Hilton 2012.

[4] This simile is spoken by Odysseus in his second lying tale to test whether Eumaios will lend him a cloak to keep warm. He describes an occasion at Troy when had forgotten his cloak on a bitterly cold night. The main function of the simile is to emphasise the weather of that night and the need for a cloak. De Jong (2001: 360) notes the similarity between Odysseus' current situation on Ithaca—without a cloak on a cold and windy night—and the situation he fabricates. The consensus of commentators is that the snow described by Odysseus is not soft snowflakes but is thick and icy, like hoar frost. See Stanford 1996b: 235; Merry 1878: 14.475; Bowie 2013: 226. For details of the properties of hoar frost, see B. Moulton 2005: 381–383. Frost is a significant hazard to plant and animal tissue.

14.21

πὰρ δὲ κύνες, θήρεσσιν ἐοικότες αἰὲν ἴαυον 21
τέσσαρες, οὓς ἔθρεψε συβώτης, ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν.

And beside them four dogs always kept night-watch, dogs like wild beasts, which the swineherd, leader of men, had reared.

This short simile spoken by the external narrator occurs very early in Book 14. Under direction from Athene, Odysseus, who has been disguised as an old beggar, approaches Eumaios' house and is met by his guard-dogs.[5]

At first glance this simile appears almost to be a simple comparison between the dogs and wild animals linked by the word ἐοικότες (21), but it serves several functions, functions that are more simile-like and have led me to treat it as a simile.

The simile explains the ferocious nature of the guard dogs reared by Eumaios.[6] These are working dogs always on alert, not table dogs, and the brief but significant reconceptualisation of them as wild beasts prepares us for their initial aggressive reaction to Odysseus' arrival.[7] The dogs present a real threat to Odysseus' safety,[8] and stand between him and human civilisation.[9]

[5] Odysseus' meeting with Eumaios has been variously interpreted by scholars. For example, Williams (1976) views it as a 'humorous parody' of 'the formal Homeric welcome'. I disagree. This scene marks Odysseus' return to the real world.
[6] Goldhill 1988: 12.
[7] Schnapp-Gourbeillon (1981: 163) notes the absence of a positive connotation of dogs in this simile. As I have noted earlier in this thesis, the use of guard dogs was common: Mayor 2014: 286. The ancient audience would have understood their role. The realistic portrayal of trained guard dogs lends the scene authenticity. Today, guard dogs' roles are even more mobile than in the past: for example, it is a common sight in Australia to see dogs on the back of utility vehicles guarding tradesmen's equipment.
[8] Hopman (2012b: 55) comments that the danger posed by dogs is best illustrated by Priam's comments that his own dogs will devour his body if the Achaeans kill him (*Iliad* 22.66–71).
[9] Hopman (2012b: 55) sums up the special place of the dog in the ancient Greece: 'The only animal fully integrated in human society, it is also known to be capable of deceit and unfaithfulness, an always ambiguous member of the household—human-like but not human, trusted but feared—the dog is a liminal being that stands between the spheres of nature and culture'. Rose (1979: 216) notes the gap between expectation and reality—Odysseus' arrival home should have been safe; instead, his life is threatened by the guard dogs.

Eumaios' diligence in training up his dogs reflects his application to his work. The dogs' role is an extension of his duty as Odysseus' swineherd.[10] Following this simile, the poet slyly includes a reference to the suitors' ongoing depletion of the herds (16–21 and 26–28), a danger that comes from *within* his master's household and is therefore not within Eumaios' power to prevent. He continues, however, to work to protect his master's pigs from external threats.[11]

The poet's brief spotlight upon Eumaios' dogs highlights the differences between Odysseus' arrival at Eumaios' mortal threshold and that of Odysseus' men at Kirke's divine threshold. The current scene is effectively an inversion of the events of that earlier arrival. On that occasion the fawning animals were bewitched wild animals acting like pampered table dogs. Their friendly behaviour belied the danger within, although the men had an instinctive, uncomfortable reaction to their unnatural behaviour.[12] Here the normality of the mortal world is represented by the dogs—the need for protection of livestock, the rearing of dogs to perform guard duties, and a strict delineation between the domestic within and the wild outside. There are no divine shortcuts in the mortal world for Odysseus while Athene is not by his side.

It is implicit that the dogs are a threat to Odysseus. Eumaios' guard dogs are the first mortal beings from the normal world that he encounters. The guard dogs' appropriate response to a stranger would be understood by the external audience.[13] The simile marks Odysseus' return to the mortal world leaving behind the Phaeacians' utopian world where guard dogs are nominal only (7.91–94)

[10] W. Beck 1991: 161.

[11] The poet briefly digresses from the main narrative to inform us about Eumaios' careful construction of the court in front of his house used to pen the female swine under his care (7–16). The boars sleep outside (16), guarded by Eumaios' specially reared and trained dogs (21–22).

[12] Goldhill (1988: 12) comments that the wild animals' behaviour illustrated by the earlier simile reflects the transgression and confusion of Kirke's world.

[13] Naiden (2006: 37) notes that the dogs are one of several examples in the *Odyssey* where there is a barrier between the suppliant and the *supplicandus*.

allowing Odysseus to linger unnoticed upon the threshold of King Alkinoos' palace.[14] In response to the mortal threat, Odysseus demonstrates his natural place in that world by sitting down so as not to pose a threat (29–31).[15] Odysseus' hostile reception by the dogs is the only normal watchdog response in the *Odyssey*.[16]

The simile introduces the meeting of Eumaios and Odysseus. It raises the expectation that Odysseus' reception will be hostile, but Eumaios promptly calls off the dogs, thereby demonstrating that he is in control of his animals (32–36),[17] and that he knows how to receive strangers appropriately while caring for his absent master's property. This appropriate behaviour is a sign of Eumaios' noble values.[18]

The dogs' behaviour towards the stranger will be contrasted later with their friendly response when Telemachos arrives at Eumaios' hut (16.1–7).

Essentially, this simile marks out the difference in arrival and reception of Odysseus from other arrivals in the *Odyssey* and raises the themes of homecoming and recognition.[19] These dogs are too young to recognise Odysseus even by scent, because he has been absent from home for so long, but we see them instantly recognise Telemachos.

[14] De Jong (2001: 177) notes that the Phaeacians' dogs are ornaments, not living watchdogs, thereby symbolising the Phaeacians' luxurious way of life.
[15] See Hainsworth (1961) for a discussion of the efficacy of Odysseus' action.
[16] De Jong (2001: 342) comments that in each of the several encounters with watchdogs the dogs respond in a way that reflects the situation at that point in the narrative. Eumaios' dogs welcome Telemachos because they know him well (16.6–7) but they shrink from Athene (16.162–163). Argos recognises his master Odysseus, wagging his tail before he dies (17.301–304; 17.326–327). The wild animals enchanted by Kirke fawn around Odysseus' shipmates (10.214–219).
[17] Whitman (1958: 292) notes how the poet characterises Eumaios through his actions, including preventing the dogs' attack upon Odysseus.
[18] A. Edwards (1993: 53) views the country as 'ennobled' in this section of the *Odyssey* because of the excellent behaviour of Eumaios and later Philoitios, unlike that of the suitors.
[19] Mendelsohn (2017: 208) regards these two scenes of recognition, together with the later scene where Argos recognises Odysseus, as 'framing' the recognition scene of Odysseus and Telemachos in Book 16. For a detailed analysis of recognition scenes in the *Odyssey*, see Gainsford 2003.

Book 15

Book 15 contains the conclusion of the Telemachy. With Athene's encouragement, Telemachos returns to Ithaca and avoids the suitors' ambush. Meanwhile, 0dysseus learns more about the current state of his household from Eumaios, who also tells of his own past.

I shall not discuss any of the four short similes in this book. These are the following—the simile where the robe Helen gives to Telemachos is described a shining like a star (15.108),[20] the simile where Menelaos comments that when he was in Troy Nestor was kind to him like a father (15.152),[21] the simile where Eumaios compares his father, Ctesius, to the immortals (15.414),[22] and the simile where the sudden fall of Eumaios' nurse into the ship's hold is compared to the plunging of a seabird (15.479).[23]

[20] Scott (1974: 22) considers this to be a simile indicating a degree of quality. Parisinou (2005: 31) notes three categories of star comparisons, besides those of people—gleaming beauty, armour and drapery. This simile falls into the last category. The simile explains the sheen of the robe which Helen retrieves from the bottom of a clothes chest. This sheen is probably due to oiling of the fabric during production and/or upon storage. Van Wees (2005: 14) speculates that the best garments would have been kept on the bottom of chests in order to be steeped in oil seeping down from the garments placed above. The oil is probably olive oil—for example, we are told that olive oil drips from the cloth as it is woven by King Alkinoos' slaves (7.107). The sheen of a garment is clearly a significant indicator of quality—see also the simile at 19.234 where Odysseus-Aithon describes Odysseus' tunic as glistening like the sun and refers to its sheen as like the sheen of a dried onion (19.233). The description of the robe here (15.107–108) is almost identical to that of the robe that Hecuba selects as an offering for Athene in Troy (*Iliad* 6.294–295). Because of this similarity, Scott (1974: 22) suggests that the simile is traditionally associated with these lines. Minchin (2018: 22) notes the similarity and the differences between the scenes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but views the repetition as an invitation to the *Odyssey* listener to recall the Iliadic scene and to note the differences in the circumstances surrounding the robes—in the *Iliad* Athene rejects Hecuba's offering and will allow Troy to fall; by contrast Helen's gift is for a future happy event. See also M. Mueller 2010: 12–13. Of course, the *Odyssey* audience may well wonder whether a gift from Helen, of all women, bodes well for a future marriage, in view of *her* past marital history. Tsitsibakou-Vasalos (2009: 189), for example, views the gift as having 'gloomy implications'. For a broader discussion of vehicle portions shared by both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, see Ready 2018a: 193–201.

[21] Menelaos speaks this simile to Telemachos and Peisistratos in his final words of farewell before they leave to return to Pylos. This simile is repeated four times in the *Odyssey* (2.47; 2.234; 5.12; 15.152) and reflects the important theme of family and more extended social relationships. De Jong (2001: 369–370) notes that this is an example of a 'parents and children comparison' but regards this instance as 'no more than a rhetorical means of expressing Menelaus' affection for the old man' because there is no other reference to a parent/child relationship between Nestor and Menelaos. Yet Menelaos' comment harks back to his time at Troy where Nestor's age and experience were valued by the younger Achaean leaders in the absence of their own fathers. See Minchin (2005) for an analysis of autobiographical memory with particular reference to Nestor.

[22] Eumaios, telling Odysseus how he came to Ithaca, describes his own father as 'like to the immortals'. This simile also occurs at 21.14 and 21.37. It also occurs at *Iliad* 1.265, *Iliad* 4.394 and *Iliad* 11.60. Like other comparisons to unspecified gods, it endows a positive gloss to the character it illustrates. C. Moulton (1977: 31 n23) views it as a formulaic phrase.

[23] Eumaios describes to Odysseus the death of his nurse who kidnapped him from his home. After dying she falls into the hold, plunging like a seabird. The simile illustrates the woman's movement as she falls: C. Moulton 1977: 137. Rood (2006:

6) regards the nurse's death as 'almost antiheroic' because she kidnapped Eumaios, and argues that the deployment of the bird image suggests that her death is the gods' revenge for her acts. Similarly, Thalmann (1998: 32) views the manner of the nurse's death as conveying an ethical judgment of her kidnap. The species of bird is not known but may be a tern: Hoekstra 1989: 261; Stanford 1996b: 260; P. Friedrich 1997: 311.

Book 16

In Book 16 Telemachos arrives at Eumaios' hut and meets Eumaios' guest, the disguised Odysseus. Telemachos sends Eumaios to inform Penelope that he has returned safely. While Eumaios is absent, Odysseus reveals his identity to Telemachos. After their emotional reunion, Odysseus and Telemachos plan their revenge upon the suitors.

This book contains two similes. I shall discuss both of them.

16.17

οὔ πω πᾶν εἴρητο ἔπος, ὅτε οἱ φίλος υἱὸς
ἔστη ἐνὶ προθύροισι. ταφὼν δ' ἀνόρουσε συβώτης,
ἐκ δ' ἄρα οἱ χειρῶν πέσον ἄγγεα, τοῖς ἐπονεῖτο,
κιρνὰς αἴθοπα οἶνον. ὁ δ' ἀντίος ἦλθεν ἄνακτος,
κύσσε δέ μιν κεφαλήν τε καὶ ἄμφω φάεα καλὰ
χεῖράς τ' ἀμφοτέρας· θαλερὸν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ.
ὡς δὲ πατὴρ ὃν παῖδα φίλα φρονέων ἀγαπάζῃ
ἐλθόντ' ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης δεκάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ,
μοῦνον τηλύγετον, τῷ ἔπ' ἄλγεα πολλὰ μογήσῃ,
ὣς τότε Τηλέμαχον θεοειδέα δῖος ὑφορβὸς
πάντα κύσεν περιφύς, ὡς ἐκ θανάτοιο φυγόντα·

Not yet was the word fully said when his dear son stood in the doorway. The swineherd leapt up in astonishment and from his hands fell the vessels he had been using as he mixed the sparkling wine. And he went straight up to his master and kissed him on his head and on both his beautiful eyes and on each of his hands. And a swelling tear fell from him. Just as a father welcomes with love his dear child who has returned from a distant land in the tenth year, his only son, his darling for whom he has suffered much worry, so then the noble swineherd kissed godlike Telemachos all over as if he had escaped death.

This simile, the first simile in Book 16, is addressed by the narrator to the external audience. It is located at the moment when Telemachos, appears at the door of Eumaios' house.[24]

The simile marks out Eumaios' emotional reaction at the sight of Telemachos, illustrating his great joy at seeing Telemachos safely returned from overseas. Eumaios has already expressed his concerns to the disguised Odysseus about Telemachos' safety. The simile explains two things—the depth of Eumaios' relief and joy upon Telemachos' safe return from his voyage overseas and the nature of his relationship with Telemachos—the poet conveys Eumaios' fatherly feelings.[25] The simile explains

[24] Telemachos' frequent visits to Eumaios are demonstrated by the fact that the guard dogs regard him as a friend. Odysseus, still disguised, notes the fawning of the dogs around a new arrival, a reception so unlike his own, moments before Telemachos appears.

[25] De Jong 2001: 388. Stewart (1986: 200) comments that Eumaios is the closest person to a father for Telemachos and that he is 'confidant, model and guide'. The perception of the close relationship is mutual. At several points in the narrative Telemachos addresses Eumaios with the designation ἄττα (16.31; 16.57; 16.130; 17.6; 17.599; 21.369). Cunliffe (2012: 60) comments that ἄττα is 'used in addressing an elder' but all of Telemachos' uses suggest that he uses it as a term of familiarity and endearment. In the *Iliad* Achilles and Menelaos each address Phoinix with the term (*Iliad* 9.607; *Iliad*

why Eumaios cries and kisses Telemachos on his head, his eyes and his hands.[26] The extent of his delight in this reunion is emphasised by the hyperbole of line 21—that he kissed him all over.

The reconceptualisation of Eumaios as a long-suffering father reveals that their relationship goes beyond that of devoted slave and master's son to a near-family bond.[27] This simile is one of several parent/child similes in the *Odyssey*. The omniscient external narrator fills a lexical gap with the simile, illustrating Eumaios' feelings towards Telemachos' arrival. The external audience has confirmation that Eumaios' earlier expressions of concern for Telemachos were not mere 'windy words'. This bodes well for Odysseus, who will later rely upon Eumaios' assistance to defeat the suitors.

The simile touches on both the past and the possible future. The poet's reconceptualisation of Eumaios as a father who has borne much sorrow, reminds us of Odysseus' absence for nearly 20 years, an absence that Eumaios has suffered as a loyal slave. The simile echoes Eumaios' fear of losing Telemachos, as well as Odysseus, because of the suitors' plot. The vehicle illustrates the grief and uncertainty that Eumaios *could* have suffered if Telemachos had not returned.[28] In effect Eumaios' relief is for what has *not* occurred to Telemachos, who has only been overseas for a short period (unlike Odysseus who, as far as he knows, has not returned). The poet's phrase in the resumptive clause (ὡς ἐκ θανάτοιο φυγόντα 21) is curious because Telemachos *has* escaped death.

17.561). See also Bosworth (2015: 629) for a discussion of the father-son language spoken by Eumaios and Telemachos in Book 16.

[26] It is hard to know to what extent Eumaios' kissing is overly enthusiastic, given possible cultural differences. His kissing, however, exceeds any other instances of kissing in the *Odyssey* and the poet emphasises it by reference to it in line 15, just before the simile begins, and in the resumptive cause in line 21. Bosworth (2015: 629) comments that Eumaios' kissing Telemachos' eyes is consistent with parental behaviour.

[27] Indeed, we subsequently learn that Telemachos trusts Eumaios sufficiently to convey a confidential message to his mother.

[28] De Jong (2001: 389) notes the reversal of roles in the simile—it is Odysseus who has been absent for many years and who returns home to be reunited with his son. Bosworth (2015: 629) observes that 'this escalation of the relationship serves to describe the emotional response of Eumaios as intense'.

Any perceived hyperbole in Eumaios' response to Telemachos' safe return is misplaced because Telemachos' life *was* at risk.

The simile reminds us that Eumaios is *not* Telemachos' father.[29] Despite his deep affection, Eumaios on his own is powerless to offer any real assistance to Telemachos to change the *status quo* on Ithaca. Eumaios' powerlessness is underlined by the reference to his occupation (ὑφορβὸς) in the resumptive clause, emphasised by its placement in final position in line 20. Yet the positive attributes of both Telemachos and Eumaios are highlighted by their epithets. Their unity is suggested by the adjacent placement of those epithets in chiasmus (Τηλέμαχον θεοειδέα δῖος ὑφορβὸς).

We must keep in mind that Odysseus is watching the reunion between his own son and Eumaios.[30] De Jong comments that the simile suggests Odysseus' unexpressed feelings when he sees his son again.[31] This simile is as much about the reunion that has not yet happened as it is about the one that is currently taking place. Odysseus should be the one being welcomed home with joy by his son. The poet chooses to ignore Odysseus at this emotional moment, focussing our attention upon the swineherd and Telemachos. The simile serves a further unusual function in that it contributes to the external audience's appreciation of Odysseus' character—his self-restraint at first sight of his son.[32] The external audience, can only wonder at, and even admire, Odysseus' self-control at this moment.[33]

[29] H. Foley (1978: 7) views this simile as a reverse simile because Eumaios is not Telemachos' real father but Telemachos' real father, Odysseus, is present.
[30] Ahl (1996: 189) comments that, in view of Odysseus' presence, 'the simile is magnificently ironic'. De Jong (2018: 38–39) notes especially the poet's detail of 'his only son', which is descriptive of Telemachos' relationship to Odysseus.
[31] De Jong 2001: 388.
[32] D. Beck 2005a: 66.
[33] As Macdonell (1936: 104) notes, secrecy and surprise are strategic devices in the *Odyssey*. Rutherford (1986: 157) views Odysseus' restraint in this scene as an indicator of his progression from a self-pitying, passive figure to an 'active strategist and avenger'.

In terms of textual structuring, the simile creates a pause in the narrative, marking the reunion of Telemachos and Eumaios, and it anticipates the more important reunion to come—that of Telemachos and his real father.

This subject matter, of course, points to one of the most important themes of the *Odyssey*—family reunion, a subject understood by most listeners.[34] It also refers to the practice of reception. Eumaios' reception of Telemachos, as illustrated by the simile, places in sharp contrast his earlier reception of the disguised Odysseus. Eumaios has provided appropriate hospitality towards him, as a stranger, but his reception of Telemachos illustrates the wide gap between the reception of a stranger and that of a loved family member.

[34] As Degn Larsen (2007: 26) comments, this simile appeals to the feelings of love and joy at reunions and would be easily understood by the audience.

16.216

ὣς ἄρα φωνήσας κατ’ ἄρ’ ἕζετο, Τηλέμαχος δὲ
ἀμφιχυθεὶς πατέρ’ ἐσθλὸν ὀδύρετο, δάκρυα λείβων,
ἀμφοτέροισι δὲ τοῖσιν ὑφ’ ἵμερος ὦρτο γόοιο·
κλαῖον δὲ λιγέως, ἀδινώτερον ἤ τ’ οἰωνοί,
φῆναι ἢ αἰγυπιοὶ γαμψώνυχες, οἷσί τε τέκνα
ἀγρόται ἐξείλοντο πάρος πετεηνὰ γενέσθαι·
ὣς ἄρα τοί γ’ ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ’ ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβον.
καί νύ κ’ ὀδυρομένοισιν ἔδυ φάος ἠελίοιο,
εἰ μὴ Τηλέμαχος προσεφώνεεν ὃν πατέρ’ αἶψα·

Having spoken thus he sat down, and Telemachos embraced his noble father and started crying, shedding tears. And a desire to weep arose in both of them and they began to wail shrilly, more intensely than birds of prey, sea eagles or vultures with crooked talons, whose young country men have taken away before they have become fully fledged. Just so did they piteously shed tears from beneath their brows. And the light of the sun would have set with them still crying if Telemachos had not suddenly started to address his father.

This is the second of only two similes in Book 16, and, like the earlier simile, is addressed to the external audience by the poet. This simile marks the reunion of Odysseus and Telemachos.
The simile explains the intensity of the emotional reunion felt by Odysseus and Telemachos. The simile is unusual in that their emotions are magnified by the poet’s use of a quantitative comparative (ἀδινώτερον ἤ). The depth of emotion is emphasised by the shrill wailing of the birds.[35]

The anguish of the birds separated from their young succinctly demonstrates the grief of unnatural separation of two family members at the behest of others. It is clear that Odysseus had not wanted to leave home 20 years earlier. The ancient audience may have been aware of tales of Odysseus’ reluctance to join the Achaian contingent.[36]

[35] Despite this comparison, crying is a uniquely human physiological response: Carlson 2011: 190; Vingerhoets 2009: 440. See also Konstan 2009: 332–333.
[36] Odysseus was said to have feigned madness to avoid joining the Achaian contingent to Troy: Sultan 1999: 1.

The simile fills a lexical gap, communicating the exact nature of the emotions that cause the tears upon reunion. These are not tears of pure joy. They are tears that reflect the grief of separation, uncertainty and loss of the previous 20 years—time that will never be recovered.[37] There is a difference in aspect between the vehicle and tenor—the vultures face the uncertainty and grief of loss in the future while Odysseus and Telemachos have already suffered their loss.[38]

This reconceptualisation of men as birds of prey is not unique in Homer.[39] In the *Iliad* warriors are frequently compared to eagles or vultures.[40] This simile introduces the concept of Odysseus and Telemachos as birds of prey in the *Odyssey*.[41] This is appropriate because this reunion is the beginning of Odysseus' and Telemachos' united effort to defeat the suitors. Their representation as adult birds raises Telemachos' status to that of an adult, an equal to his father. Their reconceptualisation as raptors may anticipate their battle with the suitors.[42] Thus, the simile may

[37] See Bosworth (2015) for a comprehensive examination of weeping and attachment theory and its application to weeping in recognition scenes in the *Odyssey*. He states (at 619) that 'moments of reunion involve emotional memories of loss, grief, and helplessness'. He comments (at 631) that this simile 'raises the pain of parent-child separation rather than the joy of reunion'.

[38] The term αἰγυπιός in Homer is a general term for both eagles and vultures: Cunliffe 2012: 10; Boraston 1911: 216, 229–230. See Arnott (2007: 6–7), Lewis (2018: 512), P. Friedrich (1997: 312) and Pollard (1977: 76–82) for discussions of the ancient Greeks' confusion of eagles and vultures. I have chosen to translate this term as 'vultures' for two reasons consistent with the simile image—because vultures were considered by the ancient Greeks to be ideal parents (van Dooren 2011: 96), and because many species of vulture emit a 'hissing' sound rather than bird song: van Dooren 2011: 29. See Weidensaul (1996: 103) for descriptions of typical calls for each species of European raptors. As Mynott (2018: 44–45) notes, an oral culture would probably have also been an aural culture and thus would have been sensitive to sound more generally. In my view Greeks would be familiar with the song of many birds and would understand the poet's reference to the birds' noises.

[39] Odysseus and his men are compared to birds of prey later in the *Odyssey* when they are attacking the suitors (22.302).

[40] Numerous similes in the *Iliad* illustrate attacking warriors by comparison with birds of prey (for example, *Iliad* 13.62; *Iliad* 13.531; *Iliad* 15.237; *Iliad* 15.690).

[41] A similar simile in the *Iliad* 18.318 illustrates Achilles' grief at the death of Patroklos, comparing him to a lion whose cubs have been snatched by a hunter.

[42] See Rood (2006) for a discussion of implied vengeance in this simile. Odysseus and his men are compared to birds of prey when they attack the suitors (22.302) and Odysseus is compared to an eagle when he is about to attack the suitors' allies and relatives (24.538). An eagle represents Odysseus in Penelope's dream (19.548–550) and the appearance of an eagle is an omen for Odysseus' defeat of the suitors (15.174–178): Leinieks 1986: 15–16. Podlecki (1967: 14) regards this simile as 'a skilful echo of the earlier bird-omens'. Ahl (1996: 195–196) views the choice of birds as 'a ghoulish reminder' that anticipates 'the havoc they will wreak among the intruders in their own nest, leaving the youth of the Ionian islands as carrion and their parents lamenting over their own plundered nests'.

refer both to their past forced separation and to their united future.[43] Borrowed from the everyday world of nature the image of birds distressed by the theft of their young would be easily understandable to the audience.

As in several other long similes in the *Odyssey*, the poet employs a reverse simile, where the roles of the subjects in the simile vehicle are inverted or altered to some extent that do not precisely correspond with the characters' situation in the main narrative. This simile has been dimly viewed by commentators, presumably because of the lack of direct correspondence between the birds and the men (for example, the birds are both adults rather than adult and child)[44] and the chicks in the simile vehicle are taken away from their parents, not reunited with them,[45] but these criticisms miss the point that the simile vehicle encompasses the grief of Odysseus' and Telemachos' past separation and loss of youthful years spent together—Telemachos' childhood and Odysseus' youthful parenthood.[46] These are times that neither can recover.

Odysseus and Telemachos are equally moved at the moment of this reunion.[47] The simile allows us to see Odysseus the family man for the very first time. The poet's deployment of similes to illustrate first the reunion of Telemachos with Eumaios, and then his reunion with Odysseus, highlights the differences in emotions between these two reunions. Telemachos' untroubled response to Eumaios'

[43]Alden (1987: 136) comments that 'the confirmation of [Telemachos' and Odysseus'] father-son relationship may signify the restoration of order on Ithaca'.

[44] The simile has been viewed harshly by some commentators. Stanford (1996b: 271) describes the simile as 'curiously inept for a reunion of father and son'. Hoekstra (1989: 275) notes that the simile has been viewed by analytic critics as the work of a Bearbeiter.

[45] De Jong (2001: 396–397) suggests that the subsequent recognition scene between Odysseus and Penelope provides a clue as to why the poet chose as the subject of the simile at 16.215 birds that have lost their young. She singles out Penelope's complaint that the gods begrudged Odysseus and Penelope the enjoyment of their youth together (23.210–12).

[46] De Jong 2001: 397; Konstan 2009: 313; Felson-Rubin 1994: 84; Saïd 2011b: 72. Cf. Rutherford (1986: 157 n65), who regards the image of the separation of the birds from their chicks as a reference to what would have occurred if the suitors' ambush had succeeded. See Dué (2005) for a discussion of the mother-bird in Greek literature as traditional image in women's laments for children. Minchin (2018: 10) comments that 'the *Odyssey* is … about the suffering and sorrow of war … but also about the rewards of peace and the importance of home'. The emotions illustrated by this simile sum up that suffering and those rewards.

[47] D. Beck 2005a: 71.

joy in the earlier asymmetric reunion was typical of a young person returned from a short adventure, who lacks understanding of the worries and fears of an elderly relative. His dissimilar response to his father's return displays all his own unhappiness during his father's long absence.[48] The poet's restraint in deploying other similes in these episodes suggests his desire to highlight these reunions.

The simile marks out this significant event, pausing the narrative to dwell on this memorable moment of *nostos* and reunion.[49] This moment represents Odysseus' first step towards acceptance back into his family and his household and his first recognition by a mortal on Ithaca.

The simile plays an important role in the structure of Book 16. By marking one most important emotional moment in the book it creates a pause in the narrative allowing the audience to dwell on this very important recognition scene.

[48] Murnaghan (1987: 22) observes that in the reunion-episodes of the *Odyssey* 'there is often a progression from expressions of solitary, one-sided emotion, which often evoke the pain of separation that is now to be cured, to the shared emotion of reunion'. This scene differs somewhat in that Eumaios effectively substitutes for Odysseus in his reunion with Telemachos while the poet remains silent about Odysseus' feelings.

[49] As D. Beck (2005a: 73) comments 'the simile draws out and thereby emphasizes this crucial and moving scene'. She views (at 63) this moment as a turning point for both Odysseus and Telemachos.

Book 17

In Book 17 Telemachos returns home and tells his mother about his visits to Nestor and Menelaos. Eumaios takes Odysseus to the palace. Odysseus, still disguised, is insulted and assaulted by the suitors and their men. Penelope hears about the beggar and tells Eumaios she wishes to question him.

There are six similes in this book. I shall discuss only one simile. I do not discuss the simile comparing Penelope to Artemis or Aphrodite (17.37),[50] Telemachos' comparison of his reception by Nestor to the welcome Nestor might give to a long absent son (17.111),[51] or Telemachos' verbatim repetition of Menelaos' simile predicting Odysseus' killing of the suitors (17.126).[52] The other two similes I omit

[50] This simile, repeated at 19.54, illustrates Penelope's appearance when she exits her chamber to greet Telemachos. This simile is *not* an 'accumulation simile' where the accumulation of comparisons adds emphasis: see Bowra 1952: 272. Nor could it be termed 'interchangeable'. There is a fundamental polarity intrinsic in Penelope's reconceptualisation as either Artemis or Aphrodite. See Burkert (1985: 221) for a discussion of the polarity of Athene and Artemis to Aphrodite. This simile has been variously interpreted. Merry (1878: 17.37) views the reference to Artemis as illustrating Penelope's 'queenly stature' and the reference to Aphrodite as illustrating her beauty. MacKay (1958: 124) interprets the simile as implying 'a still youthful appearance, and a seductive charm'. Russo (1992: 21) regards Penelope as both 'a chaste Artemis-figure' during Odysseus' absence and an Aphrodite figure exciting the suitors' sexual desires. Similarly, de Jong (2001: 411) suggests that the simile illustrates her ambiguous status up to this point in the story—desired but chaste. See also Steiner 2010: 80; Felson-Rubin 1994: 36–37. Karakantza (1997: 174–175), arguing that Penelope likes having suitors, interprets the simile as reflecting the fact that Penelope is both chaste *and* amorous. Lesser (2017: 109) cites the simile in support of the argument that Penelope is 'a construction as a virgin bride'. See also Levaniouk 2011: 322–323. Ingalls (2000: 16) regards the simile as a reminder of the parallels between Nausicaa and Penelope. In my view the simile is implicitly focalised by Telemachos who sees Penelope exiting her room (17.31–41). Telemachos has been encouraged to hurry home by Athene to ensure that his mother does not marry one of the suitors (15.10–42), and his first action upon arriving on Ithaca is to visit his old family's loyal slave, Eumaios, to ask about his mother's marital status (16.30–35). Despite Eumaios' assurance that his mother has not remarried, it is likely that Telemachos is still concerned about his mother's status, even more so now that that his father has returned to Ithaca. The simile reflects Telemachos' heightened concern about Penelope's marital intentions and highlights Penelope's own uncertainty about her marital situation in Odysseus' absence.

[51] Telemachos is responding to his mother's request for information about Odysseus (17.101–106) and describes his reception by Nestor. Telemachos' comment is disingenuous in view of his own recent emotional reunion with his father. His reference to Nestor's fatherly treatment of him is somewhat more exaggerated than Menelaos' description of Nestor's paternal behaviour in Troy (15.152).

[52] This long simile is a verbatim repetition by Telemachos to Penelope of the simile spoken by Menelaos to Telemachos (4.335). Scott (1974: 132) regards the simile as merely a part of an entire repeated speech. Lonsdale (1990: 18) regards the repetition as 'curious'. C. Moulton (1977: 124) views Telemachos' repetition as a device to increase Penelope's tension and anticipation. De Jong (2001: 413), noting Telemachos' less than candid report on his travels including the fact that Odysseus has arrived back on Ithaca, regards Telemachos' repetition of the simile as an encouragement to his mother with regard to Odysseus' return. Felson-Rubin (1994: 22) interprets Telemachos' repetition as a warning to his mother not to continue to play the doe. (This is an unusual interpretation of the simile because it equates Penelope, rather than the suitors' parents, to the fawns' mother.) My opinion of the repetition of the simile is closer to that of Scott because the simile seems clumsily positioned and of limited value to the narrative at this point, although I accept that the reference to

are those in which Odysseus is described as standing firm as a rock (17.463),[53] and Eumaios' comparison of Odysseus' narrative to that of a bard (17.518).[54]

the lion killing the fawns may anticipate Odysseus' forthcoming revenge. At best it could be seen as a cheering message to Penelope to have faith that Odysseus will return. As noted by Pache (2014: 69), the lion in Homer may symbolise vengeance. See also Saïd 2011b: 70.

[53] This simile describes Odysseus' reaction when Antinoos throws a footstool at him. It is a simile of measure or degree illustrating Odysseus' unwavering stance despite being hit on the shoulder. Keith (1914: 48) notes that images of stone and iron are also deployed in similes to illustrate steadfastness of purpose or of disposition. See, for example, 19.494.

[54] When Penelope requests that Odysseus-Aithon be brought to her, Eumaios praises his storytelling telling her that he charmed him like a talented bard singing songs. This is one of two compliments of Odysseus' storytelling of his adventures, the first offered by King Alkinoos (11.368). Odysseus also entertains King Aiolos (10.14–16) with his stories about his past experiences. It is unclear why Eumaios chooses to praise the beggar's storytelling to Penelope: see Ahl (1996: 209) for a survey of possible reasons. Eumaios' praise suggests that he has believed Odysseus' lies about his identity and his past. Ready (2011: 267) notes Odysseus' unrivalled ability in speaking. Doherty (1995: 83) views the range of bards and references to storytelling throughout the *Odyssey* as the poet's invitation to reflect upon epic narration. See also Bakker (2009: 133) on the 'pervasive self-reflexivity' of the poem. Stanford (1999: 195) comments that, by praising Odysseus' oratory, Homer 'identifies Odysseus' powers with his own'. See also Doherty 1992: 171 and more generally Zerba 2009: 313–315.

17.397

ἦ ῥα καὶ Ἀντίνοον ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
Ἀντίνο’, ἦ μευ καλὰ πατὴρ ὣς κήδεαι υἷος,
ὅς τὸν ξεῖνον ἄνωγας ἀπὸ μεγάροιο διέσθαι
μύθῳ ἀναγκαίῳ· μὴ τοῦτο θεὸς τελέσειε.
δός οἱ ἑλών· οὔ τοι φθονέω· κέλομαι γὰρ ἐγώ γε· 400
μήτ’ οὖν μητέρ’ ἐμὴν ἄζευ τό γε μήτε τιν’ ἄλλον
δμώων, οἳ κατὰ δώματ’ Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο.
ἀλλ’ οὔ τοι τοιοῦτον ἐνὶ στήθεσσι νόημα·
αὐτὸς γὰρ φαγέμεν πολὺ βούλεαι ἢ δόμεν ἄλλῳ.

So he spoke winged words to Antinoos. ‘Antinoos, it is true that you really care about me like father for his son, you who directs me with compelling words to drive a stranger from the hall. May the god never bring this about. Take some of this and give it to him. Let me tell you, I do not begrudge it. Indeed, for my part, I order it. And do not pay attention to my mother or indeed to any of the slaves who are in the house of excellent Odysseus. But indeed, this is not what is in your heart. For, by far, you prefer that you yourself eat than that you give to another.

This simile is spoken by Telemachos to Antinoos. Odysseus, still disguised as a beggar, has been brought to his palace by Eumaios. When Odysseus begs from the suitors, only Antinoos refuses him food, criticising Eumaios for bringing the beggar to the palace. Telemachos, referring to Antinoos in unflattering terms, tells Eumaios not to waste his breath on further reply to Antinoos. Telemachos then addresses Antinoos himself.

Telemachos’ simile is very unusual because it is sarcastic. His sarcasm is confirmed by his preceding remarks to Eumaios and his following criticism of Antinoos’ attitude towards suppliants. The simile reinforces Telemachos’ opinion of Antinoos that he has expressed to Eumaios. Telemachos’ audacity in expressing his real feelings to Antinoos explains his state of mind at this point. He has been emboldened by his father’s presence to make plain his objections to Antinoos’ treatment of his household.[55] Here we see Telemachos taking charge of the situation, redirecting Antinoos’

[55] Russo (1992: 39) interprets this passage slightly differently, asserting that ‘the characterization [of Telemachos] through rhetoric is again impressive, as Telemachos continues to show the typically adolescent qualities of peevishness, moodiness, and sarcasm that were so evident in the first two books of the poem’. I agree that the characterisation is impressive but

unpleasantness towards himself while standing up for Eumaios. Telemachos is no longer the powerless boy we saw earlier. He has always known how to receive guests appropriately, demonstrated by his reception of Athene-Mentes in Book 1, and he now has his own father in the same room as him, albeit in disguise. The Telemachos of this scene is a maturing young man gaining confidence in the presence of his disguised father. The poet has chosen Telemachos' sarcastic conceptualisation of Antinoos with care.

Telemachos' reconceptualisation of his relationship with Antinoos as a father/son relationship magnifies his sarcasm, communicating how unimpressed he is with Antinoos' behaviour. Other parental similes, sincerely spoken, have embodied the values of paternal behaviour, such as the sharing of advice (Athene-Mentes), wise guiding of one's community (Telemachos, Mentes and Athene), and the generous and affectionate reception by family friends and supporters. This reconceptualisation is especially ironic because Antinoos has been Penelope's chief suitor and desires to replace Odysseus in Penelope's life, and he was the main motivator behind the plot to kill Telemachos (4.657–672).[56] The irony of Telemachos' simile is magnified by the presence of his father, who would never condone Antinoos' behaviour towards a guest, a suppliant or his slaves.

Telemachos' reference to the father 'caring' (κήδεαι, you care) about the son adds to the sarcastic tone because we, the external audience, and most members of the internal audience (the suitors, Eumaios, Telemachos, Odysseus-Aithon) know that Antinoos was as keen as any other suitor to murder Telemachos. Telemachos' speech and his sarcastic simile in particular, highlight the deficiencies of Antinoos' character.

this is because the effect of Odysseus' presence upon Telemachos is show-cased here. As Minchin (2010: 544) observes, Telemachos' sarcasm towards Antinoos is 'an affiliative strategy' between him and his father.

[56] Merry (1878: 17.397) suggests that Telemachos chose the father reference because Antinoos wished to become his stepfather.

The simile is powerful for the external audience—his sarcastic tone conveys Telemachos' disgust at Antinoos. The poet squarely aligns us, the external audience, with Telemachos and Odysseus.

The simile is memorable because it harks back to the other father similes that were sincere and spoken from the heart yet its meaning is so different and unexpected. The positioning of the simile at the start of Telemachos' address to Antinoos makes it prominent. This simile goes to the heart of three main themes of the *Odyssey*—family relationships, *xenia* and the behaviour of the suitors.

Book 18

In this book Odysseus-Aithon is threatened by Iros, another beggar, and is goaded into fighting with him. Penelope, motivated by Athene and beautified by her, makes an appearance before the suitors. Penelope's maid, Melantho, insults Odysseus, as does the suitor Eurymachos, who throws a footstool at him. Telemachos intervenes, and, after more feasting, the suitors return home for the night.

There are five similes in this book. I shall not discuss the simile where Athene beautifies Penelope in her sleep (18.193),[57] nor Telemachos' description of Iros, hanging his head like a drunk after being defeated by Odysseus-Aithon (18.240).[58] I also omit the simile illustrating the chain of amber beads, bright as the sun, given by Eurymachos to Penelope (18.296).[59]

[57] Athene cleanses Penelope's face with a divine ointment of beauty like that used by Aphrodite herself. Scott (1974: 25) classifies this simile as one that accompanies the action of a god, in this case to beautify Penelope. The simile is decorative and marks out Athene's power and her protective oversight of Penelope. Odysseus, Penelope and Laertes are the only three characters in the *Odyssey* whose appearances and statures are improved by Athene. Athene improves Penelope's appearance as she sleeps to encourage the suitors to give her more gifts. Felson-Rubin (1994: 54) comments that Athene is 'decking [Penelope] out like a maiden to be married'. Zeitlin (1995: 134) views this simile as an echo of the tale of Ares and Aphrodite, commenting that Penelope then appears before the suitors 'with a seductive aim in mind'. Athene had earlier beautified Odysseus' appearance, transforming him into potential bridegroom material, to ensure Nausicaa's assistance (6.231; 6.232). See more generally Turkeltaub (2014a: 110–113) for a discussion of the elements of Penelope's beautification scene.

[58] This simile is spoken by Telemachos to his mother as he prays to Athene and Apollo for the suitors' death. As de Jong (2001: 449) notes, he does not want to see the suitors just 'groggy', he wants them dead. See also Felson 1999: 96. This short simile is very striking and would be easily understood by audiences in alcohol-consuming societies.

[59] This decorative simile explains the radiance of the beads, suggesting their beauty and quality. The simile underlines the yellow-orange colour of amber. There is evidence that amber was highly prized and traded in the ancient world from at least the Bronze Age: Causey 2011: 65. This is one of a group of similes drawing on comparisons to the sun or the moon to illustrate the brightness of objects: Scott 1974: 67, 121.

18.27 AND 18.29

τὸν δὲ χολωσάμενος προσεφώνεεν Ἶρος ἀλήτης·
ὦ πόποι, ὡς ὁ μολοβρὸς ἐπιτροχάδην ἀγορεύει,
γρηῒ καμινοῖ ἶσος· ὃν ἂν κακὰ μητισαίμην
κόπτων ἀμφοτέρῃσι, χαμαὶ δέ κε πάντας ὀδόντας
γναθμῶν ἐξελάσαιμι συὸς ὣς ληϊβοτείρης.

Then angrily the vagrant Iros addressed him, 'Oh, for shame! How glibly the greedy fellow talks, like an old furnace woman. I will make trouble for him, thumping him on either side and I will knock out all his teeth from his jaws onto the ground like a wild boar that destroys the crops.

These two successive similes are spoken by Iros the beggar, an ally of the suitors, to Odysseus-Aithon. Odysseus-Aithon has already endured insults from the suitor Antinoos.[60] Despite Odysseus' efforts to maintain civility, Iros chooses recklessly to insult him, first by comparing his talk to that of an old furnace woman (27), and then threatening him with violence by suggesting that his teeth should be knocked out like the punishment meted out to a wild boar that has eaten the crops (28–29).[61]

An underlying theme of this scene is that of *xenia*—hospitality and the treatment of guests. Iros' behaviour towards another beggar who is in a similar situation to himself, denying hospitality—or, at least, refusing to share what the palace offers—and egged on by the suitors who are themselves guests, reflects the state of disorder in Odysseus' household.[62]

[60] Bremmer (2000: 63–64) notes that in Homer lower class people are most likely to be insulted or subjected to verbal or physical abuse. Odysseus-Aithon and Eumaios had already been insulted by Melanthios on their way to the palace.
[61] Scholia indicate that the punishment of knocking out the teeth of a pig caught eating a landowner's crops was lawful under Cypriot law: Stanford 1996b: 301; Russo 1992: 48. Levaniouk (2011: 168) considers it unlikely that the poet would refer to a particular Cypriot law and suggests a custom of detoothing pigs.
[62] Nimis (1987: 37) comments that in Homer the provision of food indicates 'communal solidarity'.

The scene with Iros, in which Iros eventually is beaten up by Odysseus-Aithon as the suitors look on with amusement, has been viewed as burlesque—a parody of a real fight.[63] This view misinterprets the importance of this scene, which is a forewarning of the suitors' fate at the hands of Odysseus. Odysseus' treatment in this scene contributes to his justification for his merciless revenge upon the suitors and their allies. The suitors abuse Telemachos' and Penelope's *xenia* themselves and compound their guilt by encouraging a situation where other visitors to the household are not treated appropriately.[64] This scene builds tension and leads the listener to wonder whether Odysseus will give in to his anger and reveal himself too early.

Iros' offensive similes to Odysseus strongly convey the depths of his feelings towards the new beggar and give us a clear insight into his foolish character. The poet's choice of character speech magnifies the impact of Iros' insults. Iros makes it clear that there is no room for two beggars in Odysseus' house (18.10–14).

The choice of subject matter for the similes is interesting and the comparisons are unusual.[65] The insults are clearly chosen to be offensive. The comparison to a garrulous, old, female kitchen slave reflects disrespect for the elderly[66] and for women, and for the lowly status of slaves of low birth in Homeric society.[67] There is an implicit criticism of talkative mortal women, even women of noble birth, an aspect already seen earlier in the *Odyssey* when Telemachos tells off his mother for berating Phemios for singing about the Trojan war and orders her to return to her room and her

[63] De Jong (2001: 437 and 439). For an alternative view, see Bakker (2010) who examines the Iros/Aithon scene in terms of the importance of the concept of *gastēr* in the *Odyssey*.
[64] Lateiner (1995: 101) observes that the suitors are 'de iure guests but de facto hosts'. Their mistreatment of Odysseus-Aithon, and their encouragement of other people including Iros to do likewise, usurp Telemachos' role as host, including his obligation to protect all his guests.
[65] Ready (2018a: 251) regards the comparison to a naughty pig as idiolectal with regard to both the tenor and the vehicle.
[66] Gilleard (2007: 81) comments that in ancient Greece, with the exception of Sparta, 'old age was ugly, mean and tragic' and there was openly expressed 'distaste and disgust' for it.
[67] The loyal swineherd, Eumaios, for example, is differentiated from other slaves by his aristocratic birth: Joshel 1998: 11.

weaving.[68] The reference to a female slave in the kitchen reflects the divisions in social space for slaves in the *Odyssey*—female slaves work indoors.[69]

The insult, comparing Odysseus-Aithon to a wild boar that should be punished for eating the crops, reflects and emphasises his lowly status in society, more akin to a wild animal than a human. The basis of the insult—the wild boar helping itself to crops—reflects the reality that swine, whether domesticated or wild, forage for themselves and are omnivorous.[70] The habits of swine would have been familiar to ancient Greeks because pig farming was widespread in antiquity.[71] Wild boars were also widespread and abundant in the ancient Mediterranean.[72]

There is irony in the poet's choice of subject matter for Iros' insults. The lowly woman working in the kitchen is a productive member of society, producing the very food that Iros himself begs for. She has an essential, if unacknowledged, role in every household. Iros' reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a wild boar is ironic because boars were known as cunning and ferocious,[73] a very apt description of Odysseus in view of his deceptive behaviour and impending revenge.[74] The image of the boar breaking into the tended crops is appropriate for Iros himself who consumes food that he is neither entitled to as member of the household nor as a guest. Moreover, Iros, an interloper in the household at best, who is lingering on the threshold, has the audacity to accuse another person of

[68] The speech of other women in the *Odyssey* is limited. For example, Queen Arete speaks very little apart from some observant, carefully chosen questions. After their initial conversation, Nausicaa's speech is limited to a brief farewell to Odysseus. Later Odysseus' anger flares up when he hears the insolent maids returning to their quarters (20.5–13). See Fletcher (2008) for a survey of women's voices in the *Odyssey*.
[69] Thalmann 1998: 27.
[70] Lewis 2018: 98.
[71] Lewis 2018: 98. We have already encountered the swine-herd Eumaios tending to his pigs and providing food for the suitors' feast.
[72] MacKinnon 2014a: 159.
[73] Lewis 2018: 99. In *Iliad* 17.20–22 Menelaos refers to the spirit of the destructive boar, putting it on a par with that of leopards and lions.
[74] Odysseus will soon be recognised by Eurykleia from his scar resulting from the attack by a wild boar. Levaniouk (2011: 168–169) suggests that there is a special relationship between the pig and Odysseus, in view of his close relationship with Eumaios, the swineherd.

trying to exploit the household's resources. Of course, the most ironic aspect is that Iros is insulting the head of the household whose food he, Iros, is not prepared to share.

This scene could have been an excellent moment for an exchange of competitive similes between Iros and Odysseus. This is, however, absent, as noted by Ready.[75] We are left to wonder exactly how Odysseus replied, since the poet only informs us that the two continued to provoke each other (18.32–33). The point of the scene is not to demonstrate Odysseus' superiority in words but to illustrate the suitors' and their allies' unacceptable behaviour.[76]

The force of this scene is magnified by the poet's attribution of direct speech to Iros. His behaviour raises the theme of hospitality and more generally that of social behaviour.

[75] Ready 2011: 270.

[76] See Levine (1982) for an examination of Iros as a paradigm for the suitors.

Book 19

Odysseus and Telemachos prepare for revenge against the suitors by removing all the weapons from the hall. Odysseus-Aithon finally meets Penelope but does not reveal his identity. After their talk, the old servant Eurykleia bathes Odysseus and recognises him from the scar on his leg. Odysseus-Aithon interprets Penelope's dream as foretelling the death of the suitors and the return of Odysseus. Penelope then decides to hold an archery contest to determine who will win her hand in marriage.

There are ten similes in this book. I shall discuss five similes. I do not discuss Telemachos' simile expressing amazement that the interior of the hall is glowing in his eyes like a blazing fire (19.39),[77] the simile comparing Penelope to Artemis or golden Aphrodite (19.54),[78] the simile where Odysseus-Aithon describes the sheen of Odysseus' tunic as like the skin of a dried onion (19.233),[79] and glistening like the sun (19.234),[80] or Eurykleia's promise to Odysseus that she will remain silent about his identity like hard stone or iron (19.494).[81]

[77] Athene, unseen by Odysseus or Telemachos, leads the way to the storeroom as they put away the weapons. When Athene's divine presence lights up the house Telemachos expresses his amazement by deploying this simile. The simile explains the radiance of the room and communicates Telemachos' astonishment. For light imagery as divine manifestation, see Constantinidou (2010). See also Bierl 2004. See Fisher (1995) for a discussion of miracle in Homer.

[78] This simile is a repetition of the simile at 17.37. Morrison (2005: 73) views it as a simile illustrating Penelope's appearance. In my view the simile has similar functions to that at 17.37 in that it reflects the uncertainty of Penelope's status—wife, widow or prospective bride—both for herself and for other people. In this case she leaves her room to speak with Odysseus. The simile may reflect his focalisation.

[79] There is some ambiguity in the syntax of this simile: see Stanford 1996b: 326; Russo 1992: 89; Merry 1878: 19.233. The simile illustrates a positive feature of Odysseus' tunic. More importantly, as noted by Scott (1974: 48), the simile spotlights this garment, which Penelope gave to Odysseus. This and the following simile at 19.234 add detail to the description of the tunic. These details contribute to the convincing nature of Odysseus-Aithon's claim that he had met Odysseus. Onions were a common foodstuff in ancient Greece, commonly eaten with drinks: Jay 2016: 21. In the *Iliad* Hekamede serves Nestor an onion with his drink (*Iliad* 11.627–630). D. Griffith (2015) suggests that the poet may be having a joke with the external audience in that peeling onions causes people to cry. He notes that Odysseus-Aithon makes Penelope cry as a result of his accurate description of Odysseus' clothes, and concludes that the poet deployed the onion simile for amusement at this outcome. In my view it is more likely that the poet chose an onion as a symbol of Odysseus' disguise as Aithon, reminding the external audience that yet again Odysseus is hiding his real identity under a smooth exterior of deception.

[80] This simile, again spoken by Odysseus-Aithon to Penelope, illustrates the brightness of Odysseus' tunic. Other examples of garments illustrated by similar similes are at 15.108; 24.148; *Iliad* 6.295.

[81] Eurykleia's simile illustrates her determination to keep Odysseus' identity secret. The either/or construction gives the simile a cumulative effect, emphasising her promise not to betray his identity. Fletcher (2008: 82) notes that Eurykleia's ability to keep silent reflects her self-restraint. See also Redfield 1975: 252 n23. Thalmann (1998: 28) comments that Odysseus does not trust her not just because she is a slave but because she is also female. In his view Odysseus maintains violent control over Eurykleia by threatening her.

19.109

ὦ γύναι, οὐκ ἄν τίς σε βροτῶν ἐπ’ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν
νεικέοι· ἦ γάρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἱκάνει,
ὥς τέ τευ ἢ βασιλῆος ἀμύμονος, ὅς τε θεουδὴς
ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν ἀνάσσων
εὐδικίας ἀνέχῃσι, φέρῃσι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα
πυροὺς καὶ κριθάς, βρίθῃσι δὲ δένδρεα καρπῷ,
τίκτῃ δ’ ἔμπεδα μῆλα, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχῃ ἰχθῦς
ἐξ εὐηγεσίης, ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ.

Oh lady, no one among mortals upon the boundless land could reproach you. For truly your fame reaches heaven, as does that of some blameless king who is god-fearing, who reigns over many noble men, upholding justice. And the black earth produces wheat and barley, and the trees are heavy with fruit, and the flocks reproduce in unfailing succession, and the sea yields fish, [all] as a result of his good leadership, and the people prosper under him.

This simile marks the initial meeting of Odysseus, still disguised as a beggar, and Penelope. Penelope is keen to ask the beggar about Odysseus. (17.528–529). She opens the conversation by asking his name, his home and his parents. Avoiding answering these questions, Odysseus-Aithon replies to her, beginning his speech with the address at 19.107 and continuing with the simile under discussion.[82] This long simile is unusual in that it appears in direct speech.

Odysseus’ simile comprises flattery of Penelope as he compliments her on her wide-reaching *kleos*.[83] He does not elaborate on the nature of her *kleos*, whether it be her beauty or her steadfast refusal of her suitors, apart from commenting on its extent;[84] instead he deploys the reverse simile to

[82] Some scholars, most notably Harsh (1950), have suggested that Penelope recognises Odysseus at some point during Odysseus’ speech.[82] This thesis is not the place to examine that theory in detail. In my view Penelope may suspect fairly early in their acquaintance that the beggar is Odysseus but it is unlikely that this suspicion would occur at the point in the narrative of the simile under discussion. My starting point, therefore, is that at this moment Penelope believes she is speaking with a beggar. See Heitman (2005) for a close study of Penelope’s role in the *Odyssey*.

[83] Odysseus’ flattery of Penelope is an example of ‘other-enhancement’, an ingratiation tactic designed to create a positive influence or impression upon another person: see Bohra 1984: 217–218; Colman 1978. Eylon (2008) provides an informative introduction to the subject of flattery. See also Stengel 2000. We have already seen Odysseus deploy this technique in his meeting with Nausicaa.

[84] See Helleman (1995) for an examination of the nature of Penelope’s *aretê* and *kleos*. Katz (1991: 140) views Penelope’s *kleos* as ‘the *kleos* of unwavering fidelity … which requires Odysseus’s *nostos* for its completion and ratification’. See also Lesser 2017: 123; van Zyl Smit 2008: 393–395; H. Foley 1995: 105. King (1987: 47) comments on the differences in means of gaining *kleos* in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. She argues that there are several methods other than martial death of earning

illustrate his view of the equivalent *kleos* of a king (in other words, her husband).[85] His hyperbolic image in the simile vehicle of a productive, almost divinely favoured kingdom ruled over by a god-fearing, respectful ruler takes his flattery one step further.[86] Odysseus' choice of subject for the simile is carefully considered— it moves attention from the nature of Penelope's *kleos*, to his own peacetime *kleos*.[87]. His comparison subtly reminds Penelope of her unsatisfactory situation and is designed to elicit *her* comment upon the absence of such a just king and the impact of Odysseus' absence on *her* life.[88] In this way, Odysseus implicitly invites Penelope to talk about her husband by indirectly referring to the effects of his absence from Ithaca, while deflecting her questions about his own identity.[89] When she speaks about *her* situation he will have the opportunity to evaluate *her* loyalty to him.

The simile plays a role in the structure of the narrative, marking the important meeting of Penelope and Odysseus-Aithon. It foregrounds the problems besetting Penelope's 'reign', revisiting the theme of the just king.

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kleos in the *Odyssey*, including craft, hospitality and chastity. See Pedrick (1988) for a discussion of *kleos* and women's hospitality in the *Odyssey*. Kundmueller (2018) claims that Penelope possesses politically significant gender-neutral virtues that enhance her reputation. See also Segal 1988. For a broader examination of *kleos* in the *Odyssey*, see Petropoulos 2011; Olson 1985: 1–23.

[85] Goldhill (1991: 44) argues that Odysseus' language suggests a parallelism between him and Penelope.

[86] Odysseus' image in the simile vehicle is reminiscent of Phaeacia, except for the reference to the abundance of fish. In the simile good government and natural abundance are inextricably linked: Taplin 1980: 8. Cairns (2015: 62), noting similarities with Hesiod, comments that these are traditional values. See also Geddes 1984: 30–31. Webster (1964: 223) refers to it as 'an old theme'. Hunter (2015: 20–21) views the connection between natural abundance and good rule as reflecting the fact that the consumption of food usually signals sharing in a community.

[87] Levaniouk (2011: 259) regards this comparison as a 'consummate compliment' which may be Odysseus' recognition of his and Penelope's mutual dependency (at 266). Kitto (1988: 19) regards the poet's reference to the good king as reflecting 'the political framework … present to [his] mind'. He adds 'it goes without saying that Odysseus is always the good, wise, and just king'.

[88] Cairns (2015: 61) suggests that Odysseus' praise causes Penelope to yearn for her husband.

[89] Helleman (1995: 238–239 n30) suggests several motivations for Odysseus-Aithon's words—that flattery of a person of superior social standing is a societal norm, that he is testing Penelope's response to his words, or that he wants to elicit her view of her current position in the palace. As Thornton (1970: 88) comments, Odysseus' praise provokes Penelope to tell him the truth about Ithaca's situation and her own feelings.

The simile vehicle glances back to the state of Ithaca before Odysseus left for Troy and it looks forward to a future without the suitors. The simile marks the fact that the just king has returned. Furthermore, the simile is a teaser for Odysseus' and Penelope's open reunion.

Finally, the external audience can wonder at Odysseus' charm and cunning in providing an opening for Penelope to initiate a conversation about her missing husband, while simultaneously promoting his own image.

19.205

ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα·
τῆς δ’ ἄρ’ ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς·
ὡς δὲ χιὼν κατατήκετ’ ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν,
ἥν τ’ Εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν Ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ·
τηκομένης δ’ ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες·
ὣς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήϊα δάκρυ χεούσης,
κλαιούσης ἐὸν ἄνδρα παρήμενον.

As he spoke he made many things sound like the truth. And hearing these, her tears flowed and her face melted. As the snow melts in the lofty mountains, the snow which the East Wind melts away when the West Wind has poured it down, and as it melts the flowing streams are full, so her beautiful cheeks melted as she poured out tears, lamenting her husband although he sat beside her.

This long simile is deployed by the poet to describe Penelope’s reaction to Odysseus-Aithon’s false tale about a visit Odysseus made to Crete *en route* to Troy. It is the first of a pair of similes, the second of which illustrates Odysseus-Aithon’s reaction to Penelope’s tears. Odysseus tells Penelope that he is Aithon, a Cretan, brother of King Idomeneus, and that he entertained Odysseus and his crew when Odysseus’ ships were blown off course for Troy (19.165–202).

This much admired, visually rich simile, narrated by the external narrator, conveys to the external audience Penelope’s psychological reaction to Odysseus-Aithon’s narrative up to this point.

The first simile conveys the extent of Penelope’s unrestrained and copious weeping upon hearing about her husband’s voyage to Troy and unscheduled stay with ‘Aithon’. The adjacent placement of ῥέε δάκρυα in the introductory clause (204) underlines the flow of her tears. This focus is emphasised by the repetition of δάκρυ, this time joined with χεούσης in the resumptive clause (208).

The placement of τήκετο δὲ χρώς (204) introduces a metaphor for her loss of control, and is illustrated by the image of the literal melting of snow in the simile vehicle. The language of the simile suggests that the poet's aim is to emphasise the volume and flow of her tears.[90] The word τήκετο is repeated in various forms—in the introductory clause, three times in the vehicle of the simile (205, 206, 207), and in the resumptive clause (208).[91] The free-flowing nature of Penelope's tears is underlined by the word ῥέε in 204 and ῥέοντες in 207 in the simile vehicle. The effect of 'melting' on Penelope's face suggests the way a person's face appears to crumple under extreme distress. The use of τήκω strongly suggests the quality of her grief—one of its other meanings is 'to cause to waste or pine away'.[92]

Some scholars endow this simile with far-reaching significance with regard to Penelope's psychological state. It has been seen as illustrating the commencement of an inward 'thawing' of Penelope's psychological state of mind which has become frozen during the previous twenty years of Odysseus' absence—that she is looking forward to a brighter future, since she believes the stranger and dares to hope for Odysseus' return.[93] Supporting this interpretation is the argument that the free flow of the rivers because of snow melt in the warmer wind represents the

[90] See Monsacré (1984: 62–63) for a discussion of the 'liquidness' of women's nature, as evidenced by the language of melting in this simile. The association of the volume of tears with flowing water is also found in the simile at *Iliad* 9.14. Achilles' tears are compared to the water flowing down a cliff face.

[91] D. Beck (2014: 51) notes that in Homer the use of τήκω in narrative is restricted to emotional, not physical, melting.

[92] Cunliffe 2012: 381.

[93] For example, Rutherford (1992: 166) views this moment as a weakening of 'Penelope's resistance to flattery and skepticism in the face of good news'. See also Russo (1992: 87) for a similar view. Levaniouk (2011: 29–30) interprets this simile as indicating the coming of spring and therefore conveying a degree of recognition in Penelope of Odysseus.

commencement of spring.[94] A possible interpretation of Odysseus' alias 'Aithon' with its meaning of 'burning' or 'fiery' has also been cited as supporting this interpretation.[95]

This interpretation is, however, inconsistent with the surrounding narrative. We have seen Penelope cry about her situation at several points in the narrative. Odysseus-Aithon's speech to her so far has comprised only a description of how he entertained Odysseus twenty years before, when Odysseus was *en route* to Troy. The resumptive clause emphasises Penelope's grief (while highlighting the irony of her situation)—κλαιούσης ἐὸν ἄνδρα παρήμενον (209).[96] Moreover, Penelope goes on to test 'Aithon' for further details of Odysseus *after* this simile. This counters the claim that he has already gained Penelope's trust.

The simile fills the lexical gap of communicating to the external audience the extent of Penelope's tears on hearing of an encounter with her husband since she last saw him. Moreover, the copious tears probably reflect her despair that this encounter took place twenty years before.

This simile could be seen as hyperbole in its description of the depth of Penelope's grief. Yet it serves an important function in creating a pause in the narrative to allow the external audience to understand the volume of her tears and the extent of her sorrow. The combination of mountains, winds, melting snow and full-flowing rivers makes this long simile easy to understand and especially memorable.[97] The detailed image allows the external audience to escape the confines of the house

[94] Tsagalis (2008: 146–147) places much greater importance upon the winds in the simile. He argues that the references to winds in the simile vehicle connect with the wind that Odysseus-Aithon claims prevented Odysseus from sailing on to Troy from Crete, and that this connects the description of Penelope's feelings with Odysseus-Aithon's lying tale. I find this interpretation confusing. There is certainly an innate link between the length of time that has elapsed since Odysseus' supposed visit to Crete and Penelope's tears, with an implicit suggestion that Penelope weeps not just for the here and now but also for the all the time that has passed without Odysseus by her side, but I do not see any special connection between the winds of the simile and the wind in Odysseus-Aithon's lying tale.

[95] Levaniouk 2011: 36; Bakker 2013: 138. Cf. Edgeworth 1983.

[96] Odysseus himself has emphasised his nearness in his introductory words to his speech. He begins his speech with the words ὦ γύναι (107). This phrase has attracted notice because of its dual meaning of 'lady' and 'wife'.

[97] Russo (1992: 87) regards the simile as 'unforgettable'.

for a moment, but not to escape Penelope's anguish. For Odysseus, Penelope's depth of feeling is the clearest evidence yet of her continued longing for him.[98]

Furthermore, Penelope's reaction illustrated by the simile creates suspense. This is the first meeting between Odysseus and Penelope. Will Odysseus reveal his identity to her? The second simile in the pair swiftly settles this question for the audience.

[98] Helleman 1995: 236 n25.

19.211

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
θυμῷ μὲν γοόωσαν ἐὴν ἐλέαιρε γυναῖκα, 210
ὀφθαλμοὶ δ’ ὡς εἰ κέρα ἔστασαν ἠὲ σίδηρος
ἀτρέμας ἐν βλεφάροισι· δόλῳ δ’ ὅ γε δάκρυα κεῦθεν.

But Odysseus in his heart pitied his wife as she wept. But his eyes remained steady like horn or iron under his eyelids, and with cunning he hid his tears.

This passage directly follows the previous simile illustrating Penelope’s tears and conveys Odysseus’ reaction to his wife’s overt grief at his absence. The contrast between the emotional reactions of Penelope and Odysseus is emphasised by the pair of similes. The first simile emphasises at length the effect of Odysseus’ lies upon Penelope. Odysseus has been sitting opposite her observing the effects of his story. By contrast, this short second simile illustrates Odysseus’ self-restraint, maintaining his composure despite Penelope’s copious tears.[99] The hardness of the horn and iron is a strong contrast to the melting snow.[100] It illustrates Odysseus’ unmoving exterior, and the reference to iron may suggest coldness (due to its conductive property). Yet the poet clarifies to the external audience that Odysseus, beneath his unmoving exterior, is not immune to his wife’s grief (209–210). He himself is crying in pity for her but he cries inwardly. He does not let it show (212).[101]

This is a memorable pair of similes that starkly contrast Penelope’s and Odysseus’ situations. She is despairing and lost; he is secure in the knowledge that he has the divine support of a powerful

[99] Russo 1992: 88; van Wees 1998: 13; Morrison 2005: 76. The audience should not be surprised at Odysseus’ remarkable self-control—he displayed similar self-restraint when Eumaios greeted Telemachos and when he was attacked by a suitor.
[100] Rutherford 1986: 158.
[101] D. Beck (2014: 53 n46) comments that ‘this depiction of Odysseus captures both the strength of his self-control, and the strength of his desire to break that control’. Thornton (1970: 89) interprets the moment slightly differently, stating ‘here the tension and opposition is between the ‘spirit’ of the man that is filled with pity, and his ‘guile’ which causes him to control his emotion’. For a detailed analysis of Odysseus’ (mostly) high level of emotional intelligence at this and other moments in the *Odyssey*, see Minchin 2019.

goddess and the support of his own son.[102] Yet he is touched by his wife's situation but chooses to maintain his silence for the long-term benefit of them both.[103]

[102] D. Beck (2014: 54) comments that 'the audience … stands beside Penelope and sympathizes with her, even as they savor the irony from their superior understanding of her predicament'. See also D. Beck (2005a: 92–107) for an analysis of the conversations between Odysseus-Aithon and Penelope in Book 19.

[103] Penelope will prove to have similar self-restraint. As Saïd (2011b: 307) notes, Odysseus accuses Penelope of having a heart of iron (23.172) when she refuses to recognise him without testing him, despite Athene's beautification.

19.518

ὡς δ’ ὅτε Πανδαρέου κούρη, χλωρηΐς ἀηδών,
καλὸν ἀείδῃσιν ἔαρος νέον ἰσταμένοιο,
δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινοῖσιν,
ἥ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυηχέα φωνήν,
παῖδ’ ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὅν ποτε χαλκῷ
κτεῖνε δι’ ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθοιο ἄνακτος,
ὣς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
ἠὲ μένω παρὰ παιδὶ καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσω,
κτῆσιν ἐμήν, δμῶάς τε καὶ ὑψερεφὲς μέγα δῶμα,
εὐνήν τ’ αἰδομένη πόσιος δήμοιό τε φῆμιν,
ἦ ἤδη ἅμ’ ἕπωμαι Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος
μνᾶται ἐνὶ μεγάροισι, πορὼν ἀπερείσια ἕδνα.

Just as the daughter of Pandareos, the greenwood nightingale, sings beautifully when spring is young, sitting amongst the thick foliage of the trees, and she pours out her much warbling song lamenting Itylos, her beloved son, child of King Zethos, whom she killed with a sword by mistake, so my heart is pulled in two, this way and that, whether to stay with my child and keep everything safe, my possessions, slaves and also the great, high-roofed house, honouring the bed of my husband, and the voice of the community, or whether to follow now that man who is the best of the Achaeans, who woos me in the halls and offers me countless marriage gifts.

This simile is located in Book 19.[104] Penelope resumes her conversation with the beggar after he has been bathed by Eurykleia. She tells him of her sorrow at her situation, deploying the simile under discussion.

This is the only simile in the *Odyssey* where a character draws upon a mythological tale to illustrate his or her experience.[105] The simile vehicle refers to a version of the tale of the daughter of Pandareos that is found only in Homer.[106] In this version the daughter of Pandareos plots to kill one of her sister-in-law’s children out of jealousy but accidentally kills her own son. Immediately

[104] Nieto Hernández (2008: 55) comments that this is almost a mythical paradigm, although it is in the form of a simile. See also C. Moulton 1977: 118 n8.
[105] Rutherford 1992: 192; Bowra 1972: 62. Burkert (1983: 180) refers to this myth, as told by Penelope, as ‘the primordial image of mourning’.
[106] There is a different, better known Attic version of this tale. See Anhalt (2001–2002: 148–149) for a comprehensive discussion of the two versions. See also Levaniouk 2011: 213–228.

preceding the simile vehicle, Penelope comments how she lies awake at night mourning her situation. The simile has been interpreted as illustrating Penelope's indecision as she mulls over her future actions, reflected by the varying notes of the nightingale's song.[107] The underlying message of this simile, however, is not the nightingale's warbling song nor the choice of bird, but the daughter of Pandareos' unhappy fate, surviving to mourn the loss of her son, having made a wrong decision that has ruined her own life through his loss.[108]

The choice of subject matter explains the issues uppermost in Penelope's mind—she fears making a mistake that will jeopardise her son's life through her wrong decision.[109] Should she remain single (and possibly put Telemachos' life at risk because the suitors have already failed once to kill her son), or concede that her husband Odysseus is never going to return by marrying one of the suitors?

Through Penelope's reconceptalisualisation of herself as the daughter of Pandareos, the poet illustrates her indecision and uncertainty. This is one of the few times in the *Odyssey* where we gain insight into Penelope's psychological state through her own words. The simile affirms her introductory words to Odysseus-Aithon about her mourning for Odysseus and enlarges upon them through the simile image.

The poet clearly expects the external audience to be familiar with the version of the myth presented in this simile. The assumption by Penelope that Aithon the beggar has sufficient mythological knowledge to understand her dilemma, and the poet's assumption that the listener is acquainted

[107] Rutherford (1992: 192–193) views the main point of comparison as the varying notes of the nightingale's song and Penelope's uncertain frame of mind. See also Ready 2018a: 254; Rood 2006: 7; Keith 1914: 47.
[108] P. Friedrich (1997: 313) comments that the ancient Greeks viewed the nightingale's song as sad, or as a lament. Lesser (2017: 111) views Penelope as a perpetual mourner, hence her reference to the nightingale.
[109] H. Foley (1978: 10) interprets this simile rather differently, viewing it as 'expressing Penelope's suspension of time on Ithaca' through the image of the nightingale eternally bewailing the loss of her son.

with this version, suggest it was familiar to ancient audiences. Ancient Greek audiences would also have been familiar with the nightingale, which was common in the northern Mediterranean.[110]

This simile precedes a turning point for Penelope. She is on the cusp of the decision to hold the contest to select a suitor. The simile echoes the themes of family and forced separation that pervade the *Odyssey* story.

[110] Lewis 2018: 489.

19.574

ἤδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἥ μ' Ὀδυσῆος
οἴκου ἀποσχήσει· νῦν γὰρ καταθήσω ἄεθλον,
τοὺς πελέκεας, τοὺς κεῖνος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐοῖσιν
ἵστασχ' ἐξείης, δρυόχους ὥς, δώδεκα πάντας·
στὰς δ' ὅ γε πολλὸν ἄνευθε διαρρίπτασκεν ὀϊστόν. 575

This hateful dawn is now coming which will cause me to leave the house of Odysseus. For now I shall set as a contest those axes which he used to set up in a line in his halls, like the props of a ship being built, all twelve, and he used to stand far away and shoot an arrow through them.

This simile is spoken by Penelope to Odysseus who is still disguised as Aithon the beggar. Penelope decides to take action to determine her future by holding an archery contest that requires shooting through twelve axes.[111]

The simile is closer to a simple comparison between the axes and the ship props lined up in a row. It has, however, puzzled scholars because of the difficulties in understanding the exact nature of the challenge proposed by Penelope.[112] The main function of this simile should be to explain how the axes are to be set up for the competition but the simile fails to do this. We cannot know whether the memory of the form of the axes became distorted over time, or even lost, or whether the poet himself failed to understand the tradition he inherited.[113]

The difficulties raised by this simile, however, illustrate the importance of audience comprehension. This simile is located at a significant point in the narrative—Penelope suddenly decides that it is time

[111] Some scholars speculate that Penelope has recognised that the beggar Aithon is Odysseus and that her contest is designed to give him the opportunity to win against the suitors. See, for example, Harsh 1950.
[112] For example, for a range of theories illustrated with diagrams see Delebecque 1975: 56–67; Page 1973; Pocock 1961. Commentaries discuss this simile at length. See for example, Russo 1992: 104–105; Stanford 1996b: 338–339; and Rutherford 1992: 197–198. The TSG Entertainment logo illustrates one interpretation of the archery challenge: see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fVmLoexuVQ. Ahl (1996: 237) advances a different view, asserting that the contest is 'technically impossible for anyone to win'. Russo (2004) argues that Odysseus' shot is a symbolic achievement in the story rather than a technical achievement; therefore, the technical details are of less importance.
[113] The puzzle of this simile is perhaps best summed up by Howell (1958: 42) who refers to 'the riddle of the axe-heads'.

to move on with her life by choosing a suitor after nearly twenty years of loneliness and uncertainty.[114] Yet the uncertainty as to her meaning with regard to the archery contest detracts from this important turning point in the narrative. The irony of this simile is that Penelope understands the mechanics of the contest. Odysseus has, according to her, performed this feat many times in her presence (19.575). By telling 'Aithon' about the contest, Penelope expects him also to understand the contest setup. Yet the external audience (and possibly the poet) for once is less knowledgeable than the characters themselves.

This simile is an important example of the need for mutual understanding between the poet and the audience as to the meaning of the simile.

[114] De Jong (2001: 481) cites Penelope's announcement of the contest as an example of 'emancipation of speech'—where the external audience has received no preparation by the poet for important information announced by a character.

Comments on Similes in Books 14–19

These books could be viewed as setting the scene for the confrontation between Odysseus and the suitors. Odysseus maintains his disguise, testing other characters to assess their loyalty to him. The themes of reception and reunion are also prominent in this part of the story and their importance is reflected in longer similes—for example, Eumaios' and Telemachos' reunion, and, more importantly, Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion. The poet deploys several similes to mark out bad behaviour among the suitors' allies, for example, Iros' insults, and balances these with similes illustrating Odysseus' unwavering endurance. In this regard, it is interesting to note that none of the suitors themselves receives a simile.

Penelope's uncertain position is emphasised by similes, both directly by the poet and through her own words, leading to the moment, also marked out by simile, when she decides to hold the archery competition.

We continue to appreciate Odysseus' skill with words, evidenced through his storytelling of Aithon's life, his spoken similes, and through the praise of Eumaios. There are few grand events in these books, aside from Odysseus and Telemachos' reunion, but the poet deploys similes to spotlight significant moments as the tension builds.

Chapter Six

Books 20–24

These books are the climax to the story. Odysseus plans his revenge. He causes uproar amongst the suitors when he successfully shoots through the axes and this precipitates his battle against them. With Athene's assistance, the suitors are all killed. Telemachos then executes the disloyal maids. Odysseus is reunited with Penelope and with his father. Zeus decrees that there shall be no further bloodshed.

Book 20

In Book 20 Odysseus, unable to sleep, debates what action to take against the suitors and their supporters.[1] The next morning Philoitios, the cowherd, expresses his continued support for his absent master but the suitors resume insulting Odysseus-Aithon. One suitor, Ktesippos, even hurls an ox-hoof at him. Theoklymenos then prophesies their deaths but they ignore his warning.

I shall discuss the only two similes in this book.

[1] See Privitera (2018) for an examination Odysseus' physical and psychological state from the perspective of cognitive science.

20.14

πολλὰ δὲ μερμήριζε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
ἠὲ μεταΐξας θάνατον τεύξειεν ἑκάστῃ,
ἦ ἔτ' ἐῷ μνηστῆρσιν ὑπερφιάλοισι μιγῆναι
ὕστατα καὶ πύματα, κραδίη δέ οἱ ἔνδον ὐλάκτει.
ὡς δὲ κύων ἀμαλῇσι περὶ σκυλάκεσσι βεβῶσα
ἄνδρ' ἀγνοιήσασ' ὐλάει μέμονέν τε μάχεσθαι,
ὥς ῥα τοῦ ἔνδον ὐλάκτει ἀγαιομένου κακὰ ἔργα·

And he pondered much in his heart and his mind whether to rush upon each one to bring about their deaths or to permit them still to sleep with the arrogant suitors for the very last time; and his heart barked within him. Just as a bitch standing over her weak puppies, on seeing a man she does not recognise, barks and is eager to fight, so he barked[2] inwardly, indignant at the evil deeds.

This simile, narrated by the poet directly to the external audience, is located at the point in the narrative when Odysseus is lying awake upon his makeshift bed in the portico brooding about the suitors.[3] This is the first of a pair of similes. The simile under discussion reveals Odysseus' state of mind on his first night in his own house for twenty years.[4] His anger rises when he hears the noisy maids, allies of the suitors.

The main function of the simile is to emphasise Odysseus' emotions. This is indicated by the repetition of the word ὐλάκτει (13) before the simile and in the resumptive clause (16) to convey Odysseus' metaphorical 'barking' in his heart.[5] The word ὐλάει (15) in the simile vehicle conveys the literal barking of the bitch.

[2] The word 'growled' seems a more natural English word and this is found in some translations.

[3] For a survey of sleep and sleeplessness in the *Odyssey*, see Montiglio 2016: 41–106. She concludes (at 255) that in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* sleepless heroes (with the exception of Achilles) ponder, while sleepless heroines 'long for their husbands'.

[4] This is one of thirteen occasions in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus must work through a dilemma: see list in Heatherington 1976: 232. Heatherington (at 231) makes the amusing but accurate observation that, by contrast to the *Odyssey*, 'the *Iliad*'s heroes generally coped with hostility by hitting it'.

[5] Gurd (2016: 3) notes the auditory aspect of this metaphor and simile. It is the barking that conveys the emotions of Odysseus and the bitch in the simile image; similarly, Penelope, in her comparison of herself to Aëdon, draws upon the auditory element of the nightingale's song to convey her state of mind. See Rose (1979) for an examination of the barking metaphor.

This simile explains Odysseus' emotional state.[6] His feelings of anger towards the suitors, who threaten the household from outside, are increased and momentarily diverted by the cheerful noises of the disloyal maids, who threaten his family and his household from within.[7] The extent of their misbehaviour is emphasised by the placement of the words κακὰ ἔργα (16) at the end of the resumptive clause.

This simile is in some respects a 'reverse' simile, in that the gender roles are reversed.[8] Odysseus' reconceptualisation as a bitch with pups transforms him from a stranger to the parent protecting his family from outsiders. The family's vulnerability is suggested by the use of ἀμαλῇσι (14) to underscore the puppies' weakness.

One reason for the poet's choice of dogs for the simile image may have been the widespread but liminal position of dogs in ancient Greek society. As noted elsewhere in this thesis, dogs were viewed as neither totally tame nor totally wild.[9] The liminal nature of the dog echoes Odysseus-Aithon's current position as beggar in the household: he is neither a household member nor is he an honoured guest. His liminal role is suggested by the physical location of his bed in the portico.

The simile vehicle fills a lexical gap by shedding light upon Odysseus' feelings of parental responsibility towards his threatened family and his eagerness to fight to protect his family at the

[6] Morrison 2005: 76; Privitera 2018: 36.

[7] Russo (1992: 108) suggests that there may be an element of sexual jealousy in Odysseus' reaction. Rutherford (1992: 203) disagrees. I agree with Rutherford: the poet's deployment of the parent/child motif of the simile imagery refutes this argument.

[8] Turkeltaub (2015: 296) refers to this simile as a 'reverse-sex animal simile'. H. Foley (1978) does not mention this simile in her examination of reverse similes. The comparison of a male character to a female animal is not unique in Homer—Achilles compares himself to a mother bird at *Iliad* 9.325.

[9] See comments on the simile at 14.21.

right time.[10] The choice of gender for the dog is significant, in that it emphasises Odysseus' protective response.[11] The metaphorical use of ὑλάκτει (16) for Odysseus indicates that, despite his great anger, he is concealing his feelings in order to protect his identity for the moment, unlike the bitch of the simile who makes her hostility evident.[12]

This reverse gender, parent/child simile is very memorable. This dog simile is one of several instances of dogs occurring in the *Odyssey*. These reflect the various roles of dogs domesticated or, at least, living in proximity to humans that would have been encountered regularly by the external audience. Therefore, the image would have been readily understood by the audience.

The simile echoes the theme of family reunion throughout the *Odyssey*. Levaniouk suggests that this simile underlines the theme of vengeance through the choice of an animal well-known for its fierce protection of its pups.[13] This simile is complemented by the following simile, which illustrates Odysseus' physical agitation.

[10] De Jong (2001: 486) equates the bitch to Odysseus, arguing that he is motivated to protect those who are dear to him. Ready (2011: 245 n96) disagrees with the interpretation that the man in the simile image corresponds to the suitors. Rutherford (1992: 205) views the maids as more likely to correspond with the man. Dimock (1989: 264) holds a similar view, that Odysseus wishes to kill the maids. I do not see a need for a point for point equivalence between all aspects of the image and the main narrative and I see no reason not to view the man as representing the threat posed by both the suitors and the maids. W. Beck (1991: 164) interprets the simile differently, equating the pups to the maids and the man to the suitors. This interpretation ignores Odysseus' deliberations about whether to kill the maids immediately (20.10–13). Moreover, there is no reason for Odysseus to feel protective towards the maids who have betrayed his wife and his household by aligning themselves with the suitors.

[11] Levaniouk 2011: 44.

[12] Lawrence (2002: 10–11), in his examination of deliberation in Homer, refers to this passage as 'the *locus classicus* of self-control'. See also Pucci (1987: 71–75) for a discussion of Odysseus' deliberations in this and other scenes. See also Barnouw 2004. As Goldhill (1988: 16–17) notes, Odysseus will control his emotions by recalling his self-control when the Cyclops killed his men, deaths he compared to the killing of puppies (9.289).

[13] Levaniouk 2011: 44. See also Rose 1979: 227. See Privitera (2018: 42–43) for discussion of this passage in terms of human and non-human threat displays.

20.25

ὣς ἔφατ’, ἐν στήθεσσι καθαπτόμενος φίλον ἦτορ·
τῷ δὲ μάλ’ ἐν πείσῃ κραδίη μένε τετληυῖα
νωλεμέως· ἀτὰρ αὐτὸς ἐλίσσετο ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.
ὡς δ’ ὅτε γαστέρ’ ἀνὴρ πολέος πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο,
ἐμπλείην κνίσης τε καὶ αἵματος, ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα
αἰόλλῃ, μάλα δ’ ὦκα λιλαίεται ὀπτηθῆναι,
ὣς ἄρ’ ὅ γ’ ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ἐλίσσετο, μερμηρίζων
ὅππως δὴ μνηστῆρσιν ἀναιδέσι χεῖρας ἐφήσει
μοῦνος ἐὼν πολέσι.

So he spoke, addressing his own heart in his chest. And his heart, suffering within, unceasingly remained submissive. But he himself turned over this way and that just as when a man over the blaze of a big fire rapidly turns a paunch full of fat and blood this way and that, and he longs for it be quickly roasted, so indeed he turned over this way and that, pondering as to how in time he would lay his hands upon the shameless suitors, being alone against many.

This simile is separated by only a few lines from the simile at 20.14. That earlier simile explains Odysseus’ mental state as he struggles to suppress his anger at the suitors’ and the maids’ treachery. He then chides his heart, reminding himself that he endured much more in the Cyclops’ cave (18–21).

The simile under discussion comprises the second of the pair. It is narrated by the poet directly to the external audience.[14] Lines 22–24 affirm that Odysseus has managed to get his emotions under control, but this simile demonstrates his physical unrest and eagerness for revenge as he considers his next move.[15] His restlessness is illustrated by the repetition of ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα (24; 26; 28). The rhythm of this phrase suggests movement.[16] The action of turning is conveyed by the use of

[14] De Jong (2001: 486) notes the embedded focalisation from Odysseus’ point of view in the language of this passage, indicated by the poet’s use of value-laden language such as ἀναιδέσι (29) to describe the suitors.
[15] Lateiner (1995: 87–88) comments that Odysseus’ movement is ‘a leakage of anxiety permitted in his imagined isolation’, an example of Odysseus’ ‘need for kinetic expression’. Morrison (2005: 77) refers to Odysseus’ movement as ‘the outer action [serving] as a guide to Odysseus’ emotional distress …’.
[16] Privitera 2018: 37.

ἐλίσσετο in the introductory line (24) and repeated in the resumptive clause (28); both occurrences are adjacent to the phrase ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.

The final part line of the resumptive clause (30) points to why Odysseus is so unsettled about his chances of revenge. He is alone against the many suitors (μοῦνος 30).[17] His situation as one against many is reflected in the placement of μοῦνος ἐὼν adjacent to πολέσι.

The cooking of the paunch explains Odysseus' physical state. Like the paunch being turned on a spit,[18] and the man cooking the paunch, he is constantly in motion.[19] The language of the simile vehicle suggests the inner fire for revenge driving Odysseus.[20] The audience may be reminded of his *alias*, Aithon, by the phrase πολέος πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο in the simile vehicle (25). The great amount of fire suggests that Odysseus' own inner fire will be sufficient to defeat the suitors.

The simile subject matter—a man cooking a paunch—is unique and memorable.[21] It has been considered to be 'uncourtly, even uncouth' by past commentators.[22] Some commentators have suggested that the poet's choice of food and reference to the man's stomach is meant to be ironic given Odysseus' own comments at various points in the narrative about the necessity of food.[23] This view ignores the significant role of food and feasting in the *Odyssey*. Moreover, the suitors' bad

[17] Kahane (2007: 123) comments that the 'verse-initial *mounos* presents us with the hero at his weakest, at a moment when he is least like the *oios* hero'.

[18] Stanford (1996b: 342) clarifies that the meat is cooked by turning it on a spit. This method of cooking reflects that in the main narrative in Homer—for example, Patroklos roasts meat in the *Iliad* (*Iliad* 9.209–217). Boiling and roasting were common cooking methods in Greco-Roman times: Chandezon 2015: 141–143.

[19] The image of the simile has caused concern to commentators because Odysseus could be viewed as both the hungry man doing the turning, and therefore eager for revenge, and as the paunch itself, being turned over and over. See Rutherford 1992: 206–207.

[20] Levaniouk 2011: 47; de Jong 2001: 486. See also Privitera 2018: 36.

[21] There are no other cooking similes in the *Odyssey*. There is, however, a cooking simile at *Iliad* 21.365.

[22] Stanford (1996b: 342) cites the views of 'literary snobs'. Coffey (1955: 27) views this simile as 'unpoetic'. See also Shorey 1922: 245.

[23] See, for example, 7.216, 15.344, 17.286, and 17.473. Odysseus' appreciation of the necessity of food is also illustrated in the *Iliad*—he insists that the army needs to be fed before battle (*Iliad* 19.154–172): Clay 1999: 366.

behaviour stems from their abuse of Penelope's hospitality.[24] In view of the important role of food in the story, it is not surprising that the poet draws upon it as subject matter for a simile.[25]

With its unusual subject-matter, the simile draws upon one of the most basic human physiological needs; it would be understood by every hungry listener.[26] It is noteworthy that the food of the simile is not that of heroes but is more indicative of a common person's diet.[27]

The simile causes the external audience to pause and observe Odysseus as he lies sleepless and restless alone in bed. Without this simile Odysseus' agitation might be quickly passed over. The simile makes us notice and remember his physical discomfort and thus intensifies his feelings of stress and anxiety. Together, this and the earlier simile at 20.14 build a compelling picture of a very mortal man, alone with his worries.[28] This realistic, psychological portrayal of a man makes this a very memorable moment. The audience, will, however, soon be reminded of Odysseus' exceptional standing when Athene returns to assist him.

[24] Behaviour towards food contributes towards defining people's characters in the *Odyssey*—for example, Nausicaa and her family are generous in their hospitality towards Odysseus, and Eumaios welcomes him with a good meal. Some characters, including the Cyclops, invert the rules of hospitality by consuming their guests. Odysseus' companions lose their lives because of their food choices. As Lateiner (1995: 222) comments, 'eating is a life and death matter' in Homer. It is a most intimate act of the family and community'. See also Davies 1997.

[25] See Bakker (2013: 135–156) for an examination of the importance of the *gastēr* in the *Odyssey*. Hitch (2018: 43–44) comments that 'the threat of starvation is a large focus of the *Odyssey*'. See also Pucci 1987: 173–187.

[26] Segal (1962: 26–27) notes that the importance of food ('the needs of the belly') in the second half of the *Odyssey* represents Odysseus' rejection of Kalypso's offer of immortality.

[27] See Chandezon (2015: 141–142) for a discussion of the cuts of meat consumed by Greeks and Romans. There was a preference for fatty meats.

[28] See Kahane (2007: 122–123) for a discussion of the progression of Odysseus' deliberations. See also Saïd 2011b: 62–63.

Book 21

Penelope retrieves Odysseus' bow from the storeroom and announces the bow contest to the suitors. Some of the suitors unsuccessfully attempt to string the bow. Meanwhile, outside, Odysseus reveals his identity to Eumaios and Philoitios then gives them instructions to trap the suitors in the hall. After Penelope orders that the beggar be allowed to attempt the challenge, Odysseus-Aithon strings the bow and shoots through the axe heads.[29]

I shall not examine three of the five similes in Book 21. Two similes (21.14 and 21.37) are descriptions of Iphitos, the previous owner of the bow, as a man resembling the gods.[30] The third simile compares the groaning of the storeroom door as it is opened to the bellowing of a bull as it grazes in the meadow (21.48).[31] All similes in this book are narrated directly to the external audience by the poet.

[29] See Ready (2014) for an examination of the end of Book 21 as an example of ATU folktale 974.

[30] These two identical similes are located in the external narrator's analepsis explaining how Odysseus acquired his bow. C. Moulton (1977: 31 n23) dismisses these similes as 'formulaic and not particularly distinctive'. Scott (1974: 40) regards them as similes that can make very minor characters momentarily larger. Ready (2011: 32 n17), despite regarding the similes as formulaic, views them as significant in that they 'stress this important weapon's illustrious pedigree'. See also Russo 2004: 98.

[31] Penelope opens the storeroom door to retrieve Odysseus' bow, which Odysseus had left behind when he went to Troy (21.38–41). Stanford (1996b: 359) and Fernández-Galiano (1992: 153) view the simile's function as illustrating the sound of the opening of a door long unused. Scott (1974: 49) emphasises the importance of the bow as proof of Odysseus' identity and suggests that the simile marks out the significance of the moment as the door is opened. Anhalt (1997) argues that the simile has ominous connotations of sacrifice, foreshadowing the death of the suitors and evoking Odysseus' eventual sacrifice to Poseidon. Austin (2010: 60) views the groan as expressing 'Penelope's whole being at this awful moment' but … also Odysseus's groan, the sound of an animal about to be let loose to go on its rampage'. Vergados (2009: 18) observes that this simile and the simile at 21.411 are part of 'a series of acoustic omens' in the *Odyssey*.

21.406

ὣς ἄρ’ ἔφαν μνηστῆρες· ἀτὰρ πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,
αὐτίκ’ ἐπεὶ μέγα τόξον ἐβάστασε καὶ ἴδε πάντη, 405
ὡς ὅτ’ ἀνὴρ φόρμιγγος ἐπιστάμενος καὶ ἀοιδῆς
ῥηϊδίως ἐτάνυσσε νέῳ περὶ κόλλοπι χορδήν,
ἄψας ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐϋστρεφὲς ἔντερον οἰός,
ὣς ἄρ’ ἄτερ σπουδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.

So spoke the suitors. But once he had lifted the great bow, Odysseus of many devices examined it from every angle. Just as when a man skilled in the lyre and in song easily stretches the string around a new peg, fastening at both ends the twisted piece of gut. Just so, without haste, Odysseus strung the great bow.

Odysseus, still disguised as Aithon, has been holding his old bow, checking it for damage. Despite the suitors’ objections, Penelope has consented to the beggar attempting the archery challenge, promising him a new set of clothes if he succeeds in stringing the bow. It is the first of a pair of similes narrated by the external poet that illustrate Odysseus’ priming of the bow.

The simile explains Odysseus-Aithon’s skill stringing the bow.[32] His reconceptualisation as a bard preparing his lyre for a performance fills a lexical gap, communicating his thorough, expert handling of the bow. The image of a skilled bard would have been familiar to Homer’s audience. The simile recalls two earlier compliments regarding Odysseus’ bard-like verbal skills, the first from King Alkinoos (11.368), and the second from Eumaios (17.518).[33] Odysseus’ archery skills have not been completely ignored earlier in the narrative—he alluded to his archery skills during the Phaeacians’ games (8.215–218) and drew upon the image of setting the lid upon a quiver to explain the ease with which the Cyclops had moved his doorstone back into position (9.314). Here we finally see

[32] The simile’s main function is to illustrate Odysseus-Aithon’s ease in stringing the bow: Stanford 1996b: 369; de Jong 2001: 521.

[33] The comparison of Odysseus’ technical skill with the bow to that of a bard stringing a lyre has been much remarked upon, although scholars differ as to its significance. For example, de Jong (2001: 522) states that ‘the narrator subtly suggests his own importance: “where would Odysseus’ glory be, if there were no singers to immortalize it?”’. See also Fernández-Galiano 1992: 200. Ready (2010: 152) comments that scholars have overlooked the fact that the bard is repairing his lyre. He argues (at 157) that the simile points to Odysseus ‘repairing’ his household.

Odysseus' archery skills on display as he prepares for battle.[34] There is no place for Odysseus' silver-tongued words now.[35]

The simile slows the narrative through the emphasis on the image of Odysseus' methodical care looking over the bow and the poet's emphasis on his lack of haste (ἄτερ σπουδῆς 409) in stringing it. The simile marks out this highly charged and important moment.[36]

[34] Nieto Hernández (2008: 51) notes the polarity of the comparison—the bow brings death but the lyre can create immortality.

[35] As C. Moulton (1977:152) observes, 'in the *Odyssey*, the man of words is a military hero, when he must be'.

[36] C. Moulton 1977: 151; Scott 1974: 49; Coffey 1957: 124.

21.411

δεξιτερῇ ἄρα χειρὶ λαβὼν πειρήσατο νευρῆς· 410
ἡ δ’ ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄεισε, χελιδόνι εἰκέλη αὐδήν.

And taking it in his right hand, he tried the bow string, which sang beautifully like a swallow.

This simile follows Odysseus’ stringing of the bow and is the second in the pair of similes illustrating Odysseus’ inspection and stringing of his bow.[37] This auditory simile illustrates the sound made by the bow string when Odysseus tests its tension.[38] The reconceptualisation of the sound of the string as a swallow’s song has been interpreted in a range of ways.[39] The simile explains that the string is well tensioned, and ready for use.

The inclusion of this second simile illustrating Odysseus’ preparation of the bow further slows the narrative, thereby increasing the suspense and highlighting the moment.[40]

[37] See Ready (2010) for an examination of the importance of the bow.
[38] Dimock (1989: 293) comments that the phrase χελιδόνι εἰκέλη αὐδήν resembles ‘the feeling of the sound, of plucking an extremely tight string’. Boraston (1911: 244) states that the sound is ‘the single, clear, airdividing ‘*wheet*!’ of the swallow’. DeSmidt (2006: 287) points out that the sound indicates that the bow had not been weakened during its storage.
[39] P. Friedrich (1997: 313) suggests three alternative meanings—the twittering sound of the swallow, or possibly the liquid song of some species or the ‘swallow songs’ of later lyric poets. C. Moulton (1977: 139) links the reference to the swallow in this simile to Athene’s divine support for Odysseus’ successful homecoming and vengeance because she transforms into a swallow to watch the battle (22.240). See also Rood 2006: 4. The swallow has been viewed as representing the coming of spring and return: Austin 1975: 247; Losada 1985: 33–34; de Jong 2001: 522; Mynott 2018: 14. Cf. Fernández-Galliano 1992: 202. Borthwick (1988: 17) argues that the swallow is ‘emblematic of domestic bliss and fidelity’ in a range of literatures from different periods. See also P. Friedrich 1997: 314. De Jong (2001: 522) views the simile image as a grim contrast to forthcoming violence caused by the bow. See also Scodel 1998: 172. Cf. Segal (1988: 140), who views the bow’s beautiful sound as implying the restoration of order to Ithaca. Bakker (2013: 47) views the bow’s twanging as the song accompanying the perverted feast at which the suitors are murdered. See Ready (2014) for an examination of the end of Book 21 as an example of ATU folktale 974.
[40] Rutherford 1985: 142.

Book 22

Book 22 is often referred to as the battle book of the *Odyssey*.[41] Odysseus shoots Antinoos dead, astounding the other suitors, and then reveals his identity. Odysseus, Telemachos, Eumaios and Philoitios battle against the suitors, who manage to arm themselves with weapons. Athene assists Odysseus by diverting the suitors' spears. With Athene's assistance, all the suitors are slain. Telemachos hangs the disloyal maids and Odysseus is welcomed home by his other, loyal servants.

There are six similes in this book. I shall not discuss the simile/transformation at 22.240 when Athene sits on the roof beam resembling a swallow.[42]

[41] Purves (2010b: 343) refers to it as 'the *Odyssey*'s domestic battle book'.

[42] Athene appears in the form of Mentor at Odysseus' house and is urged first by Odysseus and then the suitors to assist in defeating the enemy (22.208–223). Athene rebukes Odysseus for being cowardly and flies up to the rafter of the hall, sitting there. It is unclear whether this is a simile or a transformation: Fernández-Galiano 1992: 262; Stanford 1996b: 382. Athene's likeness/transformation has been interpreted as linked to the simile at 21.411. It is not surprising that Athene should take the form or likeness of a swallow; as noted by C. Moulton (1977: 138), the gods frequently use birds as disguises. P. Friedrich (1997: 314) suggests that she flies up in the form of a swallow but then changes back to her divine form holding her aegis. Saïd (2011b: 321–322) suggests this is more likely to be a simile because of the suitors' lack of reaction.

22.299

δὴ τότ’ Ἀθηναίη φθισίμβροτον αἰγίδ’ ἀνέσχεν
ὑψόθεν ἐξ ὀροφῆς· τῶν δὲ φρένες ἐπτοίηθεν.
οἱ δ’ ἐφέβοντο κατὰ μέγαρον βόες ὡς ἀγελαῖαι·
τὰς μέν τ’ αἰόλος οἶστρος ἐφορμηθεὶς ἐδόνησεν 300
ὥρῃ ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τ’ ἤματα μακρὰ πέλονται.

At that point Athene held up the man-slaying aegis on high from the roof. And their minds were terrified. And they fled through the hall like cows in a herd that the darting gadfly attacks and drives about in spring time when the long days come.

This simile, the first of two successive similes, is located during the battle between Odysseus and his allies against the suitors. Odysseus has killed several of the suitors but many remain fighting. After assisting Odysseus by misdirecting the suitors’ spears, Athene holds up her aegis.

The introduction to the simile illustrates the suitors’ terror upon seeing the aegis (299).[43] The simile, narrated by the external narrator to the external audience, provides a bird’s eye view of the suitors’ movement, a view that is akin to Athene’s view from her perch.

The simile explains the suitors’ physical manifestation of their terror on seeing Athene’s aegis—dissolving their united opposition and causing them to flee haphazardly in all directions.[44] Up to this point they have been united and aggressive in their battle against Odysseus. The simile image fills the lexical gap in the narrative, neatly illustrating their behaviour.

The poet’s reconceptualisation of the suitors as a herd of cows is apt. It suggests the suitors’ earlier behaviour in Odysseus’ house. Like a herd of grazing cows, they had idled together, eating and

[43] See Deacy (2009) for an examination of the colour and luminosity of Athene’s aegis. In the *Iliad* Apollo’s aegis produces a similar reaction in the Achaean army (*Iliad* 15.323–326). See Saïd (2011a: 354–355) for an examination of the parallels between these similes.

[44] Ready (2011: 271) quotes Murnaghan’s comment that the suitors are subject to ‘wild mania that contrasts with the purposeful onslaught of her [Athena’s] favorites’. See also de Jong 2001: 536. Lateiner (1995: 112) observes that ‘the suitors’ undisciplined scattering exhibits a common group-fear reflex’.

drinking at leisure, with little need for exertion. The anonymity of the herd reflects the fact that the suitors are mostly depicted as a group. The poet emphasises the group of cattle by his placement of ἀγελαῖαι (299) in the emphatic final position of the line.

The choice of cows as comparand in the simile has sinister connotations. Agamemnon is twice compared to an ox killed at its manger.[45] Odysseus' companions' slaughter of and feasting on the cattle of Helios led to their deaths. The suitors themselves have slaughtered some of Odysseus' cattle. Therefore, the suitors' reconceptualisation as a herd of cows suggests a negative outcome for them.[46] The simile does not directly compare Athene to a gadfly but the choice of attacking insect reminds us of Athene's unseen power.[47] This is one of several similes in Homer featuring insects.[48]

The simile's bucolic image would have been familiar to Homeric audiences. Its authenticity is enhanced by the inclusion of the time of year when flies are likely to pester livestock (301).[49] This element links the simile to the reference to Athene like/transforming into a swallow (22.240), a bird which is associated with spring.[50]

This and the successive simile at 22.302 mark the important turning points of the battle.[51] The next simile shifts the focus to the actions of Odysseus and his men.

[45] As C. Moulton (1977: 141) notes, the two similes illustrating Agamemnon's murder are closely linked to the theme of Odysseus' *nostos*.
[46] More generally, Scott (2009: 177) notes that weak warriors are often compared to farm animals.
[47] Gadflies bite large animals and humans to release blood for consumption and their strong bite can cause animals to bolt: Kitchell 2014: 91. Levaniouk (2011: 129) notes a connection between the gadfly and Dionysus 'and is so common a metaphor for frenzy that the word itself acquired the meaning 'madness'.
[48] Insects may be a traditional subject for armies in similes—in the *Iliad* troops of the Achaean army in Book 2 are compared to tribes of bees (*Iliad* 2.87). Examples of insect similes where flies attack men are at *Iliad* 12.167–70 and *Iliad* 16.259. See Ready (2018a: 215–216) for a survey of insect similes in Homer.
[49] Stanford (1996b: 383) comments that 'the sight of terrified cattle running in panic from [the gadfly's] darting attack is a familiar feature of every countryside from Greece to Ireland'.
[50] Austin (1975: 250) comments that 'winter in Ithaka is at an end'.
[51] C. Moulton 1977: 137.

22.302

οἱ δ’ ὥς τ’ αἰγυπιοὶ γαμψώνυχες ἀγκυλοχεῖλαι,
ἐξ ὀρέων ἐλθόντες ἐπ’ ὀρνίθεσσι θόρωσι·
ταὶ μέν τ’ ἐν πεδίῳ νέφεα πτώσσουσαι ἵενται,
οἱ δέ τε τὰς ὀλέκουσιν ἐπάλμενοι, οὐδέ τις ἀλκὴ
γίγνεται οὐδὲ φυγή· χαίρουσι δέ τ’ ἀνέρες ἄγρῃ·
ὣς ἄρα τοὶ μνηστῆρας ἐπεσσύμενοi κατὰ δῶμα
τύπτον ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὤρνυτ’ ἀεικὴς
κράτων τυπτομένων, δάπεδον δ’ ἅπαν αἵματι θῦε.

And they [attacked], like eagles with crooked talons and hooked beaks that come out of the mountains and dart upon the birds which fly low beneath the clouds and speed over the plain, and they [the eagles] spring upon them and kill them without any defence or escape, and men rejoice in the chase,[52] just so did they set upon the suitors and strike them throughout the house. And horrifying groaning rose from them as their heads were struck, and the whole floor ran with blood.

This simile immediately follows the earlier simile that compares the panicking suitors to a herd of cows trying to escape a gadfly (22.299). The simile under discussion shifts the narrative focus from the suitors’ actions to those of Odysseus and his men. The simile is narrated by the poet to the external audience. This simile illustrates the killing of most of the suitors. Odysseus and his men have already killed several suitors but many more remain alive.

The subject matter of the simile under discussion is one of a group of similes in Homer that depict birds of prey attacking other birds or animals to illustrate attacking warriors.[53] The simile explains how Odysseus and his supporters successfully kill the suitors despite the suitors’ attempts to flee.[54]

[52] Scholars have suggested a range of scenarios for the scene described in the simile; some involve trained birds chasing smaller birds into nets or other traps set by hunters. These scenarios, which go beyond the language of the simile, seem to be inspired by the poet’s inclusion of anonymous human onlookers in the simile image. See Fernández-Galiano 1992: 272–274. It is very unlikely that the man of the image is a falconer; there is little evidence of falconry in Europe before about AD 400: Mynott 2018: 152–155.

[53] Scott 1974: 35. Similar examples include *Iliad* 13.62; *Iliad* 13.531; *Iliad* 15.690; *Iliad* 16.582; *Iliad* 17.460; *Iliad* 17.755; *Iliad* 22.139; *Iliad* 22.308; and 24.538 when Odysseus prepares to attack the suitors’ relatives and allies. See Muellner 1990. As noted by Barringer (2001: 8), ‘hunting is a metaphor for warfare’.

[54] Ready 2018a: 209.

The reconceptualisation of Odysseus and his men as birds of prey, equipped with lethal beaks and talons, implies that they are the stronger force (despite being fewer in number).[55] The poet's choice of raptors to illustrate Odysseus' revenge recalls earlier omens of Odysseus' victory, Penelope's dream of the eagle killing the geese, and the simile illustrating Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion (16.216).[56]

The suitors' reconceptualisation as smaller birds, unable to defend themselves or escape, efficiently communicates their vulnerability.[57] The positioning of the eagles higher than their victims complements the image of the preceding simile depicting the suitors as frightened cattle. The reference to the joyful men shifts the focus from a panoramic view to that of the onlookers and encourages the external audience to delight in the victory.[58] The simile fills a lexical gap in the narrative, avoiding the need to describe the attack in detail.

The poet is rather sly. His deployment of the birds of prey, high up in the sky, looking down upon the other birds, makes the external audience forget that Odysseus and his supporters are actually on the same level as the suitors and do not have the physical advantages of the raptors. The reference to eagles from places far away and high up suggests a positive connection to the gods, a connection which we have already seen most recently when Athene frightened the suitors.

[55] For my translation I have selected 'eagles' for the translation of αἰγυπιοὶ because vultures are less likely to kill prey: see van Dooren 2011: 23. Cunliffe (2012: 10) gives both 'vulture' and 'eagle' as possible meanings. See also Arnott 2007: 6–7.
[56] Rozokoki (2001: 2) observes that 'the image of birds of prey who hound and annihilate frightened birds appears as a formula for the suitors' destruction'. Rood (2006: 4–8) argues that most of the birds in similes signal 'the structure of revenge'. See also Anhalt 1995: 283. Saïd (2011a: 356–357) views this simile as linking back to the grieving vultures of 16.216 and looking forward to the simile at 24.538.
[57] This simile is similar to that at *Iliad* 22.139 where Achilles' attack on Hector is compared to a hawk swooping on a fluttering dove.
[58] An observing, generic man is often found in similes: Stanford 1996b: 384. De Jong (2001: 537) suggests three possibilities for the reference to the observers—they may represent Odysseus and his men, delighted at the suitors' deaths, or Athene's delight, or they may represent the audience.

The simile conveys the speed and inevitability of the eagles' killing, and thus Odysseus' success. The descriptions of the prey as vulnerable, without defence or escape (305–306), make the outcome of the attack certain. In this short phrase the poet generates some pathos for the situation of those birds and for the suitors. The simile is not simply decorative; it is memorable and marks out the deaths of a group of otherwise anonymous men.

The simile image draws upon the natural world for understanding. An ancient audience would be acquainted with animal competition within the animal hierarchy, and with the soaring flight of hunting raptors.[59] The image diverts us from the implausibility of a battle where four men slaughter over 100 men. Yet the poet makes the audience wince when he returns to the results of the slaughter, noting the striking of the suitors by the repetition of τύπτον (308)/τυπτομένων (309) and through his reference to all the flowing blood (309).

The simile marks the highpoint of Book 22 for Odysseus—his revenge upon the suitors.[60] Odysseus is transformed into the victor, a role that is emphasised in the following narrative when he decides the fates of three suppliants.

[59] See Bildstein (2017: 137–149) for a survey of raptors' hunting techniques, including their use of soaring flight and high-speed pursuit and swooping. Raptors have very keen eyesight: Bildstein 2017: 68–71.

[60] Stanton (1984: 26) observes that in Homer 'revenge was a means of reciprocal justice dependent on fair measure and at its best it punished the aggressor, restored honour, and maintained social balance'.

22.384

πάπτηνεν δ’ Ὀδυσεὺς καθ’ ἑὸν δόμον, εἴ τις ἔτ’ ἀνδρῶν
ζωὸς ὑποκλοπέοιτο, ἀλύσκων κῆρα μέλαιναν.
τοὺς δὲ ἴδεν μάλα πάντας ἐν αἵματι καὶ κονίῃσι
πεπτεῶτας πολλούς, ὥστ’ ἰχθύας, οὕς θ’ ἁλιῆες
κοῖλον ἐς αἰγιαλὸν πολιῆς ἔκτοσθε θαλάσσης
δικτύῳ ἐξέρυσαν πολυωπῷ· οἱ δέ τε πάντες
κύμαθ’ ἁλὸς ποθέοντες ἐπὶ ψαμάθοισι κέχυνται·
τῶν μέν τ’ Ἠέλιος φαέθων ἐξείλετο θυμόν·
ὣς τότ’ ἄρα μνηστῆρες ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοισι κέχυντο.

And Odysseus peered through his house in case any man still alive was concealing himself in a hiding place avoiding black death. But he saw every one of them fallen in the blood and dust in great heaps, just as fish that fishermen have hauled out of the grey sea with their meshed nets onto the curved seashore. And yearning for the waves of the sea they are all huddled together on the sand and the shining sun takes away life from them. Just so the suitors were heaped upon one another.

This simile is located at the point in the narrative when Odysseus and his team have killed all the suitors. It is narrated by the poet directly to the external audience. Odysseus checks around his house to ensure that no suitor has escaped (381–382).

This simile marks the true end of the battle against the suitors and allows us to dwell on Odysseus’ victory and share his first quiet, unchallenged moment since revealing his identity. The ending of the battle is marked by the poet’s focus on the immobile heap of bodies, which provides a strong contrast to the constant movement of the suitors illustrated by the two preceding similes.

A main function of the simile is to emphasise that all the suitors have been killed (πάντας 383/384) and now lie heaped up together (κέχυνται 387/κέχυντο 389).[61] The simile focalises the suitors from Odysseus’ point of view (τοὺς δὲ ἴδεν 383).[62]

[61] De Jong 2001: 540.

[62] De Jong 2001: 540; Sluiter 2014: 823. Cf. Lateiner (1995: 113), who interprets this simile as indicating that the poet has no respect for the dead suitors.

The poet's reconceptualisation of the suitors as fish is carefully chosen. As noted earlier in this thesis, fish have very low status in the Homeric epics.[63] As a foodstuff fish is shunned by heroes,[64] and would have been shunned by the suitors. In the *Iliad* fish are depicted as scavengers, eaters of human flesh.[65] The reconceptualisation of the suitors as a group of animals lacking individual identity is apt because they are mostly an unnamed, unheroic, indistinguishable group of young men keen to feast on something they should not—Odysseus' livelihood—and who sought to bring death to both Telemachos and Odysseus. This simile reminds us of Odysseus' shipmates who met a grisly fate after they consumed food that was not theirs to consume.[66]

The equivalence between the suitors' situation and that of the fish is highlighted by the fact that the fish have been caught in a net together and now lie helplessly dying together. The suitors too have been caught in a trap through Odysseus' planning.[67] This comparison underscores their hollow lives and unheroic deaths as they lie heaped on the floor.

The simile implicitly conceptualises Odysseus and his men as the fishermen who have caught the fish and therefore magnifies the differences between victor and victims.[68] The presence of the sun, ensuring that all the fish die, suggests the gods' support of Odysseus' slaughter.[69]

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[63] See 10.124. Yet as Sahrhage (1992: 44) notes, Homer displays familiarity with a range of fishing methods in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

[64] Berdowski 2008: 76.

[65] Combellack 1953: 259; Hopman 2012b: 62.

[66] See Sluiter (2014) for an examination of the thematic connections between Odysseus' shipmates and the suitors. Some of Odysseus' shipmates are killed when they are speared like fish by the Laestrygonians (10.124) and some are hooked like fish by Skylla (12.251).

[67] See Détienne (1978: 43–48) for a discussion of the link between *mētis* (especially that of Odysseus) and fishing techniques in Homer. See Kron (2014) for a survey of ancient fishing techniques, including netting.

[68] Ahl (1996: 255) comments that 'the suitors lying before [Odysseus] appear to be creatures of a different order, not fellow humans'.

[69] Sluiter 2014: 823. Austin (1975: 282) suggests an alternative comparison, equating Odysseus to the bright sun because of his *alias* 'Aithon'.

The simile presents another panoramic image. As with the previous two similes, the poet has selected an everyday scene to illustrate the battle events of the main narrative. Fishing was a widespread activity in ancient Greece practised in both inland and coastal waters so it would have been familiar to most people. The simile marks the end of the battle. The detailed image pauses the narrative, forcing us to appreciate the importance of this event.

By focussing on the gradual deaths of the fish, the simile fills the lexical gap of the main narrative by suggesting the last moments of any suitors who were not killed outright. The details of the suffering of so many fish as they lie on the beach longing for the sea creates pathos.[70] This simile of a mass fish kill reminds the listener that there has been a significant loss of life in Odysseus' battle against the suitors and yet underlines the fact that this has not been a heroic battle like those in the *Iliad*.

[70] Saïd 2011a: 359; Sluiter 2014: 823.

22.402

εὖρεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ κταμένοισι νέκυσσιν,
αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον ὥστε λέοντα,
ὅς ῥά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγραύλοιο·
πᾶν δ' ἄρα οἱ στῆθός τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν
αἱματόεντα πέλει, δεινὸς δ' εἰς ὦπα ἰδέσθαι·
ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς πεπάλακτο πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὕπερθεν.

There she found Odysseus amongst the slain bodies, spattered with blood and gore, like a lion that comes from having devoured an ox from the farm, and its breast and both its cheeks are blood red, its face terrible to behold. So Odysseus had been spattered, his feet and his hands above them.

After checking that the suitors are all dead, Odysseus then instructs Telemachos to summon his old nurse, Eurykleia (22.391–392). The simile explains Odysseus' physical appearance after the massacre.[71]

This simile is narrated by the external narrator but focalises Odysseus' appearance from Eurykleia's point of view through the introductory verb εὖρεν (401), and δεινὸς … ἰδέσθαι (405) in the simile vehicle.[72] The bloodied nature of his appearance is emphasised by the repetition of αἵματι (402)/αἱματόεντα (405), and of πεπαλαγμένον (402)/πεπάλακτο (406).[73] The latter pair of verbs have an onomatopoeic quality.

The reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a killer lion recollects Menelaos' wishful comparison of him to a lion killing fawns (4.335).[74] It may also remind the audience of the frequent usage of lion similes in the *Iliad* to illustrate heroes' combat in battle.[75] But the poet's emphasis on the resulting bloodiness and mess of the killing, rather than through a comparison of Odysseus to an attacking

[71] Scott 1974: 62.
[72] De Jong 2001: 541; Pache 2016: 13.
[73] De Jong 2001: 541.
[74] Magrath (1982: 209) views this simile as fulfilling Menelaos' prophecy.
[75] Scott (2009: 115) asserts that this is the only simile in Book 22 that illustrates Odysseus' strength 'in terms typical of a Homeric warrior'.

lion in the battle, differentiates this simile from the heroic attribute of most lion similes in the *Iliad*.[76] The revulsion of killing is subsequently confirmed by Odysseus when he checks Eurykleia's cries of joy over the suitors' deaths (22.411–412). The simile guides the audience's emotional reaction by underlining the bloody result of the conflict, rather than the *kleos* of victory.[77]

The suitors as the victims are implicitly reconceptualised as an ox, an unheroic farm animal. The image reminds the audience of the earlier simile at 22.299 when the suitors were compared to a herd of frightened cattle.

As noted earlier in this thesis, most ancient listeners would have been familiar with animals such as oxen, but not necessarily with lions. Nevertheless, the savagery of lions would be easily comprehensible from the simile image.

The image of the simile marks out a turning point in the narrative—Odysseus' resumption of his role as master of the household. This simile bookends Odysseus' return home. In his first encounter with mortals on Scheria he was likened to a savage lion (6.130), but his behaviour towards Nausicaa belied his appearance. Here, Odysseus' actions have matched that image but his civilised nature resumes as he reminds Eurykleia of the need to refrain from gloating and to respect the gods.

[76] As R. Friedrich (1981: 129) notes, the simile emphasises Odysseus' dreadful appearance rather than his victory. There is one similar lion simile in the *Iliad.* Automedon is compared to a lion that has eaten a bull (*Iliad* 17.542) after killing Aretos to avenge the killing of Patroklos.

[77] R. Friedrich (1981: 125) notes the ambiguity of the simile image, commenting that 'the *Odyssey* poet … seems to disparage the animal for its savagery'. See also Pache 2016: 13; Saïd 2011a: 362–363; Grethlein 2017: 131. Wilson (2002: 248) takes an even dimmer view of Odysseus' violence, commenting that his *biê* … against his own people assimilates him dangerously, and no less than Achilleus, to the realm of nondisplacement, nature and disorder'.

22.468

ὣς ἄρ’ ἔφη, καὶ πεῖσμα νεὸς κυανοπρῴροιο
κίονος ἐξάψας μεγάλης περίβαλλε θόλοιο,
ὑψόσ’ ἐπεντανύσας, μή τις ποσὶν οὖδας ἵκοιτο.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἂν ἢ κίχλαι τανυσίπτεροι ἠὲ πέλειαι
ἔρκει ἐνιπλήξωσι, τό θ’ ἑστήκῃ ἐνὶ θάμνῳ,
αὖλιν ἐσιέμεναι, στυγερὸς δ’ ὑπεδέξατο κοῖτος,
ὣς αἵ γ’ ἐξείης κεφαλὰς ἔχον, ἀμφὶ δὲ πάσαις
δειρῇσι βρόχοι ἦσαν, ὅπως οἴκτιστα θάνοιεν.
ἤσπαιρον δὲ πόδεσσι μίνυνθά περ οὔ τι μάλα δήν.

So he spoke and he fastened the cable of a dark-prowed ship to a large pillar and he threw it around the *tholos*, drawing it tightly high up so that none of them might reach the ground with her feet. Just as when long-winged thrushes or doves fall into a snare that has been placed in a thicket, as they speed towards a roosting-place but a hateful bed welcomes them, so the women’s heads were placed in a row, and round all their necks were nooses so to ensure that they would die piteously. And they struggled with their feet for a short time, but not for very long.

This simile occurs after the twelve disloyal serving women have removed the suitors’ bodies and cleaned the hall. Odysseus had instructed Telemachos to execute the women by striking them with a sword after completion of the cleaning. Telemachos disobeys his father’s instructions, choosing instead to kill them by hanging, a method of death that is especially associated with women.[78] He justifies this on the basis that the women had betrayed both his mother and him during Odysseus’ absence (22.462–464). This simile is located at the point in the narrative when he hangs them.

The simile is narrated by the external narrator. It is the final simile in Book 22 and it is the last scene in which the women appear.[79]

[78] Death by hanging carries an element of shame: Stanford 1996b: 389. Larson (1995: 141) comments that to the Greeks hanging was a ‘particularly feminine form of death’. See Fulkerson (2002) for an examination of Telemachos’ choice of execution.

[79] The poet does not specify what happens to the women’s bodies.

The simile touches on the theme of retribution in the *Odyssey*. Like the suitors who have betrayed Odysseus, the women have betrayed Penelope.[80]

A main function of the simile is to explain how the women are trapped and suspended with nooses around their neck, unable to escape a ghastly death.[81] The simile image does not illustrate their actual deaths; the main narrative describes the mechanism of their deaths in the resumptive clause. The women's final moments are indicated by the muscular responses of their feet (473). This movement indicates that the women do not suffer instantaneous death.[82]

Man is missing from the simile image but the reference to trapping by a snare (469) alludes to the presence of a human hunter. The obvious comparand in the main narrative is Telemachos, although Odysseus was the original instigator of their deaths. The trapped birds are innocent of any particular wrong-doing and the poet creates pathos for the women in his reconceptualisation of them as harmless small birds heading home.[83] This, of course, differs from the reality because the women have betrayed their own household. The specific reference to the birds' roosting place, their bed, reminds us that part of the women's betrayal is the fact that they slept with the suitors.[84]

[80] The unfaithful women also act as foils for faithful Penelope: Fulkerson 2002: 344. See also Joshel 1998: 5.
[81] Commentators note the lack of exact explication of the hanging process. For example, see Stanford 1996b: 389; Fernández-Galiano 1992: 302. Nevertheless, this imprecision does not detract from the narrative.
[82] See A. Howard (2016: 23–27) for a survey of the different methods of hanging. Not all methods are painless or instantaneous. Telemachos' method of hanging without a drop is clearly not the most humane method, as is manifested by their struggle. See also Cordner 2015: Chapter 11. Cf. Podlecki (1967: 14), who views the detail of the maids' moving feet as 'a touch of grisly humour'. In my view there is *nothing* humorous about this scene.
[83] Stanford 1996b: 389; Dimock 1989: 314.
[84] The bed recollects the story of Ares and Aphrodite who were captured together by Hephaistos who trapped them in bed with a net (8.266–366). The importance of the marital bed is also underlined in *Odyssey* 23 when Penelope uses it to trick Odysseus into confirming his identity.

For the simile under discussion the poet has chosen the species of bird with care—both thrushes and doves are associated with Aphrodite,[85] and are a fitting choice for the maids who have slept with the suitors.

The suffering of the birds in the simile under discussion makes the simile memorable and arouses our sympathy for the women. This aspect of pathos is underlined by the placement in the resumptive clause of the words ὅπως οἴκτιστα θάνοιεν in emphatic final position in line 472.[86]

The simile draws on the natural world, enabling easy understanding by the audience.[87] Not only does it help to explain the struggle of the women as they die, it emphasises their vulnerability through the choice as comparand of small birds not associated with violence or aggression.

This simile forms a pair with the earlier simile at 22.302 when Odysseus and his supporters were reconceptualised as eagles and the suitors as to other birds being hunted down. In the simile under discussion it is man who is killing the birds. The poet may be implicitly commenting on Telemachos' brutal (in our eyes) method of executing the women.[88]

This simile is the final simile of Book 22. Like most of the similes in Book 22, it is placed at an important juncture in Odysseus' homecoming—the revenge killing of a group of traitors.

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[85] Doves were seen as symbols of Aphrodite and there may have been erotic connotations associated with thrushes' song: P. Friedrich 1997: 315. Thrushes were known to line their nests with myrtle, a plant sacred to Aphrodite: Fulkerson 2002: 339.

[86] Saïd 2011a: 368.

[87] This scenario may have been more familiar to a wider audience than the hunting of large animals. Mynott (2018: 73) notes that in the ancient world fowling for sale and consumption was a common occupation in the countryside. Thrushes were commonly hunted: Mynott 2018: 80. See also P. Friedrich 1997: 315.

[88] Telemachos' choice of method of execution of the women may be meant to be ironic; virgins were sometimes depicted in literature hanging themselves to avoid unwanted intercourse: Budin 2015: 41. See also Larson 1995: 118. The simile may also remind the audience of Epikaste, mother of Oedipus, who hanged herself. Odysseus encounters her shade in Hades (11.271–281). Budin (2015: 42) notes that 'the ancient Greeks recognized a parallelism between the vagina and the throat, both culminating in a mouth (cervix) and lips (labia)'. See also Arthur-Katz (1989: 171) and more generally Cantarella (1985).

Book 23

Eurykleia joyfully breaks the news to Penelope that Odysseus has returned and killed the suitors but Penelope remains sceptical and wary even after he has bathed and been transformed in appearance by Athene. Penelope tricks Odysseus into proving his identity through his description of his construction of their bed. Penelope finally recognises Odysseus. Once in bed Odysseus tells Penelope about his experiences.

This book contains six similes. I shall discuss only the simile at 23.233. I do not discuss the simile in which Eurykleia compares Odysseus' bloody appearance to that of a lion (23.48).[89] I also omit the pair of similes which illustrate Athene's beautification of Odysseus (23.158; 23.159),[90] the simile where Odysseus is compared to the immortals in appearance after his beautification (23.163),[91] and the simile comparing the girth of the olive tree used to construct the marital bed to a pillar (23.191).[92]

[89] This simile, spoken by Eurykleia to Penelope, has been viewed by many as an interpolation: Stanford 1996b: 392; Heubeck 1992: 318. It is similar to the simile at 22.402: C. Moulton 1977: 140.

[90] These similes were also deployed at 6.231 and 6.232 to illustrate Odysseus' beautification by Athene on Scheria. Zeitlin (1995: 136) argues that the reference to Hephaistos links 'to his role in the stratagem of the bed'. De Jong (2001: 555) suggests the beautification may symbolise Odysseus' return to civilisation. Webster (1964: 236) comments that the repetition of the similes may make the audience recall Odysseus' previous beautification. As de Jong (2001: 555) notes, Penelope's response differs from Nausicaa's awakened interest in the stranger—Penelope remains unmoved and wary of Odysseus. In my view, the similes highlight the significant differences in their responses.

[91] This simile highlights Odysseus' splendid appearance after his bath and beautification.

[92] This simile, spoken by Odysseus to Penelope, is a simile of measurement. The reconceptualisation of the olive tree trunk as a pillar denotes the permanency of his household and his marriage. Penelope stands beside a pillar on numerous occasions during the story. See Brockliss (2019: 95–99) for a discussion of the link between trees and pillars, and stability and cosmic order. The olive, the tree of Athene, has been a motif for shelter at several points in the narrative.

23.233

ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑφ’ ἵμερον ὦρσε γόοιο·
κλαῖε δ’ ἔχων ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν.
ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἂν ἀσπάσιος γῆ νηχομένοισι φανήῃ,
ὧν τε Ποσειδάων εὐεργέα νῆ’ ἐνὶ πόντῳ
ῥαίσῃ, ἐπειγομένην ἀνέμῳ καὶ κύματι πηγῷ·
παῦροι δ’ ἐξέφυγον πολιῆς ἁλὸς ἤπειρόνδε
νηχόμενοι, πολλὴ δὲ περὶ χροΐ τέτροφεν ἅλμη,
ἀσπάσιοι δ’ ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες·
ὣς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροώσῃ,
δειρῆς δ’ οὔ πω πάμπαν ἀφίετο πήχεε λευκώ.

So she spoke, and within him a longing for lamentation arose even more. And he wept, holding his lovely wife (who was) devoted. Just as when land comes into view, welcome to the swimming men whose well-built ship Poseidon has wrecked in the sea, propelled by the wind and the strong swell, and few escape the grey seawater by swimming to the land, and much brine has encrusted their skin, and gladly they reach the shore of the land, having escaped from suffering; so was her husband welcome to her as she beheld him. And she did not release her white arms at all from his neck.

This simile is located immediately after Penelope finally acknowledges Odysseus’ identity. It is narrated by the poet to the external audience. Penelope’s speech explaining her reasons for mistrusting him, including being taken in by someone claiming to be him and fearing the adverse influence of the gods, moves Odysseus to tears (23.230).

An important function of the simile is to explain just how welcome Odysseus is to Penelope.[93] This is signposted through the repetition of ἀσπάσιος 232/ἀσπάσιοι 237/ἀσπαστὸς 238.[94] This term was also used to describe Odysseus’ delight when he spotted the coast of Scheria after his shipwreck (5.394–399).[95] The simile image emphasises the facts that the sailors have escaped danger (ἐξέφυγον 236/φυγόντες 238) and safely arrived on land (γῆ 232/γαίης 237).

[93] Doherty (1992: 174) comments that the emphasis on Penelope’s emotion suggests that there must have been women in the poet’s audience.
[94] C. Moulton 1977: 129; de Jong 2001: 559.
[95] See Taaffe (1990–1991), who argues that the use of this term at certain points in the story builds up associations that give this simile added resonance.

The reconceptualisation of Penelope as a shipwrecked sailor is surprising. The syntax of the passage, with the simile vehicle immediately following the statement that Odysseus was weeping (230), leads the listener to assume that the simile reconceptualises *Odysseus* as one of the men.[96] The detailed image of the shipwrecked men recollects Odysseus' struggle against the might of Poseidon and his arrival on Scheria.[97] The revelation in the tenor that the image illustrates Penelope, not her husband, comes as a jolt to the listener.[98]

Yet this simile is not unique in equating Penelope with Odysseus by way of simile subject matter. Like Odysseus, Penelope had earlier been compared to a lion (4.791), a comparison that is usually reserved for heroes.

As well as drawing upon the audience's more general knowledge of seafaring to understand the image, the simile draws directly upon Odysseus' earlier struggles to survive.[99] Through this lens Penelope is reconceptualised as a person who has endured just as much as her husband.[100] It is easy to forget that during Odysseus' long return journey his wife was suffering at home, in limbo about her future. The simile fills a lexical gap, explaining her endurance.[101] In addition, the similarity of the couple's distress while apart suggests their *homophrosynē*.[102]

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[96] De Jong 2001: 559.

[97] Heubeck 1992: 338; Webster 1964: 238. See Purves (2010a: 90–95) for an examination of possible links between the simile image and earlier events in the *Odyssey*.

[98] See D. Beck (2005a: 110–126) for a detailed examination of this scene.

[99] Some of those experiences were marked out by simile, for example, the simile at 5.394. That simile draws upon the image of family reunion to illustrate Odysseus' joy upon seeing land: R. Friedrich 1981: 135.

[100] De Jong 2001: 559; D. Beck 2005a: 121; H. Foley 1978: 7; Hardwick 1997: 328. Cf. Whittaker (1995: 41), who rejects any symbolic meaning in this and other reverse similes, asserting that any gender reversal 'is coincidental'. Ahl (1996: 270) notes that other household members have also weathered the storm with Penelope, like the several sailors in the simile image, unlike Odysseus, who was alone.

[101] As Montiglio (2016: 100) comments 'when [Penelope] recognizes him she also reaches the end of a *nostos*, though not physically but emotionally'.

[102] D. Beck (2005a: 121) observes that 'their shared ability to persevere even against such odds unites them and makes Odysseus' homecoming possible'. Morrison (2014: 25) succinctly comments 'these two belong together'. See also

This long, complex simile slows down the narrative and marks out the most important moment in the story.[103] Penelope regains her identity as Odysseus' wife and Odysseus achieves his own homecoming through Penelope's acceptance of him as her husband.[104]

The simile touches upon several themes and motifs in the *Odyssey* including those of recognition, reunion, *nostos*, interference of the gods, and the dangers of the sea.

In conclusion, the simile's focus on Penelope's situation bears out the extent of *her* suffering. The simile affirms the *homophrosynē* of Odysseus and Penelope, as shown by their respective fortitude during their separation, and their determination to be reunited.[105]

Bosworth 2015. See Kundmueller (2018: 61–64) on Penelope's restraint and similarity to Odysseus. See Bolmarcich (2001) for a discussion of *homophrosynē*. See Minchin (2019: 14–16) for an examination of emotional intelligence in this scene.

[103] Coffey 1957: 130.

[104] Minchin 2019: 16.

[105] Niles (1978: 59) comments that 'the *Odyssey* celebrates forbearance and mental excellence'. As Murnaghan (1995: 74) observes, their *homophrosynē* 'is experienced by the characters, but it is not articulated between them …'. See also Clayton 2004: 32; Dimock 1989: 321.

Book 24

The suitors' shades are led down to Hades by Hermes and encounter Agamemnon's shade. Meanwhile, Odysseus is reunited with his father, Laertes.[106] The suitors' relatives rally to attack Odysseus and Odysseus prepares to retaliate but is stopped by Athene on Zeus' command. The story concludes with a truce brokered by Athene.

There are four similes in this book. I shall not examine the simile comparing the noises made by the suitors' shades to those of bats (24.6).[107] nor the simile describing the robe woven by Penelope as having shone like the sun or the moon (24.148).[108] Nor shall I discuss the simile comparing Laertes to the immortal gods in appearance (24.371).[109]

[106] This important reunion is *not* marked out by a simile. See D. Beck (2005a: 83–91) for an examination of this episode.

[107] This auditory simile explains the shades' squeaking noises as they descend to Hades (τρίζουσαι 5/τρίζουσαι 7/τετριγυῖαι 9): Stanford 1996b: 411; Heath 2005: 391; A. Cook 1984: 49; de Jong 2001: 568. Cf. Russo (1992: 359), who asserts that the sound refers to the fluttering of the bats' wings. Bats are commonplace in the Mediterranean: Mackinnon 2014a: 169. This simile is a contrast to the only other bat simile in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus clings to a tree like a bat to escape death (12.433). The suitors' reconceptualisation as bats is appropriate because bats are associated with the dead: Giannakis 2000: 193.

[108] This simile is spoken by Amphimedon's shade to describe the robe woven by Penelope. It is a simile of measure or degree: Scott 1974: 22. Levaniouk (2011: 271) suggests that that the reference to both the sun and the moon represents a connection to wedding preparations. Clayton (2004: 47–48) argues that it represents marital harmony. In my view, neither of these interpretations is persuasive.

[109] Odysseus marvels at Laertes' improved appearance after his bath and enhancement by Athene. This simile is implicitly focalised by Odysseus. Murnaghan (1987: 30) suggests that Odysseus 'is, in a sense, recognizing his father'.

24.538

σμερδαλέον δ’ ἐβόησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλεὶς ὥς τ’ αἰετὸς ὑψιπετήεις.
καὶ τότε δὴ Κρονίδης ἀφίει ψολόεντα κεραυνόν,
κὰδ δ’ ἔπεσε πρόσθε γλαυκώπιδος ὀβριμοπάτρης. 540

Much enduring, illustrious Odysseus gave a fearsome shout and, drawing himself together, he swooped like a soaring eagle. And immediately the son of Kronos discharged a smoky thunderbolt, and it fell down in front of the bright-eyed daughter of the mighty sire.

This short simile is located very close to the end of Book 24 and is the final simile in the *Odyssey*. After hearing of the suitors’ slaughter, some of their relatives rally to attack Odysseus. Zeus indicates to Athene that enough bloodshed has taken place. Laertes kills Eupeithes. The suitors’ other relatives attack Odysseus and Telemachos, who are saved by Athene’s command to the relatives to cease their attack. The relatives fall to the ground but Odysseus prepares to attack.

The simile explains the manner in which Odysseus begins his attack upon the prostrate men. His reconceptualisation as an eagle conveys power and aggression,[110] and association with the gods.[111] The image recalls the earlier simile that illustrated Odysseus’ successful slaughter of most of the suitors (22.302). This association creates an expectation that Odysseus will succeed in killing their relatives. Therefore, it is a surprise when Zeus sends his thunderbolt down to Athene to stop the fight. This message counters the listeners’ expectations raised by the simile. Zeus’s rejection of Odysseus’ preparations for battle reminds us that Odysseus is only human. Odysseus has had the support of Athene from the start of the *Odyssey*, mostly unbeknownst to Odysseus but known to the external audience. But he is not an immortal. Zeus’ intervention puts Odysseus firmly in his place as a mortal subject to the rule of the gods.

[110] Ready (2019: 131), noting the use of the same simile vehicle to illustrate Hector’s attack of Achilles (*Iliad* 22.308), comments that the simile ‘makes clear the degree of marital fury possessing Odysseus’.
[111] The eagle is traditionally associated with Zeus: Levaniouk 2011: 234.

Comments on Similes in Books 20–24

Most of the important moments in these final books are accompanied by similes. On the eve of the battle we see Odysseus at his most human since arriving on Ithaca, overcome with the competing emotions of fear, uncertainty, and the desire for revenge. These emotions are skilfully illustrated with two similes. The progress of the battle is mapped out with other longer similes—the suitors' panic, Odysseus' attack, and the suitors' deaths.[112] A remarkable simile marks out Odysseus' most important reunion—his welcome by Penelope. The most prominent theme of the similes marking out these moments is that of revenge as Odysseus battles to regain his household and his family. As in earlier books, some short similes spotlight other less significant moments in the story.

[112] With regard to the similes in Book 22, Scott (2009: 114) comments that 'the poet has carefully placed his similes to enhance major moments of victory as Odysseus moves from being the lonely warrior in a room of hostile men to the returning king welcomed by his subjects'.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I comment on the similes in the *Odyssey* using as points of reference the list of functions outlined in Chapter One. Owing to the overlapping nature of a number of functions within individual similes there may be some repetition in my analysis.

1. Explanation

Similes as explanation and modelling

The poet deploys similes to explain several elements of his narrative. In the *Odyssey* similes may explain movement,[1] appearance,[2] measure,[3] brightness,[4] sound,[5] means of death,[6] actions (mostly of characters),[7] and characters' emotions.

For the poet a primary function of similes is to provide guidance as to how to interpret the narrative at a particular moment. A poet's decision to deploy a comparison of one object or event to another object or event signifies that the poet wishes to alert the audience to a salient idea.

The poet's choice of simile vehicle guides the audience's understanding. Short similes are usually easily understood by reference to the subject matter of the vehicle. For example, the description of Odysseus when Antinoos attacks him—he stood firm as a rock—explains his unwavering stance

[1] For example, Odysseus straddles a plank from his raft as if he were riding a horse (5.371).
[2] For example, Odysseus praises Nausicaa to her parents by saying that she looked like a goddess (7.291).
[3] For example, the Phaeacian ships are as swift as a bird on the wing or as a thought (7.36)
[4] For example, the amber beads of the necklace given to Penelope are as bright as the sun (18.296). Other examples include 4.45; 7.84; 19.233; 19.234; 24.148.
[5] For example, the suitors' shades twitter like bats twittering in a cave (24.6).
[6] The Laestrygonians spear some of Odysseus' men like fishes (10.124).
[7] After his beating by Odysseus-Aithon, Iros sits hanging his head like a drunken man (18.240).

(17.463). Helen's robe given to Telemachos shone like a star (15.108). Similes of measure explain magnitude, extent or speed: for example, the olive tree forming part of Odysseus' bed was as thick as a pillar (23.191).[8]

The poet deploys similes to explain the different means of deaths suffered by characters. For example, Agamemnon's men are slaughtered like white-tusked swine at a festive occasion (11.413). The treacherous maids are hanged like birds trapped in a snare (22.468).

The poet relies on similes to explain characters' emotions or reactions. For example, Antinoos' anger is evident because his eyes blaze like fire (4.662). Penelope's fear is explained by her comparison to a trapped lion ringed by hunters (4.791).

The poet often deploys character-speech similes to explain characters' feelings. For example, Telemachos' grateful thanks to Athene-Mentes, comparing her words to those of a father (1.308), convey his acceptance of her candid advice. Other character-speech similes shed light upon the speaker's motivations. Similes are used by characters as means of flattery, insult or threat. Odysseus' supplication of Nausicaa and his opening speech to Penelope as Aithon contain flattering comparisons (6.151; 19.109). Iros insults Odysseus-Aithon, comparing him to a garrulous, old, kitchen woman (18.27).

In longer similes the poet sometimes chooses to repeat a word or phrase in both the tenor and the vehicle to underline its particular importance. For example, the wave's scattering (διεσκέδασε, it scattered) of the timbers of Odysseus' raft (5.369) is compared to the wind's scattering (διεσκέδασε,

[8] Other examples include 3.290 (waves like mountains in size), 5.249 (Odysseus' raft was as wide as a freight ship), 8.124 (Klytoneos won by as far as the range of a team of mules in fallow land), 8.280 (Hephaistos' chains are as fine as spiders' webs), the Kikones attack in numbers like the leaves and flowers blooming in spring (9.51). See also 9.191; 9.322; 9.473; 10.113; 11.222; 11.243; 12.86; 12.181; 14.175; and 18.193.

it scattered) of a heap of straw (5.368).[9] This practice is especially useful when the poet wishes to communicate a character's emotional state without employing character speech. For example, Odysseus' pleasure upon catching sight of land is explained by the repetition of ἀσπάσιος/ἀσπάσιον twice in the vehicle (5.394; 5.397) and once in the tenor (5.398).

Similes clarifying the nature of the action

Longer similes not only explain but can clarify the action in the main narrative. For example, the simile used by Odysseus as he describes his use of the wooden staff to injure Polyphemos (9.384) is detailed and formulated in terms that would be understandable by the shipbuilding Phaeacians. Just as importantly, the simile clarifies Odysseus' actions for the external audience.

We see other examples of clarification in Book 5. The similes that compare the tossing of Odysseus's raft and its breakup to natural events on the land clarify the raft's violent movement (5.328; 5.368).

A simile must not confuse. The nature of the axe contest proposed by Penelope is puzzling (19.574). This has led to significant discussion, as it distracts from the important moment of Penelope's decision marked by the simile.

In summary, the poet of the *Odyssey* uses similes extensively to explain and to clarify aspects of the main narrative. I shall now examine the poet's use of reconceptualisation in similes.

[9] Other examples include 4.335; 5.328; 5.394; 8.523; 9.384; 10.216; 13.31; 19.205; 20.14; and 21.406.

2. Reconceptualisation

An important element in the creation of a simile is the reconceptualisation of the subject of the tenor. There are some groups of recurring reconceptualisations in the *Odyssey*. These are mostly found in shorter similes. The gods are usually compared to birds to illustrate their ease of travel.[10] The reconceptualisation of dying men as caught fish indicates unheroic deaths.[11] Bright items are mostly compared to celestial objects.[12] The poet expects the audience to know how to interpret these similes. Yet the poet sometimes surprises us. For example, some lion similes in the *Odyssey* differ from each other in their reconceptualisation of the tenor.[13]

Similes in which the poet compares a character to an unnamed god or gods in appearance usually indicate that the character is favoured by the poet.[14] Similes comparing characters to Ares indicate their martial intention,[15] and similes of comparison to the gods for characters who have just been bathed indicate their improved appearance.[16]

Similes comparing women to named goddesses underline their roles in society. The similes comparing Helen and Nausicaa to Artemis characterise Helen as a chaste wife (4.122), and Nausicaa

[10] For example, see 1.320; 5.51; 5.337; 5.353; and 22.240. The comparisons to birds also underline the gods' ease of travel—a reminder of the difference between gods and mortals.
[11] For example, the deaths of Odysseus' men (10.124; 12.251), and the suitors' deaths (22.384).
[12] For example, Menelaos' and King Alkinoos' palaces (4.45; 7.84), the robe that Helen gives Telemachos (15.108), the amber necklace given to Penelope (18.296), Odysseus' tunic (19.234), and the robe woven by Penelope (24.148).
[13] For example, Odysseus' and Penelope's reconceptualisations as lions suggest they are dangerous opponents (4.335; 4.791). Odysseus' reconceptualisation when he appears out of the bushes on Scheria depicts him as a wild animal (6.130). Polyphemos' reconceptualisation as a lion marks him out as brutal and uncivilised (9.292). Odysseus' reconceptualisation as a bloodied lion sated on his prey points to the bloody battle against the suitors (22.402).
[14] For example, the poet tells us that Telemachos emerged from his bedroom looking like a god (2.5). Other examples are at 4.310 (Menelaos), 6.16 (Nausicaa), and 7.5 (Nausicaa's brothers). These similes also mark the appearance of the character(s) in a new scene. This group of similes does not include compliments in character-text similes.
[15] For example, 8.115 (the poet's description of the aggressive Phaeacian Euryalos), and 8.518 (Demodokos' description of Odysseus in his tale of the fall of Troy).
[16] For example, Telemachos (3.468), Odysseus (23.163), and, as focalised by Odysseus, Laertes (24.371).

as a maiden (6.102).[17] By contrast, the repeated simile comparing Penelope to Artemis or Aphrodite emphasises her uncertain marital situation (17.37; 19.54). Similes are context-dependent.

Comparisons to gods may bestow a positive gloss on absent characters. For example, Eumaios tells Odysseus-Aithon of his father, Ctesius, describing him as a man like the immortals (15.414).[18]

The poet may draw upon a character's history and the narrative moment for his choice of simile matter. Menelaos' reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a lion killing fawns is reminiscent of Iliadic lion similes illustrating warriors in battle (4.335). It reminds us that both men are returned warriors and hints that Menelaos' prediction will be fulfilled. Odysseus' fight against the suitors in his house is characterised as a battle by his reconceptualisation as a swooping eagle attacking smaller birds (22.302).

The poet may deploy a simile so that the subject is seen in a new and surprising light. The poet of the *Odyssey* uses surprising reconceptualisation mostly in longer similes. A surprising reconceptualisation increases the memorability of the moment in the main narrative.

There are several unusual reconceptualisations in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus' relief upon seeing land is compared to that of children relieved to see their father's recovery from illness (5.394). His struggle to hang onto rocks is compared to that of an octopus being dragged from its den (5.432). He is compared to a remote farmer striving to protect a firebrand as he settles down on Scheria under the cover of leaves (5.488), and his crying during Demodokos' song about Troy is compared to that of a

[17] Helen is characterised as a wife surrounded by luxury who produces luxury goods thereby enriching her husband's household (4.122), and Nausicaa is depicted as a young virgin not yet 'tamed' by marriage (6.102).
[18] Other examples are at 6.309 (Nausicaa describes her father as sitting drinking wine like an immortal), and at 21.14 and 21.37. The poet twice describes Iphitos, the giver of Odysseus' bow, as a man resembling the gods although he does not appear in person in the narrative. (Telemachos tells the suitors to pay attention to the bard Phemios because his voice is like that of the gods but Phemios is probably still present (1.371). This is probably a compliment.)

captive woman being led away from her home and family (8.523). At Odysseus' and Telemachos' tearful reunion they are compared to vultures mourning the loss of their young (16.216). Odysseus' men are compared to delighted calves reunited with their mothers when he returns from his encounter with Kirke (10.410). Each of these reconceptualisations surprises the listener, either because the vehicle subject matter is uncommon or unique, or because the subject matter is an unusual choice for the narrative moment. Yet a core theme of these reconceptualisations is the importance of home and family.

The poet's reconceptualisation may convey an underlying message. The unique reconceptualisation of Odysseus as a horse-rider as he stays upon a plank in a storm conveys his movement upon the waves (5.371). It also underlines the fact that Odysseus is winning his battle against Poseidon, the god of horses, who is trying to destroy him. The octopus struggling to remain in its den possesses the same characteristics of cunning, stealth and disguise that Odysseus needs to regain his home (5.432).

The surprising reconceptualisations of Penelope as a besieged lion (4.791) and as a shipwrecked sailor (23.233) elevate her role from that of a passive woman waiting at home to a warrior whose fortitude and suffering are on a par with her husband's more visible, physical experiences.

Conversely, the comparisons of Agamemnon to an ox slaughtered at the manger (4.535 repeated at 11.411), and Odysseus' battle-hardened shipmates to puppies as they are killed by the Cyclops (9.289), reconceptualise them from warriors to powerless victims.

Penelope's comparison of her thoughts to the nightingale's song highlights her indecision about remarriage, but her reference to the myth of the daughter of Pandareos alludes to her need to choose her path carefully to ensure her son's safety (19.518).

The poet allows Odysseus as internal narrator to reconceptualise his adversaries in his tale to the Phaeacians. He reconceptualises Polyphemos' killing and consumption of his men as savage, uncivilised acts (9.289; 9.292). Yet, by drawing upon common technical procedures, he reconceptualises *his* attack upon the Cyclops by plunging a red-hot stake into his eye (9.384; 9.391) as constructive. These similes attempt to diminish his cruelty by diverting attention from the harm caused to a sentient creature to the production of inanimate objects.

In summary, the poet carefully chooses reconceptualisations to guide the audience's interpretation of the moment. In some instances he deploys surprising conceptualisations to guide us to interpret the moment in an unexpected way. Furthermore, the poet displays his mastery of reconceptualisation as a tool used by Odysseus to portray himself and his crew in a favourable light to the Phaeacians, despite their transgressions.

3. Filling Lexical Gaps

The third function I looked for in each simile was the use of the simile vehicle to describe concisely the tenor of the simile. This may be because there is no other sufficiently compact verbal expression that will describe the tenor. This function includes the situation where a pair or series of similes may complement or contrast aspects of a scene.

There is some overlap between this function and that of 'Explanation' above. For example, some similes spoken by characters to express their reactions, beliefs or emotions could be viewed as filling lexical gaps as well as explaining the characters' emotions.[19]

The *Odyssey* contains several similes that fill lexical gaps. The poet uses similes for this purpose in two main groups of similes—similes in battles, and similes at moments of high emotion. Most of these similes are longer similes.

An example of a battle simile that fills a lexical gap is at 5.368 where the simile vehicle describes the scattering of the planks from Odysseus' raft.[20] These similes are narrated directly by the poet.

The second group of similes—those that fill lexical gaps at moments of high emotion—comprises both character-text similes and similes deployed directly by the poet. One example of a character-text simile is that spoken by Proteus when he describes Agamemnon's death—like an ox slaughtered

[19] Examples include Telemachos' gratitude for Athene-Mentes' words (1.308), and Menelaos' comparison of Nestor's kindness to him in Troy to that of a father (15.152). Telemachos', Mentor's and Athene's comparisons of Odysseus' gentle rule to that of a father reveal their views of Odysseus' reign over Ithaca without the need for elaboration (2.47; 2.234; 5.12). See also Telemachos' reprimand of Eteoneus (4.32), his prediction of Odysseus' reaction to the suitors (4.335), Iros' insult and threat towards Odysseus-Aithon (18.27; 18.29), Telemachos' sarcastic comparison of Antinoos' advice to that of a father talking to a son (17.397), and Penelope's comparison of her uncertainty to the nightingale's song (19.518).

[20] Other examples are at 22.299 (the suitors flee like cattle stung by a gadfly), 22.302 (Odysseus attacks the suitors like an eagle swooping upon little birds) and 22.384 (the suitors lie in a heap like fish caught and lying on the sand, gasping for breath).

at the manger (4.535).[21] Several other character-text similes are spoken by Odysseus as part of his Apologue.[22]

Pairs or series of similes that complement or contrast a scene

Some pairs of similes illustrate action and the effect of a particular event in the narrative. This aspect of the function of filling lexical gaps overlaps with the use of similes for textual structuring (see below under 'Textual Structuring').

One pair of similes illustrates the beautification of Odysseus by Athene. The first of the pair illustrates the curling of his locks (6.231), the second simile illustrates Athene's overall improvement, comparing him to a work of silver overlaid with gold by a skilled craftsman (6.232).[23]

Odysseus' pair of long technical similes explains his method of injuring Polyphemos' eye (9.384) and the eye's resulting spluttering sound (9.391). The shade of Agamemnon deploys a pair of similes to illustrate his own ignoble death (11.411) and then the deaths of his men (11.413).

Odysseus deploys a pair of brief similes to describe the terror aroused in the other dead by the appearance of Herakles' shade (11.605), and the shade's own frightening appearance—like dark night (11.606). Odysseus' ordering of these two similes makes Heracles' appearance more

[21] Menelaos speaks this simile, repeating verbatim (as far as we know) Proteus' words. The simile is repeated at 11.411 when Odysseus tells the Phaeacian audience about his meeting with Agamemnon's shade.
[22] Examples are at 10.216 (Kirke's wild beasts behave like dogs begging titbits from their master who just returned home), 10.410 (Odysseus' men surround him like calves frisking around their mothers who have returned home), and 11.413 (the killing of Agamemnon's men is like the slaughter of pigs at a festive occasion).
[23] These similes are repeated when Athene enhances Odysseus for Penelope's appreciation (23.158; 23.159). This time the poet adds a third simile emphasising Odysseus' improved appearance by telling us how Odysseus resembled the immortals when he stepped out of his bath (23.163).

remarkable because we are told first of the effect of his appearance upon the other shades before we are told of his frightening appearance.

A pair of similes illustrates Odysseus' anger at the disloyal maids, likening the hero first to a bitch standing over her young, growling at a man (20.14), and, later, to a man turning food over a fire, eager for it to cook (20.25). These similes convey first his anger and then his physical distress as he ponders his revenge.

Odysseus' personal preparations for battle against the suitors are illustrated by a pair of similes. A simile of the bard stringing his lyre is deployed to illustrate Odysseus' expert stringing of his bow (21.406). His testing of the bow string is illustrated by the second simile comparing its sound to a swallow in tone (21.411).

In Book 22 several similes illustrate various aspects of Odysseus' battle against the suitors. This series of similes illustrates the progress of the battle. There are two pairs of similes within the series. The first pair comprises the simile that illustrates the suitors' panicked reaction to Athene as she holds up her aegis (22.299) and the following simile that illustrates Odysseus' attack upon the suitors as they flee in terror (22.302). The second pair of similes illustrates the results of the battle—the defeated suitors are like fish caught and heaped on the beach (22.384), and Odysseus the victor is befouled with blood like a lion that has devoured an ox (22.402).

Each of the similes within the pairs could stand alone in the narrative but the poet's deployment of pairs or series of similes endows the scene with considered detail.

The poet uses similes effectively to fill lexical gaps in similes spoken by characters to convey their emotions efficiently, to present striking scenes which bring together opposing characters, and to

illustrate series of closely related events. In the next section I shall consider similes expressing emotional attitude.

4. Expressing Emotional Attitude

An important function of similes is the expression of emotional attitude. I interpret 'expressing emotional attitude' as encompassing the poet's attitude towards the narrative moment communicated via the simile to the listener. That is, the poet uses similes to reflect his own interpretation of the moment and thus to shape the listener's emotional attitude or response. There are several ways of doing this.

Choice of simile subject matter to convey emotional attitude

The poet's choice of subject matter in a simile is crucial to express and shape emotional attitude. The poet may rely upon his audience's general knowledge to guide interpretation and response. When Eidothea tells Menelaos that her father Proteus will lie down among his seals like a shepherd (4.413), the poet draws upon his listeners' common knowledge of the shepherd's role to understand that Proteus will take a caring, protective approach towards his seals.

The poet may draw upon his audiences' shared responses to threats and danger to illustrate the specific nature of an event and how we ourselves should respond. For example, when Menelaos predicts that Odysseus will react to finding the suitors in his home as a powerful lion would react to finding two fawns in his lair, we the audience immediately understand that Odysseus' reaction will be hostile and deadly because lions are commonly considered to be aggressive apex predators (4.335).

A simile may communicate the extent of emotions of a character. When Antinoos learns that Telemachos has travelled overseas without the suitors' knowledge he becomes filled with rage. The poet tells us that his eyes were like blazing fire (4.662). Not only is Antinoos enraged internally but that intense anger is visible to onlookers. This manifest fury is evidence of Antinoos' uncontrolled

emotions and it is not surprising when it is he who initiates plans to murder Telemachos (4.664–672).

A simile may suggest moral ambiguity in a situation. When Eurykleia encounters Odysseus after he and his allies have killed the suitors his appearance is compared to a lion that has fed upon an ox at a farmstead (22.402). This lion simile underlines the difference between the formidable, divinely-assisted Odysseus who has returned home from multiple encounters with wild and dangerous adversaries to face callow young men who have never seen a day of battle. The simile invites the listener to reflect upon the battle in a way that may detract from Odysseus' victory.

Simile use to differentiate similar events

Different similes marking similar events enable the listener to refine his or her emotional attitude to each incident. The poet often marks out deaths and reunions by deploying similes. This practice highlights the significance of the moment in the narrative, alerting the listener of the need to pay particular attention to the narrative event. Through his choice of simile, the poet differentiates the event, providing guidance to the listener as to how to respond to that moment. When Agamemnon's murder is illustrated by comparison to the slaying of an ox at the manger, we understand that Agamemnon did not expect to die and that he was in a usually safe place undertaking an activity that would not usually be dangerous (4.335; 11.411). The choice of simile communicates the unexpected and unheroic nature of his death and evokes sympathy in the listener for a man who tried so hard to achieve his *nostos* only to be killed in a cowardly manner as soon as he arrived home.

Other similes also mark out the death of characters, making it clear that the characters died cruel deaths—Odysseus' two shipmates who are killed by the Cyclops are like puppies dashed against the

ground (9.289), and Odysseus' other colleagues who are seized by Skylla are like little fish caught on a hook by a fisherman and flung ashore even as they cry out to him for help (12.251). Both similes arouse our sympathy for the victims. By contrast, in the battle between the suitors and Odysseus, the dead suitors are compared to fish heaped upon the sand after being caught in nets (22.384). In death the suitors are as anonymous as they were in life.

Some deaths are passed over quickly, marked only by short, repeated similes—Odysseus' steersman falls from the deck like a diver after being hit by the mast (12.413), and Eumaios' nurse falls into the ship's hold like a plunging seabird (15.479).[24] The poet's deployment of different similes to differentiate the numerous deaths in the story shapes our emotional response to those deaths.

We see this practice in similes illustrating the reunions of family and friends. The reunions of Odysseus and his men, Eumaios and Telemachos, Odysseus and Telemachos, and Penelope and Odysseus are carefully differentiated from each other by simile. Odysseus' men are carefree and joyful at being reunited with their leader, like calves reunited with their mothers after a day apart (10.410). The simile emphasises the men's joy at reunion, not Odysseus' feelings upon his reunion with his men. Eumaios' and Telemachos' reunion is illustrated by the image of a reunion of father and son that focusses on the father's emotions; all the anxiety of separation has been on Eumaios' part (16.17). The simile illustrating Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion emphasises their mutual grief for the separation of 20 years (16.216). The simile illustrating Penelope's recognition of Odysseus reflects the one-sided nature of this reunion—Penelope has been unwilling to recognise her husband until presented with incontrovertible proof of his identity; her welcome relief, illustrated by comparison with the relief of shipwrecked sailors upon reaching land, reflects the

[24] Another short simile marking out a death is Odysseus-Aithon's description of drowned crew of the ship that kidnapped him floating on the waves like sea birds (14.308). This is part of Odysseus' 'lying tales' and we, the external audience, know that this is a fabricated story and the poet does not expect us to be emotionally invested to any extent in these deaths.

deep, life-renewing nature of this recognition for her (23.233). Each simile throws a different light upon the reunion illustrated.

Similes in character-text to evoke emotional attitude

The poet may use similes in direct character speech to evoke an emotional attitude or response from the external listener towards that character. The most prominent example of this, in the first simile of the *Odyssey*, is Telemachos' thanks to Athene-Mentes, comparing her advice to that of a father (1.308). This simile evinces his distress at the absence of his own father and generates sympathy for Telemachos in the external audience. Odysseus' similes illustrating Polyphemos' killing and eating of his men not only evoke sympathy for his men, they also arouse the external audience's antipathy towards the Cyclops (9.289; 9.292).

Although not all similes are deployed by the poet to express emotional attitude, in some similes this is an important function that shapes our response to narrative events and characters.

5. Decoration and Hyperbole

Decoration and hyperbole have been considered the major functions of many similes. This view has obscured our appreciation of other functions performed by similes. A very decorative simile does not preclude that simile from performing other functions.

There are three groups of similes in the *Odyssey*, all involving gods, that are mostly decorative. The first is the group of comparisons to unnamed gods, already discussed under 'Explanation'. These similes act like epithets, bestowing a gloss upon the subject of the tenor. The poet's usage suggests that characters compared to unnamed immortals are good-looking or talented and are favoured by the poet.[25]

The second group of similes that are mostly decorative are those that describe the travels of gods. For example, Ino is compared to a sea bird when she both emerges from and returns to the sea (5.337 and 5.353).

The third group of predominantly decorative similes comprises the pair of similes that illustrate Athene's beautification of Odysseus (6.231 and 6.232, repeated at 23.158 and 23.159).

Other similes that are mostly decorative include the picturesque simile of the movements of the leaves of a tall poplar illustrating the Phaeacian women's spinning and weaving (7.106), the comparison of the herb *moly* to milk (10.304) and the longer simile illustrating the motion of the Phaeacian ship carrying Odysseus to Ithaca (13.81).

[25] As noted earlier, not all comparisons to gods are limited to acting like epithets.

Odysseus' similes comparing Nausicaa to Artemis and to a young shoot on Delos, and comparing Penelope's fame that of a just king, appear to be decorative but are deliberately deployed by Odysseus as part of his strategy to ingratiate himself (6.151; 19.109).

Most of the similes in the *Odyssey* are not obviously similes of hyperbole. Notable exceptions are some similes of measure, for example, the extent of Odysseus' weeping like that of a woman being led off to slavery (8.523),[26] and Penelope's profuse tears like a mountain snow melt (19.205). Other shorter examples include similes of waves compared to mountains (3.290), of garments that glisten like the sun, the moon or a star (15.108; 19.234; 24.148), and the simile of the numbers of attacking Kikones compared to the leaves and flowers blooming in spring (9.51).

Most similes in the *Odyssey* contain an element of decoration which contributes to making the narrative moment more memorable, but few similes demonstrate hyperbole. In most cases, however, decoration and/or hyperbole are not their primary functions. The similes that are mostly decorative are in most cases short similes and spotlight a particular moment adding texture and variation to the narrative.

[26] When I discussed this simile in a seminar, one audience member commented that he thought this simile was 'completely over the top'.

6. Cultivation of Intimacy

The cultivation of intimacy between the poet and the audience is a very important role of a simile. The audience must understand the content of the simile vehicle in order to appreciate the narrative. This comprehension does not need to occur to the same degree for each individual listener. Some listeners may more fully comprehend the poet's choice of comparand in the simile vehicle than others. Detail in a simile that is understood by the audience makes that moment in the narrative more interesting and therefore more significant and memorable. These elements contribute to the listeners' engagement with the narrative.

Similes of measure are a simple way of adding detail to a scene. Some similes of measure rely on concepts that are universally understood but difficult to quantify. Examples include comparisons to the brightness of the sun, the moon or a star,[27] and to the size of mountains.[28] I include here the simile of Odysseus standing firm as a rock when hit by a footstool thrown by Antinoos (17.463).

The poet also deploys these similes in character-text similes. An example is Odysseus' description of the Kikones appearing in numbers like the leaves and flowers that bloom in spring (9.51). One simile, spoken by Athene disguised as a young girl, to Odysseus, broadens the scope of the measure without actually contributing to its specificity by comparing the Phaeacians' ship in speed to the swiftness of a bird or a thought (7.36).

Some similes of measure or extent specify quantifiable measurements to aid the listeners' understanding. The poet draws on similes from general life—for example, the bonds hung by Hephaestus to catch Ares and Aphrodite were as fine as spiders' webs (8.280). Odysseus' ship was as distant from Polyphemos or the Sirens on the shore as a man shouting can be heard (9.473; 12.181).

[27] See 4.45; 7.84; 15.108; 18.296; 19.234; and 24.148.
[28] See 3.290; 9.191; and 10.113.

The poet also draws on farming and construction to illustrate measures. For example, the Phaeacian Klytoneos is best at running by as much as the range of a mule team in fallow land (8.124), the width of Odysseus' raft is compared to that of a freight ship (5.249), and the trunk of the olive tree that is part of Odysseus' bed is as thick as a pillar (23.191).

These similes seem to be precise but some require the listener to interpret them by drawing upon his or her own knowledge. That knowledge may differ according to individual experience and the listener's location. A city dweller may not have an accurate idea of the range of a mule team, presumably pillars differed in size according to building specifications, and dimensions of freight ships probably varied depending on their origin. Yet through these similes the poet leads the audience to believe that it understands the intention of the poet or the character-narrator. This poetic sleight of hand means that the poet does not have to modify his similes for each new audience.

Another means of cultivating intimacy is to deploy similes that draw upon general life experiences. The *Odyssey* poet draws upon life experiences common to most people of any time or place for simile subject matter. These include several comparisons of Odysseus to a gentle father (2.47; 2.234; 5.12), the relief of children upon seeing their father's recovery from illness (5.394), the relief of a father at his son's return after ten year's absence (16.17), and a man's eager movements as he constantly turns his sausages on the grill (20.25). These similes relate more generally to the themes of the *Odyssey*—even the simile of cooking food reminds us of the suitors' (and at times Odysseus') preoccupation with eating—but, by drawing upon the common emotions of family relationships and life in general, the poet taps into the universal experiences of his audience and demonstrates his understanding of their everyday concerns. Four similes draw upon the weather (5.328; 5.368; 14.476; 19.205)—a universal influence on life.

In one case the poet deploys a simile to depict a painful event. This is the comparison of Odysseus' copious tears to those of a captive woman as she is led away to slavery (8.523). This simile must have produced collective shudders in audiences when wars were frequent and the consequences of defeat were terrible.

The poet deploys similes from a range of occupations common in ancient Greece to engage with various members of his audience. There are farming similes, fishing similes, hunting similes, shipbuilding and shipping similes, cooking similes, bard similes, a blacksmith simile, and a craft simile.[29] The breadth of this selection and the poet's attention to detail in the similes suggests that the poet was seeking to secure the interest of diverse listeners. The poet exhibits a certain acquaintance with techniques in these occupations. For example, in his longer similes he provides details of different fishing techniques, smithing, tool use in shipbuilding and craft manufacturing.

The poet displays his recognition of the need to build a connection with his audience in Odysseus' character-text similes. Odysseus deploys a simile to commence his supplication to Nausicaa, comparing her to Artemis (6.151) and then likening her to a young palm tree growing on Delos (6.163). His flattering words are intended to demonstrate that he is a cultured man belying his wild appearance. Similarly, in his address to Penelope, when disguised as Aithon the beggar, he begins his speech with a simile comparing her to a just king (19.109). Through this simile he displays his knowledge and appreciation of a well-regulated society such as Ithaca was before his departure.

The poet cultivates the intimacy of his audience in Odysseus' narration to the Phaeacians. We the audience are told early on by the poet that the Phaeacians are skilled in seafaring, and Athene,

[29] Details of similes of different types of occupations are as follows: farming (4.413; 4.535; 5.488; 8.124; 10.410; 13.31; 18.29; 21.48; 22.299), fishing (10.124; 12.251; 22.384), hunting (4.791; 9.314; 22.468), shipbuilding and shipping (5.249; 9.384; 19.574; 23.233), storytelling (11.368; 17.518; 21.406), cooking (12.237; 20.25), smithing (9.391); and craft (6.232; 23.159).

disguised as a young girl, informs Odysseus—by way of simile—of their supernaturally fast ships (7.36). In his narration we see Odysseus emphasise his shipping and construction skills, especially by way of simile, when he compares the width of Polyphemos' large staff to the width of a merchant ship's mast (9.322). He deploys shipbuilding and blacksmith similes to describe his attack upon the Cyclops (9.384 and 9.391) and he deploys more general similes to emphasise his own human nature, by drawing upon general family and farm similes.[30]

The poet's wide choice of animals for similes suggests a similar motivation for connection.[31] There are several examples in the *Odyssey* where the poet, in choosing a particular animal for the comparand of the simile, demonstrates an acute understanding of his subject matter. For example, the poet displays considerable knowledge of the cries of vultures, the behaviour of other raptors, the characteristics of cephalopods, and the calls of bats. Not all listeners may appreciate the poet's detail. To a listener whose knowledge of octopuses is limited, the understanding of the poet's choice of octopus to illustrate Odysseus' attempt to cling on to the rocks may be rooted in the fact that the octopus has multiple limbs. The Greek fisherman or seafood vendor, however, was probably aware that the octopus possesses several special characteristics in common with Odysseus. Listeners with such expertise would experience heightened appreciation and engagement with the narrative.

The final area where the poet creates intimacy with his listeners is through similes concerning the gods. He expects his audience to have knowledge of the characteristics of numerous gods including Athene, Artemis, Aphrodite, Hephaistos, Ares, Poseidon and Hermes. For example, the similes that illustrate Odysseus' beautification by Athene (6.231 and 6.232; 23.158 and 23.159) assume that the

[30] For example, 10.124 and 12.251 (fishing), and 10.410 (farming). The poet's attention to his listeners' way of life is demonstrated by his inclusion of fishing similes in a story where the consumption of fish is reviled.

[31] These include wild and domestic animals including different species of seabirds and land birds (5.51; 5.337; 5.353; 12.418; 14.308; 15.479; 16.216; 19.518; 22.240; 22.302; 22.468; 24.538), cattle (4.535; 10.410; 13.31; 21.48; 22.299), lions (4.335; 4.791; 9.292; 22.402), dogs (9.289; 12.86; 20.14), pigs (11.413; 18.29), fish (10.124; 12.251; 22.384), bats (12.433; 24.6), horses (5.371; 13.81), deer (4.335; 17.126), mules (8.124), wild beasts (14.21), octopus (5.432), and a gadfly (22.299).

audience is aware of Athene's and Hephaistos' divine connection with the arts and crafts.[32] Similes concerning the gods serve to emphasise their 'otherness' from mortals, including their ease of movement and their divine abilities. The poet also assumes the audiences' familiarity with certain mythical tales.[33]

The importance of the poet's need to achieve a connection with his audience in his similes is demonstrated by the problems posed by the simile at 19.574, when Penelope announces an archery competition and illustrates the challenge with a comparison to a ship's props. The lack of clarity of this simile distracts audiences from the surrounding narrative.

Yet it is important to note that no one listener will understand the poet in exactly the same manner as another. This has become evident to me from the numerous differing interpretations of some similes. The important point is that the listener must *be persuaded* that he or she understands the poet's meaning.

Through the careful selection of subject matter for his similes, the poet of the *Odyssey* carefully cultivates the intimacy of his listeners, ensuring a pleasurable and relatable experience for his varied audiences.

[32] Other similes that assume knowledge of the gods' characteristics and associations are 5.51 (Hermes); 4.122; 6.102; 6.151 (Artemis); 5.371; 23.233 (Poseidon); 8.115; 8.518 (Ares); 17.37; 19.54 (Artemis and Aphrodite).
[33] For example, the poet assumes listeners' familiarity with the myth of the daughter of Pandareos (19.518).

7. Textual Structuring

The seventh function that I have examined is the use of similes to structure the narrative. Similes may be used to emphasise certain points of the action, to link scenes or to emphasise certain contexts. They may introduce new scenes or characters, build suspense, foreshadow or anticipate subsequent action, and include thematic references.

Comparisons with Gods— the Introduction (and Reappearance) of Characters

In order to mark the first appearance or the re-entry of a 'good' character the poet may compare him or her to an unspecified god. I have already discussed these similes above under 'Reconceptualisation'. These short similes do not contribute to any substantive characterisation but are limited to characters that play positive roles in the narrative. Telemachos', Odysseus' and Laertes' improved looks after being bathed are marked out by similes comparing them to immortals.[34] Helen, Nausicaa and Penelope are compared to specific gods on first appearance or re-entry into the narrative but these similes also characterise each woman, as discussed above.[35]

[34] 3.468; 23.163; 24.371.

[35] Nausicaa is first introduced by a simile comparing her in form and looks to the immortal goddesses (6.16). Later the poet individualises her by comparing her to Artemis with her nymphs (6.102). Odysseus praises her by comparing her to Artemis when he supplicates her for assistance (6.151) and later flatters her parents by describing her as looking like a goddess (7.291)

Travel of the gods

The poet deploys similes to mark the travel, including some arrivals and departures, of the gods Athene, Hermes and Ino. These are mostly short similes.[36] In most similes the gods are compared to birds.[37]

Similes Marking Death and Impending Death

The poet uses similes to mark death or injury, the manner of death, probable death or impending death. Many of the similes deployed to illustrate death are spoken by characters. Odysseus deploys both short and longer similes to mark the deaths of his companions. Polyphemos' killing of two of Odysseus' men is compared to the killing of puppies (9.289), the Laestrygonians' spearing of his men is compared to the spearing of fish (10.124), Skylla's snatching of men from his ship is like a fisherman catching and landing fish (12.251), the collapse of the steersman as he dies is like the action of a diver (12.413), and the floating corpses of Odysseus' shipmates are compared to seacrows (12.418). Odysseus in his disguise as Aithon deploys a very similar simile to that at 12.413 to describe the loss of the crew of the ship he claims to have been travelling on (14.308). Eumaios illustrates the death of his nurse with a simile comparing her fall to the plunge of a seabird (15.479).

The poet deploys several similes to illustrate death or impending death in Book 22, when Odysseus, Telemachos, Eumaios and Philoitios battle the suitors. Athene's brandishing of the aegis frightens the suitors who flee like cattle frightened by a gadfly (22.299). Odysseus is compared to an eagle

[36] The exception is the simile illustrating Hermes' flight over the sea to Ogygia (5.51).

[37] Athene: 1.320; 3.372; Hermes: 5.51; Ino: 5.337; 5.353. Athene is compared to a breath of air when she enters Nausicaa's room (6.20). This unusual variation reflects the fact that she is making a covert visit to arrange assistance for Odysseus. It emphasises the ease with which she enters the young girl's room, an ease not afforded to mortals.

swooping upon little birds in his first attack upon the group of suitors (22.302). The suitors' bodies are compared to a pile of fish gasping for life upon the beach (22.384). Telemachos' hanging of the maids is illustrated by a simile of birds caught in a net (22.468).

We find a simile that marks a close escape from death at the end of the *Odyssey* when Odysseus prepares to attack the suitors' relatives (24.538). he is compared to a bird of prey but Zeus intervenes to stop the attack. Our expectations of death have been raised by the simile's similarity to that at 22.302.

These similes slow the narrative so that the listener will appreciate the significance of the event. Yet there are some points in the narrative where death occurs but a simile is not deployed. Odysseus deploys a graphic simile to mark only the first of the three pairs of men killed by Polyphemos (9.289). This avoids unnecessary repetition and maintains the momentum of his battle against the Cyclops. The death of Argos, Odysseus' loyal dog, is not illustrated by a simile. His death is due to natural causes (17.326–327) and is not witnessed by Eumaios or Odysseus, who have already entered Odysseus' house. Argos' death is a brief but sad postscript to his recognition of Odysseus.

Another death scene that is not marked by a simile is Odysseus' killing of Antinoos, one of the chief suitors and the first suitor to die (22.15–20). His killing leads to Odysseus' revelation of his identity and paves the way for Odysseus to launch his attack upon the remaining suitors (22.35–41). A simile at this point would interrupt the build-up to the battle which is the climax of the story.

Reunions

Similes are located at the point of important reunions.[38] There are four similes, all longer, deployed to illustrate reunions. These are Odysseus's reunion with his shipmates after his return from Kirke's house, (10.410), Telemachos' reunion with Eumaios after his voyage overseas, of Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion (16.17; 16.216) and Penelope's reunion with her husband (23.233).[39] The similes are confined to reunions of significant characters in the story and illustrate the mixed emotions of overt reunion.

Two significant reunions are not illustrated by simile. The reunion with Argos (17.300–305) is covert—Argos recognises his master, probably by scent, given Odysseus' twenty years of ageing and disguise. Odysseus, who is still in disguise, must conceal *his* recognition of his old dog.

The second important reunion not illustrated by a simile is that of Odysseus with his father Laertes (24.347–348). This emotional reunion might seem a natural point for a simile, but it comes after the conclusion of the main narrative—the suitors have been defeated and Odysseus has been reunited with Penelope. Book 24 could be considered an epilogue to the main story, where the poet chooses not to linger as he ties up loose ends.[40]

[38] I distinguish reunion scenes from recognition scenes. See Nünlist (2015) for a discussion of recognition scenes.
[39] Penelope's reunion with her husband is also a recognition scene. Until that point in the narrative she had refused to believe Odysseus was her husband, despite him sitting in front of her asserting his identity.
[40] Latacz 1996: 151. Cf. Ready 2019.

Similes Marking New Scenes, First Appearances of Characters, End Scenes, Sleep and Transition Scenes

I have already discussed similes of divine comparison that mark the entrance of characters. These entrances mostly occur at the beginning of a new scene. One unusual simile that marks a new scene appears when the shades of the suitors are roused by Hermes in order to be led down to Hades (24.6). It marks the suitors' departure to the world of the dead.

A transition of scene is sometimes marked by a simile. The gleam of King Alkinoos' palace is illustrated by simile when Odysseus pauses on the threshold (7.84).

The end of scenes may be marked by a simile. As mentioned above, the departures of gods, which often occur at the end of a scene, are often marked by similes. Some scenes end with the main character about to go to sleep. For example, Penelope is compared to a besieged lion, as she ponders, before falling asleep (4.791), and Odysseus is compared to a lonely farmer when he settles himself down under leaves to sleep on Scheria (5.488). When he is carried back to Ithaca by ship, he sleeps during the journey. The ship's movement is illustrated by a long simile (13.81). It slows the narrative to indicate that the scene is coming to an end. Two similes mark out Odysseus when he *cannot* sleep, kept awake by his anger and his desire for revenge (20.14 and 20.25).

Similes as Suspense

The poet sometimes deploys similes to create suspense, for example, during Odysseus' sea battle. After his relief at seeing land (5.394), Odysseus is swept away from rocks, like the octopus dragged from its den (5.432). Other similes slow the narrative in anticipation of an important event: for

example, two similes slow the narrative when Odysseus strings his bow and tests the string before he shoots Antinoos (21.406; 21.411).

The *Odyssey*'s final simile, in which Odysseus is reconceptualised as an eagle, about to swoop upon the suitors' relatives, creates both suspense and misdirection (24.538). Zeus' sudden cessation of hostilities comes as a surprise to the listener.

Foreshadowing and Recollection

Some similes contain an element of foreshadowing. This may be with reference to the event illustrated in the simile vehicle or it may be suggested by the poet's choice of subject matter. Foreshadowing varies from minimal and oblique to significant telegraphing of events to come. We see this range in the *Odyssey*. The similes that compare Polyphemos and the wife of the Laestrygonian king to mountains each suggest the danger of these characters because of mountains' ominous associations (9.191; 10.113). Likewise, Nestor's comparison of the size of waves encountered by Menelaos at Cape Malea to that of mountains suggests the impending disaster for his fleet (3.290).

The simile illustrating Eumaios' fatherly greeting of Telemachos (16.17) foreshadows Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion. The poet illustrates this second reunion with a simile comparing them to birds of prey with crooked talons whose chicks have been stolen (16.216). Their reconceptualisation as birds of prey may anticipate their eventual battle with the suitors, which is illustrated by a simile in which they are compared to birds of prey attacking little birds (22.302).

The poet also uses similes to look back at events. Menelaos' reference to the doe placing her fawns in the lion's den (4.335) is a reminder that Telemachos' plea to the suitors' relatives for restraint was

rejected as well as being a foreshadowing of the suitors' fate. The simile comparing Penelope to a shipwrecked sailor (23.233) recollects Odysseus' physical shipwreck.

Linked/Associated Similes

The poet uses similes to draw comparisons between characters' situations at different points of the narrative. The similes may draw attention to the similarity or the differences between the experiences of the characters. I have already discussed Odysseus' and Penelope's reconceptualisations as lions (4.335; 4.791). These link husband and wife across the narrative and suggest their similar characteristics.

Odysseus' arrival at King Alkinoos' palace and Telemachos' arrival at Menelaos' palace are marked by identical similes (4.45; 7.84). The similar similes remind us of the similarities of their situations but also draw attention to their differing responses to these situations—Telemachos' naïve wonder at things foreign and exotic contrasts with Odysseus' reserved, mature reaction.

The reunion of Odysseus with his men after his encounter with Kirke (10.410), and Telemachos' reunion with Eumaios (16.17) are both illustrated by parent/child similes. These similes are a prelude to the real parent/child reunion of Odysseus and Telemachos (16.216).

Two related similes describe Odysseus-Aithon's reaction to his wife's distress and Eurykleia's response to Odysseus' threat to keep his identity secret. Odysseus' eyes stay fixed as though of horn or iron (19.211) in response to Penelope's tears (19.205) and Eurykleia assures Odysseus that she shall remain as close as hard iron or stone (19.494). Their similar self-restraint, so contrary to the suitors' noisy behaviour, suggests her alliance with Odysseus.

Two contrasting similes are those of bats. Odysseus is compared to a bat *clinging* to a bush as he tries to avoid being dragged down to his death by Charybdis (12.433). The suitors' shades who are about to be led down to Hades, are compared to bats *letting go* of their perches (24.6).

Pairs of Similes Within the Same Scene

There are several examples of closely located pairs of similes in the *Odyssey*. I have mentioned some of these under 'Filling Lexical Gaps'. I refer here instead to pairs of similes that are within a few lines of each other and illustrate different aspects of the same scene in the narrative.

The deployment of pairs of similes either to illustrate different aspects of the scene or to illustrate the cause and effect of an action, grants each event illustrated by the simile equal importance in the scene. Similes that contrast different aspects of the narrative serve to magnify those differences. These pairs balance the narrative.

Some pairs illustrate an initial event and then the sequel to that event. For example, waves destroy and scatter the planks of Odysseus' rafts like a strong wind tossing straw and scattering it about (5.368) but Odysseus responds to this destruction by climbing onto one of the planks as if he were riding a horse (5.371). Another pair of similes illustrates the Cyclops' killing of two of Odysseus' men (9.289) and then Polyphemos' savage consumption of their bodies (9.292). Odysseus illustrates his attack upon the Cyclops with a pair of similes—first to describe their attack upon his eye (9.384) and the second to illustrate the effect of this attack (9.391). Agamemnon's shade deploys a pair of similes—the first to describe Aigisthos' killing of him (11.411), and the second to illustrate the killing of his men (11.413).

A pair of similes in Book 8 illustrates war and its consequences—as he sings of the Trojan war, Demodokos likens Odysseus the victor in Troy to Ares (8.518). The second simile compares his grief to that of the captive woman (8.523). These similes present both sides of war—the winners and the losers. One pair of similes illustrates the manner of Ino's arrival and departure at Odysseus' raft (5.337 and 5.353).

Pairs of similes may also intensify the narrative. Iros' insult and threat towards Odysseus, each illustrated by a simile, clarify his unpleasant nature (18.27; 18.29). Odysseus-Aithon's description of the sheen of Odysseus' tunic is illustrated by two similes—the first compares its sheen to that of the skin of a dried onion (19.233), and the second describes the tunic as glistening like the sun (19.234). The effect of this pair of similes is to magnify the quality of the tunic.

Sometimes similes placed close to each other provide a contrast. Penelope's reaction to hearing about Odysseus from Odysseus-Aithon is to weep copiously, illustrated by a simile about melting snow (19.205). Odysseus' eyes remain fixed like horn or iron despite his inward sympathy (19.211). Both husband and wife have similar strong emotions of attachment to their spouse but the contrast between the two similes emphasises the differences in Penelope's and Odysseus' behaviour and self-control.

Series of Similes

Pairs of similes may also form part of a series of battles. There are three series of closely related similes. All three illustrate battles. The series in Book 5 illustrates Odysseus' battle with the sea. The first simile illustrates the motion of Odysseus' raft comparing it to the North Wind blowing thistle tufts as it is pushed this way and that on the sea by the winds summoned by Poseidon (5.328). Another weather simile explains the scattering of the raft's timbers (5.368). Odysseus' action to save

himself by climbing onto the raft is illustrated by the simile of horse-riding (5.371). His relief at seeing land is illustrated by a comparison to the relief of children seeing their father's recovery from illness (5.394). Finally, Odysseus is compared to an octopus as he tries not to be dashed upon the rocks (5.432). This series of similes reflects the two sides of the battle—Poseidon, via the winds and the sea, against Odysseus. The similes also mark out the most memorable moments of the battle—the rise of the storm, the raft's destruction, Odysseus' means of survival, his first sight of land and his near loss of landfall. The placement of similes at these points adds interest to the narrative of a sole sailor battling a vengeful god at sea.

The second series, spoken by Odysseus, covers his battle against Polyphemos. The similes highlight Polyphemos' first murder and eating of his two of his men (9.289; 9.292), his trapping of the remaining men in his cave (9.314), their discovery of a potential weapon (9.322), and their retaliatory attack and injury with a weapon fashioned out of Polyphemos' walking stick (9.384; 9.391). Each simile marks out a significant moment in the conflict.

In Book 22 a series of similes illustrates the progress of Odysseus' battle against the suitors. The suitors, frightened by Athene's aegis, are compared to a moving herd of cattle driven by a gadfly (22.299). Odysseus and his men killing the suitors are then compared to birds of prey, killing the smaller birds (22.302). The success of this attack is then illustrated by a simile comparing the dead suitors to fish caught by fishermen and heaped up dying upon the seashore (22.384). Finally, Odysseus is compared to a lion covered in blood after a successful kill (22.402). This series of similes marks the important milestones of this battle—the presence of a god, the attack, the men killed, and the bloody victor. By deploying similes to illustrate both the suitors' behaviour and Odysseus' attack, we gain a more balanced view of the events. The similes illustrating the suitors' reactions and their deaths enable the audience to feel some sympathy for their fate. In a postscript to the killing of the suitors, Book 22 concludes with a simile comparing the hanging of the disloyal maids to the netting

of small birds (22.468). This reconceptualisation of the maids as small birds links them to the suitors who were also reconceptualised as small birds when they were being killed. This simile marks out the moment that completes Odysseus' revenge against his main opponents.

Repetitions

Aside from the comparisons to gods and some similes marking death, both of which I have discussed above, there are few repetitions of a simile in the *Odyssey*. Some repetitions are, however, significant. The repeated references to Odysseus' fatherly qualities early in the narrative underscore the fundamental importance of family and good government (2.47; 2.234).

Athene's enhancements of Odysseus' appearance, first for Nausicaa and later for Penelope, are illustrated by the same pair of similes (6.231; 6.232 and 23.158; 23.159). These similes underline Athene's steadfast support of Odysseus throughout the story.

The most powerful repetition occurs at 11.411 when Agamemnon's shade describes his own death to Odysseus. This is a repetition of Proteus' report to Menelaos, repeated to Telemachos (4.535). Agamemnon's words form a blunt warning to Odysseus of what he might expect upon arriving home.

When Telemachos arrives back on Ithaca he tells Penelope of Menelaos' prediction of Odysseus' actions should he return to find the suitors in his home, repeating Menelaos' simile word for word as part of a longer verbatim repetition of Menelaos' words (17.124–146). Telemachos' speech stirs Penelope's emotions (17.150).

Frequency of Similes Through the Books

It is not possible to draw many firm conclusions about the pattern of occurrence of similes in the *Odyssey*. A detailed comparison of the number of similes in each book seems pointless in view of the continuing discussion as to when the book divisions were implemented.[41] There are, however, some observations worth noting.

There are not many similes in Books 1 to 3—three in each book.[42] This may be because these books establish the basic elements of the story. There is a significant amount of travel described in Books 1 to 4—Telemachos travels from Ithaca to Pylos and then to Sparta. We hear of Nestor's and other Achaeans' return voyages from Troy, including Menelaos' return journey, first from Nestor (3.276–312), and then from Menelaos himself (4.78–89). These books also establish the 'fabric' of hospitality practice, an essential element of the story of the *Odyssey*. The poet provides examples of both good and poor reception of guests, giving the external audience the tools with which to judge subsequent events.

Other passages describing travel (aside from Odysseus' perilous voyage to Scheria and Odysseus' Apologue) contain few similes, and those similes tend to be short. This is probably because this travel is less important to the story.

There are only two similes in Demodokos' two songs told to the Phaeacian audience—one short simile in his song of Ares and Aphrodite (8.280) and one short simile in his song about Troy (8.518). The poet presents both songs in summary directly to the external audience. Consequently they lack the immediacy and emotional colouring of direct speech.

[41] For discussions of book divisions in the *Odyssey* see Bitto (2019) 133–138, Heiden (2000), and Skafte Jensen (1999).
[42] Book 1: 1.308; 1.320; 1.371; Book 2: 2.5; 2.47; 2.234; Book 3: 3.290; 3.372; 3.468.

Odysseus deploys 28 similes during his Apologue. Yet he deploys only two short similes during his 'lying tales' to Eumaios about his background and his mission at Troy (14.462–506).[43]

As discussed above, the other battle books each contain numerous similes. Book 5 contains twelve similes[44] including several longer similes, seven of which illustrate the two sides of the battle upon the sea—Poseidon against Odysseus.[45] Book 22 contains six similes, four of which illustrate the battle between the suitors and Odysseus and his supporters.[46]

Similes Marking Aberration or Deviation in Hospitality Practice

Many similes are located at points in the narrative where there is an aberration in the practice of hospitality. The theme of hospitality, as I have noted, is predominant in the *Odyssey*. The suitors' transgressions stem from their refusal to observe the conventions of hospitality. Throughout the story there are other examples of hospitality, both good and bad, including Telemachos' reception of Athene-Mentes, Nestor's and Menelaos' receptions of Telemachos, and Kirke's, Kalypso's, King Alkinoos', Polyphemos', and Eumaios' receptions of Odysseus.[47]

The importance of this theme is reflected in the number of similes marking moments of hospitality and guest friendship. There are numerous examples of breaches of good practice throughout the story. An early example occurs when Eteoneus considers turning away Telemachos and Peisistratos from Menelaos' palace when they arrive from Pylos. Menelaos admonishes Eteoneus for his

[43] One simile illustrates the crew's bodies floating on the waves like sea birds (14.308). The second describes the snow covering him when he was on his mission with Odysseus at Troy, as like frost (14.476).
[44] 5.12; 5.51; 5.249; 5.281; 5.328; 5.337; 5.353; 5.368; 5.371; 5.394; 5.432; 5.488.
[45] 5.328; 5.337; 5.353; 5.368; 5.371; 5.394; 5.432.
[46] 22.299; 22.302; 22.384; 22.402.
[47] This thematic variation is not limited to similes. See, for example, Redfield (1973: 148–149) for a discussion of Odysseus' thematic variations in each of his life stories.

unacceptable behaviour in not admitting them immediately, comparing Eteoneus' words to those of a child (4.32).

Menelaos' horror at the suitors' conduct and his prediction of their fate mark out their bad behaviour (4.335). Proteus' description of Agamemnon's murder at a feast in his honour marks the shocking nature of Aigisthos' actions (4.535). The simile illustrating Penelope's fear of the suitors, comparing her to a besieged lion, both illustrates her unhappy state and points to the gross breach of hospitality of the suitors who are planning the death of their hostess's son (4.791). Odysseus makes a point of calling out the Phaeacian Euryalus' bad manners towards a guest by contrasting his godlike looks with his impolite words (8.174). He draws attention with similes to Polyphemos' bestial behaviour trapping them (9.314) and killing and eating his men (9.289 and 9.292). The Laestrygonians' killing of more his men is also marked out by simile (10.124). The unnatural friendliness of wild animals when Odysseus' men arrive at Kirke's house is illustrated by simile (10.216).

As discussed earlier, Agamemnon's shade marks out the worst transgressions of hospitality—Aigisthos' slaughter of him and his men at a feast in their honour (11.411; 11.413). The fact that this is the most serious of offences is underlined by the reference to food and food consumption in the subject matter of each simile vehicle—the ox is eating at the manger and the swine are slaughtered for festive occasions.

The moment marked by the simile may not necessarily be an occurrence of intentional or even overt poor behaviour. Odysseus' copious tears at King Alkinoos' reception are illustrated by a long simile (8.523). In the *Odyssey* it is culturally acceptable for a man to cry but it is not normal for a man to cry at a feast held in his honour. Odysseus' impatience to leave the Phaeacians, despite being honoured by another feast, is illustrated by a simile comparing his eagerness to depart to that of a farmer

eager to head home for supper (13.31). In that case his behaviour is neither poor nor even overt; it is simply very unusual for a guest to be so keen to leave a feast being held in their honour. The hostile reception of Odysseus by Eumaios' guard dogs is anticipated by their description as being savage as wild beasts (14.21).

Telemachos' sarcastic comment that Antinoos cares for him as a father cares for a son, conveys his strong disapproval of Antinoos' poor treatment of Odysseus-Aithon in Odysseus' house (17.397). When Odysseus-Aithon begs for food, Iros insults and threatens him (18.27; 18.29).

The large number of similes marking aberrations in conventions of hospitality is clearly intentional and is designed to underscore the importance of this underlying theme in the *Odyssey*.

Thematic References in Similes

Scholars have noted that many of the similes of the *Odyssey* touch on themes in the story.[48] One of the most important themes is that of family and the importance of family reunion—the family's strength when it is a complete unit, and its vulnerability when it is incomplete. Two of Telemachos' three spoken similes in Books 1–3 offer comparisons to a father (1.308; 2.47). Mentor, in his rebuke of the Ithacan assembly, also invokes a comparison to a father (2.234). These similes act as signposts to this important narrative theme in the *Odyssey*—a theme invoked in other similes in the poem.

Some similes are explicit in their reference to family relationships. The simile comparing Nausicaa to Artemis refers to Leto's pride in her daughter (6.102). Odysseus compares his reunion with his men

[48] For example, see C. Moulton 1977: 126–134; Scott 1974: 122–124.

to that of cows and their calves after a day's separation (10.410). Telemachos' reunion with Eumaios is marked by a simile comparing their reunion to that of a father and son (16.17). Menelaos describes his relationship with Nestor at Troy in filial terms (15.152), a sentiment that is repeated by Telemachos when he describes to Penelope his welcome by Nestor at Pylos (17.111). Eidothea's comparison of her father's care for his seals to that of a shepherd caring for his flocks of sheep suggests a caring, almost paternal relationship (4.413).

The poet sometimes draws upon at-risk or disrupted family relationships for the subject matter in his similes. Odysseus' relief at seeing land is compared to the relief of children at their sick father's recovery from illness (5.394). Telemachos' and Odysseus' reunion is compared to the grief of vultures separated from their chicks (16.216). Odysseus' feelings of outrage about the events in his home are illustrated by comparison to a bitch's protective attitude towards her threatened pups (20.14). Penelope illustrates her uncertainty as to her future and that of Telemachos by reference to the myth of the daughter of Pandareos whose actions resulted in the death of her only son (19.518). The depth of Odysseus' emotion on hearing Demodokos sing of the Trojan war is compared to the feelings of grief of a woman being led away to captivity as her husband is dying (8.523).

Telemachos rejects any suggestion of familial ties with Antinoos when he sarcastically compares Antinoos' concern for him, Telemachos, to that of a father (17.397).

Another important theme in the *Odyssey* is that of *nostos*. The poet draws upon the subjects of homecoming and home with regard to man and to animals in several similes. Some similes depict arrivals home, both good and bad. These include the joy when the cows are reunited with their calves in the farmyard (10.410), the happiness of dogs upon their master's return with titbits for them (10.216), and the farmer's eagerness to reach home after a day's ploughing in the field (13.31).

When Odysseus settles himself down for the night on the shore of Scheria he is compared to a farmer on a remote plot resourcefully preserving a firebrand (5.488).

Some homecomings depicted in similes are not so straightforward. Penelope's relief at finally recognising Odysseus is compared to that of shipwrecked sailors finally reaching the shore, bruised and battered from their battle with the sea (23.233). Odysseus' actions upon arriving home, as predicted by Menelaos, are compared to those of a lion killing two uninvited fawns in his lair (4.335). The maids hanged by Telemachos are compared to birds trapped in nets as they try to reach their roost (22.468). Agamemnon, who arrives home but is then slaughtered by Aigisthos, is compared to an ox slaughtered at its manger (4.535).

Staying at home is also depicted in similes as challenging. Odysseus's attempts to save himself from being dashed upon the rocks as he struggles to reach dry land are compared to an octopus' struggle to remain in its den (5.432). His emotional reaction to Demodokos' song is compared to that of a captive woman being forced to leave her home and her dying husband (8.523).

The minor theme of good kingship is reflected in only four similes, all in character-text. Three refer to the need for assistance for the house of Odysseus (2.47; 2.234; 5.12). The fourth reference to good governance is part of Odysseus-Aithon's address to Penelope when he praises her in such glowing terms that she will feel obliged to rebut his compliments with the truth of her situation (19.109).

Another theme of the *Odyssey* reflected in similes is that of civilised behaviour versus savagery. Lions are depicted as wild and savage creatures in some similes.[49] Many similes refer to aspects of

[49] 4.335; 6.130; 9.292; 22.402.

human civilisation, especially farming and production.[50] The poet's choice of subject matter in these cases, however, is not necessarily related to the theme of civilisation. As discussed earlier, the poet needs to draw upon subject matter familiar to and understood by the audience if he is to be understood.

Hospitality is rarely the subject matter of simile vehicles. It is only directly referred to in two similes. The lion gives his two unwelcome guests, the fawns, a very savage welcome by killing them in Menelaos' predictive simile about Odysseus' response to the suitors (4.335). Agamemnon compares the slaughter of his men to swine slaughtered at a feast (11.413). As mentioned earlier, the theme of hospitality acts as a backdrop to the entire story of the *Odyssey* and aberrations of normal hospitality practice are marked by similes. It is the behaviour or emotions of the character against this backdrop of hospitality practice that are illustrated by a simile.

Summary

The poet of the *Odyssey* is proficient in the use of similes to structure his narrative. He deploys more vivid similes to mark out certain key events in the narrative, including incidents such as deaths and aberrations in the practice of hospitality. He deploys some similes in pairs to illustrate cause and effect or to illustrate opposing elements. In some instances similar similes at different locations in the narrative help the listener to appreciate similarities and contrasts between scenes. Longer similes often contain thematic references.

[50] 4.413; 5.249; 5.488; 6.232; 8.124; 9.322; 9.384; 9.391; 10.410; 13.31; 19.109; 19.574; 23.159.

8. Enhancing Memorability

The next function that I looked for is the use of similes to enhance memorability. The poet may deploy a simile to make the tenor of the simile more memorable or noteworthy and thus to enhance the memorability of the narrative moment. It is essential that the simile vehicle should not be memorable for itself alone but should lead the audience back to the narrative moment. The poet may use one or more means to achieve this: he may deploy a simile to create a pause in the narrative to mark the importance of the moment, or he may choose striking subject matter for the vehicle of the simile, or, by deploying a longer simile, he may draw attention both to the simile itself and to that moment in the narrative because together they engage the audience's attention for a greater length of time. Inclusion of a simile at any point allows the poet to dwell upon a key moment through the repetition of the subject matter in a different form. Sometimes the poet may use the simile to foreground a particular point of comparison.

This function is especially important in a long oral poem because the poet is relying upon his audience to remember the key points of the story. The performances of the *Odyssey* (or longer episodes from the tale) probably varied, depending on the location and the event, but would have been performed over more than one session. Therefore, the audience would have needed to recall the outline of the story and important events told in earlier sessions. It is not known whether the poet provided a short 'recap' for his audience similar to the 'recap' sequences that occur at the beginning of many television serials, or whether he just commenced at the point of conclusion of the previous session and relied on the audience's memory and their general knowledge of the story.

Striking subject matter

Similes that include unusual or even unique subject matter in the vehicle are more memorable than those similes with subject matter that is formulaic or commonly used. For example, the numerous

comparisons of characters to unspecified gods are not very memorable because they occur frequently and their purpose, apart from metrical utility, is only to confer a positive gloss upon the character at that moment or to mark the character's entry. Yet the comparisons of Helen, Nausicaa and Penelope to *named* goddesses distinguish them from each other and contribute towards their characterisation in the story.[51]

Similes with unique subject matter are memorable because they introduce a novel image into the narrative. I have already mentioned some unique similes including the comparison of Odysseus to an octopus (5.432), to a horse rider (5.371), and to a weeping woman who is being led away to slavery (8.523). Other unique similes include Odysseus' character-text similes of his attack upon the Cyclops, first comparing their actions as he and his men plunge in the wooden pole to those of a team of shipbuilders building a boat (9.384), and then the spluttering of the Cyclops' eye to the sound made by a blacksmith tempering an axe (9.391). An unusual or unique simile vehicle sometimes contains a *hapax legomenon*, which is an indicator of the novelty of the image—at least in Homeric epic.

Most unique similes occur at important points in the narrative—death,[52] attack or preparations for attack,[53] survival against attack or other threat,[54] family or family-like reunion,[55] and characters' strong emotional responses to situations.[56]

As discussed earlier, deaths are often marked out by a simile. The killing by the Cyclops of the first two of Odysseus' men is illustrated by the simile comparing them to puppies (9.289). The simile forces the listener to appreciate the tragedy of these two men's deaths through the depiction of

[51] 4.122; 6.102; 6.151; 17.37; 19.54.
[52] 4.535 repeated at 11.411; 11.413; 22.468.
[53] 9.384; 9.391.
[54] 5.371; 5.394; 5.432.
[55] 10.410; 16.17; 16.216; 23.233.
[56] 19.205; 19.518; 20.14; 20.25.

their helplessness at the hands of the Cyclops. Their subsequent consumption by the Cyclops is also illustrated by a simile (9.292). By contrast, the deaths of four more men, two each in subsequent meals, are not as memorable.

Another death made memorable by simile is that of Agamemnon, who is compared to an ox killed at the manger. The first occasion of this simile, told by Menelaos to Telemachos, repeating Proteus' report to Menelaos himself, is memorable because it emphasises the failed *nostos* that Odysseus (and Telemachos) might suffer (4.535). Its repetition, by Agamemnon's shade to Odysseus, who had been unaware of Agamemnon's death, is all the more memorable because it is spoken by the victim himself and confirms the veracity of the earlier third-hand report (11.411).

The killing of the suitors in battle is made striking by the similes that illustrate their deaths. In these similes the poet draws upon images used in earlier similes—birds of prey for Odysseus, Telemachos and their allies (22.302) and fish for the victims (22.384). Finally, Odysseus is compared to a bloodied lion (22.402). These similes make the battle between Odysseus and the suitors more interesting, and therefore memorable.

Another occurrence of killing—the hanging of the maids—is made especially memorable by their comparison to birds being trapped in nets as they try to reach their roost (22.468). This simile accentuates both the vulnerability of the maids, who did not have an opportunity to fight back, and the cruel method of their deaths.

Dissimilarity between subject of tenor and vehicle

Yet the subject matter does not need to be unique or very unusual to be noteworthy. A simile may be striking because of the great dissimilarity between the subject in the tenor and the image in the

simile vehicle. The simile illustrating the deaths of two of Odysseus' colleagues by comparing them to puppies dashed to the ground is striking through the comparison of the hardened ex-warriors to puppies (9.289). Similarly, Odysseus' simile comparing his reunion with his men to that of cows with their calves, is noteworthy because it casts them in the role of young animals in need of parental care (10.410). The element of surprise created by the disparity between the tenor and vehicle makes the simile more memorable, in turn making the narrative moment more memorable.

Other unusual combinations of simile tenor and vehicle, some of which contain unique subject matter, are the comparison of Odysseus' relief upon seeing land to that of children seeing the recovery of their sick father (5.394), and the comparison of Penelope's relief upon finally being satisfied that Odysseus really is her husband to the relief of shipwrecked sailors reaching land (23.233).

Odysseus' spoken similes comparing his attack upon the Cyclops to that of shipbuilders and a blacksmith are excellent examples of a combination of unique subject matter and dissimilarities between the tenors and the vehicles (9.384; 9.391). The unique subject matter of the vehicles is magnified by the dissimilarity from the subject of the simile tenors.

Emotional depth of character-text similes

Character-text similes are usually memorable because the characters express their emotions directly to their internal audience. We see this in Telemachos' similes. His similes reflect his preoccupation with his father.[57]

[57] 1.308; 2.47; 17.111; 17.397.

The unusual subject matter of the mythological paradigm that Penelope draws upon when she speaks to Odysseus-Aithon grants both Odysseus and the external audience insight into her internal conflict about her future (19.518). This is one of two similes spoken by Penelope to Odysseus-Aithon. Because her voice is heard infrequently in the *Odyssey* instances of her direct speech are more memorable. Penelope's subsequent decision to hold an archery contest, describing the challenging element of the contest through a comparison to ships' props (19.574), is memorable for the wrong reasons—instead of explaining the nature of the proposed competition, the image of the simile is puzzling, at least to modern audiences. Consequently, it distracts from the important narrative moment when Penelope suddenly decides to take control of her future.

Similes are deployed to make compliments and insults more noticeable and therefore more memorable. There are several insults and compliments in character-text. Odysseus' speeches to Nausicaa and Penelope each commence with compliments expressed by way of favourable comparisons (6.151; 19.109). Nausicaa tells her handmaidens of her admiration of Odysseus' appearance after his beautification by Athene (6.243). Although her admiration is expressed in very general terms—he is like the gods—her direct speech to her handmaidens conveys the intensity of her feelings.

Menelaos' sharp criticism of Eteoneus' poor reception of Telemachos and Peisistratos is framed in a simile comparing him to a child (4.32). Telemachos reprimands Antinoos for his rudeness towards the beggar Aithon by sarcastically comparing his opinion that Telemachos should turn the beggar out of the house to the advice that a father might give his son (17.397). The beggar Iros distinguishes himself by his bad behaviour when he insults Odysseus-Aithon, comparing his talk to that of an old kitchen woman (18.27) and suggesting his teeth should be punched out as if he were a pig being

punished for eating the crop (18.29). In each of these moments the characters' use of similes in their dialogue amplifies their emotions. These character-text similes are more memorable because they are short, direct, and they are exceptions to the formality of the conversations we see elsewhere in the narrative.

Creation of a pause in the narrative

Similes may create a pause in the narrative because the tenor and the vehicle together create a repetition at the narrative moment.

Longer similes with striking subject matter are generally more memorable than short similes. This is due to a combination of factors. A longer simile allows a more detailed image to be conjured up by the simile vehicle. The image is more likely to catch the attention of the audience and require more cognitive processing. In terms of performance, the simile lengthens the pause in the narrative and requires the audience to linger and appreciate the narrative moment.

Examples of similes that slow down the narrative, guiding the audience to focus on the moment, are those that illustrate Eumaios' and Telemachos' reunion (16.17), Odysseus' and Telemachos' reunion (16.216), Penelope's tears as she weeps for Odysseus (19.205), and Penelope's relief when she recognises Odysseus as her husband (23.233). All these similes occur at important emotional moments in the story.

Pre-positioning of vehicle in similes

A reversal of the order of the tenor and vehicle in a simile may contribute to making a simile more memorable. Generally the simile vehicle follows the tenor in a simile but in some longer similes the

poet of the *Odyssey* has chosen to place the vehicle first. This pre-positioning of the vehicle can have two effects. It may create surprise for the listener because of the unexpected clause order, and it imposes a greater cognitive load because the listener must wait to find out what is being illustrated.

The poet uses this variation of order in the two main battles of the *Odyssey*—Odysseus' battle upon the sea against Poseidon in Book 5 and his battle against the suitors in Book 22. The poet deploys a series of similes to illustrate both scenes.

The construction of Odysseus' raft, Ino's arrival and departure, Odysseus' battle against the winds and the sea stirred up by Poseidon, and his settling down to sleep under bushes are illustrated by nine similes.[58] In all the longer similes, six in total, the vehicle precedes the tenor.[59]

In Book 22 there are five similes in the narrative of the battle against the suitors and its aftermath, including Telemachos' hanging of the disloyal maids.[60] Of these, the vehicle is pre-positioned in two similes (22.302; 22.468). It is debatable whether the poet really aims to surprise the audience with these reversals or whether he has simply opted for elegant variation in simile composition to vary the pattern of the narrative.

The poet's most effective use of this device is in the simile in which Penelope is compared to a shipwrecked sailor. By placing the vehicle first, the poet creates the expectation that the tenor of the simile will be Odysseus because of his earlier experience of shipwreck, but he surprises the audience with Penelope as the subject of the tenor (23.233). This makes the simile very memorable.

[58] 5.249; 5.328; 5.337; 5.353; 5.368; 5.371; 5.394; 5.432; 5.488.
[59] 5.249; 5.328; 5.368; 5.394; 5.432; 5.488.
[60] 22.299; 22.302; 22.384; 22.402; 22.468.

Repetition of similes to distinguish scenes

The poet uses repetition of similes to draw the audience's attention to important differences between scenes. I have already discussed the poet's deployment of the same simile to illustrate the divine grandeur of Menelaos' palace and King Alkinoos' palace. The repetition of the simile draws our attention to the difference between Telemachos' reaction of open-mouthed awe at his grand surrounds (4.45) and Odysseus' quiet observation (7.84).

The repetition of the simile illustrating Agamemnon's murder by comparison to an ox slain at the manger performs a slightly different function—its first occurrence, Menelaos' repetition of Proteus' words, serves as a warning to Telemachos about his father, (4.535) and its repetition, spoken by Agamemnon's shade, serves as a warning to Odysseus himself (11.411).

The repetition of the pair of similes illustrating Odysseus' beautification by Athene points to differences in the effect upon Nausicaa and upon Penelope.[61] Nausicaa, the naïve young girl hoping for marriage and dazzled by Odysseus' transformed appearance, compares him to the gods and wishes she could have a husband like him (6.243). Penelope, by contrast, is not impressed by the divine improvements and is just as suspicious as before (and possibly even more so). It takes more than a quick makeover to convince her that she should accept that this man is her husband.

Disparity of elements between tenor and vehicle

Sometimes the poet makes similes more memorable by illustrating narrative moments with events in the vehicle that do not neatly overlay those in the tenor. These occur in several forms. We see a

[61] 6.231 and 6.232; 23.158 and 23.159.

simple example of this practice in the sea-weather similes in the *Odyssey*. The poet sometimes chooses to change the location of the events in the simile vehicle from the sea to the land. For example, in Book 5, during Odysseus' battle with Poseidon, the powers of the winds and waves are illustrated by descriptions of the winds' effects upon land (5.328; 5.368). Besides introducing an element of surprise, this has the effect of illustrating the narrative event with examples familiar to a wider audience.

The poet may simply invert some aspects of the tenor. When Odysseus is trying to reach dry land, he is dragged away from the rocks by the force of the waves and his hands are stripped of skin. This event is illustrated by reference to an octopus dragged from its hole but still clinging onto pebbles with its suckers (5.432). The poet transposes Odysseus' situation—Odysseus is desperate to reach the safety of land which represents a step *towards* home, yet his struggle is illustrated by the image of the octopus being dragged reluctantly *from* its den. Odysseus unsuccessfully tries to cling onto the large rocks between him and the land, but the octopus clings successfully onto the small pebbles that form part of its den even as it is dragged away.

Sometimes the poet illustrates a character or event by evoking a scene in the simile vehicle with a different atmosphere from that in the tenor. For example, Odysseus deploys technical similes of production in a civilised society to illustrate his cruel and injurious attack upon the Cyclops (9.384; 9.391). The poet compares Nausicaa, the cossetted princess who is usually protected at home surrounded by her parents, her brothers and her handmaidens, to Artemis roaming among the mountains hunting wild animals (6.102).

Agamemnon's men are killed at a feast supposed to be in celebration of their safe arrival home but they are compared to the animals slaughtered for food at such an occasion (11.413). Odysseus' eagerness for the sun to set, so that he may leave Scheria where he is the guest of honour at a

leisurely feast, is compared to the eagerness of a farmer plodding home longing for his supper after a hard day's work (13.31).

Penelope's nightingale simile illustrating her uncertainty about whether to marry one of the suitors draws upon a mythological paradigm which illustrates the outcome of a wrong decision. Penelope refers to the unhappy consequences for the daughter of Pandareos whose choice resulted in her accidentally killing her own child (19.518) as she herself struggles to make the safest choice for herself and her son.

The concept of the safety of home is challenged in the simile illustrating the hanging of the disloyal maids (22.468). Telemachos kills the women in their home, the place where they have been disloyal to their mistress, yet the birds of the simile are trying to reach the safety of their roosts.

Another group of similes that make the narrative moment more memorable due to the dissimilarity between the tenor and the vehicle is that of 'reverse similes'.[62] Examples of these include the simile that compares Odysseus' welcome relief upon the sight of land to that of children upon seeing their father's recovery from illness (5.394), the simile comparing Eumaios' and Telemachos' reunion to that of a father reunited with his long-absent son (16.17), the simile that compares Odysseus' grief upon hearing Demodokos sing of Troy to the grief of a woman being led away to slavery (8.523), and Penelope's welcome relief upon her recognition of Odysseus illustrated by comparison to the relief of shipwrecked men reaching land (23.233).

These dissimilarities between the simile tenor and vehicle increase the cognitive load required to comprehend the simile which in turn makes it more memorable.[63]

[62] See H. Foley 1978.

[63] H. Foley (1978: 7) argues that these similes suggest the loss of stability in society and associated inversion of social roles caused through Odysseus' absence. I am not entirely convinced by Foley's theory; it ignores other similes which contain

Similes to foreground a particular point of comparison

The poet may foreground a particular point of comparison.[64] This may be a particular action, emotion or sound. We see examples of this in several similes. This may be achieved through the repetition of certain words or phrases in both the tenor and the vehicle. This is not limited to the repetition of verbs in the tenor and vehicle. For example, in Menelaos' prediction of Odysseus' actions upon returning home (4.335), he foregrounds the calamity that Odysseus will bring to the suitors by repetition in the tenor and the vehicle of the phrase ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφῆκεν/ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσει (4.339/4.340).[65] The volume of tears Penelope sheds upon hearing Aithon tell of his encounter with Odysseus is made prominent through similar phrases in the introductory words, the vehicle and the tenor (τήκετο 19.204/κατατήκετ' 19.205/κατατήκετ' and καταχεύῃ 19.206/τήκετο 19.208).[66] The noise of the storeroom door as it is opened by Penelope is foregrounded by a simile comparing it to the bellowing of a bull grazing in a field (ἀνέβραχεν 21.48/ἔβραχε 21.49).[67]

To summarise, the poet draws upon a range of devices to distinguish similes, thereby making the narrative moments marked by those similes especially interesting and memorable.

elements of inversion which cannot be explained by reference to social roles. See, for example, the simile comparing Odysseus' longing for sunset so that he may leave the feast to travel home to that of the man longing for sunset so that he may have his supper (13.31).

[64] To some extent this practice overlaps the function of explanation.

[65] Other examples of actions foregrounded by similes include Aigisthus' killing of Agamemnon (κατέπεφνεν 4.534/κατέκτανε 4.535), the movement of the Phaeacians' ship in the water (ἀειρόμενοι 13.83/ἀείρετο 13.84), Odysseus' tossing and turning as he ponders how to take revenge upon the suitors and disloyal maids (ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα 20.26/ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα 20.28), and the suitors heaped dead upon the floor (κέχυνται 22.387/κέχυντο 22.389).

[66] The poet especially foregrounds Penelope's emotions at this point in the narrative. Other similes that foreground emotions include Odysseus' internal anger at the behaviour of the disloyal maids (ὐλάει 20.15/ὐλάκτει 20.16), his relief at catching sight of land after his raft is wrecked (ἀσπάσιος 5.394/ἀσπάσιον 5.397/ἀσπαστὸν 5.398), and Penelope's relief when she finally allows herself to recognise Odysseus (ἀσπάσιος 23.233/ἀσπάσιοι 23.238/ἀσπαστὸς 23.239).

[67] Another simile that foregrounds a sound is that of the suitors as they are led down to Hades by Hermes (τρίζουσαι 24.5/τρίζουσαι 24.7/τετριγυῖαι 24.9).

9. Prolonging the Audience's Pleasure

The poet may deploy a simile at a particular point in the narrative to allow the external audience to linger over and enjoy that moment.

Although we, a modern audience, cannot know precisely what especially appealed to an ancient audience, the inclusion of some similes in the narrative provides a clue. A comparison that is completely at odds with the reality of the situation may produce a comic effect for the audience. For example, when Odysseus emerges from the bushes on Scheria, battered by the waves, naked and unwashed, but is compared to a mountain-bred lion (6.130), we the external audience know that he is no such threat. With this knowledge the simile lends a sense of absurdity to the scene of the scared girls running away from an unarmed, naked man. The comic effect is enhanced by the fact that, instead of holding out a bough towards Nausicaa as a symbol of supplication, Odysseus holds it to hide his genitals.

Other instances of similes deployed in part for the pleasure of the external audience are those in Odysseus' supplication speech to Nausicaa and later, as Aithon, in his praise of Penelope. Addressing Nausicaa, Odysseus flatters her by suggesting that she is Artemis and pours praise upon her looks and behaviour, likening her to a young palm on Delos (6.151). For the external audience, the scene is both charming and entertaining as we witness naked Odysseus pulling out all the stops to demonstrate his breeding and manners to convince Nausicaa to assist him.

Odysseus-Aithon's comparison of Penelope to a just king is another example of a simile that engages the external audience (19.109). Odysseus-Aithon flatters Penelope sufficiently to demonstrate his appreciation of the importance of good governance while providing her with the opportunity to speak of her own difficulties during her husband's absence. The external audience is a party to

Odysseus' deception and, like Odysseus, we wait to hear how Penelope will respond to his fulsome praise.

Other notable examples of similes that prolong the audience's pleasure are the similes illustrating Odysseus' beautification by Athene. These two decorative similes, the first comparing Athene's curling of his locks to the intricacies of a hyacinth flower (6.231; 23.158), the second comparing her beautification of him to a goldsmith at work (6.232; 23.159), slow the narrative, allowing us to appreciate these moments of divine enhancement.

Another simile that invites us to linger on the scene at hand is the poet's comparison of Nausicaa to Artemis who roams over the mountains (6.102). This simile illustrates Nausicaa's playing ball amongst her handmaidens, having fun and enjoying her freedom without a care in the world. The resumptive clause indicates that its main point is to emphasise Nausicaa's exceptional beauty (6.109), but the joyful description of Artemis' play with her nymphs is given as much prominence as Leto's pride in her daughter's outstanding appearance.

In conclusion, some similes invite the audience to linger over and appreciate narrative moments that otherwise might be passed over quickly.

10. Other—Competitive Dynamics

The other function that I searched for was that of competitive dynamics, in light of observations by Ready who has identified similes in the *Iliad* that act as mechanisms and sites of competition.[68] Although Ready's study focusses on similes in the *Iliad*, he asks whether similes in the *Odyssey* perform a similar function and concludes that they do not.[69] Ready points out that the differing nature of the story of the *Odyssey* does not provide moments where the characters respond to other characters' spoken similes.[70]

I did not observe any examples of such competitive dynamics in the *Odyssey*. I agree with Ready's view that Odysseus is depicted as being the best in both physical ability and oral ability and that the story of the *Odyssey* does not lend itself to the evenly matched agonistic situations of open warfare that occur in the *Iliad*. Odysseus' agonistic exchanges with the suitors and their supporters are limited by his need to maintain his beggar's disguise while planning his revenge.

Odysseus' character-text similes do not compete against the narrator. They operate mostly as devices to colour his story and to influence other characters to assist him. The poet's manipulation of Odysseus' Apologue and his 'lying tales' contributes to listeners' admiration of the poet's storytelling. The poet affiliates Odysseus' verbal abilities with his own talent through King Alkinoos' and Eumaios' praise of Odysseus' storytelling (11.368; 17.518). The poet has the final word about his skill when he compares Odysseus' stringing of his bow to the bard's stringing of his lyre (21.406).

In conclusion, there seems little opportunity for the type of competitive dynamics identified in the *Iliad* owing to the different nature of the story and its storytelling.

[68] Ready 2011.
[69] Ready 2011: 264–272.
[70] See Ready 2011: 265–267.

Final Comments

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the functions of similes in the *Odyssey* and to identify significant aspects of Homer's deployment of similes. My examination has covered a range of functions adapted from Goatly's theory of the functions of metaphor.

The similes of the *Odyssey* are flexible devices. Most perform a range of functions although shorter similes mostly perform fewer functions and they are more likely to 'spotlight' a narrative moment. The most important function of similes is to explain the moment in the main narrative to the listener. Similes are frequently deployed to communicate characters' emotions, especially at intense moments of emotion. These similes often fill lexical gaps in the narrative. Few similes are deployed solely as decorative elements. Most similes have an element of decoration, which assists in making them memorable, but similes that are mostly decorative are usually short.

Homer reconceptualises his subjects with care and detail. These reconceptualisations are often tailored to relate to one or more of the main themes of the poem. His choice of subject matter demonstrates a competent knowledge of a range of subjects relevant to his audiences. This is essential to ensure understanding of the simile and to build intimacy with listeners.

The similes are carefully placed to contribute to the structure of the poem. They provide parallels and contrasts with other events in the narrative. In this regard similes play an essential role in highlighting the differing behaviour of characters with regard to the practice of *xenia* and instances of reunion, both of which are key themes of the poem.

Although Homer deploys fewer similes in the *Odyssey*, they are no less impressive than those in the *Iliad*. The poet chooses his similes judiciously; his choices are not random and they evince careful consideration of the narrative both at the micro level—the point of deployment of the simile—and

at the macro level, bearing in mind the characters, the themes, the moment being illustrated and its location in the story.

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