

LIONS IN PARADISE:¹

LION SIMILES IN THE *ILLIAD* AND THE LION CUBS OF *IL.* 18.318–22

Achilles mourning for Patroclus is compared to a lion which grieves when it returns to find its cubs have been stolen by a deerhunter (ἐλαφθηβόλος):² the lion is grief-stricken and sets out to track down (ἔχινι' ἐρευνῶν)³ the hunter who has stolen its young (*Il.* 18.318–22).⁴ This image of the grieving lion conveys Achilles' sense of loss⁵ and anticipates the image later used of Achilles at Patroclus' funeral (*Il.* 23.222–3), of a father grieving as he burns the bones of his newly married son. As Edwards⁶ points out, the lion's circumstances are closely parallel to those of Achilles: the lion had left its cubs alone and returned too late to save them, rather as Achilles allowed Patroclus to fight on his own and returned too late to save him. The simile of the lion who lost his cubs through leaving them alone illustrates the consequences of Achilles' failure to stand by Patroclus. It contrasts with an earlier simile (*Il.* 17.133–6) comparing Ajax, who bestrides the body of Patroclus and defends it, to a lion who was leading his young through the forest and defended them when they met with hunters.⁷ This article considers why the hunters who appear in these two similes would want to steal the cubs, and the animals' eventual destination. The fate of the cubs is set against what attitude, if any, the poet and his audience had towards lions, and what they might have known about hunting lions.

Lions, together with leopards and wild boar, are regarded as the most mighty of beasts (*Il.* 17.20–1). The *Iliad* uses more than twenty-eight extended similes in which lions attack domestic cattle or timid wild animals to describe heroic aggression.⁸ Where domestic animals are the lions' prey, the Homeric similes may show

¹ Greek παράδεισος derives from Iranian *pairi daeza*, enclosure: P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1980–3), ii.857.

² Some have thought that ἐλαφθηβόλος indicates the opportunistic nature of the hunter's theft, suggesting that the hunter was in pursuit of deer, not lions: see A. Schnapp Gourbeillon, *Lions, héros, masques: les représentations de l'animal chez Homère* (Paris, 1981), 45. E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979), 85 refers to 'the malicious intelligence of the human creature' in contrast with 'the simple self protectiveness of the lion'. However, hunting is intrinsically opportunistic: see below.

³ This use of a derivative of ἔχινος is repeated in the simile of the dog tracking (ἀνιχνεύων) a doe, used to describe Achilles' pursuit of Hector (*Il.* 22.192): S. H. Lonsdale, 'Creatures of speech: lion, herding, and hunting similes in the *Iliad*', *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 5 (Stuttgart, 1990), 93–4.

⁴ On similes concerning Achilles and Patroclus which involve the parents–children motif, see C. Moulton, 'Similes in the Homeric poems', *Hypomnemata* 49 (Göttingen, 1977), 101–6.

⁵ Sch. bT ad *Il.* 18.318–22 (=H. Erbse, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem* [Berlin, 1969–88], iv.494–5) comments that nothing could more forcibly (ἐμφαντικώτερον) show Achilles' love for Patroclus than the lion's reaction to the taking of the cubs.

⁶ See M. W. Edwards in G. S. Kirk (ed.), *The Iliad: A Commentary*, i vi (Cambridge, 1985–93), v.184, on *Il.* 18.318–22.

⁷ Moulton (n. 4), 105–6.

⁸ G. E. Markoe, 'The lion attack in Archaic Greek art: heroic triumph', *Classical Antiquity* 8 (1989), 86–115: see 88–9 and his list at 114–15, where he also lists five additional abbreviated similes used to describe the speed and aggressiveness of the hero. To his list should be added *Il.*

men attempting to drive the lion away with javelins and burning faggots, while dogs are encouraged to bark to frighten the lion off. The similes are thought to result from Homer's own observation of the world around him, presumably in Ionia.⁹ Shipp categorized the similes in which men try to drive off a marauding lion from their flocks and herds as 'agrarian scenes'. He rightly took the view that the similes reflected the world of the poet and his audience, for whom repelling a lion from the σταθμός was a contemporary reality. However, Shipp was wrong in thinking that lion hunting, as exemplified by the scenes on the lion hunt dagger from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae, belonged to the aristocratic past, and that in the similes lions are seldom, if ever, hunted in the usual sense.¹⁰

According to S. West, the poet's information on the habits of lions is more likely to result from hearsay rather than observation.¹¹ Fränkel seems to have thought that poets might have avoided energetic pursuits like lion-hunting.¹² There is, however, no reason why the poet should not have experience of lions: they were not eliminated from the fauna of modern Turkey until the last third of the nineteenth century A.D. They were found in the dense vegetation of river banks, in the same areas as wild boar.¹³ Lions were found also in northern Greece in the Classical period:¹⁴ by the

17. 109–2; possibly *Il.* 22. 262–4 (Achilles' parable of the oaths, addressed to Hector); and abbreviated similes *Il.* 5.476, *Il.* 5.782 and *Il.* 17.20, all listed by Lonsdale (n. 3), 143, Appendix D. Edwards (n. 6), 36 n. 43 also lists *Il.* 17.133–6 and *Il.* 18. 317–22, the two similes (already mentioned) concerning lions and their cubs. The lion similes tend to be associated with heroes of the first rank (Achilles, Hector, Diomedes, Telamonian Ajax, Menelaus): see Schnapp-Gourbeillon (n. 2), 86–94 and (for Diomedes) 95–131.

Edwards (n. 6), 36 n. 43 is probably wrong to identify the lions found in Greece down to the Classical period with 'a short-maned or maneless species which did not roar', as distinct from the African lion. Manes are grown by most adult lions, and where lions appear without manes, the artist is more likely to be indicating gender than a sub-species (L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography*, Cambridge Classical Studies [Cambridge, 1988], 44). Edwards's distinction between 'the maned lion presumably hunted by kings for sport (the type of visual art), and the lion of the similes, which usually attacks domestic animals and is pursued by villagers and dogs' is likewise unsafe: see Markoe (n. 8), 100 and 101 fig. 6 (whom Edwards cites on visual representations of lions) for an Assyrian image of a god subduing a pair of lions, of which the lioness has no mane, and pl. 16 for a pedimental group from the Olympieion in Athens showing a lion and lioness, both maned, attacking a bull. The lions depicted by the artists, and probably by the poet, are the short-maned lions formerly found in northern Greece, Asia Minor, and the Near East. On inaccurate details (manes on lionesses) by artists, see G. Lorenz, *Tiere im Leben der alten Kulturen* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar, 2000), 87 and 89.

⁹ Ο γὰρ Όμηρος ἀπὸ τῶν γινγνωσκομένων πᾶσι ποιῆται τὰς ὁμοιώσεις: Sch. A on *Il.* 16.364 (=Erbse [n. 5]), iv.242; 364a); see also O. Korner, *Die homerische Tierwelt* (Munich, 1930), 2 (all animals in the Homeric similes were found on the coast of Asia Minor in the time of Homer); Edwards (in G. S. Kirk, n. 6), v.35; R. Janko (in G. S. Kirk, n. 6), v.291, on *Il.* 15.596–8.

¹⁰ G.P. Shipp, *Studies in the Language of Homer* (Cambridge, 1972), 212–13.

¹¹ S. West, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* i. (Oxford, 1988), 213 on *Od.* 4. 335–40.

¹² H. Fränkel, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse* (Göttingen, 1977), 62–3 n. 3.

¹³ H. Kumerloeve, 'Die Säugetiere (Mammalia) der Türkei', *Veröffentlich. d. zool. Staatsammlung München* 18.71–158 (Munich, 1975), 103. N. J. Gejvall, 'The fauna of the successive settlements at Troy: second preliminary report' *Kungl. Humanistika Vetensamfundet i Lund, Årsberättelse (Bull. de la Soc. Royale des Lettres* 1938–9), 5, reports teeth and bones of many leopards and lions in Troy VIII and IX.

¹⁴ See Herodotus 7.125–6 for lions between the rivers Nestus and Achelous: they preyed on the camels in Xerxes' supply train.

time of Aristotle¹⁵ they were rare, but they did not die out there until the fourth century A.D.¹⁶ In southern Greece lions seem to have become extinct before the Classical period.¹⁷ The latest evidence for lions in central Greece is the shoulder blade of a lion from Kalapodi, dated to the seventh century B.C. and showing marks of butchery and traces of burning.¹⁸ Lion bones dating from the late Bronze Age have been found at Tiryns, where they were eaten for food.¹⁹ This must mean they were hunted.

Bronze Age representations of lion hunts are epitomized by the scene on the front of the lion hunt dagger from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae, thought by Evans and Renfrew to represent a real Mycenaean lion hunt.²⁰ It shows three men armed with tall shields and spears advancing from the left to confront a lion in the centre. Between the first and second men from the left an archer takes aim at the lion. Under its forepaws lies another hunter who has fallen from behind his shield. Two other lions flee to the right. The reverse of the dagger shows lions attacking

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* 6.31 refers to the rarity of lions, indicating that they are found in Europe only between the rivers Nestus and Achelous. Xenophon, *Cynegeticus* 11.1 tells of lions (and other big cats) in the area of Mt Pangaeum, Mt Cissus, Mt Olympus, and Mt Pindus, and other mountain areas capable of sustaining them. He also gives details of the methods used to hunt them: poison, weapons used from horseback, or bait over a pitfall. A lion from Mt Olympus is said to have overthrown and made away with the trophy erected by King Caranus of Macedonia for his victory over his neighbour, Cisseus (Pausanias 9.11.1). In 408 B.C. the athlete Poulydamas killed a lion from Mount Olympus with his bare hands: on the strength of his victory over the lion he was invited by Darius to struggle with three Immortals (Pausanias 6.5.4–7; Eusebius, *Chron.* 1.204). These two contests appear on the base of his statue by Lysippus at Olympia (E. Curtius and F. Adler, *Olympia* III [Amsterdam, 1966–7], 209 and pl. 55 nos 1–3).

¹⁶ Themistius (10.140a, ed. Downey) regrets their disappearance from Thessaly.

¹⁷ For bibliography, see K. Fittschen, *Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagenarstellungen der Griechen* (Berlin, 1969), 85 n. 436. See also O. Palagia, 'The royal hunt of Alexander', in A. B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham, *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford, 2000), 167–206, esp. 180.

¹⁸ See M. Stanzel, *Die Tierreste aus dem Artemis /Apollon Heiligtum bei Kalapodi in Böotien/Griechenland* (diss. Munich, 1991), 114. The shoulder blade was from a mixed deposit of the Geometric and Archaic periods. Two further bones from the foot of a fairly small lion were found in the sanctuary in an LH context. Also worth mentioning are a number of lion bones, heavily gnawed by dogs, in contexts ranging from late Bronze Age to eighth century B.C. at Kastanas in Macedonia. One bone displayed signs of burning in addition to the marks of gnawing (C. Becker, *Kastanas. Ausgrabungen in einem Siedlungshügel der Bronze- und Eisenzeit Makedoniens, 1975–1979. Die Tierknochenfunde. Prähistorische Archäologie in Südosteuropa* 5 [Berlin, 1986], 167–72, 248, 295).

¹⁹ The humerus of a lion from the time of the Shaft Graves was found at Tiryns together with bones from beef, mutton, goat, pork, red deer, and dog: all displayed carving marks and were kitchen rubbish (AA 1981, 257–8). For this and other lion bones as kitchen rubbish from Tiryns, see A. von dem Driesch and J. Boessneck, 'Die Tierreste von der Mykenischen Burg Tiryns bei Nauplion/Peloponnes', *Tiryns* 11 (Mainz, 1990), 110–11 and pl. 57. The heel bone of a lion (not kitchen rubbish) was found near burial 67 on the West Wall of Tiryns in a context dating to LHIIIB2 (c. 1230 B.C.) (AA 1979, 447–9). For lions and leopards as food at Bogazkoy, the Hittite capital, see A. von dem Driesch and J. Boessneck, *Reste von Haus- und Jagdtieren aus der Unterstadt von Boğazkoy Hattuša: Grabungen 1958–77* (Berlin, 1981); lions, 55–6 and pl. 10 nos. 32–3; leopards, 56 and pl. 10 nos. 30 and 31. A lion's tooth of MMIII LMIB date was found at Ayia Irini: two more, from different animals, were found in House M at the same site (lots M44 DE and M182) in an LMIB LHII context (J. Davis in *Thera and the Aegean World* [London, 1980], ii.288). The excavators did not think there could have been lions on Ceos, and thought the bones might be talismans: see Lonsdale (n. 3), 104 n. 3.

²⁰ A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1921–36), iii. 120, 122. C. Renfrew, *The Emergence of Civilisation* (London, 1972), 289.

Mediterranean deer. Another lion, this time stalking fallow deer, is found in the woods on the Ship Procession Fresco from Thera.²¹ In Geometric art the motif of men fighting lions is of great antiquity:²² a man armed with a dagger with his head almost in the mouth of one of two lions is shown on an early ninth-century figured bell crater from a chamber tomb at Tekke, to the north of Cnossus.²³ A gold diadem of a later ninth-century date from Kaniale Tekke tomb 2 at Cnossus shows heroes in individual combat with lions.²⁴ An early LGIIA kantharos in Copenhagen shows two lions devouring a man armed with a sword.²⁵ A hero subduing a lion appears on one of the legs of a late eighth-century four-legged stand from the Ceramicus.²⁶ Because it was believed that lions no longer existed in Greece from the eighth century B.C.,²⁷ the motif of a lion attacking, frequent in Greek art of the late eighth and seventh centuries,²⁸ was thought to derive from the Homeric similes.²⁹ However, Fittschen,³⁰ who has collected forty-five representations of encounters between men and lions from the late eighth and seventh centuries,³¹ argues that, since lion hunts are not found in Greek mythology, the representations must reflect the reality of contemporary Greece.³² His view is borne out by the evidence from Kalapodi mentioned above.

The poet of the *Iliad* seems to know about lion hunts (as opposed to simply repelling lions), since in two similes no prey is mentioned for the lions, which are attacked by men with javelins.³³ Hector is like a boar or a lion which rounds on the dogs and men pursuing him: they gather into a knot and attack the animal with javelins, giving ground each time it rushes at them (*Il.* 12.41–8). Achilles is compared (*Il.* 20.164–73) to a lion which comes on to face its attackers (*ἀντίζων*) regardless, but when it is hit by a javelin it crouches, jaws agape and foaming at the mouth: it lashes its

²¹ Morgan (n. 8), 44–8 mentions the most important Bronze Age examples of lions attacking their prey. See also her fold out colour plate. For further examples see H. G. Buchholz, 'Jagd und Fischfang', *Archaeologia Homerica* J (Göttingen, 1973), J21–27 nos. 36–132. Lorenz (n. 8), 80, is mistaken in thinking Late Bronze Age representations of lions are confined to the mainland.

²² N. Coldstream, 'The Geometric lion-fighter from Kato Phana', in J. Boardman and C. E. Vaphopoulou-Richardson (eds.) *Chios: A Conference at the Homereion in Chios 1984* (Oxford, 1986), 181–6 discusses the lion theme and its introduction from the Orient.

²³ H. Sackett, 'A new figured crater from Knossos', *BSA* 71 (1976), 117–25, ill. 123 fig. 5 and pl. 16 d and e.

²⁴ J. Boardman, 'The Kaniale Tekke tombs II', *BSA* 62 (1967), 57–75, and pls. 7–15; see pl. 12 n. 3.

²⁵ J. Carter, 'Narrative Art in the Geometric Period', *BSA* 67 (1972), 25–62 at 44 and pl. 9a.

²⁶ Carter (n. 25) 45 and pl. 10a and cf. pl. 10c: Fittschen (n. 17), 81 no. L28.

²⁷ On the need to revise this opinion, see K. Usener, 'Zur Existenz des Löwen im Griechenland der Antike', *Symbolae Osloenses* 69 (1994), 5–33.

²⁸ See Buchholz (n. 21), J28–30 nos. 142–75.

²⁹ Markoe (n. 8), 90–2.

³⁰ Fittschen (n. 17), 76–88.

³¹ They divide into (a) man eaten by two lions, (b) man eaten by one lion, (c) lion hunt by several men, (d) man in heraldic posture between two lions, (e) man with lion standing on hind legs, and (f) man against an advancing lion.

³² Fittschen (n. 17), 87. He asserts that, in the case of the Late Geometric examples, no oriental prototypes exist, so the reality must be Greek (85). Lorenz (n. 8), 80 and 87–90 argues for the existence of lions on the Greek mainland in the late Bronze Age, late Archaic, and early Classical periods.

³³ For Greek Bronze Age representations of lions wounded or struck by spears, see Buchholz (n. 21), J19 nos. 5, 9–12, 15–18. For representations of the lion hunt in Greek Art of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. see Buchholz (n. 21), J 27 nos. 133–41.

sides with its tail,³⁴ its eyes glaring; either it will kill someone or be killed itself. These situations are similar to that in *Il.* 21.573–8, where Agenor confronts Achilles like a leopard emerging from a thicket to meet the hunter:³⁵ the beast is not dismayed by the barking of the dogs but, even though pierced by a javelin, she does not desist until she has joined battle or been overthrown.

Shipp's 'agrarian scenes', the similes in which the lion appears as a 'marauder from whom the flocks and herds have to be guarded', have been contrasted with the formal lion hunts of the Near East, where the king, in a chariot, shoots arrows at lions released from cages by his servants.³⁶ Shipp was keen to argue that the lions of the Homeric similes are not hunted for sport, and indeed, that where hunters are involved with lions, the lions are not the intended quarry.³⁷ When the hunters' quarry is a boar or a lion (*Il.* 8.338–40; 12.41–8), Shipp explained the lion as a kind of stylistic accretion, 'a mere addition to a boar'. (He neglects *Il.* 5.782–3 and 17.20–1, where the lion(s) is/are mentioned before the boar.) He was rightly defending the view that the similes reflected the poet's observation of the world around him, but because he was mistakenly convinced that lions were not deliberately hunted in Asia Minor at the time the poems were composed, he was obliged to explain away references to lion hunting.³⁸ This is not justified: if the poet says *κάπριος ἤ ἐ λέων* (*Il.* 12.42) or *σὺ δὲ ἀγρίου ἢ ἐ λέοντος* (*Il.* 8.338), he is considering both alternatives, a boar and a lion, and expecting his audience to envisage them in the situation he is describing. It should be borne in mind that the lions of nineteenth-century Turkey were found in the same areas (dense vegetation of river banks)³⁹ as wild boar. Hunters would not be certain when they entered this vegetation whether they might encounter a lion or a boar, and the alternatives given in the similes reflect the uncertainty of local and contemporary reality.

Hunters normally want to kill their quarry, as in the case of the Calydonian boar or the boar that gave Odysseus his scar, or indeed, as *ἄνδρες ἀποκτάμεναι μεμῶασιν|ἀγρόμενοι πᾶς δῆμος* (assembling the whole community, men are eager to kill), the lion to which Achilles is compared in his encounter with Aeneas (*Il.* 20. 164–73).

³⁴ Fränkel (n. 12), 62 n. 3 rightly comments that the realism of this simile suggests the lion must still have existed in Asia Minor. Sch. bT on *Il.* 20.170 1 (=Erbse [n.5], v.30) refers to the *κέντρον μέλαν ὡς κεράτιον* (black goad, like a little horn) which the lion has 'under' its tail. This is in fact a little claw contained in the tassel of the tail.

³⁵ Leopards were hunted for food in the Bronze Age: see n. 19 above.

³⁶ See Schnapp Gourbeillon (n. 2), 44 n. 4: she is referring to the reliefs from the palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh in the British Museum discussed below.

³⁷ Shipp (n. 10), 213 14, followed by Schnapp Gourbeillon (n. 2), 44 58, esp. 43. It is true that lions are not the intended quarry in his cited cases of *Il.* 15.271 6, where hunters of stag or wild goat are surprised by a lion, and *Il.* 3.23 6, where a lion is attacked by hunters as it feasts on the stag or wild goat which they have killed. However, all but one of the other passages he cites do not support the view that lions are not the intended quarry: the two lions fighting over a stag (*Il.* 16.756 8) do not encounter the hunters who killed it; the shepherds who cannot drive off a lion from a carcass (*Il.* 18.161) are not hunters and have no quarry: they are repelling a marauder. While it is true that the lion cubs (*Il.* 18.319) might not have been the intended quarry of the *ἐλαφηβόλος* (stag hunter), it is certainly not 'clear that the lion is not the quarry' of the hunters who come upon the lion leading his cubs through the wood (*Il.* 17.133 6). *πᾶς δῆμος* are hunting a lion (*Il.* 20. 164 73), but the text does not support Shipp's contention that they are repelling an intruder. On this point see Schnapp Gourbeillon (n. 2), 86 7.

³⁸ Shipp (n. 10), 213.

³⁹ Lions are found on the river bank in the scene on the Shield of Achilles, where two lions spring on a bull from a herd of cattle walking by the river from the farmyard to the pasture (*Il.* 18.573 86).

If lions were hunted simply for food or to destroy them as pests, the hunters who come upon the lion cubs in the two Homeric similes with which I began would kill them. Instead they either steal the cubs (*Il.* 18.319)⁴⁰ or make an unsuccessful attempt to steal them (*Il.* 17.133–6), and I shall now attempt to establish why they would want to do this.

As others did before him,⁴¹ M. L. West argues that Achilles' mourning for Patroclus shows 'particularly close parallels of detail' with Gilgamesh's mourning for Enkidu. He draws attention to the striking similarity between the simile which compares Achilles groaning for Patroclus to a lion robbed of its cubs and the scene where Gilgamesh mourns Enkidu, pacing to and fro 'like a lioness deprived of her cubs'.⁴² To explain this similarity West postulates a poet educated in the Levant and familiar with *Gilgamesh*, who subsequently became Hellenized and practised in Greece.⁴³ Whether the Homeric simile derives directly from the simile in *Gilgamesh* is a moot point,⁴⁴ but it seems very likely that the image of the stolen cubs and the grieving lion relates to the lions of Assyria and elsewhere in the Near East, where the lion was a symbol of royal power and authority.⁴⁵ Lions 'of small breed' were common in Mesopotamia in the time of Assurbanipal, and were still found on the lower Tigris and the Euphrates as late as 1896, although by that time they were not often seen.⁴⁶

The baiting of the lion with javelins, and its courage, as described in the *Iliad*'s accounts of hunting lions and leopards, seem to echo aspects of the Assyrian reliefs of the ninth and seventh centuries B.C. where 'royal' figures, either on foot or in chariots, are shown killing lions in a hunting arena,⁴⁷ or

⁴⁰ Aelian *VH* 12.39 records a story of Alexander's marshal, Perdikkas, entering a lioness's den in her absence and stealing her cubs. According to Palagia (n. 17), 184, the story is invented.

⁴¹ See M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1999), 341–3 with n. 19 for references; also R. Mondt, 'Greek and Near Eastern mythology' in L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore, 1990), 141–98, esp. 150. Further bibliography on comparison between *Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad* is given by M. L. West (loc. cit., 335–6 n. 3).

⁴² The Ninevite recension of *Gilgamesh* 8.ii.19 reads: ša suddât mīrānīša (ša šu ud da at me ra [ni ša], 'who is deprived of her cubs'). A duplicate from Sultantepe reads: š ina šu ta a te mu ra [ni ša]. The latter reading could be taken as šuttatu, 'pitfall' (for which see J. A. Brinkman et al. [ed.], *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, [Chicago, 1956], § iii.404), the reading given by M. L. West (n. 41), 342. The Ninevite is the best manuscript and gives the better sense (*Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, m ii.105–6 s.v. mīrānu). I am grateful to Professor David Hawkins, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London, for this information in a personal communication. *Gilgamesh* 8.ii.19 appears as 8.61 in A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, i–ii. (Oxford, 2003), i.657. George comments (ii.857) that the Sultantepe variant has the look of a corruption.

⁴³ M. L. West, 'The rise of the Greek epic', *JHS* 108 (1988) 151–72 at 171.

⁴⁴ The two similes may have a common source. Certainly both are sympathetic to the bereaved lion.

⁴⁵ See J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton 1969³, 1st pub. 1950), 585–6, where King Shulgi (2075–25 B.C.) compares himself to a lion. See also Markoe (n. 8), 88 and 103–4. Vermeule (n. 2), 85–91 explains the mental association between the lion, as the ultimate adversary whose qualities are absorbed by the hero who overcomes it, and the victorious king, who somehow is a lion.

⁴⁶ R. D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories* (London, 1957), 70 n. 12, citing reports in the *Iraq Times*.

⁴⁷ J. E. Curtis and J. E. Reade, *Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum* (New York, 1995), 50–1, no. 5 (WA 124579 from Nimrud, North West Palace, c. 875–860 B.C.; 88 no. 30 (WA 1992 4 4, 1 from Nineveh, North Palace, c. 645–640 B.C.); cf. 97 no. 41 (clay model of a king killing a lion: WA93011 from Nineveh, c. 660–645 B.C.); 188 no. 194 (impression of royal seal showing king stabbing rampant lion: WA Sm2276 from Nineveh, 715

ambassu.⁴⁸ The kings regard themselves as priests under divine command to hunt, and regard the gods as their allies in the hunt.⁴⁹ The lions were captured in the wild in the mountains and forests, and killed in large numbers by the king from his chariot and in smaller numbers on foot.⁵⁰ These Assyrian lion hunts were staged affairs at festivals, with lions released from cages⁵¹ and wounded with arrows⁵² to enrage them before the king killed them with arrows, or with a mace,⁵³ lance, or dagger.⁵⁴ Then they were brought for a ceremony at which the king poured libations of wine over the lions he had killed.⁵⁵ The lion hunt might be watched by local people from a safe place.⁵⁶ In column II of a sandstone stele near the doorway of his new palace at Calah, Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.) boasts of how he killed 450 big lions, 390 wild bulls, and many other animals at the opening of his palace. He also boasts of capturing (in the wild)⁵⁷ 50 live wild bulls, 140 live ostriches, and 20 big lions. He received 5 wild elephants from the governors of Suhi and Lubda, and collected their herds of bulls, lions, ostriches, and apes to breed in flocks like domestic animals⁵⁸ to stock the royal hunting arena and zoological garden.⁵⁹ Assurbanipal

B.C.). Wild asses and bulls were also hunted in the arena: see E. Strommenger, *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien* (Munich, 1962), 117 and pls. 258–9; Pritchard (n. 45), 559.

⁴⁸ C. Tuplin, *Achaemenid Studies* (Stuttgart, 1996), 83–5 argues that the *ambassu* is not a game park (as in the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago* vol. A ii.44 s.v. *ambassu*, a loan word from Hurrian 'ambašši' [park]; see J. Friedrich, *Hehitisches Wörterbuch* [Heidelberg, 1952], 20, *ambašši*) but a temporarily demarcated, formalized, ritual killing ground.

⁴⁹ See D. J. Wiseman, 'A new stela of Aššur-naṣir pal II', *Iraq* 14 (1952), 24–44 at 31 for the stele of Assurnasirpal at Calah explaining that the gods 'Ninurta and Palil, who love my priesthood bestowed on me the beasts of the field and called me to go hunting'. See also D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, i–ii. (New York, 1926–7), i.233, no. 631; ii.391–2 nos. 1022.2, 1023.3, 1025.5 for further examples.

⁵⁰ See Luckenbill (n. 49), i.188 no. 518, 116 no. 375, 121 no. 392, 189 no. 519 for capturing lions and other animals in the wild; i.116 no. 375 for gathering the animals into cages. Tiglath Pileser (1100 B.C.) boasts of killing 120 lions on foot and 800 from his chariot: i.85–6 nos. 247–8. Adad-Nirari II (911–892 B.C.) mentions 360 lions killed from his chariot and a further number killed with the javelin on foot: i.116 no. 375.

⁵¹ See Strommenger (n. 47), 117 and pl. 257 for an alabaster relief from the North Palace of Assurbanipal (668–630 B.C.) in Nineveh, room S, showing a lion released from its cage. See Luckenbill (n. 49), ii.392 no. 1024.4 for the accompanying inscription.

⁵² For a list of Greek Bronze Age representations of lions shot with arrows, see Buchholz (n. 21), J.19–20 nos. 1–4, 6–8, 13–14, 19–20. No. 21 refers to a lion hunted with the bow.

⁵³ Or axe. For this subject in a relief from room S of the North palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, see Strommenger (n. 47), 117–18 and pls. 260–1. For the accompanying inscription, see Luckenbill (n. 49), ii.39102 no. 1023.3.

⁵⁴ See Luckenbill (n. 49), i.86 no. 248 for lions killed with the javelin; and with a dagger, ii.392 no. 1024.4. See Buchholz (n. 21), J20–21 nos. 22–35 for Greek Bronze Age representations of lions hunted with lance, sword, or javelin. For lions wounded or struck by spears, see J19 nos. 5, 9, 12, 15–18.

⁵⁵ For this subject in a relief from room S of the North Palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, see Curtis and Reade (n. 47), 86–7; Strommenger (n. 47), 117–18 and pl. 260. For the accompanying inscription, see Luckenbill (n. 49), ii.391 no. 1021.1.

⁵⁶ In room C of the North palace in Nineveh the locals watch the spectacle from a hillock crowned by a stele commemorating a lion hunt: R. D. Barnett and V. Forman, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum* (London, 1970), 32; Strommenger (n. 47), 117 and pl. 246.

⁵⁷ On such expeditions into the wild some animals were killed while others were brought back alive: see Luckenbill (n. 49), i.85–6 no. 247, 87 no. 253. Adad-Nirari II (911–891 B.C.) records how he collected live elephants, lions, wild oxen, deer, wild goats, wild asses, gazelles, and birds into cages: see Luckenbill (n. 49), i.116 no. 375.

⁵⁸ Wiseman, (n. 49), 31; Pritchard (n. 45), 559–60.

⁵⁹ Wiseman (n. 49), 28; see also Tuplin (n. 48), 80–8, esp. 85 and n. 19.

records how he captured 15 lions and 50 lion cubs which he kept in cages at Calah and his other palaces: these also he caused to breed, and he allowed the people to see them.⁶⁰

In room S of the North palace at Nineveh, immediately adjacent to the images of the royal hunt is a three-tier relief, the upper register of which shows Assurbanipal and his queen in a vine bower in a garden.⁶¹ The middle frieze shows a garden with pine trees, vines, and pomegranate trees. The lower register shows wild boar and stags in a marshy field, suggesting game to be hunted. Room E of the same building has reliefs of servants and a tame lioness in the royal gardens, and also tame lions and musicians.⁶² The progeny of two more lions shown (in room E) at peace in a garden full of fruit and flowers were probably destined for the hunting arena.⁶³

The ritual lion hunts of the Assyrian kings were taken up by the Achaemenid successors of the Assyrian Empire,⁶⁴ who hunted on horseback or riding in a chariot in the enclosed game parks later called *παράδεισοι* by the Greeks.⁶⁵ Lions for the royal paradise were typical gifts of honour for the Persian New Year Festival, as illustrated in the reliefs of the sub-basement of the Apadana of Persepolis, where two members of the delegation of Elamites carry lion cubs as New Year gifts, holding them securely by forepaws and middle, while the lioness (their mother) looks back at them, but is subdued by the stick of the lion tamer leading her.⁶⁶

The Greeks certainly hunted lions, for food or to control them as pests. But that does not explain the practice of taking the cubs alive. It looks as though the means by which the royal hunting arenas and zoological gardens of the Near East were stocked have made their way into the *Iliad*. The image of the lion grieving for the stolen cubs could simply have been appropriated from *Gilgamesh*. However, since the poet expects his audience to understand without explanation the practice of not killing the cubs (for food or as pests), but stealing them, they must be aware of the *ambassu*, the royal hunting arena, and the method by which it and the Assyrian zoological gardens were stocked. This suggests that the staged lion hunts of the Near East were familiar to both the poet and his (Ionian) audience, the result of first-hand acquaintance or report by travellers. In either case, the knowledge of these practices displayed by the poems testifies to their internationalism and the sophistication of their audience.

MAUREEN ALDEN
Belfast

⁶⁰ Inscription on a colossus at Calah: see Luckenbill (n. 49), i.189 no. 519.

⁶¹ Curtis and Reade (n. 47), 122, WA124920.

⁶² Strommenger (n. 47), 116 and pls. 244–5.

⁶³ Curtis and Reade (n. 47), 82–3, no. 26.

⁶⁴ See Palagia (n. 17), 181 with bibliography.

⁶⁵ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 4.13. See P. Briant, *Histoire de l'Empire Perse* (Paris, 1996), 456–8 for a description with further references. The Greek word *παράδεισος* is used of a botanical garden with water and fruit trees, or of a game park planted with rare trees and stocked with animals to be hunted: see Tuplin (n. 48), 105–9.

⁶⁶ G. Walser, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis* (Berlin, 1966), 73 and pls. 9 and 37. For accompanying inscription, see Pritchard (n. 45), 316 7.