

## BEAST-LIKE MEN IN THE *ILIAD* AND AFTER

This paper intends to reveal the significance of θῆρ-similes, namely similes of unidentified wild animals, which are applied to individuals in Homer's *Iliad*, in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius and the *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smyrna. An exceptional instance in the *Odyssey* will also be discussed.

When studying θῆρ-similes, lexicographers and critics<sup>1</sup> have often taken the word θῆρ to mean «a lion».<sup>2</sup> To employ some useful linguistic

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1. See, e.g., Hesych. s.v. θῆρ; Sch. A.R. 1.1243-48a; Sch. vet. Arat. 35.6; Sch. Opp. H. 3.387; Eust. on *Il.* 3.449 (I.682-683); Sch. *Il.* 10.183-186; Eust. on *Il.* 10.183-8 (III.41.32-33); J. B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, ed. by G. S. Kirk, vols 1-6; III: books 9-12, Cambridge 1993, on *Il.* 11.546-7; R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, ed. by G. S. Kirk, vols 1-6; IV: books 13-16, Cambridge 1992, on *Il.* 15.323-5; Sch. *Il.* 15.586b; Eust. on *Il.* 15.585f. (III.767.23); D. J. N. Lee, *The Similes of the Iliad and the Odyssey Compared*, Sydney 1964, p. 22.

Some examples of a different approach: A. L. Keith presents the beast-similes of the *Iliad* as a separate category. Though he does not attempt any interpretation, his referring to the usage of the theme reveals that the author does not perceive beasts as synonymous to lions (A. L. Keith, *Simile and Metaphor in Greek Poetry: From Homer to Aeschylus*, Menasha 1914, p. 20): «For θῆρ, wild beast, in the attitude of searching, peering or trembling and fleeing after doing some wrong cf. III 449; XI 546; XV 589». H. Fränkel (*Die homerischen Gleichnisse*, Göttingen 1921, pp. 61, 67-68, 85) also reads θῆρ as Raubtier(en). Another exception is G. S. Kirk, who mentions «the wild if unspecified beast» (G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, ed. by G. S. Kirk, vols 1-6; I: books 1-4, Cambridge 1985, p. 330, on *Il.* 3.449-50); even so, he naturally goes on to remind the reader of the hungry lion to which Menelaus was compared earlier. C. Moulton (*Similes in the Homeric Poems* [Hypomnemata, 49], Göttingen 1977) keeps referring to θῆρ as «wild beast» or «wild animal».

2. It is worth mentioning an example of how the identification of the beast as lion is often taken for granted. Homer's beast-simile for the retreat of Antilochus in *Il.* 15.585 is translated by R. Graves as follows (R. Graves (tr.), *The Anger of Achilles: Homer's Iliad*, London 1961, p. 225):

The lion, conscious of his crime—  
Killing a herdsman or a hound—  
Deserts his victim, just in time,  
Before the neighbours gather round.

In the Cambridge commentary on the *Iliad*, Janko comments on this simile as follows (above, n.1, 291, on *Il.* 15.586-8): «This simile resembles the scene on Akhilleus' shield where lions raid a herd of cattle. [...] this reflects the realities of life in Ionia. As if to authenticate the Nemean lion, lion-bones are known from Mycenaean Tiryns and Keos; lions roamed Macedonia throughout antiquity and Turkey until the sixteenth century AD. [...] Eustathius [...] thinks the lion flees as if it knew it has done "evil"». It is remarkable that when Vergil models his simile in *Aen.* 11.809-815 on the Iliadic simile, he thinks of Arruns as a wolf (*ille* [...] *lupus*); see T. Schmit-Neuerburg, *Vergils Aeneis und die antike Homerehexese*, Berlin 1999, pp. 228-232; cf. below (n. 16).

terms,<sup>3</sup> it is true that since the linguistic sign (*signum*) «θήρ» means «a wild animal» but not a particular animal, the concept signified, the *signatum* (*signifié* or το σημαϊνόμενον), remains difficult to grasp, especially as we are not talking about an abstract meaning. Therefore, on hearing someone being described as a θήρ, the readers and audience would be likely to visualise the θήρ as an actual animal according to the particular literary context and their own experience or knowledge of the things described.

As regards the θήρ-similes in the *Iliad* in particular, I will try to show that in fact the identification of the θήρ with a known animal is not only unhelpful towards the understanding of the θήρ-image; it rather misleads the reader away from it. What is helpful is to see that the θήρ has its own identity and we should not necessarily search for an animal it might be synonymous to in each particular context. I will define the concrete identity of the θήρ in the *Iliad* and I will go on to examine to what extent this identity is kept in post-Homeric epic.

There is a question that deserves mentioning at this point, as we are interested in the significance of a word which is the main word in a simile: is the word or the simile-phrase dependent on particular metrical requirements? That is, can the verse-final θηρὶ ἔοικώς be only formulaic, simply an element of oral poetry? According to W. C. Scott:

There are numerous repeated similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In fact, it seems inevitable for an oral poet to repeat short similes coming at the close of the line and filling a conventional space. For example, the following repeated simile-phrases fall between the Bucolic diaeresis and the end of the line: [...]<sup>4</sup>

In the list of simile-phrases Scott gives, we come across θηρὶ ἔοικώς (used

3. Every linguistic sign (*signum*, as «θήρ» is) has two parts: the concept signified or *signatum* (*signifié* or το σημαϊνόμενον) and the acoustic image or *signans* (*signifiant* or το σημαϊνον). The *signatum* itself has two aspects: the inner and the outer. See G. Babinotis, *Θεωρητική Γλωσσολογία*, Athens 1980, pp. 97-101, 122-123; F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique generale*, ed. by Ch. Bally - A. Sechehaye - A. Riedlinger, Paris 1972, pp. 97-100, 158-162; F. P. Dinneen, S. J., *An Introduction to General Linguistics*, New York 1967, pp. 201-204. As to the inner aspect of any *signatum*, it has two parts: the cognitive (γνωστικόν) and the affective or subjective (βιωματικόν). The cognitive part consists of the basic information which is widely known to the community of speakers. The affective part is the personal association and charge of each significance according to the speaker's experience and personality, in connection with his environment. See Babinotis 122, 233 n.1 on 5.4.3. On the subject, it is very interesting to see the philosophical approach by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Blue Book* (*The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford 1972).

4. *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Leiden 1974, pp. 128-129.

2 times) and λαίλαπι ἴσος(-οι) (used 3 times each). He comments on the list thus:

The choice between several of these metrically equivalent phrases depends on the context: Ajax attracts the phrase «like a tower». However there seems little reason on the basis of immediate context to choose «like a wild beast» over «like a whirlwind»; there are enough examples of warriors attacking like various wild animals – lions or boars – that there appears no reason for the poet to neglect the phrase θῆρὶ εὐικῶς when speaking of Nestor’s attack at 11.747.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that there are metrical considerations which would suggest this list of similes to the poet often enough for him to repeat them. The instances of the wild beast and whirlwind similes imply that several simile units may have been interchangeable provided that their subjects did not drastically disagree with the surrounding narrative and were sanctioned as alternates by the oral tradition.<sup>6</sup>

I hope that my examination of θῆρ-similes will show that their occurrence is not merely a matter of choice among alternatives, as Scott suggests. I could accept that when the θῆρ refers to an animal which has already been identified (as in *Il.* 11.119 and 15.633) – although these cases do not seem to have a formulaic structure and are not related to Scott’s discussion, I think – then metrical needs in relation to Homer’s wish for variation may dictate his choice. I could also accept that an army thought of as θῆρες by Quintus could have been described as a whirlwind without any significant loss in meaning (that of fierce impetus). Homer never describes armies as θῆρες, though. Scott overlooks the fact that the Iliadic images of individual men as θῆρες are so powerful and full of their personal significance that it would be careless to regard them as synonymous to other images (of natural phenomena, for example) or subject to merely metrical needs.

### 1. In the *Iliad*

In the *Iliad* Homer places the unidentified animal, the θῆρ, in the focus of attention in three similes, always referring to individuals.<sup>7</sup> The word then has,

5. *Il.* 11.747: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπόρουσα κελαινῆ λαίλαπι ἴσος.

6. See above (n. 4).

7. In the *Iliad* there are similes where the word θῆρ refers to an animal which has been previously *identified*; so, it refers to a lion in *Iliad* 11.119 and 15.633. This is a distinct use of θῆρ that does not really show the full potential of the word.

The θῆρ as an *unidentified* animal which is not the *tertium comparationis* occurs in similes twice. This category includes the only example of the θῆρ in Homer referring to more than one individual. For the first and only time in *Iliad* 15.323-325 the θῆρ describes a pair of characters, Hector and Apollo.

ὥς δὲ κύνες περὶ μῆλα δυσωρήσονται ἐν αὐλῆι  
θηρὸς ἀκούσαντες κρατερόφρονος,

(*Il.* 10.183)

as it still has in modern Greek, a definite *psychological significance*. No doubt there is an obvious distance between the situation of Menelaus, who is deceived as a warrior and simultaneously betrayed and mocked but still love-stricken as a husband, and the situation of Aias and Antilochus who flee in fear. Yet one thing is common in these cases: all three men's state of mind is a state of violent discomposure and loss of wits.

Let's see the simile of Menelaus first (*Il.* 3.448):

τὼ μὲν ἄρ' ἐν τρητοῖσι κατεύνασθεν λεχέεσιν·  
 Ἄτρείδης δ' ἄν' ὄμιλον ἐφοίτα θηριῶϊ εὐκίως,  
 εἴ που ἐσαθρήσειεν Ἀλέξανδρον θεοειδέα.

The picture is structured on the polarity between τὼ μὲν, that is Paris and Helen, and Ἄτρείδης δ', namely Menelaus. In the first line a picture of privacy is elaborated. The τρητὰ λέχεα operates as the only place for any sort of activity. The verb κατεύνασθεν (put oneself to bed, lie down to sleep) shows the eager desire of Paris for Helen as he has expressed it a few verses earlier (3.441-446). Thereby, the verb of repose constitutes the only form of activity in the verse, and this activity is apparently sexual. In a sharp contrast to this picture of privacy, the following verse describes a picture of exposure to the crowd. We move from the interior of a bedroom to the openness of the battlefield. Homer chooses a verb of intense movement and he expresses the field of action with the phrase ἄν' ὄμιλον. Ironically, solitude has not seized those who are in privacy, but Menelaus, who moves to and fro in the crowd in vain while his wife is in bed with another man. It seems that these two verses encapsulate the kernel of the Trojan war. The simile appears in a context where it was formally agreed that the winner of the duel between Menelaus and Paris would have Helen (3.281-282) and so the war would come to an end. However, though Menelaus is the one to have won (3.457), Paris is the one to have Helen.

οἳ δ' ὡς τ' ἦε βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶυ μέγ' οἰῶν  
 θῆρε δύω κλονέουσι.

(*Il.* 15.323)

The words θηρός and θῆρες are distanced from the introductory phrase of the simile and are not given a place until the very beginning of the second verse. In these examples the θῆρ enters our optical field indirectly, through the eyes of the domestic animals which are threatened by it that is, the dogs (*Il.* 10.183) and the oxen or lambs (*Il.* 15.323) which represent the Greeks (see Janko (above, n. 1) p. 262, on *Il.* 15.323-5: «so does [sc. heighten the terror] the viewpoint: since nobody is defending the sheep, the attack is seen from their angle»). The Trojans are compared to θῆρες in similes which describe how they are perceived by the Greeks. The θῆρ as perceived by the opponents seems to embody the dark force, namely the unknown and hostile force of Nature against them.

The θῆρ in the simile above has been identified with a lion because the simile is often seen as referring to the lion-simile in *Iliad* 3.23-26.<sup>8</sup> There Menelaus, glad to see Paris, is as a hungry lion that comes across a dead stag or wild goat. True, a few lines before *Iliad* 3 comes to an end, the θῆρ-simile that we are discussing harbours the vanishing of the joy that Menelaus felt and the thwarting of the intentions he had at the beginning of *Iliad* 3 when he saw Paris. Indeed, the diction in the wider context of the two similes strengthens the link between them: *Iliad* 3.21-28 (ἀρηϊφίλος Μενέλαος, ὀμίλου, Ἀλέξανδρον θεοειδέα, ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδῶν) ≈ *Iliad* 3.449-452 (ἀν' ὄμιλον, εἶ ... ἐσαθρήσειεν, Ἀλέξανδρον θεοειδέα, ἀρηϊφίλω Μενελάω).

The affinity is undeniable. The θῆρ-simile does more, though, than reminding the reader of the lion-simile and so forming a nice example of ring-composition in *Iliad* 3. It is important to see that the θῆρ contributes to this ring-composition having its own identity, which is not drawn from the lion. If we regarded the θῆρ as absolutely dependent on the preceding lion, we would miss the very quality of the θῆρ as this is revealed in all three θῆρ-similes in the *Iliad*. I will try to give a description of it below.

I have already mentioned the psychological nature of the Iliadic θῆρ-similes and Menelaus', Aias and Antilochus' discomposure.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, what actual animals could not embody but the θῆρ, in its metaphorical power, can, is the concept of otherness: the psychological upset of a being who is alone and unknown.

The qualities of being alone and unknown are highlighted by the contrast between the θῆρ and the crowd, the ὄμιλος. It is worth noting that this word occurs in all three beast-similes of individuals in the *Iliad* (3.449, 11.546, 15.588). The image of the θῆρ does not refer just to a feeling, but to a whole nexus of inner states. We see not only what the person feels, but also how his feelings are reflected on the way he perceives himself in his surroundings. Homer expresses the dramatic isolation of the beast-like man from the crowd to whom he does not belong.

In Menelaus' simile the phrase θηρὶ εἰκῶς is placed at the end of the verse, but still, as these lines are read or heard, the succession of words is significant: the position of the comparison (θηρὶ εἰκῶς) between the two verbs indicates that Menelaus is like a θῆρ in both the way he moves (ἐφοίτα)

8. So in Sch. *Il.* 3.449b, and less directly in Kirk (above, n. 1).

9. C. Moulton (above, n. 1, p. 89) speaks of Menelaus' frustration. It is important that Moulton seems to recognise the psychological value of the image, though it is a pity that he does not discuss beast-similes as a separate category: «The lion image at the book's beginning is balanced by the hero's frustration at the end, when he vainly searches for Paris. [...] now the Greek is compared to a wild beast (III 449-450)».

and the way he sees (εἶ ... ἐσαθρήσειεν). I think that for the understanding of the θήρ, the verb of sight εἶ ... ἐσαθρήσειεν (*Il.* 3.450; cf. *παπτήνας* at 11.546) is as significant as the word ὄμιλος (*Il.* 3.449; cf. 11.546).

The syntax in the θήρ-simile that describes the retreat of Aias, reveals the same delicate link between comparison and verbs (*Il.* 11.546):

τρέσσε δὲ παπτήνας ἐφ' ὀμίλου θηρὶ εἰκώς.

The participial phrase *παπτήνας ἐφ' ὀμίλου* is not really parenthetical, as, for example, is implied in some translations.<sup>10</sup> Both verbal forms (*τρέσσε* and *παπτήνας*) precede the phrase *θηρὶ εἰκώς* and are linked to it. Aias *τρέσσε* like a θήρ, but what elucidates his retreat is the fact that he looked around with a feeling of alarm. His look through the crowd is the look of one who feels the discomfort and loneliness of a stranger and misfit in his hostile surroundings.<sup>11</sup> The attribute of *θηριότης*, then, is reflected into the eyes.<sup>12</sup> For, as G. Gillan writes,

In its vision of things, the eye not only unfolds its relationship to things, but their relationship to it and its incorporation into the space inhabited by them. [...] The eye is, then, just as much, in vision, the object of things as things are its objects. And the experience of vision moves back and forth from seeing to being seen, and from being seen to seeing in a way that echoes the relation of touching-touched.<sup>13</sup>

The distance of Menelaus and Aias from the ὄμιλος is revealed both to Menelaus and Aias themselves and to the people who form the crowd.

Aias' relationship to the crowd and his psychological state need the θήρ-image in order to be described neatly. Immediately after the beast-simile we

10. For instance, in the modern Greek translation by N. Kazantzakis and J. Th. Kakridis: «και φεύγει, τρομαγμένος γύρω του θωρώντας, σαν αγρίμι». In a similar manner, A. Pallis translates: «κι' αφού 'δε γύρω, σα θεριό κατά το πλήθος κάνει».

11. By contrast, S. H. Lonsdale does not see the psychological tone of the participle *παπτήνας* in *Il.* 11.546. His approach is in accord with his general conclusion that the verb *παπταίνω* is associated with the idea of hunting («If Looks Could Kill: *παπταίνω* and Related Imagery in Homer», *CJ* 84 (1989) 325-333, at 326): «Aias hurls menacing glances at the throng like a besieged lion holding its attackers at bay until it can escape».

12. The beast as gazing in a particular way is seen in Philostratus' description of the Cyclops: *καὶ βλέπειν μὲν ἡμερόν φησιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐρᾶ, ἄγριον δὲ ὄρᾳ καὶ ὑποκαθήμενον ἔτι, καθάπερ τὰ θηρία τὰ ἀνάγκης ἡττώμενα* (*Im.* 2.18.3). In Julian, too: *ὥσπερ τὰ θηρία ὀργίλον καὶ ὀξὺ βλέπουσιν* (*Euseb.*, *Or.* 2 [3] 103b).

13. G. Gillan, *From Sign to Symbol*, Brighton 1982, p. 40. Cf. B. Snell's concept of *παπταίνειν*, which puts the verb also in a context of «to see and be seen» (*The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer, Oxford 1953, p. 3): «it denotes a visual attitude, and does not hinge upon the function of sight as such. [...] A man would notice such attitudes in others rather than ascribing them to himself».

read the following lion-simile (which precedes Aias' retreat like a stubborn ass) (*Il.* 11.548):

ὥς δ' αἴθωνα λέοντα βοῶν ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιου  
 ἐσσεύοντο κύνες τε καὶ ἀνέρες ἀγροῦῶται,  
 οἳ τέ μιν οὐκ εἰῶσι βοῶν ἐκ πῖαορ ἐλέσθαι  
 πάννουχοι ἐγρήσσοντες· ὃ δὲ κρειῶν ἐρατίζων  
 ἰθύει, ἀλλ' οὐ τι πρήσσει· θαμέες γὰρ ἄκοντες  
 ἀντίον ἀίσσουσι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν  
 καιόμενάι τε δεταί, τάς τε τρεῖ ἐσσύμενός περ·  
 ἦῶθεν δ' ἀπὸ νόσφιν ἔβη τετιηότι θυμῶ·  
 ὥς Αἴας τότε' ἀπὸ Τρώων τετιημένος ἦτορ  
 ἦε πόλλ' ἀέκων· περὶ γὰρ διέ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.

The images of the lion and the donkey which follow the θήρ-simile seem as if they are its developed form (something that, for example, Eustathius and Hainsworth believe).<sup>14</sup> The two similes describe the unwillingness of Aias to retreat. However, we should note that earlier than the two similes, this unwillingness can be discerned not in the θήρ-simile itself, but in the verse which directly follows this simile: ἐντροπαλιζόμενος, ὀλίγον γόνυ γουνὸς ἀμείβων (*Il.* 11.547). It is this idea that the extended similes expand, and not Aias' inner upset and the instinctive nature of his flight, as seen in the θήρ-simile.

There is also something to be said on how the special focus of attention varies in this succession of similes. The θήρ-simile is a strongly psychological image. On the contrary, in order to express an inner state (the unwillingness of Aias to retreat) the two extended similes employ external pictures – «concrete detail», as Moulton would put it<sup>15</sup> – so shedding light on events and action. This step from the inner to the outer helps both to intensify Aias' distress and to justify his action by showing that the situation was such that there was no choice for him. By making these points I wish not to question the indubitable links among the similes, but to clarify the affinity among them.

Antilochus is also thought of as a θήρ while he, like Aias, ἔτρεσε, fled from fear (*Il.* 15.585):

Ἄντιλοχος δ' οὐ μείνε θεός περ ἐὼν πολεμιστής,  
 ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἄρ ἔτρεσε θηρὶ κακὸν ῥέξαντι ἐοικώς,

14. Eust. on *Il.* 11.544-7 (III.248.25-26); Hainsworth (above, n. 1) on *Il.* 11.546-547.

15. «Similes in the *Iliad*», *Hermes* 102 (1974) 381-397, at 386, 386 n. 34.

ὄς τε κύναι κτείνας ἢ βουκόλον ἀμφὶ βόεσσι  
φεύγει, πρὶν περ ὄμιλον ἀολλισθήμεναι ἀνδρῶν.

Having looked into the θήρ-similes of Menelaus and Aias we are not at all surprised that the word ὄμιλος occurs in the simile of Antilochus, too. On the contrary, it was quite expected. What is lacking here is the verb of seeing, and this might be a reason why the simile is extended. The image of the crowd and the relation of the animal to it are in the mind of the θήρ; in particular, they dictate its flight: ἔτρεσε ... πρὶν περ ὄμιλον ἀολλισθήμεναι. However, the crowd is not out there, it has no physical presence. Thus, there is no crowd for the θήρ to look at; there is no look to reflect the relationship between the θήρ and the crowd. Instead, the extension of the simile and the reference to the deeds of the animal against the people it flees from, express this relationship of alienation.<sup>16</sup>

To conclude, whenever Homer thinks of an individual as a θήρ, he depicts the instinctive reaction of a character who is deeply distraught. In addition, he depicts the solitude, the uncertainty, the pain of helplessness at a particular and difficult moment when the individual feels that he does not belong to the group and he can expect neither help nor protection from anywhere.

## 2. After the Iliad

The θήρ-similes as we saw them in the *Iliad* – rather short, not so much describing an action in an explanatory way, but expressing an inner state in a very fine, allusive way – are not to be seen in epic poetry following the *Iliad*. There are in deed some fine examples of the very same line of thought. These are similes, though, which extend in more lines, dealing not with a momentary reaction or state of mind, but building a whole picture, which includes details about the «before» and «after» the moment of the beast's revelation. They are similes which waver between a θήρ-simile and a lion- or other wild animal simile. Such instances of θήρ-similes we will see below.

16. C. M. Bowra notes the psychological tone of the simile (*Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, Oxford 1930, p. 127): «Here the comparison picks up not only the sudden retreat of Antilochus but his feelings as well». G. Williams, though, who discusses the influence of this Homeric simile on Vergil's *Aeneid* 11.805, overlooks it (*Technique and Ideas in the Aeneid*, New Haven 1983, p. 176): «Here little is operative in the context except the running away – and that is only temporary. Antilochus has no reason to feel guilt. The poet objectively sees his hasty retreat in terms of an animal that has done something outrageous (though Antilochus has not)».



### 3. In the *Argonautica*

We will discuss the only example of the *θήρ* describing an individual in the *Argonautica*.<sup>17</sup> This is the most interesting example of the *θήρ* in the poem: the simile of Polyphemus (*Arg.* 1.1243-1247). Hylas is being abducted by a Nymph and Polyphemus is the only person to hear him cry out. Polyphemus is likened to a hungry beast which can hear sheep bleating from a distance and rushes forward only to realise that the sheep have already been shut in the pen. Coming so close to satisfying its hunger but failing to do so, the *θήρ* feels great disappointment (*Arg.* 1.1243):

Βῆ δὲ μεταΐξας Πηγέων σχεδόν, ἥυτε τις θήρ  
 ἄγριος, ὃν ῥά τε γῆρυς ἀπόπροθεν ἴκετο μῆλων,  
 λιμῶ δ' αἰθόμενος μετανίσεται, οὐδ' ἐπέκυρσε  
 ποίμνησιν – πρὸ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἐνὶ σταθμοῖσι νομῆες  
 ἔλσαν –, ὁ δὲ στενάχων βρέμει ἄσπετον, ὄφρα κάμησιν·  
 ὦς τότ' ἄρ' Εἰλατίδης μεγάλ' ἔστενεν, ἀμφὶ δὲ χώρον  
 φοῖτα κεκληγῶς, μελέη δέ οἱ ἔπλετ' αὐτή.

The *Scholia* on the *Argonautica* misinterpret the significance of the word *θήρ*. According to them, the reason why Polyphemus is compared to a *θήρ* is «διὰ τὴν ἔμφυτον τοῦ ἥρωος δύναμιν», owing to the natural strength of the hero. Modern critics see a paradox in the simile, a discrepancy between the

17. Apollonius Rhodius also writes of Polydeuces' ἀλκὴν καὶ μένος that (*Arg.* 2.44-45) οἱ ἀλκὴ καὶ μένος ἥυτε θηρὸς ἀέξετο. F. Vian (ed. Paris 1974, on *Arg.* 2.45) notes this idea of excess, but assigns it to the verb ἀέξετο only. M. Campbell («Three Notes on Alexandrian Poetry», *Hermes* 102 (1974) 38-46, at 39) relates Apollonius' Polydeuces to the Euripidean Dionysus: «Polydeuces, serene and lovely as he is, possesses the brute force of a beast (45); Dionysus too has the beast in him (Ba. 922, al.)». In these lines of Apollonius I can see something that exceeds human experience and known standards.

Argo, too, though it is not stated directly, is thought of as a sea-beast (*Arg.* 1.990):

φράξαν ἀπειρεσίησι Χυτοῦ στόμα νεῖοθι πέτρης,  
 πόντιον οἶά τε θῆρα λοχώμενοι ἔνδον ἐόντα.

However, the word has a quite different nuance there. Rather than the ship being compared to a *θήρ*, it is the ambush that reminds one of a sea-beast hunt. Similarly in *Arg.* 4.317-318, it is the human emotion of fear that is emphasised, not a parallelism between ships and sea-beasts (*Arg.* 4.317):

[...] νηῶν φόβῳ, οἶά τε θῆρας  
 ὀσσομένοι πόντου μεγακῆτεος ἐξανιόντας.

In neither comparison of Argo above, nor in that of Polydeuces, is the word *θήρ* used of an individual in action. It is only applied to characteristics of Polydeuces and to the ship as an object which appears in the comparison of one human activity or emotion to another.

intention of Polyphemus to rescue Hylas and the image of the wild θήρ that intends to devour the sheep.<sup>18</sup> As we shall see, however, Apollonius' θήρ-simile for Polyphemus responds to the function of the Homeric θήρ-simile and is perfectly justified in its context.

An Iliadic model that has been correctly pointed out<sup>19</sup> is the θήρ-simile that describes the unwilling retreat of Aias (*Il.* 11.548-555). Indeed, it is quite clear that the animals in both similes have identical plans which receive identical thwarting. However, this Iliadic model is not the only one and perhaps not the one that reveals most Apollonius' inspiration from Homer. I suggest that more than the description of Aias, Apollonius had the θήρ-simile of Menelaus (*Il.* 3.448) in mind and consciously created a picture parallel to that. I believe that the two Homeric θήρ-similes are interwoven in the mind of Apollonius. The parallelism to the simile of Aias is mainly based on form, while the one to the simile of Menelaus is wider and more significant in terms of matter. There is a series of linking points between this simile of Polyphemus in the *Argonautica* and the picture of Menelaus desperately searching for Paris in the *Iliad*.

Firstly and most importantly (no matter if the hostile Menelaus is the antithesis of the caring Polyphemus) they describe the same emotion: their immoderate, excessive agitation, which is alien to human reason. The wording also implies that Apollonius refers to Homer: Polyphemus ἀμφὶ δὲ χῶρον φοίτα, while Menelaus ἀν' ὄμιλον ἐφοίτα. This is the only instance that Apollonius uses the verb φοιτάω in the whole of his *Argonautica*.<sup>20</sup> Finally, there is another important link: Apollonius polarises the realm of the Nymph and Hylas on the one hand and of Polyphemus on the other. Making due allowances, it is the same polarity as we discerned between Paris and Helen on the one hand and Menelaus on the other, in the Homeric simile. So, the Nymph and Hylas are seen in a realm of erotic privacy similar to that of Paris and Helen. The erotic colour of both encounters is unquestionable. Of course, Hylas is violently forced to participate in this encounter, while Helen is not. Yet she consents only after she has subdued her will to the determined and harsh Aphrodite (*Il.* 3.399-420; esp. 418). Polyphemus, exactly like Menelaus, stands across the way. They are both distraught, having lost the person they care about and consequently their equanimity, standing solitary and helpless.

18. C. S. Broeniman, *Thematic Patterns in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius: A Study in the Imagery of Similes*, PhD diss., University of Illinois 1989, p. 123; cf. p. 123 n. 290.

19. F. Vian (ed. Paris 1974), on *Arg.* 1.1247; M. Campbell, *Echoes and Imitations of Early Epic in Apollonius Rhodius* [Mnemosyne, suppl. 72], Leiden 1981, p. 21, on *Arg.* 1.1243f.

20. See M. Campbell, *Index Verborum in Apollonium Rhodium*, Hildesheim 1983, s.v.

The natural course of the affinity between the two passages leads us to a final (perhaps inevitable) step: we can see both Polyphemus and Menelaus as deprived of their beloved, and so, the polarity mentioned above will be a wide and unbridgeable chasm between the lover (Menelaus or Polyphemus) and the other two persons. There is indeed a version of the story in which Hylas was Polyphemus', not Heracles' eromenos. Thus, the two similes totally correspond in the light of the allusion to the love of Polyphemus for Hylas, an allusion already discerned by critics.<sup>21</sup> So, the nexus of parallelisms that we have seen between the simile of the θῆρ in the *Argonautica* and those in the *Iliad*, corroborates the view that Apollonius alludes to the relationship in which Polyphemus is the ἐραστής and Hylas the ἐρώμενος.

#### 4. In the Posthomeric

Quintus has composed more θῆρ-similes than those composed by Homer or Apollonius, and he gives the beast the second position in his animal-similes after the lion.<sup>22</sup>

Although this paper deals mainly with individuals thought of as θῆρες, it is worth noting that Quintus compares groups of people to beasts; this is unseen in the extant epic poetry that precedes his. In comparison to θῆρ-similes of individuals, his θῆρ-similes of groups of warriors show a completely different view. Lacking psychology, these similes express heroic power and earthly force. Quintus is influenced by post-Homeric literary accounts of war, in which groups of warriors or enemies are compared to beasts.<sup>23</sup>

Quintus' comparison of Aias is his only θῆρ-simile that adequately reflects the Iliadic model. It is a deeply psychological picture and belongs to a chain of four similes (*Posth.* 5.364-391) that describe Aias' μανία. In this succession of psychological portraits the θῆρ-simile is the only one to imply Aias'

21. R. L. Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius*, Cambridge 1993, p. 39; see also p. 39 n. 120. Cf. C. R. Beye, *Epic and Romance in the Argonautica of Apollonius*, Illinois 1982, p. 94, 94 n. 23 (on p. 184); J. J. Clauss, *Allusion and the Narrative Style of Apollonius Rhodius: A Detailed Study of Book 1 of the Argonautica*, Ann Arbor 1989, p. 154; Broeniman (above, n. 18) p. 123 n. 291.

22. For a general list of animal-similes in the *Posthomeric*, see the *Appendix* in Barbara Spinoula, *Animal-Similes and Creativity in the Posthomeric of Quintus of Smyrna*, PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, 2000.

23. See Septuaginta (Mach. II, 10.35), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (14.10.1), Libanius (*Or.* 59.135; *Decl.* 13.45), Polybius (*Hist.* 1.80.10), Plutarch (*Caes.* 39.3; *Phil.* 10.9; *Dem.* 48.1), Diodorus Siculus (5.31.5), Appian (*Gall.* 1.9; *Pun.* 590), Pausanias (10.21.3), Dio Cassius (56.14.7, 62.11.4), Polyaeus (*Strategemata* 7.2.1), *Scholia* on Demosthenes (*Or.* 3.148a).

deprivation of what he naturally deserved and to describe his emotional position against the others (*Posth.* 5.371):

πάντη δ' ἀμφιθέεσκεν ἀναιδέι θηρὶ ἐοικώς,  
ὅς τε βαθυσκοπέλοιο διέσσυται ἄγχεα βήσσης  
ἀφριῶν γενέεσσι καὶ ἄλγεα πολλὰ μενοιῶν  
ἢ κυσὶν ἢ ἀγρότης οἷ οἷ τέκνα δηώσωνται  
ἄντρων ἐξερούσαντες, ὃ δ' ἀμφὶ γένυσι βεβρυχώς,  
εἷ που ἔτ' ἐν ξυλόχοισιν ἴδοι θυμήρεα τέκνα,  
τῷ δ' εἷ τις κύρσειε μεμνηνότε θυμὸν ἔχοντι,  
αὐτοῦ οἷ βιότοιο λυγρὸν περιτέλλεται ἦμαρ·

Quintus draws a definite link between the simile of Aias and a Homeric simile: the lion-simile of Achilles lamenting Patroclus in *Iliad* 18.318-322 has been pointed out<sup>24</sup> as a model:

uttering many a groan, like a bearded lion whose whelps some hunter of stags has snatched away out of the thick wood; and the lion coming back later grieves, and through many a glen he ranges on the track of the footsteps of the man, in the hope that he may find him somewhere.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, the description of Aias as a bereft θῆρ is deceptively close to that of Neoptolemus as a bereft lion in *Posth.* 7.464-471.<sup>26</sup> Behind the same situations there is a very different reaction on the part of the animals. So, we watch the distraught beast in a pointless movement of search for its young on the one hand («The animal runs about roaring, in the hope that it may still see its dear young in the thickets, and if anyone meets it when it is in this frenzied state, it is a sad day in his life»)<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the distraught lion is in a planned action against the ill-doers («the lion, high up on some crag, catches sight of the destructive hunters and rushes upon them»)<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, Quintus thinks of a lion in a simile of dynamic action, while he does not specify the identity of his wild animal in a purely psychological simile.

I wish to draw attention to Homer's θῆρ-simile of Menelaus in his search for Paris. The undeniable proximity in form reveals proximity in matter:

Ἀτρεΐδης δ' ἄν' ὄμιλον ἐφοίτα θηρὶ ἐοικώς,  
(*Il.* 3.449)

24. See F. Vian (ed. Paris 1966), on *Posth.* 5.371-378.

25. *Il.* 18.318-322, tr. A. T. Murray; rev. William F. Wyatt.

26. See above (n. 24).

27. *Posth.* 5.375-378, tr. F. M. Combellack.

28. *Posth.* 7.469-470, tr. F. M. Combellack.

εἷ που ἐσαθρήσειεν Ἀλέξανδρον θεοειδέα.  
(*Il.* 3.450)

πάντη δ' ἀμφιθέεσκεν ἀναιδέι θηρὶ εἰκώς,  
(*Posth.* 5.371)

εἷ που ἔτ' ἐν ξυλόχοισιν ἴδοι θυμήρεα τέκνα.  
(*Posth.* 5.376)

The verbs of restless and vain physical movement and the subordinate sentences of the agonizing search of the eyes embody the bestial wildness, the loneliness and distance that the characters feel.

All other instances of the θῆρ in the *Posthomerica* are self-explanatory, depriving the θῆρ of any special power, depriving the reader of the effort to think deeply on the text and decode the θῆρ-image. By self-explanatory I mean that the simile itself reveals in a very open way what the point of containing a beast in it is. As there was a direct reference to Polydeuces' ἀλκὴν καὶ μένος by Apollonius (*Arg.* 2.44-45), in the same way Quintus reveals what aspect of the beast is the main point of the comparison each time.

So, Philoctetes is seen by Odysseus and Diomedes as a θῆρ because of his state – unhuman appearance resulting from his suffering and his isolation (*Posth.* 9.364):

αὐαλέαι δέ οἱ ἀμφὶ κόμαι περι κρατὶ κέχυντο  
θηρὸς ὅπως ὀλοοῖο τὸν ἀργαλέης δόλος ἄγρης  
μάρπη νυκτὸς ἰόντα θεοῦ ποδός, ὃς δ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης  
τειρόμενος ποδὸς ἄκρον ἀταρτηροῖσιν ὁδοῦσι  
κόψας εἰς ἐὸν ἄντρον ἀποιχεται, ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κῆρ  
τείρει ὁμοῦ λιμός τε καὶ ἀργαλέαι μελεδῶναι·  
ᾧς τὸν ὑπὸ σπέος εὐρὸ κακῆ περιδάμνατ' ἀνίη·

It is obvious that this θῆρ-simile differs from the ones in the *Iliad*; this one is too clear, revealing too much. The simile that closely follows this one is, again, about the physical appearance of Philoctetes' wound and compares it to a rock eroded by the waves (*Posth.* 9.378-382). In fact, the image of the sea is one of solitude and waste no less than the image of the beast having withdrawn and lying in its lair in pain. Having seen beast-similes describing individuals in a state of loss of emotional control, we now see Philoctetes in a state of loss of physical control. As R. Parker points out,

Another prerequisite for dignified, ordered existence, again connected with control of

the body, is health. Particularly alarming are the disruptions caused by madness, which can lead to a complete loss of control, and by skin disease, a corruption of the body's visible form.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, in depicting Philoctetes as a beast and stressing his solitude and distance from humanity, Quintus is influenced by Sophocles.<sup>30</sup> In the *Philoctetes* the Chorus take pity on Philoctetes for his loneliness and associate him with beasts. Even in the vocabulary used the affinity between Quintus' and Sophocles' Philoctetes is apparent:

οἰκτίρω νιν ἔγωγ', ὅπως  
μή του κηδομένου βροτῶν  
μηδὲ σύντροφον ὄμμ' ἔχων  
δύστανος, μόνος αἰεὶ,  
(Ph. 169)

πάντων ἄμμορος ἐν βίῳ  
κεῖται μῦνος ἀπ' ἄλλων,  
στικτῶν ἢ λασίων μετὰ  
θηρῶν, ἐν τ' ὀδύναϊς ὁμοῦ  
λιμῶι τ' οἰκτρός, ἀνήκεστ' ἀμερίμ-  
νητά τ' ἔχων βάρη.  
(Ph. 182)

In this passage human beings are conspicuous by their absence: βροτῶν, σύντροφον, πάντων, ἄλλων. The successive negative and privative forms (μή, μηδέ, δύστανος, ἄμμορος) stress Philoctetes' isolation, which is further emphasised by the repetition of μόνος αἰεὶ, μῦνος ἀπ' ἄλλων.<sup>31</sup>

Also Euripides clearly associates the beast with solitude in one of his fragments (*fr.* 421 Nauck):<sup>32</sup>

κοίλοις ἐν ἄντροις ἄλυχνος, ὥστε θῆρ, μόνος.

In addition to tragedy, Quintus certainly has Aristotle's *Politics* in mind and his view of the beasts as unable to share in a political community

29. R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983, p. 326.

30. The beast as asocial is also found in the work of some Church Fathers. So in Theodoret *MPG* 81.1365B (cf. 81.1369B); Greg. Naz. *MPG* 37.589A, *MPG* 37.1456A.

31. This concept of the beast through a nexus of negations is not exclusive to Sophocles. Cf. Plutarch *Moralia* 1124e; Aelius Aristides (Dindorf I, p. 32); Orph. *L.* 75-76.

32. Cf. *h.Heph.* 4: ἄντροις νοιειτάσασχον ἐν οὔρεσιν, ἤϋτε θῆρες.

(1253a27-29).<sup>33</sup> These two sources (tragedy and Aristotle) seem to have influenced Quintus to compose a beast-simile which is different from the ones we saw in the *Iliad*: the state of Quintus' Philoctetes is not the inner solitude that one feels when in a crowd; here the environment (the away-from-people-situation) is the source of this «outer» solitude which *enters* the individual and fills him with despair. There is nobody for him to look at and nobody – so he thinks – for him to be seen by. In fact, the θῆρ in this Posthomeric passage is only seen by others, not vice-versa, and has also been harmed by others (*Posth.* 9.365: δόλος ἄγρης). Quintus' description of Philoctetes as a beast lacks the psychological depth we saw in Homer's and Apollonius' beast-similes. However, as in those poets the θῆρ represents the isolated person who stands in the margin of human reason and equanimity, so in Sophocles and Quintus the character described as a beast (Philoctetes) is also an isolated person who again stands in a margin, that of human society and dignity. The starting point for Philoctetes' isolation, though, let us repeat, is mainly physical and social, not psychological.

Philoctetes, seen above and described as a beast, is soon taking up the role of the viewer (*Posth.* 11.475):

ὡς ἴδεν Αἰνεΐαν περὶ τείχεα μαιμώνωντα  
θηρὶ βίην ἀτάλαντον.

This is another self-explanatory simile: if it were the κόμη and the ἀνίη of Philoctetes that introduced the image of a beast earlier on, here it is Aeneas' βίη, the excessive force, the opaque power of Nature.

The concept is similar in a more complicated image, that of Oenone (*Posth.* 10.315):

αἶ γάρ μοι μέγα θηρὸς ὑπὸ κραδίη μένος<sup>34</sup> εἶη

33. D. Keyt («Three Basic Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*», in D. Keyt - F. D. Miller, Jr. (eds), *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 118-141, at 139) has successfully brought Philoctetes into his discussion of this particular passage in Aristotle's *Politics* (Keyt's italics): «Philoctetes' inability to share in a polis is not the sort of inability that destroys humanness. [...] Since he is polisless through misfortune rather than through lack of capacity to live with others, he remains a human being just as a carpenter out of work remains a carpenter. Aristotle concedes as much in the course of the telic argument, for he says that "he who is polisless by nature (*dia physin*) and *not by chance* (*dia tuchên*) is either a low sort or superior to man" (1253a3-4). Thus by Aristotle's own principles Philoctetes while living in isolation remains a human being». Cf. B. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy*, London 1973, pp. 278-279.

34. There are only a few other extant passages referring to the μένος of a θῆρ: A.R. 2.45; Greg. Naz. *MPG* 37.1362A (καὶ μένος, οἶά τε θηρὸς); cf. J. Chrys. *MPG* 54.501.33 (ὁ καθάπερ θηρίον μεμηνώς); finally, Eust. on *Il.* 22.312 (IV.621.23-24). For μένος in Quintus, see F. A. García Romero, «Aportaciones al estoicismo de Quinto de Esmirna. Un comentario a la figura de Anfitrite y a *Posthomeric* XI 106 s.», *EM* 58.1 (1990) 119-124, at 123-124; García Romero, «La "intervención psíquica" en los *Post Homeric* de Quinto de Esmirna», *Habis* 17 (1986) 109-

δαρδάψαι σέο σάρκας, ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἷμα λαφύξαι,  
οἷά με πῆματ' ἔοργας.<sup>35</sup>

From the βίη of Aeneas we come to the μένος of Oenone. She expresses her repulsion for Paris in an anthropophagous wish which, however, is unrealistic. As Parker notes,

Cannibalism was, for Greeks, one of those extreme pollutions, often imagined, though never experienced. [...] which served to define by contrast the proper human condition.<sup>36</sup>

The θῆρ embodies the alienated nature required for such an action. Oenone would quench her desire for revenge if and only if she were a θῆρ, namely not a human and, particularly, not a human in love.

The same savage wish for ὠμοφαγία is in the words of Achilles<sup>37</sup> to Hector in *Iliad* 22.346-347 and in Hecabe's wish to eat the liver of Achilles in *Iliad* 24.212-213. Though one must note that despite his cold and harsh words Achilles does not liken himself to any animal, both syntax and content bring the words of Oenone and Achilles close together.<sup>38</sup> The context is also similar: they both reject a plea. However, Paris begs for his life while Hector begs for respect to his corpse. This difference makes Achilles' refusal more cruel and extreme than Oenone's. And after all, Oenone will join Paris in death while Achilles pursues Hector beyond his death.<sup>39</sup>

Apollonius' Polydeuces and Quintus' Philoctetes, Aeneas and Oenone, all

116, at 112-113.

35. Stobaeus III.19.16.51-52: καὶ γὰρ δὴ τὸ μὲν σκοπεῖν ὅπως ἀντιδίδεται τις τὸν δακόντα καὶ ἀντιποιήσει κακῶς τὸν ὑπάρξαντα, θηρίου τινὸς οὐκ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν.

36. Parker (above, n. 29), p. 305 (see also p. 360). On the inconceivable fulfilment of the cannibalistic wish, cf. G. Zanker, *The Heart of Achilles: Characterization and Personal Ethics in the Iliad*, Ann Arbor 1994, pp. 106-107 (cf. 106 n. 56); J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, p. 20; N. J. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, ed. by G. S. Kirk, vols 1-6; VI: books 21-24, Cambridge 1993, p. 141, on *Il.* 22.344-354. For cannibalism as being bestial, see Plut. *Moralia* 1124e: πολλοῦ δεήσομεν ἀλλήλους κατεσθίειν καὶ θηρίων βίον ζῆν; Sch. Anon. Arist. *EN* 1145a27-28: θηριῶδες γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ πίνειν αἷματα ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἐσθίειν ὠμὰ κρέατα; Eust. on *Il.* 22.346 (IV.629.21-22). A simile as an example of bestial ὠμοφαγία in Eusebius *MPG* 23.457D. On the Christian eucharist seen by Porphyry as bestial omophagy, see A. Henrichs, «Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion: Three Case Studies», in J. Rudhardt - O. Reverdin (eds), *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité: huit exposés suivis de discussions par J.-P. Vernant et al.*, Genève 25-30 août 1980, Genève 1981, pp. 195-242, at 226-227 and 226 n. 3.

37. For Achilles as the supplicated, see A. Thornton, *Homer's Iliad: Its Composition and the Motif of Supplication* [Hypomnemata, 81], Göttingen 1984, pp. 125-126.

38. *Il.* 22 (346: αἶ γὰρ [...] μένος [...] ἀνείη; 347: ὦμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἐδμεναι; 347: οἷά μ' ἔοργας) ≈ *Posth.* 10 (315: αἶ γὰρ [...] μένος εἶη; 316: δαρδάψαι σέο σάρκας; 317: οἷά με [...] ἔοργας).

39. A. Thornton (above, n. 37) p. 139 (of Achilles and Hector): «Achilles pursues the dying man beyond his death».



appear to have traits un-characteristic of human nature. In these examples the θῆρ is the un-human, the threatening unknown.

Apart from the θῆρ-simile of Aias, which complies with the psychological Iliadic similes, and those of Philoctetes, Aeneas and Oenone, which express the awesome distance from human nature, Quintus uses the θῆρ once more, in what I see as an unusual and rather unexpected simile: it is not a human nor an animal (as Homer does in the *Odyssey* with dogs) that he thinks of as a θῆρ, it is god Apollo<sup>40</sup>.

I regard Quintus' simile as unusual in terms of the triptych «beast – human – god» which is well-known from poetical and philosophical works. While Aristotle places humans between the bestial and the divine and maintains that men rarely seem to be either elevated to the divine status or reduced to the brutish one, Quintus takes the step of presenting a god behaving like a beast. So, we watch the supernatural and superhuman power crossing the first boundary with mortals and further than that, breaking the second boundary which lies between mortals and beasts, reducing himself to the level of a beast.

In the description of the god whose inner upset reduces him to a beast, we may see not only the conspicuously anthropomorphic perception of the divine but also an indication of disapproval of the god's conduct.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in behaving like a beast, Quintus' Apollo is a god doing wrong and is later criticised and isolated by Hera and the whole community of gods (*Posth.* 3.96-134). He has failed them and withdraws in shame (*Posth.* 3.129-133).

Homer might be the first to think of the beast as the antithesis of the divine, during the composition of his first beast-simile (*Il.* 3.449):

Ἄτρεΐδης ... θηρὶ εἰκώς,  
... Ἄλέξανδρον θεοειδέα.

It is interesting that the contrast – conscious, subconscious, or less probably accidental – exists as early as the *Iliad*. When it comes to Quintus, though, we can feel sure that we discern poetical and philosophical knowledge in his

40. Homer has already compared Apollo along with Hector, though, to θῆρες in *Iliad* 15.323-325. Rather, they were perceived as θῆρες by the Greeks.

41. So in Libanius, Poseidon speaks for his son Halirrothius who fell in love with Ares' daughter Alcippe and was killed by Ares (*Decl.* 7.11): καίτοι τί τῶν ἄλλων ἃ συγγνώμην δύναται φέρειν οὐκ ἔρωτος εἰς ἀνάγκης λόγον λείπεται; ἠδέως οὖν ἂν σε ἐροίμην, πότερον οὐδενὶ τῶν ἀπάντων ἐπ' οὐδενὶ συγγνωσόμεθα; χείρους μὲν, ὡς εἶοικε, τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅμοιοι δὲ ἐσόμεθα τοῖς θηρίοις οἱ θεοί. Cf. Theodoret (*MPG* 83.761D): καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τὴν θεῖαν διαφθεῖρασα, τοὺς τῶν θηρίων χαρακτῆρας ἐδέξατο, καὶ ἀντὶ θεοειδοῦς θηριώδης ἐγένετο; the reversed idea in John Chrys. (*MPG* 64.424C): ἴδομεν τοὺς θηρίους εἰκώτας ἀγγέλων τάξιν μεταλαμβάνοντας.

description of Diomedes and Aias fighting in the funeral games of Achilles (*Posth.* 4.219):

ἄμφω γὰρ ἔσαν μακάρεσσιν ὁμοῖοι.  
σὺν δ' ἔβαλον θήρεσσιν ἐοικότες,

Unlike the contrast between the brutish Menelaus and the divine Alexander in Homer, Quintus creates a more effective irony, as the godlike men are precisely the same characters who fight like θῆρες in the following verse. After he described the fall of a real god to θηριότης (*Posth.* 3.32), Quintus now depicts two mortals in their transition from the divine to the bestial status.

But, let us see Apollo as a beast (*Posth.* 3.30):

εἰ μὴ οἱ μέγα Φοῖβος ἀνηλεί χῶσατο θυμῷ,  
ὡς ἴδεν ἄσπετα φῦλα δαΐκταμένων ἠρώων.  
αἶψα δ' ἀπ' Οὐλύμποιο κατήλυθε θηρὶ ἐοικώς  
ιοδόκην ὠμοισιν ἔχων καὶ ἀναλθέας ἰούς·  
ἔστη δ' Αἰακίδαο καταντίον· ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ  
γωρυτὸς καὶ τόξα μέγ' ἴαχεν, ἐκ δέ οἱ ὄσσων  
πῦρ ἄμοτον μάρμαιρε, ποσὶν δ' ὑπὸ κίνυτο γαῖα.

The verse that harbours the beast-simile (*Posth.* 3.32) expresses a swift physical movement and an apparent force and threat<sup>42</sup> which is developed in the next verse and realised in the verses that describe Apollo's presence before Achilles. Apollo's force and threat is also revealed in the most intense appeal to the senses that the following verbs make: μέγ' ἴαχεν, μάρμαιρε, κίνητο. This revelation of threat and force by physical means is not seen properly unless we come to the source of this agitation, given in verse 3.30: μέγα Φοῖβος ἀνηλεί χῶσατο θυμῷ. Anger is the real reason that evoked Apollo's transition and the consequent presence of the beast-simile in the text.<sup>43</sup>

However, Apollo's anger varies a lot as an emotion compared to the loss

42. Cf. O. Tsagarakis, «Form and Content in Homer», *Hermes* 46 (1982) 135, on *Il.* 15.237-238, where Apollo descending into the battlefield is compared to a hawk: «The dive of a hawk would seem to emphasize speed, but φασσοφόνῳ suggests something else, and as it turns out, the god causes the death of many (vv. 318f.).»

43. It is in a similar manner that Tsagarakis sees the Homeric Apollo compared to the nightfall in *Il.* 1.47 (above, n. 42), p. 134: «The god is, we are told a few lines back, χῳόμενος (v. 44). [...] The comparison lends colour to the image of the angry god and is appropriate to the context.»; he adds that (above, n. 42), p. 135: «The different kind of journey similes (hawk, thought, nightfall, seagull, etc.) have to do with the fact that the journeying gods and their situations are different, though the basic idea of journey is the same.»

of equanimity as we saw it in Homer's characters. Besides, his anger finds its expression in a very impressive physical movement that causes awe to any spectator. In the *Iliad* the reader is invited by Homer to *understand* the character compared to an unidentified wild animal. Quintus, on the other hand, invites the reader to *feel the full impact* of Apollo's descent not in order to understand his anger, but in order to *be impressed* by his (uncharacteristic of a god even) force and threat. This way the reader will understand better not Apollo, but Achilles, who is the receiver of the divine intervention.

### 5. In the *Odyssey*

The only beast-simile in the *Odyssey*, and the only one in Homer not referring to a person, occurs in the scene of Odysseus visiting Eumaeus. Eumaeus' dogs, which guard the herd and sleep near it always, look like beasts. In this unique instance when Homer uses the beast-image in order to describe not humans but animals the word does not develop its interesting potential the way it does in the *Iliad*; rather, it appears not to have one, it does not have here the *identity* it reveals in the *Iliad*. Therefore, taking into account the overall homeric usage of the word  $\theta\eta\rho$  in similes, the  $\theta\eta\rho$  in the *Odyssey* is a sort of exception.

There are reasons why we include Eumaeus' dogs in this discussion and why the *Odyssey* is given a place after the *Argonautica* and the *Posthomerica*.

It may seem improper or un-necessary to include dogs in a discussion about individuals, but it is very interesting that while readers often look for the actual animal hidden behind the  $\theta\eta\rho$ , Homer is comparing actual animals, dogs, to  $\theta\eta\rho\epsilon\zeta$ . This thought of the poet proves that even in a word which means «an unspecified wild animal» there is an identity and none of the three words – *unspecified, wild, animal* – should be dropped or replaced. Thus, this simile itself offers, I feel, one more argument to support my view of the  $\theta\eta\rho$ -simile in Homer.

The position of this simile after the similes of Apollonius and Quintus is due to their affinity: while no-one could strip the  $\theta\eta\rho$  of its psychological undertones in the *Iliad*, as well as in the similes of Apollonius' Polyphemus and Quintus' Aias, on the other hand Eumaeus' dogs, Apollonius' Polydeuces (and even the Argo) and Quintus' Philoctetes, Aeneas and Oenone (and to some extent Apollo), all differ from the Iliadic nature of the  $\theta\eta\rho$  and express what exceeds proper nature.

The simile of the dogs follows (*Od.* 14.21):

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

The beast-simile expresses the strange and unexpected nature of the dogs. Their uncharacteristic ferocity is stressed here, and it is actually borne out after only a few verses, when the dogs notice Odysseus ἐξαπίνης (v. 29) and attack him.<sup>44</sup> The ferocity of these dogs proves their efficiency as guards. Particularly the fact that these unusually wild dogs have been reared by the swineherd himself (οὓς ἔθρεψε συβώτης) is something which shows Eumaeus' responsibility and personal care for Odysseus' property. Homer has already stressed the swineherd's devotion (14.3-4: ὃ οἱ βιότοιο μάλιστα / κήδετο οἰκῆων, οὓς κτήσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς) and has shown his hard work for the construction and development of the place we now see (verses 7-14). However an irony lies behind the account of the dogs' efficiency. These adequate guards, which Eumaeus himself has reared and which always spend the night by the herd (as Alexander Pope translates, «Four savage dogs, a watchful guard, attend»), are after all incapable of protecting the herd. From what Eumaeus says it becomes clear that the suitors reduce the herd in both number and quality. We are reminded of this information several times during this scene (14.16-19, 26-28, 39-42, 81).<sup>45</sup> The beast-simile is surrounded by these references to the suitors; its position in this particular context becomes significant if we notice that the simile actually consists in the surprising and interesting comparison of shepherd dogs to any wild animals

44. S. Lilja, *Dogs in Ancient Greek Poetry*, Helsinki 1976, p. 19: «The whole scene is skilfully constructed to give emphasis to the ferocity of the swineherd's dogs. At the very beginning they are θήρεσσιν ἐοικότες (21), and thus likened to beasts of prey.» See also A. Heubeck - A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II: books ix-xvi, Oxford 1989, p. 194, on *Od.* 14.21; A. Schnapp-Gourbeillon, *Lions, héros, masques: les représentations de l'animal chez Homère*, Paris 1981, p. 163. For Odysseus being noticed first not by a person but by dogs, see S. H. Murnaghan, *Anagnorisis in the Odyssey*, PhD diss., The University of North Carolina 1980, p. 25 n. 21. See also Scott (above, n. 4), p. 48 (see also p. 48 n. 35): «the sleeping dogs of Eumaeus are as savage as wild beasts (*Od.* 14.21), a simile which draws the listeners' attention to them momentarily. In a few lines these dogs will receive Odysseus and gain him the instant sympathy and protection of the swineherd. Eumaeus immediately tells the old beggar of his loyalty to his former master; his master's loss is a sorrow equal to that which he would have experienced if Odysseus had been harmed by the dogs. The poet knows that these dogs are important to the immediate narrative and consequently spotlights them with a simile.»

The same element of dangerous ferocity that is unexpected and alien to the proper nature of an animal, in this case of a horse, is seen in a beast-simile which appears in Libanius' autobiography (*Or.* 1.259): ἵπποι δὲ ἐοικότες μὲν θηρίοις, τοῦτο δὲ οὐ δοκοῦντες [...] καὶ ἦν οὐδὲν κακὸν εἰκάσαι, τὸ δ' ἄρα ἦν μέγα, χωροῦντι οὖν διὰ μέσου τοὺς ὀδόντας ἐδείκνυσαν, ἀντιβελῶν τοῖς ποσὶ χρώμενοι, τὸ δ' ἤρκεσεν ἄν εἰς θάνατον.

45. See W. Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer*, Berlin 1933, pp. 44-45.

which can destroy herds. The king who has returned and now visits the place where his herd is kept, the suitors who squander his property including this herd, and the beast-like dogs which guard the herd – all three appear in the same scene and invite some thoughts, which are bitterly ironic: «The dogs attack Odysseus, their master, and not those who actually harm the herd», we may think. And, «it is the suitors, and not hungry beasts as it might be expected, who destroy Odysseus' property», we hear behind the lines. This reversal of natural order is part of the reversal of social order which takes place in the palace at Ithaca.

I would like to finish the discussion of this simile with an additional point. It might be that another characteristic of the «beast» that Homer wishes to attribute to these dogs is bulk. Unexpectedly large size sometimes has been the operative characteristic of the beast-image. We see an example in Philostratus (*Im.* 2.21.3):

τὸν δ' Ἄνταϊον, ὃ παῖ, δέδιας οἶμαι· θηρίῳ γάρ [ἄν] τι ἐοικεν,  
ὀλίγον ἀποδέων ἴσος εἶναι τῷ μήκει καὶ τὸ εὖρος.

In modern Greek, too, a meaning of the beast-metaphor is again to exceed expected limits of size,<sup>46</sup> though the main meaning of the metaphor «to become a beast» is to feel a sudden overwhelming emotional upset and to express this in uncontrollable words and deeds (in other words, to transgress the limits of emotional expression).<sup>47</sup> The beast as denoting power but also the transgression of limits both of size and brightness is seen in the following verse by Odysseus Elytis, where the Sun in the context of his «solar metaphysics», is seen as a beast standing above Time:<sup>48</sup>

Κι ὁ ἥλιος στέκεται ἀπὸ πάνω του θηρίο ἐλπίδας.  
And the Sun is standing above him, a beast of hope.

It is possible, then, that the conception of someone or something very big and robust as a beast, appeared in Greek thought as early as Homer's *Odyssey*. After all, Eumaeus' dogs are not described as beasts in any activity of theirs, but in their appearance, in the impression they make on the onlooker, who, perhaps, can reconcile neither their fierceness nor their physical appearance with their expected nature.

46. See J. Stamatakos, *Λεξικὸν τῆς νέας ἐλληνικῆς γλώσσης*, Athens 1971, s.v. θηρίο(ν) no. 7.

47. See D. Dimitracos, *Μέγα λεξικὸν τῆς ἐλληνικῆς γλώσσης*, vol. I, Athens 1936, vol. VIII, 1950, vol. IX: n.d., s.v. θηρίο(ν); Stamatakos, op.cit., s.v. θηριώδης no. 4.

48. *Προσανατολισμοί*, «Ἡ Μαρίνα τῶν βράχων», v. 33.

6. *Like a θήρ: a permanent trait or not?*

I would like to point out something that is associated with the often psychological nature of beast-similes. The individuals we have seen in Homer, in Apollonius and Quintus, do not hide a beast in them always, do not display a bestial nature that always waits to find a way to the surface. In other words, θηριότης is not a permanent trait of theirs.<sup>49</sup> To think of someone as a beast means to regard him as adopting what is alien to one's known nature at a particular moment. To illustrate this important aspect of the beast-image I will cite Homer's simile for Andromache when she presumed that Hector has probably been killed (*Il.* 22.460):

[...] μεγάροιο διέσσυτο μαινάδι ἴση,  
παλλομένη κραδίην.

Andromache cannot be always characterised as a μαινάς; this is not a characteristic designed to be in her nature. At the moment when she loses her equanimity, she fails to be the person she normally is. Exactly as Andromache is imagined as a μαινάς, Menelaus, Aias, Antilochus and even the dogs of Eumaeus in Homer, Polyphemus in Apollonius, Aias and Apollo in Quintus, and even Philoctetes in his harsh situation, are all imagined as beasts.

Because the θήρ illustrates a particular moment or situation, there is in both Homer and Quintus a difference in the distribution of lion-similes and beast-similes among characters. Both poets can apply more than one lion-simile to a single character; so, to give one of the several examples in Homer, Menelaus is thought of as a lion several times (*Il.* 3.23-26; 17.61-67, 109-112, 657-664).<sup>50</sup> Now, Quintus' nineteen lion-similes are bestowed on fifteen characters<sup>51</sup>. On the contrary, as we have seen above, all beast-similes in Homer, Apollonius and Quintus are applied to individuals only once, because they relate to unique mental and psychological states.

Comparing a character to a beast, the poet concentrates on the setting of

49. H. Pelliccia, *Mind, Body, and Speech in Homer and Pindar* [Hypomnemata, 107], Göttingen 1995, pp. 32 and 33 n. 49, expresses a similar attitude to θηριότης when she reacts to the thesis of G. Lakoff and Z. Kövecses («The Cognitive Model of Anger Inherent in American English», in D. Holland - N. Quinn (eds), *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 195-221, at 206; see also pp. 206-208), who think that the beast-metaphor shows that there is a part of each person that is a wild beast.

50. For a discussion of the lion-similes of Achilles in the *Iliad*, see Moulton (above, n. 1) 112-114.

51. For individual lists showing the distribution of lion- and beast-similes among characters in the *Posthomeric*, see Spinoula (above, n. 22), pp. 16-17 and 218 respectively.

events on the one hand and on the character's psychological reaction to these events on the other. It is clear that what a beast-simile aims at is not characterisation, as is usually the case in other animal-similes. The choice of a particular animal by the focaliser of the simile, would entail a totally divergent direction: the reader would be expected to approach the text equipped with pre-knowledge and pre-conceptions about the nature of the animal. Consequently, the characteristics of the animal would be reflected on the character being described. By contrast – no matter if the reader may think of the beast as an actual animal – the beast does not aim to show the similarity of the individual to an animal, but rather his remoteness from human standards.

The *θηρ* particularly depicts the crossing of the limits (mainly of emotion rather than of action and valour) between human and animal. It is the master representative of the animal-realm; the reflection of crude and unrefined wildness. It embodies the force of the irrational.

I will close with an example: when in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the Chorus comment on Cassandra's behaviour, they compare it to that of a newly caught beast (Ag. 1062):

ἐρμηνέως ἔοικεν ἢ ξένη τοροῦ  
 δεῖσθαι· τρόπος δὲ θηρὸς ὡς νεαιρέτου.

The isolation of Cassandra is stressed here; she is not merely a foreigner but essentially a stranger, a different person whom no-one can understand. It appears that a *θηρ* in terms of behaviour is what a *βάρβαρος* is in terms of language.

