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"Iliadic Lion Similies: Rethinking Heroic Greatness"

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One of the characteristic features of the Homeric poems is the simile. These figures which range in size from two words, to multiple lines, create a point of comparison between the immediate situation in which they are placed, the narrative as a whole, and aspects of life away from the battlefield.¹ Moreover, according to Leonard Muellner, since the conventions of Homeric poetry are implied and shared by the performer and his audience, conventions no longer accessible to us with a written text, one way in which we can restore the simile's traditional meaning is by comparing it to other similes in the poem.² Thus, in this essay I shall be examining, in particular, two lion similes given to Agamemnon in Book 11 and Menelaus in Book 17. These similes are related, and thus significant, because the narrative repeats verbatim two of their lines. In what follows I shall argue that the result of this verbatim repetition is that the audience's attention is directed to a motif that expands beyond the immediate context of the similes and is directly tied to larger Iliadic themes. The verbatim

¹ See Fränkel 1921, especially his chapter on the organic relationship between the simile and the narrative on pages 104 to 107. Also see: Scott 1974:38-42; Edwards 1991:30-34; Moulton 1977:18; Fagan 2001:18; Coffey 1957:117; Martin 1997:139; Buxton 2004:139-155 and Foley 1999.4ff. Furthermore, Scott 1974:51ff also argues that the placement of the simile within the narrative works with the traditional methods of oral composition. See also Hampe 1952 who draws a connection between the Homeric similes and Mycenaean art thus indicating that the similes are part of a tradition rather than simply being ornamental figures, or later additions. Furthermore, de Jong 1987:93-95 expands this traditional aspect of similes by arguing that similes are oral repetitions familiar to the audience.

²Muellner 1990

repetition of the two lines is fundamental in my analysis especially given the groundbreaking research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord: in Homeric poetry, similar ideas are expressed using similar words.³ My goal in this essay is to provide an interpretation for these two lion similes by examining them in light of this larger motif.⁴ I will argue that the motif's function is to use the similes to indicate at the same time both the excellence of the heroes to whom they are applied, and to point to another, greater hero.⁵ Thus duality, I argue, encourages the audience to view this motif as a smaller representation of the larger plot of the poem which is centered on the absence of Achilles.

The two lion similes under examination are applied to Agamemnon in Book 11, and to Menelaus in Book 17.⁶ They describe the brothers as lions which descend upon a herd of cattle representing the Trojans. The similes are of interest for two reasons: first, they are utilized in order to mark the greatness of a

³ For the relationship between formulaic repetition and themes, see Parry: 1971; Nagy: 1999, especially page 1. Nagy argues that based on Milman Parry's work with traditional oral poetics the definition of *traditional* must be applied to form (diction) and theme. Based on this reasoning, diction, according to Nagy 1999.1 is "*the most accurate expression of the theme.*" See also Nagy 1994.17ff; Lord 1960, especially Chapter 4; Kirk 2001:24; and Arend 1933:25 who argues that a poet uses few words to express "necessary things" which he understands as the representation of the greater idea or theme present in a single scene.

⁴ See Whitman 1958:249ff who has identified a number of motifs within the poem that are replicated at different points in the narrative and span over multiple books. Whitman, comparing these patterns to geometric art, calls them "geometric structure" and argues that their existence points to a unified *Iliad*.

⁵ For an overview of the lion as a heroic animal, see: Lonsdale 1990:39; Schapp-Gourbeillon 1981:39; Scott 1974:58-61 and Friedrich 1981.

⁶ These two lion similes are extended similes. See Tsagarakis 1982: 140ff; and Scott: 1974 for discussions of the extended simile.

hero in battle;⁷ and second, the manner by which the lion kills the cattle is identical. The two similes read,

οἷ δ' ἔτι κάμ μέσσον πεδῖον φοβέοντο βόες ὥς,
 > ἄς τε λέων ἐφόβησε μολῶν ἐν νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ
 πάσας· τῆ δέ τ' ἰὴ ἀναφαίνεται αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος·
τῆς δ' ἐξ αὐχέν' ἔαξε λαβῶν κρατεροῖσιν ὄδοῦσι
πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἶμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει·
 (11.172-176)

Ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τε λέων ὄρεσίτροφος ἀλκί πεπιοθῶς
 βοσκομένης ἀγέλης βοῦν ἀρπάσῃ ἢ τις ἀρίστη·
τῆς δ' ἐξ αὐχέν' ἔαξε λαβῶν κρατεροῖσιν ὄδοῦσι
πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἶμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει (17. 61
 64)

taking her neck in his mighty jaws, he breaks it first,
 then he greedily gulps down the blood and all the inward
 parts;⁸
 (11.174-176 and 17.63-64).

Thus, lines 11.174-176, and 17.63-64 are repeated verbatim in both comparisons.

Agamemnon is given his simile while he is in *aristeia*.⁹ Prior to Agamemnon's entrance into battle, the Achaean army was chased off the battle field, across the ditch and forced to fight near their ships (8.338-343).

Agamemnon then enters battle following his arming scene and chases some of

⁷ I refrain from using the term *aristeia* in this instance. Although Agamemnon is in an *aristeia* when he receives his lion simile, Menelaos is not. As Clark 2004 indicates (pp. 134ff), the arming scene precedes Agamemnon's *aristeia* (11.15-44), but one does not precede Menelaos' actions in battle when he protects the corpse of Patroklos. However, "heroic greatness" can be used to describe the manner in which Menelaos performs in battle, thus earning him the lion simile. Compare also Krischer 1971.36ff

⁸ All translations are my own.

⁹ See Armstrong 1958

the Trojans back to their gates, while others cluster together in the middle of the field. The Trojans are then compared to cattle which react fearfully by stampeding when they see a lion approaching (11.172). The simile indicates that death is near for one of the cows (11.174) as they sense the presence of the lion though it is night (11.173). The simile then shifts its attention onto the actions of the lion as it kills the cow. The lion first kills the animal, and then devours the innards (11.175-176). The simile thus begins by comparing the Trojans to helpless cattle and ends by comparing Agamemnon to a lion.

The simile given to Menelaus in Book 17 differs slightly from the Agamemnon simile. Menelaus defends the body of Patroklos from the Trojans who are attempting to strip Achilles' armor from the corpse. Menelaus is then compared to a confident lion (17.61) that is wild (17.62) and grabs hold of the best cow in the pasture (17.63). Then, the lion kills the cow in the same manner as the Agamemnon simile (17.63-64) by breaking the neck and then devouring the insides. Those who were stationed to protect the cattle, the men and the dogs, are unable to do so and only shout from a distance because they fear the lion (17.65-67). The emphasis in this simile is on the might of the lion and the helplessness of the both cattle and their defenders.

Having provided a brief summary of the narrative context for the Agamemnon and Menelaus similes, we can enumerate the broader narrative context that is the motif in the following way:

1. The battle is turned against the Achaeans by Hector, who is given a lion simile. (8.338-343; 16.821-829).
2. One of the sons of Atreus enters into battle in an attempt to save the Achaeans and turn the battle back around against the Trojans. (11.15ff; 17.1-8).
3. The sons of Atreus are given lion similes at 11.170-178 and 17.61-69, where 11.175-176 and 17.63-64 are repeated verbatim.
4. A god intervenes to guide Hector back into battle. (11.200-209; 17.75-81).
5. Hector is given another simile, this time comparing him and the Trojans to human beings and hunting animals which chase the lion away from the herd (11.248-295; 17.106-112).
6. The battle is turned against the Achaeans by Hector (11.299ff; 17.113-118).¹⁰

In the section that follows I shall examine and provide textual evidence for all six elements of the motif. Let us begin by examining the first component of the motif; that is, the battle turned against the Achaeans by Hector.

In element 1 of the motif, Hector turns the battle against the Achaeans. In the first example, this turning of the battle by the Trojans is seen in Book 8,

ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τε κύων συὸς ἀγρίου ἢ λέοντος
ἄππηται κατόπισθε ποσὶν ταχέεσσι διώκων

¹⁰ For a discussion on ring composition, see Scodel 2008:49-50

> ἰσχία τε γλουτούς τε, ἔλισσόμενόν τε δοκεύει,
ὥς Ἴκτωρ ὤπαζε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοῦς,
αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἳ δὲ φέβοντο. (8.338-342)

Hector is given a lion simile in order to describe the manner in which he pursues the Achaeans. There is a relationship between Hector's actions in battle, his lion simile, and the actions and lion simile of Agamemnon in Book 11. Not only are both the heroes performing very well in battle, but Hector's good performance in particular, turns the battle against the Achaeans; an occurrence which leads to Agamemnon's *aristeia*. Because these two episodes are part of the same motif, the narrative marks this connection by verbatim repetition.

Thus, the Agamemnon simile in Book 11 reads,

ὥς τοὺς Ἀτρεΐδης ἔφεπε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
> αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἳ δ' ἐφέβοντο.
(11.177-178)

And, the Hector simile in Book 8,

ὥς Ἴκτωρ ὤπαζε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοῦς,
αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἳ δὲ φέβοντο. (8.341-342)

Bryan Hainsworth notes that this repeated line in Books 11 and 8 respectively is of "no especial significance".¹¹

αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἳ δὲ φέβοντο.
killing ever the last one; and they took to flight.
(8.342; 11.178)

¹¹ Hainsworth 1993. 244. However, I take issue with Hainsworth's claim based on the formulaic nature of Homeric poetry which invites the audience to draw a connection between formulaic repetition and themes. Refer to Lord 1960:30ff and Nagy 1999:4ff, who says "the entire formula, to repeat, is an accurate response to the requirements of traditional theme"

The narrative, however, is inviting its audience to make a connection between Book 8 and Book 11 and thus this repetition is significant. At the most basic level this verbatim repetition encourages the audience to see similarities in the circumstances of Hector and Agamemnon. That is to say, both are performing very well in battle against their enemy and as a result of this good performance, both are given lion similes. Thus, one can conclude that there is a concrete relationship between the lion simile given to Agamemnon in Book 11, and the lion simile given to Hector in Book 8 which initiates the sequence of events in this motif.

The first element of the motif appears again in Book 16 when Hector is given a lion simile after killing Patroklos:

νείατον ἐς κενεῶνα, διὰ πρό δὲ χαλκὸν ἔλασσε·
 > δούπησεν δὲ πεσῶν, μέγα δ' ἤκαχε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν·
 ὡς δ' ὅτε σὺν ἀκάμαντα λέων ἐβίησατο χάρμη,
 ὣ τ' ὄρεος κορυφῆσι μέγα φρονέοντε μάχεσθον
 πίδακος ἀμφ' ὀλίγης· ἐθέλουσι δὲ πῖεμεν ἄμφω·
 πολλὰ δέ τ' ἀσθμαίνοντα λέων ἐδάμασσε βίηφιν·
 ὡς πολέας πεφνόντα Μενoitίου ἄλκιμον υἱὸν
 > Ἐκτωρ Πριαμίδης σχεδὸν ἔγχεϊ θυμὸν ἀπηύρα,
 καί οἱ ἐπευχόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 (16.821-829).

In this simile, Hector is compared to a lion who overpowers a boar as they both fight in their great pride over a single resource, the spring of water. The lion wins through the use of force the same way that Hector overpowers Patroklos. Mark

Edwards draws a connection between the Menelaus lion simile in Book 17.60ff, and the Hector simile in Book 8.338ff.¹²

Ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τε λέων ὄρεσίτροφος ἀλκί πεπιοθῶς
 βοσκομένης ἀγέλης βοῦν ἀρπάσῃ ἢ τις ἀρίστη·
 τῆς δ' ἐξ αὐχέν' ἔαξε λαβῶν κρατεροῖσιν ὄδοῦσι
 πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἶμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει
 (17.61-64)

Ἔκτωρ δ' ἐν πρῶτοισι κίε σθένει βλεμεαίνων.
 ὥς δ' ὅτε τίς τε κύων συὸς ἀγρίου ἢ ἔλεοντος
 ἄππηται κατόπισθε ποσὶν ταχέεσσι διώκων
 > ἰσχία τε γλουτοῦς τε, ἐλισσόμενόν τε δοκεύει,
 ὥς Ἔκτωρ ὤπαζε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοῦς,
 αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἳ δὲ φέβοντο.
 (8.338-342)

As Edwards indicates,¹³ the expression “ὥς δ' ὅτε τίς τε” which introduces both of these similes introduces a simile in only one other place of the *Iliad*, in Book 3.¹⁴

This unique way of introducing these similes encourages the audience to notice the similarities in the situations in which they occur. Thus, Hector in Book 8 as

¹² Edwards 1991: 69

¹³ Edwards, 1991:69

¹⁴ The simile in Book 3.33 which “ὥς δ' ὅτε τίς τε” introduces is given to Paris and compares him to a man who is suddenly taken aback when he comes across a snake. The simile reads:

ὥς δ' ὅτε τίς τε δράκοντα ἰδὼν παλινόρσος ἀπέστη
 οὔρεος ἐν βήσσης, ὑπὸ τε τρόμος ἔλλαβε γυῖα,
 ἄψ δ' ἀνεχώρησεν, ὠχρὸς τέ μιν εἶλε παρειάς (3.33)

The simile expresses the surprise that Paris feels when he encounters Menelaos on the battleground, even though he has been shaking his spear and making threats. Upon seeing Menelaos, Paris quickly withdraws from battle (See Kirk 2001:270). The use of the snake simile in this context to describe Paris' reaction to seeing Menelaos, who as Kirk 2001.270 argues, is not the best of the Achaeans, questions the heroic identity of Paris. This questioning is further accomplished by the rebukes of his brother in lines 40ff. Moreover, Muellner 1990 argues that the identity which Paris assumes is that of dancer, not warrior. See also Fagan 2001 who argues that the horse simile given to Paris at 6.506ff serves to re-establish Paris as a warrior once his status as such has been damaged. This questioning of Paris' warrior status occurs because of the presence of a greater warrior. Thus, this Paris simile is in keeping with the notion that a hero's status can also be viewed as being in relation to the presence or absence of a greater hero from the battlefield.

defender of Troy turns the battle against the Achaeans. Likewise, Menelaus in Book 17 as defender of the body of Patroklos keeps the Trojans at bay. Thus, in both occurrences of the motif both in Book 11 and Book 17, it is Hector's actions, followed by his lion simile, that initiate the sequence of events leading to the Agamemnon and Menelaus lion similes.

The second element of the motif is the entrances of one of the sons of Atreus into battle. This element is tied to the first element because it is Hector's good performance in battle that requires an intervention by one of the sons of Atreus. Agamemnon's entrance takes place the day after the battle turned against the Achaeans by Hector in Book 8. Immediately following the arrival of Eris in Book 11¹⁵ Agamemnon receives an arming scene.¹⁶ Thus, Agamemnon throughout Book 11 performs as a hero should during an *aristeia*.¹⁷

Similarly, in Book 17 Menelaos, by protecting the body of Patroklos, attempts to turn the course of events in the Achaean favour. Menelaos, like Agamemnon in Book 11, sees that the battle has turned against the Achaeans and enters into battle and rages (17. 8). Although Menelaus is not in an *aristeia* he still performs well in battle by defending the corpse of Patroklos from the Trojans.

¹⁵ For an analysis of the events of Book 11 and the *aristeia* of Agamemnon, refer to Rabel (1990).

¹⁶ For on the role of the arming scene as a type scene which signals the beginning of an *aristeia*, see Clark 2004: 134.

¹⁷ The narrative lists many of the kills Agamemnon makes during his *aristeia*. For example: at line 90 for, he kills Bienor and Oïleus in his fury (line 98). Then, he goes on to kill Isos and Antiphos, both sons of Priam (lines 101ff)

The third element of the motif is the lion similes which in terms of their content, were already discussed in some detail. Scholarship has indicated that the lion simile marks a hero's success against the opposite side.¹⁸ For example, Annie Schnapp-Gourbeillon argues that the lion is a symbol which marks heroic greatness.¹⁹ Thus, Agamemnon's simile is in keeping with what would be expected from a hero who is performing well in battle. That is to say, we see from this simile, just as we saw from the brief lion simile given to Hector in Book 8.338, a hero compared to a lion that is in a position of power over prey, who then turns the tide of battle against the other side.

In addition, the lion simile given to Menelaos in Book 17 serves a similar function within his heroic success in protecting the body of Patroklos. It is also in keeping with Menelaos' success after entering battle in an attempt to turn the battle back in favour of the Achaeans.

Although we examined each of the similes in detail, let us take a moment to compare and contrast the two similes at 11.170-178 and 17.61-69 in relation to each other. Both Agamemnon's and Menelaos' similes describe a lion (representing a hero) descending upon a herd of cattle (representing the Trojans)

¹⁸ See Lonsdale 1990:39; Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1981:39; Scott 1974:58-61

¹⁹ Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1981:39. She argues that the lion is associated with the heroic *menos*. Such a notion holds true when looking at the lion similes given to Hector in Books 8 and 16, and the lion similes given to Agamemnon and Menelaos in Books 11 and 17 respectively. In both these examples, we see a hero expressing extraordinary heroic might against the enemy; thus the lion simile, as Schnapp-Gourbeillon argues, is in keeping with this might and excellence on the battlefield. For more on this notion, see to Lonsdale 1990: 39; Scott 1974: 58ff; Friedrich 1981; and Krischer 1971

as they are in pasture. For Agamemnon the kill occurs at night while for Menelaos no time is specified explicitly. In both similes the lion chooses a member of the herd and kills it in the same fashion. The poem makes it explicit that first the lion breaks the cow's neck, then eats the blood and guts (11.175-176; 17.63-64).

The similes differ in that for Agamemnon, the simile ends after the lion kills the cow; whereas for Menelaos, the simile goes on to describe the herdsman and the dogs that are unable to drive off the lion from the cattle. Thus, the ones entrusted to protect the cows are unable to do so. Agamemnon is in an *aristeia* when he receives his simile but Menelaos, although performing well in his defence of the body of Patroklos, is not.

In both the similes, the point of comparison does not occur until a few lines have passed and involves comparing the Trojans to cattle, and the Achaean hero to a lion. Thus, the lion similes function by marking the Achaean hero as one who performs well as a hero and kills the enemy. Moreover, because the Trojans are pointedly compared to helpless cattle, the absence of the one who can protect them becomes apparent. Thus, these two similes within this motif are used to both indicate heroic excellence, and to point to another hero.

The absent hero is Hector, and thus the next element of the motif is the divine intervention regarding Hector's actions. In Book 11 prior to the lion simile

of Agamemnon, Zeus draws Hector out of battle to protect him (11.163-165).

After Agamemnon's simile, Zeus sends Iris with a message. She says,

Ἔκτορ υἱὲ Πριάμοιο Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντε
 Ζεὺς με πατὴρ προέηκε τεῖν τάδε μυθήσασθαι.
 ὄφρ' ἂν μὲν κεν ὄρῳς Ἀγαμέμνονα ποιμένα λαῶν
 θύνοντ' ἐν προμάχοισιν, ἐναίροντα σίχας ἀνδρῶν,
 τόφρ' ὑπόεικε μάχης, τὸν δ' ἄλλον λαὸν ἄνωχθι
 μάρνασθαι δῆϊοισι κατὰ κρατερὴν ὑσμίνην.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κ' ἦ δουρὶ τυπεῖς ἢ βλήμενος ἰῶ
 εἰς ἵππους ἄλεται, τότε τοι κράτος ἐγγυαλίξει
 κτείνειν, εἰς ὃ κε νῆας ἐϋσσέλμους ἀφίκηαι
 δῦη τ' ἠέλιος καὶ ἐπὶ κνέφας ἱερὸν ἔλθη.
 (11.200-209).²⁰

Shortly after, at line 284, Agamemnon withdraws from battle because of a spear-wound and Hector re-enters.

Similarly, in Book 17, it is the god Apollo who advises Hector when to fight, by taking the form of Mentès. Apollo says to Hector,

Ἔκτορ νῦν σὺ μὲν ὦδε θεεῖς ἀκίχητα διώκων
 ἵππους Αἰακίδαο δαΐφρονος· οἱ δ' ἀλεγεινοὶ
 ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι δαμήμεναι ἢ δ' ὀχέεσθαι
 ἄλλω γ' ἢ Ἀχιλῆϊ, τὸν ἀθανάτη τέκε μήτηρ.
 τόφρα δέ τοι Μενέλαος ἀρήϊος Ἀτρέος υἱὸς
 Πατρόκλω περιβὰς Τρώων τὸν ἄριστον ἔπεφνε
 Πανθοῖδην Εὐφορβον, ἔπαυσε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς.
 (17.75-81)

In both these examples we see a similar course of events. First, Hector is not present in battle during the raging of Agamemnon and Menelaos. Then, Hector is

²⁰ Hector is told by Iris to wait because Agamemnon is in *aristeia*. Brain Hainsworth 1993:246 notes that “the essential (implicit) point is μή προμάχιζε, for that is what the hero would naturally do in order to check a victorious opponent.” (My own additions in parenthesis). Since προμαχίζω refers to being champion over opponents, it follows from Hainsworth’s argument that Zeus does not want Hector to champion over Agamemnon during his *aristeia*.

urged by a god to enter battle. The helplessness of the Trojans which was alluded to in the lion similes when they are compared to cattle is as a result of Hector's absence from battle.

Hector's re-entrance into battle is the next component of the motif in Books 11 and 17 and is marked by a lion simile for Hector. In Book 11 we read,

Ἔκτωρ δ' ὡς ἐνόησ' Ἀγαμέμνονα νόσφι κίοντα
 Τρωσί τε καὶ Λυκίοισιν ἐκέκλετο μακρὸν αὖσας·
 Τρῶες καὶ Λύκιοι καὶ Δάρδανοι ἀγχιμαχηταὶ
 ἀνέρες ἔστε φίλοι, μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς.
 οἴχετ' ἀνὴρ ὤριστος, ἐμοὶ δὲ μέγ' εὐχος ἔδωκε
 Ζεὺς Κρονίδης· ἀλλ' ἰθύς ἐλαύνετε μώνυχας ἵππους
 ἰφθίμων Δαναῶν, ἴν' ὑπέρτερον εὐχος ἄρησθε.
 Ὡς εἰπὼν ὄτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸν ἐκάστου.
 ὡς δ' ὅτε ποῦ τις θηρητῆρ κύνας ἀργιόδοντας
 σεύη ἐπ' ἀγροτέρῳ συῖ καπρίῳ ἢ λέοντι,
 ὡς ἐπ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν σεύε Τρῶας μεγαθύμους
 Ἔκτωρ Πριαμίδης βροτολοιγῷ ἴσος Ἄρηϊ.
 (11.284-295)

In Book 17, we see a similar unfolding of events,

Εἶος ὁ ταῦθ' ὄρμινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμὸν
 τόφρα δ' ἐπὶ Τρώων στίχες ἤλυθον· ἦρχε δ' ἄρ' Ἔκτωρ.
 αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἐξοπίσω ἀνεχάζετο, λείπε δὲ νεκρὸν
 ἐντροπαλιζόμενος ὡς τε λῆς ἠϋγένειος,
 ὃν ῥα κύνες τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀπὸ σταθμοῖο δίωνται
 ἔγχεσι καὶ φωνῇ· τοῦ δ' ἐν φρεσὶν ἄλκιμον ἦτορ
 > παχνοῦται, ἀέκων δέ τ' ἔβη ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιο·
 (17.106-112)

In both these instances, we see a similar course of events. First, Hector enters into battle once again and urges the Trojans; second, a simile comparing the Achaean heroes to a lion being chased away by men. That is to say, the same

lion which frightened the pointedly defenceless herd of cattle in the similes at 11.170-178 and 17.61-69, is now being chased away by the guardian of the cattle. This image is in keeping with what we saw concerning the two lion similes; that is, the similes point both to Agamemnon's Menelaos' greatness, and the vulnerability of the Trojans. Moreover, once Hector re-enters battle after being urged to do so by divine intervention, the lion which represents one of the sons of Atreus is unable to defend itself from the approach of the men who drive it away. Thus, although the similes at 11.170-178 and 17.61-69 point to the greatness of Agamemnon and Menelaos, they also point to the heroic greatness of Hector who is able to urge the Trojans to fight off their attackers as he re-enters battle. In this way, within this particular motif, the lion simile both marks a hero's greatness over the enemy, and points to a greater hero. The motif consequently ends where it began: the battle has once more been turned by Hector against the Achaeans.

However, this motif is also a summary of a larger motif; that is, the motif of a hero who causes *pêma* for his own fighting force (*laos*) when he is absent from battle, and *pêma* on the enemy when he is present in battle.²¹ When Hector is absent from fighting, his *laos* is compared to a herd of cattle who are defenceless from the onslaught of a lion. When he is in battle, however, the lion that threatened his *laos* is chased away, and the *laos* is safe again. This motif which

²¹ Nagy 1999: 77

is repeated twice with Hector and the sons of Atreus is a smaller version, embedded within the narrative, of the Achilles motif.²² Hector, like Achilles, when absent from battle, brings *pêma* to his laos and when present in battle brings *pêma* to the enemy.²³ This motif therefore functions as microcosm of the entire poem where Hector serves as an anticipatory doublet for Achilles.

The motif, however, does not only mirror the larger one. Hector in the small motif, although representing Achilles by his absence from battle and his glorious return to battle also becomes a victim to the same principle that is used to mark his excellence over Agamemnon and Menelaos. In other words, although Hector performs well in battle, even turning it (just as Agamemnon and Menelaos do), his greatness within the motif also points to a greater hero just as we saw with the Agamemnon and Menelaos.²⁴ Ironically, like Agamemnon and Menelaos, Hector too will be overwhelmed and killed by the greatest warrior in

²² Karl Reinhardt 1961 has argued that the emphasis in Book 11 is on Achilles. He says, “*der erste Teil des elften auf der Seite der kämpfenden Achäer, der zweite Teil auf der Seite des untätigen Achill*” (p. 251). Thus, just as Hector’s absence created a situation where the Trojans were vulnerable, Achilles’ absence creates a situation where the Achaeans are vulnerable. Thus, the events that occur in the first example of the motif, replicated again in the second example, are smaller representations of the larger motif centered on the absence of Achilles.

²³ Nagy 1999

²⁴ Compare the lion simile that Achilles himself uses in Book 22. He says,

“Ἐκτορ, μή μοι, ἄλαστε, συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε·
ὥς οὐκ ἔστι λέουσι καὶ ἀνδράσιν ὄρκια πιστά,
οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες ὁμόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν,
ἀλλὰ κακὰ φρονέουσι διαμπερές ἀλλήλοισιν” (22.261-264)

Achilles’ simile contrasts lions and men as different beings that cannot have ὄρκια πιστά. This notion sits apart from the previous lion similes where men and lions were comparable. This division then, between lions and men made by Achilles, occurs at the climax of the narrative when Hector himself is about to be killed. Hector is compared to the lion, while Achilles compares himself to a man. Thus, the superiority of human beings over the lions, a superiority we saw replicated previously when Agamemnon and Menelaos were compared to lions chased away by humans is applied to Hector himself.

the *Iliad*, Achilles.²⁵ In other words, Hector acts like Achilles when he returns and overwhelms the Achaeans, but he himself is later overwhelmed by Achilles as the Achaeans were. The lion similes in this motif therefore serve a more complex function than simply to mark a hero's greatness; they invite the audience to examine the hero's own greatness, and point to the excellence of another, greater hero.

The Homeric similes in the past have been considered by scholars as inappropriate additions to the narrative.²⁶ Other scholars like Fränkel, however, have made the case for an organic relationship between the similes and the narrative in which they are placed.²⁷ In this essay I examined two lion similes, dictionally identical in two lines, with the belief that Homeric repetition is not accidental or unsuitable. That is to say, I approached the issue by taking Fränkel's stance and attempted to link the similes to the narrative. After widening the scope of my investigation into the narrative surrounding both similes, a "geometric" motif emerged which pointed at the greatness of the heroes in battle who were given the similes, and the absence of the greater hero, Hector. The motif of the absent greater hero I argued is also small-scale example of the larger motif of the absent Achilles who causes *pêma* when not present in battle on his *laos*, and *pêma* on the enemy when present in battle. The similes therefore in

²⁵ Nagy 1999

²⁶ See for example, Shipp 1972

²⁷ See Fränkel 1921

this motif invite the audience to interpret heroic greatness in battle on two levels: first, in terms of the superiority of one hero when compared to lesser heroes; second the inferiority of a hero when compared to a greater, absent hero. These similes, though identical in only two lines, encompass the formulaic nature of oral poetry, as exemplified in the Homeric corpus, by encouraging the audience to seek a repetitive pattern in the narrative that is structured geometrically. In turn, this repetitive pattern or motif contains within itself themes regarding a hero's greatness.

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