

## ODYSSEUS' BARKING HEART

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In spite of major studies of the Homeric simile by such critics as Hermann Fränkel<sup>1</sup> and William C. Scott,<sup>2</sup> the important question of how closely one may relate a simile to its immediate and broader contexts must be regarded as by no means settled. It may, in fact, be the case that no single theory will embrace all the individual examples or even the various types, and that a flexible approach, allowing great relevance to some and a minimum to others, would be productive. Following Fränkel's lead, Michael Coffey, too, comes to this conclusion:

In a sense almost every comparison and simile is individual. This is obviously true of those that do not belong to stock types of subject matter. But it is also true of those which seem to belong to a long bardic tradition. The place of comparison and simile in immediate and remoter contexts is so infinitely variable that each one must be examined as an individual poetic creation in its own right.<sup>3</sup>

Adopting such a spirit I wish to probe the meaning and import of one particular simile in the *Odyssey*.

Lying alone in his palace on the eve of revenge, Odysseus watches the traitorous maidservants as they go laughing to the suitors' beds. Pained and furious he debates killing them outright or granting them a last rendezvous. The poet continues as follows:

κραδίη δέ οἱ ἔνδον ὑλάκτει.  
ὥς δὲ κύων ἀμαλῆσι περὶ σκυλάκεσσι βεβῶσα  
ἄνδρ' ἀγνοιήσασ' ὑλάει μέμονέν τε μάχεσθαι,  
ὥς ῥα τοῦ ἔνδον ὑλάκτει ἀγαιομένου κακὰ ἔργα. (20.13–16)

Most striking is the repeated ὑλάκτει—properly so, as hearts do many

<sup>1</sup> *Die homerischen Gleichnisse* (Göttingen 1921).

<sup>2</sup> *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile* (Leiden 1974).

<sup>3</sup> "The Function of the Homeric Simile," *AJP* 78 (1957) 132.

things in Homer, but neither Homer nor our own language prepares us for this. We have here, not surprisingly, the only instance in the Homeric corpus of either *ύλακτέω* or *ύλάω* used metaphorically. Fitzgerald must have thought the usage odd indeed, since he refused to translate it with anything resembling literalness either time (“cried out,” “the hackles of his heart rose”).<sup>4</sup> It means “barked,” something which elsewhere in Homer only dogs do.<sup>5</sup>

To account for the choice of metaphor and to understand the details of the simile, it will help first to examine two passages in the second half of the poem which involve living dogs and one passage containing an artistic representation. We will consider how the poet portrays these dogs and what importance they have for the poem, but also what connections they have specifically with Odysseus. Returning finally to Book 20 we will try to show what sense and what implications it might have to picture Odysseus as a dog.

παρ δὲ κύνες θήρεσσιν ἑοικότες αἰὲν ἵανον  
τέσσαρες, οὓς ἔθρεψε συβώτης, ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν. (14.21–22)

Ἐξαπίνης δ' Ὀδυσῆα ἶδον κύνες ὑλακόμωροι.  
οἱ μὲν κεκλήγοντες ἐπέδραμον· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς  
ἔξετο κερδοσύνη, σκῆπτρον δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρός.  
ἔνθα κεν ᾧ παρ σταθμῷ ἀεικέλιον πάθεν ἄλλγος. (14.29–32)

On Athena's instructions Odysseus has come to the hut of the swineherd, Eumaeus. Instead of the warm reception he expected, he is attacked by four dogs reared by Eumaeus but fierce “like wild animals,” a particularly jarring encounter for one who against all odds has at last returned to what should have been the relative safety of home.<sup>6</sup> Brief though it is, the incident has several functions: (1) it defines Odysseus' initial status on Ithaca; (2) it helps to characterize Eumaeus; and (3) it foreshadows the events of the two days during which Odysseus will mingle with the suitors. Like so many brief moments in Homer, the narration of this attack has a multi-dimensional richness that we expect of sophisticated poetry.

Over the span of the second twelve books, Odysseus' status describes an

<sup>4</sup>*The Odyssey* (Garden City 1963) 375.

<sup>5</sup>G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 206, finds “and his heart barked within him” “faintly ludicrous” and from this judgment draws the conclusion that the locution is relatively late because “anti-traditional.” A list of posthomeric instances of this metaphor can be found in P. Keseling, “Homerica,” *PhW* 63 (1943) 141–42.

<sup>6</sup>Odysseus here nearly undergoes what he first feared on Scheria (5.473) and what Laertes assumes has happened to him (24.292)—being torn apart by *θήρες*. Though home, he is far from safe.

ascending arc which culminates in total victory, reestablishment as *basileus*, and reunion with his family. At the outset, by contrast, he cannot even recognize Ithaca; he is a stranger in his own homeland—precisely the most obvious point of this incident. The poet highlights this ironic, dislocating reality with the phrase,  $\hat{\omega}$  πὰρ σταθμῶ, “next to his own steading” (32).<sup>7</sup>

When Telemachus, on the other hand, returns home likewise by way of Eumaeus', the same dogs fawn about him as about an old friend:

Τηλέμαχον δὲ περίσσαινον κύνες ὑλακόμωροι,  
οὐδ' ὕλαον προσιόντα. (16.4–5; cf. 8–9)

If we are willing to allow an echo at a distance of two books, the last clause easily suggests the sequel, “as they had barked at Odysseus' approach.” Even the line-closing epithet, ὑλακόμωροι (the meaning of whose second element is disputed<sup>8</sup>), helps to imprint the contrast with the earlier incident. The jingle, ὑλακόμωροι, / οὐδ' ὕλαον, probably gives some additional force to the epithet. To explain the words, “the dogs famed for barking did not bark at Telemachus,” we need not resort to the tenet of some oral theorists that context has no force in the choice of epithet (not to mention the “hard-Parryists'” denial of specific meaning to epithets). The effectiveness of the contrast between the dogs' reactions to Telemachus and to Odysseus will serve quite well as an explanation. The fact that ὑλακόμωρος occurs at 16.4 and 14.29, but nowhere else until the postclassical period, strengthens this interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

Minutes before Odysseus' reunion with his son and hours before his descent into the corrupted world of his palace, the poet has reintroduced Eumaeus' fiercely protective dogs, partly to underscore a related contrast between father and son. Telemachus, though still in danger, is seen to belong on Ithaca, to be well known,<sup>10</sup> whereas the man who most properly

<sup>7</sup>So Ameis-Hentze-Cauer, *Homers Odyssee* (Leipzig & Berlin 1910<sup>9</sup>): “seinem eigenen.”

<sup>8</sup>Most recently P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris 1968–77), offers as a likely translation, “illustres par leurs aboiements.”

<sup>9</sup>The poet could have chosen a different epithet at 16.4 without otherwise altering the line, thereby removing the jingle and the emphasis: we find *κύνας ἀργιόδοντας* at line-end, *Iliad* 11.292. This is, on the other hand, the only Homeric instance where this epithet, which usually modifies “boars,” is applied to “dogs.”

<sup>10</sup>M. N. Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1974) 101–02, sees the two dogs that accompany Telemachus at 2.11 as similarly being “poetically right:” “they mean that the young hero is noble, to be counted for something, but not yet come into his majority” (102). Moreover, if we consider the two passages in conjunction, we may be inclined to say that Telemachus, like his father (as we shall see), is given a special poetic link with dogs.

belongs, as *anax* of the house and *basileus* in the community, the one man, moreover, whom Telemachus requires to remove the danger—this man seems a *xeinos*, who was nearly killed by Eumaeus' sentries, the dogs.<sup>11</sup>

The second function of the incident of the attack relates it to Eumaeus. His concern for the stranger, prompting him to repulse the dogs swiftly and decisively and then to express his chagrin over what might have happened, represents our first demonstration of his scrupulousness, a point almost too obvious to need mention. More subtle and perhaps more basic is the way in which the dogs fit into the whole picture of Eumaeus' little world. For "it is the servants [Eumaeus and Eurycleia], not the masters, who retain some vestige of order in the face of general anarchy."<sup>12</sup> The poet embeds the first mention of the dogs in an elaborate description of the swineherd's highly ordered stading (14.5–28). Then, in attacking the *xeinos* they fulfil their role as watchdogs for the hut and the animals.<sup>13</sup>

It is possible to view the decrepit Argos as a relevant contrast: his condition is a clear indictment of those servants who have fallen in with the "general anarchy" of the dysfunctional palace. Formerly an active hunting dog, Argos could no longer fill even the more modest role of a watchdog. A more distant and rather different contrast might also be drawn with the dogs outside Alcinous' palace on Scheria (7.91–94). Their job, too, is δῶμα φυλασσέμεναι, but they are made of gold and silver. In the same way that Eumaeus' spirited hounds, who sleep among the pigs, accord with his simple, hardy existence, the metallic ones on Scheria well represent the luxuriating, overcivilized Phaeacians. Where even the dogs who "watch over" the house are ornamental, art and games replace, rather than enhance, life. Alcinous and his apparently paradisiacal island can no more tempt Odysseus to linger than his daughter can. The life to which he is so determined to return is thus embodied, in small, by Eumaeus' dwelling, which includes his dogs.

<sup>11</sup>A. M. Clerke, *Familiar Studies in Homer* (London & New York 1892) 74–75, notices the contrast in the dogs' behavior (adding their reaction to Athena, 16.162–63), but she neither mentions the epithet nor draws any of the larger conclusions above. For C. H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass. 1958), the several appearances of Eumaeus' dogs represent nothing more than "a concern with naturalistic representation," typical of the *Odyssey* (292). K. Reinhardt, *Von Werken und Formen* (Godesberg 1948) 49, although not concerned with the dogs, does see in Book 16 a pointed contrast between father and son, calling Odysseus "der Ausgeschlossene."

<sup>12</sup>N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1975) 165; see further 166–67.

<sup>13</sup>Eumaeus' claim that it would have been a disgrace for him had the dogs succeeded (38) does not, of course, impugn their response; as dogs they cannot share Eumaeus' refined sense for the obligation to protect a stranger from harm.

The third dimension of the attack is the preview it provides of Odysseus' reception in the palace during the following days. Just as the dogs instantly attack him, so the next morning will Melanthius the slave and Antinous the suitor, followed by others, commence a verbal and physical assault. The *ἀεικέλιον ἄλγος* (32) he nearly endures here foreshadows the unseemly sufferings he will in fact undergo in the palace, as well as intimating the final *ἄλγος*—death—that remains for now a possibility.<sup>14</sup>

What will prevent death from occurring is itself foreshadowed in the words, *ἔξετο κερδοσύνη*, "cleverly he assumed a sitting position" (31). By his instantaneous and correct submission Odysseus in a sense manipulates the angry dogs, as he will manipulate the suitors by maintaining a passive, all-enduring disguise.<sup>15</sup> It is, of course, true that eventually Odysseus will take the offensive overtly and kill the suitors, but first he must endure the kicks of Melanthius and the footstools of the suitors, cleverly disguising his warrior impulses and leading them on to ever more outrageous demonstrations of their blameworthiness. Indeed, when Eurymachus assails him with a footstool, Odysseus will react precisely as before, assuming a sitting, supplicating position at Amphinomus' knees:

Ἀμφινόμου πρὸς γούνα καθέξετο Δουλιχίῃος,  
Εὐρύμαχον δέίσας. (18.395–96)<sup>16</sup>

At 14.31 the poet presumably was not looking ahead all the way to Book

<sup>14</sup>See the threat of death uttered by Leocritus at 2.246–51. It is ironical that Melanthius (17.217–32) and Antinous (375–79) pose in a sense as watchdogs of the palace.

<sup>15</sup>J. B. Hainsworth, "Odysseus and the Dogs," *G&R* ser. 2, 8 (1961) 122–25, provides modern evidence from wolves' behavior to prove that sitting is the effective, hence clever, response. In a brief, earlier article, C. E. Lutz, "Footnote to Professor Scott's 'Dogs in Homer,'" *CW* 48 (1950) 89–90, cited modern and ancient testimony to show that the poet correctly understood canine psychology.

Approaching the passage with a quite different concern, Nagler (above, note 10) 124 views Odysseus' sitting and dropping his staff as signs of the degree to which he still lacks his proper status. Holding his staff and causing others to be seated in assembly would betoken that status, that of "convener."

<sup>16</sup>On 14.30–31 W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1965<sup>2</sup>), says, "O. is acting his part as a beggarman well, feigning fear." Similarly U. Hölscher, *Untersuchungen zur Form der Odyssee*, Hermes Einzelschriften 6 (Berlin 1939) 78. The word *κερδοσύνη*, it is true, indicates that, as Lutz (above, note 15) 89, states it, "Odysseus' singular behavior in the face of attack was not the result of panic or desperation." Nevertheless, real, if controllable, fear is excluded neither by the Greek text nor by Lutz' argument. Odysseus is revealing what Clerke (above, note 11) 74, in commenting on this passage, calls his "unfailing presence of mind," even when confronted by extreme peril. The poet specifically ascribes fear to him at 396 in the passage above; he might have done likewise in Book 14, had it not so obviously been a fearsome moment. It is presumably for the sake of this moment that Eumaeus' dogs were immediately likened to wild animals.

18 or thinking specifically of any single attack to come, but rather fashioned an incident that would adumbrate the general hostility of the palace and the shrewdness with which Odysseus would successfully counter it. The choice of dogs for this purpose, as we will see, represents the first thread in a consistent, meaningful pattern.

The second thread is the justly famous narrative of Argos' death (17.291–327). For pure story-telling the moment is a gem, with its swiftly evocative character-drawing, its aborted recognition scene, and its carefully prepared but tersely realized, two-line climax in death—altogether a model of restrained pathos. On this level Argos, like Eumaeus, is a paradigm of loyalty to his master, and simultaneously a bitter indictment of the suitors' dominion, the effects of which are felt by all connected with Odysseus.

As he lies on a heap of dung, neglected and full of ticks, Argos' condition, as noted earlier, contrasts with that of Eumaeus' well-tended, vigorous dogs. A contrast, too, with Argos' own, happier past recurs through the passage (294–96, 313–18; compare Eumaeus' analogous contrast, 15.371–76). Like Penelope, Telemachus, Eumaeus, and the palace itself, which in this sense Argos symbolizes, he suffers as a result ultimately of Odysseus' absence—ἀποιχομένοιο ἀνακτος (296).<sup>17</sup> And as with Penelope and Telemachus in particular, the narrative of Argos prompts the feeling of life interrupted, of joys lost:

Ἄργος, Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος, ὃν ῥά ποτ' αὐτὸς  
θρέψε μέν, οὐδ' ἀπόνητο. (292–93)<sup>18</sup>

For the even more poignant sense of the irrecoverable loss of a loved one, we might compare Odysseus' and Argos' inability to enjoy a last, fleeting reunion (303–05) with Odysseus' frustrated attempt to embrace his mother's shade (11.204–08).

Thus, in the details of its language the scene embodies elements of pathos evident throughout much of the poem. To our minds, though perhaps not to those of its original audience, it may also recall the similarly pathetic scene at *Iliad* 19.400–24, where Xanthus for the one and only time takes

<sup>17</sup>In the following passages also, this formula and others using this participle with a noun denoting Odysseus highlight the effects of his absence: 1.253 (Telemachus in danger), 19.19 (Odysseus' tarnished weapons), 21.70 (suitors' depredations), 21.395 (bow's possible deterioration). Such phrases, however, occur also at 1.135, 3.77, 14.8, and 14.450, without this particular emphasis.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. 23.210–12 (of Penelope and Odysseus) and 16.119–20 (of Telemachus and Odysseus). See, too, the perceptive comments of C. P. Segal, "The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus' Return," *Arion* 1, 4 (1962) 52, on the sense of loss that permeates the passage.

human voice to prophesy the death of Achilles.<sup>19</sup> In both cases the hero's favored animal participates with his master in a specially significant moment over which death hovers.<sup>20</sup>

The very placement of the incident within the structure of Book 17 illustrates Argos' loyalty, thereby enhancing our recognition of the bond between him and Odysseus. As it happens, the poet shows an understandable tendency to juxtapose loyal and disloyal slaves throughout Books 17–20, since fidelity of all sorts constitutes a major theme of the poem. Thus, lines 182–327 of Book 17 are taken up with (1) the loyal Eumaeus escorting Odysseus to the palace, (2) the vile and disloyal Melanthius abusing Odysseus, and (3) the Argos incident, which begins but thirty lines after Melanthius is shown entering the palace. In Book 20 Eumaeus, Melanthius, and the loyal Philoetius will enter the hall in precisely that order.<sup>21</sup> If we allow a substitution of loyal dog for loyal slave, the patterns of the two books will be identical. There is, thus, a structural tendency that helps to explain the placement of the Argos incident.

The poet then exploits this pattern with the especially bitter contrast between *τὸν δὲ γυναῖκες ἀκηδέες οὐ κομέουσι* (319), referring to Argos, and the royal treatment Melanthius receives upon entering the palace. He is actually served his food as he sits right next to Eurymachus, "for Eurymachus liked him best" (257). It is small wonder that Eumaeus becomes so furious at this fellow-slave (244–46), as he shortly will at all the slaves who have neglected the dog. The juxtaposition of Argos with Melanthius underscores the latter's worthlessness and, inasmuch as they sponsor him, that of the suitors as well, while also highlighting the topsy-turvy condition of the palace.

The two incidents share a second, if subordinate, relation. Since he needs to maintain for now his disguise vis-à-vis Eumaeus, Odysseus must hide his tears over the dog and deny himself a reunion even after twenty years. This remarkable self-abnegation parallels his strenuous suppression of the

<sup>19</sup>At *Iliad* 19.407 the horse is called *αὐδῆεντα*, concerning which J. Clay, "Demas and aude: The Nature of Divine Transformation in Homer," *Hermes* 102 (1974) 131, notes the following: "Audê does not merely denote the vocal production of sounds, but the production of intelligible human speech." Thus, Xanthus is here partly anthropomorphized, as Argos is analogously said to have (the peculiarly human) *δέμας* (307, 313). "Demas is used of [animate] non-humans only in Od. 17.307 (Argos) and 10.240 (Odysseus' men turned into pigs)" (Clay 129, note 2). Before Clay, W. D. Geddes, *The Problem of the Homeric Poems* (London 1878) 225, note 15, had made the same observation, although he used the point to buttress his argument that the *Odyssey* (plus the "Ulyssean cantos" of the *Iliad*) views dogs favorably compared with the "Achilleid" (the main portion of the *Iliad*).

<sup>20</sup>Whitman (above, note 11) 245 also makes the following claim for Achilles' horses: "They are the symbols of Achilles' foreknowledge and tragic suffering."

<sup>21</sup>Noted by B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden 1974) 172–73.

urge to retaliate upon Melanthius when kicked by him (235–38). Here again the poet has depicted an incident, or linked pair of incidents, that features a dog and foreshadows the future course of the narrative. Later, in even more trying circumstances, Odysseus will have to curb the fury and affection which the suitors and Penelope, respectively, evoke in him. The interview with his wife in Book 19, where his eyes, fighting back the tears, are compared with horn or iron (211–12), poses perhaps the greatest threat to his disguise, but is in a sense merely an intensification of this aspect of the meeting with Argos.<sup>22</sup>

While the poet first introduces the incident to illustrate the related themes of loyalty and the perversion of the proper functioning of the palace, the mutual recognition of dog and master propels the narrative in a new direction. “Was he just an ornament,” Odysseus in effect asks,<sup>23</sup> “or did he possess the qualities of a hunting dog?” Our interest thus comes to center on the qualities Argos had in his youth, and this is where the passage proves most relevant to the present discussion. The details of Eumaeus’ reply suggest not only that Argos once epitomized the *aretai* of a hunting dog, but that the character is being assimilated to the Odyssean ideal of heroism:

εἰ τοιόσδ’ εἶη ἡμὲν δέμας ἡδὲ καὶ ἔργα,  
οἷόν μιν Τροίηνδε κίων κατέλειπεν Ὀδυσσεύς,  
αἰψά κε θήσαιο ἰδὼν ταχυτῆτα καὶ ἀλκὴν.  
οὐ μὲν γάρ τι φύγεσκε βαθείης βένθεσιν ὕλης  
κνώδαλον, ὅττι δίοιτο· καὶ ἔχνεσι γὰρ περιήδη. (17.313–17)

Just as the poet allows Odysseus’ own traits to be shared by his closest relatives, Penelope and Telemachus,<sup>24</sup> so here Argos’ superior qualities suggest his master’s: (1) Argos used to have great speed (*ταχυτῆτα*), as the footrace at *Iliad* 23.753–92, especially 756 and 791–92, proves for

<sup>22</sup>The poet, thus, highlights the drama of Book 19 by giving a new twist specifically to the motif of crying as a threat to Odysseus’ disguise—cf. 304–05 in the Argos incident and, of course, Book 8.

<sup>23</sup>He asks whether Argos was a table dog, cultivated purely for show (309–10). The tone of Odysseus’ question and of Eumaeus’ reply makes it clear that this is an inferior sort of dog. For the poet of the *Odyssey*, in fact, it is almost undoglike: the now partly animalic, partly human, crew transformed by Circe is said to fawn about Odysseus “like dogs about their master when he comes from dinner” (10.216–17).

There may be in Odysseus’ query a deliberate contrast by the poet between Argos and Antinous. Odysseus asks whether the dog had speed *ἐπὶ εἰδεῖ τῶδε* (308); not much later he will react to Antinous’ insult with the words, “it turns out that you have no brains *ἐπὶ εἰδεῖ*” (454), a verbal similarity noticed by Eustathius 1821.58–59. Thus, the dog outdoes the man.

<sup>24</sup>For Penelope, see W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Oxford 1963<sup>2</sup>) 33, 57–58; for Telemachus, N. Austin, “Telemachos Polymechnos,” *CSCA* 2 (1969) 45–63.



Odysseus;<sup>25</sup> (2) for his strength (*ἀλκὴν*), compare Odysseus in the wrestling match at *Iliad* 23.707–37, especially 719–20, not to mention the abundant evidence of the *Odyssey*; (3) Argos had extraordinarily keen intelligence—“for he had a superior knowledge of tracking” (317)—which his instantaneous recognition of Odysseus at a distance and after twenty years proves he still possesses even in old age.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this acuity makes Argos something of a paradigm in the series of recognition scenes in the second half of the poem. For he is the only one who recognizes Odysseus without delay and without signs.<sup>27</sup> It hardly needs to be added that the word, *περιήδη*, referring to a permanent trait, would suit Odysseus preeminently. Finally, (4) even though Argos is not given Odysseus' epithet, *πολύταλς*, he certainly deserves it. For twenty years he has dragged out what at least for the last several has been an utterly wretched existence, evidently (to judge from lines 326–27) in the mere hope of seeing his master once more. Otherwise, poetically speaking, why would he have died just now?

Hence, aside from his complete loyalty Argos possesses those traits—speed, strength, and especially intelligence and endurance—that mark both the ideal hunting dog and Odysseus' special heroism. The poet has linked hound and master in a bond not only of affection but of likeness as well. Furthermore, as he has endowed Argos here with the canine counterparts to Odysseus' *aretai*, so will he turn Odysseus imagistically into an excellent dog.

When in Book 19 the disguised Odysseus attempts to prove to Penelope that once long ago he entertained the real Odysseus, he describes among other things a decorated brooch that Odysseus was wearing. This striking

<sup>25</sup>That Odysseus excludes a footrace from his challenge to the Phaeacians (8.230–33) is no counter-argument; he pleads fatigue from his voyage. On this point and the next, it is not assumed that the audience knew our *Iliad*, only a common tradition exploited by both poems.

<sup>26</sup>Conversely, at *Iliad* 10.360–62 Odysseus and Diomedes are compared with dogs who relentlessly pursue their fleeing prey and are called *εἰδότε θήρης*.

<sup>27</sup>Hölscher (above, note 16) 77 takes this recognition scene as one sign among others that Odysseus has not truly been changed into a beggar, but merely has the outward appearance and plays the role of one.

At *Republic* 375a5–7 Plato's portrait of a *γενναῖος σκύλαξ*, the model there for his *φύλαξ*, sounds much like the youthful Argos. It is conceivable that the *Odyssey*'s similar characterization of Argos and Odysseus suggested to Plato the likening of his politico-philosophical heroes to “philosophical” dogs. With the *Republic* in mind Stanford (above, note 24) 32 is willing to view Odysseus' character in canine terms to this extent: “dangerous to their enemies and gentle to their friends” (quoting 375c). Although he does not look at any of the poem's evidence for the imagistic equation of Odysseus with a dog, such an equation would fit in well with Stanford's interpretation of Odysseus' peculiar sort of heroism (for which observation I am indebted to Julia Haig Gaisser). Clerke (above, note 11) 83 similarly fails to remark upon the evidence, when she claims that Odysseus “had experienced and had not disdained to cherish in his heart the life-long fidelity of a dog.”

confirmation of his credentials lends plausibility to his claim that Odysseus will soon be in Ithaca. If, moreover, we accept the controversial view that Penelope has already begun to suspect, at least on some level, the beggar's true identity, the amazingly detailed and accurate recollection of Odysseus' garb after twenty years could easily be thought to heighten her intuition.<sup>28</sup>

In any event, the depiction on the brooch of a dog grasping a struggling fawn in its paws (19.228–31) takes our own argument a major step further. Inasmuch as any equally detailed ornamentation would have served the basic purpose of the passage, why has the poet chosen this particular picture? It is, first of all, essential to remind ourselves of the ferocity of Homeric hunting dogs. In the *Iliad* this type of dog occurs in 23 similes and in most cases its enemy or prey is a boar or lion.<sup>29</sup> There are, however, four Iliadic similes in which a dog's prey is a fawn. Being relatively weak and timid, the fawn is undoubtedly selected to suggest the helplessness and, hence, the imminent death of the character in the narrative to whom the fawn corresponds, and indeed death is precisely what follows in three of the four cases. At 10.360–62 Odysseus and Diomedes chase the Trojan spy, Dolon, and are pictured as two dogs chasing a fawn or hare. Antilochus, in trying to strip the wounded Melanippus of his armor, is likened to a dog leaping upon a wounded fawn (15.579–81). Finally, during the climactic chase of Hector around the walls, Achilles is compared with a dog relentlessly chasing a fawn (22.189–92).<sup>30</sup>

We can conclude at this point that the fawn in Odysseus' brooch, however much he strains to get free, is doomed. But the brooch also functions like the Iliadic similes, for in being on the point of death the fawn represents the suitors and foreshadows their death at Odysseus' hands. That Odysseus is here describing something worn twenty years earlier is no argument against its timely relevance; by introducing it now the poet (and perhaps his principal character as well) comments on the present situation. At this critical point when Penelope must make a fateful decision concerning the contest, the poet is once again telling us, as Odysseus may consciously be trying to tell Penelope, that all will be well, that the suitors'

<sup>28</sup>For this view of Penelope see A. Amory, "The Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope," *Essays on the Odyssey*, ed. C. H. Taylor, Jr. (Bloomington 1963) 100–21, and the more persuasive version of Austin (above, note 12) ch. 4.

<sup>29</sup>All Homeric passages involving dogs have been compiled and categorized by M. Faust, "Die künstlerische Verwendung von *κύων* 'Hund' in den homerischen Epen," *Glotta* 48 (1970) 8–31.

<sup>30</sup>The fourth simile (15.271–76) is more complex: dogs and men chase a deer or goat, but first the dense brush hinders their attack and then a lion appears and drives them away. It is the narrative context that causes the poet to expand and divert the simple simile that would, to judge from the other three similes, have ended in the taking of the prey.

death is at hand. That is what he will explicitly communicate to her, when he interprets the dream about the geese.

The link between the fawn and the suitors will become more apparent, if we recall an earlier passage in the poem. At 4.335–39 Menelaus predicts that Odysseus will return to kill the suitors, as a lion whose lair has been taken over returns to kill the usurping fawns. Telemachus is so impressed that he recounts the simile to Penelope not very long before Odysseus describes the brooch (17.126–30). It seems altogether reasonable to suppose that the Homeric audience would call to mind the recently repeated simile while hearing Odysseus' own words and would understand the reference of the fawn. But if so, it would be only a short step to equating the dog with Odysseus, especially since the brooch serves in its context to identify the real Odysseus. For an instant anyway, the dog is his trademark, as the lion is in other passages.<sup>31</sup>

Through this double equation the brooch, far from being simply a token of the beggar's trustworthiness, functions like an ominous simile foreshadowing the hero's victory over his chief enemy in the poem. It thereby assumes an importance nearly comparable to the simile in which Achilles and Hector are likewise pictured as dog and fawn.<sup>32</sup>

To summarize our efforts so far to establish links between Odysseus and various dogs in the poem, Eumaeus' hounds, first of all, present a grave danger to the hero and foreshadow his reception by slaves and suitors. The

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Scott (above, note 2) 123: "Part of the foreshadowing [of revenge] is represented in the lion similes sung throughout the poem at the mention of their [Odysseus' and Penelope's] names and recalled at the moment of triumph [22.402–05]."

J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago & London 1975) 192–203, has a detailed, thoughtful discussion of dogs in the *Iliad*, although it is clear from his use of evidence from the *Odyssey* that he would have his argument apply to both poems. Such typical statements as the following, however, do not seem to be easily applicable to the *Odyssey*: "in evoking the dog within himself, he [the warrior] runs the risk of becoming a dog, that is, of becoming something less than himself" (196); "the dog is thus an emblem of the impurity of battle. The warrior becomes a mad dog as he enacts the inner contradiction of battle ... He becomes a distorted, impure being" (202). It is not that the *Odyssey* glorifies war more than the *Iliad*; it does not. But the battle with the suitors has a far different moral context from the Trojan War, a context which leaves the question of the battle's justification quite unambiguous. One can go further: Odysseus himself, in some contrast to his allies and to Eurycleia, behaves impeccably during and after the battle, never losing his humanity. Thus, one should not see in the equation of Odysseus with a hunting dog the sort of coloration Redfield sees in the dogs of the *Iliad*. And, of course, the *Odyssey* also has Argos. On the other hand, Redfield's observation, that in the *Iliad* a dog and a lion, when they have a deer as prey, function analogously in representing the imminent victor (192, 199), does apply to the *Odyssey* as well.

<sup>32</sup>For M. L. Lang, "Homer and Oral Techniques," *Hesperia* 38 (1969) 165, note 5, "the use of this recognition by garments in the present *Odyssey* is an unnecessary frill."

Argos passage, on the other hand, serves to connect Odysseus with a dog who is at once a victim, like Odysseus himself, of the usurpation of the palace and a parallel to Odysseus' particular heroism. The brooch goes a step further and obliquely identifies Odysseus with such a heroic dog as Argos once was, thereby suggesting Odysseus' readiness at the right moment to reveal his courage and strength against the suitors. Lastly—and here we return to our starting point—the metaphor and simile of Book 20 will deepen and complete the image of the hero as dog.

Book 20 opens with an unusually rapid series of emotional states within the wakeful Odysseus. It is essential to have a clear vision of the entire series, if we are to grasp the exact mental state which the simile illustrates. The sight of the maids leaving the palace fills Odysseus at first with anger—*τοῦ δ' ὠρίνετο θυμός* (9). Typically he then ponders (*μερμήριζε*) whether to kill them immediately or not. It is at this point in the narrative—when he is still angry and undecided, that is, when he has not yet determined to restrain his urge to attack—that we read, *κραδίη δέ οἱ ἔνδον ὑλάκτει* (13), followed by the simile. Only when Odysseus reminds himself of an even worse experience<sup>33</sup>—watching helplessly while Polyphemus ate his men—does he find the strength to suppress that urge: *τέτλαθι δῆ, κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης* (18). “At this point Odysseus' heart, apparently quite willing to listen to reason, is calmed.”<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, he is again thrown into perplexity, this time because his thoughts have shifted to the coming battle with the suitors and the dangers it presents. After the simile of the blood-sausage (25–27), which expresses this second moment of perplexity, Athena arrives to soothe and encourage him.

The reason for detailing this sequence is to show that the sole internal state expressed by the bitch-simile is fury, not self-restraint in addition, as some have supposed.<sup>35</sup> The simile ends, after all, with the words, “and she is eager to fight” (15), and only at line 23, after his self-admonition, do we learn that Odysseus has decided not to attack. While it is not inappropriate

<sup>33</sup>As a translation of *κύντερον*, “worse” (Fitzgerald, above, note 4) would be adequate if the etymological force were unfelt, as is possible; but see note 41 below.

<sup>34</sup>J. A. Russo, “Homer Against His Tradition,” *Arion* 7 (1968) 292. He correctly perceives the sequence of mental events, and his analysis of the scene (pp. 291–94) constitutes a fine example of the application of oral theory to revealing the high degree of psychological complexity which the poetry is capable of expressing. My one quibble is with his use of the relatively weak word, “resentment,” for Odysseus' fury in watching the maids.

<sup>35</sup>Geddes (above, note 19) 226: “In this conception of the hero we have manifestly the image of a ‘hound,’ or mastiff, in the leash, pawing to spring, yet subject to control.” So, too, H. Eisenberger, *Studien zur Odyssee* (Wiesbaden 1973) 273, following Fränkel (above, note 1) 94. Fränkel correctly characterizes Odysseus' mood as “tatenlose Wut” and “höchste Gereiztheit,” but goes beyond the simile in adding, “aber nur ein Klaffen erlaubt er seiner Seele; zu tun was das Herz ihn treibt, verstatet sich der kluge beherrschte Mann nicht.”

to stress Odysseus' self-control in most of his scenes in the second half of the poem, it is simply irrelevant to the simile.<sup>36</sup>

Having clarified the immediate import of the simile, we are now in a position to draw the following conclusion as to its larger reference: since the brooch passage has already prepared us to regard Odysseus the avenger as a fierce dog, it should be no great stretch to interpret the angry bitch of the simile as again an image for Odysseus in his capacity as avenger. Simile and brooch complement each other: the simile concentrates on the fury, the emotional force behind the revenge, while the brooch foreshadows the act itself.<sup>37</sup>

As to why Odysseus becomes so furious specifically at the maids, the answer, as is well known, lies in their disloyalty to the house and their masters. "Treachery within the household was considered the basest of crimes."<sup>38</sup> The disloyalty of these women has been exhibited in offensive behavior and has contributed to the perversion of the household's well-being.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, whereas the suitors at least die a "clean" death in battle, Telemachus accords the maids a particularly disgraceful punishment, hanging (22.461–73). If he thereby contravenes Odysseus' instructions that he kill them with his sword, he is only demonstrating the even more intense outrage he feels for having had to live with them all these years.

Returning now to the terms in which the simile is expressed, let us remember that *ὑλάκει*, in this unique metaphorical usage, is the immediate point of comparison with the simile. The barking of the bitch is the outward sign of what was also the salient trait of the dog on the brooch, ferocity, a point then pursued in *μέμονέν τε μάχεσθαι*. The simile, however, enlarges the characterization of the dog beyond the terms of the brooch:

*ὥς δὲ κύων ἀμαλῆσι περὶ σκυλάκεσσι βεβῶσα  
ἀνδρ' ἀγνοίησας ὑλάει μέμονέν τε μάχεσθαι.* (14–15)

The felt threat to her brood, the unknown man, releases a powerful

<sup>36</sup>Russo (above, note 34), in fact, argues that the complex narrative of this section of Book 20 reveals in part that "Odysseus' famous self-mastery is at last wearing thin" (293).

<sup>37</sup>For this argument the simile must be allowed to suggest Odysseus as avenger not just against the maids, although they are here the immediate spur to his fury and, hence, to the simile. It is doubtful that the poet intends significantly to dissociate either their culpability or their death from that of the suitors.

<sup>38</sup>Stanford (above, note 16) vol. II, 1v.

<sup>39</sup>It is even possible that the simile itself comments upon this perversion; according to Fränkel (above, note 1) 94, "nun liegt Odysseus wie eine verachtete Hündin in einem Winkel seines Hauses, in dem er Gebieter sein sollte."

protective instinct. The rare word, ἀμαλός, “weak,” which occurs elsewhere in Homer only at *Iliad* 22.310 (of a lamb), emphasizes the idea of the puppies’ helplessness and consequent need for their mother. Further, her protectiveness is vividly realized in her stance, as she seems actually to be straddling the puppies.<sup>40</sup> A new element has thus been added to the treatment of Odysseus as a fierce dog—namely, the reason for his fury. The maids, in concert with their lovers, pose a direct threat to the household and family, both of which Odysseus will in fact and by design be protecting through his revenge. So weighty a threat does he see in the maids’ sexual behavior that he will mention them specifically in his terse justification to the suitors for their imminent slaughter (22.37).

When immediately after the simile Odysseus reminds himself of Polyphemus, the protectiveness he feels, as shown by the bitch-simile, takes on a greater depth by contrast with the earlier incident. Whereas Odysseus stood helplessly by as the Cyclops smashed his men to the ground ὥς τε σκύλακας (9.289), this time he must and will effectively defend his “puppies.”<sup>41</sup>

It should be evident that our interpretation of this simile seeks to establish correspondences, but not overly literal ones, for all of its details. For example, while the bitch fails to recognize the unknown man, Odysseus does recognize the maidservants but he regards them similarly—as a threat. And while the bitch is attempting to protect her litter, Odysseus feels protective toward his entire household—i.e., all that for which he is responsible.

If this analysis of the simile is persuasive, certain additional observations may follow. For one thing, inasmuch as the maids are the immediate cause of Odysseus’ imagistically canine behavior, a contrast might appropriately be drawn between Odysseus, the bitch fiercely loyal to her brood, and the disloyal bitches that in Homeric diction the maids in fact are. Although a reader may have the impression that κύων, as a common term of invective, can be found scattered indiscriminately throughout the poem, it turns out that in four of its six occurrences it is applied to these very women as a group or else to their only named member, Melantho.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, all four occur within a book and a half prior to the simile,<sup>43</sup> which would increase the likelihood of the audience’s making the connection.

Related in usage to κύων is the compound adjective, κυνώπις, “dogface,”

<sup>40</sup>So Ameis-Hentze-Cauer (above, note 7).

<sup>41</sup>κύντερον ἄλλο (18) is probably a pun with reference at least to the simile, if not to 9.289 as well.

<sup>42</sup>Redfield (above, note 31) 195 correctly observes that “the implication is not always sexual.”

<sup>43</sup>18.338 and 19.91 of Melantho, 19.154 and 19.372 of the group.

which while never applied to the maids is to be found three times in the *Odyssey*, of three different women, who are examples of the unfaithful wife—Helen (4.145), Clytemnestra (11.424), and Aphrodite in Demodocus' song (8.319). As such, these three form a composite contrast to the ever-faithful Penelope, as is well known. It is not, however, widely realized that the Ithacan maids also fall into this inglorious company, though the *κύων-κυνῶπις* connection is probably no more than a minor link. The heavy emphasis placed upon the maids and specifically upon their sexual alliances serves to displace the recurrent motif of female infidelity from Penelope onto the maids. That is to say, the whole point in giving the maids such a prominent role (given that they are inessential to the action, except for revealing the stratagem of the shroud), is to bring within the Ithacan context a motif which is central to the poem but which the story prevents from being applied to Penelope herself. Even though they are unwed and are servants, through their sexual alliances the maids become figures of infidelity, infidelity to Penelope, Odysseus, and the house.<sup>44</sup> Their presence punctuates the truly remarkable faithfulness of their mistress. Therefore, when the poet makes these *κύνες* the occasion for the simile of the protective *κύων*, he highlights their infidelity and implicitly justifies their ultimate punishment.<sup>45</sup>

A second possible implication of our interpretation of the simile would relate it to the Argos passage. By imagining Odysseus as a loyal and angry dog ready to attack, we may be inclined to view Odysseus' imminent revenge specifically upon the maids as representing retaliation for his dog's mistreatment. They are, after all, the ones upon whom Eumaeus fixes the blame for Argos' neglect (17.319), even though we can assume they have been influenced by the suitors' disregard for the palace. This is a small point, to be sure, and quite without external confirmation, as is not surprising when they stand guilty of far greater misdeeds. It is, nevertheless, a possibility in view of the close relationship that once existed, and is briefly resurrected, between Odysseus and Argos.

More important and relevant to our purposes is the fact that not only in the simile but through the entire scene Odysseus is acting the watchdog,

<sup>44</sup>So H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (New York 1951) 123: "es ist wie ein Ehebruch wenn sie sich aus eignem Willen den Freiern schenken."

<sup>45</sup>Redfield (above, note 31) 194–95, uses this abusive sense of "dog" when applied metaphorically to human beings as evidence for his view of dogs in the *Iliad*. Even if this is valid, we must again face the issue of applicability to the *Odyssey*. It seems that the *Odyssey* does not possess a simplex view of dogs, but compartmentalizes the positive and negative usages. This is not strange; we may feel affection and even respect for real dogs, who may be friends and companions, yet we, too, can use "dog" pejoratively in many expressions, including as a vocative.

even if only because of his inability to sleep.<sup>46</sup> In other words, he has now assumed the same function that the dogs fulfil in Eumaeus' hut (although it might be more exact to call the bitch not a watchdog but merely a watchful dog, since she is protecting her own brood and not someone's household). Eumaeus' watchdogs, as discussed above, are representative of the orderly world that the swineherd has managed to maintain in the face of the general decay. Like the bitch of the simile (ἄνδρ' ἀγνοίησας) they are prepared to carry out their proper function by attacking a stranger. Similarly Odysseus, the alert guardian of his family, is about to attack the intruders and thus begin to restore his household and Ithaca to their original condition. As Norman Austin states it, "Odysseus' task is not merely the expulsion of usurpers but the re-creation of an original order that had existed in Ithaca."<sup>47</sup> In short, the simile, partly through its connection with Eumaeus' dogs, has made Odysseus the very symbol of that proper order.

The four passages we have examined constitute a progression which, together with other motifs, marks the stages of Odysseus' resumption of his proper status on Ithaca. In Book 14 we see him as the intruder assailed by dogs, as he will be assailed, verbally and physically, by slaves and suitors in his own palace. In Book 17 he is recognized and greeted by the mistreated but loyal Argos, as he will be recognized by Eurycleia, Eumaeus, Philoetius, and Penelope, all of whom likewise have been mistreated but have remained loyal. Finally, in the brooch of Book 19 and the simile of 20, Odysseus is portrayed as the faithful protector and fierce attacker, as he prepares to avenge himself and his family upon the usurping suitors and the slaves who have joined the ranks of the enemy.

The simile, thus, does not serve merely to illustrate a momentary mental event—fury in the hero's breast. Rather, a series of earlier, richly textured passages featuring dogs charges it with associations that entwine it deeply into the structure of the entire second half of the *Odyssey*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Athena describes him as "staying awake all night to keep guard" (52–53).

<sup>47</sup>Austin (above, note 12) 168.

<sup>48</sup>Faust (above, note 29), although he catalogs all Homeric passages involving dogs and adds ten pages of discussion, offers little assistance for understanding how any of the passages in the *Odyssey* function. Furthermore, in obvious contrast to the present paper, he denies the existence of any consistent, literary design tying such passages together (31).

An APA referee correctly points out 19.204–08 and 24.5–9 as similar instances of a striking metaphor followed by a simile exploiting the metaphor and finally a ring-compositional return to the metaphor. Significantly, at least 19.204–08, Penelope's melting skin, carries as much thematic weight as the metaphor we have examined, if not more; see Amory (above, note 28) especially 101.

Versions of this article were presented orally at Bryn Mawr College and at the APA meeting in Vancouver.