

Homer's Comparisons. Types, patterns, and effects



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Abstract

Comparisons are an integral part of language and literature, but there are no comprehensive studies that take into account both their linguistic features and literary effects. There are four kinds of comparisons, comparatives, superlatives, equatives (expressing similarity in degree), and similitives (expressing similarity in kind), but most linguistic and literary studies focus on only one or two. Typological and language-specific studies tend to look at the dominant types, and do not include every comparison found in their corpus.

In this study all of Homer's comparisons are collected and categorized according to their syntactic structure. The differences between the four kinds of comparisons and the concepts they express are described in semantic and cognitive terms. Not only complete comparisons are taken into account, but also those in which one element, for example the standard of comparison (i.e. the entity with which another entity is compared), is missing.

The complete comparative and superlative constructions in Homeric Greek are presented according to the syntactic types in which they appear, followed by an analysis of incomplete expressions. Equatives and similitives are discussed together since they are not consistently distinguished in ancient Greek. They are presented according to the semantic and cognitive relationship between the comparee (the entity about which the comparison is made) and the standard of comparison. Their syntactic types are analysed in light of the comparatives and superlatives, and two special structures are examined separately: comparison compounds and the extended Homeric simile.

The final part is concerned with the narrative and rhetorical function of comparisons, starting with 'hybrid' comparisons, which are the result of negation or syntactic/semantic peculiarities. The linguistic features of comparatives and superlatives provide the basis for analysing their use by characters in speeches and by the narrator for creating suspense and tragic effect. The Homeric similes and shorter comparisons of similarity are approached not as aids to communication and interpretation, but as poetic devices that make the epic story and its characters more complex.

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These final stages turned out somewhat differently from how I had imagined. In April 2020, just as I had returned from one major disruption of my academic work, pregnancy, the birth of my son, and a year of maternity leave, I found myself in the next: differing degrees of lockdowns induced by the Corona pandemic, which made visits to Oxford impossible. Now, in February 2021, I have a thesis which is completed, but sorely lacking the physical resources of the Sackler library and invaluable input from the real-life academic interactions that I had hoped to be part of in the Netherlands and in Oxford over the last year. Thanks to the Radboud library, an increase in online resources, the Oxford libraries' scanning service, and help from colleagues, I could at least access a good amount of literature remotely.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Comparisons are everywhere. Comparisons can be expressed in every language of the world, and there are probably few literary works that do not exploit them as a stylistic device. Similes are famous as quintessential, and yet difficult and confusing, parts of the Homeric epics. A Homeric hero is ‘the best’ among his people, but he cannot compete with the gods – even though he is constantly said to be like them. There are 2559 comparisons in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but many of them go unnoticed next to the swooping impact of a simile and the fascination with the ἄριστος Αχαιῶν.

We find a similar imbalance between what is there and what is perceived on the linguistic side. If we take, for example, comparative constructions in ancient Greek, we read in most standard grammars that there are two different syntactic ways to mark the standard of comparison, i.e. the entity against which the comparee (about whom the comparison is made) is compared: namely by using the genitive case or the particle ἤ. The Homeric and Classical Greek evidence, however, shows that lexical means and the use of a preposition need to be included, resulting in a total of four different strategies.

In order to represent the entire syntactic and thematic spectrum on the basis of an adequate sample of ancient Greek expressions of sameness and difference,

I have collected and categorized all of Homer's comparisons. By 'Homer' I mean the poet(s) of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By 'all comparisons' I mean every single instance of a comparison whose result is an inequality, in the shape of a comparative or superlative construction, and every single instance of an explicit comparison whose result is a similarity, in the shape of a similitive or equative construction.

In this study I will examine the syntactic types in which they appear, distil the semantic and pragmatic patterns underlying them, and test their rhetorical and narrative effects. But before I provide more detailed information about the structure and aim of this study, I will briefly sketch the main linguistic approaches to the study of comparisons and situate my work in the field of Homeric scholarship.

1.1 Historical and comparative IE linguistics

Ancient Greek has two suffixes that form adjectives with comparative degree, and each of these suffixes has a corresponding suffix that marks superlative degree: the comparative suffix *-ίων* goes with the superlative suffix *-ιστος*, and *-τερος* goes with *-τατος*. The latter formations attach to adjectival stems and are regular and productive, while the former ones attach to verbal or nominal roots, are more morphologically opaque, often found in suppletive paradigms, and no longer productive.

A Proto-Indo-European origin can be reconstructed for all formations, but *-τατος* seems to be the result of Greek-internal remodelling. The suffix *-ίων* goes back to PIE **-yos-* (with the ablauting variants **-yes-* and **-is-*), and is also the origin of the comparative suffixes in Germanic, Italic, Celtic, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian. The second comparative suffix, *-τερος*, goes back to **-tero-*, which we also find in other Indo-European languages in pronominal and adverbial formations, but not to mark comparative degree. Indo-Iranian is the only other language branch that forms a second comparative based on **-tero-*, while the other

Indo-European languages use only the one formation based on **-yos-* or no morphological means of gradation at all. Indo-Iranian and Greek are also the only language groups that have two superlative formations; *-ιστος* goes back to PIE **-isto-*, which is the basis of superlative formations in Indo-Iranian and Germanic, while *-τατος* seems to be a remodelled version of **-tmmo-*, which forms the secondary superlative suffix in Indo-Iranian. For Italic and Celtic the form **-ismmo-* can be reconstructed. Anatolian, Tocharian, Albanian and Armenian either never developed or lost morphological ways of marking gradation.¹

Despite the many formal and functional overlaps, morphological gradation in the Indo-European languages is too heterogeneous to allow for the assumption that these suffixes were specialised comparative and superlative degree markers already in Proto-Indo-European. Rather, these suffixes probably expressed semantic notions that made them ideal candidates to be used for gradation and comparison in the individual languages, while in the early stages, the syntactic and lexical means that we find in many other languages across the world were used to express comparative and superlative relations.² The existence of a tripartite system of positive — comparative — superlative is a late development, and may merely be imposed upon the language by grammarians.³ The pre-historic formal and semantic origins of these suffixes, as well as their development in the individual languages, are the topic of an ongoing debate in historical and comparative linguistics.

**-yos-* is a primary suffix, which means that it attaches directly to a root, rather than to an adjectival stem. It is often characterized as having an intensive or intensifying value, but it did not (at least not originally) function as an intensified pendant to a matching adjective in the positive. It seems to be an independent

¹ Cf. Berg 1958; Thomas 1958; Puhvel 1973; Zeilfelder 1998 and forthcoming, 1-26; de Vos 2012, 155; Rau 2014, 328; Lundquist/Yates 2018, 2117-8; Lujan 2019, 310-4.

² Cf. Chapter 2 for a typological overview.

³ Cf. Small 1924, 12; Ziemer 1884, 356-57, 363-64; Schwyzer 1939, 533-38; Seiler 1950; Berg 1958; Puhvel 1973; Strunk 1977; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 183-84; Sihler 1995, 356-8.

and old formation; the lack of a separate feminine form is often adduced as a proof of this.⁴ Many scholars view the *-s-* part of the suffix as a sign that these *-yos-* formations were substantival in nature, rather than adjectival.⁵ The *-y(o)-* part of the suffix is then explained as a verbal stem formation in origin, which later becomes reinterpreted as belonging to the *-s-* part and forming nominal (or adjectival) stems (i.e. something like verbal adjectives) from roots.⁶

**-tero-* is a secondary suffix; it attaches to nominal, pronominal, adjectival, and adverbial stems. Its original function is generally thought to be contrastive, i.e. to mark one part of an antonymic pair. Later, but only in Greek and Indo-Iranian, it becomes comparative.⁷ Meier-Brügger explains the suffix as deriving from the thematisation, and thereby adjectivisation, of adverbs ending in PIE **(t)r̥* and **(t)er*. Once the theme vowel plus original adverbial ending had become reinterpreted as a suffix **-tero-*, this suffix could be used with different stems to form adjectives with contrastive meaning, and in Greek and Indo-Iranian comparative adjectives.⁸

When it comes to explaining the origins of the superlative suffixes **-isto-/*-t̃mmo-/*-is̃mmo-*, the *-is-* element of two of the three formations tends to be in-

⁴ Cf. Chantraine 1933, 437-8; Schwyzer 1939, 536-8; Seiler 1950, 1-4; Sihler 1995, 356-7; Meier-Brügger 2002, 222.

⁵ Cf. Meier-Brügger 2002, 223; Kuryłowicz 1964, 227-30; Berg 1958, 225-7; Stang 1954, 140-2; Friš, 1953, 107 (although he also sees a connection to verbal adjectives, like Seiler 1950); Schwyzer 1939, 536; Chantraine 1933, 437; Rix 1976, 167-8. Brugmann sees a nominal sense only in the later extension of the suffix by *-n-* (1906, 547-50, cf. Sihler 1995, 357-8). Kuryłowicz sees the “nasal enlargement” as reinforcing an already substantival nature of **-yos-* (1964, 228). For further views on this *-n-* cf. Szemerényi 1968; Rix 1976, 167-8; Peters 1986.

⁶ Cf. Meier-Brügger 2002, 223; Kuryłowicz is less explicit about the exact nature of the formation’s deverbal origin but seems to assume a similar development (1964, 227-30). For Rau 2014 the origin of **-yos-* is to be sought among property concept adjectives with Caland system alternations, while Szeptyński 2018 finds it in change-of-state verbs.

⁷ Cf. Brugmann 1906, 323-28; Schwyzer 1939, 533-4; Solta 1963, 179-80; Wittwer 1969; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 183-5; Benveniste 1948, 116, but he also refers to it as “séparatif” (119); Seiler calls it contrastive and localising (1950, 3-4, cf. Berg 1958, 202-3). Sihler describes it as “particularizing and by implication antonymic” (1995, 356, 363-4).

⁸ Meier-Brügger 2002, 225. Cf. Rix 1976, 168-9; Risch 1974, 91-2, Brugmann 1906, 323-8. Friš argues that the suffix is “demonstrative” in origin (1950, 176), Kuryłowicz calls it “pronominal” (1964, 227).

terpreted as the zero-grade of the comparative suffix **-yos-*. Crosslinguistically, superlatives built on comparatives are very common.⁹ All three superlative suffixes have either *-to-* or *-mo-* as their second element, and these morphemes resemble the two thematic suffixes that form ordinal numbers in the Indo-European languages.¹⁰

Benveniste has developed a very influential theory explaining the origin of the superlative suffixes through their connection with ordinal numbers. He argues that there are formal as well as semantic similarities between ordinal numbers and superlatives: both are frequently used to mark the element that forms the climax or completion within a group or sequence: “L’ordinal et le superlatif qualifient l’un et l’autre l’élément qui achève une totalité”.¹¹ Lujan, however, argues that ordinal numbers refer to a position on a sequence, rather than to its completion. He shows that while there is a connection between superlatives and ordinals based on special syntactic positions in which both can occur, the greatest overlap in syntactic and semantic terms is to be found between superlatives and the words for ‘first’ and ‘last’. In his view it is they that form the nexus for the employment of **-to-* and **-mo-* in both superlative and ordinal morphology.¹²

Concerning the syntactic dimension of PIE comparatives and superlatives, the superlatives pose no problems since in most Indo-European languages they combine with a partitive genitive, and/or are accompanied by a quantifier like ‘all’ either with the (superlative) adjective (e.g. *παγκάκιστος*, *der allerschlimmste*) or the standard of comparison.¹³ Comparative constructions are somewhat more complex because in most historical languages, there are two different ways of marking

⁹ Cf. Schwyzer 1939, 387; Kuryłowicz 1964, 237; Sihler 1995, 357; Lundquist/Yates 2018, 2117; Lujan 2019, 314-5.

¹⁰ For a summary of thoughts on their origin, cf. Lujan 2019, 315-7. Sihler describes **-is-to-* as “a comparative with a particularizing marker” and sees no connection to the ordinal numbers (1995, 357 and 427).

¹¹ Benveniste 1948, 162, summarized in more detail by Lujan 2019, 317-8.

¹² Cf. Lujan 2019, 318-28.

¹³ Most languages also allow the use of a preposition or a congruent noun. Cf. Schwyzer 1988, 116.

the standard of comparison, namely by case or by a particle. Benveniste has again been highly influential with his theory about the semantic connection between the two different comparative morphemes discussed above and the two strategies of marking the standard of comparison. He understands the **-yos-* comparative as expressing an internal, dimensional quality, which gives the adjective an evaluative function, while the **-tero-* suffix refers to an external, spatial quality and results in a separative function.¹⁴ In his view, the case construction originally goes with **-yos-* comparatives and forms comparisons that initially express an intrinsic similarity (e.g. *melle dulcior* ‘sweeter than honey’, with sweetness being intrinsic to honey, thus: ‘exceedingly sweet, like honey’), while the particle construction goes with **-tero-* comparatives to express a disjunction between two opposites:

La construction avec cas donne un comparatif de nature organique et de fonction adéquate, impliquant dans le terme comparant une qualité intrinsèque et prêtant à des emplois ‘exemplaires’; la construction avec particle donne un comparatif de nature mécanique et de fonction disjonctive, servant à contraster deux termes mis en alternative par une inégalité extrinsèque.¹⁵

Many scholars follow Benveniste with regard to the semantics and function of the suffixes, but they do not necessarily, or at least not explicitly, also assume a natural association between the suffixes and the case vs. particle construction.¹⁶ Berg accepts Benveniste’s idea about the relative-equate nature of the **-yos-* comparative and its original combination with case-marked nouns to form comparisons of the *melle dulcior* type, but rejects the inclusion of **-tero-* in a PIE system since only two historical languages use it to form comparatives. Instead, he believes that originally proper comparisons of inequality were expressed by syntactic juxtaposition, without morphological degree marking.¹⁷ Puhvel follows Benveniste’s system

¹⁴ Cf. Benveniste 1948, 116-25.

¹⁵ Benveniste 1948, 141.

¹⁶ Cf. Kuryłowicz 1964, 227; Sihler 1995, 356-64.

¹⁷ Cf. Berg 1958.

fairly closely; about **-yos-* forms in case constructions he states: “Thus the patrimony of the oldest IE comparative suffix with case construction is laden with expressions of proverbial equativity in a variety of languages”. About the **-tero* suffix he concludes: “It signals the marked member of a binary pair of opposites, to the exclusion of an unmarked alternative either implied or juxtaposed by syntactic means”.¹⁸ He goes on to stress that their usages fall together early on, and provides an overview of the usage of the case vs. particle construction in Greek and Latin. Friš, by contrast, does not assume a prominent distinction between **-yos-* and **-tero-* forms, but focuses on their similar syntactic behaviour as originally predicative and not showing congruence.¹⁹

Independently of the presence of one, two, or no comparative suffixes, many Indo-European languages have the option of marking the standard of a comparative construction by case (or adposition) as well as by particle. While Small regards the particle construction as older than the case construction, Berg argues for a syntactic motivation for the co-existence of both constructions in addition to the semantic one outlined above: the case construction was used to mark nominal standards of comparisons, while the particle construction marked clausal and verbal ones. Eventually the particle strategy encroaches upon the case strategy and in some Indo-European languages replaces it.²⁰ There is a general consensus about the originally disjunctive nature of the Greek comparative particle ἤ,²¹ and the cases found in comparative constructions of the historical IE languages are all thought to go back to the PIE ablative.²²

¹⁸ Puhvel 1973, 148 and 149.

¹⁹ Cf. Friš 1950.

²⁰ Cf. Small 1924; Berg 1958; and Stolz 2013, 257-68 for different motivations for the change from case to particle construction.

²¹ Cf. Ziemer 1884, 153-80; Benveniste 1948, 137-8; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 565, who also refer to older theories of an originally equative meaning of ἤ ‘as’, ‘like’. For the Greek particle in comparison with those of other IE languages, cf. Berg 1958, 219-29; Puhvel 1973, 151.

²² Cf. Berg 1958, 203, although in his view this ablative goes back to a genitive at an earlier stage of PIE (221-5); Schwyzer 1988, 98-101.

1.2 General linguistics and typology

In the field of general linguistics, we find studies that focus on syntactic aspects of comparisons, and those that take a (more or less formal) semantic approach. Certain assumptions and considerations of cognitive principles that underlie the expression of a comparison are present in, or even form the basis of, both syntactic and semantic explorations. The major typological studies of comparisons across different languages focus on syntax, but semantic studies also take cross-linguistic variation into account. Typological studies of the linguistic expressions of comparison assume a certain degree of universality on the cognitive level: “the cognitive structure representing the mental operation of comparison *is essentially the same for all speakers of all natural languages*”.²³ This universality stands in contrast with the lack of consistency across languages as to how comparisons are expressed in the linguistic surface structure. This discrepancy is explained as a “choice of different options in the mapping operations”.²⁴ Although it has not been, and probably cannot be, empirically proven that the cognitive structure of comparison is universal, and there may yet be (groups of) people whose cognitive concept of comparison is different, it remains most economical to assume a universal cognitive basis of comparison.²⁵

The two major typological studies of comparison by Andersen and Stassen are to be located within the syntactic/cognitive tradition. Andersen identifies different parameters of comparison, including whether a linguistic expression of comparison states a relationship of equality or inequality between two entities. His focus is the comparison of inequality, and he argues that there are five different categories of syntactic constructions with which a relationship of inequality between two entities

²³ Stassen 1985, 264 (emphasis original).

²⁴ Stassen 1985, 264.

²⁵ See Stassen 1985, 261-66; Hahnemann 1999, 1-9; Zeilfelder forthcoming, 1.

can be expressed.²⁶ Stassen's work is also limited to the comparison of inequality, but follows a slightly different approach: he tries to establish the underlying cognitive concepts that determine which grammatical case is employed to mark the standard of comparison in different languages and in different syntactic construction types within one language.²⁷ Both Andersen and Stassen have provided a starting point for subsequent typological and syntactic work on comparison.²⁸ Superlative, equative, and similitive constructions are still much less well-studied than comparative constructions, but have started to receive more attention.²⁹

From a semantic point of view, comparison has been studied mainly in connection with the gradability of adjectives. Sapir makes the important distinction between relative and absolute adjectives, and differentiates between the function of grading and comparison with reference to a normative standard and as an operation that relates two entities purely in reference to one another.³⁰ With the establishment of Montague grammar, adjectives, general quantifiers, and the distinction between positive and comparative adjectives are studied in depth by formal (and less formal) semanticists, but there is not a lot of work on equative comparisons and on comparisons that do not express the aspect of comparison by an adjective.³¹ Ultan is, to my knowledge, the only scholar who takes into account the semantics of adjectives as well as all three types of comparisons. He sets out to establish the semantic differences between comparative, superlative, and equative constructions through a typological study of how the degree and the standard of comparison are marked in 123 geographically and genetically diverse languages.

²⁶ Cf. Andersen 1983, 99-118 and Chapter 2.3.

²⁷ Cf. Stassen 1985, 36-47.

²⁸ Cf. Breivik 1994; Heine 1997; Herbermann 1998; Dixon 2008 and 2012; Bobaljik 2012; and the entry on comparison in *Ancient Greek in the Brill encyclopedia*: Cuzzolin 2014.

²⁹ Cf. Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998; Gorshenin 2012; Haspelmath 2017.

³⁰ Cf. Sapir 1944.

³¹ Cf. Bolinger 1967; Klein 1980 and 1982; Seuren 1984; Van Stechow 1984; Rusiecki 1985; Bierwisch 1988; Kennedy/McNally 2005; Kennedy 2007. Beck 2011 addresses other comparison types and cross-linguistic variation.

Many of his observations are adopted and elaborated in later typological syntactic and/or cognitive studies of comparison.³²

1.3 The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

Any study of the Homeric epics has to recognize the problem of the genesis of the poems, and every student of Homer probably has a more or less concrete theory about it, or at least a tendency towards subscribing to one view rather than another. There is no need for me to sketch the history and problem of the Homeric question; an account thereof can be found in almost every introduction to a companion, commentary, or general work on Homer. The approach of this study of the Homeric epics does not rely on a subscription to a particular view of Homeric authorship or the history of the poems, but of course I do not write independently of my own assumptions on the topic. I myself do not hold a strong view on whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* took their more or less final shape through the work of one or several authors, but I appreciate the fact that the two poems are different enough that two authors are a possible scenario. At the same time, each poem displays a degree of internal coherence that makes it difficult for me to imagine that more than one person would have been involved in the process of giving each poem the shape in which we know it now. I do not doubt that there is a strong connection between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, that they are intertwined with the same tradition, and that they ‘communicate’ with each other, in both obvious and subtle ways.

An oft-cited quote from Nietzsche makes a point that is highly relevant for an understanding of Homeric scholarship in the past and the present: “Homer als der Dichter der Ilias und Odyssee ist nicht eine historische Ueberlieferung, sondern

³² Cf. Ultan 1972; Andersen 1983; Stassen 1985; Breivik 1994; Heine 1997; Bobaljik 2012.

ein *aesthetisches Urtheil*.”³³ Or, as Graziosi paraphrases: “arguments about the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are intertwined with judgements about their beauty.”³⁴ The extent to which different people experience the beauty of the Homeric epics shapes the way in which they imagine their composition. And vice-versa, a person’s theory about the genesis and authorship of the Homeric poems, the amount of individual genius that one believes to have been involved in the creation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, influences the amount of subtlety and depth one is willing to attribute to both poems. This, in turn, has an effect on how far a given scholar is prepared to go when it comes to detecting and interpreting symbolism, complex characters, intertextuality, and intricate implicit meaning.

The more a certain scholar subscribes to a firmly oralist tradition, the greater the chance that he or she will focus their interpretation on aspects of the Homeric epics that are traditional and follow pre-determined patterns.³⁵ A scholar who focuses on more individual aspects of the epic poems and on their complexity and coherence in characterization and narrative technique is more likely to stress the ingenuity of the poet who gave the *Iliad* and/or the *Odyssey* its final shape. In the conclusions that I draw from my study of comparisons in the Homeric epics I find myself closer to the latter group. Although many of the linguistic structures that I study, for example epithet-like comparisons, similes, or the notion of the hero as ‘the best’, are generally regarded as traditional elements of epic poetry and typical characteristics of heroes and epic stories, their use and effect in Homeric poetry is precisely not just a mimetic reflection of the conventions of tradition. At the same time, many modern oralists would probably not be opposed to the idea that Homer’s use of comparisons shows creative engagement with traditional material

³³ Nietzsche 1869, 19, emphasis original.

³⁴ Graziosi 2019, 10.

³⁵ Cf. De Jong on how a scholar’s opinion about the epics’ genesis influences their view on characterization: “For analysts, separate authorship of the different parts of the poems could only lead to inconsistent characterization, while for oralists the ubiquity of the formulaic system prevented the narrator-singer from giving his heroes an individual shape” (2018, 27).

and results in a complex story with multifaceted characters and hidden meaning.

My engagement with the Homeric epics cannot confirm the results and generalizations that arise from strongly tradition-oriented studies such as the most recent monograph on the Homeric hero by Horn. He claims that there is a uniform concept of heroism in the epic tradition that differs between *Iliad* and *Odyssey* only to the extent that both epics differ in their subject matter. He further argues that in their respective poems, Achilles and Odysseus mark the ideal and unquestioned representation of the tradition's concept of heroism.³⁶ Horn's description of Achilles as "der vollkommene Held" and of Odysseus as the hero who has to prove himself "durch seine Intelligenz und seine Wandelbarkeit als der 'Beste der Achaier'" falls short of engaging with, or even acknowledging, the complexities of Homeric characters and Homeric heroism.³⁷ It ignores the subtle and thoughtful ways in which the Homeric narrator and his characters grapple with heroic ideals.³⁸

By contrast, Rynearson analyzes the skewed relationship between the singular and superlative, irreplaceable hero or heroine and the many that are sacrificed on his/her behalf. In his approach, the *Iliad* presents both, the all-too-human fascination with the idea that many men die for the one who is supreme and the fallacy, the madness that lies behind it. Helen and Achilles themselves call into question how her superlative beauty or his heroic wrath can be worth the lives of so many others.³⁹ When De Jong states that "the covert Homeric narrator largely

³⁶ Cf.: "Achill zeigt das typische aggressiv-individualistische Verhalten eines homerischen Helden, der für seine eigene Ehre auch den Tod seiner Mitstreiter akzeptiert, und an keinem Punkt der Handlung hat er nach den Maßgaben des heroischen Verhaltenskodex einen Fehler begangen. Die Richtigkeit und Berechtigung seines Verhaltens wird an keiner Stelle von anderen Helden ernsthaft in Frage gestellt, und er hat die Sympathien der anderen großen Helden der Griechen wie auch des Publikums auf seiner Seite." (Horn 2014, 239) and "Die Untersuchung der Figuren des Achill und des Odysseus konnte zeigen, dass die Idealvorstellungen des epischen Helden in beiden Fällen eine Folie bilden, um die Protagonisten im jeweiligen Epos als besondere und ausgezeichnete Männer darzustellen." (335).

³⁷ Horn 2014, 335.

³⁸ Cf. De Jong 2009, where she refutes the idea that everything that there is to a Homeric character is shown in his words and deeds, and shows that Homeric characters have depth and hidden thoughts.

³⁹ Cf. Rynearson 2013.

refrains from explicitly evaluating his characters” this does not mean that “he does not intend his characters to be morally judged by his narratees.”⁴⁰ Achilles’ character may in no place be openly criticized as being morally questionable, but that does not mean that all of his actions are laudable, or that he therefore represents the perfect, infallible hero. Achilles’ character is much more complex and has many more functions in the epic story than to represent the ideal hero. It is, after all, he “who is chosen by the Homeric narrator to voice the memorable speech on the condition humaine, the fellowship of suffering which links friend and foe, Greek and Trojan (24.518-551).”⁴¹ Grethlein describes Achilles after Patroclus’ death as “a highly ambivalent heroic model”. In his view, the analogies between Odysseus and Achilles in the *mnēstērophonia* “not only stress Odysseus’ return to the elevated realm of an Iliadic hero, they also raise crucial questions about the ethical correctness of his actions.”⁴²

In conjunction with the big questions of Homeric heroism, characterization, and morality, the interaction between what a scholar perceives as the most likely genesis of the Homeric epics and how he or she approaches their interpretation plays an important role for the very subject of this study: Homer’s comparisons. Halliwell in his 2019 *Martin West Memorial Lecture* remarks that “what critics (as would-be representative readers) make of similes is, in some respects, an index of their attitude to epic more generally.”⁴³ In his view, the early modern, and even more so 18th-century, critics of the Homeric simile created a “prejudice that Homeric similes, for all their occasional beauties, were the product of a primitive stage of human culture.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, he criticizes “a number of recent oralist claims to the effect that Homeric similes encode, and need to be understood in the

⁴⁰ De Jong 2018, 42.

⁴¹ De Jong 2018, 44-5.

⁴² Grethlein 2017, 133.

⁴³ Halliwell 2019, 1.

⁴⁴ Halliwell 2019, 4. This primitivism is still detectable in the discussions of similes in Fränkel’s 1921 study and in Bruno Snell’s *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*.

light of, distinctively oral operations of memory, cognition, or imagination”.⁴⁵

Ready, for instance, argues that the use of similes is an inherent feature of oral epic poetry, and distinguishes between similes with vehicles (i.e. standards) or vehicle portions that are shared across oral epic traditions and those that are ideolectal to one specific poet. He concludes:

The *Iliad* poet and the *Odyssey* poet ranged over the entire figurative spectrum of distribution [i.e. shared/traditional — ideolectal similes] when they performed, and one is entitled to the idea that, like modern oral poets, they did so for the purpose of displaying their competence as performers.⁴⁶

Performance-oriented accounts of the function of similes can give the impression of being limited to the question of how a simile is useful to the poet/performer, rather than exploring its effect on the level of the narrative. The poet/narrator, Ready argues, uses similes to control the narrative, give his own interpretations, and pace the progress of the narrative in order “to shape the audience’s response to the story.”⁴⁷ For Scott “the simile was a customary alternate method of continuing the tale.”⁴⁸ No account of the Homeric similes, or Homeric comparisons in general, can look at them from every angle and consider every facet. The angle that a given scholar takes on their subject will inevitably shape his or her results. The problem that I perceive in not only performance-oriented, but also in general, structuralist, and certain cognitive approaches to similes is that they operate on the assumption that similes are there to make things easier, more orderly, and clearer.⁴⁹ By focusing on the function of similes as devices that provide building blocks to structure a narrative and make abstract concepts familiar, their often difficult imagery and meaning remains unsolved and is moved into the background.

⁴⁵ Halliwell 2019, 5.

⁴⁶ Ready 2017, 260.

⁴⁷ Ready 2012, 81 and 82-3.

⁴⁸ Scott 1974, 51.

⁴⁹ For example Bowra 1961 or Minchin 2001.

This is not to say that composition-oriented studies of Homeric similes cannot contribute to our overall understanding of their function and meaning. Martin's idea that similes belong to a different poetic register than the narrative parts of epic is based on his observation that cross-culturally, many oral epic traditions have "*functionally conditioned performance shifts*."⁵⁰ Thinking about similes as having a lyric performance register, thus as being to some extent alien to the narrative register of the rest of the epic, inspired me to view them as adding complexity to the epic story and its characters, rather than as making the epic action easier to understand or visualize.

1.4 Aim and structure of this study

The aim of this study is to provide a typological account of comparisons in Homeric Greek, and to contribute to our understanding of their narrative and rhetorical function. It is therefore divided into two parts, a linguistic (Chapters 2 to 5) and a literary one (Chapter 6). The shorter, literary part builds on the linguistic part, which is larger not because I regard it as more important, but because it offers a comprehensive analysis which aims to faithfully represent the diversity of syntactic structures used to express comparisons in Homeric Greek. I did not choose Homeric Greek as my corpus because it provides a well-defined dataset for linguistic analyses, but because I am interested in the linguistic features and literary functions of comparisons in the oldest coherent texts of reasonable size written in ancient Greek.

In order to document every possible way in which a comparison can be expressed in Homeric Greek, I went through the text by hand, and used not only the formal linguistic criteria established in my methodology, but included every

⁵⁰ Martin 1997, 149, emphasis original.

expression that I identified as explicitly making a comparison. Every comparison is counted separately, even if the same expression occurs more than once, but one single comparison may include several aspects of comparison, i.e. predicates denoting the property that comparee and standard share (*tertium comparationis*). I do not consider metaphors or other expressions that may have an affinity with comparisons but are not explicitly marked as such.⁵¹ My approach is synchronic and cannot make inferences about the pre-Homeric history of comparisons, but it hopes to prove a useful point of reference for subsequent studies on comparisons in later Greek authors. Furthermore, I have no interest, nor do I see a benefit or potential, in using comparisons as a way of determining which of the two Homeric poems, let alone which individual book, might be older or younger. I used the edition by Allen (1931) for the *Iliad* and von der Mühl (1962) for the *Odyssey*. All translations are my own, though I am indebted to the Loeb translations by Murray/Wyatt and Murray/Dimock for help and inspiration. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the numbers of instances of every type of comparison I have found in the Homeric epics.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	2559	1510	1049
Comparatives	555	303	252
Superlatives	786	487	299
Similatives and equatives	1218	720	498

Table 1.1: Homer's comparisons

The linguistic part of this study begins with Chapter 2, which explores the syntactic, semantic, and cognitive features of comparisons that underly the structure and approach to their linguistic analysis in Chapters 3 to 5. It starts by investigating how different word classes, namely adjectives, nouns, and verbs, can express the aspect with regard to which two entities are compared. This is followed by

⁵¹ For a recent study of Homeric metaphors cf. Zanker 2019.

a sketch of the syntactic variety of expressions of comparisons in ancient Greek on the basis of typological studies, which have established a set of five different syntactic constructions in which comparisons appear in the languages of the world. Chapter 2 further engages with two different cognitive models underlying linguistic representations of comparisons and the question of what distinguishes the different comparison types semantically. The final section concerns incomplete comparisons in which either the aspect or standard of comparison is left implicit.

Comparative constructions are the topic of Chapter 3. They are the most widely studied kind of comparison and the most important source for the establishment of the syntactic typology outlined in Chapter 2. In Homeric Greek we find comparative constructions marked by case, preposition, particle, and lexical means. The first four sections of Chapter 3 provide an overview of the instances of comparisons expressed by each syntactic type. Section 3.5 deals with comparisons in which the standard of comparison is implicit but recoverable from the context, while the comparative expressions discussed in Section 3.6 have neither explicit nor implicit standards of comparison.

Chapter 4 on the superlatives follows the structure of Chapter 3, with the exception of the particle construction, which is not found with superlatives. While comparative constructions mostly compare individual entities or concepts, superlative constructions juxtapose an individual with a group, and this group can be concrete (as in ‘the Achaeans’) or general (as in ‘all men’). Like comparatives, many superlatives have no explicit standard of comparison. For some a contextually implied standard of comparison can be reconstructed, but most are elative.

Similatives and equatives, the two kinds of comparison of similarity, are discussed together in Chapter 5. A central point of interest about them lies in the relationship between comparee and standard of comparison. Therefore this chapter is structured differently: it starts off by explaining the difference between similative and equative constructions, and then contrasts comparisons of similarity with those

of inequality (comparatives and superlatives) with regard to differences in expressing and marking the aspect and standard of comparison. The analysis of similitive and equative expressions is divided into three parts according to the relationship between comparee and standard. The second half of the chapter is concerned with special cases of comparisons of similarity: negated comparisons, comparison compounds, descriptions of characters in disguise, and extended Homeric similes.

The end of Chapter 5 marks the end of the linguistic and fairly narrowly focused part of this study. Armed with the knowledge of which constructions are the most frequent and regular in their category, we can now re-approach the less frequent and more unusual expressions from a wider and more informed perspective.

The first part of Chapter 6 deals with hybrid comparisons, i.e. comparisons that appear in the linguistic shape of one comparison type but express the meaning of another. Such hybrid comparisons, I argue, have a special function in a narrow, linguistic sense in that they convey more complex messages than a simple comparison, as well as on the wider level of the narrative discourse in which they appear. In the second part of the chapter I look at the use of comparative and superlative expressions as rhetorical and narrative devices. Here the semantic difference between comparatives and superlatives helps to understand why comparative expressions can be taken at face-value, while superlative expressions, if understood literally, contradict each other. The final part of Chapter 6 is dedicated to comparisons of similarity, especially those that compare a human character to a god, an animal, or a natural force. Similes and shorter comparisons are viewed as poetic devices that make the characters and stories of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* more complex through the different degrees to which they evoke similarities and contrasts between the image they paint and the context in which they appear.

Chapter 2

The grammar of comparisons

Before diving into the analysis of Homer's comparisons, I will, in this chapter, explain various linguistic features of comparisons that underly the structure and approach to their analysis in the subsequent chapters. These linguistic features concern syntactic, semantic, and cognitive aspects of comparisons that were established through typological and language-specific studies. I will address how adjectives, nouns, and verbs can express the aspect of comparison before moving on to the different syntactic constructions in which comparisons appear in the languages of the world. A note on two different cognitive models underlying linguistic representations of comparisons will be followed by a discussion of what distinguishes the different kinds of comparisons. Finally, I will engage with incomplete comparisons and what it means for a comparison when one of its parts is left implicit.

2.1 Defining comparisons

A linguistic expression of comparison is the statement of what the speaker perceives to be the relationship between two entities. The speaker establishes this relationship by means of a cognitive process of comparison prior to its linguistic expression. The relationship can either be a similarity or a difference between those

entities with regard to a (more or less) specific aspect or quality. The premise for establishing a typology of comparisons in Homeric Greek is a definition of what constitutes a typical comparison. Most linguistic studies of comparison are based on the assumption that a complete linguistic expression of comparison consists of four elements:¹

Comparee	Entity which is compared
Standard of comparison	Entity with which the comparee is compared
Aspect of comparison	Predicate denoting the property that comparee and standard share (<i>tertium comparationis</i>)
Marker of standard	Element that relates comparee to standard and identifies the construction as a comparison

Table 2.1: The elements of a comparison

A linguistic expression of comparison states the relationship between comparee and standard of comparison with respect to a property (or several properties) that they share. The comparee is the focus or starting point from which the comparison is made, and the standard of comparison provides the point of reference against which the property in question is measured. If comparee and standard of comparison possess this property to different extents, we are dealing with a comparison of inequality, expressed by a comparative (a) or superlative (b) construction, shown in Table 2.2. If comparee and standard of comparison possess this property to the same extent, we are dealing with a comparison of similarity, expressed by an equative (c). These three types of comparison have in common that what they compare is the degree to which comparee and standard of comparison share the aspect, i.e. a certain quality. A similitive construction (d) expresses that two entities are similar to each other in manner rather than degree.

¹ Cf. Ultan 1972, 126-7; Heine 1997; Thurmair 2001.

	Comparee	Aspect	Marker	Standard of comparison
(a)	<i>Peter</i>	<i>is taller</i>	<i>than</i>	<i>Tom</i>
(b)	<i>Peter</i>	<i>is the tallest</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>all the brothers</i>
(c)	<i>Peter</i>	<i>is as tall</i>	<i>as</i>	<i>Paul</i>
(d)	<i>Peter</i>	<i>laughs</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>his brother</i>

Table 2.2: The four kinds of comparison

The aspect of comparison can be rather vague in similitive expressions, and can refer to a variety of different characteristics associated with the standard of comparison.² To the four elements of a comparison some scholars add a ‘trigger’, which can be realised by the morphological marking of the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison for comparative and superlative constructions, *tall-er* in example (a), and *tall-est* in example (b).³ In languages that do not mark comparison by morphological means, a specific, standardised syntactic construction or lexical item can act as a trigger. In the equative example (c), the first *as* can be seen as triggering the comparison.⁴

For all categories of comparisons there are many examples in which the standard of comparison or the aspect of comparison are implicit. Often they can be supplied from the context, but some cases of a missing standard result in polar expressions (e.g. relative superlatives). For Indo-European languages, the presence of comparative morphology is a good indicator for a comparison of inequality, but neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition. There are Indo-European languages that show no trace of comparative morphology (Hittite, Tocharian), and some that appear to have lost it (Armenian); but even those IE languages that have it can also express comparisons with unmarked adjectives, or by lexical means. It follows

² I limit my discussion of comparisons of similarity to equatives and similitives; for a discussion of other possible subcategories cf. Stolz 2013 and Thurmair 2001.

³ Cf. Thurmair 2001.

⁴ Heine 1997 distinguishes between ‘degree marker’ (affix/word/particle with predicate) and ‘marker of standard’ (adposition/clitic/case inflection/not formally marked (=juxtaposition)), as does Ultan 1972.

that even though all four elements that constitute a comparison must be present and identifiable for a linguistic expression of comparison to be complete, not all of them need to be encoded by individual morphemes or words.

There is a rather obvious affinity between comparisons and ordering expressions such as first (πρῶτος), last (ὑστάτος), second/next/later (δεύτερος), etc.⁵ The origin of the superlative suffixes -τατος and -ιστος tends to be associated with the suffix *-to-, which forms ordinal numbers.⁶ Some of the Greek words for these concepts even have comparison morphology, but they are so remote from actual comparisons that they do not feature in this work. In this study I will only look at those cases in which the adjective πρῶτος takes additional superlative morphology (cf. *Il.* 14.442-3: πρῶτιστος).

The aim of a typology of comparisons in Homer is not just to show and categorize the range of comparisons that appear in the text, but also to establish which types are regular and typical, and which are atypical or on the fringes of what can be regarded a comparison at all. Another way of looking at this is to ask which comparison types are grammaticalised in their syntactic structure and which are more like periphrastic ways of describing a comparison.

If we follow standard, established grammars of ancient Greek, there are a limited number of grammaticalised syntactic constructions for the expression of comparisons. A typical comparative construction, for instance, involves an adjective with comparative morphology and a standard of comparison either marked by the genitive case or by the particle ἤ. The regularity of a comparison is not only determined by the standard syntactic arrangement of its constituent parts, but also by their completeness. If a comparison is lacking an explicit aspect or standard of comparison, can it be regarded as regular? For most of this chapter I will be talking about complete comparisons, but incomplete (or less explicit) comparisons

⁵ Cf. Seiler 1950.

⁶ Cf. Kühner/Blass 1890, 573-4; Schwyzer 1939, 503-4, 537, 594-6; Benveniste 1948; Lujan 2019.

will be addressed in the final section. Another factor is frequency; the more often a certain construction appears, the more likely it is to be regarded regular to at least some extent. A maybe even more important parameter than frequency is stability; for a comparison type to be regular, we can expect it to show a certain degree of stability or coherence across its instantiations. If the standard of comparison is most often marked by a particle, we might expect to find one particular particle to be grammaticalised to fulfil this function, rather than an array of different particles.

2.2 The aspect of comparison

The aspect of comparison denotes the property that is shared between comparee and standard of comparison to either equal or differing extents. In similitive constructions the aspect of comparison is the manner or quality in which comparee and standard are similar. In *Mary sings like a nightingale* the verb *sing* expresses the aspect of comparison; Mary and the nightingale are similar with regard to the manner in which they sing. Equatives, comparatives and superlatives express an equality or inequality in extent or degree. In *Mary is as tall as/taller than Tom*, Mary and Tom are (un)equal with regard to the degree of their tallness.⁷ In this respect, similitive comparisons could be regarded as semantically simpler; they express comparisons purely in terms of one or several qualities that comparee and standard of comparison share. It is not an issue for similitive comparisons how the semantically difficult notion of the degree to which comparee and standard possess a quality is to be understood and reflected in a semantic analysis of the constituents of a comparison. By contrast, for comparatives, superlatives, and equatives, it is still a matter of debate how exactly the notion of degree is part of the (adjective

⁷ I have extended the observations about equatives made by Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998 to all degree comparisons, i.e. also comparatives and superlatives.

expressing the) aspect of comparison.⁸ The difficulty with similitive expressions is rather that the aspect of comparison is often not expressed at all.⁹ In such cases there is a greater focus on the standard of comparison and the context, since the aspect of comparison must be established on the basis of what speaker and hearer know about the characteristics of the standard of comparison, and how (or which of) these characteristics are relevant in the context of the comparison.

In typical degree comparisons, the aspect of comparison is a concrete, gradable property or quality denoted by an adjective; the extent or degree to which this property is present in the comparee is either equal or different to the degree to which that very same property is present in the standard of comparison, e.g. *the bench is as long as/longer than the table*. In correlating comparisons, a special type of degree comparison, it is not a property itself, in the strict sense, that comparee and standard of comparison have in common. Instead, the extent or degree to which the comparee possesses a property equals or exceeds the extent or degree to which the standard of comparison possesses another property, e.g. *the bench is as long as/longer than the table is wide*. The two properties need not have the same aspect of comparison, and can even be opposites: *dogs are as loyal as cats are indifferent*.¹⁰ It may seem that we are dealing with two different aspects of comparison here (*length* and *width*; *loyalty* and *indifference*), but since the function of a comparison is to give information about the comparee, the aspect of comparison is *length* in the first example and *loyalty* in the second example. *Width* and *indifference* are part of the standard of comparison; they make the standard of comparison more complex, but they do not affect that what is being measured against that standard is the length of a bench or the loyalty of a dog.

⁸ For a brief overview of the different approaches to this question cf. the Introduction in Kennedy 1999.

⁹ As for example in *παῦροι γάρ τοι παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται* ‘few sons indeed are like their fathers’ (*Od.* 2.276).

¹⁰ Cf. Bierwisch 1988, 113-4.

Yet, the two aspects have to refer to the same scale, or at least to two scales that can be metaphorically associated with one another. Roughly speaking, *length* and *width* both refer to a scale of spatial extension; *loyalty* and *indifference* refer to the positive and negative pole of a scale of loyalty. It is not normally possible to say *Larry is more tired than Michael is clever*.¹¹

Equative constructions can appear in a special variation of the correlating comparison; if the properties by which comparee and standard of comparison are related are marked for comparative degree (either by comparative morphology or periphrastically with degree adverbials), the aspect of comparison is enhanced by the correlating increase in degree to which comparee and standard of comparison possess the property. For example, *the more the merrier* expresses a comparison in which the extent in number correlates with or equals the extent in merriment: ‘the degree by which the number of people increases equals the degree by which merriment increases.’ In such expressions there is no formal marking as to which element is the comparee and which is the standard, but word order and the context make it clear. In our example the focus lies on the increase of merriment that correlates with an increase in number of people, and not vice versa.¹²

An interesting pragmatic feature of comparisons is the difference between a marked and an unmarked comparison. An unmarked comparison in which the aspect of comparison is *height* employs an adjective denoting the upper end of the scale of height: *Peter is taller than Paul*. A marked version of this employs an adjective referring to the lower end of the scale: *Paul is shorter than Peter*. The unmarked version of this comparison is the standard way of expressing a difference in height between Peter and Paul. The marked version would only be employed to emphasize the shortness of the comparee.¹³

¹¹ In the literature on the semantics of comparison, this phenomenon is called incommensurability. Cf. Kennedy 1999, 16-7; Cresswell 1976.

¹² Cf. Jespersen 1924, 251-2.

¹³ Cf. Jespersen 1924, 246-7; Bierwisch 1987, 91-101; Thurmair 2001; Zeilfelder (forthcoming),

Bierwisch calls the words that express degrees (*many/much, more, most*)¹⁴ “expressions of gradation *par excellence* [...]; they can occur as quantifiers, adjectives, adverbials, degree modifiers [...]. Their characteristic property is not the fixing of any particular dimension or condition of comparison. They represent, so to speak, gradation *per se*.”¹⁵ For the adverbial usage of *much, more, most*, ancient Greek has μάλα, μᾶλλον, μάλιστα, and for adjectival (as well as adverbial) usage πολύς, πλείων, πλείστος. These words act like degree markers or triggers to form a comparison together with an adjective (or adjectival participle), a noun, or a verb expressing the aspect of comparison. Frequently, μᾶλλον/μάλιστα occur as periphrastic expressions in place of comparative/superlative morphology with gradable verbal adjectives in -τος, participles, or other adjectives that cannot take comparative/superlative suffixes for formal reasons.¹⁶ There are even cases in which περί is employed as an adverbial degree modifier and acts like μάλιστα as a means of marking the superlative periphrastically (cf. *Il.* 13.49-52). In comparative, superlative, and equative constructions the aspect of comparison is most often expressed by an adjective, but also frequently by a noun or verb, while similitive constructions tend to be more diverse. They vary greatly in how explicitly the aspect of comparison is expressed, and whether by (a combination of) adjective, noun, or verb.

13-5. For the notion of markedness in semantics cf. Waugh 1982.

¹⁴ And their antonyms *few, fewer, fewest / little, less, least*.

¹⁵ Bierwisch 1988, 111. Rusiecki uses the fuzzy notions of *many* and *few* in order to explain how the positive of relative adjectives is processed. He, for example, suggests to think of a sentence *Peter is tall* in terms of *Peter is many feet and inches* rather than as relative to a norm that is made up by some mathematical average/median/mean (1985, 34-9).

¹⁶ In post-Homeric Greek periphrastic ways of marking comparative and superlative degree also occur with adjectives that can take comparative/superlative morphology, cf. μᾶλλον φίλος for φίλτερος (*Eur. Tro.* 789). Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 184.

2.2.1 Word classes: adjectives vs. nouns and verbs

Since adjectives are generally regarded as the most suitable word class for the expression of the aspect of comparison, we will first take a closer look at them before moving on to nouns and verbs. Adjectives are a highly disputed class; some scholars claim that adjectives do not exist in some languages of the world,¹⁷ others define the category widely enough to allow for most (or even all) languages of the world to have them. At any rate, it does emerge that nouns and verbs that express typically adjectival concepts do not entirely behave like core nouns and verbs; there are certain things that ‘adjectival’ nouns and verbs can do, which core nouns and verbs cannot, and vice-versa.¹⁸ It is clear that every language has some means to express the concepts that semantically correspond to what adjectives express. To capture the typical semantic contents of adjectives, Dixon lists four central types (1-4), and another three peripheral types (5-7):¹⁹

1. Dimension	<i>big, small, long, deep</i>
2. Age	<i>new, young, old</i>
3. Value	<i>good, bad, important, lucky</i>
4. Colour	<i>red, green, black</i>
5. Physical property	<i>hard, soft, strong, sick, tired</i>
6. Human propensity	<i>jealous, happy, clever, proud</i>
7. Speed	<i>fast, slow</i>

Table 2.3: Core adjectival concepts

In languages that have closed adjective classes,²⁰ or express adjectival concepts through words that appear not to form the kind of category that corresponds with

¹⁷ Cf. Andersen 1983, 114-5; Schachter 1985.

¹⁸ Cf. Wetzler 1996; Baker 2003; Dixon 2004. For a different and rather more flexible view on word classes cf. Vogel 1996.

¹⁹ Cf. Dixon 2004, 3-4.

²⁰ I.e. a limited, often very small, set of adjectives. In such languages the adjective class cannot be expanded through morphological derivation of new adjectives from nouns or verbs.

what is traditionally viewed as an adjective, adjectival concepts can be expressed through (i) nouns or (ii) verbs (or noun-like words and verb-like words).²¹ Typologically speaking, in the case of (i) in a language that has a closed ‘real’ adjective class, adjectival concepts outside of this closed class are expressed as an abstract noun with a verb ‘to have’ if the adjectival noun acts as a modifier to a noun, or with a verb ‘to be’ if it acts as a predicate.²² If we are dealing with a language that has no distinct adjective class at all, adjectival concepts are expressed by nouns that designate an object embodying that concept. Such adjective-like nouns look and syntactically function more or less like normal nouns. They can act as modifiers of other nouns, or as predicates in combination with a copula.²³

Language	In modifier function	In predicate function
Hausa	<i>mutum mai alheri</i> person having kindness ‘a kind person’	<i>yana da alheri</i> he is with kindness ‘he is kind’
Quechua	<i>chay hatun runa</i> that big-one man ‘that big man’	<i>chay runa hatun (kaykan)</i> that man big-one (is) ‘that man is big’

Table 2.4: (i) Adjectival concepts expressed through nouns

In the case of (ii), for both languages with closed adjective classes and languages without an adjective class, adjective-like verbs look and behave like normal verbs, when the adjectival concept acts as a predicate. When the adjectival concept takes the function of a modifier, the adjective-like verb is relativized, even though this relativization can be optional in some languages that have no adjective class.²⁴

²¹ For the purpose of this work it does not matter whether one follows Dixon 2004 in assuming that there is something like a category adjective in every language of the world, or whether one follows the more traditional view (e.g. Andersen 1983; Schachter 1985) that some languages have no separate class of adjectives at all.

²² Cf. Schachter 1985, 15.

²³ Cf. Schachter 1985, 13-20. Hausa is an Afro-Asiatic language with a closed adjective class. Quechua is a South American language with no adjective class.

²⁴ Cf. Schachter 1985, 16-20. Bemba is a Bantu language from Niger-Congo with a closed ad-

Language	In modifier function	In predicate function
Bemba	<i>umuuntu àashipa</i> person who is brave 'a brave person'	<i>umuuntu àashipa</i> person is brave 'the person is brave'
Mojave	<i>ʔi:pa (k^w-)homi:-n^y-č iva:k</i> man (REL-)tall-DEM-SUBJ is here 'the tall man is here'	<i>ʔi:pa-č homi:-k (iðu:m)</i> man-SUBJ tall-PRES (AUX) 'that man is tall'

Table 2.5: (ii) Adjectival concepts expressed through verbs

Crosslinguistic variation for the expression of what, from an Indo-European perspective, we would call adjectival concepts shows that it is not very surprising that the aspect of comparison can be expressed by either of the three major word classes.²⁵ Adjectives are somewhere between nouns and verbs in different respects. Typical adjectives express property concepts, while typical nouns refer to entities, and typical verbs denote actions.²⁶ Nouns as entities typically express the most time-stable concepts, they refer to essential, permanent characteristics. Verbs as events typically express the least time-stable concepts, they refer to momentary and transitory actions. Adjectives can refer to stage-level (momentary, transitory, more general) properties, as well as to individual-level (i.e. essential, time-stable, intrinsic) properties.²⁷ Example (1) illustrates a typical stage-level (a.) and a typical individual-level (b.) predicate.

- (1) a. Firemen are available
b. Firemen are altruistic

jective class. Mojave is a Yuman language from North America with no adjective class.

²⁵ For a discussion of common features and distinctions between adjectives, participles, nouns, and adverbs in Greek cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 173-80.

²⁶ Pustet 2006, 61. For Ferris 1993 the distinction is between entities (\sim nouns) and properties (\sim verbs), and adjectives seem to be somewhere in between, or sometimes more like one, sometimes more like the other (1-18).

²⁷ Cf. Givón 1984, 55; Vogel 1996, 195-219; Wetzler 1996, 44; Blackwell 2000, 371-2; Pustet 2006, 61-2. The core semantic adjective types tend to be more time-stable, while the peripheral ones tend to be less time-stable.

The distinction between these two types of predicates is reflected on a syntactic and semantic level. One way to test this distinction is ‘there-insertion’: (1)a. can have ‘there’ inserted (‘There are firemen available’), and mean that only some, but not all, firemen are available. This is not the case in (1)b., which refers to a general truth about all firemen.²⁸

In a linguistic utterance, nouns typically take the position of the argument(s) (i.e. subject and object), and verbs that of the predicate, which links the arguments into a syntactic structure. Adjectives in their most basic form are neither independent arguments nor full predicates, but they can fulfil roles that neither nouns nor verbs typically can: they can be

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) direct attributive modifiers of nouns | <i>a smart woman;</i> |
| 2) complements of degree words | <i>Mary is too smart for her own good;</i> |
| 3) resultative secondary predicates | <i>they beat the metal flat.</i> |

For our purposes especially statement 2) is interesting, since it claims that gradability is a strictly adjectival property; in how far nouns and verbs participate in gradability remains a matter of debate and will be discussed below. Statement 1) refers to one of the most prominent and intuitively adjectival properties. Statement 3) refers to a special case of the predicative use, the other prominent syntactic position of adjectives.²⁹ In Greek, for example, the ‘normal’ predicative position can be taken up by nouns, and a noun in this position usually has no article, “da dasselbe in der Regel nicht ein bestimmtes Individuum, sondern nur den abstrakten Begriff einer Eigenschaft bezeichnet, die von dem Subjekte ausgesagt wird.”³⁰ In

²⁸ Cf. Carlson 1977; Kratzer 1995.

²⁹ Cf. Baker 2003, 190-1; Pustet 2006 stresses the attributive function of adjectives, and Bolinger 1967 claims that more adjectives are restricted to attributive than to predicative position.

³⁰ Kühner/Gerth II, 1 1898, 591. This is, however, not a hard-and-fast rule, and the distinction between the function of identifying an individual and of assigning a property is not clear-cut. Cf. Hes. Fr. 308: αὐτὸς γὰρ πάντων βασιλεὺς καὶ κοίρανος ἐστίν ‘for he himself is (the?) king and (the?) ruler of all’.

English, indefinite nouns in predicative positions behave like adjectives: *he is (a) king* assigns a property to the subject, while *he is the king* identifies the subject.

There is a certain degree of fluidity between word classes in that a member of one class can enter into another, either by derivation or even without formal changes. In participial form, verbs can behave like adjectives. Generally speaking, participles express less time-stable, and proper adjectives more time-stable attributes. In Greek, adjectives can be nominalised by a definite article and act as nouns, and nouns (especially agent nouns) can occur in attributive position.³¹

2.2.2 Gradability

Predicates of typical degree comparisons denote gradable properties, i.e. properties that can be of a higher or lower degree, and thereby present to equal or differing degrees in different objects.³² There is an ongoing debate among semanticists about how exactly gradability is to be conceptualized, and how gradable predicates (which tend to be adjectives, see below) should be represented in formal semantic analyses. Formal semantic representations are not of concern for this work, but thinking about a cognitive model underlying the linguistic expression of a comparison can shed light on its syntactic representation. To conceptualize the most basic, straightforward, and typical degree comparison, I follow Stassen’s definition which describes it as the “mental act by which two objects are assigned

³¹ Cf. *ἑταῖρος ἀνὴρ* ‘companion’ (*Il.* 17.466). Götz Keydana has kindly pointed out to me that, in PIE, nouns and adjectives may not have always been formally distinct: Vedic *madhu-*, can mean ‘sweet’ or ‘honey’ depending on the context. At the same time, however, there were designated affixes forming adjectives right from the start, which shows that there probably was an early categorial difference between the three major word classes. In English, categorial state is fluid in any direction and across all word classes: e.g. ‘a fun thing’, ‘Don’t sweetheart me!’, ‘to off somebody’. Borer (2005) argues that underived words in the English lexicon are unspecified with regard to word class.

³² Cf. Kennedy 2006, 691: gradable predicates are of a “unique semantic type that directly represents their order-inducing feature; they are analysed as expressions that map their arguments onto abstract representations of measurement, or scales.”

a position on a predicative scale.”³³ More specifically, gradable predicates are functions from objects to extents; they express relations between objects and abstract representations of intervals on a scale.³⁴ If both objects are assigned the same position (or interval) on the scale, we are dealing with a comparison of equality; if the objects are assigned different positions, the comparison is one of inequality.³⁵ The degree to which these objects possess a certain property determines how they are ordered on that scale. The semantic notion of gradability is to be distinguished from the morphological marking of positive, comparative, and superlative degree.³⁶ A comparison relates two explicitly mentioned entities (comparee and standard of comparison) with regard to a specific aspect by which those entities are similar or different. This aspect is often expressed by an adjective that denotes a gradable property, and for languages that mark degrees of comparison morphologically, this adjective is likely to be marked for the relevant degree, i.e. either as positive, comparative, or superlative.

Gradability is usually regarded as a purely adjectival concept; it is closely connected to vagueness; typically, gradable adjectives are vague. Vagueness refers to “a particular kind of uncertainty about the application of a predicate.”³⁷ Without a specific context, it is impossible to determine the truth condition of a statement like *Peter is tall*. This statement could be true if the comparison class is primary school kids, but false if it is basketball players.³⁸ Besides vagueness, dimensionality is an important factor of gradability: the most typical — and the most straightforwardly gradable — adjectives are uni-dimensional. According to

³³ Stassen 2006, 686.

³⁴ Cf. Kennedy 1999, xvii-xviii. He briefly discusses the other main approaches to describing gradable adjectives in his Introduction. Cf. also Constantinescu 2011.

³⁵ Cf. Stassen 2006; Kennedy 2006.

³⁶ Or the absence of marking on the positive forms vis-à-vis the morphologically marked graded forms. Some scholars operate with a zero-morpheme for the positive. Cf. Thurmair 2001, 104-5; Kennedy 2007.

³⁷ Barker 2006, 294.

³⁸ Cf. Kennedy 1999, 5-11; Barker 2006.

Kennedy, the term dimension refers to ordering domains, which are properties that permit grading. The way to conceptualize these properties is to think of them as abstract nominal concepts; when we talk about the dimension referred to by a uni-dimensional adjective like *tall*, we call it the dimension or property of height. When we think of the dimensions of multi-dimensional adjectives like *clever*, we call them intelligence, wittiness, knowing what to do and how to behave in different situations, etc.;³⁹ *clever* cannot be defined through only one dimension. Cleverness as a concept is not as straightforwardly measurable as height. It is made up of different parameters such as how much someone knows, or how someone can put their knowledge to practical use. Someone can be clever with regard to business skills, in maths, on an academic or social level. In order to establish the exact meaning of a multidimensional adjective it is not only necessary to know which parameters are at play at all, but also how these parameters are to be ordered according to their importance, and how the interplay of parameters and their importance contributes to our understanding of an average or normative standard of, say, cleverness. *Peter* can be *cleverer than Tom* with regard to one specific or several dimensions of cleverness.

Multidimensional adjectives have a greater and different degree of vagueness than unidimensional adjectives. As stated above, vagueness for unidimensional adjectives concerns the extent to which the property holds in context (*John is quite tall for a basketball player* vs. *John is quite tall for a 12-year-old*). Multidimensional adjectives are vague not just in terms of the relevant extent of cleverness, but also with regard to which dimensions of cleverness are relevant at all.⁴⁰

Concrete nouns, as well as most abstract nouns, are multidimensional and have

³⁹ Cf. Kennedy 1999, 12-4; I disagree with Constantinescu's claim that unidimensionality is a purely adjectival property, while multidimensionality is purely nominal (2015, 177).

⁴⁰ Cf. Kaiser 1979, 8-14. Kennedy refers to vagueness in multidimensional adjectives as indeterminacy. In his view, this is a different phenomenon from vagueness, but rather something like ambiguity (1999, 12-5).

a degree of vagueness that can be conceptualized in terms of prototypicality; the combination of its characteristics makes a noun a good or less good example of its category. Experiments show, for example, that people consistently regard a robin as a more typical example of a bird than a penguin or an ostrich. On a conceptual level, there is a scale of prototypicality for the category *bird*. The parameters by which it is established whether a certain member of the category qualifies as a better or worse example of it are determined by a multitude of dimensions, of which a prototypical bird should display most, or at least the most important ones, e.g. have feathers, fly, lay eggs, be small, sing, etc.⁴¹

In this regard, most nouns do not appear to be all that different from multi-dimensional adjectives. On purely syntactic grounds, however, there is a crucial difference between adjectives and nouns in the way in which they participate in expressions of comparison. If combined with degree morphology or a degree modifier like *more*, adjectives express a comparison of degree: *more beautiful*. When concrete nouns are modified by *more*, the result is a comparison of quantity. When a plural concrete noun is combined with a degree modifier, the resulting meaning is that of a greater number of entities: *more cars*; a degree modifier with a mass noun yields a greater amount of the relevant substance: *more wine*. In order to refer to a greater degree of the prototypical features usually associated with concrete nouns, many languages require additional marking: *more of a car*, *more wine-like*, but in Greek, for instance, some nouns can take degree morphology and thereby become comparative (or superlative) adjectives: βασιλεύτερος ‘more of a king’.⁴² But even in English, abstract nouns can be directly modified by a degree word: *more cleverness* means ‘a higher degree of cleverness’.

Verbs are compared with regard to frequency and amount: *Ben laughs more than Peter* (~*more often*). However, an exception are experience verbs; they cluster

⁴¹ Cf. Sassoon 2013.

⁴² Cf. Lujan 2019, 306-7.

with adjectives: *she likes dogs more than cats*.⁴³

In view of the above, we may draw a preliminary conclusion about gradability in the three major word classes. Adjectives are the word class that has the greatest number of members that are straightforwardly gradable.⁴⁴ Yet, nouns and verbs are also gradable, albeit in a less straightforward way. Grading nouns and verbs often requires additional marking and has an effect on their meaning: some verbs receive the additional feature of frequency or amount when they are graded, and concrete nouns no longer refer to entities but become abstract, often to the effect that the graded form becomes adjectival. Constantinescu in her study on the gradability of nouns and adjectives argues that a strong distinction between nouns and adjectives also holds on the lexical level:

[N]ouns do not introduce orderings, as they are and need to be inherently multi-dimensional. It is only under specific conditions that predicatively used noun phrases may introduce orderings in terms of prototypicality (e.g. more of an N structures) or that a (gradable) property interpretation of bare nouns is licenced which allows for degree modification.⁴⁵ [...] gradability is not manifested in the nominal domain in a way that we are familiar with from the adjectival domain, thus pointing to a fundamental lexico-semantic difference between these two lexical categories.⁴⁶

Here multi-dimensionality and non-gradability are directly linked and ascribed to nouns as opposed to adjectives. As we saw above, not only nouns, but also a considerable number of gradable adjectives are multidimensional, which means that multidimensionality cannot be used as a criterion for non-gradability. Gradability may be not manifested in the nominal domain in the same way as in the adjectival domain, but this does not justify the conclusion that there is a lexico-semantic

⁴³ Cf. Constantinescu 2011, 15-7; Sassoon 2013, 36-7.

⁴⁴ Baker 2003, 214.

⁴⁵ An example of an ordering in terms of typicality is *he is more of an idiot than I thought* (~*more idiotic*). An example of a (gradable) property interpretation of bare nouns is *a big idiot* (~*very idiotic*); compare the respective predicative use of *big*, *this idiot is big* (~*large in size*), which does not allow a degree modifier reading.

⁴⁶ Constantinescu 2015, 188-9. This is also the conclusion of her 2011 PhD thesis.

difference between the two lexical categories. The adjective class itself is much more heterogeneous than Constantinescu acknowledges, and certain adjectives are more similar to abstract nouns than to unidimensional, i.e. typically gradable, adjectives.⁴⁷

Sassoon regards nouns as gradable on at least a cognitive level, even if they do not syntactically behave exactly like gradable adjectives. He discusses noun gradability in terms of prototypicality.⁴⁸ The properties of a noun, whose combination determines whether an entity is a prototypical example of that noun, correspond to the dimensions of gradable adjectives. Dimensions are conceptual abstractions of properties in the shape of abstract nouns or nominalized verb phrases. As we have already seen, for the noun *bird* these properties are small size, having feathers, flying, nesting etc.⁴⁹ Some of them refer to scales themselves, cf. small size, intelligence; others are polar properties, cf. nesting, having feathers. A multi-dimensional gradable adjective (or noun) could consist entirely of properties that do not refer to scales, since it is not the scale of the individual property that is being graded, but the number and relative importance of the properties the referent of the adjective (or noun) possesses.

Some adjectives are like nouns that do not straightforwardly refer to scales, and are thus not straightforwardly gradable. Grading such an adjective or a proper noun means grading the abstraction of its properties in a metaphorical or metonymical way. The result is a comparison of one or several of its abstract dimensions: *? a robin is more bird than a penguin* is not quite felicitous, but it is not an impossible step to get the meaning *a robin is more of a bird than a penguin*, i.e. displaying more characteristics usually associated with a bird. This difference in the degree to which some or all properties of typical birds are present can also be expressed

⁴⁷ See Section 2.2.3.

⁴⁸ Constantinescu 2011 mentions prototypicality with regard to certain expressions of graded nouns, but is not sure how to deal with it (22-3).

⁴⁹ Cf. Kaiser 1979; Kennedy 1999, 12-4; Sassoon 2013, 6-7.

by *more birdiness* or *more birdy*. In the same way, *this painting is more Italian than that* does not mean that it has a greater extent of Italian nationality, but that it displays to a greater degree the characteristics usually associated with Italian paintings or with being Italian. Many abstract nouns are gradable in the same way as multidimensional adjectives: *to have more power* is another way of saying *to be more powerful*. Jespersen comes to exactly this conclusion in his discussion of comparatives and superlatives formed on nouns. Such cases, he says, are rare, but

... where we do find in actual usage comparatives or superlatives of substantive forms they will be seen on closer inspection to single out one quality and thus mean the same thing as if they were formed from real adjectives.⁵⁰

If it were indeed the case that nouns and verbs are not gradable at all, we should find verbs and nouns expressing the aspect of comparison only in similitive constructions, since these are the only comparison type that does not involve degrees or extents in any way. That this is not the case is further evidence that, at least on a conceptual level, nouns and verbs are gradable.

2.2.3 Adjectives expressing the aspect of comparison

The semantic features of adjectives are the premise upon which they can act as predicates expressing the aspect with regard to which two entities are compared. In semantic terms the class of adjectives is divided into absolute and relative adjectives. Absolute adjectives denote inherent properties or classes of objects; they are context-independent and not gradable in a straightforward way, e.g. *round*, *square*, *married*, *female*, *iron*. Relative adjectives are gradable, highly context-dependent, and can be described with reference to a scale, e.g. *big*, *small*, *loud*, *old*, *deep*.⁵¹ They can be used in a scalar and in a polar way, i.e. they are conceptualized

⁵⁰ Jespersen 1924, 80.

⁵¹ Cf. Thurmair 2001, 108-9.

in terms of their location on a scale that runs between two antonymic points. A scalar use of the adjective *tall* would be *Tom is taller than Tim*, locating Tom and Tim relative to each other on a scale from short to tall. A polar use of *tall* would be *this is a tall tree*, locating the tree at a more or less specific point on a scale of tree-height.⁵²

Even the polar use of relative adjectives implies a comparison in that the exact meaning of the adjective is understood with reference to a normative standard. What this norm is, is determined by the context, the properties of the subject, the type of predicate, and other pragmatic factors. Our idea of what is a normal height for trees acts as the standard of comparison for whether we would call a particular tree tall or not, and where on a scale of tree height we would place that tree.⁵³ In contrast, the scalar use of relative adjectives, i.e. complete equative or comparative comparisons, do not make any reference to a normative scale. It is fine to say *Tom is taller than Tim, but both are actually quite short* because the comparative does not entail the positive: saying that A is taller than B does not entail that A (or B) is tall. A scalar comparative makes a statement about the degree to which an object has a quality in relation to another object, not in relation to a contextual norm.⁵⁴

It is an inherent feature of a relative adjective that when construed with reference to more than one entity, it can express all three types of scalar comparisons; it does not even require special comparative, superlative, or equative morphology for this: *Next to an apple tree, an oak tree is tall* implies a comparative reading *an*

⁵² Cf. Ultan 1972, 121-2; Thurmair 2001, 109-14. Other scholars think of the polar use of relative adjectives in terms of actual comparative expressions. In their view the expression *this is a tall tree* means *this tree is taller than an average tree* or *this tree has a greater degree of tallness than a standard representative of the set of trees*. Cf. Rusiecki 1985; Bierwisch 1988; Kennedy/McNally 2005.

⁵³ Cf. *vagueness*. Kennedy 2006 and 2007; Barker 2006. For a discussion of different types of scales that underlie different types of relative adjectives cf. Bierwisch 1988; Kennedy/McNally 2005.

⁵⁴ Cf. Jespersen 1924, 247; Thurmair 2001; Kennedy/McNally 2005; Kennedy 2006.

oak tree is taller than an apple tree. Similarly, *among all the oak trees, this one is tall* implies a superlative reading *this one is the tallest of all oak trees.*⁵⁵

Comparative and superlative morphology on their own are not sufficient to mark a comparison: an adjective with comparative or superlative morphology does not express a comparison any more than a relative adjective in the positive does, namely only in reference to a normative scale. *An older woman* is not a comparison, but a polar use of a comparative adjective and means *a rather old woman*, unless this statement is made with reference to an explicit or contextually implied standard of comparison.⁵⁶

I have already touched upon the connection between vagueness and gradability, but it should be noted that it is not strictly the case that only relative and vague adjectives are gradable. Rotstein/Winter and Kennedy/McNally have pointed out that adjectives like *wet, empty, full, open, awake* are gradable. These kinds of adjectives are not considered vague in the same way in which the adjective *tall* is vague; their truth value is not as heavily dependent on the linguistic context, and at first sight, they are binary: something is either wet or dry, full or empty. Yet, even these adjectives can be modified by degree adverbials: *the theatre was quite empty, emptier than usual; my jacket is wetter than my trousers.* In such examples the adjective is not vague or relative, and, unlike with relative adjectives, the comparative *wetter* entails its positive *the jacket is wet*; *emptier* entails *the theatre was empty*; in contrast, a comparative construction with a relative adjective *Peter is taller than Tom* does not entail the positive *Peter is tall.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The superlative is to some extent a special case of a comparative: it expresses that one object among a group has a quality to a degree that is greater than all the others in that same group. Thus, the sentence *among all the oak trees, this one is tall* also implies a comparative reading *this oak tree is taller than all other oak trees.* The distinction between comparative and superlative comparisons is discussed in Section 2.5.

⁵⁶ Cf. Herbermann 1998, 78-83. For explicit vs. implicit comparisons cf. section 2.6. This polar or contrastive use of comparative adjectives is to some degree lexicalised, cf. *she is an older woman, they live in a better neighbourhood*, vs. *?he is a taller man* to mean ‘rather tall’, *?they live in a bigger house* to mean ‘rather big’.

⁵⁷ Cf. Rotstein/Winter 2004; Kennedy/McNally 2005.

Absolute adjectives are thus gradable in a different way to relative adjectives. Kennedy/McNally suggest that this could be explained with reference to Lasersohn's theory of pragmatic halos. Even though it should not be possible to grade absolute, binary expressions such as the above, pragmatics allows for a certain degree of deviation from what is strictly speaking true. Even though arguably an object can only either be wet or dry, empty or full, it is possible to express that something is just a little bit more or less empty or wet. The pragmatic halo describes the range within which it is possible to deviate from the standard denotation of the property.⁵⁸ There seems to be a continuum of acceptability along which different absolute adjectives can combine with degree modifiers or be part of degree comparisons. While *the theatre was quite empty, even emptier than yesterday* is unproblematic, *my orchid is quite dead, even deader than yesterday* might be less so. Beyond the examples that Rotstein/Winter and Kennedy/McNally discuss, even rather firmly absolute adjectives like *dead*, can be graded in a meaningful way.⁵⁹

Thinking about gradability in terms of dimensionality and prototypicality can explain why some absolute adjectives are gradable in simpler terms than the rather vague concept of pragmatic halos: when saying *fuller* or *quite full*, the speaker does not refer to the literal meaning of *full*, but to one or several specific dimensions of *full* that are relevant in the context of the utterance. For example, a glass of beer is full when filled up to the line that says one pint, even though this means that the glass is not full to the brim, and could be filled up more. Absolute adjectives are typically multidimensional, and even though in their most literal and strictly logical meaning, they are not straightforwardly gradable, they can become gradable if one focuses only on those dimensions that fit the context. For the example of the empty theatre this means not taking the meaning of empty too literally, but view-

⁵⁸ Cf. Kennedy/McNally 2005, 357; Lasersohn 1999.

⁵⁹ Cf. Latin *mortuus sum* 'I am dead' is a verbal form, and patterns with experience verbs which can be graded in the same way as multidimensional relative adjectives.

ing it in the context of the theatre and what a normal audience size is. In terms of the dead orchid, this means focussing on certain characteristics that death is associated with, namely that (natural) death is often preceded by physical weakness and decreasing health. Absolute adjectives thus fall into the same category as concrete nouns: they are gradable when one focuses on the (abstract) properties associated with one or several of their dimensions. Even uni-dimensional absolute adjectives are gradable because language and real-life experience allow for gradations of, for example, the adjective *square*. Even though squareness is theoretically defined in an absolute way, there are situations in which one shape can be said to be *more square* than another.

2.2.4 Nouns expressing the aspect of comparison

While adjectives and their usage in comparison are discussed widely in General Linguistic literature, there is to my knowledge no linguistic study of nouns (or verbs) featuring in expressions of comparisons. What follows here are predictions on the behaviour of nouns expressing the aspect of comparison on the basis of general properties of the word class ‘noun’ and my observations regarding specific nouns in Homeric comparisons. Since nouns cannot generally appear in exactly the same syntactic positions as adjectives and cannot usually be directly modified by the same degree modifiers as adjectives, we do not expect adjectives and nouns to be interchangeable when they appear as aspects of comparisons. From the above discussion of word classes and gradability, it should follow that in straightforward degree comparisons, the noun expressing the aspect of comparison is an abstract noun, like νοήματι ‘in wit’.⁶⁰

- (2) (...) ἐγὼ δέ κε σεῖω νοήματί γε προβαλοίμην Il. 19.218
 but I would surpass you in wit

⁶⁰ Cf. Coray 2009, 98 on the meaning of νοήματι.

If the noun is a concrete noun, the ‘actual’ aspect of comparison, or the metonymical relationship between the concrete noun and the quality that is actually being compared, is to be inferred from the abstract characteristics or dimensions associated with the concrete noun in question:

- (3) Αντίλοχος· ὁ γὰρ αὐτε νέους ποσὶ πάντας ἐνίκα Il. 23.756
 Antilochus; for he surpassed all the young men with (regard to the
 swiftness of) his feet

The aspect by which in this passage Antilochus surpasses all the young men is expressed by a concrete noun in the dative, ποσὶ ‘with his feet.’ Beside the literal meaning, in which the feet are the instrument by which Antilochus surpasses the others, on a conceptual level, ποσὶ has the meaning ‘with regard to the swiftness of his feet’.

Most typically, nouns express the aspect of comparison in lexical expressions of comparisons, as in the examples above, but they can also specify or make more precise the aspect of comparison with multidimensional adjectives:

- (4) (...) ὁ γὰρ αὐτε βίην οὗ πατρὸς ἀμείνων Il. 1.404
 for in strength he is better than his father

ἀμείνων ‘better’ is prototypically multidimensional, since someone can be better with regard to a great variety of dimensions. A noun in the accusative of relation, βίην ‘strength’, specifies that the dimension referred to in this example is that of physical prowess.

In similatives, which express a similarity or sameness in manner, not in degree, the aspect of comparison need not be an abstract and gradable concept.

- (5) Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῆ τ’ ἐνοπή τ’ ἴσαν ὄρνιθες ὥς Il. 3.2
 The Trojans came with crying and shouting like birds.

Here the two aspects of comparison, κλαγγή ‘crying’ and ἐνοπή ‘shouting’, are not straightforwardly gradable; in a degree comparison they would have to be semantically enhanced to be understood to refer to an abstract and gradable concept,

such as ‘intensity of crying’ for example. In this similitive comparison, what is being compared is the kind of sound that the Trojans make in their attack, and not its volume.⁶¹

In those similitive comparisons that are very similar to metaphors, the aspect of comparison is a noun which has a dependent genitive expressing the standard of comparison:

- (6) ἄλλ’ Ἐκτωρ πυρὸς αἰνὸν ἔχει μένος Il. 17.565
 but Hector has the terrible might of fire

Hector is being compared to fire with regard to his might. This ‘to have + noun’ construction resembles the way in which adjectival concepts can be expressed in languages that have only a small, closed adjective class or no adjectives at all. ‘To have the might of fire’ is another way of saying ‘to be mighty like fire’.

A variation of this is a compound on the basis of a possessive relation:

- (7) (...) Ἀχιλλῆα ῥηξήνορα θυμολέοντα Il. 7.228
 Achilles, breaker of armed ranks, in spirit like a lion

The compound adjective θυμολέων translates to ‘having the spirit of a lion’, and thus to ‘being like a lion in spirit’.⁶²

A small set of nouns can take comparative and superlative morphology and thereby function as an adjectival aspect of comparison. The gradable meaning of the thus created adjective is based on characteristics usually associated with the noun. In example (8), the comparative adjective κύντερον is formed on the noun κύων ‘dog’, and its meaning is based on the usage of κύων as an insult, designating a shameless person.⁶³

⁶¹ This does not mean that the volume or intensity of the noise that the Trojans are making is not also at play here. The comparison and the crane simile following it (verses 3-7) do not make explicit reference to the notion of volume and intensity, but they do stand in contrast with the silence, σιγή, of the Achaeans mentioned in verse 9. Cf. Kirk 1985, 264; Krieter-Spiro 2009, 12.

⁶² Cf. Wesselmann 2020, 125: “mit einem Mut, wie ihn ein Löwe hat”.

⁶³ Cf. Il. 8.299, 13.622-3.

- (8) ὧς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός *Od.* 11.427
 that there is nothing more dreadful and more shameless than a
 woman

2.2.5 Verbs expressing the aspect of comparison

In degree comparisons, the aspect of comparison can be expressed by experience verbs combined with *μᾶλλον*, and the resulting meaning is that of a high degree of the experience or emotion expressed by the verb.

- (9) (...) ὁ δ' ἐχώσατο κηρόθι μᾶλλον,
 κινήσας δὲ κάρη προτὶ ὄν μυθήσατο θυμόν *Od.* 5.284-5
 And he got angrier in his heart, and shaking his head he spoke to
 his own spirit.

ἐχώσατο μᾶλλον is translated with an adjective in English, 'got angrier', but in Greek 'to get angry' is a verb.⁶⁴

Verbs meaning 'rather want', 'like better', or 'prefer' are reminiscent of lexical means of marking the standard of comparison and function like semantically bleached markers of degree. The meaning that they convey when used in comparisons is similar to that of very general multi-dimensional adjectives like 'good': to prefer one thing over another is like finding it better. They describe a comparison, but they do not, on their own, denote the aspect of comparison. The comparative (or superlative) meaning of the verb can be reinforced by *μᾶλλον* (or *μάλιστα*).

- (10) τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐέλδεται ἔξ ἔρον εἶναι
 ἢ πολέμου *Il.* 13.638-9
 His desire for these things a man would wish even more to satisfy
 than his desire for war.

In similitive expressions, the focus lies not on the intensity, but on the manner in which the verbal action is performed.

⁶⁴ Ameis/Hentze understand *μᾶλλον* as expressing growing intensity: "immer mehr" (1908b, 178).

- (11) (...) οἳ δὲ λύκοι ὥς
 ἀλλήλοις ἐπόρουσαν, ἀνὴρ δ' ἄνδρ' ἐδνοπάλιζεν. *Il.* 4.471-2
 Like wolves they attacked one another, and man flung down man.

The comparison λύκοι ὥς, ‘like wolves’, appears in the context of the verbal action ἀλλήλοις ἐπόρουσαν ‘they attacked one another’, and describes warriors in terms of wild beasts. Like many similatives, this example lacks an aspect of comparison that is clearly marked as such, but here the context of the comparison suggests that the warriors are wolf-like precisely with regard to their action of attacking, and not in a more general, context-independent way.

Like nouns, verbs can, in combination with multi-dimensional adjectives, make explicit the dimension that is relevant for the comparison.

- (12) (...) αἱ γάρ τε βοῶν προφερέστεραί εἰσιν
 ἐλκόμεναι νειοῖο βαθείης πηκτὸν ἄροτρον *Il.* 10. 352-3
 For they are better than oxen at drawing through deep fallow-land
 the well-constructed plough.

The infinitive phrase ἐλκόμεναι νειοῖο βαθείης πηκτὸν ἄροτρον ‘to draw through deep fallow-land the well-constructed plough’ specifies the aspect in which mules are better than oxen.

2.3 Syntactic typology of comparison

For the syntactic analysis of the different expressions of comparison found in my corpus I have adapted the typology put forward by Andersen, and established the following categories:⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Cf. Andersen 1983, 112-13. Ziemer discusses the same range of syntactic constructions with which languages can express comparison, but claims that ancient Greek employs only the ‘most developed’ ones, i.e. case, pre- and post-position, and particle (1884, 6-19). For an overview of the syntactic typology of gradation and comparison in the IE languages, cf. the handbook edited by Keydana/Widmer/Hock 2021.

Juxtaposition	<i>A is big(ger), B is small/B is not (big), A and B, A is big(ger)</i>
Case	<i>A is big(ger) B-from</i>
Adposition	<i>A is big(ger) from/to B</i>
Particle	<i>A is bigger than B</i>
Lexical	<i>A surpasses B in size</i>

Andersen's typology includes only comparisons of inequality, and the above categories are established on the basis of comparatives (and to some extent superlatives). I will first briefly discuss the nature of each category from a typological perspective, and then situate it within ancient Greek, and more specifically in my corpus, Homeric Greek. I will explain what the typical members of each category look like, and discuss possible difficulties with identifying them and with defining the category itself.

2.3.1 Juxtaposition

Comparisons by juxtaposition tend to be short, asyndetic expressions involving nothing more than the four necessary elements of a comparison. This construction type seems to appear only in comparative constructions, and most often in languages that do not have morphological degree marking on adjectives. The standard of comparison is not explicitly marked; instead, the rigid asyndetic syntax that links comparee and standard of comparison conveys the meaning of a comparison. The comparee and the predicate make up one clause, and the standard the other. The standard is further characterised by the antonym 1) or the negation 2) of the predicate; this marks the construction as a comparison of inequality. Andersen gives the following examples of this construction:⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Cf. Andersen 1983, 108-9.

1) Dakota	<i>de šiča, he wašte.</i> this is bad, that good ‘this is worse than that’
2) Mosquito	<i>Jan almuk, Sammuei almuk apia.</i> John old, Sammuel old not ‘John is older than Sammuel’
3) Nyandya	<i>madzi ni cakudia komo cakudia.</i> water and food, good food ‘food is better than water’

In 3) the two entities under comparison, *madzi* ‘water’ and *cakudia* ‘food’ are both introduced together in the first clause, and then *cakudia* ‘food’ is singled out and repeated in connection with the predicate expressing the aspect, *komo* ‘good’, in the second clause. This singling out of one entity and connecting it with the predicate is a means of marking it, i.e. *cakudia* ‘food’, as the comparee, while the standard is to be understood as the entity which is not repeated and not connected to the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison, i.e. *madzi* ‘water’.⁶⁷

Comparatives by juxtaposition do not occur as a standard type in Ancient Greek. Cuzzolin argues for reconstructing expressions of the *ars longa vita brevis* ‘art is long, life is short’ type as Proto-Indo-European comparatives by juxtaposition on the basis of Sanskrit, Baltic, and Slavic evidence, and a few examples in Latin. His discussion, however, appears rather anecdotal and lacks detailed and compelling evidence.⁶⁸

In Hesiod’s *Works and Days* there is an equative comparison of correlating increase that almost resembles the syntactic structure of comparisons by juxtaposition, the one difference being that the use of the particle combination μέν ... δέ makes it not asyndetic:

⁶⁷ Cf. Andersen 1983, 109.

⁶⁸ Cf. Cuzzolin 2006.

- (13) μείζων μὲν φόρτος, μείζον δ' ἐπὶ κέρδει κέρδος Hes. *Erg.* 644
greater freight, greater profit on the profit

The relationship between ‘freight’ and ‘profit’ is not one of strict equality with respect to a specific aspect (size or amount); the example cannot be paraphrased as ‘the freight is as great as the profit.’ Instead, there is a relationship of equality in the correlation between an increase in freight and an increase in profit. This correlation of increasing degrees of size (of freight) and amount (of profit) is triggered by the comparative morphemes on the adjectives μείζων and μείζον ‘greater.’ We thus get the reading ‘the greater the freight, the greater the profit.’⁶⁹

There is an example in the *Iliad* that is a comparison of correlating increase in meaning, ‘the more men the better the work’, but its two parts are not parallel, and like the Hesiodic example above it is not asyndetic:

- (14) (...) πλεόνων δέ τι ἔργον ἄμεινον Il. 12.412
The work of more men is better.

2.3.2 Case

The case construction is cross-linguistically common especially in languages that have degree morphology, and is generally regarded as one of the standard strategies for expressing comparative and superlative comparisons in ancient Greek. The marking of the standard of comparison is done by a particular, fixed, case. The genitive case in comparative constructions is generally thought of as reflecting the Indo-European ablative, which syncretized with the genitive and marks the vantage point of the comparison.⁷⁰ This case is often regarded as a grammaticalized

⁶⁹ Cf. Mazon 1914, 136. West calls this an “explanatory asyndeton” and finds that ἐπὶ κέρδει κέρδος together with μείζον “makes an overloaded phrase” (1978, 318). In my view μείζων ... μείζον act almost like correlative particles, and are both necessary to convey the meaning ‘the greater A is, the greater B will be’.

⁷⁰ Cf. Ziemer 1884, 7-9 and 46-64; Schwab 1893, 23-32; Kühner/Gerth 1898, 20-1; Jensen 1934; Benveniste 1948; Berg 1958; Puhvel 1973; Andersen 1983.

comparative case, while the function of the genitive marking the scope of a superlative construction is generally regarded as a ‘normal’ partitive.⁷¹ Only noun phrases can appear as standards of comparison with the case construction, but they could theoretically be rather complex (i.e. modified by attributes). Example (15) has a comparative, and example (16) a superlative construction.

(15) τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή *Il.* 1.249
From his tongue streamed speech sweeter than honey.

(16) οὐ μὰ Ζῆν’, ὅς τις τε θεῶν ὕπατος καὶ ἄριστος *Il.* 23.43
no, by Zeus, who is of gods the highest and best

There is no morphological suffix in ancient Greek noun declension that is specialised to mark a noun as standard of an equative or similitive comparison; nor is there a morphological marker for equative or similitive on adjectives. Yet, there are expressions that may qualify as examples of the case construction for similitives:

(17) ἄλλ’ Ἔκτωρ πυρὸς αἰνὸν ἔχει μένος *Il.* 17.565
but Hector has the terrible might of fire

We have already seen example (17) in Section 2.2.4. It is a metaphorical way of saying ‘Hector is mighty like fire’; an abstract noun denoting a property concept plus the verb ‘have’ can be used to express an adjectival quality. Instead of overtly marking the standard of comparison by a particle or lexical item like ‘resembling’, a possessive genitive attribute πυρός ‘of fire’ does the job.

Only expressions in which the standard of comparison and its case are not required by the predicate qualify as case constructions. Adjectives or verbs meaning ‘similar/be like/resemble’ always require a dative object. There are no certain instances of a free dative case used to mark the standard of a similitive.⁷²

⁷¹ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 98-100.

⁷² The ‘dative proper’ is the case required by expressions of similarity, except for cases such as: τὰ αὐτὰ Κύρω ὄπλα εἶχον ‘they have the same weapons as Kyros’, in which the dative can be understood as comitative. Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 412-3; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 161.

2.3.3 Adposition

From a purely syntactic point of view, the construction with an adposition, in Greek generally a preposition, is just a variation of the case construction.⁷³ It is not unusual for ancient Greek to use pure case marking and marking by preposition interchangeably, for example in references to time: *τούτου τοῦ χρόνου* and *ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ*. Both expressions mean ‘at that time’, but the noun does not appear in the same case. In *τούτου τοῦ χρόνου* the noun is in the genitive, which has the function of referring to a point in time. The dative in *ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ* is demanded by the preposition *ἐν*.⁷⁴ This is also the case in comparative and superlative constructions. If on its own, the case of the standard of comparison is the genitive. In connection with a preposition, the standard of comparison takes the case demanded by the preposition. In some cases it is not entirely clear whether the preposition is used as an actual preposition, or as a preverb that has been separated from its concomitant verb by tmesis:

- (18) (...) *περὶ δ’ ἄλλων φασὶ γενέσθαι*
Ἀντίλοχον, πέρι μὲν θείειν ταχὺν ἠδὲ μαχητήν. *Od.* 4.201-2

Men say that Antilochus prevailed over the others, superior in running swiftly and as a warrior.

We could either interpret the first *περὶ* ‘over’ as directly modifying the standard of comparison *ἄλλων* ‘the others’, and thus include this example under superlative constructions marked by adposition, or we read it as part of a lexical comparison with *περιγίγνομαι* ‘to prevail over’. The second *πέρι* is used as an adverbial marker for superlative degree: ‘superior, exceeding’.⁷⁵

When an adjective is used to express the aspect of comparison, it normally

⁷³ Small calls the prepositional construction a substitute for the case construction (1924, 34).

⁷⁴ Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 464; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 458.

⁷⁵ Cf. Heubeck/Privitera 1981, 337: “*περὶ* esprime superiorità; [...] è usato in funzione di avverbio: ‘molto, straordinariamente.’” I print *πέρι* with the accent on the first syllable when I refer to its adverbial use; cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 499-500, and 419-36 for tmesis versus actual preposition.

appears with comparative or superlative morphology, as shown in example (19). In combination with the preposition *περί*, however, the adjective appears in the positive, as shown in example (20).⁷⁶

- (19) οὐνεκα δὴ γενεῆφι νεώτατός εἰμι μεθ' ὑμῖν *Il.* 14.112
because by birth I am the youngest among you

- (20) νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' ὠκύμορος καὶ οἰζυρὸς περὶ πάντων
ἔπλεο *Il.* 1.417-8
but now you are bound to meet your doom quickly and miserable
above all

In Homer, standards marked by adposition appear almost exclusively with the superlative, but there are a couple of examples of a similitive construction in which the standard is introduced by *ἅμα* ‘together with’.⁷⁷

- (21) Ξάνθον καὶ Βαλίον, τὼ ἅμα πνοιῆσι πετέσθην *Il.* 16.149
Xanthus and Balius, who flew like the blast of the winds

2.3.4 Particle

The particle construction is used in comparative, equative, and similitive constructions. Marking a comparative construction with a particle is common in Greek and other Indo-European languages, and seems to be used only in combination with explicit degree marking, be it morphological or periphrastic. Herbermann stresses that this fact is important for a typology of comparisons, since particles alone are

⁷⁶ Only the right context and prepositions that carry the notion of superiority (like *περί*) can create a clearly superlative meaning with adjectives in the positive. Compare: *σὸν δ' ἔκτανε πιστὸν ἑταῖρον | ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι Ποδῆν υἱὸν Ἡετίωνος* ‘and he has slain your trusty comrade, a good man among the foremost fighters, Podes, son of Eëtion’ (*Il.* 17, 589-90); here we do not get a meaning ‘the best man among the foremost fighters’. Cf. Latacz/Nünlist/Stoevesandt 2009, 144: “*περὶ πάντων* umschreibt in Verbindung mit dem Prädikatsnomen einen Superlativ”.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908a, 13: “*ἅμα* zugleich mit, um die Wette mit”; Brügger 2016, 76: “*ἅμα πνοιῆσι πετέσθην*: d.h. ‘so schnell wie der Wind’”.

not semantically explicit enough to mark a comparison of inequality.⁷⁸ Andersen claims that comparative particles were originally conjunctions that connected a clause that contained the comparee and a comparative adjective with a clause that contained the standard of comparison and the same adjective in the positive.⁷⁹ Once they have become specialised as comparative particles, clauses as well as noun phrases can be compared by the particle construction.

Especially in the older literature, there is much discussion about the relative age of the particle versus case construction in Indo-European languages. It has long been assumed, but never proven, that the case construction was more archaic, and the particle construction was initially only used when the case construction could not be employed straightforwardly.⁸⁰ If, for instance, in the clause in which the comparison appeared there was already another constituent in the genitive, there would be an ambiguity as to which of the noun phrases in the genitive was the standard of comparison. Similarly, if the standard of comparison was an adverbial expression, the particle construction would be preferred over the case construction:

- (22) ἄνδρες δ' ἄψ ἐγένοντο νεώτεροι ἢ πάρος ἦσαν
καὶ πολὺ καλλίονες καὶ μείζονες εἰσοράσθαι. *Od.* 10.395-6

And they became men again, younger than they were before, and far more beautiful, and taller to behold.

Here the particle ἢ is employed to mark the standard of comparison instead of a definite article in the genitive before the adverbial.⁸¹ My work cannot contribute to

⁷⁸ Cf. Herbermann 1998, 87-118; Andersen 1983, 128.

⁷⁹ Andersen distinguishes between true particles and negation: “Strictly speaking, the so called negative particles like the Classical Sanskrit *na* and Slavic *neže* are not conjunctions, and therefore, represent paratactical constructions of the type: *A is big, B is not (big).*” He proposes the following historical development of the particle comparative in English: *You are taller, then I am tall* (two clauses joined by conjunction, *than* being a variant of *then*) > *You are taller than I* (verb in second clause deleted if it is the same) > *You are taller than me* (particle reinterpreted as preposition) (1983, 127-30). Andersen is not alone in assuming that a longer expression with repeated predicate in the second clause underlies the particle construction, but he does not provide historical evidence for the specific development he describes.

⁸⁰ Cf. Berg 1958; Puhvel 1973. It has also been argued that the particle is older than the case construction: see Small 1924.

⁸¹ Adverbials with an article in the genitive are not found in Homer; the closest construction to

the discussion of the relative age of different construction types, but it can provide an account of how many of the instances of the particle construction could also have been expressed by a case construction.⁸²

The correlative adjectives ὅσ(σ)ος ... τόσ(σ)ος are similar to particles like ὡς or ἤύτε in that they relate two clauses in an equative construction. In addition to their function of marking the standard of comparison (ὅσος) and comparee (τόσος), they also carry the meaning of degree or extent ('as much as', 'as far as'). A typical example is:

- (23) (...) ἐπεὶ οὐ τις Ἀχαιῶν τόσσ' ἐμόγησεν,
 ὅσσ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐμόγησε καὶ ἦρατο *Od.* 4.106-7
- For no man of the Achaeans suffered as much as Odysseus suffered
 and took upon himself.

Syntactically, ὅσος ... τόσος can be used adjectivally and adverbially; with ἐμόγησε 'suffered' being an intransitive verb, τόσσα is used adverbially, while the transitive ἦρατο 'took upon himself' entails a (nominalised) adjectival reading of ὅσσα as 'how many things he took upon himself'. In both cases the aspect that is compared is the degree or intensity of Odysseus' toil.

We find examples of equative constructions that include both particles, but also some that show only one, either ὅσος marking the standard of comparison, or τόσος marking the comparee. Apart from marking equatives, ὅσος is frequently used as a generalising relative pronoun and indirect interrogative pronoun.⁸³

an adverb marked by case is ἐνθάδε γ' ἔτραφ' ἄριστος 'reared as the best one here' (*Il.* 21.279), a superlative construction with the adverb ἐνθάδε 'here' as the standard, but not marked as such in any way (Cf. a parallel in the *Odyssey*: 2.51).

⁸² Cf. Chapter 3.3. Ziemer rightly concludes that in Homer the case construction is more frequent than the particle construction (1884, 180-2). Cf. Berg 1958.

⁸³ A comparison relates two linguistic representations of objects or concepts that do not refer to one and the same item, but to two different, individual objects or concepts that are similar. The antecedent of a relative clause is a linguistic representation of the same object or concept to which the relative pronoun refers. A semantic study of the development of ὅσος/ὅσοι 'how much/many' to 'however much/many' and eventually to 'whoever' has as far as I know not been conducted.

- (24) ὄσσαι γὰρ ῥαθάμιγγες ἀπέσσυθεν αἱματόεσσαι,
πάσας δέξατο Γαῖα Hes. *Theog.* 183-4

For however many bloody drops gushed forth, Earth received them all.

The particles ὡς (εἰ), ὥστε, ἤύτε, φή and οἷος ... τοῖος are used to relate two noun phrases or clauses in a similitive construction.

- (25) ἀλλὰ καταπτώσσουσι κύνες ὡς ἀμφὶ λέοντα Il. 5.476

but they crouch like dogs around a lion

The aspect of comparison lies in the interpretation of the action described by the verb, καταπτώσσουσι ‘they crouch’, together with the standard of comparison, κύνες ὡς ‘like dogs’, and the prepositional phrase modifying it, ἀμφὶ λέοντα ‘around a lion’.

2.3.5 Lexical

Comparatives, superlatives, and similitives can be expressed by lexical means. In Homeric Greek the lexical item marking the comparison tends to be a verb in comparative and superlative constructions, while in similitives, verbs and adjectives are found equally often. The standard of comparison occurs in the case demanded by the verb or adjective. If the aspect is expressed in comparative and superlative constructions marked by lexical means (examples (26) and (27) respectively), it takes the shape of a noun in the dative or accusative.

- (26) (...) ἐγὼ δέ κε σεῖο νοήματί γε προβалоίμην Il. 19.218

but I would surpass you in wit

- (27) Ἀντίλοχος· ὁ γὰρ αὔτε νέους ποσὶ πάντας ἐνίκα Il. 23.756

Antilochus; for he surpassed all the young men with (regard to the swiftness of) his feet

In similitive comparisons the case of the standard is always the dative, and may be called a dative of comparison similar to, though not as free as, the genitive (or ablative) of comparison that occurs with comparative adjectives.⁸⁴ The aspect of comparison can be expressed by a predicative adjective modifying the comparee, by a full verb, or most explicitly by a noun in the accusative of relation, as in the following example by αὐδῆν ‘with regard to his voice’.⁸⁵

- (28) (...) Ταλθύβιος δὲ θεῶ̃ ἐναλίγκιος αὐδῆν Il. 19.250
and Talthybius, resembling a god with regard to his voice

Especially similitive constructions marked by lexical means often occur without an explicit aspect of comparison.⁸⁶ In most cases it can easily be supplied by the context, or is meant to convey an overall impression, as in Odysseus’ description of the Laestrygonians:

- (29) (...) οὐκ ἄνδρεσσιν εἰκότες, ἀλλὰ Γίγασιν. Od. 10.120
not similar to men, but to Giants

2.3.6 Compounds

A number of Homeric compounds express similitive comparisons. Broadly speaking, these compounds can be divided into two types. One combines the standard of comparison, which is typically a noun, with an adjective meaning ‘similar/like’:

- (30) (...) Δηΐφοβος θεοεΐκελος Od. 4.276
god-like Deiphobus

Here, the aspect of comparison is most often left implicit, and these compounds

⁸⁴ Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 412-3; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 161.

⁸⁵ Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 315-18; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 84-6.

⁸⁶ Zeilfelder (forthcoming) comes to the same conclusion. She speaks of “bloße Äquivalentsetzung” and “konstatierende Gleichsetzung von zwei Sachverhalten” (136) for verbal expressions ‘be similar to/resemble’, and of “reine Gleichsetzung zweier Entitäten ohne nähere Bestimmung der Vergleichsqualität” and “impliziten Vergleichsoperationen” (160) for adjectival expressions ‘similar to/resembling’ and for compound adjectives.

appear frequently in epithets. An example of the same structure and meaning is *θεοειδής*; we also find a combination of a preposition or adjective meaning ‘equal’ with a noun: *ἀντίθεος*, *ισόθεος*, also meaning ‘god-like’. Of a different internal syntax are examples like the noun *ὁμηλική* ‘sameness of age’ or the adjective *ἀντάξιος* ‘worth as much as’. There the second element does not denote the standard of comparison, but the aspect.

The other type of compound can be called metaphorical or possessive, i.e. of the bahuvrihi type.⁸⁷ Such compound adjectives consist of two nouns, or a noun plus adjective, of which one expresses the aspect of comparison, and the other the standard of comparison: *θυμολέων* ‘lion-hearted’. They do not include an element meaning ‘like’, but have a similar internal syntax to examples of similitive constructions with the standard marked by a structure involving a noun and a possessive genitive.⁸⁸

2.4 Cognitive aspects of comparison

Two kinds of cognitive processes underlie the expression of a comparison: one concerns the linguistic encoding of the mental process of comparing, and the other concerns the function of a comparison as conceptualizing one entity in terms of another. The former cognitive process shows that how we conceive of the mental activity of taking two entities, comparing them to one another, and drawing a conclusion about their relationship is, to some extent, reflected in the linguistic expression of that comparison. The latter cognitive operation concerns mostly comparisons of similarity, but is also relevant for comparatives and superlatives. It concerns the relationship between the types of entities that appear as comparee and standard. They can be of the same category or class, for example when one

⁸⁷ Cf. Tribulato 2015, 84.

⁸⁸ Cf. examples (6) and (7).

man is compared to another man, or they can be of different classes, for example when a man is compared to an animal. The ‘conceptual gap’, i.e. the degree to which comparee and standard belong to different categories, can be smaller or greater, thereby resulting in a different effect of the comparison.

2.4.1 Conceptual source structures

Several features of the linguistic expression of a comparison suggest that it is a complex and secondary category. Comparisons are complex because they require at least four formal elements (comparee, standard of comparison, aspect of comparison, marker of standard), while a basic (transitive) proposition only requires three (subject, object, predicate). Comparisons are a secondary category because the crucial element that designates a linguistic expression as a comparison, the marker of standard (whether in the form of case inflection, an adposition, or a particle), tends to be derived from other, more basic and concrete concepts. Heine calls them conceptual source structures, or event schemas, and identifies the following main types:⁸⁹

Action	<i>A is big surpasses B</i>	comparison by lexical means
Location	<i>A is big at B</i>	stative locative function (adposition)
Source	<i>A is big from B</i>	ablative function (genitive case/adposition)
Goal	<i>A is big to B</i>	directional function (dative case/adposition)
Polarity	<i>A is big, B is not big</i>	antithetic juxtaposition
Sequence	<i>A is big, then B</i>	temporal relation (cf. Engl. ‘than’ < ‘then’)
Similarity	<i>A is big like B</i>	equative (template for comparative) ⁹⁰
Topic	<i>A and B, A is big</i>	two items co-represented, one predicated

Heine’s work is based on Stassen’s 1985 study, which sets out to identify the cognitive concepts that determine how the standard of comparison is marked in

⁸⁹ Cf. Heine 1997, 111-120; Zeilfelder (forthcoming), 1.

a corpus of 110 languages.⁹¹ In his discussion of the cases that are employed to mark the standard of comparison in comparative constructions, Stassen argues that spatial expressions serve as structural templates for more complex concepts, such as temporal expressions or comparatives, because spatial organisation is central to human cognition. On the cognitive level, the aspect of comparison is an axis with a negative and a positive pole, and the two objects compared are localised on this axis. The standard of comparison is closer to the negative pole, and the comparee is closer to the positive pole.⁹² The case of the standard of comparison reflects that the relationship between standard and comparee is conceptualised as either separative (*A is big from B*), allative (*A is big to B*), or locative (*A is big at B*).⁹³ Different reviewers have pointed out that Stassen's study and its results are not unproblematic because there appear to be a number of crucial mistakes and inaccuracies in the data, and hence also in their analysis.⁹⁴ This means that both Stassen and Heine's results may not be entirely reliable in terms of their implications for typological generalisations, but they nevertheless provide a point of departure for the study of comparative constructions in a particular language.

⁹¹ Stassen distinguishes between whether the case of the standard of comparison is identical to the case of the comparee, or different. In the particle construction the cases are identical: *Brutum ego non minus amo quam Caesarem* 'I love **Brutus** (acc.) no less than (I love) **Caesar** (acc.)' > accusative marks both nouns as direct objects of verb *amo* 'I love'. In the case construction the standard of comparison is marked by a fixed comparative case, which is different from that of the comparee: *Brutum ego non minus amo Caesare* 'I love **Brutus** (acc.) no less than **Caesar** (abl.)' > accusative marking the direct object of the verb, ablative is the fixed comparative case in Latin. In a verbal construction *A surpasses B*, the standard *B* takes the case of the direct object of the transitive verb *surpass* (1985, 13 and 42-44); examples from Stassen 2006, 687.

⁹² This is because the comparee has a higher degree of the aspect of comparison than the standard of comparison. Stassen claims that the concept of comitative and possessive is based on location, agentive and instrumental on separation, and indirect object/benefactive on direction (allative function) (1985, 36-37, 262-64). For space and spatial organisation as the basis for more complex concepts cf. the literature on conceptual metaphor theory: Lakoff/Johnson 2003; Kövecses 2010. The idea that spatial organisation is the underlying principle for the expression of a comparison is present already in Ziemer 1884.

⁹³ For examples of each type cf. Stassen 1985, 39-47.

⁹⁴ This is due to the problem that typologists have to rely on more or less well written grammars, especially in the case of less well-studied languages. Cf. Andersen 1987; Steele 1987; Kaye/Müller-Gotama 1988; Herbermann 1998, 118.

Stassen and Heine treat the particle construction as a separate category because this type is often grammaticalised to such an extent that the underlying conceptual event schema is not readily reconstructable. The cases for which a reconstruction is possible tend to employ the sequence (Engl. *than*) or similarity (Lat. *quam*) schema. The Greek disjunctive conjunction ἢ, which underlies the particle for comparative constructions, may be connected to the polarity schema if we take it to mark the entity to which a property does not apply in contrast with the one to which it does apply (to a higher degree).⁹⁵ We may even tentatively identify the dominant event schemas associated with the three types of comparison in ancient Greek: the source (separative) schema with comparatives, location with superlatives, and similarity/goal with equatives and similatives.

The centrality of spatial organisation as underlying linguistic expressions of complex concepts is reflected in the basic functions of the cases employed to mark the standard of comparison. Schwyzer explains the function of the ancient Greek genitive in comparative constructions as connected to the separative function stemming from the PIE ablative, which syncretized with the genitive. It expresses the point of view of the entity from which the comparison is made, “σέο von dir aus, im Vergleich mit dir”.⁹⁶ He also mentions a general distinction between comparatives and superlatives with the genitive: σοφώτερος πάντων ‘klüger als alle zusammen’, and σοφώτατος πάντων ‘der/am klügste(n) unter allen’. The genitives are formally equivalent, but the genitive with the superlative is a partitive genitive, and the one with the comparative has a specialized function as *genitivus comparationis*.⁹⁷ If the assumed connection between this special comparative genitive and the PIE

⁹⁵ Breivik argues that particle comparatives are the most complex way of expressing comparison; they are derived from rather convoluted, loose paratactic expressions of the type *there is an extent e such that Jim is tall to e and Joe is not tall to e*, which became grammaticalised to tighter structures of the type *Jim is taller than Joe* (1994, 51-7 and 66-7).

⁹⁶ Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 98; cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 391-3.

⁹⁷ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 100.

ablative is correct, the comparative is based on a separative source schema, while the superlative is based on the locative one: the partitive genitive reflects that the comparee is located within the standard of comparison, as a part of it, while the separative origin of the comparative genitive reflects that the comparee is outside of, distant from the standard of comparison. As for equatives, besides the similarity schema, they may also be associated with the allative schema because in equatives marked by lexical means, the dative that these lexemes demand for the standard of comparison is semantically close to the ‘original’ dative function of goal or purpose.⁹⁸ An allative sense is also present in causative expressions ‘to make oneself/someone like’ that are found in descriptions of characters in disguise:

- (31) εἰσαμένη Φοῖνικι δέμας καὶ ἀτειρέα φωνήν Il. 17.555
likening herself to Phoenix, in stature and unyielding voice

Most languages can employ different event schemas, but are likely to have one dominant schema for each type of comparison.

2.4.2 The relationship between comparee and standard

Comparisons are made on the basis of two conceptual models: measurements and conceptualizations. The first type measures the extent to which, or manner in which, a quality is present in comparee and standard of comparison. In such a comparison, the comparee and the standard of comparison belong to the same class of entities: a man is compared to a man, or an animal to an animal. In these cases, the relationship between comparee and standard is straightforward, and the comparison is centered around the fact that the quality denoted by the aspect of comparison is present in them to equal or differing degrees. When in the Homeric epics such comparisons are made about human characters, they refer to the relationship between individuals and to their status among different groups

⁹⁸ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 139-53 and 161.

(the tribe, the army, human kind...). In example (32) Nireus is ranked second-most beautiful among the Danaans, falling short only of Achilles, who by implication is the most beautiful.

- (32) Νιρέυς, ὃς κάλλιστος ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε
τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα *Il.* 2.673-4
Nireus, who came to Troy as the most beautiful man of the Danaans
after the blameless son of Peleus

Example (33) also concerns beauty as the aspect of comparison, but here a human girl is compared to goddesses. Nausicaa's beauty is not measured against, but conceptualized in terms of the beauty of immortal goddesses. The relationship between comparee and standard of comparison is not straightforward, but figurative. The comparison concerns entities from different classes, and is not about the direct relationship between them, but rather about the characterization of a human person as beyond human.

- (33) βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἐς θάλαμον πολυδαίδαλον, ᾧ ἔνι κούρη
κοιμᾶτ' ἀθανάτησι φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη,
Ναυσικάα, θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο *Od.* 6.15-7
[Athene] went into the well-built bedroom in which a girl slept,
like the immortal goddesses she was in physique and appearance,
Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous.

Thinking about the conceptual relationship between comparee and standard of comparison has not been a topic in scholarship on comparisons, but it is an important aspect of metaphor theory.⁹⁹ Comparisons that conceptualize rather than measure are to some extent like explicit, and more elaborate, metaphors. Their function in language, especially in the poetic language that is the topic of this study, is different from that of comparisons that measure, and will be discussed in Chapter 6. The boundaries between these two modes of comparison are, of course,

⁹⁹ Cf. Lakoff/Johnson 2003; Kövecses 2010. For the notion of 'conceptual blending' as a mechanism of thought and language that connects elements from different domains to create new meaning cf. Fauconnier/Turner 2002.

fluent, and in many instances elements of both are at play. In example (32), for instance, Nireus, a lesser hero, is not just compared to any other human character in the epic, but to the supreme hero Achilles, and this has an effect on the portrayal of his persona.

2.5 Distinguishing comparison types

A first obvious distinction between the four comparison types discussed here is that comparatives and superlatives express an inequality between two entities, while equatives and similatives express a similarity between two entities. The distinction of inequality vs. similarity in expressions of comparison is reflected in morphology and syntax: cross-linguistically, comparatives and superlatives often display formally similar or identical marking of degree and/or standard; the superlative is often derived from the comparative (but never vice-versa). Suppletive gradation paradigms often have the same base for comparative and superlative forms, but a different base for the positive, cf. *good – better – best*. The standards of comparatives and superlatives tend to be marked with contrastive, adversative, or separative features (disjunctive particle $\dot{\eta}$, ablative, partitive genitive, negative), while those of equatives and similatives tend to be marked by associative features (dative, relative).¹⁰⁰

From another angle, comparatives, superlatives, and equatives form a group in that they express comparisons of degree, focussing on the quantity or extent of the aspect of comparison, while similatives express comparisons of manner, and thus focus on the quality of the aspect.¹⁰¹ As we have already seen, the most typical degree comparisons are formed with uni-dimensional adjectives, abstract nouns, or experience verbs, but absolute adjectives and concrete nouns can likewise feature

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ultan 1972.

¹⁰¹ See Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998, 313.

in degree comparisons. Similatives express their aspect of comparison by any noun, verb, or multi-dimensional adjective.

This distribution reflects that a difference or equality in degree is most basically and precisely expressed with regard to one specific dimension. A degree scale can thus be mapped, one to one, onto the dimension of the adjective: a uni-dimensional adjective like *tall* is naturally associated with a scale running from a low to a high degree of height. As discussed above, when more dimensions come into play, grading cannot happen by a direct mapping of one particular degree scale to one dimension denoted by the adjective. A multi-dimensional adjective is not graded with regard to one specific dimension, but with regard to the ensemble of dimensions associated with the adjective (or noun or verb) in question.

Similatives express comparisons in manner, and cannot involve uni-dimensional adjectives on their own in their basic meaning. *Peter is tall like his brother* is either reinterpreted as an equative *Peter is as tall as his brother*, or, if pronounced with a pause after *tall*, does not tell us anything about Peter's height in comparison with that of his brother, but merely states: *Peter is tall, and so is his brother*. Height can only be compared in terms of degree; one cannot be tall in different manners — except in certain contexts in combination with a verbal action or a story: *Peter stands tall among the people like a mighty oak among apple trees*. The point is that here the comparison between Peter and the oak tree is not in terms of height, but in terms of the manner in which Peter stands out among people, about the way in which he exceeds them in height. Typically, degree comparisons are about measuring the extents of a quality present in two well-known and straightforwardly comparable objects, while similatives are about describing one thing in terms of another, categorically different, thing; they are metaphors made explicit. Degree comparisons tend to involve one specific aspect of comparison, while in similatives the aspect can be rather broad and complex. But as we will see in the analysis of comparative and simulative/equative constructions in Homer, a comparison that

formally belongs to the degree type can express a conceptualization instead of, or in addition to, a measurement, and vice-versa.

We have already seen that we can distinguish equatives and similatives by the presence or absence of a degree; both comparisons of inequality involve degrees, which means that there must be another feature that distinguishes those two from one another. The superlative, Andersen claims, differs from the comparative in that it involves more than two entities, while the comparative involves only two entities.¹⁰² However, Andersen fails to address other important differences between comparatives and superlatives. Similarly oversimplified is Heine's claim that superlatives are "built on the model of the comparative" and resemble it. They, he argues, are based on the same conceptual sources, but the individual standard of comparison is replaced by an entire class of possible individuals. Further differences are that the goal and polarity schema are less often used with the superlative, and that the genitive is more common with superlative constructions than with comparatives.¹⁰³ Zeilfelder has a more nuanced idea about the distinction between comparatives and superlatives:

Der prinzipielle Unterschied besteht vielmehr darin, daß der Superlativ das Komparandum auf einen Extremwert fixiert. Die Vergleichsgruppe enthält oder impliziert demnach stets einen Allquantor, und sie schließt das Komparandum mit ein: Beim Superlativ *Peter ist der älteste meiner Brüder* gehört Peter zur Gruppe der Brüder, beim Komparativ *Peter ist älter als meine Brüder* aber nicht.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Cf. Andersen 1983, 100, and endnote 2, p. 138. The examples he gives are *John outran his friends* for the superlative, and *John outran his friend* for the comparative.

¹⁰³ Cf. Heine 1997, 124-6.

¹⁰⁴ Zeilfelder 2003, 268. For a similar definition of the superlative cf. Jespersen 1924, 245; Bierwisch 1988, 115. A seed of this idea is present in Ultan 1972, when he says that in comparative constructions, "the item compared is superior or inferior to the standard where the latter does not include all members of the class to which the former belongs." (123). He further argues that even a comparative *he is bigger than all the others* is not the same as the superlative *he is biggest of all*. The former is the sum of individual comparatives *he is bigger than A, he is bigger than B, he is bigger than C...*, while in the latter "the actual comparison is a simultaneous one between he and all the members of the standard class" of which the comparee is a member (123-4).

This is a crucial observation for our understanding of not only the difference between comparatives and superlatives, but also between the scalar and the polar use of comparatives and superlatives. Since in superlative constructions the entities that make up the comparison (comparee and standard of comparison) are members of the same set, it makes sense that a superlative comparison disprefers syntactic construction types in which the comparee and standard of comparison are in separate clauses (i.e. juxtaposition and particle construction). In the same vein, it is intuitive that the functions of the Greek genitive for comparatives and superlatives differ in such a way that comparatives take a genitive with a specialized function, while superlatives take the ‘normal’ partitive genitive. The nature and function of the standard of superlative constructions can better be captured by the term ‘scope’: superlative constructions do not actually express a measurement of comparee against standard. They express that with reference to a comparison group, which often contains a universal quantifier, the comparee displays a quality to the highest degree.

The superlative entails a comparative since any superlative expression *A is the tallest of all B* can also be expressed by a comparative *A is taller than all B*, but not vice-versa. A comparative *A is taller than B* cannot also be expressed by a superlative **A is the tallest of B* if B is a single entity or a set of which A is not a member.¹⁰⁵ Because of this, comparatives and superlatives marked by lexical means might employ the same verb, which in a comparative construction would have the nuance ‘prevail over’ and in a superlative construction ‘be distinguished among’. For the purpose of my syntactic categorization of expressions of comparison, those lexical constructions in which the standard of comparison is an individual or a group that does not include the comparee count as comparative constructions (ἐγὼ δὲ κε σεῖο νοήματι γε προβαλοίμην ‘in counsel I would surpass you by far’ *Il.*

¹⁰⁵ The superlative can be used to express a comparative relation: *of Peter and Paul, Peter is tallest.* Cf. Ultan 1972, 124.

19.218), while those in which we find a scope rather than a standard, that is a set of which the comparee is a member, count as superlative constructions (πᾶσιν δὲ μετέπρεπεν ἡρώεσσιν ‘he was pre-eminent among all the warriors’ *Il.* 2.579).

Superlative adjectives tend to be definite, comparative adjectives are normally not. The superlative appears in attributive and in predicative position; in the former case either as an adjective modifying a noun, as in *my oldest brother*, or as a substantivized definite adjective, as in *the oldest (one) of my brothers*. Superlatives tend to have a definite article even in predicative position, and do the job of nouns: they identify or individualize the referent rather than ascribe a property to him:¹⁰⁶ *Peter is the oldest of my brothers* (cf. οὐ μὲν μοι δοκέεις ὁ κάκιστος Ἀχαιῶν | ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ’ ὄριστος ‘to me you do not seem to be the worst of the Achaeans, but the best’ *Od.* 17.415-6). A scalar comparative is never definite (*Peter is taller than Paul*, and not **Peter is the taller than Paul*), and tends to appear in predicative position, not in attributive position.¹⁰⁷ Polar or contrastive comparatives can appear in attributive position, and when they do, they tend to identify rather than assign a property to the referent. *My older brother* identifies a particular one of the speaker’s brothers, rather than ascribe the property of ‘having more age’ to him, while *my brother is older* ascribes exactly that property. A predicative construction reflects the assignment of a property by the copula, while the attributive construction shows the result of this assignment, as Kühner points out: “In dem prädikativen Verhältnisse erscheint der Akt des Denkens (*cogitatio*) – die Zusammenfassung beider Begriffe zu einer Einheit – als geschehend, in dem

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 22-3.

¹⁰⁷ For superlatives and definiteness cf. Ultan 1972. Whether adjectives can appear in only modifier or predicate position, or in both, is also dependent on the type of adjective. Every language seems to have some restrictions in this regard. Cf. Baker 2003, 190-211; Bolinger 1967; Ferris 1993; Vogel 1996; Blackwell 2000. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner about the usage and meaning of comparative and superlative adjectives in Greek: “In der graduierenden Verwendung überwiegt wohl der prädikative Gebrauch.” And in a footnote: “Dies scheint für die meisten Sprachen weder beobachtet noch untersucht zu sein; nur für den irischen Komparativ ist dessen ausschließlich prädikativer Gebrauch festgestellt” (1988, 183).

attributiven dagegen als schon geschehen, als ein Produkt dieses Aktes.”¹⁰⁸ This situation is motivated by the fact that attributive constructions have no means of expressing tense or aspect between head noun and attribute, while predicative ones do through the copula.

2.5.1 Comparative constructions

Comparing the scalar use with the polar use of comparative adjectives gives us insight into the semantics of comparative constructions:

Scalar	<i>Peter is older than my brothers</i>	> Peter is not one of my brothers
Polar	<i>Peter is my older brother</i>	> Peter is one of my brothers

In scalar comparative constructions the entities relevant for comparison (comparee and standard of comparison) are not both members of the same set. The separative genitive, with which the standard of a comparative comparison is marked, reflects this sense of distance between the comparee and standard of comparison. In polar comparative constructions, however, the entities relevant for comparison are members of the same set. Note that the adjective in the scalar use is indefinite, while in the polar use the adjective is definite. The polar comparative appears to be closer to a scalar superlative than to a scalar comparative, since it shares two important features with scalar superlatives: its comparee and standard of comparison are members of the same set, and it is definite. The Greek comparative suffix **-tero-* is generally thought to have started as a contrastive suffix, demarcating the objects it attached to (not only adjectives, but also nouns and pronouns) from other members within a set. Thus originally, βασιλεύτερος did not mean ‘more king’ but ‘belonging to the king-type’.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Kühner/Gerth 1898, 261.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Kühner/Blass 1890, 564; Schwyzer 1939, 533-6; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 183-4; Zeilfelder 2003.

2.5.2 Superlative constructions

Likewise, comparing the scalar use with the polar use of superlative adjectives gives us insight into the semantics of superlative constructions:

Scalar	<i>Peter is the most entertaining one of my brothers</i>
Polar	<i>Peter is a most entertaining guy</i>

In scalar superlative constructions the entities relevant for comparison (comparee and scope) are members of the same set, while in polar superlative (relative) constructions the only entity relevant for comparison is the comparee. Scalar superlatives express that the comparee possesses a quality to the highest degree among a group, while polar superlatives express that the comparee possesses a quality to a (very) high degree in comparison with a normative standard. Note the definite article with the adjective in the scalar use, and the indefinite article in the polar use (although this is not a hard-and-fast rule).¹¹⁰ Since in superlative constructions the comparee and the scope refer to members of the same set, superlative constructions can get away with leaving out the comparee or scope in certain cases without becoming polar comparisons.

- (34) (...) οἱ μέγ' ἄριστοι
 κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ *Od.* 23.121-2
 who are the very best of the young men in Ithaca

In this example the scope, κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ ‘the young men in Ithaca’, refers to a specific set, and the superlative οἱ μέγ' ἄριστοι ‘the very best’ makes it clear that the comparee is a member of this set. There is no need to make this explicit by saying ‘the very best young men in Ithaca of all the young men in Ithaca.’ On the other hand there are also several examples in which the scope appears to have been left out:

¹¹⁰ Cf. Ultan 1972, 125.

- (35) (...) πέμπων δὲ θεῶν ἱερῆας ἀρίστους Il. 9.575
 They sent the best priests of the gods.

At a closer look it seems that the scope has not actually been left out entirely, but rather that what could be the scope (and should thus be in the partitive genitive) appears as the comparee, congruent with the predicate. The expression ‘the best priests of the gods’ appears to be synonymous with ‘the best of the priests of the gods’, and avoids a double genitive construction. We find a very similar expression in a parallel context used with a ‘proper’ scope in the genitive:

- (36) Πριαμίδης Ἑλενος οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ’ ἄριστος Il. 6.76
 the son of Priam, Helenus, of augurs by far the best

The superlative adjective could be seen as alternating between acting as an adjective attribute in agreement with a noun (ἱερῆας ἀρίστους) and acting as a nominalized adjective with a genitive attribute (οἰωνοπόλων ἄριστος).¹¹¹ But it could also be that in the example θεῶν ἱερῆας ἀρίστους we are not actually dealing with an attributive adjective, but with a nominalized adjective which is coordinated with a noun acting as both comparee and scope at the same time: ‘the priests of the gods, namely the best ones (of them)’.

The question may arise whether examples like *Peter is a most entertaining guy* should then also count as scalar comparisons. The answer must be negative, because *guys* is not a well-defined set, and the adjective is construed with an indefinite article. Without a context specifying a certain group of guys, *Peter is a most entertaining guy* is not meant to give information about an aspect by which Peter is distinguished within a certain group, but it is meant to state, in a polar sense, that Peter is entertaining to a high degree. Only those cases that are definite constructions and have a congruent noun that describes a well-defined set may count as abbreviated scalar superlative constructions.

¹¹¹ Cf. Zeilfelder 2003, 268-9.

In example (37) we do not hear about a number of individuals who are the best among Nestor's sons; instead, all of Nestor's sons together form the comparee, and they are compared, if at all, to a normative standard. The superlative must therefore be understood as polar: it refers to men in general (to the set of all men in the world), and not to a well-defined set.

- (37) ὡς νῦν Νέστορι δῶκε διαμπερὲς ἦματα πάντα
αὐτὸν μὲν λιπαρῶς γηρασκέμεν ἐν μεγάροισιν,
υἰέας αὖ πινυτούς τε καὶ ἔγχεσιν εἶναι ἀρίστους *Od.* 4.209-11

as now [Zeus] has granted to Nestor forever in all his days that he would himself grow old comfortably in his halls, and that his sons, in turn, would be prudent and the best with the spear

Example (38) shows that the scope of a superlative construction can be metonymical: ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους 'among men' must be understood as 'among the counsels that men have' for the comparison to make sense.

- (38) (...) σὴν γὰρ ἀρίστην
μῆτιν ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους φάσ' ἔμμεναι *Od.* 23.124-5

For your counsel is the best among men, they say.

If in a superlative construction the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison is not morphologically marked for superlative, a preposition that carries the notion of superiority can act as a superlative marker. δώδεκα δὲ Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἰέας ἐσθλοῦς (*Il.* 23.175) must just mean 'twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans', but with the preposition περί 'above', as in ἰητρὸς δὲ ἕκαστος ἐπιστάμενος περὶ πάντων | ἀνθρώπων (*Od.* 4.231-2), there is a sense of superlativity: 'each man is a physician, knowledgeable above all men'. Puhvel stresses that, in ancient Indo-European languages, positive adjectives in superlative constructions appear in older, almost fossilized, forms of the language. They resemble superlative constructions found in Hittite and Tocharian, two Indo-European languages that are thought to have branched off from the rest of the Indo-European family at an early

stage and show no trace of comparative or superlative morphology.¹¹²

2.5.3 Similitive and equative constructions

While similitives express a conceptualization of one entity in terms of another, equatives express an equality between two entities as a result of measuring one against the other in terms of the degree to which they possess a shared quality. How precise the equality in degree is from a strictly truth conditional-angle may be debatable for many examples, and this can be made explicit by pragmatic hedges such as *almost*, *roughly*, *at least*.¹¹³ My definition of equatives follows Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998, and is narrower than that of Thurmair 2001, who uses the term ‘Äquativvergleich’ as an umbrella term for all comparisons of similarity; what I refer to as equatives corresponds to one subcategory of Thurmair’s ‘Äquativvergleiche’, namely that of ‘Gradvergleiche’ (comparisons of degree).¹¹⁴

The distinction between degree and manner comparisons has not attracted much scholarly interest in Linguistics, and a reason for this may be that not every language reflects this distinction in a systematic way. A starting point is Haspelmath/Buchholz’ 1998 article, in which they point out precisely this distinction, and argue that equative constructions are similar to, in many languages even based on, (cor-)relative clauses, e.g. the ὅσος ... τόσος type in Greek.¹¹⁵ ὅσος ... τόσος convey a sense of degree and relate two entities to one another, which makes them a perfect set of correlative adjectives for the marking of equative constructions. What we find in Homeric Greek, however, is that many ὅσος ... τόσος constructions express the kind of comparison that conceptualizes rather than measures in

¹¹² Cf. Puhvel 1973, 146-9.

¹¹³ Cf. Bergmans 1985; Ultan 1972; Sovran 1992; Herbermann 1998.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Thurmair 2001, 3; Zeilfelder (forthcoming), 41-63.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998, 287-93. More recent works have adopted the distinction between equative and similitive. Cf. Jäger 2018 and the forthcoming Mouton Handbook of Indo-European Typology on gradation and comparison.

a strict sense. In example (39) Odysseus' men encounter the Laestrygonian queen, and she is compared to a mountain peak. The main point of this comparison is not to actually measure her height against that of a mountain, but to conceptualize her horrid, monstrous, appearance.¹¹⁶

(39) οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ εἰσῆλθον κλυτὰ δώματα, τὴν δὲ γυναῖκα
εἶρον ὄσσην τ' ὄρεος κορυφήν, κατὰ δ' ἔστυγον αὐτήν. *Od.* 10.112-3

And when they had gone into the noble house, they found the woman, as large as a mountain peak, and they were appalled by her.

The linguistic representation of comparisons of similarity in ancient Greek shows no systematic distinction between equatives and similatives. Whether or not a given example is similative or equative is a matter of interpretation, and therefore I will treat both types in the same chapter. By doing so, I can avoid giving the impression that the distinction between them is more clear-cut than the evidence allows. Despite the lack of a clear formal distinction, asking whether a given comparison is one of degree or manner (or a combination of both) provides a useful framework for understanding the rhetorical and narrative function of comparisons.

Just as with equative comparisons, there is an uncertainty about precisely how closely similar the two entities in a similative expression are. Similatives express similarities in manner or quality of all kinds, and how explicit or implicit the aspect of comparison is can vary widely. Semantically, similatives are hard to conceptualize and define; as Sovran puts it, they have a *semi-contradictory* nature:

Similarity relations demand that the compared objects be one and the same (in some sense), but at the same time many and different. The delicate and versatile equilibrium between these contradicting elements accounts for the variety of similarity relations and contexts. Language is richer and more flexible (hence less clear and unambiguous) than logic, and it is not to be blamed for this.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Cf. De Jong 2001, 236 on the comparison of Polyphemus to a mountain at *Od.* 9.190-2.

¹¹⁷ Sovran 1992, 336.

What are the subtypes of similitive comparisons? Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998 divide comparisons of similarity into similitives and equatives, and in addition discuss accord clauses (*as we all know, her brother is an idiot*) and role clauses (*I am telling you this as your mother*) as related to similitives. Their example of an accord clause seems to be a metalinguistic statement on the truth condition of the utterance rather than an actual comparison. Role clauses are not comparisons since the point of them is that the sentence constituents that would syntactically be comparee and standard of comparison, *I* and *mother* in the example given, have the same real-world referent; they are two linguistic references to the same person. This misses the point of a comparison, which is to relate one object or entity to another, different, object in terms of a shared aspect or quality. As already touched upon in the above section on similitive and equative constructions, Thurmaier distinguishes the following subtypes of comparisons of similarity (‘Äquativvergleiche’ in her terminology):

(a) comparison of degree		<i>as big as</i>
(b) comparison of type		<i>people like you</i>
(c) comparison of modality		<i>walk like an Egyptian</i>
(d) comparison of factuality		<i>he works, like they all do, at the pub</i>

I have already identified (a) with equatives in my terminology; (c) refers to typical similitive comparisons. (b) can be paraphrased as *people who behave/are like you*. This is making a point about a certain group of people, and one can wonder whether, strictly speaking, this is a comparison at all. The interpretation of this kind of statement is highly context-dependent. In some contexts, and with a different intonation, it may be more truthfully paraphrased as *people, like you (for example)*; instead of a standard of a comparison, *like* here introduces an example. If expressions of this kind appear in my corpus, they will only be included in this study if they express a comparison, not if they introduce an example. The example in (d) does not describe or conceptualize the comparee *he* in terms of

the aspect *working at the pub* and in relation to the standard *they all*; it states that *he works at the pub, and they all also work at the pub*. Similitive expressions with uni-dimensional adjectives (cf. *Peter is tall, like his brothers* discussed above) also belong to this type, and do not express proper comparisons either. The array of sentence or clause types that are discussed by Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998 and Thurmair 2001 as comparisons of similarity show that the field is lacking a cohesive definition of the category. It appears as though almost anything counts as a comparison as long as it involves lexical items or structures reminiscent of comparisons. Similitive comparisons, as I define them here, have the function of giving information about a comparee in relation to a standard with regard to a more or less explicit aspect. Some expressions that do not achieve this may still be associated with comparisons to some degree, but I do not regard them as real comparisons.

2.6 Incomplete comparisons

This section deals with incomplete comparisons and explores the extent to which a missing standard or aspect of comparison can be supplied on the basis of contextual information, real-world knowledge, or the nature of and relationship between comparee and standard/aspect.

2.6.1 Implicit standard of comparison

Apart from complete comparisons, we find expressions with adjectives marked for comparative or superlative degree in which the standard of comparison is not made explicit. In these cases, the implied standard of comparison can either be more or less easily inferred from the context, or it is so general that we may doubt whether we are dealing with a comparison at all. Completely polar comparatives and superlatives express that an entity possesses a quality to a rather high or a

very high degree, measured against a normative standard.¹¹⁸ There is a continuum between entirely polar comparisons and those with clearly contextually implied standards. Most examples in Homer can be associated with one of the several stages between the end points of the continuum.

Almost as explicit as relative comparisons with clearly expressed and marked standards of comparison are examples in which the standard can be easily supplied since it is mentioned in the immediate context, i.e. the co-text, of the comparison.

- (40) αὐτὸν δ' ἐν μέσσω καὶ ἀρηΐφιλον Μενέλαον
οἴους ἀμφ' Ἑλένη καὶ κτήμασι πᾶσι μάχεσθαι.
ὀππότερος δέ κε νικήση κρείσσων τε γένηται
κτήμαθ' ἔλων εὖ πάντα γυναῖκά τε οἴκαδ' ἀγέσθω *Il.* 3.90-3

And in the middle [Paris] himself and Menelaus, dear to Ares, alone [he urges to] fight for Helen and all her possessions. And whoever of the two shall win, and turn out to be the stronger man, he shall deservedly take all the wealth and the woman, and bear them to his home.

Hector announces that Paris and Menelaus shall fight against each other for Helen and the end of the war. It is clear from this co-text that the standard of comparison of κρείσσων 'stronger' is the loser of the fight, either Paris or Menelaus.

I categorize examples as having a contextually implied standard of comparison when the standard is not recoverable immediately from the co-text, but easily inferable from our knowledge of the story and the world in which the story is set.

- (41) ῥεῖα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ ἀμείνονας ἠέ περ οἶδε
ἵππους δωρήσαιτ', ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺν φέρτεροί εἰσιν *Il.* 10.556-7

Easily could a god, if he wants to, present even better horses than these, for the gods are far mightier.

The comparative φέρτεροί 'mightier' has no explicit standard of comparison, but

¹¹⁸ Andersen argues that the difference between the positive *John is tall* and the equative *John is as tall as George* is the mode of expression: the positive is an implicit comparison since the standard of comparison is not expressed, while the equative is an explicit comparison (1983, 100, and endnote 2, p. 138). Cf. Rusiecki 1985; Bierwisch 1988; Thurmair 2001; Kennedy/McNally 2005; Kennedy 2006.

our knowledge of the world in which the *Iliad* is set allows us to understand without difficulty what is to be supplied here: the gods are mightier than mortals, and this is why any god could present even better horses than the best horses that a mortal man could ever have.

There is a fairly large group of examples in which the implied standard of comparison is the situation or time until now. Often these examples have ἔτι or a similar word meaning ‘yet’ or ‘even’, which stresses that something is even more the case now than it was before, or happens with even more intensity than it did before or up until now.

(42) καί νύ κ' ἔτι πλέονας Λυκίων κτάνε διὸς Ὀδυσσεύς *Il.* 5.679

And still more of the Lycians would noble Odysseus have killed.

Odysseus would have killed even more Lycians than he had killed at this point, were it not for Hector coming to their aid. Another context in which we find comparatives with this kind of implied standard of comparison is when a god or army leader encourages a warrior to fight on after he became tired or injured, and the warrior is then said to ‘fight on even more keenly’ (cf. *Il.* 15.726).

More difficult are those cases in which the scope/standard of comparison is very general, e.g. ‘than everyone else’/‘of all’. Here it can be impossible to decide whether a general scope/standard of comparison is implied, or whether an adjective in the superlative or comparative simply expresses a very, or rather, high degree.

(43) ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τε Διὸς κρείσσων νόος αἰγιόχοιο,
ὅς τε καὶ ἄλκιμον ἄνδρα φοβεῖ καὶ ἀφείλετο νίκην
ῥηϊδίως, ὅτε δ' αὐτὸς ἐποτρύνει μαχέσασθαι *Il.* 17.176-8

But the mind of the aegis bearer Zeus is always more powerful, for he turns even a valiant man to flight, and deprives him of victory easily, when he himself urges men on to fight.

The sense implied in example (43) may be that Zeus is always more powerful than man, but the comparative κρείσσων could also have been translated as ‘all too

powerful'.¹¹⁹

Two adjectives that frequently occur in this category are *θαῖσσον* 'more quickly' and *ἄσσον* 'nearer'; in many instances it is unclear whether any comparative meaning is present at all, or whether they just mean 'quickly' and 'near'. The same holds for relative superlatives; especially those that appear in formulas seem to have hardly anything to do with actual comparisons.

- (44) Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰδηθεν μεδέων κύδιστε μέγιστε Il. 7.202
 father Zeus, ruling from Ida, most glorious, most great

This formulaic verse does not express that Zeus is the most glorious and great among a certain group, but that he is exceedingly glorious and great.¹²⁰

2.6.2 Implicit aspect of comparison

The aspect of comparison is most frequently implicit in similitive constructions, but it can also be missing in those comparatives and superlatives that do not involve an adjective. Most obviously this is the case in lexically marked comparisons, but also comparisons with *μᾶλλον* or *μάλιστα* can lack an explicit aspect. Similar to comparisons without an explicit standard, there is a continuum of explicitness with regard to the aspect of comparison on which different expressions can be located. Those comparisons in which the aspect is expressed by adjectives or nouns are at the positive end of this continuum, followed by those in which the verbal action conveys the aspect. In cases where there is no full verb, or the verb does not contribute to the meaning of the comparison, the context can help to fill in the gap. In Homeric Greek there are many instances in which a hero is said to be 'as good as', 'better than', or 'the best' in rather general terms. The nature of the

¹¹⁹ Edwards seems to assume 'man' as the implied standard of comparison (1991, 79-80).

¹²⁰ Unlike, for example, Italian with its relative 'ottimo' vs. the superlative 'il migliore', ancient Greek does not formally distinguish between superlatives and elatives. The boundary between an elative and a superlative with a general scope is fluent; example (44) may be read as either.

comparee and standard of comparison also contribute to an inference of what the implied aspect could be. In example (45) there is no noun or adjective expressing the aspect; the verb *μεταπρέπει* ‘is pre-eminent’ states a relationship of superiority of the bull over the other cattle, but it does not elaborate on the precise aspect of this superiority. Real-world knowledge about the position of a bull among a herd of cattle helps to fill in the gap and flesh out the kind of superiority implied here.

- (45) ταῦρος, ὃ γάρ τε βόεσσι μεταπρέπει ἀγρομένησι *Il.* 2.481
 the bull, for he is distinguished among the gathered cattle

In similitive constructions that involve full main verbs, careful attention must be paid to whether the verb contributes to an understanding of what the aspect is, or not. On closer inspection, in many cases the meaning of comparee and standard together are the only source for inferring the aspect of comparison.

- (46) (...) φέρων σάκος ἥτε πύργον *Il.* 11.485
 bearing a shield like a defence tower

The participial verb *φέρων* ‘bearing’ is not actually part of this comparison, since it does not make sense to interpret this as ‘the shield is similar to a defence tower with regard to how it is being carried’. The comparee *σάκος* ‘shield’ and the standard of comparison *πύργον* ‘defence tower’ are both means of defence, but of rather different calibre. Comparing a shield to a tower is a means of emphasizing the size, strength and sturdiness of this particular shield, and thus the aspect is easily inferable.¹²¹ There are many similitives with implicit aspects of comparison that are highly formulaic, and in these cases it is not easy to determine in how far we are dealing with an actual, active, comparison at all.

- (47) (...) Μηριόνης δὲ θοῶ ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηϊ *Il.* 13.295
 Meriones, equal to swift Ares

¹²¹ For other views on the meaning of this comparison cf. Hainsworth 1993, 276.

Ares being the god of war suggests that the aspect of comparison concerns Meriones' ability as a warrior. Apart from the uncertainty about what exactly the aspect of comparison is, we may also ask whether these expressions are equatives or similatives. Are we to understand that 'Meriones is as good as Ares', or that 'Meriones fights like the god of war himself'? Furthermore, the adjective *θοός* 'swift', even though it agrees with Ares, contributes at least partially to an understanding of what makes Meriones similar to Ares.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical basis which underlies the approach and structure of my analysis of all the different kinds and types of comparisons found in the Homeric epics. Chapter 3, on comparative constructions, and Chapter 4, on superlative constructions, are structured according to the syntactic types in which these comparisons are expressed, and deal with semantic and cognitive aspects whenever relevant. Chapter 5, on similatives and equatives, is structured according to the different kinds of relationships between comparee and standard of comparison: it presents comparisons of similarity along a scale ranging from more measurement-like and less figurative to more conceptual and more figurative. It deals with the syntactic types in which these comparisons occur by means of an overview and whenever the syntactic structure interacts with the meaning of the comparison. The linguistic features that distinguish the different kinds of comparisons that I have introduced here, and that will be further confirmed by the analyses in Chapters 3-5, provide a reference point from which unusual expressions of comparisons will be approached in Chapter 6. The largest part of Chapter 6, however, deals with comparisons as part of a literary work of art. Understanding the nature of the different comparison types described here provides a starting point for the exploration of their rhetorical and narrative function in epic poetry.

Chapter 3

Comparatives

This chapter provides a linguistic analysis of the different types of comparative constructions that appear in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The first four sections deal with complete scalar comparisons, with the exception of a few cases in which the aspect of comparison is implicit or very vague. The first section deals with comparatives marked by case, followed by those marked by preposition, particle, and lexical means. The fifth and sixth subchapters try to make sense of all the instances that do not include an explicitly marked standard of comparison, and suggest to subdivide this category into another three groups, each characterized by a different degree to which a standard of comparison can be supplied: 1: fairly easily from the immediate co-text, 2: on the basis of the wider context and pragmatic features. These two groups make up the category of comparatives with an implicit standard of comparison. For the third group, a concrete standard of comparison cannot be established; if anything, the comparees of this category are measured against a normative standard, thus I label this group ‘polar’. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the syntactic distribution of comparative constructions.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	555	303	252
Case	102	58	44
Preposition	1	0	1
Particle	50	26	24
Lexical	8	5	3
Implicit standard	257	148	109
Polar	137	66	71

Table 3.1: Comparative constructions

The aspect of a comparative construction is most frequently expressed by an adjective. In Homer there are 21 adjectives with comparative morphology based on the primary PIE suffix **-yes-/*-yos-*, and 63 with comparative morphology based on the secondary PIE suffix **-tero-*. Most of the **-yes-/*-yos-* cases involve words that express basic adjectival concepts and are fairly frequent, while the majority of **-tero-* adjectives express more complex concepts and only appear once or twice in the Homeric epics. This reflects what we know about these suffixes, namely that *-ων* is an older, less morphologically transparent, and no longer productive formation which survives in high-frequency lexemes, while *-τερος* is a newer, morphologically transparent, and highly productive formation.

In five cases we find the same root displaying forms with both suffixes. *γλυκίων* (attested in Homer 5x) vs. *γλυκερώτερος* (1x), *κακίων* (5x) vs. *κακώτερος* (6x), *λωίων* (5x) vs. *λωίτερος* (2x), *φιλίων* (1x) vs. *φίλτερος* (6x), *χείρων/χερείων* (28x) vs. *χειρότερος/χειριώτερος* (4x).

Category	Total number	Complete	Implicit standard	Polar
<i>-ων</i>	263	68	134	61
	100%	26%	51%	23%
<i>-τερος</i>	201	72	88	41
	100%	36%	44%	20%

Table 3.2: *-ων* vs. *-τερος*

From a synchronic perspective, there is no obvious syntactic or semantic difference between the forms in *-ίων* and those in *-τερος*. Both are found in each of the syntactic construction types, and they show similar distributions across scalar and polar usages, as shown in Table 3.2.

In addition to proper comparative adjectives, there are adjectives that look like comparative forms since they end in *-τερος*, but are not actually part of a complete or implicit comparison. They include *πρότερος* ‘before’, *δεύτερος* ‘next, second’, *ὑστερος* ‘next, later’, *παροίτερος* ‘in front’, *ὑπέρτερος* ‘upper/outer’, *δεξιτερός* ‘right-hand’, *ἐπασσύτερος* ‘one after another’, *θηλύτερος* ‘female’. When these adjectives refer to the spatial or temporal position of entities, to the category to which an entity belongs, or when they structure the narrative discourse, they do not have the function of expressing a comparison, and thus are not considered in this study. *πρότερος*, *παροίτερος*, and *ὑπέρτερος* do, however, also occur in real comparisons in the Homeric epics, and these cases are included here.

3.1 Comparatives marked by case

An initial distinction must be made between those comparative constructions that express a comparative relation in the strict sense, namely a difference in degree to which the aspect of comparison is present in comparee and standard, and those that strictly speaking express the meaning of an equative or superlative relation. Among those instances that express a proper comparative relation, a large group involves adjectives meaning ‘better’ or ‘worse’. These adjectives denote fairly vague concepts of valour, and context must be adduced to enhance their meaning; in some cases, a noun or verb makes the concrete area of the comparee’s valour (or lack thereof) explicit. Those instances that express relations of the *melle dulcior* type involve more concrete adjectives such as ‘sweet’, ‘white’, ‘hard’. The standards of comparison in these cases are the epitome of the qualities that the adjectives

express, and the resulting meaning is that of a striking similarity, rather than a real inequality. Another way of expressing a comparison of similarity by means of a comparative construction is by negating the aspect of comparison: ‘X is no worse than Y’ means ‘X is at least as good as Y’. Negating the comparee of a comparative construction results in a superlative meaning: ‘nobody is better than X’ means ‘X is the best of all’.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	102	58	44
Proper comparatives	67	42	25
<i>melle dulcior</i> type	8	6	2
Negated comparatives	27	10	17

Table 3.3: Comparatives marked by case

3.1.1 Proper comparatives

Case comparatives with the aspect ‘better’ or ‘worse’ predominantly occur in battle or argument scenes between two characters. How exactly one is to understand this (lack of) valour is determined by the co-text, but even more importantly by general knowledge of the story world. Apart from a few instances in the context of the funerary games in Book 23 of the *Iliad*, adjectives meaning ‘better’ or ‘worse’ are not employed to describe the outcome of the present (martial, athletic, or verbal) contest that two opponents have engaged in, but are aimed at their respective position in society, as warriors but also as leaders or citizens. They are not often used to describe a momentary attribute of a character at a certain time or in a certain context, but denote permanent, established properties.

(48) οἶδα δ’ ὅτι σὺ μὲν ἐσθλός, ἐγὼ δὲ σέθεν πολὺ χείρων *Il.* 20.434

I [Hector] know that you [Achilles] are valiant, and I am much less strong than you.

ring to body parts or other battle-related things ('in strength', 'with the sword').⁸

- (51) ἄλλ' ἄγεθ', οἳ περ ἐμεῖο βίη προφερέστεροί ἐστε *Od.* 21.134
but, come on, you who are more excellent than I in strength

There is one instance in which the adjective πρότερος 'earlier' is made more explicit by the noun γενεῆ 'by birth'.

- (52) (...) ἐπεὶ εὖ φημι βίη πολὺ φέρτερος εἶναι
καὶ γενεῆ πρότερος *Il.* 15.165-6
since I say that I am much better than he in strength, and older
by birth

In another instance the body size of two warriors is compared.

- (53) μείων μὲν κεφαλῆ Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο,
εὐρύτερος δ' ὤμοισιν ἰδὲ στέρνοισιν ἰδέσθαι *Il.* 3.193-4
Shorter by a head is he than Agamemnon, son of Atreus, but
broader to behold with regard to his shoulders and chest.

Three of the four instances of comparatives made more explicit by verbs can be grouped together on the basis that they refer to 'devising counsel', 'prophesying', and 'knowing and fulfilling'.⁹ In the fourth one, mules are compared to oxen, an exception next to the almost exclusively human or divine comparees and standards of comparison in this category. On closer inspection, even this comparison is made with reference to a human agent, since the mules themselves appear as the standard of comparison of an equative expression, used to conceptualize how far a warrior, Dolon, ran.

- (54) ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἀπέην ὄσσόν τ' ἐπὶ οὖρα πέλονται
ἡμίονων· αἱ γάρ τε βοῶν προφερέστεραὶ εἰσιν
ἐλκόμεναι νειοῖο βαθείης πηκτὸν ἄροτρον *Il.* 10.351-3
but when he was as far away as the range of mules comes to, for
they are better than oxen at drawing through deep fallow-land the
well-constructed plough

⁸ Cf. *Il.* 1.404, 3.430-1, 4.399-400, 7.457, 15.139-40, 15.181-2, 19.217-9; *Od.* 5.215-8, 21.372-3.

⁹ Cf. *Il.* 23.311-2; *Od.* 2.180, 5.169-70

3.1.2 The *melle dulcior* type

Comparatives of the *melle dulcior* type appear in a variety of contexts, with a variety of types of comparees, aspects, and standards. The collocations ‘sweeter than honey’ and ‘whiter than snow’ seem to be common also in other Indo-European poetic traditions.¹⁰ What identifies these comparatives as special cases is 1) that the standard of comparison denotes what is conventionally perceived as the quintessence of the quality expressed by the aspect of comparison, and 2) that the relationship between comparee and standard is figurative. This leads to a reading of ‘sweeter than honey’ as not (just) literally meaning ‘having a greater degree of sweetness than honey’, but ‘a sweetness like that of honey, and to a superlative degree’.¹¹

In the *Iliad* six of these expressions have standards marked by case, and ‘sweeter than honey’ appears twice, but with very different comparees: Nestor’s speech streams sweeter than honey in example (55), and anger expands in the breasts of men sweeter than honey in example (56).

- (55) τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή *Il.* 1.249
 From his tongue streamed speech sweeter than honey.

We commonly find the adjective ‘sweet’ with reference to the way in which someone speaks, and the image of speech streaming from someone’s mouth or tongue is frequently used in Homer and in other literary traditions.¹² Honey as a standard of comparison for something described as sweet is also found in the compound adjectives *μελίγηρυς* ‘honey-voiced’, referring to the voice of the Sirens at *Od.* 12.187, *μελιηδής* ‘honey-sweet’ and *μελίφρων* ‘honey-hearted’, both used for wine, food items, and various other things.¹³

¹⁰ Cf. Benveniste 1948; Berg 1958; Puhvel 1973.

¹¹ Cf. Chapter 6.1.2 for a discussion of the meaning and function of the *melle dulcior* type.

¹² For a list of parallels cf. Latacz/Nünlist/Stoevesandt 2009, 104. Kirk notes that the sweetness of honey becomes a commonplace for the voice of the poet, especially in Pindar (1985, 79).

¹³ Cf. Chapter 5.7.

- (56) ὥς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο
καὶ χόλος, ὅς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι,
ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσι ἀέξεται ἢ ὕτε καπνός·
ὥς ἐμὲ νῦν ἐχόλωσεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων *Il.* 18.107-11

So may strife be extinguished from the world of gods and men, and wrath, which incites even a wise a man to being angry, and which, far sweeter than honey that is poured down, expands like smoke in the breasts of men; so the lord of men, Agamemnon, now angered me.

Example (56) is reminiscent of Hesiod's description of the effect of bad ἔρις 'strife' on mankind in the *Works and Days*.¹⁴ The first ὥς with the optative ἀπόλοιτο 'may it be extinguished' introduces a wish; two relative clauses dependent on χόλος 'wrath' (and ἔρις) develop the thought in a simile-like way. The second ὥς picks up that thought, and makes it into a standard of comparison for the action described in the final line. This is the only example in Homer in which honey is used in a comparison that describes something that has a detrimental effect on a human character.¹⁵

One example of this category displays some, but not all characteristics of the *melle dulcior* type; it is the beginning of a simile.

- (57) Εὔτ' ὄρεος κορυφῆσι Νότος κατέχευεν ὀμίχλην
ποιμέσιν οὐ τι φίλην, κλέπτῃ δέ τε νυκτὸς ἀμείνω *Il.* 3.10-1
as when over the tops of a mountain the South Wind sheds a mist,
which is in no way dear to shepherds, but to a robber is better
than night

The relationship between the comparee ὀμίχλη 'mist' and the standard νύξ 'night' can be understood as figurative: they may both be called natural phenomena, but they are not of the same kind. In this comparison, mist is compared to night in order to make a point about mist and not to make a statement about the

¹⁴ Cf. Hes. *Op.* 10-29.

¹⁵ Cf. Willcock 1984, 265; Edwards 1991, 160-1. The honey-sweet voice of the Sirens, however, is a similar case, with fatal consequences for those who indulge it.

relationship between the two concepts. Unlike in the other examples of this type, the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison, ἀμείνων ‘better’, is vague and does not denote the epitome of the standard ‘night’. Yet, the comparison as a whole and the context in which it appears make it clear that what is meant by ‘better’ is ‘a more advantageous circumstance for robbers’. Night is the usual advantageous circumstance for robbers; mist offers the same kind of advantage as night, but to an even greater, a superlative, degree.¹⁶

It is interesting that the example in the *Odyssey* that involves the adjective ‘white’ does not use the standard ‘snow’, which is used in a similar example in the *Iliad* to describe the colour of horses,¹⁷ and in poetic traditions across the Indo-European languages. Instead, in the *Odyssey* we find the standard ‘ivory’:¹⁸

(58) καί μιν μακροτέρην καὶ πάσσονα θῆκεν ιδέσθαι,
 λευκοτέρην δ’ ἄρα μιν θῆκε πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος *Od.* 18.195-6

And she made her taller as well as sturdier to look upon, and she made her whiter than sawn ivory.

3.1.3 Negated comparatives

Negation interacts with comparative constructions in a variety of ways. When the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison is negated, the result is a reinforcement of the positive, i.e. not negated, aspect of comparison, and the comparison itself becomes equative.¹⁹

(59) καί μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὐ τι χέρεια
 πατρὸς ἐοῖο φίλοιο, δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν *Od.* 14.176-8

¹⁶ Krieter-Spiro explains: “vorteilhafter als die Nachtzeit: Nachts ist das Vieh eingepfercht, tagsüber zerstreut” (2009, 16).

¹⁷ *Il.* 10.436-7, example (276) in Chapter 6.1.2.

¹⁸ For white skin as a beauty ideal and the relevance of the material ivory cf. Russo/Fernández-Galiano/Heubeck 1992, 62. Steiner gives other parallels of (female) skin compared to white substances (2010, 187-8). The remaining instances of the *melle dulcior* type are: *Il.* 13.817-9, 18.610; *Od.* 23.103.

¹⁹ Cf. *Il.* 1.114-5; *Od.* 5.211-3, 8.585-6.

And I thought that among men he would be in no way worse than his dear father, glorious in stature and appearance.

‘He is not worse than his father’ means that he is (at least) as good as his father.

In example (60) the comparee is negated: οὐκ ἄλλο ‘nothing (other)’. Thereby the comparison as a whole takes on the meaning of a superlative: ‘going astray is the worst thing for mortal men’.²⁰

- (60) πλαγκτοσύνης δ’ οὐκ ἔστι κακώτερον ἄλλο βροτοῖσιν *Od.* 15.343
Nothing is worse for mortal men than going astray.

Even though in example (61) it is not the comparee ‘idea’ that is negated, but the subject of the sentence οὐ ... τις ἄλλος, the sense conveyed in this expression corresponds to that in example (60): ‘another person will come up with no better idea’, i.e. ‘this is the best idea anyone could come up with’.

- (61) οὐ γάρ τις νόον ἄλλος ἀμείονα τοῦδε νοήσει *Il.* 9.104
Nobody else will come up with a better idea than this.

While in all other categories, the *Iliad* has either more instances than the *Odyssey*, or both works have roughly equal numbers, in this category the *Odyssey* has a clear majority of 17 versus 10 instances.²¹

3.2 Comparatives marked by preposition

The fact that this category comes second in Andersen’s typology shows how common it is across languages to mark the standard of comparison by preposition. In Homeric Greek, however, there is only one example of this type; it appears in the 7th book of the *Odyssey* and is interesting in various ways. Using a preposition

²⁰ Cf. *Il.* 2.248-9, 3.365, 5.173, 8.483, 15.569-70, 17.446-7, 23.439, 24.93-4; *Od.* 8.138-9, 9.5-6, 9.27-8, 9.34-5, 11.427-8, 11.482-3, 11.623-4, 15.533-4, 18.130-1, 20.201, 20.376, 20.392-3, 21.344-5.

²¹ Cf. Section 6.1.1 for a possible explanation.

instead of a bare case as standard marker is not a very common strategy, but still found across all genres of Greek literature.²²

- (62) οὐ γάρ τι στυγερῆ ἐπὶ γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο
ἔπλετο Od. 7.216-7

For no other thing is more shameless than one's loathsome belly.

The preposition ἐπί ‘upon’ marks the standard of comparison στυγερῆ γαστέρι ‘loathsome belly’.²³ The aspect of comparison is expressed by κύντερον ‘more shameless’, which is a comparative adjective derived from the noun κύων ‘dog’, and literally means ‘more dog-like’. There is no associated adjective in the positive, but a superlative version of it appears at *Il.* 10.503. A concrete noun is graded here in terms of the abstract characteristics associated with what it denotes. It is used with this meaning also in its substantival form in Homer as a word of reproach.²⁴ As in example (60), a negative quantifier οὐ τι ‘nothing’ as comparee has the effect of giving the comparison superlative/relative meaning: ‘one’s loathsome belly is the most shameless thing’.

3.3 Comparatives marked by particle

Like case-marked comparatives, those marked by particle can express real comparative relations or convey the meaning of a superlative and/or equative. The *melle dulcior* type and negated comparatives in this category, however, are much less numerous. Next to ‘proper comparatives’, which express a real comparative

²² The different prepositions used in this function in Classical Greek are ἀντί, ἐπί, παρά, πρό, πρὸς (Kühner/Gerth 1898, 453-521; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 443-511). Cf. Hdt. 1.62.1 for an example with πρό.

²³ Commentaries mainly talk about the comical effect of this scene, and the inconsistency with the preceding narrative: Odysseus complains about hunger when he has actually just eaten. Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 18; Heubeck/West/Hainsworth 1988, 334-5. Garvie does comment on the preposition: “the prepositional phrase is equivalent in sense to a gen. of comparison” and refers to parallels: Hdt. 4.118.3, Thuc. 3.45.6 (1994, 208).

²⁴ For example by Diomedes to Hector at *Il.* 11.362. Cf. Chantraine 1942, 259; Faust 1970, 24-31; Shipp 1972, 76; Garvie 1994, 208-9; Zeifelder 2003, 269-70.

relation between comparee and standard, there are many instances that are not so much comparisons as expressions in which two options are weighed up in a process of decision making. They express the choice of one option at the exclusion of the other, hence I label them ‘disjunctive comparatives’. Some of these involve adjectives with comparative morphology (type ‘it would be better to do X’), but some use a verb meaning ‘prefer’. Since in both cases the dispreferred option is marked with the particle η , the ‘prefer’ cases are included here despite a lack of comparative morphology, and a questionable relationship to ‘real’ comparisons.

While case-marked comparatives all have nominal standards, particle-marked comparatives are found with nominal, clausal, and verbal standards; with nominal and clausal standards the predicate or verbal action is the same for comparee and standard. When the standard is verbal, the comparison is not between two people or concepts to whom the same predicate applies, but between the action associated with the comparee, and a different action associated with the standard. In these cases comparee and standard might refer to one and the same entity, or to two different ones.

Category	Total	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	50	26	24
Proper comparatives	23	12	11
Disjunctive comparatives	22	12	10
<i>melle dulcior</i> type	2	1	1
Negated comparatives	3	1	2

Table 3.4: Comparatives marked by particle

3.3.1 Proper comparatives

In Homer, actual comparative relations marked by particle only appear with nominal or clausal standards of comparisons. Many examples are elliptic or metonymical, or not quite straightforward in some other way.

- (63) τῶ σε χρῆ δόμεναι καὶ λῳιον ἤε περ ἄλλοι
σίτου Od. 17.417-8

Therefore you ought to give an even better piece of bread than the others.

Normally when comparee and standard of comparison are connected by a particle, they have the same syntactic function, but here λῳιον σίτου ‘better piece of bread’ seems to be coordinated with ἄλλοι ‘the others’, which, strictly speaking, neither syntactically nor semantically makes sense. λῳιον is the accusative object of δόμεναι ‘to give’, with σίτου in the partitive genitive, while ἄλλοι is in the nominative and functions as the subject of an implied clause ‘than [the piece of bread that] others give’. Both the aspect of comparison and the standard of comparison are especially emphasized here, by the particles καὶ and περ respectively, resulting in a meaning ‘you ought to give an *even better* piece of bread *than the others ought to give anyway*.’ The particle περ follows the comparative particle in exactly this function in 7 other instances.²⁵

Very few of the examples of comparatives marked by particle could have easily been expressed, or would have been equally straightforward, with a case construction. Often the standard of comparison is an adverb such as πάρος ‘before’.²⁶

- (64) μείζονα δ’ ἤε πάρος καὶ πάσσονα θῆκεν ιδέσθαι Od. 24.369

And she made him taller than before and sturdier to look at.

If the standard of comparison is a clause, it takes the same slot in a sentence as a nominal or adverbial standard; the clause is marked with the particle ἤ and thereby coordinated with the comparee, which in example (65) is ‘Hector (now that he is dead)’.²⁷

²⁵ Cf. *Il.* 1.260-1; 10.556-7; 11.318-9; 14.467-8; 16.688. *Od.* 4.819; 8.154. Even though περ appears also at *Il.* 18.302, this is an instance of the ‘it is better to do X than Y’ type, and here there is no καὶ modifying the aspect of comparison; at *Od.* 8.186-8 περ goes with the adverb οὐκ ὀλίγον ‘not by little’, which modifies the aspects of comparison. Cf. Bakker 1988, 83-5 and 277. On example (63) cf. Ameis/Hentze 1910, 136.

²⁶ Cf. *Od.* 1.320-2; 10.395-6; 18.160-2.

²⁷ Cf. *Od.* 8.186-8; 12.209-10. Cf. De Jong 2012, 155-6.

- (65) ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάσθαι
Ἔκτωρ ἢ ὅτε νῆας ἐνέπρησεν πυρὶ κηλέῳ *Il.* 22.373-4
- Well then! Indeed now Hector is much easier to deal with than
when he burned the ships with blazing fire.

Example (66) looks as if it has a verbal standard of comparison, but on closer inspection, it is not the verbal actions directly that are being compared, but rather two groups of people to whom different predications apply.²⁸

- (66) αἰδομένων ἀνδρῶν πλείονες σοοὶ ἢ ἐπέφονται *Il.* 5.531
- Of men who have regard for one another more are safe than slain.

What is juxtaposed is ‘being safe’ and ‘being slain’, but strictly speaking a comparison is made between the number of people in one group versus another: ‘the number of people who are safe is greater than the number of people who are slain’.

In other cases the standard of comparison could have been put into the genitive case, but for reasons of syntactic lucidity, the particle construction is favoured.²⁹ The case construction is normally only employed if comparee and standard both have the function of either subject or direct object.

- (67) (...) γύπεσσιν πολὺ φίλτεροι ἢ ἀλόχοισιν *Il.* 11.162
- much dearer to the vultures than to their wives

If the standard of comparison ἀλόχοισιν ‘to their wives’ were in the genitive, this passage would have probably read as if they (slain warriors) were dearer to the vultures than the wives, assuming that ‘wives’ is coordinated with the subject of the sentence ‘they’, i.e. the slain warriors. To make it clear that ‘wives’ is coordinated, i.e. compared, with ‘vultures’, it needs to retain its dative case that marks it as an indirect object.

²⁸ Cf. *Il.* 15.563; *Od.* 19.167-8.

²⁹ Cf. *Il.* 1.260-1, 8.188-90, 16.688, 23.315-8; *Od.* 4.819.

The particle construction is also employed when the aspect of comparison is expressed by a verbal phrase marked for comparative by the adverb *μᾶλλον*.³⁰

- (68) κήδεά μοι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἢ περ ἄεθλοι *Od.* 8.154
Grief is on my mind much more than contests.

In example (68) the verbal phrase consists of a prepositional phrase *ἐνὶ φρεσὶν* ‘on my mind’ in combination with *an*, in Greek often unexpressed, copula ‘is’.

There are, however, also cases in which there is no cogent syntactical reason not to use the case construction.³¹

- (69) πύθεται, οἰωνοὶ δὲ περὶ πλέες ἢ γυναιῖκες *Il.* 11.395
He is rotting away, and around him are more birds than women.

This is the second time in the *Iliad* that women and scavenger birds are juxtaposed in a comparison; the structure of example (69), i.e. the word order and the employment of the particle *ἢ*, is parallel to and reminiscent of example (67).³² Beyond syntactical lucidity, a reason for the choice of a particle over case-marking could be that the particle adds an ironic sense of disjunction: there are not *more* birds *than* women, but birds *and not* women. Instead of being lamented and buried, the corpses of these unlucky warriors fall prey to scavengers.

Example (70) is unusual in that it starts off like a comparative marked by lexical means with the verb *φθάνω* ‘outrun’, but has its standard marked by the particle *ἢ* instead of the accusative case demanded by *φθάνω*. The reason for this is probably that *ἐγώ* ‘I’ is further specified by *σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ* ‘with my black ship’; complex or clausal standards of comparison are normally marked by particle.³³ By

³⁰ Cf. *Od.* 4.819.

³¹ Cf. *Il.* 10.556-7, 14.467-8.

³² Cf. Hainsworth 1993, 242-3.

³³ Cf. Merry 1880, 317: “φθάνειν implies a comparative notion, and so is followed by *ἢ*, as sometimes βούλομαι” and Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 140. Cf. *Il.* 23.444-5, which is a parallel, but there the use of a particle in addition to *φθήσοντα* ‘they are quicker’ is due to the fact that comparee and standard are in the dative case.

using a particle, both the ‘you’ and the ‘I’, as well as the activities of going on foot vs. by ship are juxtaposed.

- (70) Ἐλπήνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα;
 ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ Od. 11.57-8
- Elpenor, how did you come beneath the murky darkness? Going on foot you were quicker than I with my black ship.

3.3.2 Disjunctive comparatives

Disjunctive comparatives appear in two types; one refers to the preference of one thing, person, or action over another. The other describes the choice of one option or course of action over another. The former category employs a verb meaning ‘rather want’ or ‘prefer’, and the latter uses an adjective ‘better’ with the copula ‘to be’. In both cases, the dispreferred option is marked by the particle ἢ. The verbs that are used to express ‘rather want’/‘prefer’ are βούλομαι with five examples in the *Iliad* and four examples in the *Odyssey*, ἔλδομαι, reinforced by μᾶλλον, with one example in the *Iliad*, and ἀράομαι with one example in the *Odyssey*. For ‘better’ the most frequent adjective is βέλτερον with four instances in the *Iliad* and one in the *Odyssey*. γλυκίων appears twice in the *Iliad*, but in a duplicate verse. The *Iliad* uses κέρδιον to reinforce βούλομαι in *Il.* 3.41-2, and the *Odyssey* has one instance with just κέρδιον. In the *Odyssey* only we find φέρτερον twice, and κάλλιον once. Most of the time the adjectives appear in the neuter because they refer to phrasal comparees and standards, but γλυκίων is first coordinated with a noun (πόλεμος), hence the masculine form, and only the standard is phrasal.³⁴

When comparee and standard of comparison are different verbal phrases, they tend to share the same subject. When the standard of comparison is nominal, it tends to share the verbal action with the comparee.

³⁴ Cf. *Il.* 2.453-4, 11.13-4.

- (71) αὐτὸς γὰρ φαγέμεν πολὺ βούλει ἢ δόμεν ἄλλῳ *Od.* 17.404
 For you would rather eat a lot yourself than give to someone other.

In example (71), ‘you’ is the subject of both, the clause that makes up the comparee and the clause that expresses the standard of comparison. The verbal action is ‘eating’ with the comparee, and ‘giving’ with the standard.³⁵

In example (72), which has a nominal standard of comparison, there is only one verbal action, but comparee and standard refer to two different groups of people, the Trojans and the Greeks respectively.³⁶

- (72) ἡμῖν δὲ Ζεὺς μὲν πολὺ βούλεται ἢ Δαναοῖσι
 νίκην *Il.* 17.331-2
 But for us Zeus wants victory much more than for the Danaans.

The same distinction can be made for comparatives that use adjectives to express that one scenario or course of action is better than another.

- (73) (...) ἐπεὶ ἢ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστι
 τεθνάμεν ἢ ζῶντας ἀμαρτεῖν *Od.* 21.154-5
 Since indeed it is much better to die than to be alive and fail.

Here two scenarios or choices are expressed through verbal actions, ‘to die’ and ‘to be alive and fail’,³⁷ while in example (74) the verbal action remains the same, but comparee and standard of comparison refer to different groups of people, the Trojans and the Greeks.³⁸

- (74) τῶν τινὰ βέλτερόν ἐστιν ἐπαυρέμεν ἢ περ Ἀχαιοῦς *Il.* 18.302
 It is better that someone [of the Trojans] enjoys them rather than the Achaeans.

³⁵ Cf. *Il.* 1.117, 23.592-5; *Od.* 3.232-5, 12.349-50.

³⁶ Cf. *Il.* 11.318-9, 13.638-9; *Od.* 1.164-5, 17.81.

³⁷ Cf. *Il.* 14.80-1, 15.511-3, 21.485-6; *Od.* 20.316-9.

³⁸ Cf. *Od.* 6.39-40; 12.109-10; 17.18-9; combinations of the two types are also possible: *Il.* 2.453-4 has a nominal comparee and a verbal standard.

comparee and standard as they are about expressing a high degree of, in this case, blackness. On the other hand, as we have seen in the discussion of source schemata that underlie the expression of comparisons, it is not unusual at all to use a similarity schema for the expression of an actual comparative relation, as is the case in modern German, where the originally equative and similitive particle *als* is employed to mark the standards of comparative expressions.⁴¹

The example in the *Odyssey* is similar to the case-marked instances discussed above. The reason why a particle is used here instead of a case construction might be that this comparison appears within a simile.⁴² In the simile, which carries on directly from here, the birds, sea eagles, and vultures are the subjects, so having them already in the nominative, rather than in the genitive, allows for a seamless transition from here into the simile.

(77) κλαῖον δὲ λιγέως, ἀδινώτερον ἢ τ' οἰωνοί,
φῆναι ἢ αἰγυπιοὶ γαμψώνυχες Od. 16.216-9

And they [Odysseus and Telemachus] let out a high-pitched cry,
more vehemently than birds, sea eagles, or vultures with crooked
talons.

3.3.4 Negated comparatives

In all three instances of this type, the comparee is negated, which gives the comparison the effect of a superlative. The standard of comparison is a clause, which could not have been marked as such by the genitive case. Two examples have a demonstrative pronoun in the genitive, which acts as a ‘dummy’ standard, and

⁴¹ In some dialects the current equative/similitive particle *wie* has started to encroach upon *als*, starting a new cycle of the same change.

⁴² For different opinions about the problem of ἢ τ' cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908a, 100; Monro 1901, 81-2, also with reference to example (76); Heubeck/Hoekstra 1989, 275-6. Ruijgh argues that the τε following ἢ is unnatural, and has probably crept in by analogy with the type ὡς τ' οἰωνοί ‘like birds’ (1971, 827-8). This reflects that such a comparison expresses a striking similarity rather than a real difference.

mark the clause that actually expresses the standard of comparison with ἦ.⁴³

- (78) ἡμῖν δ' οὐ τις τοῦδε νόος καὶ μήτις ἀμείνων
ἦ αὐτοσχεδίη μῖζαι χεῖράς τε μένος τε *Il.* 15.509-10

And for us there is no thought or counsel better than this, than to bring together our hands and strength in close combat.

The third example does not have a ‘dummy’ pronominal standard, but a noun, κλέος ‘glory’ congruent with the adjective μεῖζον ‘greater’. The clause marked by ἦ specifies that the standard of comparison is a particular kind of κλέος.⁴⁴

- (79) οὐ μὲν γὰρ μεῖζον κλέος ἀνέρος, ὄφρα κεν ἦσιν,
ἦ ὅ τι ποσσὶν τε ῥέξῃ καὶ χερσὶν ἐῆσιν *Od.* 8.147-8

For there is no greater glory of a man, for as long as he exists, than that which he attains with his own feet and hands.

3.4 Comparatives marked by lexical means

Using lexical means for the expression of comparative relations is not a frequently employed strategy, and it seems to be a creative way of paraphrasing a comparison, rather than a grammaticalized way of expressing it. The lexical item that marks the comparison is a verb meaning ‘surpass’, and the aspect of comparison is either left implicit or expressed by a noun; there is variation not only in the case in which this noun appears, but also in the types of ‘surpass’ verbs. It can be difficult to decide whether an expression of this kind is a comparative or superlative relation. In order to have a clear criterion, only expressions in which the standard of comparison is either a single entity, or a group of which the comparee is not a member, count as comparatives. Any expression that includes the words ‘others’ or ‘all’ as part of the standard of comparison, or in which the comparee is clearly a member of the group that the standard refers to, is considered a superlative.

⁴³ Cf. *Od.* 6.182-4. Janko notes that “ἦ after τοῦδε is pleonastic but aids comprehension.” (1992, 283-4). Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922c, 115.

⁴⁴ For the use of a congruent noun as the scope of a superlative construction cf. Chapter 4.4.1.

When the aspect of comparison is a concrete noun in the dative, as in example (80), this case can be understood as an instrumental dative, τόξω ‘with the bow’, or as a metonymy for the abstract concept ‘archery’.⁴⁵

- (80) οἷος δὴ με Φιλοκτήτης ἀπεκαίνυτο τόξω
 δῆμῳ ἔνι Τρώων, ὅτε τοξάζοιμεθ’ Ἀχαιοί Od. 8.219-20
- Philoctetes alone surpassed me with the bow in the land of the Trojans, whenever we Achaeans shot.

Example (81) is a part of Nestor’s speech during the funerary games for Patroclus, and one might argue that instead of expressing a comparison by lexical means, this is simply an enumeration of a person’s successes in athletic contests.

- (81) πῦξ μὲν ἐνίκησα Κλυτομήδεα Ἴηνοπος υἱόν,
 Ἀγκαῖον δὲ πάλῃ Πλευρώνιον, ὅς μοι ἀνέστη·
 Ἴφικλον δὲ πόδεσσι παρέδραμον ἐσθλὸν ἐόντα,
 δουρὶ δ’ ὑπειρέβαλον Φυλῆά τε καὶ Πολύδωρον.
 οἴοισίν μ’ ἵπποισι παρήλασαν Ἀκτορίωνε
 πλήθει πρόσθε βαλόντες ἀγασσάμενοι περὶ νίκης⁴⁶ Il. 23.634-9

In boxing I defeated Clytomedes, son of Enops, and in wrestling Ancaeus of Pleuron, who stood up against me; Iphiclus I outran with my feet, though he was a good man; with the spear I surpassed Phyleus and Polydorus. Only in the chariot race the sons of Actor overtook me pushing to the front with the crowd, begrudging me the victory.

Again the concrete nouns in the dative could either be understood as proper instrumentals, for example πόδεσσι ‘with my feet’, or as expressing the aspect of comparison in a more general, adverbial sense, ‘in the footrace’.

Example (82) at first sight does not look like a comparative; the adjective ἐπιδευέες is in the positive, and we could translate ‘but if we are indeed lacking the strength of god-like Odysseus by so much’.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. *Il.* 19.217-9, 23.318; *Od.* 13.291-2.

⁴⁶ This line, especially the meaning of πλήθει poses problems. For discussions of different suggestions cf. Leaf 1902, 516; Willcock 1984, 307; Richardson 1993, 239.

⁴⁷ This is how Russo/Fernández-Galiano/Heubeck understand this passage (1992, 175).

- (82) ἄλλ' εἰ δὴ τοσσόνδε βίης ἐπιδευέες εἰμὲν
ἀντιθέου Ὀδυσῆος *Od.* 21.253-4
but if indeed in strength we are inferior to godlike Odysseus by
this much

Ameis/Hentze argue for a comparative reading as in my translation, treating βίης as expressing the aspect of comparison, and Ὀδυσῆος as a comparative genitive.⁴⁸

The final two examples quoted below are, if at all, marginal representatives of comparative constructions. In example (83) the lexical item describing a comparison, or rather the effect of a comparison, is προβέβουλα, ‘I prefer’. Among comparatives marked by particle I included examples that expressed a preference, because the dispreferred element was marked by the same particle that marks the standard of comparison in more typical expressions of that category. Here the standard of comparison, Klytemnestra, is not marked by a particle, but by the genitive case as the indirect object of προβέβουλα, a form of βούλομαι reinforced through the preverb προ-, which occurs only once in Homer.⁴⁹

- (83) (...) καὶ γὰρ ῥά Κλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα *Il.* 1.113
For I even prefer [Chryseis] over Klytemnestra.

Example (84) is problematic because it arguably involves a literal meaning of νικάω in the sense of ‘win against’, and does not express a real comparison. The expression can be paraphrased as ‘your youth was stronger than your reason’, but this may not be enough to call it an actual comparative construction.⁵⁰

- (84) (...) ἐπεὶ οὐ τι παρήγορος οὐδ' ἀεσίφρων
ἦσθα πάρος· νῦν αὖτε νόον νίκησε νεοίη *Il.* 23.603-4
For you were in no way imprudent or witless before; though now
your youth has overpowered your reason.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1911, 87.

⁴⁹ Cf. Leaf 1900, 12; Latacz/Nünlist/Stoevesandt 2009, 68.

⁵⁰ Richardson paraphrases “your plan (or ingenuity) got the better of your good sense” (1993, 235).

3.5 Comparatives with implicit standard

Incomplete comparisons in which the standard of comparison is implicit make up a difficult category. It counts more instances than any other single category of comparatives, and the instances themselves are very heterogeneous. Whereas in the other categories we were mostly concerned with the interpretation of the aspect of comparison, a first step for the analysis of this category must be to establish how an implicit standard of comparison can be inferred. A first subcategory is made up of those instances in which the implied standard of comparison is explicitly mentioned in the co-text, that is the lines immediately before and after the comparative expression. For the second subcategory the implied standard of comparison is inferable on the basis of different parameters concerning the general knowledge of the story world and pragmatic features associated with comparatives. Table 3.5 shows the number of instances for each subtype.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	257	148	109
Co-textual standard	159	100	59
Contextual standard	98	48	50

Table 3.5: Comparatives with implicit standard

3.5.1 Standard inferable from co-text

The adjectives that appear most frequently in this category have the meaning ‘better’ or ‘worse’. Other frequent semantic fields are age and size/amount. Many instances of comparisons are complex in one way or another; either they involve several adjectives, or an adjective with a verb or noun, or even several different comparisons. In addition to real implicit comparisons, we also find disjunctive comparatives of the kind discussed in the particle-marked category. The *Iliad* has one, the *Odyssey* two examples of a negated comparative with superlative meaning.

Table 3.6 shows the number of instances for each type.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	150	99	51
Proper comparative	116	74	42
Disjunctive comparative	31	24	7
Negated comparative	3	1	2

Table 3.6: Comparatives with co-textual standard

For examples to count as members of this category, there must be a concrete word or phrase in the immediate vicinity of the comparative expression, and this word or phrase must be clearly identifiable as the intended standard of comparison.

- (85) ἔνθά κέ τοι Μενέλαε φάνη βιότοιο τελευτή
 Ἴκτορος ἐν παλάμησιν, ἐπεὶ πολὺ φέρτερος ἦεν,
 εἰ μὴ ἀνάϊξαντες ἔλον βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν *Il.* 7.104-6

And now for you, Menelaus, the end of your life would have manifested itself, at the hands of Hector, because he was far mightier, if the kings of the Achaeans had not leapt up and withheld you.

Example (85) contains a comparison between Menelaus and Hector; Menelaus is mentioned in the first line, and can thus be supplied as standard of comparison for the comparative in the second line: ‘Hector was far mightier than you, Menelaus’.⁵¹

A co-textually implied standard of comparison, if it is the subject of the sentence, may be hidden in the personal endings of the verb.⁵² In example (86) Odysseus is the subject of *πότημον ἐπίσποι* ‘would meet a shameful fate’ and of *μάχοιτο* ‘he fought’, as well as the implied standard of comparison: ‘if he fought with men who were more in number than he’.⁵³

⁵¹ Other instances with ‘better’/‘worse’ are *Il.* 1.80, 2.527-80, 3.69-72, 3.90-3, 4.56-61, 6.157-9, 6.350-3, 8.143-4, 8.210-1, 9.423-6, 15.512-3, 16.777-80, 17.149-51, 17.538-9, 20.105-7, 20.134-5, 20.367-8, 21.410-1, 21.485-6, 21.487-8, 22.39-40, 22.158-9, 22.333-4, 23.322-3, 23.459-61, 23.476-9, 23.571-2, 23.605, 23.855-8; *Od.* 3.249-50, 6.4-6, 9.275-6, 11.620-2, 18.46-7, 18.83-4, 18.233-4, 20.45-8, 20.80-2, 21.325-6, 22.156, 22.165-7, 22.287-9.

⁵² Cf. *Il.* 21.485-6.

⁵³ Other instances with the aspect amount/size are *Il.* 1.165-8, 2.120-2, 3.167-70, 5.635-42,

- (86) (...) ἀλλά κεν αὐτοῦ ἀεικέα πότμον ἐπίσποι,
εἰ πλεόνεσσι μάχοιτο *Od.* 2.250-1

But right there he [Odysseus] would meet a shameful fate, if he fought with men [the suitors] who were more in number.

In lexical expressions, the object can be left unexpressed, but easily recoverable from the context. Example (87) appears in a longer passage that compares Menelaus and Odysseus with regard to different aspects.⁵⁴

- (87) στάντων μὲν Μενέλαος ὑπείρεχεν εὐρέας ὤμους *Il.* 3.210

Standing up, Menelaus overtopped [Odysseus] with his broad shoulders.

The aspect of comparison can be expressed by more than one adjective, a combination of adjective and noun or verb, and it can refer to several comparees and standards at once.⁵⁵

- (88) τόφρα δ' ἄρ' οἰχόμενοι Κίκονες Κικόνεσσι γεγώνευν,
οἷ σφιν γείτονες ἦσαν, ἅμα πλέονες καὶ ἀρείους *Od.* 9.47-8

Meanwhile the Cicones went away and cried out to other Cicones, who were their neighbours, both more in number and braver.

In some cases it is difficult to decide whether a contrastive meaning of the comparative adjective is intended, or whether one is dealing with an actual comparison with an implied standard of comparison. The adjective *γεραίτερος* can refer to a person who, among a group of people, belongs to those that are (significantly) older than the average, and such a reading would understand the comparative as contrastive.

7.264-9, 8.53-7, 10.105-7, 10.357, 13.737-9, 15.405-7, 15.610-2, 17.361-4, 18.518-9, 23.591-5; *Od.* 2.45-9, 2.276-7, 9.56-7, 12.96-7, 14.13-7, 16.245-6, 16.288-94, 18.62-3, 19.7-13, 20.38-43, 22.12-4.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Il.* 16.53-4; *Od.* 11.510-2.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Il.* 1.280-1, 1.322-5, 2.706-8, 3.209-24, 4.405-7, 9.160-1, 9.496-8, 10.235-9, 11.786-7, 13.353-5, 14.376-7, 14.382, 15.641-3, 18.105-6, 19.217-9, 21.439-40, 23.576-8, 23.587-8; *Od.* 4.697-9, 8.167-77, 15.363-5, 16.88-9, 19.181-4, 21.370-1, 22.351-3. Other aspects are 'more king-like' *Il.* 9.391-2, 'swifter' *Il.* 23.309-12, 'more piteous' *Il.* 24.503-6, 'lower' *Od.* 12.101-2, 'dearer' *Od.* 19.350-2.

- (89) αἰδῶς δ' αὖ νέον ἄνδρα γεραίτερον ἐξερέεσθαι *Od.* 3.24
 And besides, a young man is ashamed to question someone who
 is older.

The statement in example (89) is made by Telemachus in response to Mentor encouraging him to approach Nestor. It is a platitude, but in this context makes clear reference to Telemachus (as νέος ἀνήρ) and Nestor (as γεραίτερος). Yet, I concede that the contrastive meaning ‘person of relatively old age’ is clearly also active here.⁵⁶

Instead of a single word or a short phrase, the implied standard of comparison can also be a longer thought described in the co-text of the comparative expression.⁵⁷ In example (90) Odysseus expresses that the question of how he would save himself after having killed the suitors is an even greater concern to him than the problem of how to kill them in the first place.

- (90) ἀλλά τί μοι τόδε θυμὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζει,
 ὅππως δὴ μνηστῆρσιν ἀναιδέσι χεῖρας ἐφήσω,
 μούνοσ ἐών· οἱ δ' αἰὲν ἀολλέες ἔνδον ἔασι.
 πρὸς δ' ἔτι καὶ τόδε μείζον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζω·
 εἴ περ γὰρ κτείναμι Διὸς τε σέθεν τε ἔκητι,
 πῆ κεν ὑπεκπροφύγοιμι; *Od.* 20.38-43

But somehow the spirit in my heart is pondering over this, how I [Odysseus] should lay my hands upon the shameless suitors, being all alone; they are always in here as a crowd. And in addition this yet even greater concern I ponder in my heart: even if I were to kill them by the will of Zeus and you, where would I escape to?

There are also cases in which the implied standard of comparison that appears in the co-text is metonymical. The first line of example (91) has a comparative marked by case, πατέρων μέγ' ἀμείνονες ‘much better than our fathers’, but what we are

⁵⁶ Heubeck/West/Hainsworth seem to understand γεραίτερος as a comparative with Telemachus as implied standard (1988, 161). Other instances with possible contrastive readings are *Il.* 1.80, 4.318-25, 10.235-9, 14.376-7, 14.382, 17.149-51; *Od.* 18.52-3. Other instances with the aspect age are: *Il.* 2.552-5, 4.318-25, 10.164-7, 10.175-6, 23.643-5, 24.433; *Od.* 2.188-90, 3.49-50, 3.362-4, 4.204-5, 18.30-1, 18.52-3, 21.309-10.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Il.* 10.93-107.

interested in is the *παυρότερος λαός* ‘weaker host’ and *τείχος ἄρειον* ‘stronger wall’. The fathers can be adduced as a metonymical implied standard of comparison, thus ‘a weaker host than our fathers’ would mean ‘a weaker host than the host our fathers had’, and ‘a stronger wall than our fathers’ would mean ‘a stronger wall than the wall that our fathers were attacking’.

- (91) ἡμεῖς τοι πατέρων μέγ’ ἀμείνονες εὐχόμεθ’ εἶναι·
 ἡμεῖς καὶ Θήβης ἔδος εἵλομεν ἑπταπύλοιο
 παυρότερον λαὸν ἀγαγόνθ’ ὑπὸ τείχος ἄρειον Il. 4.405-7

We [Sthenelus and Diomedes] claim to be much better than our fathers: we took the seat of Thebes with the seven gates, leading a weaker host against a stronger wall.

At the same time, however, there is a comparison or contrast going on between *λαός* and *τείχος*; the two nouns and the adjectives modifying them are juxtaposed in chiasmic word order. The host in question is not only weaker than the host of the father’s time, but also weak in comparison with how strong the wall is, which in turn makes Sthenelus and Diomedes’ achievements even more impressive.⁵⁸

Besides ‘real’ implied comparisons, comparatives with co-textually implied standards of comparison can refer to different scenarios or courses of action that are weighed up against one another. Two further subdivisions can be made: one type has the rough structure ‘it is better to do X’, and the other ‘I prefer (to do) X’. Since we are mostly dealing with longer, verbal comparees, the implied standards of comparison are also longer phrases that describe actions. Example (92) is spoken by Achilles at the end of his complaint that he had been doing all the fighting but received only small rewards, while Agamemnon claimed all the spoils for himself without having contributed much to the work of acquiring them.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922a, 33; Coray/Krieter-Spiro/Visser 2017, 174-5.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Il.* 1.116, 1.226-30, 4.303-7, 6.338-9, 6.407-13, 9.254-6, 11.404-6, 15.196-9, 15.222-8, 17.415-9, 19.200-4, 21.100-3, 22.99-110, 22.123-9, 22.300-3; *Od.* 1.374-8, 2.70-5, 2.139-43, 2.167-9, 8.548-9, 9.228, 20.304.

- (92) νῦν δ' εἴμι Φθίηνδ', ἐπεὶ ἧ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν
οἴκαδ' ἴμεν σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν, οὐδέ σ' οἴω
ἐνθάδ' ἄτιμος ἐὼν ἄφενος καὶ πλοῦτον ἀφύξειν *Il.* 1.169-71

Now I will go to Phthia, since it is much better to go home with my beaked ships, and I have no intention, while I am dishonoured here, to heap up wealth and treasures for you.

The co-text of example (92) provides enough information to understand that the implied standard of comparison is 'to remain here', and the sentence introduced by οὐδέ makes this explicit once more.

Other instances of this type start with a short discussion of two possible courses of action, and then a line such as ὡς ἄρα οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι 'and as he was pondering, it seemed better to him' followed by a short summary of the preferred option.⁶⁰

- (93) (...) ὁ δὲ μερμήριξεν Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἧ γούνων λίσσοιτο λαβὼν εὐώπιδα κούρην,
ἧ αὐτῶς ἐπέεσσιν ἀποσταδὰ μιλίχοισι
λίσσοιτ', εἰ δείξειε πόλιν καὶ εἵματα δοίη.
ὡς ἄρα οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι,
λίσσεσθαι ἐπέεσσιν ἀποσταδὰ μιλίχοισι,
μή οἱ γοῦνα λαβόντι χολώσαιτο φρένα κούρη *Od.* 6.141-7

And Odysseus pondered whether, clasping her by the knees, he should entreat the fair-faced girl, or whether, standing apart as he was, he should beg with gentle words, if she might show him the city and give him clothing. And, as he was pondering, it seemed better to him to stand apart and beg with gentle words so that the girl would not get angry in her heart with him if he clasped her knees.

The 'prefer' version is often construed with a full verb plus the adverb μάλλον, or with a verb meaning precisely 'prefer' or 'rather want', such as βούλομαι. In example (94) the implied standard of comparison 'Argives' is mentioned explicitly in the verse preceding the comparative, allowing us to understand this as 'the

⁶⁰ Cf. De Jong 2001, 159. The other instances of such 'indirect deliberation' scenes are: *Il.* 13.455-9, 14.20-4, 16.646-55; *Od.* 5.466-75, 10.153-5, 18.93-4, 22.338-9, 24.239-40.

heart of Zeus is tending more towards the sacrifices of Hector than to those of the Argives.⁶¹

- (94) χρεὼ βουλῆς ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ διοτρεφὲς ὦ Μενέλαε
 κερδαλέης, ἣ τίς κεν ἐρύσσεται ἠδὲ σαώσει
 Ἀργείους καὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ Διὸς ἐτράπετο φρήν.
 Ἐκτορείοις ἄρα μᾶλλον ἐπὶ φρένα θῆχ' ἱεροῖσιν Il. 10.43-6

There is need of a cunning plan, for both me and you, Menelaus, fostered of Zeus, a plan that would rescue and save the Argives and their ships, since Zeus has changed his mind. His heart is tending more towards the sacrifices of Hector.

A negated comparative with superlative meaning appears in Book 19 of the *Iliad*.⁶²

- (95) νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν κεῖσαι δεδαῖγμένος, αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ
 ἄκμηνον πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἔνδον ἐόντων
 σῆ ποθῆ· οὐ μὲν γάρ τι κακώτερον ἄλλο πάθοιμι,
 οὐδ' εἴ κεν τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο πυθοίμην Il. 19.319-22

Now you [Patroclus] lie slain, and my heart is fasting from drink and food, even though it is right here, due to my longing for you. Nothing worse could I [Achilles] suffer, not even if I should find out that my father had died.

This is part of a very emotional speech by Achilles, and there are several things going on at once. οὐ τι κακώτερον ἄλλο ‘no other worse thing’ interacts with various other thoughts in this passage: nothing is worse for Achilles than the fact that Patroclus was killed, i.e. Patroclus’ death is the worst of all things for Achilles. At the same time, οὐ τι κακώτερον ἄλλο can be read in conjunction with ἐμὸν κῆρ ἄκμηνον πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ‘my heart is fasting from drink and food’, making this fasting the epitome of Achilles’ expression of grief. The final part of this passage, οὐδ' εἴ κεν τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο πυθοίμην ‘not even if I should find out that my father had died’ acts as the epitome of reasons for grief, and reminds us of comparatives of the *melle dulcior* type: to Achilles the death of Patroclus is worse,

⁶¹ Cf. *Il.* 12.343-4, 12.356-7, 13.776-80, the one example with βούλομαι is *Il.* 1.111-3.

⁶² Cf. *Od.* 5.363-4, 19.350-2.

more grievous, than the death of his own father. The point is not that Achilles loves Patroclus more than his own father, but rather that he is using different aspects of superlative grief to express and conceptualize his own feelings.⁶³

3.5.2 Standard inferable from context

We are now moving on to a category in which the implied standard of comparison is not mentioned explicitly in the co-text, but still inferable from the reality of the story. A first subdivision is made between those instances in which the implied standard of comparison is actually the same as the comparee, but at an earlier stage in the story, i.e. where the comparee is compared to its former self. I label these instances ‘reflexive’. On a next level, i.e. within the reflexive and non-reflexive group, in some examples the positive of the adjective denoting the aspect of comparison is entailed (resulting in a meaning ‘even X-er’), in others not.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	98	48	50
Reflexive,	89	43	46
with positive entailed	66	36	30
with positive not entailed	23	7	16
Non-reflexive,	9	5	4
with positive entailed	7	3	4
with positive not entailed	2	2	0

Table 3.7: Comparatives with contextual standard

When contextually inferable standards of comparison are reflexive and have an aspect of comparison that entails the positive of the adjective (or adverb), they have a rough structure ‘X is even more Y than X was before’. Example (96) is a

⁶³ Cf. Coray 2009, 138-9.

typical instance involving an adjective.⁶⁴ It is taken from Thetis' speech to Achilles after Patroclus was killed in battle.

- (96) αἰεὶ τῶ γ' ἔσται χρώς ἔμπεδος, ἢ καὶ ἀρείων *Il.* 19.33
 Yet always will his [Patroclus'] flesh be sound, or even better.

The wider context makes it clear that there is no external standard of comparison to be inferred here, nor is the meaning that Patroclus' flesh will be better than flesh in general. Thetis assures Achilles that despite being dead, Patroclus' body will not rot, but remain unscathed and be even better than it was before, when he was still alive. That the positive of the adjective ἀρείων 'better' is entailed here is clear from the context, made explicit by the particle καὶ 'even', and further stressed by an adjective of similar meaning appearing in the positive: ἔμπεδος 'sound'.⁶⁵

Much more frequent are, however, examples in which the aspect of comparison is expressed by a verb in combination with the adverb μᾶλλον.⁶⁶

- (97) οὐ σύ γ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι πατὴρ ἐμός, ἀλλὰ με δαίμων
 θέλγει, ὄφρ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω *Od.* 16.194-5
 You are not actually Odysseus my father, but instead a god is
 bewitching me, so that in my mourning I would wail even more.

Expressions of the kind that we find in example (97) are intensifications of verbal actions; the comparee is always the subject of the verb, and so is the standard. When the aspect of comparison is expressed by a verb, the positive tends to be entailed, and often the particles ἔτι and/or καὶ (both meaning 'even', 'yet') make this explicit or put special emphasis on this fact.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Il.* 5.672-3, 5.679, 14.4, 16.557, 16.651, 21.211; *Od.* 7.189, 7.213-4, 8.202-3, 12.53-4, 12.163-4, 12.195, 18.246-8.

⁶⁵ Cf. Coray 2009, 27. Ameis/Hentze connect καὶ ἀρείων with ἔμπεδος: "noch besser, als unversehrt, also frischer, als bisher" (1922d, 5).

⁶⁶ Cf. *Il.* 1.562-3, 2.80-1, 5.206-8, 8.252, 8.470-2, 9.257-8, 9.585, 9.678-9, 9.700, 10.506, 12.413, 13.73-4, 14.97-8, 14.362, 14.441, 15.379-80, 15.726, 16.211, 19.16, 19.231-2, 21.136, 21.305-6, 22.235-6, 23.386, 23.417-8, 23.429-20, 23.446-7, 24.222, 24.568; *Od.* 1.88-9, 2.201-2, 2.334, 4.419, 5.284-5, 9.12-3, 9.480, 11.208, 11.213-4, 12.195, 15.198, 15.370, 16.194-5, 17.458-9, 18.88, 18.267-8, 18.346-8, 18.387, 19.117-8, 19.249-50, 20.284-6, 22.224, 23.231.

Apart from verbs, nouns can also be graded with *μᾶλλον*. As reflected in my translation of example (98), *ἡσυχίη* ‘calmness’ expresses a concept that we may expect to take the shape of an adjective. A more literal, but in English very unnatural, translation would be ‘calmness will be mine to an even greater extent tomorrow’.

- (98) (...) ἡσυχίη δ’ ἄν ἐμοὶ καὶ μᾶλλον ἔτ’ εἴη
 αὔριον *Od.* 18.22-3
- So should I be yet even more at ease tomorrow.

In the category ‘reflexive but positive not entailed’ we find mostly adjectival aspects of comparison, with the exception of six examples in the *Odyssey* that have verbal aspects. A typical adjectival case is:

- (99) καὶ μιν μακρότερον καὶ πάσσονα θῆκεν ιδέσθαι *Od.* 8.20
- And [Athena] made him [Odysseus] taller and sturdier to look at.

Saying that the positive is not entailed here does not mean that Odysseus was the opposite of tall and sturdy before, but rather that the focus is not on an intensification of an already rather prominent state, but on a change from ‘normal’ to ‘taller and sturdier’. There are complete comparative constructions with almost the same phrasing in which *πάρως* ‘before’ appears as the standard of comparison.⁶⁷ I treat these as examples with an adjectival aspect despite the presence of the verb *ιδέσθαι* ‘to look at’, since the point is not an intensification of the verbal action, but of a characteristic attributed to the comparee.⁶⁸

In a similar vein, verbal actions can be intensified by adverbs other than *μᾶλλον*, and yet be clearly verbal, and not adjectival.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Cf. example (64) in Section 3.3.1.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Il.* 18.258, 19.181-2, 22.54-5, 22.287-8, 23.427, 23.526-7, 24.243-4; *Od.* 1.392-3, 6.229-31, 14.498, 17.190-1, 18.195-6, 18.254-5, 19.127-8, 23.156-7, 24.373-4.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Od.* 8.201, 12.188, 18.216, 20.166-7, 23.108-9.

- (100) (...) τάχα δὲ φράσεται καὶ ἄρειον *Od.* 23.114
 Soon [Penelope] will understand things much better.

Odysseus says this to Telemachus before the reunification scene between himself and Penelope. At present Penelope does not quite understand what is going on in the house, nor is she willing to recognize that her husband is back. ἄρειον ‘better’ gives the verb φράσεται ‘she will see’ a comparative, i.e. intensified, meaning. The particle καὶ does not express ‘even better than before’ and entail the positive as in the previous category, but refers to the manner in which Penelope will recognize Odysseus. Shortly before, she refuted Telemachus’ appeal to speak to Odysseus and thereby recognize him: γνωσόμεθ’ ἀλλήλω καὶ λώϊον· ἔστι γὰρ ἡμιν | σήματα ‘we will recognize each other much better, since we have our signs’ (*Od.* 23.109-10). Odysseus echoes this in example (100): she will understand things much better by means of their σήματα than by way of Telemachus’ suggestion.⁷⁰

Non-reflexive instances of comparatives with contextually implied standards of comparison do not appear very often, and it can be difficult to distinguish between reflexive and non-reflexive examples when the comparee refers to a mass or multitude of entities. Such cases depend on the point of view: in a reflexive reading, the entities within a group are seen as inherent constituents that make up a whole, while in a non-reflexive reading, each member of the group is seen as an individual, distinct from the others. The following two examples illustrate this: in example (101), the evils that Odysseus has suffered are seen as a unified whole of which more or less can be told, hence I regard it as reflexive.⁷¹ By contrast, in example (102), which has a standard marked by case (τούτων ‘these’) and is quoted here only for the sake of illustration, Odysseus refers to another, even more lamentable thing separate from the ones referred to earlier.

⁷⁰ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1911, 137; Russo/Fernández-Galiano/Heubeck 1992, 323; De Jong 2001, 552.

⁷¹ For different views on πλείονα cf. Garvie 1994, 208.

- (101) καὶ δ' ἔτι κεν καὶ πλείον' ἐγὼ κακὰ μυθησαίμην,
ὄσσα γε δὴ ζύμπαντα θεῶν ἰότητι μόγησα *Od.* 7.213-4

And I could tell [you] of even more of all those evils that I suffered at the will of the gods.

- (102) (...) οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτα
τούτων σοι φθονέοιμι καὶ οἰκτρότερ' ἄλλ' ἀγορεύειν *Od.* 11.380-1

I would not refuse to tell you of other, even more lamentable things than these.

Non-reflexive expressions can entail the positive or not. Example (103) is taken from Apollo's rebuke of the gods for not protecting Hector from Achilles' wrath and mistreatment; that the implied standard of comparison must be Patroclus is easily understood from knowledge of the story. The positive of the adjective φίλτερον 'dearer' is entailed here, indicated both by the particle καὶ meaning 'even', and by general knowledge of the story.⁷²

- (103) μέλλει μὲν πού τις καὶ φίλτερον ἄλλον ὀλέσσαι
ἢ κασίγνητον ὁμογάστριον ἢ καὶ υἷόν *Il.* 24.46-7

No doubt a man may have lost someone even dearer, a brother, born of the same mother, or even a son.

The comparative ἄρειον 'stronger' in the following example does not entail the positive 'strong'.⁷³ τεῖχος 'wall' seems to be used to refer to a metaphorical wall of defence, rather than an actual wall around the ships, where this fighting scene is taking place.

- (104) ἢέ τινάς φαμεν εἶναι ἀοσητηῆρας ὀπίσσω,
ἢέ τι τεῖχος ἄρειον, ὃ κ' ἀνδράσι λαιγὸν ἀμύναι; *Il.* 15.735-6

Do we think that there are either some helpers in our future, or some stronger wall that could ward off destruction from men?

⁷² The other instances with entailed positive are *Il.* 13.120-1, 23.551-2; *Od.* 9.537, 11.474, 18.106-7, 20.18.

⁷³ The other instance in which the positive is not entailed is *Il.* 10.556-7.

The standard is again not reflexive: what is meant is not that the same wall should be stronger than it was before, but *τειχος* refers to another, hypothetical wall that is stronger than the wall of defence presently formed by the Achaeans.⁷⁴

3.6 Polar comparatives

The final category of comparative constructions is the most difficult one. It comprises all those instances in which the standard of comparison has no concrete presence in the immediate or wider context, but refers to an imagined reality or a normative standard. The sense of an actual comparative meaning is often very weak, and can be paraphrased as ‘relatively X’, rather than ‘more X’.⁷⁵ It is difficult to further subdivide this category, yet there clearly are tendencies and differences, as indicated in Table 3.8.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	137	66	71
Contrastive	23	19	14
Alternative scenario	46	12	27
ἄσσον	27	14	13
θἄσσον	24	12	12
Moderative	9	5	4
Excessive	5	4	1

Table 3.8: Polar comparatives

The subcategory that I have labelled ‘contrastive’ includes those examples in which the imagined standard of comparison can be described as a group or collective concept of which the comparee is a part. Such a comparative expresses that within

⁷⁴ Cf. Leaf 1902, 152; Ameis/Hentze 1922c, 128; Janko 1992, 307.

⁷⁵ Cf. Monro 1891, 116: “the Comparative is sometimes used as a softened way of expressing the notion of the Positive”.

this group or collective concept the aspect of comparison applies to the comparee to a relatively high degree.⁷⁶

- (105) ὁψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε γέρων ἥρωσ Ἐχένης,
ὄς δὴ Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν προγενέστερος ἦεν *Od.* 7.155-6
Eventually then spoke the old hero Echeneus, who was an elder
among the Phaeacians.

The point here is not that Echeneus was older than the Phaeacians, thus the genitive Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν is partitive and functions like the scope of a superlative construction; it marks the group within which the aspect προγενέστερος ‘older’ is true of the comparee Echeneus to a relatively high degree.⁷⁷ Not every instance that I have included in this group is as easily recognizable as belonging here. Adjectives meaning ‘older’ or ‘younger’ are the best examples of this type, followed by ‘better’/‘worse’, which shows that the contrastive usage of comparative adjectives is to some degree lexicalized.

The examples of the category ‘alternative scenario’ all share that if one were to attempt to describe a possible implied standard of comparison, it would be something like ‘than not to do X’, or ‘than the opposite’, i.e. an alternative, imagined, often opposed action or entity. This ‘alternative scenario’ type is similar to the ‘disjunctive comparative’ type in the co-text and particle-marked category, the difference being that here there is no explicit mention at all of the alternative, or dispreferred, option.

- (106) ἄλλ’ εἴ μοί τι πίθοιο, τό κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη *Od.* 20.381
Instead, if you would obey me it would be much more profitable.

We can assume that what is meant in example (106) is that to obey is better,

⁷⁶ Cf. *Il.* 1.80, 1.575-6, 3.108, 4.262-3, 4.315-6, 11.290, 12.269-71, 12.437, 14.267-8, 15.203, 14.275, 15.225, 15.491, 15.644, 23.413, 23.787-8, 24.52, 24.148-50, 24.177-9; *Od.* 2.29, 3.124-5, 6.275, 7.293-4, 8.475-6, 11.342-3, 13.110-1, 15.324, 18.403-4, 20.131-3, 21.324, 23.286-7, 24.159-60.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Od.* 11.342-3. Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 14; Stanford 1965, 326; Heubeck/West/Hainsworth 1988, 331. Garvie, on the other hand, reads a proper comparative with Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν as standard of comparison: “older (born before) than the <other> Phaeacian men” (1994, 196).

more profitable, than not to obey, but the ‘not to obey’ option is not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the co-text, nor is it a salient scenario in the context of the passage.⁷⁸

A mirror image of this first subcategory are expressions of the kind shown in example (107), which state that one scenario or situation is/would be worse than another.⁷⁹

- (107) (...) κάκιον δέ κεν εἶη
νηυσὶν καιομένησιν ἀμυνέμεν Il. 9.601-2
- It would be worse to defend the ships when they were already burning.

In expressions with adjectives from the negative end of a scale, like ‘worse’ in example (107), there is often a sense of entailment of the positive. The situation in which example (107) occurs is already bad, and ‘it would be *even* worse than it already is, if we had to defend the ships when they were already burning’. The sufferer of the negative impact tends to be a specific person or group of people identifiable from the context, while examples with ‘better’, such as example (106), are more general and do not entail the positive: ‘(in principle/generally/for all) it is a better thing to do X’. Two of these instances are negated.⁸⁰

- (108) οὐ μὲν γάρ τι χέρειον ἐν ὄρῃ δεῖπνον ἐλέσθαι Od. 17.176
- For it is not a worse thing to take one’s dinner at the right time.

The comparative force of the adjective χέρειον ‘worse’ is very weak, one may even say not active at all; the line could better be expressed as ‘it is not a bad thing to take one’s dinner at the right time’.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Cf. *Il.* 1.216-7, 1.274, 5.201, 7.28, 11.466-71, 19.56-64, 22.103; *Od.* 2.320, 3.69-70, 3.357-8, 6.282-3, 7.159-60 (negated), 7.310, 8.542-3, 11.356-61, 14.466, 15.70-1, 15.204, 17.583-4, 18.166-8, 19.283-4, 20.331-2, 22.104.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Il.* 1.563, 18.278-9, 18.305-6, 21.437-8; *Od.* 2.188-90, 4.292-3, 15.514-5, 16.147, 17.14-5, 18.174, 19.120, 19.322-3.

⁸⁰ The other instance with οὐ τι χέρειον is *Od.* 23.262.

⁸¹ This is what Monro suggests (1902, 104). Ameis/Hentze give “nicht das Schlechteste oder

Two other frequently occurring adjectives are ἄσσον ‘nearer’ and θᾶσσον ‘more quickly’. They are always used adverbially, and their comparative force is often fairly weak. ἄσσον appears 27 times, and θᾶσσον 23 times.⁸²

- (109) ἄσσον ἴτω ὅς τις δέπας οἴσεται ἀμφικύπελλον· *Il.* 23.667
 Let him come closer, who will take as his prize the two-handled cup.

An explicit version of this could be something like ‘come closer than you are now’, but expressions like this do not carry a strong comparative sense,⁸³ except in the two instances in the *Odyssey* that are doubly marked for comparative by adding the -τερο- morpheme to the already comparative form ἄσσο-:⁸⁴

- (110) καὶ τότε μ’ εἰρέσθω πόσιος πέρι νόστιμον ἦμαρ
 ἄσσοτέρω καθίσασα παραὶ πυρὶ *Od.* 17.571-2
 And then she shall ask me about the day of her husband’s return,
 once she has given me a seat closer to the fire.

Likewise, the instances with θᾶσσον carry real comparative meaning to varying degrees.

- (111) αἰεὶ γὰρ πόδα νηὸς ἐνώμων, οὐδέ τω ἄλλω
 δῶχ’ ἐτάρων, ἵνα θᾶσσον ἰκοίμεθα πατρίδα γαῖαν *Od.* 10.32-3
 For I was always guiding the rudder of the ship, and gave it to
 none other of my comrades, so that the sooner we might come to
 our native land.

In example (111) the comparative makes sense because we can supply ‘I held on to the rudder so that we might come home more quickly than we would if I let my

nicht so übel” (1910, 123). Rutherford notes that “the comparative is used in a weak sense, little more than ‘bad as opposed to the alternative.’” (1992, 146). Stanford comments “χέρειον is a comparative of contrast” (1967, 285), and so does Steiner, suggesting to translate it as “better” (2010, 99).

⁸² They appear together in the same verse in a dramatic challenge: ἄσσον ἴθ’ ὥς κεν θᾶσσον ὀλέθρου πείραθ’ ἴκηαι ‘Come nearer, so that you may the sooner reach the doom of destruction’ at *Il.* 6.143 and 20.429.

⁸³ The other instances are *Il.* 1.334-5, 1.566-7, 6.143, 9.508, 14.247, 15.105-6, 20.429, 22.3-4, 22.92, 23.8-9, 23.44-6, 23.97-8, 24.74; *Od.* 9.299-300, 9.380-1, 10.536-7, 11.49-50, 11.88-9, 11.147-8, 13.367-8, 17.303, 19.392, 19.479-81, 24.220-1.

⁸⁴ The other instance with ἄσσοτέρω is *Od.* 19.506-7.

comrades steer the ship'. Only ten lines on from this passage, we find an example of *θᾶσσον* used with little to no comparative force:

- (112) (...) ἀλλ' ἄγε θᾶσσον ἰδώμεθα, ὅτι τάδ' ἐστίν, *Od.* 10.44
 But, come, let us quickly see what there is.

One of Odysseus' comrades says this as they are about to open the bag that Aeolus gave to Odysseus. It may be possible to read this as 'let us open that bag so that we may see what there is more quickly than if we waited for Odysseus to show us', but this meaning is certainly not as directly at hand as the comparative meaning in example (111). *θᾶσσον* always appears in expressions of intention or in commands, both of which carry a sense of urgency; the verbs in these expressions often denote movement and preparation for an action.⁸⁵

There are nine instances of polar comparatives with other aspects of comparison. The comparative force of the adjectives is not fully present but somewhat moderated. The following line is spoken by Agamemnon in response to Chryses, who asked the sons of Atreus to release his daughter.

- (113) ἀλλ' ἴθι μὴ μ' ἐρέθιζε σαώτερος ὧς κε νέηαι *Il.* 1.32
 But go, do not make me angry, so that you may return more safely.

The meaning of *σαώτερος* is something like 'more safely than you would if you did anger me and I punished you'. Some translators render this as 'the safer', which conveys the same sense.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 14 (referring to *Od.* 7.152). The other instances are *Il.* 2.439-40, 4.64-5, 6.143, 12.26, 13.115, 16.129, 17.654-5, 19.68-9, 20.257-8, 20.429, 23.52-3; *Od.* 2.307-8, 7.151-2, 10.72, 10.192-3, 10.228, 10.268-9, 15.201, 16.130-1, 20.153-4, 24.495.

⁸⁶ Cf. Kühner/Blass 1890, 564; Ameis/Hentze 1913, 4; Willcock 1978, 187. Wittwer argues that there is no comparative sense here at all, and that *σαώτερος* means safe, i.e. alive as opposed to dead. "Chryses hat nicht die Wahl, mehr oder weniger wohlbehalten zu bleiben, sondern die zwischen Leben und Tod" (1970, 56-7). Latacz/Nünlist/Stoevesandt call the comparative contrastive, but with "leicht gradierendem Nebenton: 'auf daß du *noch einigermaßen, noch eben* heil zurückkommst'" (2009, 38, emphasis original), and refer to Schwyzer 1988, 184, who gives exactly the same translation. The other instances are *Il.* 4.303-7, 5.231-2, 9.202-3, 10.222-6; *Od.* 1.164-5, 1.351-2, 7.51-2, 11.356-61.

The final subcategory of polar comparatives is labelled ‘excessive’, and can be paraphrased as ‘too X’. It represents expressions in which the comparee is said to possess a quality to an excessively high degree.

- (114) στῆ δὲ μάλ’ ἐγγὺς ἰών, καὶ ἐρεισάμενος βάλε μέσσας
 εὖ διαβάς, ἵνα μὴ οἱ ἀφαιρότερον βέλος εἶη *Il.* 12.457-8

And he [Hector] came and stood very close by, and firmly planting his foot he hit them [the gates] in the middle, standing with his feet well apart, so that his cast would not be too weak.

The comparative ἀφαιρότερον ‘weaker’ is translated as ‘too weak’ because its meaning is ‘weaker than necessary/weaker than it should be’. The implied standard of comparison is an ideal or a norm against which the comparee, βέλος ‘cast’, is measured.⁸⁷

3.7 Conclusion

The majority of comparative expressions in Homer lack an explicit standard of comparison; in many cases, the implied standard of comparison can be established on the basis of the co-text or context in which the comparative appears, yet a fifth of all comparatives are polar or have at best imaginary standards of comparison. My analysis has also shown that the most frequent aspect of comparison in comparative constructions is a rather vague notion of ‘better’ or ‘worse’, occasionally made more explicit by nouns or verbs.

In those cases in which the standard of comparison is explicit, marking it by adposition and by lexical means are very marginal strategies; they are creative,

⁸⁷ Leaf comments on this, but it is not entirely clear what he means when he says “Notice the curious use by which μὴ ἀφαιρότερον = *more powerful*, a comparative in the dependent form of οὐκ ἀφαιρός = *strong* by *litotes*.” (1900, 557). A translation ‘standing with his feet well apart, so that his cast would be the more powerful’ may express the same idea, but the affirmative undertone in ‘the more powerful’ does not do justice to the precautionary sense of ἵνα μὴ ἀφαιρότερον εἶη ‘lest it be too weak’. The other instances are *Il.* 9.300, 17.176, 23.590; *Od.* 21.132-3.

descriptive ways of expressing a comparative relation rather than grammaticalized means of forming them. The case and particle category are almost complementary ways of expressing complete and typical comparative relations, but even they show a considerable number of atypical comparisons. There is a strong tendency that, if comparee and standard of comparison are nominal and either the subject or direct object of the sentence, the case construction is used; with verbal, clausal, and adverbial standards, or if a noun is in the dative or genitive case, we find the particle construction. The overall impression one gets from comparatives marked by particle is that they do not measure one entity against another with regard to a shared property (like case constructions), but that the disjunctive nature of the particle $\check{\text{ř}}$ is rather prominent, resulting in an expression that states the preference or choice of one thing, option, or scenario over another. In several cases of comparatives with explicit or implied standards of comparison, the standard (or comparee) is elliptical or metonymical.

Chapter 4

Superlatives

This chapter provides a typology of superlative constructions in the Homeric epics, and attempts to shed more light on the question of how superlatives differ from comparatives. Like the chapter on comparatives, the first part is structured according to the different strategies with which the scope (the superlatives' version of the standard of comparison, cf. Chapter 2.5) is marked, and the final two sections deal with superlatives without explicit scope. The number of instances for each type is given in Table 4.1.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	786	487	299
Case	224	129	95
Preposition	48	30	18
Lexical	50	31	19
Implicit scope	163	108	55
Elative	301	189	112

Table 4.1: Superlative constructions

Like comparative constructions, complete superlative constructions typically have their scope marked with a case, the (partitive) genitive. A preposition is used with the same function as the case construction, and, like the lexical strategy, is used

more often with superlatives than comparatives. There are no superlative constructions marked by particle, and many with no explicitly marked scope. Contrary to the comparatives, for which an implied scope could be established on the basis of the context and pragmatic features in most cases, this can only be achieved for a relatively small number of superlatives. Largely it is very difficult to decide whether a given superlative without expressed scope is to be understood with reference to a concrete, contextually implied scope, a general scope, or whether it is relative, i.e. it expresses a very high degree in an absolute sense.

The aspect of superlative constructions is most frequently expressed by an adjective. There are 28 different adjectives with the superlative suffix *-ιστος*, and 47 with the superlative suffix *-τατος*. Generally speaking, adjectives that take the superlative suffix *-ιστος* take the comparative suffix *-ίων*, and those that mark the superlative with *-τατος* have comparatives in *-τερος*. More or less analogous to the distribution of adjectives with *-ίων* vs. *-τερος*, the adjectives with *-ιστος* tend to express basic adjectival concepts and are fairly frequent, while the majority of *-τατος* adjectives tend to express more complex concepts and only appear once or twice in the Homeric epics. In four cases we find the same root displaying forms with both suffixes: *οἰκτιστος* (attested 7 times in Homeric Greek) vs. *οἰκτρότατος* (1x), *ρήιστος* (1x) vs. *ρήίτατος* (1x), *φέριστος* (7x) vs. *φέρτατος* (10x), *ᾠκιστος* (3x) vs. *ᾠκύτατος* (1x).

From a synchronic perspective, there is a slight difference between the forms in *-ιστος* and those in *-τατος* with regard to the frequency in which they occur in complete superlative vs. relative expressions (cf. Table 4.2). Adjectives in *-ιστος* are found in relative expressions more often than in complete superlative constructions (43% vs. 35%), while adjectives in *-τατος* occur more often in complete superlative constructions (49% vs. 30%). This is due to the fact that the three superlative adjectives that are used most frequently in relative constructions, and often in address formulae, are formed with *-ιστος*: *ἄριστος* occurs 78 times, *κύδιστος* 19 times, and

μέγιστος 17 times. The most frequent elative adjective in *-τατος*, *αινότατος*, occurs only 11 times. I have not made any other observations that suggest that *-ιστος* and *-τατος* forms differ substantially with regard to their syntax or semantics.

Category	Total number	Complete	Implicit scope	Elicative
<i>-ιστος</i>	386	136	83	167
	100%	35%	22%	43%
<i>-τατος</i>	125	61	26	38
	100%	49%	21%	30%

Table 4.2: *-ιστος* vs. *-τατος*

Like comparatives, superlatives can be enhanced to stress a high degree of inequality between comparee and scope. Superlatives do this more frequently than comparatives, and display a greater variety of features that can be used to enhance the superlative meaning. The adverbs *πολύ*, *μέγα*, *ἔξοχον/ὄχα*, *περί*, and *μάλιστα* (all meaning ‘very’, ‘by far’) can be combined with the comparee and the aspect to highlight that a certain quality applies to an especially high degree. In some cases the adverb is more closely associated with the aspect, in others its job is mainly to highlight the comparee. The combination of *πάντων* ‘of all’ or *ἄλλων* ‘of the others’ with an explicit scope emphasizes that one individual is lifted out of and contrasted with a group representing a comprehensive set. The prefix *παν-* with an adjective expressing the aspect of comparison has the same effect, but is used much less frequently.

Like *πρότερος* and *δεύτερος/ὑστερος*, the adjectives *πρῶτος/πρώτιστος* ‘first’ and *δεύτατος/ὑστατος* ‘last’ are most often used as a means to structure the narrative discourse (as in ‘first they did this’, ‘this was the first/last time’). There are, however, some cases in which they refer to, for example, a warrior who is the first or last among a group to do something. These cases are so similar to ‘real’ superlative constructions that I include them in this study.

4.1 Superlatives marked by case

We have already seen that especially adjectival aspects of comparison can vary greatly with regard to how concrete and semantically rich they are. A first glance at the category of superlatives marked by case shows that there is not only variation in the degree of concreteness of the aspects involved, but also with regard to the scope. Thus, a first distinction is made here between those constructions in which the scope refers to a specific group, for example a certain tribe, profession, or type of animal, and those constructions in which it refers to a very general group, such as mortals, men, women, gods, or simply ‘all’ (cf. Table 4.3).

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	224	129	95
Concrete scope	146	83	63
General scope	78	46	32

Table 4.3: Superlatives marked by case

Of the 224 total instances of this category 79, which is more than a third, have an adjective meaning ‘best’ as their aspect of comparison, and many others employ a combination of ‘best’ with another adjective, a noun, or a verb. The meaning and literary function of superlative constructions with ‘best’ referring to a hero will be discussed in Chapter 6.2. A representative example is Menelaus saying about Patroclus:

- (115) (...) πέφαται δ' ὄριστος Ἀχαιῶν *Il.* 17.689
 Slain is the best of the Achaeans.

Of the other aspects that appear in the case category, φίλτατος ‘dearest’ is the most frequent; the rest mostly refer to positive character traits of human or divine beings, such as δικαιοτάτος ‘most righteous’, κεδνότατος ‘trustiest’, κάλλιστος ‘most beautiful’, κέρδιστος ‘craftiest’, but some are also said of animals (ᾠκιστος

and ἐλαφρότατος ‘swiftest’, τελειότατος ‘most reliable’). Negative character traits that feature as aspects of comparison are among others ἔχθιστος ‘most hateful’, ἐλέγχιστος ‘most despised’, οἴκτιστος ‘most piteous’, ὀλοώτατος ‘most cruel’, ἀποτμώτατος ‘most ill-fated’. Adjectives relating to time and age are also relatively frequent, e.g. νεώτατος/ὀπλότατος ‘youngest’ and πρεσβύτατος ‘oldest’, which can also mean ‘of highest status due to age’, or πρώτιστος ‘first’ and ὕστατος/δεύτατος ‘last’.

4.1.1 Instances with concrete scope

The most common kind of concrete scope is the name of a specific group of people, often a certain tribe of warriors fighting at Troy. The most frequent group in the *Iliad* are the Achaeans, followed by the Trojans and some minor tribes. In the *Odyssey* we find the people in Ithaca, the suitors, and the Phaeacians. Other groups include certain professions (augurs, heralds, domestic servants), the athletes at an athletic contest, and a certain person’s friends or comrades. Especially in the *Odyssey* we find ‘best’ applied to a specific animal within a herd of cattle or a species of birds, as in example (116).¹

- (116) αὐτίκα δ’ Ἥελιοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας Od. 12.353
 And immediately [Odysseus’ comrades] drove the best of the cattle
 of Helios.

A typical and unproblematic representative of the instances that feature a concrete adjectival aspect is example (117).²

¹ The other instances with ‘best’ are *Il.* 1.69, 1.91, 1.244, 1.412, 2.82, 2.761-2, 3.19, 3.250-1, 3.274, 4.259-60, 5.103, 5.414, 5.541, 5.842-3, 6.76, 6.98, 7.50, 7.220-1, 10.235-6, 10.538-9, 11.328, 12.13, 13.836, 15.281-3, 16.21, 16.271-2, 17.62, 17.80, 17.105, 17.164-5, 17.306-9, 17.513, 17.689, 18.10-1, 19.216. *Od.* 1.210-1, 2.292-4, 4.272-3, 4.278, 6.257, 8.78, 8.90-1, 8.107-8, 8.250-1, 9.195-6, 9.432, 11.179, 11.478, 11.523-4, 12.343-4, 14.18-9, 14.106, 14.107-8, 14.414-5, 15.24-6, 16.76-7, 17.415-6, 18.289, 19.528-9, 22.29-30, 23.121-2, 24.37-8, 24.215, 24.429, 24.506-7.

² The other instances with concrete single aspects are *Il.* 1.176, 8.247, 9.198, 9.521-2, 13.249, 13.429, 15.237-8, 17.583-4, 19.315-6, 21.141-3, 22.139-40, 24.315, 24.748, 24.762; *Od.* 11.239,

- (117) ὄν Χείρων ἐδίδαξε δικαιοτάτος Κενταύρων *Il.* 11.832
whom Cheiron taught, the most righteous of the Centaurs

Many examples enhance the superlative force by one, or a combination of, the adverbs πολύ, μέγα, ἔξοχον/ῶχα, περί, and μάλιστα with the comparee/aspect, or πάντων with the scope.

- (118) ὦ Ἄρκεισιάδη, πάντων πολὺ φίλταθ' ἐταίρων *Od.* 24.517
son of Arceisius, far dearest of all my comrades

Here, for instance, we find a combination of the adverb πολύ 'by far' with the superlative adjective φίλτατε 'dearest', and the adjective πάντων 'of all' with the scope ἐταίρων 'of my comrades'.³

Negation does not interact with superlative constructions in the same way as with comparative constructions. Here it can only combine with the aspect of comparison, not with the comparee or scope, and therefore we do not get expressions that have the meaning of another comparison type.⁴ We find two instances in which the aspect of comparison is a negated negative quality.

- (119) (...) ἐπεὶ οὐ μιν ἀφαιρότατος βάλ' Ἀχαιῶν *Il.* 15.11
since not the weakest of the Achaeans had struck him

This statement refers to Aias, one of the supreme heroes of the *Iliad*, and works like a litotes: the negation of a negative quality applied to someone who is well-known for his prowess results in an intensified reading of the positive quality.⁵

The *Odyssey* has one example in which the standard of comparison is marked by the dative case instead of the genitive. This is unusual, but not entirely surprising; the genitive and dative case in Greek have several overlaps, not only in

12.258-9, 13.86-7, 15.364, 24.517.

³ The other enhanced examples are *Il.* 2.701-2, 17.583-4, 22.233-4, 24.748, 24.762; *Od.* 11.239, 12.258-9.

⁴ For more on the interaction of negation with the different comparison types cf. Chapter 6.1.1.

⁵ Cf. Janko 1992, 228. The other instance is *Od.* 4.199-200.

their function to mark the group of which someone or something is a part (as is the case here), but also in expressions of possession, where depending on the construction, either one or the other is used to mark the possessor. Chantraine and Schwyzer/Debrunner regard this dative as a function of the locative, marking a group of people among whom someone is counted.⁶

- (120) ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον, ὅου κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον
 πᾶσιν Κυκλώπεσσι *Od.* 1.70-1
 godlike Polyphemus, whose strength is greatest among all the Cyclopes

Apart from the unusual case employed, example (120) is special also because it is metonymical. What is conveyed here is a comparison between Polyphemus and the other Cyclopes: he surpasses them in strength. Yet, strictly speaking, according to the syntactical surface structure, κράτος ‘strength’ is the comparee, and not a part of the aspect of comparison. A parallel for this is found in references to a person with the phrase ‘the strength of [personal name]’ instead of just the personal name: ἱερὴ ἰς Τηλεμάχιο ‘the divine strength of Telemachus’ (*Od.* 2.409 and six other instances in the *Odyssey*).⁷

Combinations of the adverbs μάλιστα, περί, and ἔξοχον with verbs to express a superlative relation occur much more frequently than the corresponding comparative construction with μᾶλλον. While μᾶλλον marks the verb for comparative degree, and thus intensifies the verbal action, μάλιστα etc. in most cases pick out one constituent of the sentence, either a nominal or an adverbial one, and express that the verbal action applies to this constituent, i.e. the comparee, to the highest degree.⁸ A scope appears in the genitive case and denotes the group of which the comparee is a member. The nature of this scope shows which of the constituents in the sentence is the comparee. The comparee can have any syntactic function,

⁶ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908b, 7; Chantraine 1953, 80; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 155.

⁷ Cf. Heubeck/Hoekstra 1989, 192, also with reference to example (121).

⁸ Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 27.

i.e. subject or object, but it can also be an adverbial expression. In example (121) the comparee is the subject: ‘out of all the servants, the swineherd cared most’.⁹

- (121) (...) δῖον ὑφορβόν, ὃ οἱ βιότοιο μάλιστα
κῆδετο οἰκῶν, οὓς κτήσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς *Od.* 14.3-4
the noble swineherd, who cared for his [Odysseus’] stock most of
the servants that noble Odysseus had got

In other examples, the object (indirect or direct) is the comparee, as shown by the fact that the scope refers to the group of which the object is a part.¹⁰ Aeneas and Hector are the comparee in example (122); they are referred to by the dative ὑμῖν ‘upon you’ in the clause that expresses the comparison.¹¹

- (122) Αἰνεΐα τε καὶ Ἴηκτορ, ἐπεὶ πόνος ὑμῖν μάλιστα
Τρώων καὶ Λυκίων ἐγκέκλιται *Il.* 6.77-8
Aeneas and Hector, since of Trojans and Lycians, the toil of war
lies upon you the most

When an adjective in the superlative is combined with a noun or verb, the adjective is, in the majority of cases, a vague adjective, meaning ‘best’ or ‘first’, and the noun or verb specifies the domain of the superiority or priority.

- (123) Λαοδίκην ἐσάγουσα θυγατρῶν εἶδος ἀρίστην *Il.* 6.252
leading in Laodice, the best of her daughters in appearance

We find the noun in the accusative, as in example (123) εἶδος ‘appearance’, as well as in the dative.¹² In combination with an adjective meaning ‘first’ or ‘last’ we

⁹ Cf. Bowie 2013, 164. The other instances with the comparee as subject are *Il.* 4.46; *Od.* 1.434-5, 15.540-1, 17.172-3.

¹⁰ The other instances with the comparee as object are *Il.* 2.21, 4.257-8, 14.489-91, 17.576-7, 24.574-5; *Od.* 4.171-2.

¹¹ Cf. Graziosi/Haubold 2010, 97: “Λυκίων: the Lycian leader Sarpedon has just been wounded (5.663-98) and is therefore no longer available to lead his people: the task falls on Aeneas and Hector.”

¹² Accusative noun: *Il.* 2.715, 3.124, 13.365, 13.378; *Od.* 8.116-7. Dative noun: *Il.* 2.715, 3.124, 13.365, 13.378, 18.364-7; *Od.* 22.244-5. As we saw with comparative constructions of this type, the nouns can be abstract or concrete.

tend to find verbs rather than nouns.¹³

- (124) ὕστατος ἀρνειὸς μῆλων ἔστειχε θύραζε *Od.* 9.444
 Last of the flock the ram went out.

One example involves a semantically richer adjective (which could also be understood as an adverb here) together with a verb.¹⁴

- (125) (...) αἰετός, ὃν ῥά τέ φασιν
 ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν *Il.* 17.674-5
 an eagle, which, as people say, is keenest in sight of all birds under
 heaven

In seven cases, one superlative construction involves two different adjectives at the same time, and thus we have two aspects of comparison applied to one comparee, as in example (126).¹⁵

- (126) δῶρων δ', ὅσσ' ἐν ἐμῷ οἴκῳ κειμήλια κεῖται,
 δῶσω ὃ κάλλιστον καὶ τιμηέστατόν ἐστι *Od.* 15.113-4
 And of all the gifts that lie in my house as treasures, I will give
 you whichever one is the most beautiful and the most valuable.

Example (127) also involves two aspects and is a little more complex because like in example (120) we find the structure 'whose strength is greatest' instead of 'who is strongest'. In addition, one may doubt whether the scope οἰωνῶν 'of birds' is still active in the relative clause, or whether we may have to read the superlative in the relative clause as independent and thus lacking a scope. In my view οἰωνῶν is so readily available that it would be odd not to understand it with both φίλτατος 'dearest' and, metonymically, with μέγιστον 'greatest'.

¹³ Cf. *Il.* 2.701-2, 13.459-60; *Od.* 1.285-6. *Od.* 9.447-52 is a longer passage in which a simple superlative ὕστατος appears first, and is repeated a few lines later in the enhanced form πανύστατος. *Od.* 8.123 involves a verb together with the adjective ἄριστος 'best'.

¹⁴ Willcock understands ὀξύτατον as adverbial with δέρκεσθαι (1984, 262).

¹⁵ The other instances with two aspects are *Il.* 6.293-5, 21.253, 24.292-3. *Od.* 4.613-4, 10.224-5, 15.105-8.

- (127) πέμψον δ' οἰωνὸν ταχὺν ἄγγελον, ὅς τε σοὶ αὐτῷ
 φίλτατος οἰωνῶν, καὶ εὖ κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον *Il.* 24.310-1
 And send a bird, the swift messenger, who to you yourself is dear-
 est of birds and whose strength is greatest.

A verse that appears once in the *Iliad* and three times in the *Odyssey* involves ὑπατος 'highest', an adjective with superlative meaning but no superlative suffix.¹⁶

- (128) ὦ πάτερ ἡμέτερε Κρονίδη, ὑπατε κρειόντων *Od.* 1.45
 our father, son of Chronos, highest of lords

The adjective ἔξοχος 'eminent' is a similar case; in combination with a genitive plural it means 'most eminent'. We find it on its own, in meaning and usage very similar to ἄριστος and other adjectives denoting 'best', as in example (129),¹⁷ but it is also often accompanied by nouns, as in example (130).¹⁸

- (129) υἷὸν ἐπεὶ μοι δῶκε γενέσθαι τε τραφόμεν τε
 ἔξοχον ἡρώων *Il.* 18.436-7
 He gave me a son to be born and brought up, pre-eminent among
 warriors.
- (130) (...) ἀρετῇ δ' ἦν ἔξοχος αὐτῶν *Il.* 14.118
 And in valour he was pre-eminent among them.

In some instances, one could understand the adverbial form ἔξοχον as giving positive adjectives superlative meaning. Most translators render ἀμύμονά τε κρατερόν τε ἔξοχον ἡρώων (*Il.* 18.55-6) as 'excellent and mighty, pre-eminent among warriors', i.e. with ἔξοχον as an adjective in the accusative singular in apposition to the other two adjectives. But in other places ἔξοχον (or ἔξοχα) is used exactly like περί or μάλιστα, as a way of marking expressions with verbal aspects of comparison with superlative degree (cf. *Il.* 24.113-4). In the same way, ἔξοχον could here

¹⁶ The other instances of this formulaic verse are *Il.* 8.31; *Od.* 1.81 and 24.473.

¹⁷ And in *Il.* 2.482-3, 12.269-70.

¹⁸ Cf. *Il.* 3.227, in which ἔξοχος has a more literal meaning 'standing out among'. In *Od.* 18.204-5 it is debatable whether παντοίην ἀρετήν 'all kinds of virtue' from the clause before is also meant to be understood with ἔξοχος Ἀχαιῶν.

be seen as an adverb giving the adjectives superlative meaning: ‘pre-eminently excellent and mighty among warriors’, or as a way of marking ἡρώων as the scope: ‘excellent and mighty above warriors’.¹⁹

In example (131) we find another adjective that is not marked with superlative degree, but incorporated into a structure that is typical of superlative expressions. The same adjective occurs with superlative morphology in example (132).

(131) (...) Εὐρυδίκη, πρέσβα Κλυμένοιο θυγατρῶν *Od.* 3.452
Eurydice, the most honoured of the daughters of Clymenus

(132) πρεσβυτάτην δ’ ὄπιε θυγατρῶν Ἴπποδάμειαν *Il.* 13.429
He married the oldest of the daughters, Hippodameia.

In example (132), it is straightforward to understand πρεσβύτατος as meaning ‘oldest’, but the epic feminine form πρέσβα of example (131) according to the *LSJ* always means ‘honoured’, and never ‘aged’.²⁰ The combination of the adjective with the genitive plural θυγατρῶν ‘of the daughters’ strongly suggests a superlative reading ‘most honoured of daughters’.²¹

The final subcategory of superlatives with concrete scope is characterized by the addition of ἄλλων ‘of (the) others’ to the scope, which seems odd at first sight considering that a superlative construction is distinguished from a comparative construction by the fact that the comparee is part of the group to which the scope refers. The addition of an adjective meaning ‘other’ seems to contradict precisely this defining feature of a superlative construction. In a strict sense, *Mary is the*

¹⁹ Cf. *Od.* 24.24-5, with περί marking the adjective φίλος for superlative.

²⁰ Heubeck/West/Hainsworth disagree, their comment on πρέσβα is: “only here used of a mortal; the meaning must surely be ‘eldest’, not ‘august, honoured’.” (1988, 188). Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908b, 101.

²¹ There is one example of πρεσβυτάτη without an explicit scope: καί με πρεσβυτάτην τέκετο Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης ‘And crooked-counselling Cronos begat me as the most honoured one’ (*Il.* 4.59). Here the reading ‘most honoured’ fits the context better than ‘oldest’ because this line is followed by a further elaboration of why Hera (who is the speaker here) has a special status among the gods. Cf. Monro 1884, 286; Ameis/Hentze 1922a, 7; Leaf 1900, 159; Willcock 1978, 223.

tallest of the other singers can only be true if there are two groups of singers, and Mary belongs not to the first, but to the other group. A scenario like this is never the case when ἄλλων appears as part of the scope of superlative constructions in Homer; instead, these instances look exactly like expressions in which πάντων ‘of all’ is in the scope.

- (133) φησί τοι ἄνδρα παρῆναι οἴζυρώτατον ἄλλων,
 τῶν ἀνδρῶν, οἳ ἄστυ πέρι Πριάμοιο μάχοντο Od. 5.105-6
- He says that there is with you a man most miserable above the others, the men who fought around the city of Priam.

In the context of these lines there is no mention of one group of men and another group, of which the man (Odysseus) is the most miserable. The meaning here is not ‘of the others’ but ‘in comparison with the others’, maybe even ‘above the others’; ἄλλων in the scope gives this superlative construction a comparative flavour. Odysseus is not only distinguished within a group of warriors at Troy, but also lifted out of it and contrasted with it.²²

4.1.2 Instances with general scope

When the scope of a superlative expression is less specific and refers to a general class of entities such as ‘of all’, ‘of men/mortals’, ‘of gods’, ‘of lands’, ‘of living things’, the sense of a real comparison is less prominent than when the scope is concrete. A general scope does not contribute much to the interpretation of the aspect of comparison, and the function of the superlative expression as a whole seems to be to emphasize the comparee, and not to make a comparison between two entities.

²² Cf. Ziemer 1884, 54-6; Kühner/Gerth 1898, 23-4; Heubeck/West/Hainsworth have a rather unsatisfactory explanation: “οἴζυρώτατον ἄλλων: a frequent and convenient Homeric idiom [...] πάντων would be logical, but would not enter into this formular system” (1988, 265). The other examples with ἄλλων are *Il.* 2.673-4, 9.641-2 and *Od.* 11.468-70, 24.17-8 (all with adjectival aspect), and *Od.* 19.247-8, 24.78-9 with ἔξοχα plus verb.

The range of adjectives that appear in superlative expressions with a general scope is similar to those with concrete scopes; they are largely unproblematic.²³ Besides animate comparees, we find ἄριστος in expressions that refer to the choice of one option over another:²⁴

- (134) ἔρχεο διε Θεῶτα, θέων Αἴαντα κάλεσσον,
 ἀμφοτέρω μὲν μᾶλλον· ὁ γὰρ κ' ὄχ' ἄριστον ἀπάντων
 εἶη Il. 12.343-5
- Go, divine Thoötes, run and call Aias, or better both of them; for that would be by far best of all.

As in examples with concrete scope, we find superlative relations with verbal aspects of comparison in which the comparee is highlighted by μάλιστα, περί, and ἔξοχον. Again, in some cases the comparee is the subject, and in others the object.²⁵ There are five examples with combined aspects of comparison, one consisting of an adjective with a noun in the accusative, and four with a noun in the dative.²⁶ Of the six examples with several aspects, two are unproblematic,²⁷ and four have the formula θεῶν ὕπατος καὶ ἄριστος ‘highest and best of gods’.²⁸ We find eight examples with the adjective ἀριδείκετος, which, like ὕπατος, is superlative in meaning but not in form.²⁹ Six of these instances appear in the same formulaic verse in the *Odyssey*:³⁰

²³ ‘Plain’ superlatives with ‘best’ referring to men, gods, or animals: *Il.* 1.266, 2.768-9, 8.17, 13.153-4, 19.95-6, 19.413-4, 20.122-4, 20.242-3; *Od.* 15.252-3. Other adjectives: *Il.* 1.122, 5.378, 5.890, 6.153, 9.158-9, 15.111, 20.220, 20.233, 22.15; *Od.* 1.219-20, 3.419, 8.283-4, 8.329-32, 10.72, 15.229, 16.445-6. At *Od.* 20.33 περί marks the adjective κάμμορος for superlative degree. One expression, which appears three times in the *Iliad*, always after the penthemimeres, is an address formula: πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν ‘most daunting of all men’ (*Il.* 1.146, 18.170, 20.389).

²⁴ The other example of ἄριστος referring to a preferred option is *Il.* 12.354-8.

²⁵ Comparee as subject: *Il.* 21.214-5, 24.113-4, 24.134-5; *Od.* 4.190-1, 7.211-2, 19.285-6, 23.209-10. Comparee as object: *Il.* 13.374, 14.257; *Od.* 8.487, 19.363-4, 23.166-70.

²⁶ Accusative noun: *Od.* 7.57. Dative noun: *Il.* 7.153; *Od.* 8.128, 8.129-30, 13.297-9.

²⁷ *Il.* 1.121, 9.586.

²⁸ *Il.* 19.258, 23.43; *Od.* 19.303, 20.230.

²⁹ For the precise meaning of ἀριδείκετος cf. Heubeck/West/Hainsworth 1988, 372; Garvie 1994, 314-5.

³⁰ Cf. *Od.* 8.401, 9.2, 11.355, 11.378, 13.38. The non-formulaic instances of ἀριδείκετος are *Il.* 11.248, 14.320. There is one instance (*Il.* 2.480-1) with just ἔξοχος ‘pre-eminent’ as the aspect of comparison, which is exactly parallel to example (129).

- (135) Ἀλκίνοε κρείον, πάντων ἀριδείκετε λαῶν Od. 8.382
 lord Alcinous, renowned among all people

When (τῶν) ἄλλων ‘(the) others’ expresses the scope of a superlative construction, the comparee is seen as not just distinguished within, but lifted above his or her peer group. An example from the *Odyssey* underlines this notion by employing περί and ἔξοχον: περί is used adverbially with the superlative adjective μακάρτατος ‘most blessed’. ἔξοχον functions like a preposition marking the scope ἄλλων and emphasizing the special status of the comparee κείνος ‘that man’.³¹

- (136) κείνος δ’ αὖ περὶ κῆρι μακάρτατος ἔξοχον ἄλλων Od. 6.158
 That man again is exceedingly blessed in heart above the others.

4.2 Superlatives marked by preposition

A preposition can in principle fulfil the same function as case marking, but the number of instances in this category is much smaller than in the case-marked category. This, and the fact that despite the low number of instances we find seven different prepositions used in Homeric Greek, suggests that this strategy is a free and creative, and not a regular or grammaticalized way of marking the scope of a superlative construction. Superlative constructions marked by preposition are to be distinguished from expressions in which a superlative adjective and a prepositional phrase appear together, but the preposition does not have the function of marking the scope, even though at first sight it may look as though it does.

- (137) μηδὲ γένος πατέρων αἰσχυνέμεν, οἳ μέγ’ ἄριστοι
 ἔν τ’ Ἐφύρῃ ἐγένοντο καὶ ἐν Λυκίῃ εὐρείῃ Il. 6.209-10
 and to not dishonour the line of my fathers, who were by far the
 best in Ephyre and in wide Lycia

³¹ For the remaining constructions with (τῶν) ἄλλων in the scope, we find adjectival aspects in *Il.* 1.505-6, 12.103-4, 23.532. ἔξοχος appears on its own as superlativity marker without explicit aspect of comparison in *Il.* 6.194-5, 17.358, 20.184-5. Verbal aspects of comparison: *Il.* 9.631, 13.499-501, 13.726-8; *Od.* 3.244. Several aspects: *Il.* 6.208, 11.784; *Od.* 5.118.

Here ἔν τ' Ἐφύρῃ καὶ ἐν Λυκίῃ, ‘in Ephyre and in Lycia’ does not express the scope of the superlative construction in a straightforward, but in a metonymical way. The preposition ἐν does not mark the scope, but it is part of the metonymy that stands in for a proper, literal, scope. The fathers in this example were the best of the men in Ephyre and Lycia, but ‘men’ is not made explicit. Examples of this kind are discussed in Section 4.4.2. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the prepositions which undoubtedly have the function of marking the scope of a superlative construction. Of the total of 48 instances, 30 (62.5%) have a concrete scope, and 18 (37.5%) have a general scope.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	48	30	18
περί	15	9	6
ἐν	9	7	2
ἐκ	5	3	2
μετά	11	8	3
κατά	5	1	4
ἀνά	2	1	1
διά	1	1	0

Table 4.4: Superlatives marked by adposition

4.2.1 περί

περί has a variety of functions in superlative expressions; it often appears as a preverb or adverb with the meaning ‘above’ or ‘exceedingly’, and it can be difficult to distinguish between this function and its usage as a preposition to mark the scope of a superlative construction. For this reason I only count those instances as examples of proper scope-marking in which περί is directly followed by a noun in the genitive that expresses the scope.³²

³² The standard meaning of περί with the genitive is ‘around’, but more specifically with a sepa-

In all instances in Homer, the scope is, or includes, the adjective πάντων (or an equivalent). When adjectives are employed to express the aspect of comparison, they appear in the positive, i.e. they are not marked with superlative morphology.³³

- (138) ὦ μοι, τέκνον ἐμόν, περὶ πάντων κάμμορε φωτῶν *Od.* 11.216
oh me, my child, ill-fated above all men

In one instance in the *Iliad*, the adverb λίην ‘exceedingly’ modifies the adjectival aspect of comparison κρατερός ‘strong’.

- (139) λίην γὰρ κρατερός περὶ πάντων ἔστ’ ἀνθρώπων *Il.* 21.566
For he is exceedingly strong above all men.

A verb can express the aspect of comparison on its own, as in example (140), or, if it is transitive, together with an object like ἄλγεα ‘sorrows’ in example (141).³⁴

- (140) σκήπτρῳ μὲν τοι δῶκε τετιμῆσθαι περὶ πάντων *Il.* 9.38
With the sceptre he granted you to be honoured above all.

- (141) (...) μάλιστα δ’ ἐμοὶ περὶ πάντων ἄλγε’ ἔθηκε *Il.* 22.422
But mostly to me above all he has given grief.

In example (141) the adverb μάλιστα highlights the indirect object ἐμοὶ ‘to me’, which refers to the comparee. The use of μάλιστα ἐμοὶ and περὶ πάντων together makes for “a unique, forceful combination”.³⁵

rative genitive it means ‘from/out of’. With the genitive in a comparative/superlative sense: περὶ πάντων εἶναι ‘to be above/more than everyone else’; πέρι as an adverb or a periphrastic way of marking comparative or superlative degree has the meaning ‘exceedingly’: ὅς πέρι μὲν νόον ἐστὶ βροτῶν ‘who is superior among mortals with respect to his understanding’ > ‘exceedingly wise’. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 499-505.

³³ The remaining instances with adjectival aspect are *Od.* 1.235-6, 17.388-9. We find a negated aspect of comparison in *Od.* 4.607-8, and several aspects in *Il.* 1.417-8.

³⁴ The other examples with verb only are *Il.* 5.325-6, 18.81-2, 20.303-5; *Od.* 4.231-2. With verb + noun: *Il.* 10.88-9, 11.329-30; *Od.* 20.70-1.

³⁵ De Jong 2012, 169.

4.2.2 ἐν

The preposition ἐν marks the scope of a superlative construction predominantly in combination with adjectives that are marked with superlative morphology.³⁶ Adjectives that are not morphologically superlative, but have a superlative sense in their positive form, are also used, as in example (142) ἐκπρεπής ‘pre-eminent’.³⁷ But, contrary to the construction with περί, normal positive adjectives in a construction with ἐν plus dative do not yield superlative meaning, as illustrated in example (143), in which ἐσθλός simply has the meaning ‘good’.

- (142) (...) Ἀτρείδην θῆκε Ζεὺς ἡματι κείνῳ
ἐκπρεπέ’ ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἕξοχον ἠρώεσσιν *Il.* 2.482-3
Zeus made Agamemnon on that day pre-eminent among many,
and outstanding among warriors.

- (143) (...) σὸν δ’ ἔκτανε πιστὸν ἑταῖρον
ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι Ποδῆν υἱὸν Ἡετίωνος *Il.* 17.589-90
And he killed your trusted comrade, a good man among the cham-
pions, Podes, son of Eetion.

The adjective ἄριστος ‘best’ appears three times as the aspect of comparison.³⁸

- (144) (...) ὅσσοι ἄριστοι ἐνὶ στρατῷ εὐχόμεθ’ εἶναι *Il.* 15.296
all of us who claim to be the best in the army

Two instances have verbal aspects of comparison. One of them employs the verb ἀριστεύω, which has superlative meaning by virtue of being formed on one of the suppletive superlative adjectives meaning ‘best’; the aspect is made explicit by another verb, μάχεσθαι ‘fighting’.

³⁶ Grammars make no reference to the use of ἐν in superlative constructions. Its main function is locative, and with plural/collective nouns it can mean ‘in the middle of’, ‘among’, ‘in-between’. Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 462-6; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 454-61.

³⁷ Two (duplicate) instances in the *Odyssey* employ a participle παντοίησ’ ἀρετῆσι κεκασμένος ‘pre-eminent in all kinds of virtues’: 4.724-5 and 4.814-5.

³⁸ The other two instances with ἄριστος are *Il.* 6.7, 15.107-8 (combined with two nouns in the dative). The one other adjectival aspect is ἐλέγχιστος (*Il.* 17.26-7). In example (144) I take στρατός as referring to a body of soldiers and thus not as metonymical, but I appreciate that it may be seen as a borderline case. Cf. the discussion of example (153).

- (145) (...) πολέες γὰρ ἄμ' αὐτῷ
 λαοὶ ἔποντ', ἐν δ' αὐτὸς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι *Il.* 16.550-1
 For many people followed him, and among them he himself was
 best at fighting.

In the second instance with verbal aspect (*Il.* 17.753-4), the adverb **μάλιστα** marks the expression as superlative.

4.2.3 ἐκ

All but one of the superlative constructions with **ἐκ** marking the scope have verbal aspects of comparison.³⁹ The scope is a word for 'all' in all cases except *Il.* 21.369-70, where we find **ἐξ ἄλλων**. In two instances there is no element that explicitly marks the construction as superlative, which makes them similar to superlative constructions marked with **περί**.⁴⁰ In example (146), **πασέων** in the scope, together with a preposition that singles out the comparee, gives the expression superlative meaning.

- (146) (...) ἐμοὶ ἐκ πασέων Κρονίδης Ζεὺς ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν *Il.* 18.431
 To me beyond all Zeus, son of Cronos, has given sorrows.

Two instances have **μάλιστα** with a verb that expresses the aspect of comparison.⁴¹

- (147) λείβον δ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσ' αἰειγενέτησιν,
 ἐκ πάντων δὲ μάλιστα Διὸς γλαυκῶπιδι κούρη *Od.* 2.432-3
 And they made libations to the immortal, everlasting gods, and
 most out of them all to the flashing-eyed daughter of Zeus.

In example (148) adverbial **πέρι** indicates that the verbal action **ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν** 'gave grief' applies to the dative object **μοι** 'to me' to the highest degree.

³⁹ Grammars make no reference to the use of **ἐξ/ἐκ** in superlative constructions. The main functions are: origin, partitive (out of a group/a whole). Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898, 459-62; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 461-4.

⁴⁰ Cf. examples (140) and (141). The second instance is *Il.* 21.369-70.

⁴¹ The second one is *Il.* 4.94-6.

- (148) (...) πέρι γάρ μοι Ὀλύμπιος ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν
 ἐκ πασέων, ὅσσαι μοι ὁμοῦ τράφον ἠδ' ἐγένοντο *Od.* 4.722-3
 For mostly to me the Olympian gave grief out of all the women
 who were brought up and born together with me.

4.2.4 μετὰ and διὰ

Nine of the eleven examples with μετὰ employ adjectival aspects of comparison, and of those all except one are marked with superlative morphology.⁴² As was the case in example (142) with ἐν, in a construction with μετὰ, the one adjective without superlative morphology expresses a superlative idea even in the positive: ἔκδηλος, a strengthened form of δηλός 'conspicuous', in the expression ἔκδηλος μετὰ πᾶσιν Ἀργείοισι means 'pre-eminent among all Argives' (*Il.* 5.1-3).

Example (149) involves two superlative adjectives expressing the aspects of comparison.⁴³

- (149) οὔνεκά οἱ μετὰ παισὶ νεώτατος ἔσκε γόνιοι,
 καὶ οἱ φίλτατος ἔσκε *Il.* 20.409-10
 because among his children he was the youngest offspring and
 dearest to him

Here the first aspect of comparison, νεώτατος 'youngest', is enhanced by a noun γόνιος 'offspring', which occurs in the genitive case instead of, as usually, the accusative or dative. It could be understood as the scope marked by case, νεώτατος γόνιοι 'youngest of the offspring', and μετὰ παισὶ would then only go with φίλτατος 'dearest'.⁴⁴ But μετὰ παισὶ stands prominently at the beginning, which suggests

⁴² Grammars make no reference to the use of μετὰ in superlative constructions. It refers to the position 'in the middle of', '(in) between', 'among (several persons)'; originally it occurs only with plural/collective objects. In Homer we find it with the dative, later with the genitive to mean 'with'. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 481-7.

⁴³ The unproblematic examples are *Il.* 1.515-6 (with 'all' as scope), 16.570 (with negated aspect), 23.476; *Od.* 20.163 (with 'all' as scope).

⁴⁴ Leaf understands γόνιοι as used peculiarly in a collective sense as the scope: "the youngest of his offspring" (1902, 376).

that it has scope over both superlative adjectives, and γόνιοιο has the same function as γενεῆφι ‘by birth’ in example (150).

- (150) οὔνεκα δὴ γενεῆφι νεώτατός εἰμι μεθ’ ὑμῖν Il. 14.112
 since by birth I am the youngest among you

Finding a second person-pronoun in the scope is somewhat surprising given that ὑμεῖς ‘you’ does not include the person speaking, who is the comparee in example (150). The motivation behind using such an expression is likely to be the same as when ἄλλων appears in the scope of a superlative construction. The superiority of the comparee is highlighted by presenting them as outside of the scope.

In two instances μετά takes the accusative instead of the dative case, with no difference in meaning.⁴⁵

- (151) καὶ βουλῇ μετὰ πάντας ὁμήλικας ἔπλευ ἄριστος Il. 9.54
 And in counsel you are the best among all those of the same age.

A verbal aspect of comparison is found at *Il.* 18.508, with the superlative adverb ἰθύντατα ‘most fairly’ modifying the predicate δίκην εἴποι ‘he should speak judgement’. Even verbs which are otherwise used as lexical means of marking a superlative construction (cf. Section 4.3) can be combined with a preposition. In example (152) we find the verb πρέπω ‘to be distinguished’ and the one instance of scope-marking with διά. The meaning ‘among’ for διά is an extension of its usual meaning ‘through’, and makes sense with the verb πρέπω given the existence of the preverbed form διαπρέπω ‘be distinguished among’.⁴⁶

- (152) (...) ὃ δ’ ἔπρεπε καὶ διὰ πάντων. Il. 12.104
 But he was distinguished even among all.

⁴⁵ Hainsworth states that “μετά + accusative in the sense ‘among’ (which must be the sense here) usually occurs with a collective noun or follows a verb of motion.” (1993, 67). Cf. Leaf 1900, 375; Willcock 1978, 271. The other instance is *Od.* 16.418-20.

⁴⁶ Cf. Willcock 1900, 315. *Od.* 19.81-2 has κáινυμαι in combination with μετά. Cf. *Od.* 4.724-5 and 4.814-5, which have ἐν as their preposition, but a very similar way of expressing the aspect of comparison.

4.2.5 κατά and ἀνά

The three nouns that appear in the scope of superlative constructions marked by κατά are λαός ‘people’, δῆμος ‘people’, and πόλις ‘city’; it may be argued that πόλις is used metonymically and should be grouped with other metonymical expressions. I regard it as referring to an organised body of people similar to λαός and δῆμος.⁴⁷ Four examples have a form of ἄριστος ‘best’ as the aspect of comparison.⁴⁸

- (153) κρινάμενος κατὰ δῆμον ἑείκοσι φῶτας ἀρίστους *Od.* 4.530
choosing the twenty best men in the community

In very similar expressions, also with the adjective ἄριστος ‘best’, we find ἀνά στρατόν ‘in the host’ (*Il.* 13.117) and ἀνά δῆμον ‘in the community’ (*Od.* 4.666). The verb ἀριστεύω, which we have already come across in example (145), appears at *Od.* 4.652.⁴⁹

4.3 Superlatives marked by lexical means

The lexical items that are employed to mark the scope of a superlative construction in Homeric Greek are all verbs, while in relative expressions of this kind we also find an adjective (cf. Section 4.5.3). There are three sub-types in this category, and these are distinguished by syntactic criteria. The first type employs verbs of the ‘be preeminent among’ type, and is construed with a dative object expressing

⁴⁷ According to the *Lfgre* δῆμος refers to a unified and institutionalized body of people (or citizens) in a certain geographical area, and can mean ‘people’, ‘state’, ‘community’ or ‘country’/‘area of settlement’ cf. *Lfgre* 2.275-8 s.v. δῆμος. Similarly, λαός refers to a body of men, or more specifically warriors, cf. *Lfgre* 2.1633-5 s.v. λαός, and πόλις can refer to the community of which a town is made up, cf. *Lfgre* 3.1349 s.v. πόλις.

⁴⁸ The other instances with ἄριστος are *Il.* 9.520-1; *Od.* 8.35-6, 24.107-8. Grammars make no reference to the use of κατά in superlative constructions. It refers to a horizontal extension, meaning ‘downwards’, ‘with’, ‘across’/‘opposite to’; it also has a distributive function and can mean ‘with regard to.’ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 473-81.

⁴⁹ Grammars make no reference to the use of ἀνά in superlative constructions. It refers to a spatial extension, meaning ‘upwards (and along)’, ‘through to’; it also has a distributive function. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 439-41.

the scope. The second uses verbs meaning ‘surpass’, which take a direct accusative object. The verbs of the third type are construed with genitive objects and translate to ‘be superior’. Table 4.5 gives an overview of their distribution. Of the 50 instances in this category, 29 (58%) have a concrete scope, and 21 (42%) have a general scope.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	50	31	19
‘Be preeminent among’	16	10	6
‘Surpass’	15	9	6
‘Be superior’	19	12	7

Table 4.5: Superlatives marked by lexical means

4.3.1 ‘Be pre-eminent among’

The syntax and semantics of superlative constructions marked by a verb meaning ‘be pre-eminent among’ reflect the prototypical notion of a superlative relation most faithfully. All instances of this type employ the verb *μεταπρέπω*.⁵⁰ In the majority of instances the aspect of comparison is not made explicit, which results in a statement that is as informative as examples with a simple adjectival aspect ‘best’. Example (154) is a typical expression of this kind.⁵¹

- (154) ἄψ ἐς Ἴλιον ἦλθε, μετέπρεπε δὲ Τρώεσσι *Il.* 13.175
 He came back to Ilios, and was pre-eminent among the Trojans.

In three instances the aspect of comparison is made explicit by a verbal or nominal phrase.⁵²

⁵⁰ (μετα-)πρέπω is used with human beings, animals, and inanimate objects; the aspect by which the subject is distinguished can be outer appearance or particular achievements (cf. *LfgreE* 3.1528-9 s.v. πρέπω).

⁵¹ The other ‘simple’ instances are *Il.* 2.481, 11.720, 15.550, 18.369-70, 23.645; *Od.* 6.109, 8.171-3, 10.524-5, 11.32-3. With ‘all’ in the scope: *Il.* 2.579, 16.194-5; *Od.* 17.213, 20.174.

⁵² *Il.* 16.194-5 has a verbal phrase, and *Il.* 16.834-5 has a concrete noun.

- (155) Χάλκωνος φίλον υἷόν, ὃς Ἑλλάδι οἰκία ναίων
 ὄλβῳ τε πλούτῳ τε μετέπρεπε Μυρμιδόνεσσι *Il.* 16.595-6
 Chalcon's dear son, who inhabited a house in Hellas, and was
 preeminent among the Myrmidons for his happiness and wealth

4.3.2 'Surpass'

In all of the 15 instances with a verb meaning 'surpass', the aspect of comparison is made explicit; in 14 cases by a noun in the dative case, and in one case by a verbal phrase. The most frequently employed verb is *καίνυμαι* with eight instances; the pre-verbed version *ἀποκαίνυμαι* occurs once. *καίνυμαι* is used of human subjects with reference to an active, physical or mental ability through which they are distinguished, rarely of passive qualities such as wealth.⁵³

- (156) (...) ὃς ἀνθρώπους ἐκέκαστο
 κλεπτοσύνη θ' ὄρκῳ τε *Od.* 19.395-6
 who surpassed men in thievishness and in oaths

νικάω is used four times in the *Iliad* and once in the *Odyssey*, and *περιβάλλω* appears once in the *Odyssey*. *νικάω* is mostly used with individual human beings that prevail over others by virtue of certain achievements or personal qualities.⁵⁴ *περιβάλλω*, which originally means 'throw around' comes to be used like *ὑπερβάλλω* 'throw beyond', i.e. 'be above'.⁵⁵

- (157) (...) αἷ κάλλει ἐνίκων φῦλα γυναικῶν *Il.* 9.130
 who in beauty surpassed womankind

⁵³ Cf. *Lfgre* 2.1275-6, s.v. *καίνυμαι*, *κεκάσθαι*. The other instances with *καίνυμαι* are *Il.* 2.530, 13.431-2, 14.124-5, 16.808-9, 24.535-7; *Od.* 2.158-9, 3.282-3 (with verbal aspect). *ἀποκαίνυμαι*: *Od.* 8.126-7.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Lfgre* 3.402-4 s.v. *νικάω*. The other instances are *Il.* 9.272, 20.410, 23.756; *Od.* 13.260-1.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Lfgre* 2.30-1, s.v. *βάλλω*; Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 500. The Homeric instance is *Od.* 15.17-8.

4.3.3 ‘Be superior’

The verbs that occur in this category are *περίεμι/περιγίγνομαι* (12x), *προβαίνω* (2x), *ἀριστεύω* (2x), and in one instance *καίνυμαι*; even though *τεύχομαι* is not attested as a compounded form with *περί* as preverb, it is used in tmesis in two instances in the same way in which we find *περίεμι* and *περιγίγνομαι*. In three cases the aspect of comparison is left implicit.⁵⁶

- (158) *τόσσον ἐγὼ περὶ τ’ εἰμι θεῶν περὶ τ’ εἴμ’ ἀνθρώπων* *Il.* 8.27
By so much I am superior to gods and superior to men.

Both instances of *προβαίνω* are combined with nouns in the dative, while *ἀριστεύω* appears once with a noun and once with a verbal phrase.⁵⁷

- (159) (...) *ἀτὰρ μὲν νῦν γε πολὺ προβέβηκας ἀπάντων*
σῶ θάρσει *Il.* 6.125-6
But now you are far superior to all with your courage.

The example that employs *καίνυμαι* is odd since this verb normally takes the accusative.⁵⁸

- (160) *ὄσσον Λέσβος ἄνω Μάκαρος ἔδος ἐντὸς ἔργει*
καὶ Φρυγίη καθύπερθε καὶ Ἑλλήσποντος ἀπείρων,
τῶν σε γέρον πλούτῳ τε καὶ υἰάσι φασὶ κεκάσθαι *Il.* 24.544-6
As far as towards the sea Lesbos, the seat of Macar, reaches, and Phrygia above, and the boundless Hellespont, to all these, it is said, you, old man, were superior with your wealth and your sons.

Ten instances of this category have *ἄλλων* as (part of) their scope.⁵⁹ This suggests that the genitive of the scope is not a partitive genitive as we find it in the majority

⁵⁶ The other instances with implicit aspect are *Il.* 1.287-9, 4.375, all with *περίεμι/περιγίγνομαι*. The other instances with *περίεμι/περιγίγνομαι* have explicit aspects of comparison in various forms. A noun in the accusative: *Il.* 1.258, 13.631, 17.171-2, 17.279-80 (*τεύχομαι*); *Od.* 1.66-7, 11.550-1 (*τεύχομαι*), 18.248-9, 19.325-6. A dative noun: *Od.* 8.102-3, 8.252-3. A combination of verbal phrase and noun: *Od.* 4.201-2.

⁵⁷ *προβαίνω*: *Il.* 23.890-1 (with dative nouns); *ἀριστεύω*: *Il.* 6.460-1 (with verbal phrase), 11.627 (with dative noun).

⁵⁸ Cf. example (156). Leaf suggests that the genitive might be partitive (1902, 576); for Brügger it could be either a comparative or a partitive genitive (2009, 195).

⁵⁹ *Il.* 1.287-9, 4.375, 13.631, 17.171-2, 17.279-80; *Od.* 4.201-2, 8.102-3, 8.252-3, 11.550-1, 19.325-6.

of constructions with the scope marked by case. ἄλλων gives a comparative flavour to superlative expressions: not ‘superior among’, but ‘superior above the others’, with a function of the genitive that is more similar to the comparative genitive than to that of typical superlative constructions.

4.4 Superlatives with implicit scope

The relationship between the comparee and the scope of a superlative construction is different from that between the comparee and the standard of a comparative construction. The scope of a superlative construction is not as crucial to the meaning of the superlative expression as the standard of a comparative construction is to the meaning of the comparative expression. The scope refers to a group of which the comparee is a member, and therefore does not add a lot of extra information to how the superlative adjective characterizes the comparee. The standard of a comparative construction brings another entity in relationship with the comparee, and the precise meaning of the comparative adjective is closely connected to who or what the standard of comparison is. Even when this standard is not explicitly stated, it is a concrete entity, action, or scenario, and therefore often easier to reconstruct on the basis of the context in which the comparative construction appears (cf. Chapter 3.5). By contrast, a fairly general and ‘unsurprising’ scope of a superlative construction is much more difficult to pin down when left unexpressed.

In the majority of superlatives without explicit scope, it is not possible to firmly establish what an implied scope might be, therefore I label them *elative* and discuss them separately in Section 4.5. In the cases that I discuss in this section, there are elements in or around the superlative expression which are likely to denote an implied scope, or which suggest that a certain scope is salient. These come in three types: they can be instances in which a noun congruent with the adjective expressing the aspect of comparison denotes a well-defined group that

serves as the scope (4.4.1). The second group consists of examples in which the scope is mentioned in the immediate co-text, but is not explicitly marked as such (4.4.2). For the third type, the wider context of the story suggests a particular scope (4.4.3).

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	163	108	55
Congruent noun	55	35	20
Co-textual scope	82	51	31
Contextual scope	26	22	4

Table 4.6: Superlatives with implicit scope

4.4.1 Congruent noun as scope

Instead of in the genitive case, the scope of a superlative expression can appear as a noun which is congruent with the comparee and refers to a specific group among which the comparee possesses the aspect of comparison to the highest degree.

- (161) Βουκολίων δ' ἦν υἱὸς ἀγαθοῦ Λαομέδοντος
 πρεσβύτατος γενεῆ *Il.* 6.23-4

And Bucolion was the son of noble Laomedon, the oldest by birth.

This statement suggests that there is a well-defined group of sons of Laomedon, so this is virtually the same as saying ‘Bucolion was the oldest of the sons of Laomedon’. As in other categories, the most frequent aspect of comparison we find here is ‘best’. Apart from age, other aspects include ‘most beautiful’, ‘dearest’, and ‘biggest’.⁶⁰

Only examples in which the congruent noun denotes a specific, well demarcated group are counted here; this demarcation is most often achieved by a posses-

⁶⁰ ‘Best’ as aspect: *Il.* 2.763, 6.314-5, 9.575, 10.560, 13.432-3, 15.526, 23.536, 23.659, 23.802, 24.241-2, 24.255-6, 24.493-4; *Od.* 1.280, 8.424, 8.512-3, 10.522-3, 11.30-1, 12.245-6, 16.348, 23.124-6. Other aspects: *Il.* 6.90-1, 6.271-2, 9.57-8, 9.139-40, 9.281-2, 14.371-2, 14.373, 17.410-1, 17.654-5, 22.318, 23.748-9; *Od.* 2.349-50, 3.369-70, 3.464, 4.433-4, 7.58, 11.281-3.

sive genitive attached to the noun in question. In example (161), *Λαομέδοντος* ‘of Laomedon’ specifies that we are not dealing with all the possible sons in the world, but with precisely the group of sons that belong to Laomedon. Other entities that define such nouns that are congruent with superlative adjectives in Homer are a person’s comrades, horses, wine, or robes.

In other instances the demarcation of the congruent noun is achieved by a precise definition of a group, for instance ‘Trojan women’ or ‘the Achaeans’, where the reference to a tribe makes it clear that we are dealing with a set that has a limited and well-defined membership.

- (162) κρίνας ἐκ Λυκίης εὐρείης φῶτας ἀρίστους Il. 6.188
 having chosen out of wide Lycia the best men

It may be debatable here whether the preposition goes with the verb *κρίνω* ‘to choose’, and the English translation, when it reflects the word order in the Greek original, may suggest this: [he chose out of Lycia] [the best men]. It is, however, also plausible to read this as [he chose] [out of wide Lycia the best men], i.e. the best of the men who come from Lycia. In either case Lycia is active as part of the scope.

In some instances the context makes it clear that we are dealing with a finite, well-defined set of entities.

- (163) οὐνεκα δὴ τὰ μέγιστα παρ’ αὐτόθι λείπεται ἄεθλα Il. 23.640
 because the biggest prizes were still left there

The context of this utterance is the funerary games for Patroclus, for which Achilles has set up a number of prizes for the winners of each contest. ‘The biggest prizes’ thus means ‘the biggest ones of the prizes that Achilles had set out’.⁶¹

⁶¹ Richardson prefers the reading *παρ’ αὐτόφι*, meaning *παρ’ αὐτοῖς* and referring to *ἵπποισι*: “Because the greatest prizes were reserved for this contest.” (1993, 239). Leaf 1902, Ameis/Hentze 1922e, and Willcock 1984 assume *αὐτόθι*. For the meaning of the superlative it does not make a difference.

a co-textually implied scope: A specific scope is implied in a certain superlative expression when 1) a passage includes several comparisons, but only in the first one the scope is expressed; 2) a verbal action is predicated of a group and then said to apply most to an individual belonging to that group; 3) there is a specific narrative context describing a group and its most distinguished member; 4) adverbs or prepositional phrases are used metonymically instead of a ‘real’ scope.

Example (165) illustrates the first type, involving first a complete superlative construction, followed by another superlative adjective characterizing the same comparee.

- (165) πέμψον δ’ οἰωνὸν ταχὺν ἄγγελον, ὅς τε σοὶ αὐτῷ
 φίλτατος οἰωνῶν, καὶ εὐκράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον, *Il.* 24.310-1
 And send a bird, the swift messenger, who to you yourself is the
 dearest of birds and whose strength is greatest.

We have seen this passage already in example (127), where I suggested that we can safely supply οἰωνῶν ‘of birds’ also for the second superlative expression, even if the second comparison is then metonymical. εὐκράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον ‘whose strength is greatest’, with ‘strength’ as the comparee, stands for ‘who is greatest in strength’, with the ‘birds’ as the scope.⁶³

Example (166) is an expression in which a verbal action is predicated of a group, and then said to apply especially to one member of the group, i.e. the comparee. The adverb used to express the superlative meaning, and highlight the comparee, is always **μάλιστα**. The comparee can appear as the subject or the object of the sentence.

- (166) ὧς ὁ μὲν ἔνθ’ ἀπόλωλε, φίλοισι δὲ κήδε’ ὀπίσσω
 πᾶσιν, ἐμοὶ δὲ μάλιστα, τετεύχεται *Od.* 14.137-8
 Thus he perished there, and his friends grief has befallen for the
 future, all, but mostly me.

⁶³ The other instances of this kind are *Il.* 2.579-80, 2.768-9, 6.77-9, 23.476-7, 23.890-1, 24.292-3; *Od.* 1.66-7, 7.155-7 (with a contrastive comparative in the first clause), 16.76-7.

The swineherd Eumaeus says this about Odysseus; he is one of the friends of Odysseus, and in this context ἐμοὶ δὲ μάλιστα ‘but mostly me’ must mean ‘me most of all the friends’.⁶⁴

The same kind of structure underlies examples with πρώτιστος ‘first’ and δεύτερος/ ὕστατος ‘last’, sometimes used in their adjectival form, and sometimes adverbially. In most cases the clause that names the scope and that which includes the superlative are both quite short and appear right next to each other, as in example (167), but the scope can also be supplied from a longer narrative in the co-text of the superlative expression, as when the narrator asks Patroclus: τίνα πρῶτον τίνα δ’ ὕστατον ἐξενάριξας ‘whom did you slay first, whom last?’ (*Il.* 16.692), and follows this with a list of Patroclus’ victims.⁶⁵

- (167) κίκλησεν δὲ γέροντας ἀριστῆας Παναχαιῶν,
 Νέστορα μὲν πρώτιστα καὶ Ἴδομενῆα ἄνακτα *Il.* 2.404-5
 And [Agamemnon] summoned the elders, the leaders of the Achaean
 host, Nestor, first of all, and king Idomeneus.

In other cases the verbal action of the clause with the scope and the verbal action with the superlative expression are not the same, but the narrow and specific narrative context in which the superlative is embedded makes it clear that we should supply a certain scope.

- (168) αἱ μὲν ἄρ’ ἄλλαι εὔδον, ἐπεὶ κατὰ πυρὸν ἄλεσσαν,
 ἡ δὲ μί’ οὐ πω παύετ’, ἀφαιροτάτη δὲ τέτυκτο *Od.* 20.109-10
 The others, then, were sleeping, since they had ground their wheat,
 but she alone had not stopped yet, for she was the weakest.

‘The others’ in this passage are the remaining eleven of the group of twelve women working in the mill to which the woman who is ἀφαιροτάτη ‘weakest’ belongs.

⁶⁴ The other instances of this type are *Il.* 1.15-6, 1.174-5, 1.374-5, 2.588-90, 3.97-100, 6.492-3, 7.294-5, 9.179-80, 13.417-8, 14.458-60, 14.486-7, 15.367-71, 15.658-60, 18.174-6, 24.740-2; *Od.* 1.358-9, 2.161-2, 2.265-6, 11.352-3, 13.36-7, 21.275-8, 21.352-3, 23.60-1.

⁶⁵ The remaining instances are *Il.* 9.165-8, 14.440-3, 16.656-8, 18.478, 19.51, 23.285-9; *Od.* 3.57-9, 4.456, 14.217-21, 19.447-8. With a similar structure but in a spatial instead of a temporal sense: *Od.* 9.22-6.

Even though we are not told explicitly that the woman still grinding wheat is the weakest of the twelve women working in the mill, the fact that she and the others are juxtaposed – she is still at work while the others are asleep – suggests that we are to understand ἀφαιροτάτη δὲ τέτυκτο ‘she was the weakest’ with reference to the specific group of female mill workers mentioned in the context, and not as an elative expression ‘she was very weak’.⁶⁶

A special case of these instances are slightly longer narrative passages in which there is a sense of comparison, such as the catalogue of ships in *Iliad* 2 and the funerary games for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23. When in this kind of context it is said that Antilochus’ horses were slowest, as in example (169), and we find no explicitly marked scope, we can safely supply ‘of the horses who took part in the race’.⁶⁷

(169) βάρδιστοι μὲν γάρ οἱ ἔσαν καλλίτριχες ἵπποι *Il.* 23.530

For slowest were his fair-maned horses.

In two cases, the adverb ἐνθάδε ‘here’ is used in place of a ‘real’ scope. Both, example (170), quoted here, and the other instance (*Il.* 21.279) have as their aspect an adjective meaning ‘best’.

(170) τῶν ἀνδρῶν φίλοι υἱές οἱ ἐνθάδε γ’ εἰσὶν ἄριστοι *Od.* 2.51

dear sons of the men who are the best here

A prepositional phrase referring to a physical place can fulfil a similar function to ἐνθάδε above. In example (171), ἐν Ἰδῆ ‘on Ida’ is a metonymical way of referring to the trees on mount Ida.⁶⁸ In example (172) ‘at the ships’ refers to a location that stands for a group associated with it, namely the horses that belong to the

⁶⁶ Cf. *Il.* 5.778-81, 12.86-90, 13.42-3, 14.520, 23.451, 23.668-9; *Od.* 10.551-3, 12.341-2, 13.141-2, 16.390-2, 17.256-7, 17.499-500, 20.328-35, 21.73-6, 21.187.

⁶⁷ The other examples from the games are *Il.* 23.309-10, 23.356-7, 23.531, 23.547. From the catalogue of ships: *Il.* 2.577-8, and *Il.* 2.815-8 from the catalogue of Trojans and their allies.

⁶⁸ Cf. Janko 1992, 196. Cf. ἐν τ’ Ἐφύρῃ ... καὶ ἐν Λυκίῃ ‘in Ephyre and Lycia’ (*Il.* 6.209-10), πᾶσαν ἐπ’ αἴαν ‘on all the earth’ (*Il.* 23.742-3 and *Od.* 24.508-9).

Achaeans, and ἄριστοι refers to the two best of them.⁶⁹

- (171) εἰς ἐλάτην ἀναβὰς περιμήκετον, ἥ τότε ἐν Ἴδῃ
μακροτάτη πεφυῖα Il. 14.287-8

And he climbed a very tall fir tree, the largest that then grew on
Ida.

- (172) οἳ κεν ἄριστοι ἔωσι θοῆς ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν Il. 10.306
they who are the best at the swift ships of the Achaeans

Apart from cases in which the prepositions are used in their strictly locative sense, we also find them applied to human and divine groups.⁷⁰

- (173) τρις γὰρ τῆ γ' ἐλθόντες ἐπειρήσανθ' οἱ ἄριστοι
ἄμφ' Αἴαντε δύω καὶ ἀγακλυτὸν Ἴδομενεῖα
ἠδ' ἄμφ' Ἀτρεΐδης καὶ Τυδέος ἄλκιμον υἱόν Il. 6.435-7

For three times the best (of the people) around the two Aiantes
and glorious Idomeneus and around the sons of Atreus and the
brave son of Tydeus came here and tried.

4.4.3 Scope inferable from context

We are now moving on to instances in which there is no specific linguistic structure or narrow narrative co-text that suggests connecting a superlative expression to an actively implied scope. Yet, the sense of these expressions is not entirely elative either, since their meaning is best understood with reference to groups that form a central part of the story world. For the *Iliad* this means that the scope for these examples is broadly speaking the armies at Troy. It can be the Achaeans, the Trojans, or any of their allies, or it can be a more general reference to the Trojan war. For the *Odyssey*, such a contextual kind of scope can be assumed for the group of suitors and the inhabitants of Ithaca as a whole. It may very well be

⁶⁹ *Od.* 4.408-9 concerns the best of Menelaus' companions παρὰ νηυσὶν 'at the ships'. Cf. the complete superlative construction ὃς μέγ' ἄριστος | Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ '[Achilles] who is the best of the Argives at the ships' (*Il.* 16.271-2).

⁷⁰ Cf. *Il.* 1.525-6, 2.274; *Od.* 1.391. On example (173) cf. Graziosi/Haubold 2010, 203.

that there are other fairly well-defined groups that have the potential to be such contextual scopes (like the Phaeacians for those passages concerned with Odysseus' time there), but they are more difficult to clearly demarcate, thus I regard them as elative.

As in previous categories, we find simple adjectives, adjectives combined with verbs and nouns, an example with several aspects, and verbal aspects marked with superlative degree by *μάλιστα* and *περί*. In the *Iliad*, the implied scope can encompass all the armies and warriors at Troy, as in example (174), or it can more specifically refer to the Achaeans, as in example (176), or to the Trojans, as in example (175).

- (174) ὤρσε δέ μιν κατὰ μέσσον ὄθι πλεῖστοι κλονέοντο Il. 5.8
 And she [Athena] urged him [Diomedes] into the middle where the
 most men were clustered.

Example (174) is taken from a battle scene between Trojans and Greeks. The superlative adjective *πλεῖστοι* 'most' refers to a specific part or subgroup of Greek and Trojan warriors.⁷¹

In example (175) we have several aspects, expressed by the adjectives *πλεῖστοι* καὶ ἄριστοι 'most in number and best', and by a verb *μέμασαν μάλιστα* 'were most eager'. Like *πλεῖστοι* in example (174), these superlatives refer to a group within a larger, but well-defined, group: in this case the Trojan warriors. Such expressions are similar to instances with a congruent noun in which that noun refers to a unified space or body of which the comparee is the X-est part.⁷²

⁷¹ Contrast this with a superficially similar example in the *Odyssey*: ἤματι τῷ ὅτε μοι πλεῖστοι χαλκήρεα δοῦρα | Τρῶες ἐπέρριψαν περὶ Πηλεΐωνι θανόντι 'On that day when the very many Trojans hurled bronze-tipped spears upon me, [as I was fighting] around the dead son of Peleus.' (5.309-10). This is part of an address of Odysseus to himself, in which he wishes to have died at Troy rather than be in distress at sea now. The superlative here is elative; *πλεῖστοι* does not refer to a specific part of the Trojans, but to a very large number of them. Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908b, 179.

⁷² Cf. example (164) in Section 4.4.1. The remaining instances of this kind are *Il.* 6.68-9, 11.499-500, 11.528-30, 13.683-4, 13.789.

- (175) τόφρ' οἱ Πουλυδάμαντι καὶ Ἕκτορι κοῦροι ἔποντο,
οἱ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι ἔσαν, μέμασαν δὲ μάλιστα
τειχὸς τε ῥήξειν καὶ ἐνιπρήσειν πυρὶ νῆας *Il.* 12.196-8

Meanwhile those young men followed Polydamas and Hector who were the largest group and the best, and most eager to break through the wall and set the ships on fire.

In example (176) Nestor addresses Agamemnon in the assembly of the Achaeans. The superlative βασιλεύτατος is formed to the noun βασιλεύς ‘king’. It highlights Agamemnon’s special status among the other kings and leaders of the Achaeans: he is the highest king of them all.⁷³

- (176) (...) σὺ γὰρ βασιλεύτατός ἐσσι *Il.* 9.69
For you are the most kingly.

In the *Odyssey* there are fewer instances of this type, which is not surprising since the suitors at Odysseus’ house, even though they form an important part of the story, are not as central to the *Odyssey* as the armies and their warriors are to the *Iliad*. We learn much less about the individual suitors than we do about the warriors at Troy. Besides examples (177) and (178), there are only two further instances of superlatives with a contextually implied scope.⁷⁴

- (177) (...) ἢ δέ κ' ἔπειτα
γῆμαιθ' ὅς κε πλεῖστα πόροι καὶ μόρσιμος ἔλθοι *Od.* 21.161-2
Then should she [Penelope] marry the one who offers most, and who comes appointed by fate.

Example (177) has a parallel in *Od.* 16.390-2, which includes a co-textually implied scope: ἀλλ' ἐκ μεγάροιο ἕκαστος | μνάσθω ἐέδνοισιν διζήμενος ‘each man shall court her from his hall and try to win her with gifts’. The same scope, namely the suitors, is also active in example (177), but not explicitly mentioned.

⁷³ Cf. Griffin 1995, 84. The other instances in which one or several individuals are highlighted among Achaeans, Trojans, or all warriors at Troy are *Il.* 1.105, 2.227-8, 2.802, 8.161-2, 10.57, 10.59, 10.113, 11.123-5, 16.146-7, 17.286-7, 20.75-8, 20.425, 23.156-7, 23.159-60.

⁷⁴ Namely *Od.* 15.521-2 (where the implied scope may also include other men from Ithaca, rather than just the group of suitors), 16.396-8.

The implicit scope in example (178) refers to all the evil things that the suitors have done, and are about to do, to the family of Odysseus. Penelope has just complained to the herald Medon about the suitors' unacceptable behaviour in Odysseus' house, and Medon responds, informing her about their plans for an ambush in which they hope to kill Telemachus.

- (178) εἰ γὰρ δὴ, βασίλεια, τόδε πλεῖστον κακὸν εἶη.
 ἀλλὰ πολὺ μείζον τε καὶ ἀργαλεώτερον ἄλλο
 μνηστῆρες φράζονται *Od.* 4.697-9

If only, my queen, this were the greatest evil. But another, much greater and more troublesome one, the suitors are contriving.

As in the instances with a co-textually implied scope, some passages that I have included here are better, others less good examples of this category. The boundaries between superlative expressions with an implicit scope and elatives are by no means clear, and a different interpretation of a certain passage is likely to lead to a different categorization.

4.5 Elatives

The majority of examples with no explicit scope are so general that if asked what an implied scope might be, one would probably reply something like 'of all possible X'. In very many cases this is virtually equivalent to stating that the quality denoted by the aspect of comparison is true of the comparee to a very high degree. It is impossible to determine to what extent the expressions that I term 'elative' carry an implicit comparison with a general or normative scope. This section is structured according to the linguistic item that is marked as elative. Table 4.7 shows that adjectives make up almost two thirds of all cases, and verbal expressions one third. The lexical means with which complete superlative expressions can be marked (cf. Section 4.3) are also used in elative expressions, but not very frequently.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	301	189	112
Adjectival aspect	188	131	57
Verbal aspect	100	49	51
Lexical expressions	13	9	4

Table 4.7: Elatives

4.5.1 Adjectival aspect

In the majority of cases, elative adjectives describe entities, and since any given entity can be considered as part of the entire set of its kind, it can seem natural to interpret such expressions as referring to a very general scope. In example (179) Odysseus quotes Circe, who had warned him to avoid the island of Helios so that his companions would not be tempted to kill and eat the cattle of the god. The most natural way of reading this might be ‘the most terrible bane of all existing banes’.

(179) ἔνθα γὰρ αἰνότατον κακὸν ἔμμεναι ἄμμιν ἔφασκεν *Od.* 12.275

For there, she said, was a most terrible bane for us.

One might even argue that since this appears as part of a narrative passage on Odysseus’ adventures, this context suggests a reading ‘most terrible of all the things that Odysseus and his comrades have experienced’, but in my view such a scope is neither well-demarcated nor is there an element in this passage that suggests that such a scope is actively available. One could easily read this superlative as elative, ‘a very terrible bane’, and not find that this changes the meaning of the passage dramatically. In the case of example (178) of the contextual scope category, however, changing the superlative to an elative ‘a very great evil’ would distort the meaning.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The other instances of elatives describing an entity or concept are: with ‘best’ as aspect: *Il.*

In example (180) we might expect *πᾶσιν μερόπεσσι βροτοῖσιν* ‘all mortal men’ to express the scope, and in example (120) of Section 4.1.1, we saw that a dative case can do that. In example (180), however, we are dealing with a dative that marks the point of view, situation, or attitude from which a person or action is described, and thus it does not express the scope.⁷⁶

- (180) Ἄτρεΐδη νῦν δὴ σε ἄναξ ἐθέλουσιν Ἄχαιοὶ
 πᾶσιν ἐλέγχιστον θέμεναι μερόπεσσι βροτοῖσιν *Il.* 2.284-5
 Son of Atreus, now indeed the Achaeans are willing to make you,
 king, the greatest target of reproach in the eyes of all mortal men.

When a superlative adjective is used in an expression that describes a process of decision making, like that of example (181), the absolute and thus elative sense of the adjective is more easily visible. Diomedes is looking for a plan that would be as reckless as possible. *κύντατος* ‘most shameless’ is a superlative adjective derived from the noun *κύων* ‘dog’, which is often used as an insult in Homeric Greek.

- (181) Αὐτὰρ ὃ μερμήριζε μένων ὅ τι κύντατον ἔρδοι *Il.* 10.503
 But he [Diomedes] paused and pondered what most shameless
 thing he might do.

1.267 (2x), 1.581, 4.211-2, 5.839, 6.56-7, 6.185, 7.150, 7.285, 7.325, 8.229, 9.3, 9.73-4, 9.94, 9.109-10, 9.638, 10.214-5, 10.273, 10.300, 10.326-7, 11.258, 11.288-9, 11.658-9, 11.690-1, 11.825, 12.127, 12.243, 13.128-9, 13.276-7, 13.740, 13.751, 14.213, 14.424, 16.23-4, 16.521-2, 17.368-9, 17.376-7, 17.509, 18.230, 20.158-60, 21.207-8, 23.409, 24.384-5; *Od.* 3.108, 4.778, 5.441-2, 7.281, 7.327-8, 8.126-7, 8.383, 16.122, 16.251, 18.371, 19.130, 24.52. Other adjectives (referring to size/amount, age, space, speed, beauty, positive/negative attributes, (lack of) affection): *Il.* 2.118, 2.216, 2.220, 2.850, 3.185, 4.51, 4.59, 4.171, 4.514-5, 5.756 (*ὑπατος*), 6.433-4 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in positive), 8.22 (*ὑπατος*), 8.84 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in positive), 8.326 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in positive), 9.25, 9.39, 9.204, 9.382, 13.6, 13.49-52, 13.335, 13.484, 13.568-9 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in positive), 14.389-90, 17.21-2, 17.339 (*ὑπατος*), 18.118, 19.222, 19.223, 19.287 (*μάλιστα* with participle), 19.415-6, 21.158, 22.30, 22.76, 22.254-5, 22.288, 22.325, 22.410-1 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in positive), 24.347-8; *Od.* 1.351-2, 3.95 (*περί* with adjective in positive), 4.127, 4.229-30, 4.441, 4.441-2, 4.565, 5.3-4, 5.309-10, 7.321-3, 8.519, 8.582-3 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in superlative), 9.11, 9.264, 10.277-9, 11.412-5, 11.421-3, 11.522, 16.288-90, 23.79, 24.34. Adjective combined with noun: *Il.* 9.53, 24.260-1; *Od.* 4.211, 4.629. Adjective combined with infinitive: *Il.* 14.345, 23.654-5, 24.334-5 (*μάλιστα* with adjective in superlative). *Od.* 7.327-8. Several aspects: *Il.* 7.155, 10.436-7, 15.37-8; *Od.* 5.185-6, 8.246-7, 11.309-10, 13.79-80, 13.93-4, 18.112-3.

⁷⁶ Cf. Chantraine 1953, 74; Schwyzler/Debrunner 1988, 151-2; Brügger/Stoevesandt/Visser 2010, 89. A parallel for a dative of point of view with an adjective in the superlative is *βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων* ‘of all gods most hated to humans’ (*Il.* 9.159). Ameis/Hentze, by contrast, suggest a locative dative “unter allen” (1913, 67).

Variations of such a ‘decision-making verse’ are ἦδε δέ οἱ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνεται βουλή ‘And this seemed to his mind the best plan.’ (*Il.* 2.5), and φραζόμεθ’ ὅπως ὄχ’ ἄριστα γένηται ‘Let us consider how things may turn out in the best possible way’ (*Od.* 23.117). These expressions are followed by either an explanation of the plan made, or by a description of what the intended outcome of the plan is; we normally never learn what the other option would have been.⁷⁷ Example (181), however, is followed by a short description of the two options between which Diomedes is currently deciding, each introduced by the particle ἦ. The outcome of this process is that he does not do either of the things that he had in mind because the goddess Athena approaches him and tells him not to.⁷⁸

Elatives also regularly feature as part of a (more or less formulaic) address, when one character speaks to another. Zeus is frequently addressed as αἰνότητε Κρονίδη ‘most dread son of Chronos’⁷⁹ and κύδιστε μέγιστε ‘most glorious, most great’;⁸⁰ Agamemnon is Ἀτρείδη κύδιστε ‘most glorious son of Atreus’;⁸¹ the adjective here is always elative and to be taken with Ἀτρείδη only, even if another superlative with a scope marked by case follows, as in Ἀτρείδη κύδιστε φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων ‘most glorious son of Atreus, most greedy of all’ (*Il.* 1.122). In this kind of expression there are two individual addresses, which are stacked on top of one another. The genitive πάντων ‘of all’ goes only with the second superlative adjective φιλοκτεανώτατε ‘most greedy’. The same is true for τίς δὲ σὺ ἐσσι φέριστε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων; ‘Who are you, best one, among mortal men?’ (*Il.* 6.123), where the genitive καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων ‘of mortal men’ goes with the question τίς σὺ ἐσσι; ‘who are you?’, and not with the superlative adjective.⁸² In

⁷⁷ The other instances of elatives in decision-making processes are: *Il.* 3.110, 9.103, 9.314, 10.17, 12.215, 13.735, 14.161, 17.634, 17.712; *Od.* 3.129, 5.360, 9.318, 9.420, 9.424, 11.230, 13.154, 13.365, 23.130.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hainsworth 1993, 204.

⁷⁹ *Il.* 1.552, 4.25, 8.462, 14.330, 16.440, 18.361.

⁸⁰ *Il.* 2.412, 3.276, 3.298, 3.320, 7.202, 24.308.

⁸¹ *Il.* 2.434, 8.293, 9.96, 9.163, 9.677, 9.697, 10.103, 19.146, 19.199; *Od.* 11.397, 24.121.

⁸² Cf. Graziosi/Haubold 2010, 110. Cf. *Il.* 15.247, 24.387. Without a genitive: *Od.* 1.405, 9.269.

some cases the address is at the same time an insult: εἶδος ἄριστε ‘best in appearance’ is said to Paris (*Il.* 3.39 and 13.769) and to Hector (*Il.* 17.142), and νεῖκος ἄριστε ‘best at quarrelling’ is said to Aias (*Il.* 23.483).

4.5.2 Verbal aspect

Of the expressions with verbal aspects of comparison most are marked for superlative with the adverb μάλιστα, but we also find περί and πλείστον, as well as some semantically richer adverbs. As in previous categories, μάλιστα is used to highlight the constituent in the sentence to whom the verbal action applies to a high degree, and this constituent can be the subject, direct or indirect object, or an adverbial expression. In example (182) the anaphoric pronoun ἧ, which refers to ἰς ἀνέμου ‘the force of the wind’, is the comparee of the superlative expression and the subject of the sentence. μάλιστα marks the action of the verb ὀφέλλω ‘to cause to swell’ as applying to the comparee to a very high degree.⁸³

- (182) ἰς ἀνέμου· ἧ γάρ τε μάλιστα γε κύματ’ ὀφέλλει *Il.* 15.383
 the force of the wind; for it most of all causes the waves to swell

In a few cases, the superlative adverb seems to only apply to, and superlativize, the verbal action, and not a particular constituent in the sentence. These cases are similar to comparatives with μᾶλλον, which also intensify the verbal action, rather than focus attention on the comparee.⁸⁴ It does not make sense to read μάλιστα in example (183) as highlighting either the subject Penelope or the object θυμὸν μνηστήρων ‘the hearts of the suitors’. It rather endows the verb πετάννυμι

⁸³ The other instances are: with comparee as subject: *Il.* 4.137-8 (with πλείστον), 5.766, 8.500-1, 12.310, 13.734, 14.399; *Od.* 1.282-3, 2.88 (with περί), 2.216-7, 6.185, 11.200-1, 12.289-90, 14.284, 15.356-7. Comparee as direct object: *Il.* 6.355; *Od.* 1.342, 2.41, 7.170-1, 11.416-20, 14.53-4, 17.557-8, 18.175-6, 24.90. Comparee as indirect object: *Il.* 13.726-8 (with περί); *Od.* 2.115-22 (with περί), 4.366, 8.44-5 (with περί). Adverbial comparee: *Il.* 10.280, 13.276-7.

⁸⁴ Cf. example (97) in Chapter 3.5.2.

‘to expand [the passion]’ with superlative force, i.e. it intensifies the verbal action to a very high degree.⁸⁵

- (183) μνηστήρεςσι φανῆναι, ὅπως πετάσειε μάλιστα
 θυμὸν μνηστήρων ἰδὲ τιμήεσσα γένοιτο
 μάλλον πρὸς πόσιός τε καὶ υἱέος ἢ πάρος ἦεν *Od.* 18.160-2

To show herself to the suitors, that she might most greatly expand the passion in the hearts of the suitors and become more honoured to her husband and her son than she was before.

The same effect is achieved with other, semantically richer adverbs. In example (184), ἄγχιστα, a superlative adverb meaning ‘closest’, makes the verb ἔοικα ‘to resemble’, superlative. ἄγχιστα is semantically richer since it conveys the sense of ‘closeness’ in addition to the superlative degree, and thus the meaning of the verb is not just ‘resemble very much’, but more specifically ‘resemble very closely’.⁸⁶ In addition to this superlative marking on the verb through ἄγχιστα, the indirect object, Nestor, is highlighted by the adverb μάλιστα.

- (184) (...) μάλιστα δὲ Νέστορι δίῳ
 εἶδος τε μέγεθός τε φύην τ’ ἄγχιστα ἐώκει *Il.* 2.57-8

And most of all it resembled divine Nestor most closely, in physique and in stature and in height.

There are 29 instances in the *Iliad* and 24 in the *Odyssey* that involve a special kind of verbal action modified by the superlative adverb τάχιστα. Some of these expressions have a hortatory, volitive, or imperative sense expressed through the verb form, as shown in example (185).⁸⁷ Others, like example (186), appear in

⁸⁵ The other instances of superlativized verbal actions are *Il.* 3.388, 13.49-52 (with περί); *Od.* 19.160-1.

⁸⁶ The other instances of this kind are *Il.* 5.5-6 (with μάλιστα λαμπρόν ‘most brightly’), 5.873 (with ρίγιστα ‘most cruelly’), 14.474 (again ἄγχιστα ἐώκει), 15.453-4 (with τάχιστα ‘most quickly’), 16.385-6 (with λαβρότατον ‘most violently’), 20.18 (with ἄγχιστα ‘in very close proximity’); *Od.* 6.151-2 (ἄγχιστα εἴσκω ‘I liken most closely’), 8.561-2 (with τάχιστα), 12.120 (with κάρτιστον ‘with all your might’), 13.79-80 (ἄγχιστα εἰκώς ‘resembling most closely’), 18.263-4 (with τάχιστα), 22.118 (ἄγχιστῖνοι ἐπιπτον ‘they fell in heaps’), 22.472 (οἴκτιστα ‘most pitifully’).

⁸⁷ The other instances of τάχιστα in an imperative context are *Il.* 3.102, 11.513, 17.692-3,

a purpose clause, which is introduced by either ὄφρα, ἵνα, or ὡς (conjunctions meaning ‘in order that’), or in a relative clause with an added sense of purpose. A third type, shown in example (187), has an infinitive dependent on a verb that expresses a wish, order, or necessity.

- (185) Ταλθύβι’ ὅτι τάχιστα Μαχάονα δεῦρο κάλεσσον *Il.* 4.193
Talthybius, call Machaon over here as quickly as possible!

Example (186) displays a purpose clause introduced by ὄφρα, in which, as is the rule, the verb appears in the subjunctive.⁸⁸

- (186) ἀλλ’ ἄγ’ ὁ μὲν πεδίονδ’ ἐπὶ βοῦν ἴτω, ὄφρα τάχιστα
ἔλθῃσιν, ἐλάσῃ δὲ βοῶν ἐπιβουκόλος ἀνήρ *Od.* 3.421-2
Come now, someone shall go to the plain for a heifer, that she may come as quickly as possible, and that the cowherd may drive her.

The third type, shown in example (187), has τάχιστα with the infinitive φανήμεναι ‘to appear’ dependent on the finite verb ἀρᾶται ‘he prays’.⁸⁹

- (187) ἀρᾶται δὲ τάχιστα φανήμεναι Ἥῳ διᾶν *Il.* 9.240
He prays that as quickly as possible divine Dawn may appear.

4.5.3 Lexical expressions

The lexical expressions without an expressed scope in the *Iliad* all concern character traits that are true of the comparee as a rule or under normal circumstances. In the specific context in which such elatives appear, they either have no direct relevance or are even, sometimes tragically, contrasted with it. In example (188)

21.311, 21.333, 21.466-7, 23.71, 23.403, 23.414, 24.263, 24.554-5, 24.635-6; *Od.* 4.544-5, 11.223, 14.407-8, 15.14-5, 22.77, 22.133, 24.436.

⁸⁸ The other instances of τάχιστα in a purpose clause are *Il.* 4.269, 4.465-6, 5.690-1, 8.9, 9.165-6 (relative clause), 9.621-2, 13.326-7, 17.640-1 (relative clause), 18.344-5, 23.197; *Od.* 1.85-6, 3.175, 4.473-4, 4.737, 5.491-3 (with ἵνα), 6.32-3, 6.289-90, 15.293-4, 16.349-50 (relative clause), 24.360 (with ὡς), 24.532 (with ὡς).

⁸⁹ The other instances of τάχιστα in expressions of desire or necessity are *Il.* 9.626-7, 9.658-9, 13.286, 15.146, 22.129; *Od.* 5.112, 8.434, 16.152, 16.466-7.

this tragic contrast is made explicit: despite his excellence in hunting, Scamandrius is killed by Menelaus.⁹⁰

- (188) ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ τότε γε χραιῖσμ' Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα,
οὐδὲ ἐκηβολίαί ἦσιν τὸ πρὶν γε κέκαστο Il. 5.53-4
- But then the archer Artemis did not defend him [Scamandrius],
and neither did his skills in archery in which he used to be pre-
eminent.

Like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* has a number of instances in which such lexical expressions of superlativity act like epithets, giving background information about a character without contributing much to the immediate events in the story.⁹¹ The *Odyssey* does, however, also have two elatives expressed by lexical means which have direct relevance for the context.⁹² Polyphemus, for instance, says the following upon realizing that the prophecy that he received from the seer Telemus was fulfilled:

- (189) Τήλεμος Εὐρυμίδης, ὃς μαντοσύνη ἐκέκαστο Od. 9.509
- Telemus, son of Eurymus, who was pre-eminent in soothsaying

Besides the verbs which we also find in complete superlative constructions marked by lexical means (καίνυμαι, ἀριστεύω, περίεμι, νικάω, περιβάλλω), here we also find an adjective: ἀριπρεπής ‘very distinguished’ (*Od.* 8.176-7).

4.6 Conclusion

In complete superlative constructions, the scope is most regularly and frequently marked by the genitive case. While the genitive that marks the standard of comparative constructions can be seen as having a specialized comparative function, the

⁹⁰ Cf. Chapter 6.2.2. The other instances with a tragic or ironic undertone are *Il.* 11.746, 17.351, 23.288-9. The instances which are general descriptions of a character are *Il.* 4.339, 16.186, 18.251-2, 20.35, 23.276.

⁹¹ *Od.* 3.112, 8.176-7.

⁹² The second one being *Od.* 3.120-2.

genitive in superlative constructions looks like a partitive genitive that we also find in other expressions that refer to the set of which an entity is a part. Prepositions and lexical means are used to mark superlative constructions more frequently than comparative constructions. At the same time, both of these strategies are much less uniform than the case-marking strategy: we find seven different prepositions used to mark the scope of superlative constructions, and a variety of verbs to express the notion of ‘surpass’ or ‘be pre-eminent’. They are productive categories, but in comparison with the case-marking category they are considerably smaller in number and less rule-governed. Prepositions and lexical means are creative ways of marking the scope of a superlative construction, but they are not grammaticalized like the comparative genitive or even regular like the partitive genitive with superlatives.

When we compare superlative and comparative expressions with regard to the distribution of instances with explicit, implicit, and no scope/standard, it looks at first sight as if they are not so different (cf. Table 4.8). The percentage of expressions with implicit standard or scope of comparison is higher among the comparatives than the superlatives, but the relative number of complete and polar expressions is roughly even in both comparison types: complete and polar comparatives make up almost 30% each, while complete superlatives and relatives each come to around 40%.

Category	Total number	Complete	Implicit std/scope	Polar/relative
Comparatives	555	163	255	137
	100%	29%	46%	25%
Superlatives	786	322	163	301
	100%	41%	21%	38%

Table 4.8: Comparatives vs. superlatives

My analysis of expressions with an implicit standard or scope has shown that an implied standard of a comparative expression is fairly securely reconstructable from

the direct co-text or the wider narrative context. By contrast, it is not so easy to determine whether the scope of a superlative expression is actively implied or not. We can thus conclude that in the case of comparatives, only 25% are undoubtedly polar, and the instances with implicit scope can be grouped with complete comparatives. In the case of superlatives, however, the instances with implicit scope can be grouped with the elatives, and only 41% are complete superlative constructions. Furthermore, of these 41% (322 in number), 205 have a concrete scope, and 117 have a general scope. Superlative expressions with a general scope are not much more informative than elative superlatives: *Jack is the best of all*, or *Jack is the best of men*, tells us as much about Jack as *Jack is the best*. Such an expression puts emphasis on the comparee, but it does not relate the comparee to a graspable comparison group. When the scope of a superlative construction is concrete, i.e. referring to a specific group of people such as ‘the Achaeans’ or ‘people of his age’, the focus is still on the comparee, but this comparee is seen in relationship with a graspable body of individuals, and not as superlative in an absolute way.

We can thus conclude further that only 26% (205 out of 786) of all superlative expression make a comparison. The remaining 74% are expressions which highlight an entity against a generic or undefined backdrop. The opposite is the case with comparative constructions: 75% of comparative constructions express a relationship of inequality between a comparee and a specific (if implicit) standard. The remaining 25% involve a normative standard. It is certainly true that comparative expressions also place emphasis on their comparee, but this emphasis is in the majority of cases qualified through a specific standard of comparison, while in the majority of superlative expressions, the emphasis on the comparee is absolute, and the scope adds little to no qualification.⁹³

⁹³ The majority of general/elative superlatives over those with a concrete scope is in line with the development of superlative adjectives in the history of the Greek language: in later Greek, superlative morphology is used exclusively to mark adjectives as elative. Relative superlatives are expressed through a comparative construction. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 185.

Chapter 5

Similatives and Equatives

This chapter deals with comparisons of similarity, that is similatives, which express a sameness in manner, and equatives, which express a sameness in degree. In the first section I will explain in detail, why similatives and equatives are not discussed in separate chapters. Before delving into the analysis of the different kinds of simulative and equative constructions, I will make some general remarks about comparisons of similarity in contrast with comparisons of inequality (5.2). The main body of the chapter gives an overview of the comparisons of similarity in Homeric Greek. While I structured the discussion of comparative and superlative constructions according to the different syntactic ways in which the standard or scope of comparison is marked, I will present the comparisons of similarity in three groups, according to the nature of the standard of comparison and its relationship to the comparee. The first group contains instances in which the standard of comparison is a specific entity that is of the same kind as the comparee (5.3). In the second group, comparee and standard also belong to the same kind or class of entities, but the standard does not refer to an individual, but to the class of these entities, i.e. it is generic rather than specific (5.4). In the third group, the relation-

ship between comparee and standard is figurative (5.5).¹ The rest of this chapter concerns special cases. Section 5.6 deals with negated similatives and equatives, whose meaning is closer to that of a comparative, superlative, or elative expression than a proper comparison of similarity. This is followed by a discussion of comparison compounds, namely comparisons which are compressed into a single word (5.7). Section 5.8 is a short comment on descriptions of characters in disguise, which employ the same linguistic structures as comparisons. The final section (5.9) consists of notes on linguistic aspects of the extended Homeric simile. Table 5.1 shows the number of instances for each category.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	1218	720	498
Specific standard	96	46	50
General standard	73	44	29
Figurative standard	301	181	120
Negated comparisons	61	32	29
Compounds	461	231	230
Similes	226	186	40

Table 5.1: Similatives and equatives

5.1 Similatives vs. equatives

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a conceptual difference between similatives and equatives: equatives express sameness or similarity in degree, while similatives express a similarity in kind or manner. A definite distinction between these types presupposes clear linguistic marking, but unlike with comparatives and superlatives, there is no morphological or syntactic item that unambiguously marks a construction as equative in ancient Greek. In the majority of comparisons of simi-

¹ For more information on this distinction cf. Chapter 2.4.2.

larity in Homer, there is no degree meaning apparent, but there are a number of expressions in which a degree meaning is possible or likely.

The best indication for the presence of degree in comparisons of similarity are the correlative adjectives ὅσος (with the standard of comparison) and/or τόσος (with the comparee); they are employed when the number, space, size, amount, or extent of two entities is compared, but even in these constructions, the definitive presence of a degree is often doubtful. To make matters worse, the same comparison can be marked with ὅσος and/or τόσος in one place, and a marker that does not have a degree meaning in another place.

In examples (190) and (191) the Greek army is compared to leaves and flowers/sand. The adjective ὄσσα in example (190) can be understood as an indication for a degree meaning ‘as many in number as’, and μυρίοι ‘numberless’ makes this aspect explicit.²

(190) ἔσταν δ' ἐν λειμῶνι Σκαμανδρίῳ ἀνθεμόεντι
 μυρίοι, ὄσσά τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρη *Il.* 2.467-8

So they set themselves up in the flowery meadow of Scamander, numberless, as many as the leaves and flowers that appear in spring.

But the participle εἰκότες ‘be like’ that marks the comparison in example (191) does not explicitly carry any sense of degree, though the context and the nature of the standard of comparison suggest it.³ In degree comparisons with a figurative standard of comparison, the symbolic nature of the standard plays a role besides, or even beyond, the equality in degree.

² On example (190) cf. Kirk: “the idea of multitude is now specifically stated as the Achaeans take station in the plain beyond the ships” (1985, 164); and Brügger/Stoevesandt/Visser: “erneut wird die Menge hervorgehoben [...] andernorts können Blätter Vergänglichkeit symbolisieren” (2010, 136).

³ Kirk and Brügger/Stoevesandt/Visser understand example (191) also as a comparison in terms of multitude. Brügger/Stoevesandt/Visser paraphrase “Blättern gleich an Zahl oder auch Körnern Sandes” (2010, 260), and Kirk notes in addition: “leaves in Homer are usually a symbol for self-renewing rather than of multitude” (1985, 245).

- (191) ἄλλ' οὐ πω τοιόνδε τοσόνδέ τε λαὸν ὄπωπα
 λίην γὰρ φύλλοισιν ἐοικότες ἢ ψαμάθοισιν
 ἔρχονται πεδίῳ μαχησόμενοι προτὶ ἄστυ *Il.* 2.799-801

But never have I seen an army of this kind and size, for they are very much like leaves or sand as they march across the plain in order to fight against the city.

Examples in which *τόσος* is used on its own without a correlating *ὅσος* are very similar to comparative constructions without an explicit standard of comparison. In example (192), *τοσσοῦτον* ‘as far’ is used exactly parallel to the comparative *μάσσον* ‘further’. By contrast, in examples that have no trace of a degree meaning the standard of comparison is almost never left implicit.⁴

- (192) τοῦτον νῦν ἀφίκεσθε, νέοι· τάχα δ' ὕστερον ἄλλον
 ἦσειν ἢ τοσσοῦτον οἴομαι ἢ ἔτι μάσσον *Od.* 8.202-3

This now reach, young men; soon I will throw another one after it, as far, I think, or further still.

But even this parallel between the behaviour of *τόσος* constructions and comparative constructions does not clearly identify all *ὅσος/τόσος* instances as including a degree reading. In some cases, the precise meaning of *ὅσος/τόσος* is left so implicit that a definite degree meaning is dependent purely on the context and does not follow directly from translating the correlative adjectives literally as ‘as much/many as’ or ‘as far as’. In example (193) the voice of the man-devouring monster Scylla is compared to that of a puppy.

- (193) τῆς ἢ τοι φωνὴ μὲν ὅση σκύλακος νεογιλλῆς
 γίνεται, αὐτὴ δ' αὖτε πέλωρ κακόν *Od.* 12.86-7

Her voice is only as loud as that of a new-born puppy, she herself however is an evil monster.

The choice of a baby animal as standard of comparison is a stark and dramatically very effective contrast to the terrifying nature of Scylla, and a meaning ‘as loud

⁴ For an exception to this cf. coexample (245) in Section 5.3.

as’ for ὅση seems appropriate, but ‘like’ would make the point just as well.⁵

Besides ὅσος/τόσος there are other adjectives and adverbs, notably ἴσος ‘equal’ and ἴσον/ἴσα/ἴσως ‘equally’, that seem to carry a sense of degree in their basic semantics, and could thus be used to express ‘to the same degree as’. In some contexts this is quite likely, in others the meaning really is just ‘like’, i.e. a regular similitive expression. There are no cases that are unambiguously equative, and in all the instances that have a possible degree reading, the positive of the aspect of comparison (if it is expressed) is entailed, and this is typically a feature of similitive, not of equative constructions.

- (194) (...) τίσω δέ μιν ἴσον Ὀρέστη Il. 9.142
 And I [Agamemnon] will honour him [Achilles] like Orestes.

Example (194) might be intuitively read as an equative, ‘I will honour him as much as Orestes’, and this is true for most instances of ἴσος ‘equal’ and ἴσον/ἴσα/ἴσως with a specific person in the standard of comparison. But the more figurative the standard of comparison is, the weaker the equative sense of such expressions becomes. In example (195) Thetis compares the way in which Achilles grew up to a young sprout, and ἴσος is used without any sense of degree.

- (195) (...) ὁ δ’ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος Il. 18.56
 And he shot up like a young sprout.

Apart from the markers discussed above, which can convey a sense of equative meaning through their semantics, there are adverbs that can be regarded as morphologically free markers of equative degree. In example (196), the function of ὡς in the first line is most easily explained as adding the notion of degree to ἠβώοιμι ‘I were young’, and possibly also βίη τέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἶη ‘and my strength were firm’.⁶

⁵ Cf. Heubeck/Hoekstra 1989, 123.

⁶ Although Bowie 2013 seems to see no degree involved: “ὡς ... | ὡς ‘in such a way ... as’ ” (225). The adverb οὕτω can fulfil the same function as ὡς, cf. example (224).

- (196) εἴθ' ὥς ἠβώοιμι βίη τέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἶη,
ὥς ὄθ' ὑπὸ Τροίην λόχον ἤγομεν ἀρτόναντες *Od.* 14.468-9

If only I were as young and my strength as firm as when beneath
the city of Troy we prepared and executed our ambush.

The employment of such a morphologically free equative marker is typical in formulaic expressions of the kind in example (196), when Nestor (in the *Iliad*), or Odysseus (in the *Odyssey*), is reminiscing about his former prowess.⁷ In other, very similar expressions in Homer, however, such markers are by no means required or even regular. Even in the expressions in which ὥς and οὕτω appear to mark the aspect of comparison, their main function might be that of a structural rather than a degree marker. We find ὥς in extended Homeric similes, where it marks not only the comparee and aspect of comparison, but also the end of the narrative digression that elaborates the comparison, and the transition back into the main narrative (cf. Section 5.9).

In the same syntactic position, we find the correlative adjectives οἷος ... τοῖος, which have no degree meaning in their semantics.⁸ As we saw in the case of ὥς/οὕτω ... ὥς and τόσος ... ὅσος, τοῖος goes with the comparee and, if expressed, aspect of comparison, while οἷος marks the standard of comparison.

- (197) οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπαρωγὸς ὑπ' ἀυγὰς ἠελίοιο,
τοῖος ἐὼν οἷός ποτ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
πέφνον λαὸν ἄριστον, ἀμύνων Ἀργείοισιν,
εἰ τοιόσδ' ἔλθοιμι μίνυνθά περ ἐς πατέρος δῶ *Od.* 11.498-501

For I am not there as a helper beneath the rays of the sun, being
such as once in the wide city of Troy I destroyed the best army,
defending the Argives. If only as such a man I could come, albeit
for a short time, to the house of my father.

To make matters worse, when the standard of comparison is negated, any comparison of similarity takes on a sense of degree, resulting in either comparative or

⁷ Cf. *Il.* 4.318-9, 7.132-57, 11.670-6, 23.629-31.

⁸ Cf. *Il.* 7.132-57, 11.670-6, 23.629-31 *Od.* 1.255-66, 4.341-5, 10.460-3, 13.387-8, 17.132-7, 17.313-5, 20.88-90, 21.281-4 (example (222)), 22.226-30, 24.376-81.

superlative/elative meaning. In example (198), a likely standard of comparison, γυναῖκες ‘women’, is mentioned in the verse following the similitive expression, and since the comparee Arete is part of the group ‘women’, we seem to be dealing with the meaning of a superlative construction ‘most of all the women’, though the particle ὥς does not carry any explicit sense of a degree.

- (198) καί μιν ἔτισ’ ὥς οὔ τις ἐπὶ χθονὶ τίεται ἄλλη,
 ὄσσαι νῦν γε γυναῖκες ὑπ’ ἀνδράσιν οἶκον ἔχουσιν *Od.* 7.67-8

And [Alcinous] honoured her [Arete] as no other woman on earth is honoured, of all the women who now keep house under the hands of their husbands.

In Homeric Greek, the distinction between equatives and similitives, i.e. between expressions of equality in degree and similarity in kind is not a salient one. Trying to divide the instances of comparisons of similarity into these two categories would misrepresent the linguistic reality since the evidence does not allow for a clear-cut distinction. I will therefore discuss all comparisons of similarity in this chapter and refrain from labelling any given comparison as including the feature degree or not. Some comparisons are more like degree comparisons, and some more like manner comparisons, but where on the spectrum between the two types the examples found in Homer can be located depends on the interpretation of each individual instance in context.

5.2 Similarity vs. inequality

The syntactic and semantic features of comparisons of similarity have received much less scholarly attention than those of comparative and superlative constructions. The syntactic categories according to which I have presented comparative and superlative constructions in the previous chapters are based on Andersen’s 1983 typological study, whose main concern are comparative constructions. His categories have turned out to also be a valid means of classifying superlative con-

structions, but their aptness for understanding and presenting the properties of similative and equative constructions needs to be critically tested. In the following I compare comparisons of similarity to comparisons of inequality with regard to the aspect of comparison, the standard of comparison, and the ways in which the standard is marked. The result of these investigations is that a primary distinction within the comparisons of similarity is made not according to their syntax, but according to the relationship between comparee and standard.

5.2.1 The aspect

While in the majority of comparative and superlative constructions the aspect of comparison is expressed by an adjective that is marked with comparative or superlative morphology, adjectives are rarely employed in comparisons of similarity. There is no morphological degree or comparison marker for similatives and equatives, but adverbs can act like aspect markers, as shown in example (196) above and (224) below. When, in similative constructions, the aspect of comparison is expressed by an adjective, the positive of that adjective is always entailed, while in most degree comparison there is no such entailment unless it is made explicit. When an adjective modifies the standard of comparison, it is difficult to determine to what extent this adjective interacts with the comparison. The fact that in example (199) Meriones is likened to swift Ares might, but need not, imply that swiftness is part of the aspect of comparison. The adverb *καρπαλίμως* ‘swiftly’ in the following line supports such a reading.⁹

- (199) (...) Μηριόνης δὲ θοῶ ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηϊ Il. 13.295
 Meriones, equal to swift Ares

Nouns can express the aspect of comparison in similative and equative constructions in the same way in which we find them in lexically marked comparative and

⁹ Cf. the comparison compound *ἀρηίθοος* ‘swift as Ares’.

superlative constructions, and with vague adjectives like ‘better’/‘best’.¹⁰

Often the meaning of a comparison fits the verbal action in whose context it appears in such a way that this action and the comparison are to be read as connected. It is, however, not always entirely clear to what extent the meaning of that verb expresses or contributes to the aspect of comparison.

(200) (...) νευστάζων κεφαλῆ, μεθύοντι εἰκώς *Od.* 18.240
[Irus] hanging his head, resembling a drunken man

(201) εἶπε δ’ ἄρα κλαίουσα γυνὴ εἰκυῖα θεῆσι *Il.* 19.286
And [Briseis] spoke, crying, a woman resembling goddesses.

In Example (200) we are meant to imagine Irus hanging his head like a drunken man hangs his head, but Briseis in example (201) is not like goddesses with respect to her crying, but in a general sense, maybe even despite her crying.

Example (202) refers to Apollo’s punishment of the Greek army with the plague, and the comparison νυκτὶ εἰκώς ‘resembling night’ could be understood as describing the coming of Apollo in terms of how night falls, but it could also describe the terrifying and disastrous effect that Apollo has in a more general sense.¹¹

(202) (...) ὃ δ’ ἦϊε νυκτὶ εἰκώς *Il.* 1.47
And he [Apollo] came, resembling night.

In comparative and superlative constructions we have μᾶλλον, μάλιστα, and other adverbial expressions to mark a verbal aspect of comparison, though we have seen

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter 3.4 for comparatives and 4.3 for superlatives expressed by lexical means, and example (123) in Chapter 4.1.1 for ‘best’ + noun. Example (219) below is a similitive construction with nouns expressing the aspect of comparison.

¹¹ Kirk 1985, 58 and Latacz/Nünlist/Stoevesandt 2009, 45 describe this comparison as ‘effective’, but do not elaborate on its precise meaning. Ameis/Hentze see an effective contrast between night-like darkness and Apollo’s usual “Lichtnatur” (1913, 5). Pulleyn notes “For all its brevity, the comparison has a chilling power. Night is silent and irresistible, elemental and terrifying; so is Apollo” (2000, 138).

that in superlative constructions these adverbs can also highlight the comparee instead of having the effect of intensifying the verbal action.¹² While comparative expressions are generally directly relevant to the context in which they appear, many superlative and similative/equative expressions occur rather like a formulaic aside, which characterizes a person in a general way. Such asides can involve explicit aspects of comparison, as in example (203), taken from the catalogue of ships, or implicit aspects of comparison as we saw in example (201).¹³

- (203) τῶν μὲν Ὀδυσσεὺς ἦρχε Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος Il. 2.636
 Of these men Odysseus was the leader, equal to Zeus in counsel.

5.2.2 The standard

The standard of comparison is almost never implicit in similative constructions, but fairly frequently in comparative and superlative constructions, and occasionally in expressions that are likely to be equative.¹⁴ One might say that in comparative and superlative constructions, the combination of comparee, aspect, and context of the comparison helps to establish what an implied *standard* could be, while in similative constructions the comparee, standard, and context help to establish the often implicit *aspect* of comparison.

In the most straightforward comparisons, which are also those in which an equative sense can be most easily recognized, the standard of comparison is a specific entity and belongs to the same category as the comparee. This means that, for example in the *Iliad*, one human character, such as Achilles, is compared to another human character, such as Agamemnon, but it could also be a comparison between two specific horses or sets of armour. In such cases, a fairly straightforward

¹² Cf. example (182) vs. (183) in Chapter 4.5.2.

¹³ Among the superlatives it is especially relative expressions that are context-independent characterizations, cf. example (188) in Chapter 4.5.3, and Chapter 6.2.

¹⁴ Cf. example (221) in Section 5.3.

point is being made about two entities that are of the same kind. The majority of comparative expressions have a specific standard, and about a quarter of the superlative expressions have a concrete scope. A concrete scope refers to a limited, well-defined comparison class in which the comparee is distinguished, and it thereby qualifies this distinction: we interpret ‘best’ when it refers to Tychios as *σκυτοτόμων (...) ἄριστος* ‘best of the leather-makers’ (*Il.* 7.220-1) differently from ‘best’ said about Aias with reference to a general scope in *ἀνδρῶν (...) ἄριστος* ‘best of men’ (*Il.* 2.768).

When the scope of a superlative construction is general, it refers to a generic group of which the comparee is a member: ‘women’ in example (204) refers to a class to which Periboea, the comparee, belongs. It qualifies or limits the superlativity of the comparee to a lesser extent than a concrete scope, but, through its generic nature, also contributes less to the exact meaning of an aspect like ‘best’. By contrast, in comparisons of similarity with a general standard, the comparee and standard belong to the same overall class of entities, but within that class, they are of a different kind. When, in example (205), Diomedes is compared to women, a male warrior is juxtaposed with an equally human standard, but one that is of the opposite sex. Such a comparison not only expresses that Diomedes is similar to women, but evokes a host of stereotypes and characteristics associated with women, and applies them to the male comparee in order to make a point, in this case a rebuke.¹⁵

(204) (...) Περίβοια, γυναικῶν εἶδος ἀρίστη *Od.* 7.57
Periboea, the best of women in appearance

(205) νῦν δέ σ’ ἀτιμήσουσι· γυναικὸς ἄρ’ ἀντὶ τέτυξο *Il.* 8.163
Now they will dishonour you [Diomedes]; you have become like a woman.

¹⁵ Cf. Kirk 1990, 310.

Other examples of general standards found in comparisons of similarity are professions like a shepherd, or they can refer to types of people like ‘someone in distress’ or ‘someone who is dumb’. Such expressions always carry an additional layer of meaning, they are made to drive home a point about the comparee in a more figurative sense than the simple and straightforward comparisons.

Properly figurative comparisons have standards of comparison that are of an entirely different category. Superlative constructions with a figurative scope do not exist in Homeric Greek. Comparative constructions of the *melle dulcior* type have such figurative standards and are of a special type that is closer to a similitive expression with relative degree than a typical comparative expression. Example (206), with a comparative of the *melle dulcior* type, and example (207) with a figurative similitive, compare the whiteness of one thing to the whiteness of an object of a different kind. In example (206) the striking degree of this whiteness is emphasized through the usage of a comparative adjective instead of a simple adjective as we find it in example (207).

(206) λευκοτέρην δ' ἄρα μιν θῆκε πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος *Od.* 18.196

And [Athene] made her [Penelope] whiter than sawn ivory.

(207) (...) λευκὸν δ' ἦν ἠέλιος ὥς *Il.* 14.185

And [Hera's veil] was white like the sun.

5.2.3 Standard-marking

Overall, the syntactic strategies of marking the standard of similitive/equative comparisons are the same as in other types of comparison, but there is more variation and a different distribution. Marking the standard of comparison by case is a very frequent and regular strategy for comparative and superlative constructions (cf. Chapters 3.1 and 4.1), but a rare and rather special type for comparisons of similarity. Similatives employ the genitive case in its function of indicating posses-

sion, and the resulting expression is closer to a metaphor than a grammaticalized way of expressing a comparison.

In examples (208) and (209), the standard of comparison is a noun marked by the genitive, *πυρός* ‘fire’, and modifies a noun in the accusative, which expresses the aspect of comparison. This accusative marks the aspect-noun either as the direct object of a verb ‘have’, as in example (208) *ἔχει μένος* ‘has the might of’, or it functions like an adverbial phrase, as in example (209) *δέμας* ‘in the fashion of’, i.e. ‘like’.¹⁶

(208) ἄλλ’ Ἔκτωρ πυρὸς αἰνὸν ἔχει μένος Il. 17.565

but Hector has the terrible might of fire

(209) Ὡς οἱ μὲν μάρναντο δέμας πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο Il. 18.1

So they [Trojans and Greeks] fought in the fashion of blazing fire.

Using a preposition to mark the standard of comparison is similarly infrequent with similatives as it is with comparatives and superlatives. The use of *ἀντί* with a genitive noun and the verb *τεύχομαι* in two instances, example (205) above and example (226) below, can be explained as a periphrastic way of making a comparison. It expresses the notion that the comparee is viewed as ‘in the place of’ the standard of comparison.¹⁷ In figurative comparisons in which the aspect of comparison is implicit but reconstructable as referring to the notion of swiftness, we find *ἄμα* marking the standard of comparison.¹⁸ In example (210) the comparees are Achilles’ horses Xanthus and Balius.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf. Coray 2016, 14.

¹⁷ Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 443. Chantraine describes the function of *ἀντί* in these cases as expressing equivalence: “*ἀντί* signifie ‘équivalent à’, ce sens provenant peut-être de l’image de la balance où s’équilibrent l’un en face de l’autre deux objets” (1953, 92).

¹⁸ It is unclear whether this use of *ἄμα* goes back to its older, temporal sense ‘at the same time as’, or to its comitative function ‘together with’. Cf. Schwyzer/Debrunner 1988, 534.

¹⁹ And Zephyros, the standard of comparison, is their father. Coray paraphrases “*ἄμα πνοῆς Ζεφύροιο*: d.h. ‘so schnell wie unser Vater’” (2009, 176). Cf. *Od.* 6.20 for a comparison of Athene’s swift movement to the breeze of the wind marked by *ὥς*.

- (210) νῶϊ δὲ καὶ κεν ἅμα πνοιῆ Ζεφύροιο θέοιμεν,
 ἦν περ ἔλαφροτάτην φάσ' ἔμμεναι *Il.* 19.415-6
 The two of us, we could run like the blast of the West Wind, which,
 people say, is the swiftest.

While there is precisely one particle that regularly marks the standard of comparative constructions, similatives employ three: ἤύτε, φή, and, most frequently, ὥς, which is sometimes reinforced by particles like περ, τε, καί, or adverbs like αἰνῶς. ἤύτε and φή are only used with standards that are noun phrases, never with clausal standards, and they always precede the standard. φή is an archaic similative particle, possibly based on the instrumental of an IE demonstrative, and used in Homer and by Hellenistic poets when they write in Homeric style.²⁰ It only appears twice in the Homeric epics, once at the beginning of a simile (*Il.* 2.144), and in a short, but memorable, figurative comparison, example (211). The comparee is the freshly cut-off head of Ilioneus, with the helmet still on.

- (211) (...) ὃ δὲ φή κώδειαν ἀνασχῶν
 πέφραδέ τε Τρώεσσι *Il.* 14.499-500
 And he, holding it up like a poppy, showed it to the Trojans.

When ὥς marks a nominal standard, it can precede or (in the accented form ὦς) follow the noun, and it can mark clauses with finite verbs, in which case it precedes the standard. When ὥς is accompanied by a conjunction like εἰ, ὅτε, ὁπότε, one may expect it to mark a clausal standard, but this is not always the case, as shown in example (212), where ὥς ὅτε marks the noun πύργος 'tower'.

- (212) ἦριπε δ' ὥς ὅτε πύργος *Il.* 4.462
 And he fell like a tower.

ὥς can be correlated with ὦς marking the aspect of comparison, as we saw in example (196) above. Like the particle ἦ in comparative constructions, similative

²⁰ Cf. Krieter-Spiro 2015, 228; Janko 1994, 222. The *LfgreE* describes the etymology of the particle as disputed (4.868 s.v. φή).

particles can mark standards in any syntactic position: subjects, objects, adverbs, and adverbial phrases.

In examples (197), (193), and (190) of Section 5.1 we saw comparisons of similarity involving the correlative adjectives οἷος ... τοῖος and ὅσος ... τόσος. They can be used in combination, i.e. with οἷος/ὅσος marking the standard and τοῖος/τόσος the comparee, or only one of them can appear. οἷος and ὅσος mark nominal, but more often clausal standards of comparison, and always precede the standard; occasionally, when the standard is clausal, ὅτε follows οἷος. They can be used as adjectives in all syntactic positions (subject-function being the most common), or adverbially, in which case they are similar in function to a particle.²¹

While comparative and superlative constructions only involve verbs (with the exception of one relative expression, cf. Chapter 4.5.3) as lexical ways of marking the standard of comparison, in comparisons of similarity we find verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. All of them demand the dative case for their argument, i.e. the standard of comparison. There are nine different verbs, of which only three are used frequently; the most common is ἕοικα, followed by εἶδομαι and εἴσκω. Many of the others are only attested once in either *Iliad* or *Odyssey*; they are ἐπέοικα, ἴσκω, ἰσοφαρίζω, ἰσάζω, ἰσώω, and ὁμοιόω. They are often used in participial form, which makes them similar to adjectives in terms of their syntax: compare νυκτὶ ἑοικώς of example (202), ἔϊκυῖα θεῆσι of example (201), and μεθύοντι ἑοικώς of example (200) with the use of an adjective in example (213).

(213) (...) κασίγνητοι δέ μιν ἀμφὶς
ἴσταντ' ἀθανάτοισ' ἐναλίγκιοι *Od.* 7.4-5

And her brothers stood around her, resembling the immortals.

There are eight different adjectival markers, and all of them appear at least once in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* the most frequent ones are ἴσος and

²¹ Cf. example (225) in Section 5.3 for the adverbial usage of ὅσος ... τόσος.

ἀτάλαντος, and in the *Odyssey* ἐναλίγκιος. Fairly frequent in both works are ὁμοῖος, ἴκελος/εἴκελος, and ἐπιείκελος; ἀλίγκιος occurs only once in each poem. I do not provide general translations for the individual verbs and adjectives listed here. This is in order to avoid overemphasising semantic nuances, since it is difficult to detect a rigid rule behind the choice of a particular verb or adjective over another. The entry of ἔοικα in the *LfgrE* serves as an illustration of the diverse application of these verbs and adjectives in comparisons.²²

Besides the clearly adverbial forms like ὁμῶς, a number of the adjectives mentioned in the previous paragraph can be used adverbially: ἴσον and ἴσα are used frequently; εἴκελον appears once in the *Odyssey*. In cases like example (214) it is clear that these are adverbs: there is no nominal constituent in the sentence with which εἴκελον could be congruent, and it makes sense to understand the verbal action as the aspect of comparison: Odysseus describes the fleeting image of his mother's ghost in terms of the intangible disappearance of a shadow or dream.²³

- (214) τρὶς δέ μοι ἐκ χειρῶν σκιῇ εἴκελον ἢ καὶ ὄνειρῳ
ἔπτατ' *Od.* 11.207-8

And three times she fluttered out of my hands like a shadow or a dream.

In a case like example (215), ἴσον could either be congruent with the neuter noun κύμα, or an adverbial form of the adjective, depending on whether one understands the movement of the wave as compared to how a mountain seems to rise up towards the person approaching it (adverbial), or whether the wave is compared to a mountain in a general way, without explicit aspect of comparison (adjectival).

- (215) πορφύρεον δ' ἄρα κύμα περιστάθη οὔρεϊ ἴσον,
κυρτωθέν, κρύψεν δὲ θεὸν θνητὴν τε γυναῖκα *Od.* 11.243-4

²² Cf. *LfgrE* 2.618-22 s.v. ἔοικα.

²³ Unless one follows Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 149: "εἴκελον prädikativ zu dem Subjekt in ἔπτατο ἐκ χειρῶν: das zerrinnende Bild der ψυχὴ verflüchtigt sich für Odysseus zu einem unbestimmten es".

And the surging wave rose around them like a mountain, arching,
and covered the god and the mortal woman.

Even a clearly adjectival usage can express a comparison that is more similar to a similitive marked by particle than a lexically marked comparison: δαίμονι ἴσος of example (216) has the same meaning and function as θεὸς ὧς of example (217).

(216) Ὡς εἰπὼν Τρῶεσσιν ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος *Il.* 21.227

So [Achilles] spoke and rushed on the Trojans like a god.

(217) Αἰνεῖαν θ', ὃς Τρωσὶ θεὸς ὧς τίετο δῆμῳ *Il.* 11.58

and Aeneas, who was honoured among the Trojan people like a
god

Categorizing the comparisons of similarity according to standard-marking strategies does not make as much sense as it does for comparisons of inequality. In order to reflect the nature of comparisons of similarity I categorize them, on a first level, on the basis of the relationship between comparee and standard. I comment on the syntactic constructions in which the expressions of each category appear within each section.

5.3 Specific standard

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	96	46	50
Case	2	0	2
Preposition	0	0	0
Particle	24	13	11
Corr. Adjective	42	13	29
Lexical	27	20	7
No marking	1	0	1

Table 5.2: Similitives and equatives with a specific standard

The most frequent standard-marking strategies in comparisons with specific standards are the use of particles, correlative adjectives, and lexical means. In the *Odyssey* we find two instances of case-marking, representing a marginal strategy shown in example (220), and one instance without any standard-marking in example (224).

The majority of instances in which the standard of comparison is a specific character (or, in a few cases an animal or inanimate item) have as their aspect of comparison an expression of an attitude, a feeling, an assessment of a person's value, but also their outer appearance. For example, one Homeric character might be said to be honoured, loved or hated, have a similar fate or standing, show valour and strength, or simply look like, another character.

In example (218) the Achaeans are angry with Agamemnon like Achilles is; the aspect of comparison lies within the verbal action, ἐν θυμῷ βάλλονται ἐμοὶ χόλον 'they are building up anger in their hearts against me', and the standard marker, ὥς, is reinforced by the particle περ.²⁴

- (218) ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥα καὶ ἄλλοι ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοὶ
 ἐν θυμῷ βάλλονται ἐμοὶ χόλον ὥς περ Ἀχιλλεὺς
 οὐδ' ἐθέλουσι μάχεσθαι ἐπὶ πρυμνήσι νέεσσι *Il.* 14.49-51

Oh me! Clearly the other well-greaved Achaeans are also building up anger in their hearts against me, just like Achilles, and are unwilling to fight at the sterns of the ships.

In example (219), the verb ἕοικας 'you are like' is the marker of the standard of comparison, and two nouns in the accusative, κεφαλὴν 'head' and ὄμματα 'eyes', make the aspect of comparison explicit.²⁵

²⁴ These three verses are thought to be an interpolation, cf. Krieter-Spiro 2015, 33-5. The other instances of this kind with ὥς are *Il.* 6.477-8, 14.265-6, 19.401-3, 24.398; *Od.* 3.218-20, 3.232-5, 10.434-6, 17.251-3, 18.235-42, 19.370-2, 20.63-79, 20.281-2.

²⁵ The other instances in which the standard is marked by lexical means are, with a verb: *Il.* 5.181-3, 9.392, 11.613-4, 14.474, 21.410-1; *Od.* 3.124-5, 4.141-4. With adjective/adverb: *Il.* 2.764-5 (horses) 4.410, 5.467-8, 5.535-6, 9.142 (example (194)), 9.616, 9.284, 15.50-1, 15.166-7, 15.182-3, 15.209-10, 16.53-4, 17.720, 18.81-2; *Od.* 1.432, 11.556-8, 19.383-5, 20.88-90. Combination of verb and adverb: *Il.* 1.186-7.

- (219) αἰνῶς μὲν κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ὄμματα καλὰ ἕοικας
 κείνῳ *Od.* 1.208-9
 You [Telemachus] are uncannily like him [Odysseus] with regard
 to your head and beautiful eyes.

Marking the standard of comparison by case is an unusual strategy, and different from case marking in comparative and superlative constructions. Here the meaning of a comparison rests with the possessive function of the genitive: when Odysseus says ‘the ill fate of Agamemnon’, he means ‘the same ill fate as Agamemnon’.²⁶

- (220) ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδου
 φθείσεσθαι κακὸν οἶτον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔμελλον *Od.* 13.383-4
 Oh me! Indeed I was about to be killed by way of the ill fate of
 Agamemnon, son of Atreus, in my halls.

There are twelve instances in which the standard of comparison is left implicit; most of them have animals and inanimate objects as their comparee, and employ *τόσος*, which refers to an implied standard of comparison mentioned immediately before.²⁷

- (221) ἑπτὰ βοῶν ἀγέλαι, τόσα δ’ οἴων πώεα καλά *Od.* 12.129
 seven herds of cattle and as many fine flocks of sheep

Even though the *βοῶν ἀγέλαι* ‘herds of cattle’ are not marked as standard of comparison, it is clear that example (221) expresses that there are as many flocks of sheep as there are herds of cattle. Both parts of the correlative pair *ὅσος ... τόσος*, or *ὅσος* alone, are used to measure space, time, or amount: ‘as far as’ or ‘as long as’, ‘as much as’/‘as many as’.²⁸

²⁶ The other instance with a standard marked by case is *Od.* 2.271-2.

²⁷ The other instances with implicit standard are *Il.* 11.678-9, 20.250 (with *τοῖος* and a generalizing *ὅπποῖος* in the clause with the implied standard), 24.229-31; *Od.* 4.148-50 (with *τοῖος* and human comparee), 8.202-3 (example (192)), 12.122-3, 14.100-2, 17.407-8 (with human comparee), 19.358-60 (with *τοῖος* and human comparee), 22.144-5, 24.276-7.

²⁸ Space: *Il.* 8.16; *Od.* 5.400, 6.293-4, 9.473, 12.181. Time: *Od.* 19.168-9. Amount: *Il.* 9.125-7, 9.267-9, 14.93-4, 17.232, 22.41-2.

In reflexive comparisons, i.e. when characters are compared to themselves at an earlier time in their lives, *ὡς* and *οἷος/τοῖος* are used to mark the standard.²⁹ Example (222) shows how difficult it can be to distinguish between the function of *οἷος/τοῖος* as simple correlative adjectives and their use as markers of a similitive construction, especially if only one of the two is used. One might argue that here *οἷη* introduces a simple generalizing relative clause instead of a comparison.

- (222) ἄλλ' ἄγ' ἐμοὶ δότε τόξον εὐξοον, ὄφρα μεθ' ὑμῖν
 χειρῶν καὶ σθένεος πειρήσομαι, ἥ μοι ἔτ' ἐστὶν
 ἴς, οἷη πάρος ἔσκεν ἐνὶ γναμπτοῖσι μέλεσσι,
 ἢ ἤδη μοι ὄλεσσαν ἄλη τ' ἀκομιστή τε Od. 21.281-4

But come on, give me the well-polished bow, so that among you I may make proof of my hands and strength, whether there is still any valour in me, as it used to be in my supple limbs, or whether meanwhile my roaming and lack of subsistence have destroyed it.

Other instances of reflexive comparisons have a structure reminiscent of extended Homeric similes.

- (223) αἶ γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον,
 τοῖος ἐὼν οἷός ποτ' ἐϋκτιμένη ἐνὶ Λέσβῳ
 ἐξ ἔριδος Φιλομηλείδῃ ἐπάλαισεν ἀναστάς,
 καὶ δ' ἔβαλε κρατερῶς, κεχάροντο δὲ πάντες Ἀχαιοί,
 τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὀμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς Od. 4.341-5

If only, father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, being such as he was when once in well-built Lesbos he stood up and wrestled with Philomeleides in a quarrel and knocked him down fiercely, and all the Achaeans were glad, yes, if as such a man Odysseus would encounter the suitors.

The description of a hero's past self in the structural setting of an extended Homeric simile draws special attention to the comparee. We find these 'if only I was like before when...' in the *Iliad* about Nestor, who is already a legendary and highly

²⁹ The other instances of simple reflexive comparisons are, with *ὡς*: *Il.* 12.40. With *οἷος/τοῖος*: *Il.* 14.294-6, 16.557; *Od.* 4.420-1, 10.460-3, 13.387-8, 17.313-5, 20.88-90, 21.281-4. A related expression is *τοῖος ἐὼν, οἷός ἐσσι* 'being such as you are' (*Od.* 7.312).

honoured character. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus takes this place and is thereby endowed with an air of mystery and legendary power, preparing the audience for his mighty reappearance and cruel, super-human revenge on the suitors.³⁰

Example (224) is an interesting and difficult one; οὔτω seems to mark the adjective νέος ‘young’ with equative degree, to express the aspect of an equative comparison. We do not find constructions like these in Homer very often; in most cases in which an adjective expresses the aspect of a comparison of similarity, it is not marked by a degree word.³¹

(224) αἶ γὰρ ἐγὼν οὔτω νέος εἶην τῶδ’ ἐπὶ θυμῶ Od. 16.99

If only I were as young as [I feel] according to my spirit.

What makes example (224) difficult is that there is no linguistic element that explicitly marks the standard of comparison, and an implied standard of comparison is not as clearly at hand as in example (221). Odysseus says this line in his conversation with Telemachus upon being told that he cannot go to his own house due to the suitors’ insolent behaviour. Some translators understand Telemachus as an implied standard of comparison, for example Murray in the old Loeb edition: “Would that with my present temper I were as young as thou.”³² In my translation I follow the second Loeb edition with Murray’s translation revised by Dimock: “Would that I were as young as my present temper demands.”³³ This reading understands τῶδ’ ἐπὶ θυμῶ as the standard of comparison.

In example (225) Agamemnon equates the extent of the submission that he

³⁰ The other instances of extended reflexive comparisons are, with ὡς: *Il.* 4.318-9, 7.132-57, 11.670-6, 23.629-31; *Od.* 14.468-9 (example (196)). With οἷος/τοῖος: *Od.* 1.255-66, 11.498-501 (example (197)), 17.132-7, 22.226-30, 24.376-81.

³¹ The same sentiment is expressed in ὦ γέρον εἶθ’ ὡς θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν | ὡς τοι γούναθ’ ἔπειτο, βίη δέ τοι ἔμπεδος εἶη ‘I wish, old man, that as is the spirit in your dear breast, so your limbs would follow, and your strength would be steadfast’ (*Il.* 4.313-4). Similar in structure are two instances of reflexive comparisons, *Il.* 23.629-31 and example (196). They both display the same formula to introduce the aspect of comparison: εἶθ’ ὡς ἠβώοιμι βίη τέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἶη, | ὡς ... ‘If only I were as young and my strength as firm as ...’

³² Murray 1919, 123. Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1910, 93.

³³ Murray/Dimock 1995, 125; cf. Monro 1901, 76.

As shown in Table 5.3, most similitives and equatives with general standards are marked by a particle or by lexical means, but correlative adjectives and a preposition are also used.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	73	44	29
Case	0	0	0
Preposition	2	1	1
Particle	36	27	9
Corr. Adjective	4	2	2
Lexical	31	14	17
No marking	0	0	0

Table 5.3: Similitives and equatives with a general standard

We find the preposition *ἀντί* to mark the standard of comparison only in this category. It is not a very common construction, but it does occasionally occur even in Classical prose.³⁵

- (226) ἀντί κασιγνήτου ξεινός θ' ἰκέτης τε τέτυκται
ἀνέρι, ὅς τ' ὀλίγον περ ἐπιψαύῃ πραπίδεςσι *Od.* 8.546-7

Like a brother is the stranger and the suppliant to a man who can reach even a little way with his mind.

Examples (227) and (228) demonstrate the typical usage of the particles *ἥύτε* and *ὡς*.³⁶

- (227) ὃς καὶ χρυσὸν ἔχων πόλεμονδ' ἴεν ἥύτε κούρη *Il.* 2.872

And he went to war dressed in gold like a girl.

- (228) οὐ μὲν νήπιος ἦσθα, Βοηθοῖδη Ἐτεωνεῦ,
τὸ πρὶν· ἀτὰρ μὲν νῦν γε πάϊς ὡς νήπια βάζεις *Od.* 4.31-2

³⁵ Cf. Kühner/Gerth 1898: 453-4, 479; Ameis/Hentze 1908c, 62; Garvie 1994, 343. The other instance with *ἀντί* is shown in example (205).

³⁶ There is one other instance with *ἥύτε*, *Il.* 7.235-6. The *Odyssey* has two instances with *οἷος*: 3.72-4 and 13.221-5. The *Iliad* has two instances with *ὅσος ... τόσος*: 5.786 and 5.859-63.

You never used to be childish before, Eteoneus, son of Boethous,
but now like a little boy you say silly things.

When *ὡς εἰ* ‘as if’ is used, one would expect a finite clause expressing the standard of comparison, but example (229) has just a noun phrase in the accusative without a verb.

- (229) (...) *ὡς μ’ ἀσύφηλον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρρεξεν*
Ἀτρείδης ὡς εἴ τιν’ ἀτίμητον μετανάστην *Il.* 9.647-8
how the son of Atreus has made a fool out of me among the Ar-
gives, [treating me] like some honourless vagabond

There are three instances in the *Iliad* in which a god does something like a god, i.e. as one would expect of a god, or as only a god, by virtue of being a god, could.

The standard is marked by *ὡς τε* in all three cases.³⁷

- (230) (...) *τὸν δ’ ἐξήρπαξεν Ἀπόλλων*
ρεῖα μάλ’ ὡς τε θεός, ἐκάλυψε δ’ ἄρ’ ἠέρι πολλῆ *Il.* 20.443-4
But him [Hector] Apollo took away very easily, just like a god
does, and concealed him in dense mist.

Example (231) illustrates the use of an adjective, *ἴσος*, and shows that even a clearly adjectival form can seem adverbial: the comparison of Odysseus to an *ἄναυδος*, a speechless person, is connected to the way in which Odysseus is sitting at the table and refusing to eat.³⁸

- (231) *τίφθ’ οὕτως, Ὀδυσσεῦ, κατ’ ἄρ’ ἔζει ἴσος ἀναύδω,*
θυμὸν ἔδων, βρώμης δ’ οὐχ ἄπτει οὐδὲ ποτῆτος; *Od.* 10.378-9
Why do you sit like this, Odysseus, like someone who is speechless,
eating away your spirit, but food or drink you do not touch?

³⁷ The other instances of ‘like only a god could’ are *Il.* 3.380-1 and 18.517-8. The remaining instances with *ὡς* are *Il.* 2.190, 6.443, 8.94, 8.271-2, 9.481-2, 11.388-9, 11.466-8, 13.292-3, 13.470, 15.196, 16.58-9, 16.191-2, 18.539-40, 18.599-602, 20.200-1, 20.431-2, 21.281-3, 22.124-5, 23.782-3, 24.327-8, 24.770; *Od.* 2.46-7, 2.233-4, 4.413, 5.11-2, 11.368, 15.152, 17.397, 19.108-14.

³⁸ The remaining instances with adjectival/adverbial standard-marking are *Il.* 5.70-1, 13.176, 15.438-9, 15.551, 22.460-1, 24.757-9; *Od.* 2.276, 14.203-4, 18.26-7.

Verbal standard-marking is found with simple nominal standards of comparison, with participial standards, as in example (232), and, in example (233), with a demonstrative pronoun that is the referent of a generalizing relative clause.³⁹

(232) Ἥρη τίπτε βέβηκας; ἀτυζομένη δὲ ἔοικας *Il.* 15.90

Hera, why have you come? You look like a woman in distress.

(233) οὓς τινὰς ὑμεῖς ἴστε μάλιστ' ὀχέοντασ ὀϊζὺν
ἀνθρώπων, τοῖσιν κεν ἐν ἄλγεσιν ἰσωσαίμην *Od.* 7.211-2

Whoever you know of men who bear the greatest burden of woe,
to them might I [Odysseus] liken myself in my sorrows.

There are only two examples in which comparee and standard are not human or divine entities; both occur in the *Odyssey*, and both mark the standard with a verb.⁴⁰

(234) πέτρη γὰρ λῖς ἐστι, περιξέστη ἔϊκυῖα *Od.* 12.79

For the rock is smooth, like a polished one.

5.5 Figurative standard

This section deals with comparisons of similarity in which the relationship between comparee and standard of comparison is least straightforward, that is to say that comparee and standard belong to two entirely different semantic categories. The greater the semantic difference is between comparee and standard, the smaller the points of actual, simple similarity. When Achilles is, for example, compared to a god, the relationship between comparee and standard is not simple; the gods stand above the human sphere, and despite their anthropomorphic characteristics

³⁹ The other instances with verbal standard-marking and human/divine comparees are *Il.* 2.337-8, 3.170, 3.219, 12.385-6, 16.742-3, 23.429-20, 24.371; *Od.* 1.411, 7.208-10, 11.605-8, 12.413-4, 17.415-6, 17.511, 18.240, 20.194, 24.252-3, 24.254-5.

⁴⁰ Dogs are the comparee of the second instance, *Od.* 14.21.

they are different to men in many regards. The natural points of contact between Achilles and a god are fewer than between Achilles and another warrior.

This becomes even more evident when the standard of comparison is an animal or a natural force. When Hector fights like blazing fire, there are few actual, straightforward points of similarity between him and fire; we might describe them as fairly abstract, metaphorical impressions of his manner of fighting: fervour and ruthlessness, the heat of the moment, a certain glow around the body of the warrior. But the point of such a comparison is not to take it literally and find real similarities, but rather to open up all the (more or less relevant) characteristics of fire, especially those that are un-human or super-human, and look at Hector through them. The greater the gulf between comparee and standard, the greater the impact of the comparison.

Expressions with figurative standards make up the largest group and are found with every kind of standard marking. Table 5.4 shows that, as in the previous category, particles and lexical items (i.e. adjectives/adverbs and verbs) mark the standard of comparison most frequently.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	301	181	120
Case	9	8	1
Preposition	5	3	2
Particle	110	60	50
Corr. Adjective	18	7	11
Lexical	158	103	55
No marking	1	0	1

Table 5.4: Similatives and equatives with a figurative standard

Human characters are the most frequent type of comparee, and they are compared to gods, animals, entities and forces from the natural world, death/the Underworld, and a couple of man-made items. Figurative standards are also present in

compounds expressing comparisons, such as ‘god-like’ or ‘honey-sweet’, but those are discussed separately in Section 5.7. The same is true for extended Homeric similes, which are discussed in Section 5.9.

Gods and divine entities make up the largest group among the standards of comparison and are found with all types of standard marking. Comparisons with animals in the standard are most frequently marked with ὥς or other particles. With entities from the natural world in the standard we often find lexical means of marking, and the genitive case construction.

When at the beginning of the *Iliad* Achilles accuses Agamemnon of being a coward and not taking part in battle, he compares him to a dog and a deer. He uses a verb ‘to have’, namely the participle ἔχων, with nouns in the accusative, ὄμματα ‘eyes’ and καρδίην ‘heart’, to express the aspect of comparison. The standards of comparison are nouns in the possessive genitive dependent on the accusative nouns: Agamemnon has the same (shameless) eyes as a dog, κυνός, and the same (timid) heart as a deer, ἐλάφοιο.⁴¹

- (235) (...) κυνὸς ὄμματ’ ἔχων, καρδίην δ’ ἐλάφοιο *Il.* 1.225
 having the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer

In example (236) ἄμα functions like a preposition marking the standard of comparison, and the context of the comparison implies that the aspect of comparison is the speed of movement.⁴²

- (236) (...) τὰ μιν φέρον ἡμὲν ἐφ’ ὑγρὴν
 ἠδ’ ἐπ’ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν ἄμα πνοιῆσ’ ἀνέμοιο *Od.* 5.45-6
 [Hermes’ sandals], which carried him over both, the sea and the
 boundless land, like the blast of the wind

⁴¹ The first part of this comparison expresses the same meaning as the compound κυνώπης, but has a greater rhetorical impact, cf. Pulleyn 2000, 189. The other instances of figurative comparisons marked by case are *Il.* 8.349, 9.561-4, 11.596, 13.673, 17.366, 17.565 (example (208)), 18.1 (example (209)); *Od.* 4.14.

⁴² The other instances with ἄμα are *Il.* 16.149, 19.415-6 (example (210)), 24.341-2; *Od.* 1.97-8.

Example (237) is a figurative comparison marked by the particle ἤύτε, and conceptualizes the fleeting life of mortals and their ingraspable state after death in terms of a dream.⁴³

- (237) ψυχή δ' ἤύτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται *Od.* 11.222
 And the spirit, like a dream, has flown away in a flutter.

In example (238) the postpositional form of the particle ὡς marks the standard of comparison θεόν, which is in the accusative case parallel to the comparee ἐ 'him' (= Achilles), the accusative object of the verb τιμήσουσι 'they will honour' expressing the aspect of comparison.⁴⁴

- (238) οἱ κέ ἐ δωτίνησι θεὸν ὡς τιμήσουσι *Il.* 9.155
 They will honour him [Achilles] with gifts like a god.

The standard-marking part of the correlative adjective pair ὅσος ... τόσος marks the standard of comparison in example (239), which involves a comparee that is neither human nor divine.

- (239) σὸν δ' ἦτοι κλέος ἔσται ὅσον τ' ἐπικίδναται ἠώς *Il.* 7.458
 Your fame, in truth, will be as far as the morning light spreads.

The fame in question is, however, that of Poseidon, so the comparison ultimately

⁴³ The other instances with ἤύτε are *Il.* 1.359, 2.753-4, 7.219-20, 8.131, 11.485, 17.128, 18.107-11, 19.386, 21.29-30, 21.237-8, 22.1-3, 23.100-1, 23.454-5; *Od.* 8.279-80, 8.517-8, 14.475-7, 17.463-4, 21.48-50, 23.190-1. The one instance with φή is *Il.* 14.499-500 (example (211)).

⁴⁴ The other instances with ὡς are *Il.* 2.763-4, 3.2, 3.230-1, 3.300, 4.462, 4.471-2, 5.299, 5.476, 6.293-5, 6.513, 8.538-41, 9.297, 9.301-3, 10.33, 10.153-4, 10.297, 11.58, 11.65-6, 11.145-7, 12.173, 12.292-3, 12.312, 13.218, 13.531-2, 13.653-5, 13.827, 14.185, 15.605-10, 16.428-30, 17.459-62, 17.541-2, 18.57, 18.438, 18.616, 19.16-7, 19.365-6, 19.380-3, 19.397-8, 22.149-50, 22.393-4, 22.410-1, 22.434-5, 23.365-7, 23.711-3, 24.572; *Od.* 1.319-20, 3.246, 4.45-6, 4.160, 4.534-5, 5.36, 5.281, 5.370-1, 6.20, 6.309, 7.10-1, 7.36, 7.71, 8.171-3, 8.453, 8.468, 9.289-90, 9.292-3, 9.314, 10.124, 10.282-3, 11.410-1, 11.412-5, 11.605-8, 12.237-8, 12.432-3, 13.230-1, 14.205-6, 14.253-4, 15.105-8, 15.181, 15.478-9, 18.28-9, 18.295-6, 19.211-2, 19.232-4, 19.280, 19.493-4, 19.573-4, 22.348-9, 23.47-8, 23.339, 24.538. There is no standard-marker at *Od.* 21.295-306, but we find a narrative digression telling a story which functions as a standard of comparison to the present situation in Odysseus' house. ὡς marks this comparee and the return to the main narrative, and thereby suggests applying the story of the digression to the main narrative in the way of a simile. Cf. example (224) in Section 5.3.

characterizes a divine persona, and not fame in general.⁴⁵

Example (240) employs a comparison marked by an adjective for the description of a magic herb. Even though the aspect of the comparison is not made explicit, the fact that the root of the herb is described as black suggests that milk is used as the standard of comparison to conceptualize the white colour of the flower.⁴⁶

(240) ῥίζη μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δὲ εἴκελον ἄνθος *Od.* 10.304

At the root it was black, but like milk was its flower.

The employment of a verb to mark the standard of a figurative comparison is illustrated in example (241).⁴⁷ It describes a comparison of a goddess, Athene, to an animal, a vulture. Such passages have attracted considerable attention in literary studies with regard to the question of how exactly such descriptions are to be imagined by the audience. Does the goddess transform into the animal, or does she simply act in a manner that is reminiscent of the animal?

(241) ὧς ἄρα φωνήσασ' ἀπέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
φῆνη εἰδομένη· θάμβος δ' ἔλε πάντας Ἀχαιούς *Od.* 3.371-2

So she spoke and went away, the owl-eyed goddess Athene, likening herself to a vulture; and amazement took hold of all the Achaeans.

⁴⁵ The other instances with ὅσος ... τόσος are *Il.* 2.467-8, 7.451, 10.351-2, 21.251, 23.327, 24.317-9; *Od.* 8.124-5, 9.51, 9.325, 10.112-3, 10.167-8, 10.517, 11.25, 12.86-7. With οἶος ... τοῖος: *Od.* 7.105-6, 18.136-7, 19.232-4.

⁴⁶ The other figurative comparisons with adjectival/adverbial standard markers are *Il.* 1.262-5, 2.169, 2.407, 2.477-9, 2.627, 2.636, 2.651, 3.454, 4.253, 4.394, 5.438, 5.440-1, 5.459, 5.576, 5.778, 5.884, 6.401, 7.47, 7.166, 7.366, 8.215-6, 8.264, 9.312, 9.603, 9.485, 9.494, 10.137, 10.436-7, 11.60, 11.200, 11.295, 11.297-8, 11.603-4, 11.747, 12.40, 12.130, 12.375, 12.462-3, 13.39-42, 13.53, 13.295, 13.328, 13.330-1, 13.499-501, 13.528, 13.687-8, 13.802, 14.72-3, 14.289-91, 14.318, 14.385-6, 15.302, 16.705, 16.784-5, 16.786-7, 17.51, 17.72, 17.87-9, 17.259, 17.536, 18.56, 18.154, 18.437, 19.250-1, 19.282-4, 20.45-6, 20.51, 20.422-3, 20.447-8, 21.18-9, 21.227, 21.315, 22.131-4, 22.134-5, 22.279-80, 23.80-1, 24.486, 24.699-700; *Od.* 1.370-1, 2.5, 3.110, 3.290, 3.408-9, 3.468, 4.310, 6.15-7, 6.229-31, 7.4-5, 8.13-4, 8.115, 8.174-5, 9.3-4, 11.207-8, 11.243-4, 11.304, 11.484-6, 12.418-9, 13.88-9, 14.156-7, 14.175, 14.308-9, 15.414, 15.520, 17.36-7, 19.53-4, 19.265-8, 21.13-4, 21.36-7, 21.411, 22.239-40, 23.157-8, 23.163, 24.36, 24.148, 24.370-1.

⁴⁷ The other instances with verbal markers are *Il.* 1.47 (= (202)), 1.103-4, 2.800-1, 3.158, 3.221-2, 3.449, 5.560, 5.782-3, 7.58-60, 7.256-7, 8.305, 9.389-90, 10.547, 11.26-8, 11.546-7, 11.638, 13.754-5, 15.237-8, 15.592-3, 19.286, 19.350-1, 20.371-2, 21.464-6, 22.151-2, 24.629-30; *Od.* 4.27, 4.121-2, 4.662, 5.337, 5.351-2, 6.151-2, 6.242-3, 7.291, 9.190-2, 10.120, 11.605-8, 13.79-80, 16.187, 16.199-200, 17.500, 20.361-2.

Athene, until this moment in the form of Mentor, Telemachus' companion, likens herself to a vulture and departs. The amazement of the human onlookers present in this scene strongly suggests that a real transformation took place here.⁴⁸ Buxton points out that the verb εἶδομαι is used to describe actual changes of physical appearance in other scenes in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁴⁹ While my own research confirms this observation, linguistic evidence cannot bear the weight of this argument. Next to εἶδομαι, the verb ἔοικα is also used to describe actual physical transformations of gods into human form (cf. section 5.8), but ἔοικα also describes human characters doing something like an animal or natural force, and it is used in comparisons of gods to animals and natural forces of the kind we saw in example (241).

Neither comparisons nor descriptions of real physical transformations use a single and exclusive linguistic marker, but instead display a variety of strategies for standard marking; in addition, there are various structural overlaps between both categories. A comprehensive account of all relevant descriptions of comparisons and transformations is needed to shed more light on this problem. Buxton only very briefly touches upon Iliadic examples, and does not discuss comparisons of gods to natural phenomena. The majority of discussions on this topic focus on Olympian gods compared to animals, though standards like 'night' and 'mist' are sometimes included. Figurative comparisons of deities are also found in the form of compounds and extended Homeric similes, which are discussed in Sections 5.7 and 5.9. In Chapter 6.3.4 I will express my own view on the basis of the combined data from all three categories.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ameris/Hentze 1908b, 96; Heubeck/West/Hainsworth 1988, 183-4.

⁴⁹ For example Athene as Mentos at *Od.* 1.105 and Boreas as stallion at *Il.* 20.224. Cf. Buxton 2009, 30. Buxton provides a good, brief overview of the main opinions on the question of metamorphosis vs. comparison of gods to animals in the *Odyssey*.

5.6 Negated similatives and equatives

When similative or equative constructions are negated, the comparison becomes one of inequality or dissimilarity; such expressions, though equative or similative in form, are closer in meaning to elatives, superlatives, or comparatives. The most frequent standard-marking strategy is the use of correlative adjectives, with ὅσος ... τόσος occurring 30 times, and οἷος ... τοῖος occurring nine times. The relatively high frequency of the ὅσος ... τόσος construction, which is associated with equative rather than similative meaning, might mean that those comparisons of similarity which already have degree semantics are especially likely to be used for the expression of an inequality in degree, i.e. comparative or superlative/elative meaning.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	61	32	29
Case	0	0	0
Adposition	0	0	0
Particle	8	3	5
Corr. Adjective	39	21	18
Lexical	14	8	6
No marking	0	0	0

Table 5.5: Similatives and equatives with elative meaning

The most frequent expressions in this category are of the type ‘Nobody is like X’, with a variant ‘I have never seen/heard of/met anyone who is like X’. The element that is negated is the comparee, and the focus of the comparison, which normally is the comparee, is in this case expressed by the standard of comparison. In example (242), the entity we are interested in and about whom a point is being made is the standard of comparison, Odysseus. The same is true in example (243), in which Hector is the focus of attention and the standard of comparison.⁵⁰ These

⁵⁰ The other instances of the ‘Nobody is like X’ type are *Il.* 2.552-5, 6.101, 9.305-6, 10.214-6,

comparisons state that Odysseus and Hector display certain characteristics to an unusually, or even extraordinarily, great extent, namely being good at taking care of one's house, and doing terrible deeds, respectively.

- (242) (...) οὐ γὰρ ἔπ' ἀνήρ,
οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκεν, ἀρὴν ἀπὸ οἴκου ἀμῦναι. *Od.* 2.58-9

For there is no man here like Odysseus was to keep away calamity from the house.

- (243) οὐ γάρ πω ἰδόμην, οὐδ' ἔκλυον ἀυδήσαντος
ἄνδρ' ἕνα τοσσάδε μέρμερ' ἐπ' ἡματι μητίσασθαι,
ὄσσ' Ἐκτωρ ἔρρεξε Διὶ φίλος υἱᾶς Ἀχαιῶν
αὐτως, οὔτε θεᾶς υἱὸς φίλος οὔτε θεοῖο. *Il.* 10.47-50

For I have never seen nor heard anyone say that a single man contrived as many baneful deeds in one day, as Hector, dear to Zeus, has done to the sons of the Achaeans, just like that, being neither the dear son of a goddess nor of a god.

A very similar point can be made with the entity of interest in the comparee and 'nobody else' in the standard. While the two examples above recall typical relative expressions, the kind in example (244), with the negation in the standard instead of the comparee, seems closer to a superlative construction with a general standard.⁵¹

- (244) καί μιν ἔτισ' ὡς οὐ τις ἐπὶ χθονὶ τίεται ἄλλη,
ὄσσαι νῦν γε γυναῖκες ὑπ' ἀνδράσιν οἶκον ἔχουσιν *Od.* 7.67-8

And [Alcinous] honoured her [Arete] as no other woman on earth is honoured, of all the women who now keep house under the hands of their husbands.

Example (245) employs the negative quantifier *παῦροι* 'few' as the comparee, which gives it a structure similar to example (242). The point of this comparison is not

14.521-2, 15.569-70, 22.424-6, 23.632-3; *Od.* 3.120-2, 4.104-5, 4.106-7, 14.96-9, 17.537-8, 19.314-5, 19.365-8, 21.93-4. The other instances of the 'I have never seen/heard of/met anyone who is like X' type are *Il.* 1.262-5, 2.799, 3.169-70; *Od.* 2.117-22, 3.221-2, 4.141-4, 19.350-2, 19.380-1.

⁵¹ The other instances of the 'X is like nobody' type are *Il.* 18.105-6, 22.380; *Od.* 8.229. There is one example in which the comparee is said to display a quality not as much as everyone else, i.e. least of all: *Il.* 21.370-1.

to establish in which way Odysseus and the Achaeans are similar, but to highlight the special standing of Odysseus; it is thus closer to a superlative construction than a real similative.

- (245) (...) παῦροι γὰρ Ἀχαιῶν ἦσαν ὁμοῖοι *Od.* 19.240
for few of the Achaeans were similar [to Odysseus]

When the similarity or equality between two specific entities is negated, the resulting meaning comes close to that of a comparative construction. In example (246) Priam compares the number of Phrygian warriors, whom he joined in battle against the Amazons, to that of the Achaeans who have come to attack Troy.⁵²

- (246) ἀλλ' οὐδ' οἷ τόσοι ἦσαν ὅσοι ἐλίκωπες Ἀχαιοί *Il.* 3.190
But not even they [the Phrygian warriors] were as many as the bright-eyed Achaeans.

The underlying meaning here is clear: ‘the Achaeans are even more in number than the Phrygians were back then, and they were already an army of considerable size’.

In similative constructions of the kind in example (247), only the context and knowledge of the story world make it possible to establish the intended outcome of such a comparison. Here, Apollo warns Diomedes not to engage in battle with a god, implying that gods are superior to humans.⁵³

- (247) (...) ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον
ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων *Il.* 5.441-2
Since not at all alike are the race of immortal gods and that of men walking on the ground.

The last subgroup in this category concerns counterfactual expressions in which A is so great that not even B (which is in itself considerably great) could have

⁵² The other instances of the ‘X is not like Y’ type are *Il.* 2.527-9, 6.450-5, 17.240-4; *Od.* 21.250-5. With figurative standard: *Il.* 14.394-401, 17.20-3, 18.362-4; *Od.* 20.45-6. With a reflexive standard, i.e. a comparison of one entity or event to itself in the past: *Il.* 3.442-6, 11.668-9, 14.315-28; *Od.* 16.288-90, 19.7-9.

⁵³ The other comparisons of this kind that rely on the context for their interpretation are *Il.* 24.607-8; *Od.* 6.301-3, 15.330-2.

come close to it. In example (248), the already considerable amount of booty that Odysseus would have brought back from Troy, had all gone well, is adduced as a standard of comparison for the even greater amount of treasure which the Phaeacians give to Odysseus when they escort him back to his home. This somewhat roundabout way of expressing a comparison uses a combination of an equative particle ὅσα ‘as much as’ and a negated counterfactual expression ἄν οὐδέ ποτε ἐξήρατο ‘could never have carried off’ to highlight the extraordinary amount of treasure given to Odysseus.⁵⁴

- (248) χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τε ἄλις ἐσθῆτά τε δόντες,
 πόλλ', ὅσ' ἄν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
 εἴ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχῶν ἀπὸ ληΐδος αἴσαν *Od.* 5.38-40
- And [the Phaeacians] gave him bronze and gold in plenty and clothing, lots of it, as much as Odysseus could never have carried off from Troy, even if he had come back unharmed having obtained his share of the booty.

Beside the use of negation, there is one other way in which specifically equative expressions acquire a comparative sense: by amplifying the correlative adjective with a numeral adverb.⁵⁵

- (249) δεσμοὶ μὲν τρὶς τόσσοι ἀπείρονες ἀμφὶς ἔχουεν *Od.* 8.340
- Thrice as many inescapable bonds might hold me all around.

Example (249) is taken from the short conversation between Apollo and Hermes after Aphrodite and Ares were caught in bed together by Aphrodite's husband Hephaestus. The implied standard of comparison here are the bonds that Hephaestus had made to catch the pair as they were committing adultery. ‘Thrice as many’ expresses an inequality in number, not an equality.

Another way of using an equative construction to express relative or superlative

⁵⁴ The other counterfactual expressions of this kind are *Od.* 9.240-3 and 13.136-8.

⁵⁵ The other equative expressions with numeral adverbs are *Il.* 1.213, 5.136, 9.379-85, 14.148-51 (figurative); *Od.* 9.491.

meaning is to make the focus of the comparison into the subject of a (rhetorical) question.

- (250) Ἥφαιστ', ἧ ἄρα δὴ τις, ὅσαι θεαί εἰς' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ,
 τοσσάδ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἧσιν ἀνέσχετο κήδεα λυγρὰ
 ὅσσ' ἐμοὶ ἐκ πασέων Κρονίδης Ζεὺς ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν; *Il.* 18.429-31

Hephaestus, has a single one of all the goddesses in Olympus endured as many bitter sorrows in her heart as to me above all Zeus, son of Cronos, has given grief?

The question in example (250) expects an answer along the lines of ‘no goddess has endured as many bitter sorrows as you’, which comes down to saying ‘of all goddesses you are the one who has endured most bitter sorrows’.

5.7 Compounds

Comparisons can be expressed by compounds with various internal syntactic structures. A comparison compound can be made up of combinations of nouns, adjectives, and prepositions in varying order and with various internal relationships. The comparison compound itself is always an adjective (though occasionally one that is substantivized or adverbialized), and the comparee is expressed by a noun agreeing with the compound. All comparison compounds can be classified as exocentric, which means that the two parts of the compound together modify an entity outside of the compound: *ποδήνεμος* ‘wind-footed’ characterizes the goddess Iris, and not a particular kind of foot. By contrast, the compound ‘clubfoot’ belongs to the endocentric class of compounds since one part of it, ‘club’ modifies the other, ‘foot’, and the compound as a whole refers to a particular kind of foot.⁵⁶

Compounds that express comparisons have, to my knowledge, not been studied as an object in their own right, but following Tribulato’s account of the syntactic

⁵⁶ For an overview of general linguistic as well as Indo-European approaches to compounds cf. Tribulato 2015.

categories of Ancient Greek compounds in general, we can divide most of our comparison compounds into two groups: determinative compounds and bahuvrihi-type compounds.⁵⁷ In determinative compounds one part of the compound governs the other part: in θεοείκελος ‘god-like’ the determinatum -είκελος ‘-like’ governs the modifier θεο- ‘god-’. In bahuvrihi-type compounds there is a possessive relationship between the compound and the entity to which it refers: βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη ‘cow-eyed queen Hera’ means ‘queen Hera who has the eyes of a cow’.

5.7.1 Bahuvrihi-type compounds

A comparison compound is a special subtype within the class of bahuvrihi-type compounds since the relationship between its two parts is metaphorical.⁵⁸ There is no element that formally marks the meaning of the compound as that of a comparison. The only way in which one can know that ἀργυρόπεζα, ‘silver-footed’, means ‘having feet like silver’ and not ‘having feet made of silver’ is because Thetis, the Homeric goddess characterized by this epithet, does not actually have feet made of silver.⁵⁹ A ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον ‘silver-studded sword’, however, probably has studs on it that are made of silver.

The majority of compounds in ancient Greek are right-oriented, i.e. the governing part of the compound is the second, and the modifier part is the first element. In the compound ἀργυρόπεζα, -πεζα, ‘-foot’ is the governing part that characterizes the noun it agrees with (Thetis) and ἀργυρό- ‘silver-’ is the modifying part that in turn characterizes the ‘foot’ part of the compound. Table 5.6 lists all Homeric bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds that can be classified as such.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Risch’s 1944 study of early Greek compounds mentions some of the compounds that I discuss here, but does not group them together as a special class expressing comparisons.

⁵⁸ Tribulato 2015 explains this metaphorical relationship with the examples ῥοδοδάκτυλος ‘rose-fingered’ and κυνώπης ‘dog-eyed’ (84).

⁵⁹ Although it has been argued that she does, cf. *LfggE* 1.1214-5 s.v. ἀργυρόπεζα.

⁶⁰ The instances of each right-oriented bahuvrihi-type compound are, γλαυκῶπις: *Il.* 1.206, 2.166, 2.172, 2.279, 2.446, 4.439, 5.29, 5.133, 5.405, 5.420, 5.719, 5.793, 5.825, 5.853, 6.88, 7.17, 7.33,

Compound	Translation	Secondary comparees
γλαυκῶπις	owl-eyed	Athene
ρόδοδάκτυλος	rose-fingered	Eos
βοῶπις	cow-eyed	Hera, Clymene, Phylomedusa, Halië
ἀργυρόπεζα	silver-footed	Thetis
κυανόπρωρος/-ρειος	enamel-prowed	ship
μελίφρων	honey-hearted	sleep, wine, wheat, food
κυνώπης/-πις	dog-eyed	Agamemnon, Helen, Hera, Aphrodite, Clytemnestra
ἀελλόπος	wind-footed	Iris
κυανῶπις	enamel-eyed	Amphitrite
μελίγηρυς	honey-voiced	voice
θεοειδής	god-like	human characters
ἠεροειδής	mist-like	sea, cave, rock
μυλοειδής	millstone-like	rock
ιοειδής	violet-like	sea

Table 5.6: Right-oriented bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds

Bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds consist of two nouns, and the metaphorical combination of these two nouns has the effect of a comparison condensed into

7.43, 8.30, 8.357, 8.373, 8.406, 8.420, 9.390, 10.482, 10.533, 11.729, 17.567, 18.227, 20.69, 22.177, 22.214, 22.238, 22.446, 23.769, 24.26; *Od.* 1.44, 1.80, 1.156, 1.178, 1.221, 1.314, 1.319, 1.364, 2.382, 2.393, 2.399, 2.420, 2.433, 3.13, 3.25, 3.135, 3.218, 3.229, 3.330, 3.356, 3.371, 4.795, 5.427, 5.437, 6.13, 6.24, 6.41, 6.47, 6.112, 7.19, 7.27, 7.47, 7.78, 11.626, 13.236, 13.287, 13.329, 13.361, 13.374, 13.389, 13.392, 13.420, 15.9, 15.292, 16.451, 18.158, 18.187, 19.604, 20.44, 21.1, 21.358, 23.242, 23.344, 24.516, 24.518, 24.540, 24.541. *ρόδοδάκτυλος*: *Il.* 1.477, 6.175, 9.707, 23.109, 24.788; *Od.* 2.1, 3.404, 3.491, 4.306, 4.431, 4.576, 5.121, 5.228, 8.1, 9.152, 9.170, 9.307, 9.437, 9.560, 10.187, 12.8, 12.316, 13.18, 15.189, 17.1, 19.428, 23.241. *βοῶπις*: *Il.* 1.551, 1.568, 3.144, 4.50, 7.10, 8.471, 14.159, 14.222, 14.263, 15.34, 15.49, 16.439, 18.40, 18.239, 18.357, 18.360, 20.309. *ἀργυρόπεζα*: *Il.* 1.538, 1.556, 9.410, 16.222, 16.574, 18.127, 18.146, 18.369, 18.381, 19.28, 24.89, 24.120; *Od.* 24.91-2. *κυανόπρωρος/-ρειος*: *Il.* 15.693, 23.852, 23.878; *Od.* 3.299, 9.482, 9.539, 10.127, 11.6, 12.100, 12.148, 12.354, 14.311, 22.465. *μελίφρων*: *Il.* 2.34, 6.264, 8.188, 8.506, 8.546, 24.284; *Od.* 7.182, 10.356-7, 13.53, 15.148, 24.489. *κυνώπης/-πις*: *Il.* 1.159, 3.180, 18.396; *Od.* 4.145, 8.319, 11.424-6. *ἀελλόπος*: *Il.* 8.409, 24.77, 24.159. *κυανῶπις*: *Od.* 12.60. *μελίγηρυς*: *Od.* 12.187. *θεοειδής*: *Il.* 2.623, 2.862, 3.16, 3.27, 3.30, 3.37, 3.58, 3.450, 6.290, 6.332, 6.517, 11.581, 12.94, 13.774, 17.494, 17.534, 19.327, 24.217, 24.299, 24.372, 24.386, 24.405, 24.483, 24.552, 24.634, 24.659, 24.763; *Od.* 1.113, 3.343, 4.628, 6.7, 7.231-2, 10.205, 14.173, 15.271, 15.508, 16.20, 17.151, 17.328, 17.391, 20.350, 20.363, 21.186, 21.277-8. *ἠεροειδής*: *Il.* 5.770, 23.744; *Od.* 2.263, 3.105, 3.294, 4.482, 5.164, 5.281, 8.568, 11.107, 12.80, 12.232-3, 12.285, 13.103, 13.150, 13.176, 13.347, 13.366. *μυλοειδής*: *Il.* 7.270. *ιοειδής*: *Il.* 11.298; *Od.* 5.56.

a single word. Whether all of the adjectives that I have listed as bahuvrihi-type compounds were understood as such by the composers and audiences of epic poetry through the ages is debatable. Whether, for instance, the γλαυκ- part of the compound γλαυκῶπις actually refers to an owl is disputed.⁶¹ The κυανο- part of κυανόπρωρος/-ρείος and κυανῶπις tends to be translated as ‘dark’, i.e. as a colour term, rather than as ‘enamel’ or ‘lapislazuli’, i.e. the material objects to which the noun κύανος refers.⁶² The compounds with -ειδής ‘having the appearance’ in their second part are translated as ‘X-like’ for lack of a better phrase that represents the compound type more faithfully. Synchronically, they may well have simply meant exactly that, ‘X-like’. ἠεροειδής is once used adverbially to mean ‘in the far distance’, ‘dimly’ (*Il.* 5.770).

The linguistically reduced nature of these comparisons makes it difficult to pin down the individual elements of a comparison. The most common translations and discussions of these compounds understand the second part, -πεζα, ‘-foot’, as the comparee, and the first part, ἀργυρό- ‘silver-’, as the standard of comparison. The noun with which such a compound agrees can accordingly be called a secondary comparee: it refers to the (mostly human or divine) person whose body part is referred to by the compound, and who is therefore indirectly, on a second level, also characterized by the comparison in the compound.

This interpretation of bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds as having the comparison structure STD-CPREE is challenged by the issue of a related type of compound, generally referred to as left-oriented or ‘reversed’ bahuvrihi. The two Homeric instances of this type are shown in Table 5.7.⁶³

⁶¹ Cf. *Lfgre* 2.161-2 s.v. γλαυκῶπις.

⁶² Cf. *Lfgre* 2.1569 s.v. κυανοπῶροιο/-ρείους, 2.1571 s.v. κυανῶπις, and 2.1570 s.v. κύανος.

⁶³ The instances of each left-oriented bahuvrihi-type compound are, ποδήνεμος: *Il.* 2.786, 5.353, 5.368, 15.168, 15.200, 18.166, 18.183, 18.196, 24-95. θυμολέοντα: *Il.* 5.639, 7.228; *Od.* 4.724-5, 4.814-5, 11.267.

Compound	Translation	Secondary comparees
ποδήνεμος	wind-footed	Iris
θυμολέοντα	lion-hearted	Heracles, Achilles, Odysseus

Table 5.7: Left-oriented bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds

The problem that left-oriented bahuvrihi-type compounds pose lies in the abnormal constituent order: the vast majority of ancient Greek compounds are right-oriented, in correspondence to what is assumed to be the basic Proto-Indo-European word-order (OV). Most left-oriented compounds are of a special kind, and their left-orientation can be explained as reflecting a stylistically marked word-order by way of a regular exception to the rule based on their particular syntax. Their first parts, i.e. the parts that trigger the left-orientation, are of verbal or prepositional origin, as in *φερέουκος* ‘house-carrier’ and *ἔνδημος* ‘native’.⁶⁴ Such verbal and prepositional parts govern the other half of the compound in a way that is different from the function of the governing part of bahuvrihi-type compounds, and thus the left-orientation of *ποδήνεμος* and *θυμολέοντα* is in need of explanation.

In view of this, Tribulato 2006 argues that the internal structure of *ποδήνεμος* and *θυμολέοντα*, as well as the personal name *Εἰδοθέη* ‘having the appearance of a god’, should be interpreted differently: instead of the structure ‘having the X (=first part) of Y (=second part)’, she proposes to understand them as expressing ‘like Y (=second part) with regard to X (=first part)’. This interpretation turns these seemingly aberrant bahuvrihi-type compounds into a kind of right-oriented determinative compound in which the second part governs the first. If we translate this structure into comparison terms, we end up with a compound expressing the aspect of comparison as its first part, and the standard of comparison as its second part: *ποδήνεμος* then means ‘like the wind with regard to her feet’.⁶⁵ The noun

⁶⁴ Cf. Tribulato 2007, 528-9.

⁶⁵ In this case ‘feet’ metonymically refers to the concept ‘swiftness of one’s feet’, as we saw in

that is congruent with the compound, in this case *Iris*, then refers to the comparee.

Tribulato focuses her argument around *θυμολέοντα* and adduces various passages in which *θυμός* and other nouns are used in an accusative of respect to express the aspect of comparison.⁶⁶ While I agree that both *ποσί* and *θυμόν* are commonly used in Homeric Greek to express the aspect of a comparison, I doubt that her interpretation of the structure of *ποδήνεμος*, *θυμολέοντα*, and *Εἰδοθέη* does justice to the nature of these compounds. Furthermore, I contend that if we are to follow Tribulato's analysis, there is no reason to not also interpret the right-oriented bahuvrihi-type compounds in this way except that such an interpretation in that case would result in the wrong constituent order.

The structure 'having the X of Y' for the expression of a comparison is found in Homeric Greek beyond the right-oriented bahuvrihi-type compounds: we have come across it in case-marked similative constructions of the type *κυνὸς ὄμματ' ἔχων* 'having the eyes of a dog' (*Il.* 1.225).⁶⁷ We even find the noun *θυμός* in such a construction: *τῶν τότε Μυρμιδόνες κραδίην καὶ θυμόν ἔχοντες | ἐκ νηῶν ἐχέοντο* 'Then the Myrmidons, having the heart and spirit of them [the wasps of the preceding simile], poured out of their ships.' (*Il.* 16.266-67). These observations suggest that left-oriented bahuvrihi-type comparison compounds do exist in Homeric Greek, and that an adequate explanation for the order of their constituents is still to be found.

5.7.2 Determinative compounds

A typical determinative comparison compound has the standard of comparison as its modifier part, and a lexical marker of a similative comparison as its other

the usage of *ποσί* 'with his feet' expressing the aspect of a superlative construction marked by lexical means. Cf. example (27) in Chapter 2.2.4.

⁶⁶ Cf. Tribulato 2006, 173-5.

⁶⁷ Example (235) in Section 5.5.

part, the determinatum. This lexical similarity marker is in most cases an adjective meaning ‘like’, but in left-oriented compounds we also find the preposition *ἀντί* and the adverb *ἄγχι*.⁶⁸ Tables 5.8 and 5.9 list all attested types in Homer.

Compound	Translation	Comparees
θεοείκελος	god-like	human characters
αἴθοψ	fire-like	wine, bronze, smoke
οἴνοψ	wine-like	sea, ox

Table 5.8: Right-oriented determinative comparison compounds

Compound	Translation	Comparees
ἀντίθεος	god-like	human and semi-divine characters
ἀντιάνειρα	men-like	Amazones
ισόθεος	god-like	human characters
ἄγχιθεος	god-like	Phaeacians

Table 5.9: Left-oriented determinative comparison compounds

The determinatum *-οψ* of two of the right-oriented compounds could have once referred to the aspect of comparison, but its precise meaning in *αἴθοψ* and *οἴνοψ* is obscure or semantically bleached to such an extent that I understand it as acting as a marker instead. Since *αἴθοψ* and *οἴνοψ* almost always characterize an entity that does not have a face or eyes, *-οψ* must simply mean ‘-like’.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ We have already seen the preposition *ἀντί* as a marker of comparisons of similarity with a general standard. There and in the compounds discussed here it has its older meaning ‘in the place of’ or ‘equivalent to’. Cf. Section 5.4 example (226) and *LfgreE* 1.930-1 s.v. *ἀντιάνειρα(α)* and 1.934 s.v. *ἀντίθεος*. According to the *LfgreE* *ἄγχιθεος* could be interpreted as “praep. Rektionskompos. ‘den Göttern nahe’”, i.e. prepositional determinative compound, or “Possessivkompos. ‘die Götter nahe habend’”, i.e. bahuvrihi-type compound (1.106 s.v. *ἄγχιθεος*).

⁶⁹ The instances of each right-oriented determinative compound are, *θεοείκελος*: *Il.* 1.131, 19.155; *Od.* 3.416, 4.276, 8.256. *αἴθοψ*: *Il.* 1.462-3, 4.259-60, 4.495, 5.341, 5.562, 5.681, 6.266-7, 11.775, 13.305, 14.5, 16.225-6, 16.230, 17.3, 17.87, 17.592, 18.522, 20.111, 20.117, 23.237, 23.250, 24.641-2, 24.791; *Od.* 2.57, 3.459-60, 7.295, 9.360, 10.152, 12.18-9, 13.8-9, 14.447-8, 15.500, 16.14, 17.536, 19.197, 21.434, 24.364. *οἴνοψ*: *Il.* 2.613, 5.771, 7.88, 13.703, 23.143, 23.316; *Od.* 1.183, 2.421, 3.286, 4.474, 5.132, 5.221, 5.349, 6.170, 7.249-50, 12.388, 13.32, 19.172, 19.274.

In light of the discussion of left-orientation in bahuvrihi-type compounds it may seem surprising to find as many left-oriented determinative compounds as we find right-oriented ones. Tribulato 2007 argues that certain adjectival first members of left-oriented compounds in which the second member is substantival have a governing function that is similar to that of prepositional first members, which customarily form left-oriented compounds in ancient Greek (the ἔνδημος type). The relationship of the two parts of ἰσόθεος is thus to a certain extent similar to that between the two parts of ἔνδημος or ἀντίθεος. When used freely, i.e. not bound in a compound, both ἴσος and ἀντί govern a certain case with which their complement is marked, the only difference being that the complement with a preposition is obligatory, and that with an adjective like ἴσος it is not.⁷⁰

5.7.3 Other types

We are left with two groups of comparison compounds which do not quite match one of the above classifications. The first group is reminiscent of the bahuvrihi-type, but instead of two nouns, it has as its first part a noun, and as its second part an adjective. The noun denotes the standard of comparison, and the adjective the aspect of comparison. The second, adjectival part can be seen as governing the first, substantival part, and we can thus classify these compounds as right-oriented: ἀρηίθοος means ‘swift like Ares’, μελιδής ‘sweet like honey’, and so forth.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Tribulato 2007, 543-4. In free similitive/equative constructions ἴσος occurs both before and after the standard of comparison. Cf. δαίμονι ἴσος ‘like a god’ (*Il.* 5.438) vs. ἴσος Ἄρηι ‘like Ares’ (*Il.* 11.295). The instances of each left-oriented determinative compound are, ἀντίθεος: *Il.* 1.264, 3.186, 4.88, 4.377, 5.168, 5.629, 5.663, 5.692, 5.705, 6.199, 8.275, 9.622-3, 10.112, 11.140, 11.322, 12.307, 12.408, 13.791, 14.322, 16.321, 16.421, 16.649, 16.865, 20.232, 20.407, 21.90-1, 21.595, 23.360, 23.837, 24.257; *Od.* 1.20-1, 1.70-1, 2.17-8, 3.414, 4.571, 4.741, 6.241, 6.330-1, 7.146, 8.119, 8.518, 11.117, 11.308, 11.371, 11.512, 13.126, 13.378, 14.18, 14.40, 14.182, 14.247, 14.385, 15.90, 15.236-7, 17.54, 19.216, 19.456-7, 20.369-70, 21.254, 22.290-1, 24.116, 24.300. ἀντιάνειρα: *Il.* 3.189, 6.186. ἰσόθεος: *Il.* 2.565, 3.310, 4.212, 7.136, 9.211, 11.428, 11.472, 11.644, 15.559, 16.632, 23.569, 23.677; *Od.* 1.324, 20.124. ἀγχίθεος: *Od.* 5.35, 19.279.

⁷¹ Although the *Lfgre* proposes to understand ἀλιπόρφυρος as a determinative compound meaning ‘reich an der Farbe der πορφύρα’ (1.489 s.v. ἀλιπόρφυρος).

The interpretation of such a compound as expressing a comparison is based on the semantic relationship between its adjectival and substantival parts; there is no element that explicitly marks the standard of comparison.⁷² The comparee is external to the compound, expressed by a noun congruent with it. The relationship between comparee and standard is, as in the previous groups, figurative.

Compound	Translation	Comparees
ἀρηίθοος	Ares-swift	youths
μελιηδής	honey-sweet	wine, life, wheat, fruit, grass, nostos, wax, sleep
ιοδνεφής	violet-dark	wool
άλιπόρφυρος	sea-purple	wool

Table 5.10: STD-ASP compounds, right-oriented

The final group of compounds, listed in Table 5.11, does not include the standard as part of the compound itself, but the marker and the aspect. The first part of the compound is the marker, an adjective meaning ‘same’ or ‘similar’. It governs the noun in the second part, which expresses the aspect of comparison. These compounds are, thus, left-oriented and reminiscent of the left-oriented determinative compounds discussed above, although the way in which *ισό-* in *ισόμορος* governs *-μορος* is different from how the same adjective in *ισόθεος* governs *-θεος*: the former expresses the notion of ‘similar in fate’ and the latter the notion of ‘similar to a god’.

Unlike the other compound groups which have only adjectival members, some of the compounds in this group tend to be used as nouns, in particular *ὀμηλικία/ὀμηλιξ* and *ὀμογάστριος*. The standard of comparison is always of the same kind as the comparee, i.e. unlike in the other compounds not figurative. Most often the

⁷² The instances of each right-oriented STD-ASP compound are, *ἀρηίθοος*: *Il.* 8.298, 15.315, 20.167. *μελιηδής*: *Il.* 4.346, 6.258, 10.495, 10.569, 10.579, 12.320, 17.17, 18.545-6, 18.568; *Od.* 3.46, 6.90, 9.94, 9.208, 11.100, 11.203, 12.48, 14.78, 16.52, 18.151, 18.426, 19.551, 21.293. *ιοδνεφής*: *Od.* 4.135, 9.426. *άλιπόρφυρος*: *Od.* 6.53, 6.306, 13.108.

standard is implicit but recoverable from the context, as in ἐν δῆμῳ Ἰθάκης μεθ' ὁμηλικας ἔμμεν ἄριστον '[that you] be the best among those of the same age in the land of Ithaca' (*Od.* 16.419), but occasionally expressed by a nominal phrase in the dative or genitive, as in ἀλλὰ νεώτερός ἐστιν, ὁμηλική δ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ 'but he is a younger man, of the same age as I' (*Od.* 3.49). In other cases the compound is predicated of comparee and standard at the same time, as in ἀτὰρ καὶ ὁμηλικές εἰμεν 'and we are even of the same age' (*Od.* 15.197). Three instances of the compound ἀντάξιος express an inequality, for example ἰητρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων 'For a physician is a man worth as much as many others' (*Il.* 11.514).⁷³

Compound	Translation	Comparees
ὁμηλικία/ὁμηλιξ	of the same age	human characters
ὁμογάστριος	of the same womb	Lycaon and Hector, a brother
ὁμότιμος	of the same honour	Poseidon and Zeus
ἀντάξιος	of the same value	prizes, life and wealth, physician and other men
ῥοιζ	of the same hair	horses
οἰέτης	of the same age	horses
ἰσόμορος	of the same fate	Poseidon and Zeus
ὁμώνυμος	of the same name	Aiantes

Table 5.11: MRK-ASP compounds, left-oriented

Besides comparison compounds, there are a number of other adjectives that deserve mention here: τηλικός 'so old' is not of the same type as the compounds discussed above, but at least associated in some way. The word-initial τ- element seems to

⁷³ Risch's discussion of ὁμογάστριος focuses on its function as expressing "die Zugehörigkeit oder die Abstammung" and does not engage with the comparison inherent in it (1945, 21-2). The instances of each left-oriented MRK-ASP compound are ὁμηλικία/ὁμηλιξ: *Il.* 3.175, 5.325-6, 9.54, 13.431, 13.485, 20.465; *Od.* 2.158, 3.49-50, 3.363-4, 6.22-3, 15.197, 16.419, 19.358, 22.209, 24.107. ὁμογάστριος: *Il.* 21.95, 24.47. ὁμότιμος: *Il.* 15.186. ἀντάξιος: *Il.* 1.135-6, 9.401-5. ῥοιζ: *Il.* 2.765. οἰέτης: *Il.* 2.765. ἰσόμορος: *Il.* 15.209-10. ὁμώνυμος: *Il.* 17.720.

mark the adjective with something like equative degree, and it has an associated relative form ἡλικός ‘as old as’, although that does not occur in Homer. Its function could thus be compared to τόσος, but with the additional explicit aspect ‘age’. The standard of comparison is marked by ὡς in one instance, but left implicit in the other four.⁷⁴

Apart from the compounds meaning ‘god-like’ listed in the tables above, there are two adjectives that are sometimes used to express the same notion, even though their internal structure does not explicitly make a comparison: θεῖος and ἀρήιος. -ιος is a common suffix to derive adjectives from nouns,⁷⁵ and for both adjectives in question, there are instances in which they are used with inanimate objects or actual divine entities to mean ‘belonging to the gods’/‘divine’ or ‘belonging to Ares/war’ respectively, e.g. θεῖος ὄνειρος ‘divine (i.e. god-sent) dream’ (*Il.* 2.22) and τεύχε’ ἀρήϊα ‘weapons of war’ (*Od.* 19.4). When, however, the congruent noun refers to a human being, who cannot actually be divine or associated with the gods or Ares in the same way in which certain objects can, the sense of a comparison imposes itself. Ὀδυσσῆος θεῖοιο (*Od.* 2.394) ‘of divine Odysseus’ compares Odysseus to a god, and Μενέλαος ἀρήϊος (*Il.* 11.487) does not just mean ‘the warrior Menelaus’, but invokes a comparison of Menelaus to Ares.

5.8 Characters in disguise

This section provides a brief note on expressions that are not real comparisons, but take the same linguistic shape: when one character or entity is actively made to resemble another one, the same syntactic constructions are used that we find in proper similitive comparisons.

⁷⁴ *Il.* 24.487 (with ὡς); *Od.* 1.297, 17.20, 18.175, 19.88.

⁷⁵ Cf. Kühner/Blass 1892, 291-3. Another adjective that has a similar association with comparison compounds is σφαιρηδόν ‘ball-like’ *Il.* 13.204.

Category	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	70	35	35
Case	2	0	2
Adjective	11	4	7
Verb	57	31	26

Table 5.12: Characters in disguise

Using a verb (ἔοικα, εἶδομαι, ἴσκω/ἔίσκω) is the most common way to mark the entity that is the target of the transformation, followed by the adjective strategy (ἴκελος, ἐναλίγκιος, ὁμοῖος); in the *Odyssey* we find the genitive case construction twice.

Gods take the shape of a human character in order to communicate with or help a hero or heroine in 46 instances, 20 of which are descriptions of the goddess Athene in human shape. Contrary to descriptions of gods doing something like an animal or natural force, it is clear here that the god actually takes on the human shape, otherwise direct communication with a human character would not be possible.⁷⁶

It happens mostly in the *Odyssey* that humans are transformed; the goddess Circe, for instance, turns Odysseus' comrades into swine (*Od.* 10.239-40 and 10.390). In Book 4 Helen tells the story of how Odysseus dressed himself up as a beggar and entered Troy as a spy (*Od.* 4.244-9 and 4.247-8), and Menelaus relates how Helen likened her voice to that of the wives of the Achaeans (*Od.* 4.279). The remaining six instances of humans in disguise refer to Odysseus being made to look like a beggar by Athene as he returns to Ithaca.⁷⁷ In the *Iliad*, Patroclus puts on Achilles' armour to trick the Trojans into thinking that Achilles has rejoined

⁷⁶ The instances of gods in disguise are *Il.* 2.279-80, 2.790-1, 3.121-2, 3.386, 4.86-7, 5.461-2, 5.604, 5.784-6, 13.45, 13.68-9, 13.216, 13.357, 14.136, 16.715-20, 17.73, 17.322-6, 17.555, 17.582-5, 20.81-2, 20.224, 21.212-3, 21.284-5, 21.600-1, 22.226-7, 24.347-8; *Od.* 1.105, 2.267-8, 2.383, 2.401, 4.654, 6.22-4, 7.19-20, 8.7-8, 8.193-4, 10.277-9, 11.241-2, 13.221-5, 13.288-9, 13.312-3, 16.157-8, 17.485-6, 20.30-1, 22.205-6, 24.445-6, 24.502-3, 24.547-8.

⁷⁷ They are *Od.* 13.431-2, 16.208-10, 16.272-3, 17.201-3, 17.336-8, 24.157-8.

the battle (*Il.* 11.799 and 16.40-2).

In both Homeric poems we find descriptions of items made by gods that are said to closely resemble something in real life, like the artwork on Achilles' shield made by Hephaestus (*Il.* 18.548-9 and 18.590-2) and the god's golden handmaid statues (*Il.* 18.417-8). In the *Odyssey* Poseidon and Zeus decide that the ship of the Phaeacians will be turned into a stone that resembles a real ship (*Od.* 13.155-7), and Odysseus makes the lies that he tells seem like the truth (*Od.* 19.203).

The last category of expressions in which one character or entity takes on the identity of another are dreams and phantoms. On two occasions in the *Iliad*, a dream visits a character at night, and that dream appears in the shape of another character. Zeus sends Nestor to Agamemnon as an evil dream (*Il.* 2.20 and 2.57-8), and the spirit of dead Patroclus visits Achilles to demand a speedy burial (*Il.* 23.65-7 and 23.105-7). One Iliadic phantom appears during the day: Apollo takes Aeneas, who is seriously injured, away from the battle scene to heal him, and replaces his body with a phantom over which the Greeks and Trojans carry on fighting (*Il.* 5.449-50). In the *Odyssey*, Athene creates a phantom of Penelope's sister Iphthime and sends it to Penelope in a dream to encourage her to not worry about Telemachus while he is away (*Od.* 4.796-7).

The reason why I mention these transformations is to show that not everything that looks like a comparison is a comparison. Furthermore, the descriptions of gods in disguise of a human character provide important comparative material for the interpretation of passages in which gods are said to do something like or in the form of an animal or natural phenomenon.

5.9 Similes

This section aims at providing a linguistic definition and description of extended Homeric similes; it focuses on structural and syntactic features, and the semantics

of comparee and standard of comparison. Aspects of their literary function will be addressed in Chapter 6. Example (251) is a typical and easily recognizable instance of an extended Homeric simile (henceforth just ‘simile’).

- (251) Ἴμβριον αὐτ’ Αἴαντε μεμαότε θούριδος ἀλκῆς
 ὥς τε δύο αἶγα λέοντε κυνῶν ὑπο καρχαροδόντων
 ἀρπάξαντε φέρητον ἀνὰ ῥωπήϊα πυκνὰ
 ὑψοῦ ὑπὲρ γαίης μετὰ γαμφηλῆσιν ἔχοντε,
 ὥς ῥα τὸν ὑψοῦ ἔχοντε δύο Αἴαντε κορυστὰ
 τεύχεα συλήτην Il. 13.197-202

And Imbrius the two Aiantes [dragged away], mindful of their vigorous strength; and as when two lions have snatched away a goat from sharp-toothed dogs and carry it through the thick underwood, holding it high above the ground between their jaws, so the two Aiantes, the helmed warriors, held Imbrius up high, and stripped off his armour.

Both its form and its content make this example typical and easily recognizable as a simile. The passage starts with an action of the main narrative: the two Aiantes drag away Imbrius. The particle ὥς introduces the simile, starting with an exactly parallel action: two lions have snatched away a goat and carry it off. The image of the lions with the goat is elaborated in a short narrative digression: they carry their prey through the underwood, holding it up high in their jaws. The return to the main narrative is signalled through the adverb ὥς ‘so’/‘in this way’, and the focus is back on the Aiantes.

Not every longer description of a comparison, however, is a simile. A crucial aspect of the typical content of a simile is the narrative digression; there is an ongoing debate over whether the images described within the similes belong to the time of the audience of the Homeric epics, or to an heroic or mythological age.⁷⁸ The answer to this question is important for certain views on the literary and performative function of similes. For a structural and semantic analysis of similes, however, the kind of standard of comparison, that is the type of image described in

⁷⁸ Cf. Coffey 1957, Scott 1974, Larsen 2007, Taplin 2007.

a simile, is important, and not so much the time or world to which it belongs. The majority of similes have human characters as comparees and animals or elements of the natural world as standards; they thus describe figurative comparisons. Even if the standard of comparison is human, it never involves a specific person. A human standard of comparison is always general: a shepherd, a man, a mother, etc.⁷⁹ Longer comparisons of a human or divine character with his past self, like when Nestor or Odysseus wishes to still be as strong as he was in the past when he fought against people here and there, are not similes. They can be fairly long stories and even have introductory and concluding parts like a real simile, but they are comparisons with ‘real’, one-time episodes of a character’s life, and thus very different from the stories that elaborate actual similes.

The most typical examples of similes are comparisons of warriors to an animal or a natural force, with narrative digressions extending over several verses, but there are also many shorter instances of comparisons of similarity that are extended in one way or another. In order to achieve a systematic definition of the Homeric simile, I include comparisons that are further elaborated by a single, short finite clause, but not those with participial phrases. The reasoning behind this is that I regard a participial phrase as an adjective, i.e. as part of a noun phrase, and not as an independent elaboration. I concede that this distinction is to some extent arbitrary, and that it results in instances that one might describe as expressing a simile being categorized as similitives or equatives. The number of those is, however, very small, and a syntactic rather than semantic definition of a simile at least provides a rigid criterion for classification.

On the basis of this criterion we can classify example (252) as a simple similitive with a participial phrase elaborating the comparison. By contrast, example (253)

⁷⁹ There are a few similes in which specific mythological or even (possibly) historical names are mentioned, for example Typhoeus and the country of the Arimi at *Il.* 2.780-5, or a woman of Maeonia or Caria at *Il.* 4.140-7, but these are mentioned as more or less interchangeable examples, not as specific and concrete standards of comparison.

is a simile since it includes an elaboration of the image with a finite verb.⁸⁰

- (252) ὄσση δ' ὑψορόφοιο θύρη θαλάμοιο τέτυκται
 ἀνέρος ἀφνειοῖο ἐν κληῖσ' ἀραρυῖα,
 τόσσ' ἄρα τοῦ ἐκάτερθεν ἔσαν πτερὰ Il. 24.317-9

As wide as the door of the high-roofed chamber of a wealthy man,
 a door well furnished with bolts, so wide were the wings [of Zeus'
 eagle] on either side of him.

- (253) (...) γεφύρωσεν δὲ κέλευθον
 μακρὴν ἢ δ' εὐρεῖαν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ δουρὸς ἐρωή
 γίγνεται, ὅππότε ἀνήρ σθένεος πειρώμενος ἦσι Il. 15.357-9

And [Apollo] bridged a pathway long and wide, as far as the force
 of a spear reaches, when a man throws it, testing his strength.

In 71% of all extended similes, the particle ὡς marks the beginning of the simile, and ὥς marks the return to the main narrative; they can be combined with other particles, most frequently as ὡς (δ') ὅτε ... ὡς and ὡς τε ... ὡς. Instead of the introductory ὡς, we find the particle ἤνυτε, the correlative adjectives οἷος and ὅσος, as well as adjectives and verbs such as ἀτάλαντος, ἐναλίγκιος, and ἔοικα. Instead of the resumptive adverb ὡς, we find ἤνυτε, τοῖος, τόσος, ἵκελος, and ἔοικα. A genitive case dependent on an ἔχων-plus-noun construction, as in οἶμα λέοντος ἔχων 'having the swoop of a lion' (Il. 16.752), can replace either the introductory or resumptive marker, and one of the two can be left out entirely.

The aspect of comparison normally lies within the verbal action, which is expressed once in the sentence containing the introductory marker, and again in the resumptive clause. In example (254) the exact same verb is used in both places, ἐπέχραον 'they attacked'. The narrative digression elaborates on the action and the agents involved in it, though not all similes are as straightforward as this one.

⁸⁰ Such a syntactic categorization together with the semantic distinction between straightforward and figurative comparisons provides a more rigorous framework for the analysis of similes and short comparisons than, for example, Ready 2008 and 2011's spectrum of comparisons ranging from lesser to greater similarity, or Larsen 2007's distinction between particle-marked comparisons (= 'similes', linked to present, appealing to senses and emotions) and adjective/verb-marked comparisons (= 'comparison', linked to heroic age/content of narrative).

Depending on the type of verb in the introductory and resumptive clauses, there can be one comparee and standard, or several. The transitive verb ἐπέχραον, ‘they attacked’, requires an object, thus there are two parties being compared here: the wolves in the simile stand for the Danaans, the agents in the narrative digression and in the main story, while the lambs and kids stand for the Trojans, the patients that undergo an attack both within the simile and in the main narrative.⁸¹

- (254) ὡς δὲ λύκοι ἄρνεσσιν ἐπέχραον ἢ ἐρίφοισι
 σίνται ὑπέκ μῆλων αἰρεύμενοι, αἳ τ’ ἐν ὄρεσσι
 ποιμένος ἀφραδίησι διέτμαγεν· οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες
 αἴψα διαρπάζουσιν ἀνάλκιδα θυμὸν ἐχούσας·
 ὡς Δαναοὶ Τρώεσσιν ἐπέχραον· οἱ δὲ φόβοιο
 δυσκελάδου μνήσαντο, λάθοντο δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς *Il.* 16.352-7

And as ravening wolves attack lambs or kids, catching them from within the herd, which is scattered around the mountains through the negligence of the shepherd; upon seeing them, the wolves quickly seize them that have feeble spirits; in this way the Danaans attacked the Trojans; and they gave heed to ill-sounding fear, and forgot their furious courage.

If the verb is intransitive, there tends to be only one party involved in the comparison, i.e. there is exactly one comparee and one standard. Though even in these cases, there may be other, circumstantial participants that are involved in painting the picture of the comparison, and play a more or less active role in it. In example (255), the way in which the warrior Gorgythion bows his head after being struck by Teucer is compared to a poppy. The comparison is elaborated by a description of the poppy as being heavy with fruit and rain, which is paralleled by the helmet that weighs down Gorgythion’s head.⁸² Fruit, rain, and the helmet are involved in painting the picture of the comparison, but they are not compared to one another.

- (255) μῆκων δ’ ὡς ἐτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἢ τ’ ἐνὶ κήπῳ
 καρπῷ βριθομένη νοτίησί τε εἰαρινῆσιν,
 ὡς ἐτέρωσ’ ἤμυσε κάρη πῆληκι βαρυνθέν *Il.* 8.306-8

⁸¹ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1908a, 26; Brügger 2016, 158-9.

⁸² Cf. Fränkel 1921, 40.

And he let his head fall to the side like a poppy that stands in a garden and is heavy with fruit and spring rain; so he bowed down his head to the side, weighed down by his helmet.

In about one quarter of the similes in Homer (25% in the *Iliad* and 17.5% in the *Odyssey*), the relationship between the elements that occur with the first marker and those that occur with the second marker is crooked. This mismatch can have a more or less severe impact on the meaning of the simile.⁸³ In milder cases, the mismatch is purely syntactic; the comparee then starts as the subject or agent of the action, but after the digression, when a second marker returns the story to the main narrative, the comparee appears as object/patient, or vice-versa. The verb that appears with the second marker is often the same, or at least expresses the same concept as the verb with the first marker; it might be active in one case and passive in the other, or express opposing actions, e.g. pursuing and fleeing.

- (256) Ἴκτορα δ' ἀσπερχῆς κλονέων ἔφεπ' ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς,
 ὥς δ' ὅτε νεβρόν ὄρεσφι κύων ἐλάφοιο δίηται
 ὄρσας ἐξ εὐνῆς διά τ' ἄγκεα καὶ διά βήσσας·
 τὸν δ' εἰ πέρ τε λάθησι καταπτήξας ὑπὸ θάμνῳ,
 ἀλλά τ' ἀνιχνεύων θέει ἔμπεδον ὄφρ' ἀκεν εὐρη·
 ὥς Ἴκτωρ οὐ λῆθε ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα Il. 22.188-93

And onto Hector, chasing him ceaselessly, was swift Achilles. And as in the mountains a dog rouses the fawn of a deer, chasing it out of its lair and through the mountain glens and combs, and even if it escapes at first, cowering under some shrubbery, the dog still runs on and on, tracking it down until he finds it; in the same way Hector did not escape swift-footed Achilles.

In example (256), the first verse describes the context of the simile: Achilles is chasing Hector. The particle combination ὥς δ' ὅτε marks the beginning of the simile, and in this first clause the dog and the fawn resemble Achilles and Hector both syntactically and figuratively. The comparison is further elaborated in a short

⁸³ Cf. Scott 2009. Lee calls this kind of mismatched simile a “roundabout, illogical idiom of statement” which requires “retranslation into our own thought-idiom” in order to make sense (1964, 7).

narrative digression in which the focus shifts to the fawn and then back to the dog, but when the adverb ὥς takes the story back to the main narrative, Hector has become the subject and Achilles the object. The verb λανθάνω ‘escape’ is used of the fawn within the narrative digression, and of Hector in the resumptive clause, and is the antonym to the verb δῖω ‘put to flight’ in the clause introducing the simile. The focus has changed from the pursuer to the pursued, and the elements that are marked with ὥς δ’ ὅτε ... ὥς at the beginning and end of the simile are syntactically not parallel.⁸⁴

In more severe cases, the verbal action at the beginning of the simile is very different to that at the end. Instead of returning to the image set up by the verb with the first marker, the verb with the second marker takes up an idea from within the narrative digression. For Fränkel such similes show that the at his time dominant scholarly approach to the simile, which was to determine its ‘Vergleichspunkt’, was “ungeheuerlich”. He calls similes like that in example (257) “doppelseitig” or having “zwei Kuppelungen”, i.e. Vergleichspunkte.⁸⁵

- (257) Αἰνεΐας δ’ ἐτέρωθεν ἐκέκλετο οἷς ἐτάροισιν,
 Δηΐφοβόν τε Πάριν τ’ ἐσορῶν καὶ Ἀγήνορα δῖον,
 οἷ οἷ ἄμ’ ἠγεμόνες Τρώων ἔσαν· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
 λαοὶ ἔπονθ’, ὥς εἴ τε μετὰ κτίλον ἔσπετο μῆλα
 πιόμεν’ ἐκ βοτάνης· γάνυται δ’ ἄρα τε φρένα ποιμήν·
 ὥς Αἰνεΐα θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι γεγῆθει
 ὥς ἴδε λαῶν ἔθνος ἐπισπόμενον ἐοῖ αὐτῶ Il. 13.489-95

And Aeneas from the other side urged on his companions, looking at Deiphobos and Paris and divine Agenor, who together with him were leaders of the Trojans; and thereafter the men followed, as when sheep follow after the ram from their pasture in order to drink, and the shepherd is glad in his heart; so the heart of Aeneas was glad in his breast, when he saw the host of men following him.

⁸⁴ Cf. Fränkel: “Die Einzelheiten des Anschauungsbildes sind sehr abweichend, aber die allgemeine Stimmung wird im Gl. treffend gezeichnet: beim Verfolgten der Wille sich zu entziehen, beim Verfolger die überlegene Gegenwirkung.” (1921, 69); De Jong 2012, 106-7.

⁸⁵ Cf. Fränkel 1921, 3-8.

At the opening of the simile in example (257), the men, λαοί, are compared to sheep, μῆλα, and the aspect of comparison lies within the movement of the crowd of soldiers/flock of sheep behind the leader/ram. In the narrative digression, the image of the shepherd rejoicing at the sight of his flock appears. As the focus shifts back to the main narrative, the adverb ὥς picks up the image of the shepherd instead of the ram and relates it to Aeneas. The focus of the simile has shifted from the herd following its leader to the shepherd rejoicing in his flock; Aeneas is at the same time the ram, shepherd, and commander.⁸⁶

In the lists of references to all Homeric similes below I label those with a mismatch between the (roles of the) participants at the beginning of the simile and the return to the main narrative as ‘crooked’. As we saw in the case of similitive and equative constructions, similes also come with different kinds of comparees and standards, and can therefore also be more or less figurative in meaning. In the majority of similes, the comparee is human, either a specific individual, or a group, occasionally expressed metonymically as someone’s heart, voice, or spirit. In 33 instances, the standard of comparison also belongs to the human sphere, which makes the comparison between comparee and standard straightforward.⁸⁷ There are four similes in which a human character is compared to a god.⁸⁸ 48 Similes compare humans to elements from the natural world.⁸⁹ In 91 instances human

⁸⁶ Cf. Lonsdale 1990, 21; Janko 1999, 109-10. Ameis/Hentze use the term “Doppelvergleich” (1922c, 33). Fränkel notes: “Gewiß ist es für unser Empfinden merkwürdig, wenn ganz unvermittelt von den Schafen und dem Leitbock auf den Hirten übergegangen wird, als ob das gar nichts Neues oder Anderes wäre. Aber es ist doch einmal eine Tatsache, die wir zu verstehen suchen müssen, und sie lehrt: der homerische Vergleich kann in mehr als einem Zuge mit der Handlung zusammenhängen; gelegentlich werden vom Sänger Beziehungen zwischen Gl. und Erz. ausdrücklich festgestellt, die über die eine Kuppelung hinausreichen.” (1921, 6-7).

⁸⁷ Human comparees and human standards: *Il.* 2.474-9, 3.30-7, 5.596-600, 11.67-71, 11.267-72, 11.292-5, 11.413-20, 12.421-6 (crooked), 12.432-8 (crooked), 12.451-4, 15.271-80, 15.676-88, 16.7-11, 16.406-10, 17.389-97 (crooked), 17.520-4 (crooked), 18.161-4, 20.251-5, 21.257-64 (crooked), 22.199-201, 23.222-5, 23.844-7, 24.480-4 (crooked); *Od.* 5.394-9, 5.486-91, 8.521-31, 9.382-8, 13.31-5 (crooked), 16.17-21, 17.110-3, 17.518-21 (crooked), 20.24-30, 23.233-40.

⁸⁸ Human comparees and divine standards: *Il.* 7.206-13, 10.3-10, 13.298-305; *Od.* 6.101-9.

⁸⁹ Human comparees and nature standards: *Il.* 2.144-6, 2.147-54 (crooked), 2.207-10, 2.394-9, 4.275-82 (crooked), 4.422-8, 4.452-6 (crooked), 4.482-9 (crooked), 5.4-7, 5.87-94 (crooked), 5.499-505 (crooked), 5.522-7, 6.146-9, 7.4-7 (crooked), 7.61-6, 8.306-8, 9.1-8 (crooked), 9.13-6,

characters are compared to animals.⁹⁰ Outside of the divine, natural, and animal world we find similes comparing Hector's heart to an axe (*Il.* 3.60-3), Menelaus' injured thigh to ivory stained with scarlet (*Il.* 4.140-7, crooked), Agamemnon' behaviour to Eris and Cholos (*Il.* 18.107-11, crooked), and Achilles' voice to the sound of a trumpet (*Il.* 18.219-21). There are 16 similes with divine comparees and figurative standards.⁹¹ The majority of non-human and non-divine comparees in the *Iliad* are items or concepts related to battle, and the standards in these similes are always figurative.⁹² In the *Odyssey* these are related to Odysseus' adventures.⁹³

Relationship CPREE — STD	Total number	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Overall	226	186	40
Straightforward	33	23	10
Figurative	193	163	30

Table 5.13: Similes

11.61-5, 11.153-162 (crooked), 11.304-9 (crooked), 12.131-6, 13.136-48, 13.177-81, 13.242-5, 13.389-93, 13.795-801, 14.16-22, 14.414-8, 15.380-9, 15.617-22, 15.623-9 (crooked), 16.297-302 (crooked), 16.364-7, 16.481-8, 16.765-71, 17.53-60, 17.263-6, 17.746-53, 18.207-14, 19.375-80, 20.490-4, 21.522-5, 22.25-32, 22.317-21, 23.597-600; *Od.* 6.160-9, 19.204-9.

⁹⁰ Human comparees and animal standards: *Il.* 2.87-93, 2.459-66, 2.469-73, 2.480-3 (crooked), 3.1-9, 3.22-9, 3.148-53, 3.196-8, 4.243-6, 4.433-6 (crooked), 5.136-43, 5.161-4, 5.554-60, 6.503-16, 8.335-42, 9.321-7, 10.181-9 (crooked), 10.358-64, 10.482-8, 11.107-121 (crooked), 11.172-8 (crooked), 11.324-6, 11.473-86, 11.548-57 (crooked), 11.558-69 (crooked), 12.41-50, 12.145-53 (crooked), 12.165-72, 12.299-309, 13.99-106, 13.197-202, 13.471-7, 13.489-95 (crooked), 13.570-5, 13.701-8, 15.262-70, 15.323-7 (crooked), 15.630-40 (crooked), 15.579-84, 15.585-91, 15.688-95, 16.155-67, 16.257-67, 16.352-7, 16.487-91 (crooked), 16.581-5, 16.641-5, 16.751-4, 16.756-61, 16.823-9, 17.3-6, 17.61-9 (crooked), 17.108-13, 17.132-137, 17.281-5, 17.656-67, 17.673-81, 17.725-34, 17.742-6, 17.755-9, 18.318-23, 20.164-75 (crooked), 20.403-6, 21.12-6 (crooked), 21.22-6, 21.251-6, 21.571-82, 22.21-4, 22.93-7, 22.162-6, 22.188-93, 22.262-9, 22.308-11, 23.692-4, 24.39-45; *Od.* 4.333-40 (crooked), 4.791-3, 5.432-5 (crooked), 6.130-6, 10.410-5, 12.251-5 (crooked), 15.174-8, 16.216-9, 17.124-31 (crooked), 19.518-29 (crooked), 20.14-6, 22.299-301, 22.302-9, 22.383-9, 22.401-6, 22.468-72.

⁹¹ Divine comparees and figurative standards: *Il.* 4.75-9 (crooked), 4.130-3, 5.864-7, 5.902-4, 13.62-5, 15.80-3, 15.170-2, 15.361-6, 17.547-52, 21.346-9 (crooked), 21.493-6, 24.80-2; *Od.* 5.50-4, 6.232-5, 9.389-94 (crooked), 23.159-62.

⁹² Armour and weapons: *Il.* 2.455-8, 12.154-61, 12.278-89, 13.586-92, 16.212-7 (crooked), 19.356-61; horses of warriors: *Il.* 5.770-3, 16.384-93, 17.434-7, 20.495-503 (crooked), 23.431-3; battle itself: *Il.* 13.333-8, 15.410-5, 16.633-7, 17.735-41; earth groaning under armies' weight: *Il.* 2.780-5; dust under armies' feet: *Il.* 3.10-4 (crooked); Trojan fires: *Il.* 8.554-61; river Xanthus boiling with bodies: *Il.* 21.363-5; measurements of distance/lenght: *Il.* 15.357-9, 16.588-92, 23.516-25, 23.758-64.

⁹³ Location of an island: *Od.* 4.356, sea: *Od.* 5.327-30, wave: *Od.* 5.368-70, staff of olivewood: *Od.* 9.321-4, wolves and lions: *Od.* 10.216-9, stern of a ship: *Od.* 13.81-5, ghosts of the suitors: *Od.* 24.5-10.

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an overview of all comparisons of similarity found in the Homeric epics. Their linguistic analysis has shown that this comparison type is different from comparatives and superlatives in many regards. The most notable differences lie in how the aspect and standard of comparison are expressed and marked, as well as in the relationship between comparee and standard. While in comparative and superlative constructions this relationship is almost always straightforward, the majority of comparisons of similarity have figurative standards of comparison.

The end of this chapter marks the end of the linguistic part of this study, and in it I have already brought together some of the most important generalizations that I have made about comparatives, superlatives, and similatives/equatives. To express it in the most simplified terms, my analyses have shown that 1) the core function of comparative constructions is to express a relationship of inequality between two straightforwardly comparable entities or concepts, 2) the core function of superlative constructions is to highlight one entity within its peer group, and that of elatives is to highlight an entity independently of any peer group, while neither of them expresses a real comparison, and 3) the core function of typical comparisons of similarity is to conceptualize one entity in terms of another, fundamentally different entity.

In the next and final chapter of this study, I will examine the narrative and stylistic function of each of the three comparison types in the Homeric epics. The linguistic generalizations just stated form the basis of my literary investigations, and will prove to be valuable tools for explaining the diverse effects that each comparison type has when exploited for narrative and stylistic purposes.

Chapter 6

Comparisons in Action

‘Comparisons are a linguistic way of relating two entities to one another and making a statement about this relationship.’ This was the definition of comparisons as a linguistic phenomenon and stylistic tool with which I set out to study Homer’s comparisons. I discussed the linguistic system behind expressions of comparison in Chapter 2, and provided a comprehensive account of all types of comparisons found in the Homeric epics in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. It became evident in this account that while the most basic and straightforward expressions of comparisons neatly reflect the theory outlined in Chapter 2, there are a considerable number of comparisons that do not behave in the expected way. ‘Comparison’ is not a rigid category in the grammar of a language that follows strict rules, but rather one that provides a structure which can be either closely followed or creatively exploited in language use.

The use of comparisons as a stylistic and narrative device in the Homeric epics is by no means limited to making a statement about the relationship between two entities. Especially the superlative and simulative/equative expressions in Homer serve the purpose of making a point about a character, building up tension in the narrative, or painting a complex picture of what the story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is all about. This chapter brings together what the previous chapters have

taught us about the nature of each comparison type, and addresses the few but striking expressions that do not neatly fit into one of the established categories. It then goes on to engage with the stylistic and narrative function of comparisons made about the Homeric heroes, focusing first on comparative and superlative expressions, and finally on the Homeric simile as well as shorter similitive and equative constructions.

Comparatives and superlatives bring the heroes in relationship to each other, and exploit this relationship for narrative and rhetorical effects. These comparisons point out what and how the hero is among his peers, within a group, as a social being. Comparisons of similarity bring an individual hero in relationship with other things. They can depict actions and whole scenarios that are foreign to the situation a hero is in, as when an image of peaceful everyday life is called up in the context of a battle scene. They can involve highly figurative standards of comparisons such as animals, natural forces, or gods, and thus show the hero in a completely different, un-human light. Especially the extended Homeric similes take the hero out of the social and cultural sphere and into a more crude and less familiar, yet highly imaginative world.

6.1 Hybrid comparisons

The linguistic analysis of comparisons in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provides a typology of the syntactic constructions that are used to express comparative, superlative, similitive, and equative relations in Homeric Greek. But what if a comparison appears in the morpho-syntactic shape of one type, and with the semantics of another? This section identifies two factors that cause such hybrid comparisons and seeks to explain their function on a linguistic and narrative level. But before we look at these outliers, let us first recap the most important observations we were able to make about each comparison type on the basis of its ‘normal’ members.

All comparison types exist in a variety that is complete, i.e. with explicit comparee, standard, and aspect of comparison, as well as in versions in which one of these parts is missing. In comparative and superlative constructions, the missing part tends to be the standard or scope of comparison, although there are types (namely those that employ lexical means to mark the standard of comparison) in which the aspect of comparison can be implicit or at least vague. Similatives and equatives often lack an explicit aspect of comparison, but much more rarely leave out the standard of comparison.¹ However, the implicitness of the standard of comparison is very different for comparative and superlative constructions. When we look at our evidence from Homer, in the majority of comparative constructions the implicit standard can be reconstructed from the context, i.e. it is somewhat actively and concretely implied, whereas in superlative constructions this is not the case. Even an explicit scope in superlative constructions tends to refer to rather large and heterogeneous groups ('the Greeks' or 'all'), and when it is left out, a difference between a construction that implies a very general scope and a construction that is relative is barely determinable.

The aspect of comparison is most explicit and concrete in comparative constructions, followed by superlative constructions. Similatives and equatives often leave the determination of the aspect of comparison to the relationship between comparee and standard. This relationship is also the most complex in these two categories, as here we find the greatest number of figurative standards of comparison, i.e. constructions in which the categorial difference between comparee and standard is greatest. The relationship between comparee and standard in typical comparative and superlative constructions is straightforward: both entities are of the same category or class, and so one could say that an explicit aspect is neces-

¹ This is one way in which comparatives and superlatives pattern together, and we have already seen other ways as well: they are both comparisons that express an inequality and this inequality is one of degree.

sary to elucidate the point of the comparison. There are similitive and equative constructions for which this is true, as well, but the majority of them are more complex. The often large conceptual gap between comparee and standard offers ample space for multifaceted aspects of comparison.

When we look at the precise way in which comparee and standard are related to one another in the different comparison types, a different pattern becomes apparent: comparative constructions on the one side are the only ‘honest’ comparison between two entities; they really do make a statement about the relationship between those entities, be it two human characters or two courses of action that are juxtaposed and judged in relation to one another. In example (258) Eurymachus claims to be better than Halitherses because he does not want to accept the seer’s interpretation of a bird sign. Example (259) involves the juxtaposition of two scenarios. Odysseus has the choice between either sailing close to Scylla and losing six comrades, or passing by Charybdis and losing the entire ship.

(258) ταῦτα δ’ ἐγὼ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων μαντεύεσθαι *Od.* 2.180
I am much better than you at prophesying these things.

(259) (...) ἐπεὶ ἢ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν
ἕξ ἐτάρους ἐν νηϊ̄ ποθήμεναι ἢ ἅμα πάντα *Od.* 12.109-10
For it is much better to be missing six comrades in your ship than all of them together.

In superlative constructions, the focus is very much on the comparee; the point of the expression is to characterize someone or something as extraordinary. In example (260) Poseidon speaks about Zeus, and thus a natural scope would be ‘of the gods’, as made explicit in another, similar expression in example (261), where Zeus speaks about himself.

(260) (...) ὁ γὰρ πολὺ φέρτατός ἐστιν *Il.* 1.581
for he is by far the mightiest

- (261) γνώσετ' ἔπειθ' ὅσον εἰμι θεῶν κάρτιστος ἀπάντων *Il.* 8.17
 Then you will realise by how far I am the strongest of all gods.

Similitive and equative constructions are a mixed bag in this respect. There are expressions which indeed state that comparee and standard are similar to one another; in these cases the standard of comparison is of the same kind as the comparee, and the similarity is explicit, concrete, and straightforward. The majority of similitive and equative constructions in Homer, however, have figurative standards of comparison, and in these cases the point of the comparison is not a real similarity, but exactly the opposite: the most effective similitive and equative constructions are those in which comparee and standard of comparison have the fewest actual, or straightforward, points of similarity. Such expressions invite the imagination of the audience and, like superlative constructions, portray the comparee as extraordinary.

In example (262) Hermes in the disguise of a servant of Achilles speaks to Priam. The aspect of comparison is made explicit by the adjective ἀφνειός ‘wealthy’ and the noun γέρων ‘old man’. The comparee, who is the speaker’s father, and the standard of comparison, Priam, are both human beings, and the point of the comparison is to state that they are similar to one another. Hermes in disguise is making this comparison to create familiarity and trust between himself and his addressee.²

- (262) ἀφνειός μὲν ὃ γ' ἐστὶ, γέρων δὲ δὴ ὡς σύ περ ᾧδε *Il.* 24.398
 Wealthy is he, and an old man certainly, just like you.

When Odysseus and Diomedes are compared to two lions in example (263), we cannot possibly speak of a real familiarity or literal similarity between warriors and lions.

² Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922e, 124; Macleod 1982, 120; Richardson 1993, 314; Brügger 2009, 145.

(263) βάν ῥ' ἴμεν ὥς τε λέοντε δύω διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν *Il.* 10.297

They set off to go like two lions through the black night.

The verbal action gives an indication of the aspect of comparison: the way in which they move is cat-like, but they are not trying to imitate lions, nor do they look like lions. There is a large conceptual gulf between lions and men, there is no straightforward, immediate similarity between them. This comparison is made in light of their extraordinary mission of entering into the enemy's camp, a deed that is super-human. Comparing Odysseus and Diomedes to lions in this situation invites the audience to think about them as lions not only in terms of their movement through the night, but to find other aspects in which their behaviour matches what people know or think about lions, or what they have heard about lions in extended similes: lions are courageous, reckless, strong, unafraid, ready to fight even at the cost of their own life.

Knowing the prototypical characteristics of each comparison type provides a reference point from which exceptional expressions can be interpreted. The exceptional expressions of comparisons are best described as hybrids: they all share that the meaning of one comparison type is expressed in the syntactic shape of another. In other words, the structure of one comparison type is appropriated for the expression of another. This means that there is an element in the construction of the comparison which causes it to express the meaning of a different type of comparison. The most common kind of such an element is negation. A negated comparative construction can express the meaning of a superlative/relative or similitive/equative; a negated similitive/equative construction can express the meaning of a comparative or superlative/relative construction. The other such element to be discussed below is more comparison-type specific: a comparative construction with a figurative standard in which there is also a special relationship between the aspect of comparison and the standard of comparison, namely that

ισοφαρίζειν ‘match oneself with’ in combination with a noun, μένος ‘might’, to express the aspect of comparison.⁵

- (265) (...) οὐδέ τις οἱ δύναται μένος ἰσοφαρίζειν *Il.* 6.101
 And no one can match himself with him in might.

Similitive/equative meaning arises when the aspect of a comparative construction is negated; in these cases the aspect of comparison is expressed by an adjective denoting the negative pole of a scale, for example χείρων ‘worse’.

- (266) καί μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὐ τι χέρεια
 πατρὸς ἑοῖο φίλοιο, δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν *Od.* 14.176-7
 And I thought that among men he would be in no way worse than
 his own dear father, admirable in stature and appearance.

The effect of the negation of a negative polarity adjective like ‘worse’ is a special emphasis of its positive counterpart: ‘at least as good’, which here is further specified and confirmed by the use of οὐ τι ‘in no way’ instead of plain οὐ, and by the positive assertion δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν ‘admirable in stature and appearance’.

When the underlying syntactic structure is that of a comparative construction, we expect the relationship between comparee and standard to be straightforward, and this is indeed the case. But when the underlying structure is that of a similitive/equative construction, we find both straightforward, as in example (267), and figurative, as in example (268), relationships between comparee and standard of comparison, even if the resulting meaning is that of a superlative or comparative expression.

- (267) (...) οὐ γὰρ ἐμῆ ἴς
 ἔσθ’ οἷά πάρος ἔσκεν ἐνὶ γναμπτοῖσι μέλεσσιν *Il.* 11.668-9
 For my strength is not like it once was in my supple limbs.

⁵ Cf. Kirk 1990, 169 and Graziosi/Haubold 2010, 104 for notes on the emendation of ἰσοφαρίζειν to ἀντιφερίζειν by Bentley. Stoevesandt 2008, 44 does not seem to doubt ἰσοφαρίζειν.

- (268) οὔτ' οὔν παρδάλιος τόσσον μένος οὔτε λέοντος
οὔτε συὸς κάπρου ὀλοόφρονος, οὔ τε μέγιστος
θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι περὶ σθένει βλεμεαίνει,
ᾧσσον Πάνθου υἷες ἐϋμελίαι φρονέουσιν⁶ *Il.* 17.20-3

Not even the might of a leopard is so great, nor that of a lion, nor that of a wild, mean-hearted boar, in whose breast the greatest spirit exults exceedingly in its strength, as the sons of Panthous, armed with good ashen spears, boast confidence.

The underlying meaning of all these comparisons can also be expressed through a less marked construction, without negation, so how can we explain this rather roundabout way of making a comparison? I argue that there are two levels on which the use of negation has an effect: the level of the comparison itself in a narrow sense, and the level of the wider narrative discourse. Negation creates hybrid comparisons in which aspects of the meaning and function of one type are transferred to another. But before we look at their linguistic and narrative effect, we need to address the question why superlative constructions are never the starting point of these hybrids.

My conclusion after analysing all the superlative constructions in the Homeric poems is that they are not genuine comparisons, and the interaction of negation with superlative constructions confirms this. They do not juxtapose two entities and make a claim about their relationship in the way in which comparative and similitive/equative constructions do. A superlative construction is a definite expression that refers to the exceptional status of an entity, with or without mentioning the respective reference group. Negating the comparee or aspect of a superlative construction does not straightforwardly result in the expression of another comparison type: *Achilles is not the best of the Achaeans* may be a litotic-ironic way of expressing *Achilles is worse than the other Achaeans*, but such a reading is based on pragmatics, not on semantics. In a similar vein, *(it is) not Achilles (who) is the*

⁶ There are several textual problems in this passage, though none have an effect on the meaning and syntax of the comparison (cf. Edwards 1991, 65).

best of the Achaeans is not a productive way of expressing *some other Achaean is better than/at least as good as Achilles*. A negative quantifier as comparee or scope yields an equally empty, in the latter case even nonsensical, expression: *nobody is the best of the Achaeans*, **Achilles is the best of nobody*.

The use of negative quantifiers in comparative and similitive/equative constructions is a way of expressing a comparison that carries superlative meaning *and* a real sense of a comparison. In many negated comparisons found in Homeric Greek, the entity which displays the quality denoted by the aspect of comparison to a higher degree is in the position of the standard of comparison instead of the comparee, where we normally find it. This means that the point of view of the comparison lies with the ‘weaker’ instead of the ‘stronger’ part, and the ‘stronger’ part is the reference point. When such a comparison is figurative, we end up with the odd situation in which the figurative element, for instance the animals in example (268), takes the position of the comparee instead of the standard: leopard, lion, and boar are compared to the sons of Panthous, and not, as usually, vice-versa. When we look at the intended effect of such a comparison, however, the animals do function as the image with which the warriors are conceptualized, but with an added sense of superlativity: the sons of Panthous are even more confident than leopard, lion, and boar.⁷ The markedness of this juxtaposition is emphasised by οὔτ’ οὐβ ‘not even’ and the priamel-like nature of the comparison involving the three most impressive and dangerous animals.⁸

Beyond its effect within the expression of a comparison, negation has an effect on the level of the narrative discourse. The priamel-like negated comparison in example (268) is spoken by Menelaus at a point in the epic story where he is the centre of attention and the hero of the moment, showing himself strong and

⁷ Thereby, negated figurative comparisons express the same meaning as comparisons of the *melle dulcior* type discussed below.

⁸ Cf. Edwards 1991, 28-9.

considerate in his defense of Patroclus' body. The overbearing conduct of which Menelaus accuses Euphorbus and his brothers stands in contrast to the image in the simile with which Menelaus himself is described at the beginning of Book 17: he stands over Patroclus' body like a mother cow over her first-born calf (*Il.* 17.4-6).

There are two more passages in the *Iliad* with the same structure; at *Il.* 14.394-401 the clash of the armies after having re-arranged themselves is described with a threefold negative comparison. Not even the roar of the sea, nor the blaze of fire, nor the blast of the wind is as loud as the clashing of Trojans and Achaeans in battle. This scene marks the start of a phase in the battle during which the Achaeans have the upper hand since Zeus has been beguiled by Hera so that Poseidon can support the Achaeans undisturbed by him.⁹ The deafening din of battle, ξύνισαν μεγάλῳ ἀλαλητῶ (*Il.* 14.393) stands in contrast with Zeus' undisturbed sleep, ἀτρέμας εὔδε πατήρ (*Il.* 14.352). Zeus' reaction to awaking and seeing the Achaeans pursuing the Trojans in rout is to reveal his ultimate plan to Hera and send her off to put it into action: the Trojans will drive the Achaeans back to their ships, Patroclus will come to aid them and kill Sarpedon, upon which Hector will kill Patroclus, which will in turn cause Achilles to re-enter battle and kill Hector.

The third negated comparison of this kind also appears at a dramatic point in the epic story; it is made by Hector during his last encounter with his wife Andromache in Book 6. It involves four instead of three elements and a straightforward instead of a figurative relationship between comparee and standard. Hector says to his wife that neither the future grief of the Trojans, nor that of Hecabe, nor that of Priam, nor that of his brothers, affects him as much as hers (*Il.* 6.450-5).

These passages are reminiscent of another use of negation in a tripartite struc-

⁹ The desire that overcomes Zeus is also described by an extended negative comparison, involving a negative quantifier and thus resulting in superlative meaning: Zeus says that never before has he desired anyone as he desires Hera now, not even when he... followed by a list of women with whom he has slept.

ture found in Homer, the employment of mistaken questions. The most common structure of such a mistaken question is one person asking ‘Is it X or is it Y?’, and the other replying: ‘It is not X, nor is it Y, it is Z’, though the first part can involve fewer or more than two options. Kakridis discusses a number of examples of these questions as elements of popular style in Homer.

The poet uses it [the device of mistaken questions] only for the purpose of emphasizing the positive assertion which will come at the end of the answer. In the beginning, the audience, hearing the surmises of the person asking, is led to imagine mistaken solutions. [...] In this scheme the erroneous questions have no other purpose than to form a negative background from which the positive assertion will emerge, in full clarity, at the end.¹⁰

At the assembly of the Achaeans, Achilles proposes to consult a seer or priest about the reason for the pestilence that has come over the Achaeans.

- (269) ὅς κ' εἴποι ὃ τι τόσσον ἐχώσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
εἶταρ ὃ γ' εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται ἢδ' ἐκατόμβης¹¹ *Il.* 1.64-5
who might say why Phoibos Apollo is so angry, whether he finds
fault with a prayer and a sacrifice

In his reply, Calchas first negates the two options given in Achilles' question before providing the actual answer:

- (270) οὐ ταρ' ὃ γ' εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται οὐδ' ἐκατόμβης,
ἀλλ' ἔνεκ' ἀρητηῆρος, ὃν ἠτίμησ' Ἀγαμέμνων *Il.* 1.93-4
He does not find fault with a prayer, nor with a sacrifice; instead,
this is because of the priest, whom Agamemnon dishonoured.

The combination of mistaken question and negated answer enables Achilles to be diplomatic and strategic in his attempt to make Agamemnon correct his offence.¹²

¹⁰ Kakridis 1949, 110-1; cf. Kurman 1969, who discusses other oral epic traditions that use this device much more frequently than Homer. Kurman views it as a feature of oral poetry, possibly connected to riddles, and as a means of retardation of the unfolding of the epic story.

¹¹ Kakridis prints εἶτ' ἄρ ... εἴθ' instead of εἶταρ ... ἢδ', which fits the interpretation of this passage better, but even with the reading of Allen 1931, which I print, Calchas' reaction at 1.93-4, example (270), suggests interpreting εὐχολή and ἐκατόμβη as two separate options rather than in conjunction.

¹² Cf. Pulleyn 2000, 143.

At the same time, it leads the audience to imagine different possible scenarios just in order to dismiss them again.¹³ The mistaken question makes background assumptions explicit, but the same effect can be achieved by a negated proposition on its own. More recent studies of negation in narrative discourse view it as a foregrounding process that calls up backgrounded propositions and expectations of the audience in order to correct them. “In using a NEG-assertion, the speaker is not in the business of communicating new information to the hearer. Rather, s/he is in the business of *correcting the hearer’s misguided beliefs*.”¹⁴ The double step of first creating and then dismissing information means that the processing of a negated proposition requires more effort than that of a simple, positive assertion, and extra meaning is triggered beyond the semantic content alone. These observations lead Nahajec, in her study on negation in poetry, to conclude that “negation can be seen as a significant language choice in the construction of meaning.”¹⁵ Negation is a powerful tool in the construction of tension in the narrative discourse since “the evocation of alternative states of affairs through negation creates a clash between what is expected and what is realised.”¹⁶

Negation in expressions of comparisons has an effect not only on the meaning of the comparison in a narrow sense, but on the discourse as a whole. A negated comparison must first create in the audience an image of the positive comparison, to which the negation can be applied. The poet plays with expectations and pre-suppositions in order to make a point about a certain character, group, or event. This view of negation can shed light on an interesting observation: negated comparisons of similarity with superlative/elative meaning are made about several different characters in the *Iliad*, but of Hector as the only character more than once, in fact four times in all. Of the 16 occurrences of this type in the *Odyssey*,

¹³ Cf. Latacz, Nünlist, Stoevesandt 2009, 62-3.

¹⁴ Givon 2001, 372, emphasis original.

¹⁵ Nahajec 2009, 110.

¹⁶ Nahajec 2009, 117. Cf. De Jong 2004, 61-8.

12 are made with regard to Odysseus. Hector as first-born prince of Troy is the most high-ranking hero to die in the course of the *Iliad*, but his death is dependent on Achilles. As long as Achilles boycotts battle, Hector is impossible to stop. The first two negative comparisons are made of Hector at a moment of great insecurity about the future of the Achaean mission: at the very end of his attempt to persuade Achilles to accept Agamemnon's apology and gifts, Odysseus says to Achilles that now is the time to fight against Hector, since in his present self-confidence he deems himself unlike anyone of the Achaeans.¹⁷

(271) νῦν γάρ χ' Ἔκτορ' ἔλοις, ἐπεὶ ἄν μάλα τοι σχεδὸν ἔλθοι
 λύσσαν ἔχων ὀλοήν, ἐπεὶ οὐ τινά φησιν ὁμοῖον
 οἷ ἔμναι Δαναῶν οὓς ἐνθάδε νῆες ἔνεικαν Il. 9.304-6

Now you can take Hector's life, for he would come very close to you in his destructive rage, because he believes that there is nobody like him among the Danaans whom the ships brought here.

A little later, Agamemnon and Menelaus consult over how to proceed with the war while Achilles is still inconsolable and threatening to sail home with his men. Agamemnon remarks that no man had done as many evil deeds as Hector, and expresses his amazement that an entirely mortal man could achieve such things.

(272) οὐ γάρ πω ιδόμην, οὐδ' ἔκλυον ἀυδήσαντος
 ἄνδρ' ἓνα τοσσάδε μέρμερ' ἐπ' ἡματι μητίσασθαι,
 ὅσσ' Ἔκτωρ ἔρρεξε Διὶ φίλος υἱᾶς Ἀχαιῶν
 αὐτως, οὔτε θεᾶς υἱὸς φίλος οὔτε θεοῖο Il. 10.47-50

For I have never seen nor heard anyone say that a single man contrived as many baneful deeds in one day, as Hector, dear to Zeus, has done to the sons of the Achaeans, just like that, being neither the dear son of a goddess nor of a god.

At this point in the story, the outcome of the battle is up in the air, but at the same time it is clear to the audience that there is indeed someone among the Greeks, a son of a goddess, who is stronger than Hector, and who, in his revenge for Patroclus, will do even more evil deeds than Hector.

¹⁷ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922b, 101; Hainsworth 1993, 99.

Through the use of negation the poet plays with the discrepancy between the reality of the story world at that moment and the knowledge and expectation of the audience. Shortly after Hector's death, Achilles states that Hector has done more evil deeds than all the other Trojans, *κακὰ πόλλ' ἔρρεξεν, ὅσ' οὐ σύμπαντες οἱ ἄλλοι* (*Il.* 22.380). Hector remains the most dangerous warrior among the Trojans, but his deeds are no longer a threat to the Achaeans. With Troy's strongest man dead, the city and its people are doomed. At the same time, the audience and Achilles already know that now that Achilles has killed Hector, someone among the Trojans will kill the very man to whom Hector succumbed.

The final negative comparison of this kind is spoken by Priam. He does not know that another one of his sons will kill Achilles. Hector to him is singular and incomparable, so he puts his grief for Hector above his grief for the many other sons of his that had been killed by Achilles. Hector is extraordinary even among his own brothers, so Priam must take extraordinary measures to bring home his body: he himself will go to Achilles and beg him to return it.

- (273) τῶν πάντων οὐ τόσσον ὀδύρομαι ἀχνύμενός περ
ὥς ἑνός (...)
Ἕκτορος *Il.* 22.424-6
- For them all I do not mourn as much, grieved though I am, as for one, Hector.

The same comparison is made by Menelaus in the *Odyssey*. He says that he mourns for the Achaeans who have not made it back from Troy, but for all of them not as much as for Odysseus, and gives a reason for this in the form of another negated comparison.

- (274) τῶν πάντων οὐ τόσσον ὀδύρομαι, ἀχνύμενός περ,
ὥς ἑνός, (...)
ἐπεὶ οὐ τις Ἀχαιῶν τόσσ' ἐμόγησεν,
ὅσσ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐμόγησε καὶ ἦρατο. *Od.* 4.104-7
- For them all I mourn not as much, grieved though I am, as for one; for nobody among the Achaeans suffered as much as Odysseus suffered and endured.

The *Odyssey* is the story of how Odysseus almost did not make it home. This story is characterized by the ever present uncertainty of whether and how Odysseus will return home, and whether he will be there in time and with the means to defeat the suitors and regain his family and possessions. The way in which different characters speak about Odysseus reflects their assumption that he is dead. The expression οὐ γὰρ ἔπ' ἀνήρ | οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκεν 'for there is no man here like Odysseus was' occurs four times with almost exactly the same wording (*Od.* 2.58-9, 17.537-8, 19.314-5, 21.93-4) and is a good representation of the sense and effect these comparisons convey.¹⁸ At *Od.* 2.58-9, Telemachus addresses the assembly and deplores the lack of a man like Odysseus as protector of the house, a role for which he sees himself as too weak. Much later, at *Od.* 17.537-8, Penelope makes exactly the same remark to Eumaeus, but adds that, if Odysseus were to return, he and his son would take vengeance on the suitors. Telemachus has developed from being too weak to being a companion of this father in battle. At *Od.* 19.314-5, Penelope apologises to Odysseus in disguise for the lack of a host and entertainer like Odysseus was, while she herself actually fulfils this role perfectly well. At *Od.* 21.93-4 Antinous remarks that there is nobody like Odysseus when it comes to stringing the bow and shooting, but secretly hopes that he will be able to achieve it and replace Odysseus. Odysseus is the topic of these comparisons, but the negation causes them to be made from the perspective of the other characters, who might yet take the place of 'nobody' and make Odysseus redundant.

The use of negation in these comparisons highlights Odysseus' special status as (once) uncontested leader, but one part of the processing of such a negative comparison is the recognition of a positive expectation behind it: there is an alternative scenario in which Telemachus grows into the role of protector of the house, Penelope hosts the stranger, and Antinous strings the bow. The use of the imper-

¹⁸ The remaining negated comparisons made about Odysseus are *Od.* 3.120-2, 3.221-2, 8.229, 14.96-9, 19.350-2, 19.365-8.

fect in ἔσκεν ‘he was’, or even ‘he used to be’, reflects the characters’ assumption that Odysseus is dead and will not return, while the audience, of course, knows that Odysseus is alive, and actually there in Ithaca at the time at which three of the four comparisons are uttered.¹⁹

6.1.2 The *melle dulcior* type

Beside negated comparisons, there is a type of comparative construction that can be described as a hybrid comparison. Expressions such as *melle dulcior*, μέλιτος γλυκίων, ‘sweeter than honey’, or *nive candidior*, λευκότερος χιόνος, ‘whiter than snow’ are a well-known phenomenon across the Indo-European languages.²⁰ Most scholars regard this type of comparative construction as expressing an equative relation, and due to its existence across the IE languages, as inherited and old; in fact it is often adduced as a way of understanding the origin and function of IE comparative morphology and syntax.²¹ Ittzés, however, argues for understanding these expressions as proper comparative constructions and shows that the textual evidence adduced for their interpretation as equative constructions is not unproblematic. Linguistic discussions of the *melle dulcior* type are centred around the semantic relationship between the adjective expressing the aspect and the noun expressing the standard of comparison, as well as the function and type of case or particle used to mark the standard of comparison. I propose to approach this problem by looking at the relationship between comparee and standard of comparison, as well as the effect of such a comparison on the level of the discourse.

¹⁹ Odysseus’ disguise prolongs this state of insecurity and the possibility of alternative scenarios, as Thalmann points out: “Odysseus’s disguise allows the text to toy with other possibilities while ultimately cancelling them in order to reaffirm – all the more strongly for having explored alternatives – hierarchical order under his control” (1998, 207). The same can be said about the names with which Odysseus is referred to by others as well as by himself, notably οὔτις/μήτις. Cf. Austin 1972.

²⁰ Cf. Ittzés (forthcoming) for examples from different IE languages.

²¹ Cf. Benveniste 1948, Berg 1957, Puhvel 1973.

What distinguishes the *melle dulcior* type from other comparative constructions, and what distinguishes it from normal similitive or equative constructions? Typical comparative constructions have a straightforward relationship between comparee and standard of comparison. In the *melle dulcior* type, this relationship is figurative, i.e. of the kind that we normally only find in similitive and equative expressions. The point of relating comparee and standard of comparison in a *melle dulcior* type comparison is to make a statement about the similarity between them, while at the same time stressing the extraordinary degree to which comparee and standard display the quality in question. They do not, like normal comparative constructions, state an actual difference.

In the majority of similitive constructions, the aspect of comparison is not expressed, or (indirectly) expressed by the verbal action; in some cases a noun, but rarely an adjective, makes the aspect explicit. When there is an adjective expressing the aspect of comparison, often the connection between the adjective and the standard of comparison is not as close as it is in comparative constructions; the standard of comparison may even seem like an afterthought added to the description of the comparee. In example (275), the adjective ποδώκεας ‘swift of foot’ aptly describes the horses, but does not actually fit with the birds in the standard of comparison, which are swift by means of their wings and not feet.

(275) ἵπποι μὲν μέγ’ ἄρισται ἔσαν Φηρητιάδαο,
τὰς Εὐμήλος ἔλαυνε ποδώκεας ὄρνιθας ὥς Il. 2.763-4

By far the best horses were those of the son of Pheres, that Eumelus drove, swift of foot, like birds.

The *melle dulcior* type expresses a figurative comparison in which the aspect and standard of comparison stand in an especially close relationship: the standard refers to the embodiment of the quality denoted by the aspect of comparison.²²

²² The other *melle dulcior* type comparisons are Il. 1.249, 3.10-1, 4.277-8, 13.817-9, 18.109-10, 18.610; Od. 16.216-9, 18.195-6, 23.103.

- (276) τοῦ δὴ καλλίστους ἵππους ἴδον ἠδὲ μεγίστους·
 λευκότεροι χιόνος, θείειν δ' ἀνέμοισιν ὅμοιοι Il. 10.436-7

His [King Rhesus] are indeed the most beautiful horses I have ever seen, and the greatest, whiter than snow, and they can run like the winds.

With such a comparison the speaker makes a point about the extraordinarily high degree to which that quality is present in the comparee, namely to an even greater extent than in the embodiment of the quality itself. The linguistic form of a comparison of inequality is used to express a hyperbole in which the whiteness of horses is conceptualized through the whiteness of snow. The horses are not actually whiter than snow, they are so extraordinarily white that even the whitest thing on earth, snow, is barely an accurate standard of comparison. But despite this ‘shortcoming’ of snow, it is the very image of snow that is created in the mind of the audience, and through it the whiteness of the horses is meant to be imagined.

Many of the *melle dulcior* type expressions appear in contexts that are already marked, e.g. at the start of an extended simile, or in combination with relative expressions, when something extraordinary or threatening is described. There are, however, other marked contexts in which superlative adjectives are used to express an extraordinary degree of closeness between the comparee and standard of comparison.²³ In example (277) sleep is compared to death, but here it would seem odd to say ‘more unawakening’ and ‘sweeter’ than death.

- (277) καὶ τῷ νήδυμος ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν ἔπιπτε,
 νήγρετος ἠδιστος, θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικώς. Od. 13.79-80

And sweet sleep fell on his [Odysseus] eyelids, unawakening, the sweetest, most closely resembling death.

There is no hard-and-fast rule for when it is appropriate to use the *melle dulcior* construction. It is a stylistic device available to the poet to place special emphasis

²³ Cf. Bowie 2013, 109.

and attention on a comparison. Through the combination of a comparative construction and similitive/equative meaning the *melle dulcior* type can communicate a more complex message than a simple similitive or equative expression.

Hybrid comparisons combine syntactic structures and pragmatic effects that would not normally go together, and thereby provide the narrator with a powerful tool for elaborating his story. Negated comparisons can produce extra layers of meaning by activating alternative scenarios for the course of the epic story, while comparisons of the *melle dulcior* type combine likeness and superlativity into comparisons that stand out even in a story replete with expressions of superiority and complex imagery.

6.2 Superlative irony

On several occasions in this study I have made the observation that superlative constructions do not express real comparisons. In this section I will show that the way in which superlative expressions are used to characterize the heroes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* confirms their otherness. I will first compare comparative and superlative constructions in different contexts in the *Iliad*, and try to explain the contradictions that arise when we take superlative expressions at face value. Then I will move on to the *Odyssey* and illustrate the ways in which superlative expressions point out the consequences and complications of the characters' actions.

All comparative and superlative expressions considered in this section are applied to human characters and involve the notion of 'better' or 'best' in their aspect of comparison, since they are the largest group.²⁴ Besides the adjectives ἀμείνων,

²⁴ Of superlative/relative expressions, only those that refer to a specific person or a group of people and identify them as 'best' are considered. Examples like πένθει δ' ἀτλήτω βεβολήατο πάντες ἄριστοι 'With unbearable grief all the best were affected.' (*Il.* 9.3) are not included since here ἄριστοι is used in a generalising sense to mean 'all those who were the best', or even just 'all the leaders' and does not identify specific characters as being the best. The other adjectives in comparative and superlative constructions are too few in number and too

φέρτερος, προφερέστερος, κρείσσων, ἀρείων, this includes verbal aspects of comparison: προβάλλω, υπερβάλλω, νικάω, παρατρέχω for comparative constructions. Superlative constructions are formed with the adjectives ἄριστος, φέρτατος/φέριστος, ἔξοχος, ὑπείροχος, ἔκδηλος, κάρτιστος, ἀριπρεπής, προφερέστατος and the verbs περίεμι, ἀριστεύω, πρέπω, μεταπρέπω, προβαίνω, περίεμι, περιγίγνομαι, καίνυμαι, νικάω. An adjective or verb can be qualified by a verbal phrase, e.g. καίνυμαι νῆα κυβερνήσαι ‘be superior in steering a ship’, or a noun in the dative or accusative, e.g. βίη ἀμείνων ‘better in might’, εἶδος ἄριστος ‘best in looks’, but for the sake of a clear boundary I do not also include cases like κάλλιστος ‘most beautiful’.

6.2.1 ‘Better’ vs. ‘best’

The relationships between two or more characters expressed by comparative constructions never contradict each other. In some cases one can establish a clear ranking of warriors in the *Iliad*: Menelaus is better than Antilochus (*Il.* 23.587-8), Hector is better than Menelaus (*Il.* 7.104-6), and Achilles is better than Hector (*Il.* 22.158-9). In other cases, comparisons between certain characters require more nuanced differentiation resulting in a diplomatic compromise: Achilles is, for example, better than Agamemnon as a warrior (*Il.* 2.239-40), but Agamemnon is mightier, has a higher status, rules over more men (*Il.* 1.280-1). Achilles is better than Odysseus with the spear, but Odysseus surpasses Achilles in terms of wisdom, knowledge, and age (*Il.* 19.217-9).

Superlative constructions are not systematic in this way; beside Achilles and Agamemnon, Diomedes, Aias, Patroclus, Teucer, and Odysseus are called ‘the best of the Achaeans’. Crethon, Orsilochus, and Phoenix are mentioned in groups of the best of the Achaeans, and more than 50 other individual characters in the *Iliad* are called ‘the best’ or ‘pre-eminent’ among their individual tribes, among

semantically diverse to provide insight into their overarching function in the Homeric epics.

heroes, men, ‘of all’, or in an elative sense without a scope. While a comparative expression can be taken at face value and remains true throughout the Homeric epics, superlative constructions do not express a comparison that is truthful and coherent in the same way.²⁵

In many contexts, these contradictions are fairly light, especially when the scope is as general as ‘men’ or ‘all’, and when the aspect of comparison is qualified by the specific area in which someone is best. That Teucer, for example, is best of the Achaeans in bowmanship (*Il.* 13.313-4) does not contradict the more universal way in which Agamemnon and Achilles are the best. Apart from the specific identification of an individual hero as best, an entire group of warriors can be described as being the best, for example when Phoenix refers to the members of the embassy sent to Achilles, namely Aias, Odysseus, and himself, as the best of the Achaeans. There, these three warriors were chosen to go to Achilles and offer Agamemnon’s apologies and gifts of requittal because they seemed the best for this task.

There are, however, also cases in which the superlative does not characterize each individual according to his skills and talents, but rather refers to them as the leaders of (parts of) an army. A leader is the best of his troop, and a superlative adjective can in such cases be used as a synonym for ἀριστῆες ‘champions, leaders’, as exemplified by the superlative adjective ἀρίστους in example (278), which is used in exactly the same way as the noun ἀριστῆας in example (279).

(278) ἀλλ’ ἀναχασσάμενος κάλει ἐνθάδε πάντας ἀρίστους *Il.* 13.740

But you, hold back, and call all the best men over here.

(279) ἀλλ’ ἄγ’ ἀριστῆας Δαναῶν κάλει, ἢν τις ἀκούσῃ *Il.* 17.245

But you, come and call the chiefs of the Danaans, if anyone may hear.

²⁵ Cf. Snell on superlatives in Pindar: “Pindar wendet das nicht so, daß er das ‘eigentliche Wesen’ erkennen möchte, sondern ihm liegt nur daran, das jeweils Hellste und Beste im Gegensatz zu dem Minderen aufzuweisen.” (1955, 265).

This almost inflational and fairly frequent use of ‘best’ to denote rather than characterize a person is another striking difference between comparative and superlative constructions.²⁶ Comparative adjectives can be used contrastively in a similar function, e.g. γεραίτερος ‘elder’ to refer to a member of a group of men distinguished by their age, but such a usage is highly conventional and to my knowledge does not occur in such overt parallelism to a noun as we saw in the case of ἄριστοι and ἀριστῆες, with ἀριστῆες being itself a noun formed on a superlative stem.

When heroes describe themselves or others as ‘better’ or ‘best’ in dialogue, they often refer to the tension between the inherent status and ability of a warrior and the way in which he conducts himself at a given moment. In Book 1 of the *Iliad* Achilles says about Agamemnon that he claims to be the best of the Achaeans (ὄς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὐχεται εἶναι, *Il.* 1.91), and does not honour the one who is actually the best, Achilles himself (ὄ τ’ ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας, *Il.* 1.244). And vice-versa Agamemnon accuses Achilles of always wanting to be above everyone else (ἐθέλει περὶ πάντων ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, *Il.* 1.287), when he (Agamemnon) is actually more powerful (φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, *Il.* 1.186).²⁷ Nestor also uses both superlative and comparative constructions in his attempt to settle the dispute: he rebukes Agamemnon and Achilles for quarrelling like this when due to their preeminence in counsel and fighting they should be more reasonable (οἱ περὶ μὲν βουλήν Δαναῶν, περὶ δ’ ἐστὲ μάχεσθαι, *Il.* 1.258), and asserts his own authority by stating that Agamemnon and Achilles are younger than he (ἄμφω δὲ νεωτέρω ἐστὸν ἐμεῖο, *Il.* 1.259) and that he used to fight alongside men better than they (ἀρείοσιν ἢ περ ὑμῖν | ἀνδράσιν ὠμίλησα, *Il.* 1.260-1), the mightiest in fact (κάρτιστοι δὴ κεῖνοι ἐπιχθονίων τράφεν ἀνδρῶν | κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις

²⁶ But this usage of adjectives meaning ‘best’ does not describe a character and therefore does not contribute to the issues discussed here.

²⁷ Cf. Pulleyn 2000, 149, 193, 201-2, 174.

ἐμάχοντο, *Il.* 1.266-7). Nestor confirms Agamemnon in his position of ultimate power, reminding Achilles that even though he is strong and the son of a goddess, Agamemnon is of higher rank (εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ, | ἀλλ' ὃ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει. *Il.* 1.280-1).²⁸ Both Achilles and Agamemnon demand respect for themselves from the other on account of the aspect in which they are the best of the Achaeans, and neither of them is willing to show this respect to the other.²⁹

Superlative and comparative constructions feature in many shorter and less elaborate verbal exchanges between characters.³⁰ They are used to drive home a point when insulting or rebuking someone for his lack of valour in battle (e.g. Hector to Paris: εἶδος ἄριστε 'best in looks', *Il.* 3.39; Agamemnon to Menestheus: κακοῖσι δόλοισι κεκασμένε 'distinguished in evil trickery', *Il.* 4.339), when corroborating a threat (Telemachus to Eumaeus: βίηφι δὲ φέρτερός εἰμι 'I am better in might', *Od.* 21.370-1), when boasting about one's prowess (Nestor: μετέπρεπον ἥρωεσσιν 'I was distinguished among heroes', *Il.* 23.645; Alcinous about the Phaeacians: νηυσὶν ἄριστοι 'best with their ships', *Od.* 8.246-53), and as a way of showing respect or winning someone's favour, often in the address at the beginning of a verbal exchange (Odysseus to Achilles: μέγα φέρτατ' Ἀχαιῶν 'by far the best of the Achaeans', *Il.* 19.216-20).

Superlative expressions of this kind normally refer to the permanent characterization of someone as outstanding, even in contexts in which a hero is meant to prove himself as the best, for example in a contest. During the funerary games, the outcome of most of the contests is basically already known according to the rank-

²⁸ Cf. Pulleyn 2000, 197-200.

²⁹ Cf. Edwards 1984, 65. Griffin points out that εὔχεται, though in other Homeric contexts so semantically bleached that it expresses no more than 'is', is used with its original semantic force by Achilles at *Il.* 1.91.(1980, 52-3). By using εὔχομαι, Achilles reduces Agamemnon's excellence to a (mere) claim to power by tradition, while Agamemnon uses the verb ἐθέλω 'want' at *Il.* 1.287-9 to portray Achilles as wanting more than is his due.

³⁰ In narrator text they are much less frequent, cf. Griffin 1986, 49.

ing of warriors and their horses. With Achilles and his divine horses not participating, Eumelus (ὄς ἵπποσύνη ἐκέκαστο ‘who excelled in horsemanship’, *Il.* 23.288-9) should have won the chariot race, closely followed, or possibly yet overtaken by Diomedes (ὄχ’ ἄριστος ἐών ‘being by far the best’, *Il.* 23.356-7), but Athene tampers with Eumelus’ chariot and he comes last. Achilles, recognizing that something has gone wrong, offers him a prize anyway on account of his status as the best: λοῖσθος ἀνὴρ ὄριστος ἐλάυνει μώνυχας ἵππους ‘in the last position the best man drives his single-hoofed horses’ (*Il.* 23.536).³¹ When Agamemnon stands up to take part in the javelin contest, Achilles steps in to give him the first prize without allowing the contest to happen, since everyone knows that Agamemnon is the best at casting the spear: Ἀτρεΐδη· ἴδμεν γὰρ ὅσον προβέβηκας ἀπάντων | ἦδ’ ὅσον δυνάμει τε καὶ ἤμασιν ἔπλευ ἄριστος ‘son of Atreus, for we know by how far you succeed everyone, and by how much you are the best in strength and with the spear’ (*Il.* 23.890-1).³²

Despite all this striving for the first place, being second best is not seen as a shameful position to be in, neither in a physical contest, nor in the ranking of heroes at Troy. Telamonian Aias is said to be in the prestigious position of ‘the best after Achilles’ twice in the *Iliad* and three times in the *Odyssey*.³³

(280) ἀνδρῶν αὖ μέγ’ ἄριστος ἔην Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
ὄφρ’ Ἀχιλεὺς μήνιεν· ὃ γὰρ πολὺ φέρτατος ἦεν *Il.* 2.768-9

And of men the very best was Telamonian Aias, as long as Achilles
cherished his wrath; for Achilles was by far the mightiest.

Such superlatives with qualification are almost exclusively spoken by the narrator,

³¹ Cf. Richardson 1993, 228. Similarly Menelaus and Antilochus: Menelaus is the better man and has the better horses, so he should have come before him, but Antilochus cheats, and has to recognize later on that Menelaus is the true winner of the prize (*Il.* 23.570-95).

³² Cf. the boxing contest, in which Epeius claims to be the best: εὐχομαι εἶναι ἄριστος (*Il.* 23.669), and only one man, Euryalus, dares to face him, well knowing he does not stand a chance.

³³ Cf. *Il.* 17.279-80; *Od.* 11.468-70, 11.550-1, 24.17-8. *Il.* 13.321-5 expresses the same idea without a superlative adjective. Instances of another hero being best after someone else are *Il.* 12.103-4, 17.351; *Od.* 8.116-7, 15.252-3.

also the comparee of two superlative constructions: he is called ‘the best of the Achaeans’ by Menelaus (*Il.* 17.689), and ‘the best of the Myrmidons’ (*Il.* 18.10) by Achilles. The Achaeans as well as the Myrmidons are a group to which Achilles also belongs. How can Patroclus be the best, when Achilles is better than he?

6.2.2 Tragic excellence in the *Iliad*

“The ‘best’ fighter of a group is usually its leader, as Patroclus was when he was killed”³⁶ is probably the easiest way to explain this, and it is worth considering the intricacies of this role-play of Patroclus as leader with Nagy’s view on the hero in the *Iliad*. He explains the label ‘best’ for Patroclus as due to his role as *therápōn*, i.e. surrogate or ritual substitute, of Achilles: “By dying, Patroclus gets the title ‘best of the Myrmidons’ and ‘best of the Achaeans’ because he has taken upon himself not only the armour but also the heroic identity of Achilles.”³⁷ For the short period in which Patroclus leads the Myrmidons in Achilles’ place, he is treated like one of the prime heroes of the *Iliad*, and his death foreshadows and postpones Achilles’ own death beyond the story of the *Iliad*.³⁸

This is an interesting analysis, but it does not consider that we find such contradicting attributions of the title ‘best’ on the Trojan side, too. When Achilles is in danger of being drowned by the river Xanthus, he wishes to be killed by Hector instead, whom he describes as the best of the men bred in Troy (ἐνθάδε γ’ ἔτραφ’ ἄριστος, *Il.* 21.279), and other passages confirm Hector’s superiority among the Trojans and their allies (cf. *Il.* 6.460-1, 16.834-5, 24.241-2, 24.384-5). Yet, other characters too are called the best of the Trojans: Menelaus, in his effort to protect Patroclus’ body, kills Euphorbus, ‘the best of the Trojans’ (Τρώων τὸν ἄριστον

³⁶ Edwards 1991, 143.

³⁷ Nagy 1999, 34.

³⁸ Cf. Nagy 1999, 32-34. For the use of ἄριστος in connection with Patroclus’ death and the foreshadowing of Achilles’ death cf. Edwards 1984, 78-80.

ἔπεφεν | Πανθοίδην Εὐφορβον, *Il.* 17.80-1). Aias kills Imbrius, who is distinguished among the Trojans (μετέπρεπε δὲ Τρώεσσιν, *Il.* 13.175), and Idomeneus, with the help of Poseidon, slays Alcathous, who is the best man in wide Troy (ἄνῆρ ὄριστος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ, *Il.* 13.432-3). These and numerous other superlative expressions appear at the point at which a hero is struck in battle.³⁹ The death of a warrior on the battlefield is by itself a notable event, but it is the more spectacular and tragic the more excellent that hero is. Killing or even just wounding a high ranking warrior gives glory to the attacker, as Hector boastfully proclaims when he sees Agamemnon retreat after being hit.⁴⁰

- (282) οἶχετ' ἄνῆρ ὄριστος, ἐμοὶ δὲ μέγ' εὖχος ἔδωκε
 Ζεὺς Κρονίδης *Il.* 11.288-9
 Gone is the best man, but to me Zeus son of Cronos has given
 great glory.

Being overcome by another warrior is the fate of many heroes at Troy, and the defeat need not diminish the status of a hero, as long as it happens at the hands of a worthy opponent. This is why Achilles is terrified of the prospect of drowning in the river Xanthus and wishes to be killed by Hector instead. Being defeated by Hector would be a glorious death in battle since then a good man would have killed a good man: τὼ κ' ἀγαθὸς μὲν ἔπεφν', ἀγαθὸν δέ κεν ἐξενάριξεν (*Il.* 21.280).⁴¹

The tragic defeat of an excellent warrior can be enhanced by an elaboration of his special qualities, which, even though they are what make him the best, fail him, or are even partly responsible for his fall. Sarpedon, for example, is special

³⁹ Cf. *Il.* 5.103-5, 5.842-4, 17.306-11, 17.348-51. These instances correspond to Edwards's "emphatic" use of ἄριστος (1984, 62). He views the lesser heroes as temporarily deserving this title because of their efforts in battle, but his structuralist analysis on the macro level of the plot does not address the effect of ἄριστος on the local discourse level.

⁴⁰ Cf. example (284): the defeat of Patroclus means calamity for the Achaeans but victory for the Trojans. At *Il.* 6.5-11 Aias brings a light of hope to his comrades by killing Acamas, the best of the Thracians. Nestor receives glory from Athene by killing Eurythion, the mightiest and best man (*Il.* 7.154-5). In all these cases, the qualification of the hero as best only makes sense if it refers to a permanent attribute, and is not, as Hainsworth claims, "a temporary distinction" (1993, 258).

⁴¹ Cf. *Il.* 22.158.

because he is the son of Zeus. Initially, he is under the protection of his father (in Book 5 Sarpedon is hit but does not die since Zeus wards off destruction, *πατήρ δ' ἔτι λοιγὸν ἄμυνεν*, *Il.* 5.622), but in Book 16, when he encounters Patroclus in battle, Sarpedon is on his own and meets his fate.⁴²

- (283) (...) ἀνὴρ δ' ὄριστος ὄλωλε
 Σαρπηδῶν Διὸς υἱός· ὃ δ' οὐ οὗ παιδὸς ἀμύνει *Il.* 16.521-2
 And the best man has died, Sarpedon, son of Zeus; and he [Zeus]
 is not protecting his own child.

In a similar vein, Scamandrius, who was taught by Artemis herself to shoot with bow and arrow, is killed, and neither Artemis nor his excellence in archery protects him (*Il.* 5.49-58). Polydorus surpasses all in swiftness of foot, and is struck by Achilles as he is showing off his fleetness among the foremost fighters (*Il.* 20.407-18).⁴³

The death of someone who is best can have a severe impact on others, either on his comrades on the battlefield itself, at the moment when he falls, or outside the battle on his family and friends. When Sarpedon dies, unbearable grief takes hold of his comrade Glaucón and the Trojans, and they prepare for a fierce counterattack (*Il.* 16.508-68). The Paeonians freeze in terror at the sight of their best man Asteropaeus slain by Achilles, and also become victims of Achilles' murdering frenzy (*Il.* 21.205-13).⁴⁴ In Book 6 Hector imagines his wife Andromache in the future grieving for her dead husband who was preeminent in fighting (*Il.* 6.459-65).⁴⁵

Likewise, the two passages in which Patroclus is called the best are highly pathetic and tragic. In example (284), Menelaus tells Antilochus that Patroclus is

⁴² Cf. Hofmeister 1984, §4.

⁴³ There is one comparable example in the *Odyssey*, when Menelaus' helmsman, Phrontis, who surpasses the tribes of men at steering a ship, is killed by Apollo while steering a ship (*Od.* 3.282-3).

⁴⁴ Cf. *Il.* 11.656-64, 11.744-6, 16.593-600.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Il.* 5.410-5 about Diomedes and his wife Aegialeia; Priam's loss of his best son: *Il.* 24.384-5; Thetis' lament about the impending fate of Achilles: *Il.* 18.54-60 (=18.436-7).

dead and sends him to Achilles to pass on this news. Hector has already stripped Patroclus of Achilles' armour, and Menelaus fears that the Achaeans will not be able to protect Patroclus' body from being dragged away by the Trojans.

- (284) Ἀντίλοχ', εἰ δ' ἄγε δεῦρο, διοτρεφές, ὄφρα πύθῃαι
 λυγρῆς ἀγγελίης, ἢ μὴ ὄφελλε γενέσθαι.
 ἤδη μὲν σε καὶ αὐτὸν οἴομαι εἰσορόωντα
 γινώσκειν, ὅτι πῆμα θεὸς Δαναοῖσι κυλίνδει,
 νίκη δὲ Τρώων· πέφαται δ' ὄριστος Ἀχαιῶν,
 Πάτροκλος, μεγάλη δὲ ποθὴ Δαναοῖσι τέτυκται *Il.* 17.685-90

Antilochus, come here now, nurtured by Zeus, so that you may hear grievous news – if only this had not happened. And already, I think, you yourself can see it as you look, that a god is dealing calamity to the Achaeans, while victory belongs to the Trojans; slain is the best of the Achaeans, Patroclus, and great longing has come upon the Danaans.

In example (285), Achilles voices a painful premonition; he fears that his beloved companion has died.

- (285) μὴ δὴ μοι τελέσωσι θεοὶ κακὰ κήδεα θυμῶι,
 ὥς ποτέ μοι μήτηρ διεπέφραδε, καί μοι ἔειπε
 Μυρμιδόνων τὸν ἄριστον ἔτι ζώντος ἐμεῖο
 χερσὶν ὑπο Τρώων λείψειν φάος ἡελίοιο.
 ἢ μάλα δὴ τέθνηκε Μενoitίου ἄλκιμος υἱός,
 σχέτλιος· ἢ τ' ἐκέλευον ἀπωσάμενον δῆϊον πῦρ
 ἄψ ἔπι νῆας ἵμεν, μηδ' Ἔκτορι ἴφι μάχεσθαι *Il.* 18.8-14

May the gods not bring sore troubles for my heart to fulfilment, as my mother once revealed to me and said to me that while I was still alive the best of the Myrmidons would leave the light of the sun at the hands of the Trojans. The brave son of Menoitius must have died, the fool; and I did bid him return to the ships after pushing back the consuming fire, and not to fight with mighty Hector!

Patroclus' excellence is different from that of the many other heroes at Troy. He is not a typical warrior with an innate, permanent status as a hero. Instead, Patroclus is showing himself as the best by his very actions. He understands that someone needs to step in to defend the Achaeans, and he knows that Achilles will not be that person. He takes the responsibility that really is Achilles' upon his own

shoulders. In his way of dealing with the current situation of need, he shows himself better than the rest, better than Achilles. Achilles in his wrath has neglected the responsibilities of a real ἄριστος, and Patroclus has taken it upon him to be a ‘shepherd of the people’ in his place.⁴⁶ That is, until he himself becomes a victim of his heroic self-confidence and Zeus’ will.⁴⁷

Another sense in which Patroclus is a superlative character is that his actions and his death work as a catalyst for the progression of the epic story. Patroclus stands for hope for the Achaeans because he brings long-desired support in battle. He stands for love and friendship for Achilles, the one thing that will cause Achilles to cease from his wrath. Patroclus’ death means the beginning of the end to the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, and of the end of Hector, Achilles, and the Trojan war.

6.2.3 Legitimacy and propriety in the *Odyssey*

Despite the different subject matter and the many other differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the notions of ‘being better’ and ‘being the best’ also play an important role for the characterization of the Odyssean heroes and the unfolding of the narrative of Odysseus’ *nostos*. Grief over the loss of her excellent husband is expressed by Penelope in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 4.724-5, 4.814-5, 18.204-5), but Odysseus is never called ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν.⁴⁸ In order to carry the title ἄριστος

⁴⁶ Cf. Edwards 1984, 75.

⁴⁷ The failure of ‘the best’ to make the right decision and act responsibly is the cause of major calamities in the *Iliad*. Cf. Agamemnon’s refusal to return Briseis, which causes the plague in Book 1, and his subsequent disrespect towards Achilles, which causes Achilles’ wrath and withdrawal from battle (cf. the use of superlative and comparative expressions in their quarrel sketched in section 6.2.1). Hector’s disregard of Polydamas’ advice in Book 12 (where both of them call their plan ‘best’ at 12.215 and 243) and 18 (where Polydamas is characterized as superior with words and Hector with the spear at 18.252) eventually leads to the doom of Troy (cf. Bakker 2017, 66-9).

⁴⁸ Though the Sirens flatter him with the address μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν (*Od.* 12.184), and he and Achilles together are called ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν by Demodocus in his song about their quarrel (*Od.* 8.78).

designating his role as a leader, he first needs to regain the authority over his *oikos* as well as his people, which will not be fully the case until the end of Book 24.⁴⁹ Odysseus is praised for his outstanding craftiness and ability to come up with good plans.⁵⁰ His innate superiority over the suitors is borne out through the events in the story (for example by being the only one able to string the bow) rather than through explicit comparisons. When he is compared to Irus, for example, it is Odysseus in the disguise of a beggar, and not explicitly Odysseus, who is said to be better (*Od.* 18.233-4). He appears as the standard of negative comparisons of the type ‘there is nobody like Odysseus was’ (*Od.* 2.58-9),⁵¹ and in a comparison made by Penelope, in which the suitors are said to be inferior to him (*Od.* 20.80-2), as well as when Eurymachus expresses his fear that he and the other suitors might turn out weaker than Odysseus (*Od.* 21.253-4 and 21.325-6). It is the leader of the suitors, Antinous, who is referred to as ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν, ‘the best of the Achaeans’ by Odysseus as he is begging for food in the palace (*Od.* 17.415-6), and as ‘the best of the youths in Ithaca’ by the suitors after Odysseus has killed him.

(286) ξεῖνε, κακῶς ἀνδρῶν τοξάζεαι· οὐκέτ’ ἀέθλων
 ἄλλων ἀντιάσεις· νῦν τοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος.
 καὶ γὰρ δὴ νῦν φῶτα κατέκτανες, ὃς μέγ’ ἄριστος
 κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ· τῷ σ’ ἐνθάδε γῦπες ἔδονται *Od.* 22.27-30

Stranger, you are ill-advised shooting at men; never again will you enter into another contest; now for certain sheer destruction awaits you. For indeed you just killed a man who is by far the best of the youths in Ithaca; therefore the vultures will devour you right here.

The wording of this short passage beautifully reflects how what began as a sporting contest, ἀέθλων, is turning into battle. Instead of objects, men are being shot at, ἀνδρῶν τοξάζεαι, and one party is threatening the other party with the most

⁴⁹ On the return of Odysseus’ authority over Ithaca through the figure of Telemachus cf. Gottesman 2014.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Od.* 1.66-7, 3.120-2, 13.297-9, 23.124-6.

⁵¹ Cf. Section 6.1.1.

undesireable end for a warrior: being devoured by vultures, σ' ἐνθάδε γῦπες ἔδονται. The vultures whom we know from the *Iliad* as devourers of abandoned corpses are brought to Ithaca: ἐνθάδε, 'right here', the palace of Odysseus has become a battlefield. But the suitors have not yet understood what is going on, foretelling destruction for Odysseus, τοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος, because he killed their best man, φῶτα κατέκτανες, ὃς μέγ' ἄριστος, when really they themselves are about to meet their fate.⁵²

In view of this, Nagy argues that "the characterization 'best' seems ironically misapplied" in both the statement of the suitors, and also in Odysseus' speech as he is begging Antinous for food: "*Noblesse oblige*, but Antinoos crudely refuses. [...] Antinoos may have looked like a king, but he did not behave like one."⁵³ Nagy sees the same misapplication of the title 'best' in Telemachus' words to the seer Theoclymenos at *Od.* 15.519-22, where he calls Eurymachus πολλὸν ἄριστος ἀνὴρ, 'by far the best man' as well as a god-like man who is most eager to marry Penelope. This statement is directly followed by a bird omen, which the seer interprets as a sign of the exclusive supremacy of Odysseus and his family.

(287) ὑμετέρου δ' οὐκ ἔστι γένεος βασιλεύτερον ἄλλο
ἐν δήμῳ Ἰθάκης, ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς καρτεροὶ αἰεὶ *Od.* 15.533-4

There is no family that is more kingly than yours among the people of Ithaca, but you are powerful for always.

I follow Nagy's analysis that this omen can be understood as correcting Telemachus' description of Eurymachus as the best. The comparative adjective βασιλεύτερον trumps the superlative ἄριστος and provides a reliable and coherent account of the ranking of characters in the *Odyssey*. This does not mean, however, that the title 'best' for Eurymachus is entirely misapplied and not to be taken seriously at

⁵² Cf. Russo/Fernández-Galiano/Heubeck 1992, 223-5.

⁵³ Nagy 1999, 39; cf. Hofmeister 1984, 124. The same assessment of Antinous' character underlies Penelope's rebuke of him for plotting Telemachus' death and being unkind to suppliants: unacceptable behaviour for someone who among his agemates is called βουλῆ καὶ μύθοισι ἄριστον (*Od.* 16.417-20).

all. The comparative construction in the seer's correcting statement is marked by the use of negation: οὐκ ἔστι 'there is not' and thereby plays with the as of yet real threat to Odysseus' family and lineage posed by the suitors. 'There is no family more kingly than you – or is there? – no, the power is yours, permanently.' The final words of the seer positively confirm that power will be restored in the right way, but at this point for Telemachus everything is still up in the air, he does not know yet that Odysseus is back.

Nagy does not mention that the suitors as a group are called ἄριστοι by Telemachus (*Od.* 16.251) in his catalogue-like account of the places from where they have come. Telemachus says this to warn his father that they will not be easy opponents by virtue of their nobility and strength in number. Odysseus himself repeats this observation in Book 23 because he knows that having killed them is not the end of the story. He makes Telemachus aware of the fact that someone who has killed but one man goes into exile to escape revenge from the victim's family.

(288) ἡμεῖς δ' ἔρμα πόληος ἀπέκταμεν, οἳ μέγ' ἄριστοι
κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ· τὰ δέ σε φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα *Od.* 23.121-2

But we killed the guardians of the city, who are by far the best of
the young men in Ithaca; this I urge you to consider.

The suitors' nobility poses a problem even after their death, and another plan, further action, is required to settle things in Ithaca and restore Odysseus as king without the constant threat of revenge.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The ghost of Agamemnon confirms the status of the suitors as the best men of the city as he watches them enter the Underworld (*Od.* 24.106-8). Antinous and Eurymachus together are twice called the best in virtue by the narrator, ἀρετῇ ἄριστοι, with respect to their position among the suitors as the leaders, ἀρχοί (*Od.* 4.629 and 21.187). In both cases the context is a banquet accompanied by games, that is the bow trial in the second case. The superlative adjectives draw attention to Antinous and Eurymachus' permanent characteristic of being of noble birth and distinguished according to their innate virtue, but in both cases there is another figure of authority who displays the qualities of a true and lawful leader acting as a foil to the failure of Antinous and Eurymachus at fulfilling this role. The scene of the banquet of insolent suitors in Book 4 directly follows the story of how Telemachus was entertained as a guest by Menelaus, and the second instance in Book 21 is followed by the appearance of Odysseus and his stringing of the bow.

Especially in the *Odyssey*, comparative and superlative expressions with ‘better’ and ‘best’ are expressed by characters in dialogue much more often than by the narrator.⁵⁵ The characterization of the suitors as ‘the best’ in contrast with Odysseus’ excellence in craft and trickery serves to build up tension in the narrative by reflecting the uncertainty among the characters about the if and how of Odysseus’ return and confrontation with the suitors. Their status as noble men allows the narrator to keep sowing doubt about a happy ending for Odysseus and his family, while at the same time their inappropriate behaviour foreshadows their doom. In the *Iliad*, the tension between permanent, innate excellence and its external application in a given situation is exploited for dramatic effect when a warrior who is the best succumbs to another in battle. This tension is also on display in the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, in which their eagerness to assert their innate superiority makes them forget to act in accordance with their status and valour.

Despite the many hyperbolic and traditional uses of comparative and especially superlative expressions, they are not all empty phrases devoid of real significance. Of course we must keep in mind that due to its subject matter, epic poetry is prone to exaggeration. Both the Homeric narrator and his heroes are keen to show off excellence, and both epic poems are full of situations that are all about competition and distinction.⁵⁶ The Homeric heroes are having to prove themselves constantly, be it on the battlefield, in athletic contests, in the agora, in struggles with mythical beings, when concocting plans or thwarting those of others. As Hutchinson has shown, repetition itself can attract attention, a different attention from that which is drawn to something unique, and different again from the attention paid to repeated words used in new, unexpected ways.⁵⁷ Repeated superlative expressions

⁵⁵ This is also the case in the *Iliad*, but to a lesser extent.

⁵⁶ Cf. De Jong 2006.

⁵⁷ Cf. Hutchinson 2017.

contribute to the effect of epic poetry as grand; they are a recurring reminder of how the heroic world is different from that of ‘normal’ people. At the same time, even an oft-repeated adjective like ἄριστος, when it is used in the right context, can enhance the emotional, tragic, or surprising effect of a scene.

6.3 Exploring images of the hero

After comparative and superlative constructions, we will now take a closer look at equatives, similitives, and extended similes, to explore their function within the Homeric epics. Comparisons of similarity become the more interesting the greater the difference is between comparee and standard, and between the world depicted in the narrative and that of the comparison. When the comparee and standard of comparison are specific human characters, the comparison is straightforward, in that the quality denoted by the aspect of comparison can be directly mapped from standard to comparee without any complicating factors. For example when Hector wishes for his son to become strong and excellent like himself (*Il.* 6.477-8), the audience can easily imagine that Astyanax will follow in his father’s footsteps. That there will no longer be a kingdom of Troy by the time Astyanax would be an adult complicates Hector’s wish, but not the straightforwardness of the comparison between the two.⁵⁸

The topic of this section are figurative comparisons, whose point of interest varies according to the type of standard that we are dealing with. In only lightly figurative comparisons, the standard of comparison stands for a general category of human beings, and the context in which this category is invoked makes the comparison special. When Menelaus says about Nestor that he was kind to him like a father (*Od.* 15.152), the audience is invited to transfer what they know

⁵⁸ Such straightforward comparisons do not feature here; they are discussed in Chapter 5.3.

about the relationship between a father and a son to two grown-up men. This transfer of a family relationship to two men who are kings over separate tribes makes this comparison noteworthy. Comparisons made in fighting scenes are often highly figurative: a hero is compared to an animal, a natural force, or a god. Such comparisons transfer a human character to a super- or sub-human domain. Their meaning and function are to be detected through the consideration of the tension between points of similarity and points of contrast between the hero and the natural/animal/divine world. The extended Homeric simile makes the mapping of a hero to an entity from a different world or category explicit and provides tangible points of contact, and many shorter similitive or equative comparisons can activate what is already known from longer similes.⁵⁹

Other scholars consider the shorter comparisons as ‘more basic’, or even as belonging to an earlier stratum of the poems, and the long similes as (later) expansions that add details and make the mapping of vehicle to tenor (standard to comparee) explicit.⁶⁰ The question of the diachrony of extended Homeric similes and shorter comparisons adds little to our understanding of the function of these comparisons as we find them in the Homeric epics, but approaching them in a synchronic way, i.e. by dealing with what we find in the text, we can make inferences about their interaction. Once the Homeric audience is familiar with both types of comparison, the narrative elements in a long lion simile can, but do not have to, be activated to some degree when a shorter lion comparison is made and thereby guide the audience’s interpretation. But this synchronic situation does not necessarily imply that one of the two types is older or even presupposes the other.⁶¹

Among the vast sea of literature on similes in the Homeric epics there is a wide range of approaches, from fairly narrow, thematic, and highly contextual

⁵⁹ Cf. Krischer 1971, Moulton 1977, Muellner 1990.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bowra 1961, 275-6, Lee 1964, Scott 1974, 54.

⁶¹ On the view that the short comparisons are older, cf. Edwards 1987, 102; for the opposite view, cf. Coffey 1957, 113-6.

discussions of individual similes to overarching ideas about their function as a literary, performative, and narrative device. My own approach in this section is holistic and attempts to consider the synergetic effect of the different images used in similes and shorter comparisons in the Homeric epics. As in the previous sections of this chapter, I focus on comparisons made of human characters, and since I cannot discuss each individual one, I will try to be as exhaustive as possible and provide examples, or references to examples, that represent the different types and patterns.

In the scholia the main recurring terms with which the functions of the Homeric similes are described are αὐξήσις (amplification), ἐνάργεια (vividness), σαφήνεια (clarity), ποικιλία (variation), ἔμφασις (emphasis), κόσμος (adornment).⁶² One or more of these notions can be found in most treatises on the topic; according to Coffey, for example, the similes illustrate abstract qualities, temporary and permanent psychological traits, as well as actions in their immediate narrative context. Porter's analysis focuses on the contrast, variety, change of pace, and the respite from monotonous battle scenes that similes offer. Similarly, Bowra speaks about similes as taking the hearer away from the immediate action, providing relief and respite, and illustrating a point.⁶³

The function of the simile in the process of story-telling is pointed out by Scott: "In several locations the simile was a customary alternate method of continuing the tale".⁶⁴ Moulton goes further by stating that the similes are integral to the narrative and the effect of individual passages. They are used for characterization

⁶² Cf. Snipes 1988, Nünlist 2009, 289-92. On philosophical and rhetorical theories about metaphor and simile from Aristotle to Horace cf. Innes 2003. On the history and different modes of scholarship on the simile cf. Martin 1997. Fränkel's 1921 study, though by now inevitably outdated in certain regards, remains important and influential: he initiated the shift from the sole focus on the 'Vergleichspunkt' between simile and main narrative to an appreciation of the overall effect and atmosphere which the ensemble of all parts of a simile creates.

⁶³ Cf. Coffey 1957, Porter 1972, Bowra 1961.

⁶⁴ Scott 1974, 51.

and for marking different stages in the unfolding of the narrative.⁶⁵ Apart from the function of the similes within the main narrative, scholars have also pointed out the various ways in which they differ from it. Basett summarizes different points of contrast between the material of the *Iliad* and that of the similes: he lists the time, place, and theme of the narrative content, the social status of the participants, as well as the political conditions, religious views, and emotions connected to them. These observations culminate in a difference in genre: the main narrative tells an epic story, while the similes describe sensory images in the style of lyric poetry.⁶⁶

What almost all of these approaches have in common, whether they focus on the points of contact or the contrast between similes and their narrative context, is that they either dismiss the similes as irrelevant ornament, which at best serves as a relief from all the fighting and an aid for composition-in-performance, or view them as genuinely explaining something about the action in the main narrative. It seems as though they are either mechanical tools and distractions, or crucial for helping the audience understand what is going on in the story and guiding their emotional response.⁶⁷ By now, the latter is the more dominant approach, as for example illustrated in Minchin's summary of their function:

[Homer] uses familiar scenes as explanatory models, to engage us in an assessment of what is unfamiliar to us in the world of war and to help us appreciate what is happening on the battlefield [...] or in that other realm of competitive male activity, games.⁶⁸

If this is the case, how do we explain that Homer uses similes of games (foot race and chariot race, *Il.* 22.159-66) to describe what is happening on the battlefield

⁶⁵ Cf. Moulton 1977. And further, Krischer 1971 on similes as part of the structuring of a Hero's *aristeia*, Minchin 2001 on narrative, pragmatic, and conceptual aspects, De Jong 2004 on similes and focalization, Ready 2017 on shared/traditional vs. ideolectal similes in oral poetry.

⁶⁶ Cf. Basett 1921, and further Martin 1997 on similes as 'song' vs. main narrative as 'prose' sections in performance.

⁶⁷ Cf. Halliwell's criticism of scholarship on the simile (2019, 3-5).

⁶⁸ Minchin 2001, 43.

during the showdown between Achilles and Hector? How can an activity that at one point in the epic ‘needs’ clarification through a simile be used at another point as the image that clarifies?

Comparisons of similarity are a strong stylistic and narrative tool because of the various ways in which they contrast with the main story. They enhance the Homeric epics by providing a stage for the display and negotiation of tensions on different levels: 1. between the warrior at war and more ordinary aspects of and roles in human life, 2. between human beings and the natural world, 3. between human beings and animals, 4. between human beings and gods. Each one of these types of standard of comparison in a simile or shorter comparison made of a hero reflects a vantage point, a certain way of looking at the figure of the hero in Homeric poetry.⁶⁹ Rather than viewing the hero as part of a social group, as we have seen in the case of comparative and superlative constructions, the majority of comparisons of similarity focus on an individual hero (and his opponent) or the unified mass of an army. Similes and shorter comparisons characterize a Homeric hero from distant and less straightforward angles, they engage with his special, heroic kind of humanity by showing him in the most un-human light.

6.3.1 Images from human life

When the standard of comparison is a representative of a human group, the conceptual gap between him and the warrior about whom the comparison is made is only small. The tension that such a comparison creates stems from the contrast between the activity of the warrior and that of the agent in the comparison. A domestic, peaceful, entirely un-warlike scene is used to conceptualize a brutal action in war. In example (289), the brutal and graphic way in which Achilles drives his horses over dead warriors on the battlefield is described in terms of a man yoking

⁶⁹ Cf. Halliwell’s “perspectivism” (2019).

his bulls to tread barley on a threshing floor, creating a “contrast between the life-giving harvest of domestic labour and the deadly destructiveness of warfare.”⁷⁰

(289) ὥς δ' ὅτε τις ζεύξῃ βόας ἄρσενας εὐρυμετώπους
 τριβέμεναι κρῑ λευκὸν ἐϋκτιμένη ἐν ἄλωῃ,
 ῥίμφά τε λέπτ' ἐγένοντο βοῶν ὑπὸ πόσσ' ἐριμύκων,
 ὥς ὑπ' Ἀχιλλῆος μεγαθύμου μώνυχες ἵπποι
 στειβον ὁμοῦ νέκυάς τε καὶ ἀσπίδας· αἶματι δ' ἄξων
 νέρθεν ἄπας πεπάλακτο καὶ ἄντυγες αἶ περι δίφρον,
 ἄς ἄρ' ἀφ' ἰππέων ὀπλέων ῥαθάμιγγες ἔβαλλον
 αἶ τ' ἀπ' ἐπισσώτρων· ὃ δὲ ἔτετο κῦδος ἀρέσθαι
 Πηλεΐδης, λύθρω δὲ παλάσσετο χεῖρας ἀάπτους *Il.* 20.495-503

And as when someone yokes broad-faced bulls to tread white barley on a well-made threshing floor, and swiftly it is husked under the feet of the loud-bellowing bulls, so under great-hearted Achilles his single-hoofed horses likewise trod on the dead and the shields; and with blood the entire axle was bespattered below, and the rail around the chariot, which the drops from the horses' hooves and from the wheels hit. But he rushed on to gain glory, the son of Peleus, and with gore were defiled his invincible hands.

While Achilles and the farmer are both human characters, the activities in which they and their animals are involved could not be more drastically different. Halliwell points out that in a simile “what is pictured is an experience of a familiar kind”, but this does not mean that the effect of such a simile is to create a feeling of familiarity or to act as an explanatory model for what is going on in the main narrative. Instead, “the ostensibly familiar serves as a sort of *defamiliarisation*, a provocation to ordinary habits and thoughts of perception.”⁷¹

With a similarly stark contrast and defamiliarizing effect, moments in war in which Trojans and Achaeans are attacking each other but neither side is making progress are conceptualized as the activities of reapers cutting grain (*Il.* 11.67-71),

⁷⁰ Edwards 1991, 244, who further points out possible parallels in the countless number of grain-ears and dead bodies, as well as between the forcing out of grain from the husks and the blood squeezed from the bodies. Porter talks about violent juxtaposition, the “yawning gulf” between the world or image of the simile and the context in which it appears (1972, 12). Fränkel points out that the the smooth, productive, and joyful labour in the simile highlights the eerie irony of the comparison (1921, 41).

⁷¹ Halliwell 2019, 2, emphasis original.

men with measuring rods around a landmark stone (*Il.* 12.421-6), and a woman weighing wool (*Il.* 12.432-8). Hector lifts up a stone to use as a missile as easily as a shepherd carries the fleece of a ram (*Il.* 12.451-4). Patroclus pulls a slain warrior out of his chariot as a fisherman pulls fish out of the sea (*Il.* 16.406-10). Achaeans and Trojans try to drag away Patroclus' body like people stretching the hide of a bull (*Il.* 17.389-97). A slain warrior falls off his chariot like an acrobat (*Il.* 12.385-6, 16.742-3).

In other passages, the activities described in the simile correspond more closely to what is going on in the main narrative. In such examples there is an overlap with hunting, herding, and nature similes, but here the point of reference is the human agent involved, not an animal or a natural force. The Achaean leaders, for example, marshal their armies like goatherds separating their flock (*Il.* 2.474-9). Paris is frightened of Menelaus like a man is frightened of a snake (*Il.* 3.30-7), and Diomedes of Ares like a man of a river (*Il.* 5.596-600). A warrior or a group of warriors in pursuit of their foe are described as huntsmen going after their prey (*Il.* 11.292-5, 11.413-20, 15.271-80). The Aiantes try to protect Patroclus' body from Hector like shepherds trying to protect a carcass from lions (*Il.* 18.161-4). In these types of 'domestic' simile, the levels of danger, the emotions of the agents, and the types of action are fairly similar to what is being described in the main narrative.

The simile in example (290) appears during the showdown between Achilles and Hector. It describes a scene from a dream that is not only a quintessentially human experience, but allows the narrator to focalize the perspective of both, Achilles and Hector, pursuer and pursued, at the same time.⁷²

⁷² Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922e, 17; De Jong 2012, 109: "Placing himself in the position of both Achilles and Hector, the narrator makes their feelings clear: both men feel that they are hardly moving although they are running at full speed, since the one cannot overtake the other and the other cannot escape". Fränkel 1921, 78: "Es ist wie im Traum, wo der heftigste Wille gelähmt und ohne Tat bleibt".

- (290) ὥς δ' ἐν ὀνείρῳ οὐ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν·
 οὔτ' ἄρ' ὁ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὔθ' ὁ διώκειν·
 ὥς ὁ τὸν οὐ δύνατο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὐδ' ὃς ἀλύξαι *Il.* 22.199-201

And as in a dream one man cannot pursue another man who is fleeing — nor can the one escape, nor the other catch him — so he [Achilles] could not seize him [Hector] as he was running, nor could he [Hector] get away.

Mostly outside of the immediate battle scenes we find comparisons centring around the family, human relationships, and gender roles. Women and children, for instance, frequently feature in satirical remarks or rebukes of cowardice, lack of experience in war, or foolish behaviour. While the majority of similes are spoken by the narrator, those that explicitly criticize a person are spoken by characters. The narrator tends to refrain from moral evaluations of his characters, but he does use similes to elicit emotional responses.⁷³ Patroclus is rebuked by Achilles for crying like a little girl (*Il.* 16.7-11), Aeneas does not want to argue with Achilles like women shouting at each other in the street (*Il.* 20.251-5).⁷⁴ In highly dramatic or emotional scenes we find comparisons involving family or other social relations. Achilles feels treated by Agamemnon as if he were a refugee with no rights (*Il.* 9.647-8), Achilles wails for Patroclus like a father for his son (*Il.* 23.222-5), Priam in his appeal to Achilles is compared to a fugitive homicide (*Il.* 24.480-4).⁷⁵ In the *Iliad*, Achilles is involved in these kinds of comparisons notably often, and so is Odysseus in the *Odyssey*; he is described as having been kind as a father to his people (*Od.* 2.46-7, 5.11-2), to him the sight of land is as welcome as the recovery of a sick father to his children (*Od.* 5.394-9), he wails as he listens to a song about the sack of Troy as a captive woman wails for her dead husband (*Od.* 8.521-31).⁷⁶

The similes and shorter comparisons discussed thus far do not only characterize

⁷³ Cf. De Jong 2018, 42-5.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Il.* 2.872, 8.163, 11.388-9, 13.292-3, 20.200-1, 22.124-5.

⁷⁵ Cf. Heiden 1998 for an interesting analysis.

⁷⁶ Foley 1978 illustrates the intricate ways in which gender roles are portrayed and inversed through similes in the *Odyssey*. On characterization through simile cf. De Jong 2018, 38-9.

warriors, but also reflect attitudes towards the family, gender roles, and the kind of behaviour that is expected from different groups of humans: men ought not to act like children or women, shepherds have a responsibility for keeping their flock safe, and even die-hard warriors experience fear and grief, joy and relief. They engage with humanity on a direct level, and point out the banal, matter-of-fact, side of war. Being and acting human in battle and other challenging situations characterizes the Homeric heroes just as much as the super-human aspects in similes involving animals and natural forces. The juxtaposition of calm domestic life with the brutality of battle puts into perspective what these men gave up for the sake of retrieving or keeping Helen. The actions in the main narrative are seen from the distance of a different kind of life, from the perspectives of women and children, from the point of view of encounters and activities far away from the battlefield. The simile of the dream in example (290) illustrates this distance and yet familiarity particularly well by evoking a universal human experience that is at the same time strange and intangible.

6.3.2 Images from the natural world

Elements from the natural world appear in similes and shorter comparisons in order to conceptualize the movement and attack of an army or individual warrior, the withstanding of an attack, as well as the death of a hero in battle. The image of waves of the sea, a black cloud, or a winter torrent is used to describe the magnitude of an entire army on the move (*Il.* 4.422-8, 4.275-82, 4.452-6). The sheer number of warriors in an army is compared to leaves and flowers in spring (*Il.* 2.467-8, *Od.* 9.51), and leaves and sand (*Il.* 2.800-1). A single, outstanding warrior gleams like a star (*Il.* 5.4-7, 11.61-5, 19.397-8, 22.25-32, 22.317-21), lightning (*Il.* 11.65-6, 13.242-5), or fire (*Il.* 18.207-14, 19.375-80). The force and the impact of an attack are conceptualized through images of a winter torrent (*Il.* 5.87-94), fire/flame (*Il.* 11.153-162, 13.53, 13.330-1, 17.366, 19.375-80, 20.490-4), wind/storm (*Il.* 11.297-8,

11.304-9, 12.375, 16.765-71), a rolling boulder (*Il.* 13.136-48), waves (*Il.* 15.380-9, 15.623-9, 17.263-6), sudden night (*Il.* 12.462-3), or a snowy mountain (*Il.* 13.754-5). The firmness with which a warrior withstands an attack is compared to mist (*Il.* 5.522-7), oak trees (*Il.* 12.131-6), a rocky cliff (*Il.* 15.617-22, *Od.* 17.463-4), or a wooded ridge (*Il.* 17.746-53).

In these types of simile and short comparison, there is tension on a slightly different level from the first group discussed above. There is a large conceptual gap between the human character and the element of nature that he is compared to; the comparison is highly figurative. Yet, the picture of nature painted in these similes often corresponds fairly closely with what is going on in the epic narrative. In most of the passages quoted here, there is a sense of threat coming from an overbearing power, which is paired with fear and admiration in both the simile and the main narrative. In many longer similes, points of contrast and points of correspondence are fluid and can even change as the simile progresses. Especially in crooked similes,⁷⁷ there is an imbalance between the point of view from which the simile is described and that of the main narrative. In example (291), the simile portrays a threatening image; it starts from the point of view of a goatherd who is afraid at the sight of a great black cloud moving his way.

- (291) τὼ δὲ κορυσσέσθην, ἄμα δὲ νέφος εἶπετο πεζῶν·
 ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀπὸ σκοπιῆς εἶδεν νέφος αἰπόλος ἀνήρ
 ἐρχόμενον κατὰ πόντον ὑπὸ Ζεφύροιο ἰωῆς·
 τῷ δέ τ' ἀνευθεν ἐόντι μελάντερον ἢ ὅτε πίσσα
 φαίνεται' ἰὸν κατὰ πόντον, ἄγει δέ τε λαίλαπα πολλήν,
 ῥίγησέν τε ἰδὼν, ὑπὸ τε σπέος ἤλασε μῆλα·
 τοῖαι ἄμ' Αἰάντεσσι διοτρεφέων αἰζηῶν
 δῆϊον ἐς πόλεμον πυκινὰ κίνυντο φάλαγγες
 κυάνεαι, σάκεσιν τε καὶ ἔγχεσι πεφρικυῖαι.
 καὶ τοὺς μὲν γήθησεν ἰδὼν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων *Il.* 4.274-83

⁷⁷ That is, similes in which the roles of comparee and standard of comparison are reversed or otherwise altered in the progress of the simile, resulting in a crooked relationship between the element introduced as the focus of the simile, and the element that marks the transition back into the main narrative, cf. Chapter 5.9.

They [Aiantes] were arming for battle, and with them followed a cloud of foot soldiers. As when from a lookout place a goatherd watches a cloud moving across the sea beneath the blast of the West Wind, and for him being far away it seems to be blacker than pitch as it moves across the sea, and it brings with it a great whirlwind; and he shudders as he sees it, and leads his flock into a cave; in this way, together with the Aiantes, the closely packed battalions of youths, nurtured by Zeus, moved into destructive war, dark they were, bristling with shields and spears. And upon seeing them, lord Agamemnon rejoiced.

As the simile transitions back into the main narrative, the focus shifts to the battalions of footsoldiers, *τοῖαι ... φάλαγγες*, whose movement was already described with the image of a cloud in the line directly preceding the start of the simile: *νέφος εἶπετο πεζῶν*. Directly following the simile, Agamemnon appears as an onlooker, parallel to the goatherd in the simile, but Agamemnon is glad, *γῆθησεν*, at the sight of the cloud of footsoldiers, not afraid as the goatherd is of the dark storm cloud within the simile.⁷⁸ Of the participants in this scene, namely the Aiantes, the soldiers, the goatherd, his flock, Agamemnon, and the storm cloud, only two parties show a clear correspondence: the soldiers, in the main narrative, and the storm cloud, in the simile. The sense of threat, danger, and fear created within the simile is contrasted with Agamemnon's joy in the main narrative.⁷⁹ The simile focuses on the threatening aspect of an army on the move through the image of a dark cloud and a frightened human onlooker, a perspective that fits the Trojans and their allies, but they are not mentioned in the main narrative. Agamemnon, as

⁷⁸ The goatherd has no real correspondence in the main narrative, hence I categorized the simile as a 'soldiers compared to natural force' type. Kirk focuses on the audience's experience of the simile from the perspective of the goatherd, but does not engage with its crooked structure or with the mention of Agamemnon (1985, 359-60). For Coray/Krieter-Spiro/Visser the focalizer of the simile from beginning to end is Agamemnon, and the goatherd is a secondary focalizer, providing the point of view of the frightened enemy (2017, 123). Halliwell rightly states that "the goatherd is certainly no symbolic surrogate for a Trojan leader", and he does not believe that there is a direct correspondence between the point of view of the audience and that of the goatherd (2019, 10).

⁷⁹ Taplin 2007 also speaks about the tensions between the narrative context and the image of the simile, and argues that it is precisely those similes in which this tension is strongest that are taken up in late 20th-century poetry.

onlooker, and the Aiantes, as army leaders, are the active participants in the main narrative, but they are not explicitly connected to the simile. Despite the lack of explicit connections, the interaction between simile and main narrative invites the audience to reflect on the antithetical effect of the cloud of footsoldiers: what is threatening to the attacked is exhilarating to the attackers.

The final category of nature images in similes and short comparisons that deserves attention concerns descriptions of warriors falling in battle. When a warrior dies on the battlefield, his fall is sometimes described in terms of a tree being felled (*Il.* 4.482-9, 5.560, 13.177-81, 13.389-93, 14.414-8, 16.481-8, 17.53-60). The oak tree is the one type of tree that appears in both, descriptions of a warrior falling and of a warrior withstanding an attack, and this is not the only ambivalent aspect of tree imagery. A number of tree similes for fallen warriors are followed by an account of what a craftsman might make of the wood of the fallen tree: a part of a chariot in *Il.* 4.482-9, or a ship in 13.389-93. Through the creative and cultural contribution of a craftsman, the death of a warrior is made productive. Rood even goes as far as stating a parallel between the act of a craftsman turning a tree into a permanent, useful object, and the poet creating undying glory for the fallen hero.⁸⁰ But equally, a comparison of a fallen hero to a tree can make his death more painful and tragic by stressing the effort of tending and nursing that was put into the warrior/tree by their parents/carers, as we hear in *Il.* 17.53-60 and in Thetis' lament about the fate of Achilles: *Il.* 18.56-7.⁸¹

Notwithstanding the intricacies of fallen tree similes, the overall impression one

⁸⁰ For more examples and a detailed analysis cf. Rood 2008, and Porter 1972, 14-6. Minchin focuses on the contrast between productive carpenters and the wasteful killing on the battlefield: "the target domain and the source domain are violently at odds" (2001, 40-1). Cf. the simile comparing the din of battle to the noise coming from woodcutters in a mountain glen (*Il.* 16.633-7), which according to Halliwell is to be understood "with a dissociative aesthetic that strips out the human horror of the fighting" (2019, 11).

⁸¹ A similar sentiment underlies the comparison of Astyanax to a star at *Il.* 6.401 and of Telemachus to a sapling at *Od.* 14.175; their situation is tragic because a virtuous child is left behind in a war-zone without a father.

gets from similes and short comparisons involving natural phenomena is that they are external descriptions of what happens on the battlefield, detached from any internal perspective, motivation, or feeling on the side of the comparee. A warrior attacking like fire, storm, a rolling boulder, or a raging flood simply overcomes his victims, and the only way to deal with him is hide (like the goatherd in our example), abide the onslaught (like the Achaeans when Hector attacks like a rolling boulder, *Il.* 13.136-48), or fall (like the Trojans when Agamemnon attacks like fire, *Il.* 11.153-162).⁸² The attacker is untouchable and uncontrollable during the attack, but will after a while come to a standstill, or be held back eventually. In a similar vein, warriors withstanding an attack like mist, an oak tree, or a rocky cliff are described as passive and enduring; they stand firm and unafraid, trusting in their strength.⁸³ The gulf between the image of the comparison and the human character in the story is at its largest in these types of comparisons. In Halliwell's words, "similes have their own aesthetic, and it is one in which comparison can contain within it a sort of affective dissociation."⁸⁴

6.3.3 Images from the animal world

Many (though not all) similes with animals as standard of comparison address the feelings, motivation, fear or aggression, which cause the animal/hero to act in a certain way. They often use words for human characteristics or feelings to

⁸² Cf. Krischer's observation that as a warrior prepares for battle, his armour and weapons are compared to fire, lightning, or a star only if he returns victorious (1971, 36).

⁸³ Very few comparisons with natural phenomena are made with reference to the battle between Odysseus and the suitors in the *Odyssey*. The only two extended similes of this category are about women: Odysseus compares Nausicaa's beauty and likeness to goddesses to the shoot of a palm tree (*Od.* 6.160-9), and when Penelope weeps for Odysseus her cheeks melt like snow (*Od.* 19.204-9). Antinous' eyes blaze like fire in his anger about Telemachus (*Od.* 4.662), and he is compared to black death by Penelope (*Od.* 17.500). Outside of battle scenes in the *Iliad*, nature imagery is used to describe mental processes or emotional reactions: the Greek army reacts to Agamemnon's speech with disorder and shouting like a wave hitting a headland (*Il.* 2.394-9), Agamemnon weeps like a fountain with dark water (*Il.* 9.13-6), Nestor is pondering over whether to join battle or find Agamemnon like the sea heaving with swell (*Il.* 14.16-22).

⁸⁴ Halliwell 2019, 5.

describe the animal, and thus decrease the gulf between human comparee and bestial standard. Animals and human beings both experience life and death, so the image of an animal allows the poet to explore the mortality of the hero in a simile.⁸⁵ Yet, animals are different enough from man to make for a strong figurative comparison with a host of connotations and implications. “Animals appeal to the familiar and the commonplace, and yet they are veiled in mystery. The animal is at once comprehensible and unknowable.”⁸⁶

The aspects with regard to which warriors are compared to animals in the Homeric epics are much more varied and complex than those which we saw in comparisons with elements from the natural world. In the following I will provide an overview of the types of aspect of comparison found with animal imagery applied to the heroes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁸⁷ As in the previous categories, the *Odyssey* has considerably fewer instances, and especially the long similes are of a different kind from, though in some cases reminiscent of, those in the *Iliad*. Many animal comparisons in the *Odyssey* are found in the context of the killing of the suitors and handmaids, and the deaths of Odysseus’ comrades in encounters with various mythical creatures and tribes.

The leader of an army is described as standing out among his people like a bull (Agamemnon, *Il.* 2.480-3) or a ram (Odysseus, *Il.* 3.196-8) among the herd. The eagerness with which a warrior enters into battle or performs an attack is compared to that of a lion when finding a carcass (Menelaus finding Paris, *Il.* 3.22-9), a stalled horse running free (Paris/Hector, *Il.* 6.503-16/15.262-70), wolves devouring a stag (Myrmidons, *Il.* 16.155-67). The lion wounded by a shepherd or wasps stirred to anger by boys serve as images for furious, confident warriors

⁸⁵ Cf. Lonsdale 1990, 7-11

⁸⁶ Lonsdale 1990, 13; cf. Hubbard 1983 who discusses the difference between animal and plant imagery, animate vs. inanimate elements of similes.

⁸⁷ As above, the examples given are not exhaustive but meant to give the reader an idea of types of scenes I am referring to. Complete lists of all comparisons of similarity can be found in Chapter 5.

(Diomedes, *Il.* 5.136-43, and the Myrmidons, *Il.* 16.257-67, respectively).

The image of female animals protecting their young is used to describe warriors protecting their comrades: wasps or bees defend their young against hunters (Polypoetes and Leonteus defending the gate to the Achaean camp, *Il.* 12.165-72), a mother cow stands over her calf (Menelaus standing over Patroclus' body, *Il.* 17.3-6), a lion protects her cubs from a hunter (Aias protecting Patroclus' body with his shield, *Il.* 17.132-7). A lack of protection means an easy prey for the attacker: Diomedes attacks the Thracians in their sleep like a lion attacking an unprotected herd (*Il.* 10.482-8); when Agamemnon is killing and stripping Isus and Antiphus, the Trojans are helpless just like a hind is unable to protect her fawns when they are eaten by a lion (*Il.* 11.107-21). Odysseus kills the suitors like a lion kills the fawns that a doe has put in his den (*Od.* 4.333-40 = 17.124-31).⁸⁸

When warriors are confronted with the threat of an attack, animal imagery is used to describe various reactions: withstanding or awaiting the attack, being driven back unwillingly, being driven in rout, and being defeated and/or captured: Idomeneus abides the onrush of Aeneas like a boar abiding the attack of men and dogs (*Il.* 13.471-7), Agenor awaits Achilles' attack like a leopard facing a hunter (*Il.* 21.571-82), Hector awaits Achilles in front of the Trojan wall like a serpent awaiting a man in his lair (*Il.* 22.93-7). Aias reluctantly gives way to the Trojans like a donkey that is being beaten by boys (*Il.* 11.558-69), Menelaus retreats from Patroclus' body like a lion being driven from a farmstead (*Il.* 17.108-13). The Trojans are afraid of the Achaeans like hinds in panic and flight (*Il.* 13.99-106), the Achaean youths flee from Hector and Aeneas like starlings or daws fleeing from a falcon (*Il.* 17.755-9), the Trojans flee from Achilles like locusts fleeing from fire (*Il.* 21.12-6) and like fish fleeing from a dolphin (*Il.* 21.22-6), the suitors flee around the hall in panic like cattle fleeing from the gadfly (*Od.* 22.299-301). From the

⁸⁸ Cf. a related image outside of immediate battle scenes: in his grief for Patroclus, Achilles is angry and groaning like a lion whose cubs have been stolen (*Il.* 18.318-23).

perspective of the pursuer, Hector drives the Achaeans in rout like a lion attacking cattle (*Il.* 15.630-40), and Achilles chases Hector like a dog chasing a fawn (*Il.* 22.188-93).

When defeated, the Trojans are penned up in Troy like lambs (*Il.* 8.131) or dazed like fawns and bound up (*Il.* 21.29-30); the unfaithful slave women are hung up outside Odysseus' house like thrushes or doves in a snare (*Od.* 22.468-72). After the slaughter, the victorious hero is covered in blood like a lion who has devoured a bull (Automedon: *Il.* 17.541-2, Odysseus: *Od.* 22.401-6, 23.47-8). As the slain warrior is breathing out his life, he might be writhing on the ground like a bull that is being bound by shepherds (Adamas, *Il.* 13.570-5), or bellowing like a bull that is being dragged to the altar for an offering (Hippodamas, *Il.* 20.403-6), or stretched out on the earth like a worm (Harpalion, *Il.* 13.653-5). In the *Odyssey*, the suitors are killed and heaped on top of each other like fish (*Od.* 22.383-9), and Odysseus' comrades experience pitiful deaths on their journey home: they are smashed like puppies by Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.289-90), or pierced like fish by the Laestrygonians (*Od.* 10.124).

In some cases, the similarity between the animal in the simile and the warrior in the epic story is portrayed as so close that aspects of feelings or actions that should normally only apply to the warrior, are transferred onto the animal. As if he were a warrior, the lion in example (292) is urged on by his θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ, 'proud spirit', and he is ready to kill or be killed ἐν πρώτοισι 'among the foremost'.

- (292) βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν ὥς τε λέων ὄρεσίτροφος, ὅς τ' ἐπιδευῆς
 δηρὸν ἔη κρειῶν, κέλεται δέ ἐ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
 μῆλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·
 εἶ περ γάρ χ' εὐρησι παρ' αὐτόφι βώτορας ἄνδρας
 σὺν κυσὶ καὶ δούρεσσι φυλάσσοντας περὶ μῆλα,
 οὐ ρά τ' ἀπείρητος μέμονε σταθμοῖο δῖεσθαι,
 ἀλλ' ὁ γ' ἄρ' ἦ ἥρπαξε μετάλμενος, ἠὲ καὶ αὐτὸς
 ἔβλητ' ἐν πρώτοισι θοῆς ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἄκοντι·
 ὥς ρά τότε ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα θυμὸς ἀνήκε
 τεῖχος ἐπαΐξει διὰ τε ῥήξασθαι ἐπάλλξεις

Il. 12.299-309

And he [Sarpedon] then went his way like a mountain-fed lion who has too long been in need of meat, and his heroic spirit urges him to have a go at the sheep and even enter the well-built fold. For even though he might encounter beside there the herdsmen with dogs and spears guarding the sheep, he for sure has no intent to hasten away without having tried; but either he attacks and snatches [a sheep], or he himself is hit among the foremost by a javelin cast by a nimble hand: in just this way then his spirit urged godlike Sarpedon to assail the wall and to break through the battlements.

Ready argues that these types of similes decrease the difference between the human warrior and the animal by giving the animal human characteristics.⁸⁹ Instead of focusing on the the animal as displaying human attributes, Lonsdale explores what such linguistic interaction between the epic story and the simile means for the characterization of the Homeric hero: “The creation of a lion with a manly spirit, a reasoning mind, and indomitable courage — in short, a kind of hybrid lion — emphasizes that both bestial and human appetites spur on the warrior.”⁹⁰ We find such linguistic interaction also the other way around: Odysseus, for example, is compared to a bitch barking at a man to protect her pups, and in the resumptive clause, the same verb, ὑλακτέω, is used of Odysseus to express his anger against the suitors (*Od.* 20.14-6).

The different types of animal imagery thus far discussed illustrate how such comparisons show the warrior in a more complex light than the much less animate images from the natural world. There is a more intrinsic similarity between a warrior and an animal, but not all animal similes make such links explicit. In many cases, the motivation and emotion of a warrior is expressed, if at all, only with reference to him, and plays no role in the simile. Patroclus, for example, attacks like a falcon pursuing daws and starlings (*Il.* 16.581-5), Achaeans and

⁸⁹ Cf. Ready 2011, 16-9.

⁹⁰ Lonsdale 1990, 65. Hainsworth understands the simile as clarifying “the emotional colour of the narrative rather than the action to which it ostensibly relates”. He describes the lion as “heroic”, but then misses the point when he disregards the ἐν πρώτοισι as “absurd unless it has lost its proper meaning and become an empty formula” (1993, 351).

Trojans attack each other like wolves (*Il.* 4.471-2). The vulture is often used as an image for the powerful swoop of a warrior upon his opponent, e.g. of Meriones (*Il.* 13.531-2), Automedon (*Il.* 17.459-62), or Odysseus (*Od.* 22.302-9, 24.538). These comparisons describe the action of hero and animal simply as an action, without explicit psychological insight into the actors.

That the image in a comparison need not always be exactly matched and specific is reflected in short comparisons offering two alternatives: the Argives attack like lions or wild boars (*Il.* 5.782-3, the same comparison is made of Aias and Hector at 7.256-7). In such cases, the poet seems to want to show the gist of an action without being too precise. This is also true of the simile in example (293), which is difficult to make sense of unless one accepts that illustrating how Menelaus is looking for Antilochus is more important than explicitly stating the exact correspondence between both participants of the epic story (Menelaus and Antilochus) and both animals in the simile (the eagle and the hare). Antilochus and the hare might well have the attribute of swiftness in common, but Antilochus is neither trying to hide, nor is he the victim of an attack by Menelaus.

- (293) ὄως ἄρα φωνήσας ἀπέβη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος,
 πάντοσε παπταίνων ὡς τ' αἰετός, ὃν ῥά τέ φασιν
 ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν,
 ὃν τε καὶ ὑψόθ' ἐόντα πόδας ταχύς οὐκ ἔλαθε πτώξ
 θάμνω ὑπ' ἀμφικόμῳ κατακείμενος, ἀλλὰ τ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ
 ἔσσυτο, καὶ τέ μιν ὄκα λαβῶν ἐξείλετο θυμόν.
 ὡς τότε σοὶ Μενέλαε διοτρεφὲς ὄσσε φαιινῶ
 πάντοσε δινείσθην πολέων κατὰ ἔθνος ἐταίρων,
 εἴ που Νέστορος υἱὸν ἔτι ζῶοντα ἴδοιτο.
 τὸν δὲ μάλ' αἴψ' ἐνόησε

Il. 17.673-82

So speaking then, blonde Menelaus went away, looking everywhere around him like an eagle, which, they say, has the sharpest vision of winged creatures under heaven; him, even though he is high up, the swift-footed hare does not escape as he lies hidden under a thick, leafy bush. But the eagle speeds down on him, and seizing him swiftly takes away his life. So then, Menelaus, nurtured by Zeus, your bright eyes whirled around everywhere over the band of your many comrades, if only they may see the son of Nestor still alive. And very quickly he noticed him.

In Bakker's words, "the art of the Homeric simile lies in the tendency to strain the similarity by looking for unexpected connections between the two scenes." Similes bring out the "essence" of an action, and thereby "the epic world comes alive in a surprising and revealing light."⁹¹ Hutchinson mentions this simile to illustrate that the *Iliad* is interested in different kinds of attention. He stresses the "incomparable vividness" of this passage, and the "intense scrutiny" of Menelaus' search followed by "the moment of sudden perception", and concludes that this "shows sharp awareness of some things standing out from their background."⁹² If we read this passage closely, however, the attention of both Menelaus and the eagle is focused precisely on things that at first do not stand out from their background: the hare is hidden under a thick, leafy bush, θάμνω ὑπ' ἀμφικόμω κατακείμενος, and Antilochus is somewhere in the thick of the fight, among his many comrades, κατὰ ἔθνος ἑταίρων.⁹³ Menelaus and the eagle focus their attention on something that they initially cannot see, but can suspect to be there. This is as far as the correspondence between simile and main narrative goes.

Menelaus marks Antilochus very quickly, μάλ' αἶψ' ἐνόησε, but the eagle is one step further, he has already seized the hare swiftly, ὄκα λαβών. Menelaus hopes to find his friend still alive, ἔτι ζώνοντα, while the eagle takes away the life of his prey, ἐξείλετο θυμόν. The simile makes us aware not only of the similarity between the swiftly focused attention of man and bird, but also of the differences between them: their goals stand in stark contrast to each other, as does their spatial position and movement. The eagle is high up, ὑψόθ' ἕοντα, and from there speeds down on the hare, ἐπ' αὐτῷ | ἔσσυτο, while Menelaus is on the same level as Antilochus, on the battlefield. His approach to Antilochus is horizontal, a few lines later at 684 he

⁹¹ Bakker 2001, 22; cf. Edwards 1991, 127-8.

⁹² Hutchinson 2017, 163.

⁹³ Cf. Fränkel's interpretation of the simile as illustrating "daß [Menelaus] scharf spähte, ganz Aufmerksamkeit, ganz Auge war, um Antilochus aus dem Gewimmel herauszukennen, und dann mit wuchtiger Raschheit auf ihn zu strömte." (1921, 81, my emphasis).

stands right next to him, ἀγχοῦ δ' ἰστάμενος. Menelaus in his active and anxious search is compared to an animal that does not even need to make an effort. The hare is the subject (also syntactically) that cannot escape, while the eagle only becomes a determined agent once the visual clue has reached him, and this change from passive observer to attacker is marked by the particle ἀλλά.

A further element that keeps the participants of the simile separate from those in the main narrative is the description of the eagle as having the sharpest vision of winged creatures under heaven, ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν. The eagle is distinguished among its own kind, not among all living creatures to which also man belongs. There is no mention of his inner motivation or other anthropomorphic aspects that we saw in the lion simile of example (292). The real points of contact between Menelaus and the eagle are very small, and yet the simile is highly effective. The vividness of the passage stems from the interaction of main narrative and simile, but not from a close correspondence.⁹⁴

Animal similes range between instances in which the participants in the main narrative and those in the simile can easily be mapped onto each other to instances in which not every participant in the simile has a correspondence in the main narrative. The motivations, emotions, and intentions which drive the actions of warriors can be transferred onto the animal in the simile to achieve a close identification between the hero and the beast. But animals in similes can also act in a plain way, without any drama or ornament. Such variation might be perceived as an inconsistent way of applying animal imagery, especially in comparison with the fairly consistent use of nature imagery. This inconsistency, however, reflects much more truthfully the many facets of heroic deeds and warfare. The Homeric poet explores heroism and the events in the Trojan war through the medium of

⁹⁴ Cf. Halliwell: “Similes often complicate Homeric ἐνάργεια: they do not simply contribute to or authenticate it” (2019, 10). Edwards notes that a strong contrast between the main narrative and the story in the simile “attract[s] the audience’s attention by a kind of shock effect.” (1987, 106).

images in comparisons. The images of nature conceptualize certain aspects, the grandeur of an army on the move, the splendour of the best fighters in arms, the force and inescapability of an attack, but also the steadfastness with which it can be withstood, or the suddenness with which death can come upon a hero. Animal imagery adds to these a host of other, even more complex aspects, and, more explicitly than nature imagery, highlights the ambivalent aspects of heroic ideals and warfare.

The lion is the most frequent animal in similes and shorter comparisons, and his role and characterization is by no means consistent; he can represent a multitude of facets of the hero, his strength and courage, his fury and relentlessness, but also his vulnerability. The lion is not just the brutal and bloodthirsty attacker, he sometimes acts out of pure necessity, because he needs to eat, or because he is the victim of an attack by hunters and dogs. Sometimes he is successful, sometimes he is not. In the same way, part of the engagement of the heroes in the battle around Troy stems from the realization that there is no longer a way out, that the fighting has become necessary and inescapable. In the course of the war, warriors on both sides find themselves in positions of superiority and inferiority; in some moments they are the attackers who drive others in rout, in other moments fear takes hold of them and they cannot but flee. Sometimes the lion enjoys the bloodbath he is waging and draws new strength from it, like a hero can feel empowered by his success on the battlefield. But enthusiasm can easily turn into folly and *hybris*, which tends to lead to a sad end for both the lion and the warrior. Comparisons with animals can highlight super-human abilities in warriors, but they can also show how being at war can cause a man to lose his humanity and become excessively cruel and merciless.

The killing of the suitors in the *Odyssey* is even more problematic than the fighting in the *Iliad*. Odysseus' triumph over the suitors is not glorious like an Iliadic *aristeia*, but a deed that is presented as necessary, yet barely justifiable,

and likely to have problematic repercussions for him and his family.⁹⁵ The lion similes in the *Odyssey* represent the wild and hostile forces that Odysseus has to overcome before he can enjoy the rest of his life in peace and quiet. According to Friedrich, this process is conceptualized through the sequence of lion simile — bath — artist simile in which Odysseus is transformed from a wild to a civilised man, once in Book 6 as he encounters Nausicaa and the other Phaeacians after being shipwrecked, and once after the killing of the suitors in Book 22.⁹⁶ Graziosi points out that Odysseus' elusive character is matched by the great range of animals that he is compared to.⁹⁷

Like comparative and superlative constructions, the comparisons of similarity in the *Odyssey* reflect various levels of uncertainty: many of the *Odyssey*'s extended similes are confusing, if not disturbing.⁹⁸ Odysseus as a character is difficult to grasp, to see, to recognize: he spends a lot of his 'stage-time' in disguise, his success in his *nostos* and his regaining of authority are constantly presented as up in the air. He fails as a leader by losing all of his companions and waging war on his own people. "By turns a comic character, a tragic hero, a stoic sage, and a villain, Odysseus could never, and cannot yet, be pinned down."⁹⁹

But the single warrior who experiences and displays the complexities of the heroic persona to the most extreme degree is Achilles. He features in a striking number of similes and comparisons that engage with the positive, but especially

⁹⁵ Cf. Nagler 1990 for a discussion of the ways in which the narrator of the *Odyssey* deals with this central problem of the poem: how to confront and justify the fact that Odysseus has to kill his own people. For the role of Telemachus in the re-establishment of authority and the justification of the *mnesteroiphonia* cf. Gottesman 2014. Bakker 2013 points out the parallels between Odysseus and Achilles in their morally questionable *aristeiai* (150-6).

⁹⁶ Cf. Friedrich 1981. Sluiter 2014 makes a similar argument about the narrative function of fish similes in the *Odyssey*. Bakker 2013 highlights the difference between the two lions: the hungry and needy one in Book 6 vs. the one who has glutted himself with blood in Book 22 (155). Grethlein adds that Odysseus as gluttonous lion in *Od.* 22.402-6 is paralleling Achilles as scavenger and reckless lion in *Il.* 22.346-7 and 24.39-43 (2017, 130-1).

⁹⁷ Cf. Graziosi 2019, 75-6.

⁹⁸ Cf. Moulton 1977, 126-34; Glenn 1998.

⁹⁹ Graziosi 2019, 84.

the negative, tragic aspects of war. The conflict with Agamemnon makes Achilles reflect on his role in the Trojan war and the lack of benefit he receives from being engaged in it. In one of the few extended similes in direct speech, Achilles compares himself to a mother bird who sacrifices herself by bringing all the food she can gather to her chicks while she herself is starving (*Il.* 9.321-7). Achilles' wrath about the lack of respect with which Agamemnon treated him makes him disregard the distress in which the Achaeans are as the Trojans are advancing to the ships. He has no pity for his fellow warriors, only for himself.¹⁰⁰ Patroclus appeals to the good core that is hidden under Achilles' wrath and receives his consent to lead the Myrmidons into battle in Achilles' place. Patroclus' subsequent death illustrates the folly and cruelty of war; he need not have died, if he had only come back when Achilles asked him to, but the thrill of battle gets the better of him. Achilles grieves for him like a lion whose cubs have been stolen (*Il.* 18.318-23), and later on, after he has taken his revenge and buried Patroclus, he weeps like a father for his dead son (*Il.* 23.222-5).

The need to avenge Patroclus' death causes Achilles to temporarily lose all humanity and become bestial in the meanest way. He engages in a mad fighting frenzy and captures twelve young Trojans as a human sacrifice for Patroclus. In his confrontation with Hector, he not only threatens Hector that he will leave his body to be devoured by scavengers, but expresses the wish to become mad enough to take active part in the scavenging and eat Hector's raw flesh: αἰ γὰρ πῶς αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη | ὥμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι 'if only my fierceness and spirit would drive me to tear off your raw flesh and eat it' (*Il.* 22.346-7). Without making an explicit comparison, Achilles is speaking about himself as a scavenger. In his final interaction with Hector he shows no trace of decency or

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rynearson 2013 on Achilles as a singular and superior, incomparable and irreplaceable warrior for whom other, lesser warriors are being sacrificed.

humanity, “he loses his heroic stature and becomes something less than a man.”¹⁰¹ Instead of allowing the Trojans to bury him, Achilles ties Hector’s body behind his chariot and drags him around Patroclus’ tomb. Like his wrath about Agamemnon’s misdeed, his grief about Patroclus’ death is extreme. The actions that follow his emotional reaction are beyond measure to the extent that Apollo complains to the other gods about Achilles’ impious treatment of Hector’s body and uses a lion simile to make his point.

(294) ἄλλ’ ὀλοῶ Ἀχιλῆϊ θεοὶ βούλεσθ’ ἐπαρήγειν,
 ὧ οὔτ’ ἄρ φρένες εἰσὶν ἐναΐσιμοι οὔτε νόημα
 γναμπτόν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι, λέων δ’ ὡς ἄγρια οἶδεν,
 ὅς τ’ ἐπεὶ ἄρ μεγάλη τε βίη καὶ ἀγήνορι θυμῷ
 εἶζας εἶσ’ ἐπὶ μῆλα βροτῶν ἵνα δαῖτα λάβησιν·
 ὡς Ἀχιλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς
 γίγνεται, ἢ τ’ ἄνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἠδ’ ὀνίνησι Il. 24.39-45

But destructive Achilles you gods are willing to help, when his heart is neither righteous, nor the intent in his breast bendable; but like a lion he knows only cruelty, a lion who, giving in to his great might and heroic spirit, comes on to the sheep of men to get himself a meal; so Achilles has lost his mercy and feels no shame, which both harms and profits men greatly.

As in example (292), human characteristics are transferred to the lion, but this time in a negative light: “the lion ‘gives in’ to his strength and pride because he represents the man who is the enemy of other men.”¹⁰² Even after Hector’s death and Patroclus’ burial, Achilles can find no closure. He dwells on his anger and maims Hector’s body until the gods step in and allow Hermes to escort Priam to the Myrmidon camp so he can ransom his son from Achilles. And even towards Priam, an old man who comes as a suppliant, Achilles initially can barely restrain his temper; his reaction to Priam’s appeal to get Hector back is abrasive and threatening, like a lion (*Il.* 24.559-72), but eventually he calms and treats Priam

¹⁰¹ Lonsdale 1990, 85. Cf. Faust 1970, 24; De Jong 2012, 147 and 126; Grethlein 2017, 133-4.

¹⁰² Macleod 1982, 91. Cf. Brügger 2009, 34-6.

with the due respect.¹⁰³

After Patroclus' death and at moments when Achilles is not engaged in battle, he is characterized as both, a caring father/mother figure and a ruthless animal. Thetis, aware of Achilles' fate, laments him as if he were already dead while at the same time comparing him to new life.¹⁰⁴ Achilles, the central character of the *Iliad* is poised between life and death, humanity and inhumanity. The comparisons made about him conceptualize and highlight these extremes, but how do we as the audience or the readers experience Achilles' character? Is it possible to determine how exactly the images evoked through comparisons inform our understanding of Homeric characters?¹⁰⁵

Minchin discusses the short comparison of Achilles to a lion in his encounter with Priam, and argues that at the basis of the audience's processing of Achilles' — vis-à-vis the lion's — threatening demeanour lies the visualisation of a full-blown picture of the lion: "The salient features of the lion — his four paws, his reddish mane, his sharp teeth — are important in that they hold its image in our mind's eye."¹⁰⁶ Since the physical appearance of a lion is never mentioned in the extended similes, it seems more economical to assume that human imagination works with a more sketchy visualisation that focuses on the action, intention, and behaviour of the lion.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, by virtue of being so contradictory, the

¹⁰³ Cf. Brügger 2009, 199-204.

¹⁰⁴ A young sprout (*Il.* 18.56) and a sapling (*Il.* 18.437). Her view of the situation is effectively summarized in an epithet for herself: δυσσαρπιστοτόκεια 'unhappy mother of the noblest son' (LSJ s.v.), or should we read 'mother of a most noble but doomed man'? Cf. Edwards 1984, 78-80; Coray 2016, 39. Cf. Muellner on Achilles' epithet ὠκύμορος as meaning 'whose path towards death is quick/quickest' (2020, 99).

¹⁰⁵ Fränkel's brief analysis of this simile, though capturing its overall effect, shows a primitivistic attitude to Homeric characters: "Der Sänger wollte nicht mehr die grausame, triebhafte Rohheit und Leidenschaft des Gewaltmenschen verherrlichen. Wenn er Achilleus durch Apollons Mund unter dem Bild eines Löwen zeichnen läßt, legt er eine offenbare Gehässigkeit hinein: er malt Achilleus als viehischen, allen feineren Empfindungen, aller Sitte, Ordnung und Anpassung unzugänglichen Menschen [...] Freilich hat dieser Sänger seinem Achilleus dann doch die eigene Gesinnung geliehen; aber nur als eine weiche Stimmung, die für jetzt die Härte seines eigenen Wesens überlagert." (1921, 70).

¹⁰⁶ Minchin 2001, 35-6.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. the 'enactive' approach taken by Grethlein/Huitink 2017, which is based on cognitive

comparisons made of Achilles at the climax of the *Iliad* do not culminate in a consistent account of Achilles' character that guides the understanding, emotional response, sense of familiarity, attention, and pleasure of the audience.¹⁰⁸ Rather, these comparisons complicate the audience's understanding of Achilles, they create mixed feelings, a sense of unfamiliarity and uncertainty. Grethlein argues that after the death of Patroclus — though one may say even before that, since the conflict with Agamemnon — Achilles is an ambivalent heroic model and in a liminal state: divine and bestial at once.¹⁰⁹ He remains unpredictable, and even an audience who knows that Priam will return home safely with Hector's body cannot but feel anxious on his behalf when he goes to face Achilles.

6.3.4 Gods in figurative comparisons

The majority of figurative comparisons with human comparees is made by a third party, most of the time by the narrator, occasionally by another character. Such comparisons regard an action or characteristic of a hero that is instinctive and impulsive, something that he is not at that point reflecting on himself. Human characters are often not entirely in control over their actions, they act according to the situation they find themselves in. They certainly have no control over the application of a comparison to their actions, nor are they aware of it, except for the very few cases in which someone makes it to their face or about himself.¹¹⁰

This is very different when gods are the subjects of figurative comparisons. As already mentioned in Chapter 5.4, there is an ongoing debate among Homeric

research that refutes the 'mind's eye' approach in Minchin 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. the functions of similes that Minchin lists (2001, 32-3).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Grethlein 2017, 133-4.

¹¹⁰ De Jong stresses that "comparisons and similes made by the NF₁ [primary narrator-focalizer, or, in simplistic terms, the poet] reach the NeFe₁ [primary narratee-focalizee, or the audience] only, the characters remaining unaware of the fact that they are compared to, say, a lion. In other words, comparisons and similes are no events on the level of the fabula, they are *interpretations* of events, belonging to the story and text only" (2004, 125, emphasis original). She illustrates this with two examples on p. 125-6.

scholars whether comparisons of gods to animals or natural phenomena are to be understood as real transformations or as narratorial comments on their modes of action. There are cases in which a given scene is much easier to imagine if a real transformation took place, for example when Athene sits on the roofbeam of Odysseus' palace like a swallow at *Od.* 22.239-40. Other cases might be simply a description of a mode of action, like comparisons made about human characters.

Comparee	Standard	Reference
Athene	star from Zeus mother sweeping fly from child falcon bird sea eagle breath or air craftsman swallow	<i>Il.</i> 4.75-9 <i>Il.</i> 4.130-3 <i>Il.</i> 19.350-1 <i>Od.</i> 1.319-20 <i>Od.</i> 3.371-2 <i>Od.</i> 6.20 <i>Od.</i> 6.232-5, 23.159-62 <i>Od.</i> 22.239-40
Apollo	night falcon child playing in the sand	<i>Il.</i> 1.47 <i>Il.</i> 15.237-8 <i>Il.</i> 15.361-6
Thetis	mist falcon	<i>Il.</i> 1.359 <i>Il.</i> 18.616
Ares	darkness from a cloud after heat storm	<i>Il.</i> 5.864-7 <i>Il.</i> 20.51
Iris	snow or hail lead weight	<i>Il.</i> 15.170-2 <i>Il.</i> 24.80-2
Poseidon	hawk	<i>Il.</i> 13.62-5
Hypnos	mountain bird	<i>Il.</i> 14.289-91
Hera	thought of a man	<i>Il.</i> 15.80-3
Hephaestus	North Wind drying orchard	<i>Il.</i> 21.346-9
Artemis	dove fleeing from falcon	<i>Il.</i> 21.493-6
Hermes	cormorant	<i>Od.</i> 5.50-4
Ino	sea mew	<i>Od.</i> 5.337, 5.351-2
Hera and Athene	doves	<i>Il.</i> 5.778
Athene and Apollo	vultures	<i>Il.</i> 7.58-60

Table 6.1: Gods in figurative comparisons

Table 6.1 lists the shorter comparisons and extended similes made about the Olympian gods, but does not include comparisons in the form of compounds, since an adjective like βωῶπις ‘cow-eyed’ or ποδήνεμος ‘wind-footed’ undoubtedly expresses an abstract characterization and not a transformation.

Instead of trying to adduce more evidence for one of the two positions, I suggest approaching comparisons made about gods from a different perspective, namely by asking how they differ from the same kinds of comparisons made about human beings. When gods take on the shape or mode of action of animals or natural phenomena as they move from one place to another and achieve certain goals, the gods are in full control over their action and the comparison. For the purpose of their journey or goal, they consciously choose to embody the swiftness, ease, elegance, or power of a falcon, hawk, cormorant, wind, or hail. When a god acts like an animal, there is no danger of unwanted consequences, of losing control, crossing boundaries, or suffering tragic effects.

Even comparison compounds in epithets, or other comparisons that are more likely to be a comment by the narrator than a mode of action consciously chosen by the god, are free of negative connotations. When Athene is compared to a mother or a craftsman, or Apollo to a child, the image conveyed is of the ease, lightheartedness, and mastery with which the gods engage in battle and other human affairs.¹¹¹ The one real exception to this might be the comparison of Artemis to a dove fleeing from a falcon when she is being rebuked and hit in the face by Hera as if she were a naughty child. This is a conflict among the gods, without any human participants or onlookers, and Artemis is the victim of reproach and ridicule. She is not in control of the situation and vulnerable, though on a very different level and with much lighter consequences than when a human warrior is faced with a superior opponent in battle.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Cf. Griffin 1980, 188-9; Janko 1994, 267; Coray/Krieter-Spiro/Visser 2017, 68.

¹¹² Cf. Richardson 1993, 95.

6.3.5 The god-like warrior

The similes and shorter comparisons discussed thus far mostly concern the temporary characterization of a hero; they illustrate a momentary action, the behaviour or attitude of a person in the narrower or wider context of their occurrence. They do not normally refer to a permanent character trait as we saw it in the case of most superlative expressions and, as we will see, in the majority of comparisons of a hero to a god. This is neatly illustrated in the encounter between Achilles and Priam discussed earlier. Achilles' bestial behaviour may well expand over a considerable amount of time within the story of the *Iliad*, but it is nevertheless temporary and triggered by specific events. Once Achilles has calmed down, Priam gets the chance to look at him carefully and observe some other, more permanent characteristics.

(295) ἦτοι Δαρδανίδης Πρίαμος θαύμαζ' Ἀχιλῆα
 ὄσσοσ ἔην οἷός τε· θεοῖσι γὰρ ἄντα ἔφκει·
 αὐτὰρ ὁ Δαρδανίδην Πρίαμον θαύμαζεν Ἀχιλλεύς
 εἰσορόων ὄψιν τ' ἀγαθὴν καὶ μῦθον ἀκούων Il. 24.629-32

Then indeed the son of Dardanus, Priam, admired Achilles, how great he was and what kind of a man; for he resembled the gods in his countenance. And Achilles in turn admired Priam, son of Dardanus, beholding his noble appearance and listening to his story.

At the climax of their encounter, Priam and Achilles find a calm moment to observe and respect each other.¹¹³ Priam admires the beautiful and impressive physical appearance of Achilles, which stands in contrast with his cruel and impious behaviour prior to this scene. Achilles is the hero that is most often compared to a god, and the fact that his mother is a goddess is frequently addressed in the course of the *Iliad*.¹¹⁴ But next to him, there is a great number of other characters that are

¹¹³ Cf. Ameis/Hentze 1922e, 140; Macleod 1982, 142; Brügger 2009, 222-3.

¹¹⁴ And, as Graziosi points out: "At the beginning of the *Iliad*, Achilles behaves very much like an insulted deity." His wrath and revenge parallel that of a god, Apollo, in Book 1 (2019, 47).

compared to gods on one or several occasions. In the majority of comparisons of a human character to a god, the direct relevance of the comparison to the narrative context is implicit, if not altogether lacking.

Compounds meaning ‘god-like’ are used like epithets to accompany the name of a warrior, often in lists or genealogies. In 90% of these instances there is no obvious relevance of the comparison to the narrative context. In the remaining 10%, contextual relevance is not made explicit either, though in these cases the hero referred to as god-like does something especially brave or laudable, which may explain the use of this epithet in context.¹¹⁵ Euryalus, for example, is called *ἰσόθεος*, ‘god-like’, when he is the only one brave enough to face Epeius in the boxing contest, but his likeness to a god is not connected to his action or courage explicitly (*Il.* 23.677). But in general, these compounds and even some of the short comparisons discussed below behave exactly like Vivante describes the Homeric epithet, namely as expressing a quality intrinsic to the idea of the noun it modifies, “unsubjected to the particular requirement of the action at a certain point, [...] perceived for what it is, [...] irrelevant to the narrative occasion.”¹¹⁶

The situation is a little different with the other syntactic types: the particle construction tends to be used with a full verb, which does indicate the aspect with regard to which a character is like a god. According to my analysis, in 80% of these comparisons, there is contextual relevance. When adjectives/adverbs or verbs are used to mark the standard of comparison, there is no clear contextual relevance in about 50% of cases, while in the other 50% there is either explicit or at least inferable contextual relevance (as it is the case with example (295) above). Whether or not a comparison is contextually relevant strongly depends on the narrative environment. Warriors who are mentioned in genealogies or short stories

¹¹⁵ Whether or not one includes *θεῖος* and *ἀρήμιος* in these numbers barely makes a difference to the percentage.

¹¹⁶ Vivante 1982, 13.

explaining how someone acquired an important object are often characterized by an epithet-like comparison, as for example when the narrator recounts that Odysseus received his famous bow and a quiver with arrows from a man called Iphitus:

- (296) δῶρα τὰ οἱ ξεῖνος Λακεδαίμονι δῶκε τυχήσας
 Ἴφιτος Εὐρυτίδης, ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισι *Od.* 21.13-4
 They were gifts that a friend gave him [Odysseus] when he came
 across him in Lacedaemon, Iphitus, son of Eurytus, who was like
 the immortals.

But Iphitus' god-like character is not further elaborated, nor explicitly connected to an event in the narrative digression. The half-verse ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισι is a formula fit for a warrior regardless of the context in which it occurs.

The four extended similes with divine standards, however, all include explicit reference to their contextual relevance. This is not surprising, since the narrative digression in a simile usually provides explicit points of contact between the image in the simile and the main narrative. Two of the four similes occur in a battle scene and have Ares as their standard of comparison (*Il.* 7.206-13, 13.298-305), one compares Agamemnon to Zeus (*Il.* 10.3-10), and the other Nausicaa to Artemis (*Od.* 6.101-9). The similarity between these human characters and the gods arises from a specific, momentary action, and thereby the similes stand in contrast with the majority of shorter comparisons to gods, which describe a permanent characteristic of a person. Because compounds form the largest group of comparisons of human beings to gods, followed by comparisons marked by adjective or adverb, around 70% have no contextual relevance.

That relatively few comparisons show contextual relevance may also be linked to the fact that they are most often made to an unspecified god, or to 'the immortals'. Human characters are barely ever compared to specific gods, only Ares appears fairly frequently as an image for a hero in battle. This makes sense given that these comparisons happen in a context of war, but it also makes sense on another level: Ares is a fairly new deity, probably not initially an anthropomorphic

god at all, but rather the deification of destruction, terror, battle. When a warrior is compared to Ares, he is compared to the spirit of war, i.e. to abstract qualities more so than to a full-blown divine personality.¹¹⁷ The phrase Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος ‘equal to Zeus in counsel’ appears six times in the *Iliad* with reference to Odysseus and Hector. Agamemnon is compared to Zeus on two occasions, in example (297) below, and in a simile. Hector wishes to be immortal and ageless, and honoured like Athene and Apollo, and I have already mentioned the four similes with specific gods above, but otherwise concrete deities are only mentioned in comparisons of female characters with goddesses.

In total, 52 different human characters are compared to gods in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Of those, ten are female and 42 are male. Among the male characters are six that are not mentioned by name: ‘the Trojans’, ‘the narrator’, ‘a man’, ‘a herdsman’, ‘Nausicaa’s brothers’, ‘a Trojan warrior’, and among the female characters one: ‘Agamemnon’s daughter’. Two of the female characters are compared to gods more than twice: Nausicaa (4x) and Helen (3x). Of the male characters, six are compared to gods on more than two occasions: Achilles (18x), Odysseus (19x), Hector (11x), Meriones (7x), Patroclus (5x), Diomedes (4x). In the majority of cases, the same character is compared to a god only once or twice; in four cases, two characters are mentioned together as a pair (Sarpedon and Glaucón, Castor and Polydeuces, Aeneas and Idomeneus, Telemachus and Peisistratus).

Comparisons of heroes to ‘the gods’ are very frequent, but at the same time very vague, and as such reminiscent of superlative expressions describing heroes as ‘the best’ without further qualification. In that sense they are less figurative than the other comparisons of similarity discussed in this chapter, and fulfil a different function. They are less vivid than, say, a lion simile, because they refer to the

¹¹⁷ Cf. Willi 2014, 215-6 (fn. 13), Burkert 1985, 169. Ares as ‘the spirit of war’ is probably also what is meant when Nestor encourages Agamemnon to go around the camp of the Achaeans ‘to rouse keen Ares’, ἐγείρομεν ὄξυν Ἄρηα (*Il.* 2.440).

status of a warrior instead of his actions.¹¹⁸ It does not really matter to which god a warrior is compared when the goal is to characterize him as super-human in a universal sense. But comparisons of heroes to gods are not only a way of asserting their superiority, they also remind the audience of one central theme of the Homeric epics: the relationship between the human and the divine, and the special status of the hero as belonging to an earlier, better generation of man. The heroes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belong to a stage in the history of mankind that is half-way on the decline from more god-like to just human. They can do things that normal men cannot, such as lift and use certain weapons or other exceptionally big and heavy items, and they act as role-models for later generations.¹¹⁹

The second half of Book 2 of the *Iliad* is concerned with displaying the magnitude of the Achaean armies, the sheer number of warriors and their prime heroes, followed by an account of the Trojan army and their allies. After the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles and the upheaval caused by Agamemnon's failed test of the army's morale, the leaders of the Achaeans offer sacrifices to the gods and get ready for battle. Right before the catalogue of ships begins, Agamemnon's prowess and superiority are highlighted through a comparison of him to three different deities at once, followed by a simile likening his outstanding position among the Achaeans to that of a bull among a herd of cattle.

(297) (...) μετὰ δὲ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
 ὄμματα καὶ κεφαλὴν ἴκελος Διὶ τερπικεράυνῳ,
 Ἄρει δὲ ζώνην, στέρνον δὲ Ποσειδάωνι Il. 2.477-9

and among them lord Agamemnon, his eyes and head like Zeus
 who delights in thunder, his waist like Ares, and his chest like
 Poseidon

Agamemnon as the leader, and thereby the best, of the largest army ever to be seen represents the culmination of royalty and heroism. He is the only hero whose

¹¹⁸ Cf. Grethlein/Huitink 2017.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Griffin 1980, 81-3; Clarke 2004, 80.

physical appearance is compared to three gods at the same time, and this is the only time that a hero is compared to Poseidon.¹²⁰ This comparison and its context draw a striking amount of attention to Agamemnon and restore him as the excellent and unquestioned leader figure that he failed to be in Book 1 and the first half of Book 2.

But being god-like, just like being the best, does not save the hero from the most human aspect of his nature: his mortality. A comparison to the immortals gives the (impending) death of a hero a heightened sense of tragedy and illustrates the inescapability of death.¹²¹ When the plan for Patroclus' engagement in battle as a substitute for Achilles starts taking shape in Book 11 of the *Iliad*, he is ἴσος Ἄρηϊ, 'equal to Ares' (*Il.* 11.604). Patroclus will lead the Myrmidons and be the best of the Achaeans, he will bring them support and new hope. He will win himself glory by killing Sarpedon, but inextricably linked to all this is his own doom: κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἀρχή (*Il.* 11.604).¹²² Patroclus' likeness to Ares is reiterated in the description of his extraordinary deeds of war, closely followed by a general comparison to the gods.

(298) Πάτροκλος δὲ Τρωσὶ κακὰ φρονέων ἐνόρουσεν.
 τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε θεῶν ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηϊ
 σμερδαλέα ἰάχων, τρὶς δ' ἐννέα φῶτας ἔπεφνεν·
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος,
 ἔνθ' ἄρα τοι, Πάτροκλε, φάνη βιότοιο τελευτή *Il.* 16.783-7

But Patroclus rushed upon the Trojans, plotting evil. Three times then did he rush on like swift Ares, shouting terribly, and three times he killed nine men. But when he rushed on for the fourth time like a god, then and there for you, Patroclus, the end of your life revealed itself.

¹²⁰ Cf. Brügger/Stoevesandt/Visser 2010, 139. Kirk comments that the word ζώνη for a man's waist is rather unusual, and understands "gaze and height" for ὄμματα καὶ κεφαλὴν since he finds it "a powerful and extravagant idea that he resembles the god in 'eyes and head', literally: a unique phrase". (1985, 165-6).

¹²¹ Cf. Griffin 1980, 84-5.

¹²² Waanders suggests translating κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἀρχή as "was *developing* into the beginning of evil for him" since "the omniscient narrator sees that this action initiated Patroclus' doom" (2000, 276, my emphasis).

The end of Patroclus' life is initiated by a blow from Apollo, followed by a strike from Euphorbus, and finalised by Hector.¹²³ Both his (initial) success and his defeat in battle happen according to the will of Zeus. It was even beyond Patroclus' fate to get this far in his attack, display god-like excellence and win glory, thus there was no other possible consequence than that he would pay for it with his life.¹²⁴

Comparisons with gods are especially rich in implications when a hero crosses a boundary, when he acts beyond his own status or fate. Diomedes does this in an even more flagrant fashion when he keeps attacking Aeneas, even though he knows that Apollo is protecting him:

- (299) Αἰνεΐα δ' ἐπόρουσε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης,
 γινώσκων ὃ οἱ αὐτὸς ὑπείρεχε χεῖρας Ἀπόλλων,
 ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἄρ' οὐδὲ θεὸν μέγαν ἄζετο, ἴετο δ' αἰεὶ
 Αἰνεΐαν κτεῖναι καὶ ἀπὸ κλυτὰ τεύχεα δῦσαι.
 τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων,
 τρὶς δέ οἱ ἐστυφέλιξε φαιρινὴν ἀσπίδ' Ἀπόλλων·
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος,
 δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας προσέφη ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·
 “φράζεο, Τυδεΐδη, καὶ χάζεο, μηδὲ θεοῖσιν
 ἴσ' ἔθελε φρονέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον
 ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.”
 ὣς φάτο, Τυδεΐδης δ' ἀνεχάζετο τυτθὸν ὀπίσσω,
 μῆνιν ἀλευάμενος ἑκατηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος Il. 5.432-44

But on Aeneas rushed Diomedes, good at the war cry, knowing that Apollo himself was holding his hands over him; but he then had no regard for the great god, but was ever eager to slay Aeneas and despoil him of his glorious armour. Three times did he leap on him, desiring to kill him, and three times did Apollo strike him hard on his shining shield. But when he charged at him for the fourth time like a god, then with a terrible shout the far-shooter Apollo spoke to him: “Consider, son of Tydeus, and give way; do not be tempted to think like the gods, since not at all alike are the race of immortal gods and that of men walking on the ground.” So he spoke, and the son of Diomedes backed off a little, avoiding the wrath of the far-shooter Apollo.

¹²³ This time, Patroclus does not realise that he is facing Apollo, and cannot escape the blow of the god. At *Il.* 16.698-711 Patroclus, in his attempt to break through the Trojan wall, has already encountered Apollo, but recognized him and escaped his wrath.

¹²⁴ Cf. Janko 1994, 410-1; Brügger 2016, 328-31.

Diomedes attacks δαίμονι ἴσος, ‘like a god’, and is immediately rebuked by Apollo, who reminds him of the fact that humans and gods are not at all equal. In his attempt to fight against a god, Diomedes is going too far. He acknowledges the superiority of the god just in time and manages to escape the bitter consequences that he would have suffered otherwise.¹²⁵

Comparisons of Homeric heroes with gods range from the mere designation of an innate characteristic in an epithet or another non-contextually relevant expression to highly dramatic descriptions of individuals acting (too much) like gods and thereby incurring reproach or death. These different kinds of likenesses to the gods represent yet more facets and tensions in the image of the Homeric hero. Clarke points out the two extremes in which a hero can find himself when his super-human side takes over:

More-than-human *menos* is characteristic in different ways of gods and wild beasts: in this sense the raging warrior is poised between two extremes, and [...] his movement can be articulated either as an impossible aspiration to divine glory or as a descent towards the reckless and self-destructing fury of a flesh-eating animal.¹²⁶

6.4 Conclusion

My analysis of all comparisons made of the heroes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* shows that the situation is not as binary as Clarke’s statement might lead us to believe. Aspiration to divine glory is by no means only positive, nor are all comparisons to

¹²⁵ Cf. Kirk 1990, 106-7; Kearns 2004, 72-3. Apollo reiterates the comparison of Diomedes to a god in his complaint to Ares: αὐτῶι μοι ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος ‘me myself he attacked like a god’ (*Il.* 5.459) Cf., in contrast, Diomedes’ earlier attack on a deity, Aphrodite, knowing that he could dare fight against her since she is a weak goddess and not of the kind that engage in battle, not an Athene or an Eneuο: γινώσκων ὃ τ’ ἀναλκις ἔην θεός, οὐδὲ θεάων | τάων αἶ τ’ ἀνδρῶν πόλεμον κάτα κοιρανέουσιν, | οὔτ’ ἄρ’ Αθηναίη οὔτε πτολίπορθος Ἐννώ (*Il.* 5.331-3), as confirmed by Athene and Zeus at *Il.* 5.421-30. In his later attack on Ares Diomedes is supported by Athene (*Il.* 5. 827-63). In response to it Ares makes the same complaint to Zeus that Apollo had made earlier (*Il.* 5.884 = 5.459).

¹²⁶ Clarke 2004, 81.

animals about recklessness and self-destruction. The great wealth of images used to describe the Homeric hero represents the complexity of his role in the epic stories. He has a special relationship with the gods in that he is at the same time like them and incomparable to them. His actions are sometimes reminiscent of the behaviour of a wild animal, be it predator or prey, and sometimes of a domestic animal, and both of these can characterize him in a positive or negative sense. The overtones with which animal comparisons are made can be admiring, compassionate, reproachful, derogatory, or simply neutral. Nature imagery highlights the immense power and splendour which an entire army or a single distinguished warrior displays. The forces of nature do not have an agenda or a will of their own, they show that there are moments in war that defy human control. The Homeric hero is above, beneath, and in the very centre of human nature. His humanity characterizes him as much as his super- and sub-human qualities.

Bowra describes the Homeric simile as an aid to navigating the epic story; its aim is not to compare every aspect of an entity or action, but to point out what is important: “[Homer] helps us to select from a complex experience what is really essential and central.”¹²⁷ I would rather conclude that the Homeric simile and all other comparison types discussed in this chapter make the epic story *more* complex. Even the expression of a comparison itself can be made more complex, for example through the negation of one of its parts, which in turn has an effect on the audience’s processing of the story: negated comparisons activate alternative scenarios and play with the expectations of the audience. Comparative and superlative constructions highlight the innate status and ability of a hero, often in contrast with his actions and the fate that he is allotted. Figurative comparisons point out the many and often contradictory facets of the Homeric hero.

Comparisons on the one hand emphasize what is heroic about heroes by poin-

¹²⁷ Bowra 1961, 276.

ting out their status within society and the expectations connected to this. Especially comparative and superlative constructions confirm what we already know or expect about the different characters in the Homeric epics. Most similes and shorter comparisons of similarity, on the other hand, describe the heroes and their actions as they are perceived. The various perspectives that the images from the human, the natural, and the animal world provide complicate the audience's perception of the hero. They interrupt the flow of the narrative and impose a moment of distance.

Familiar images become unfamiliar in a context that contrasts with them, and our knowledge of the heroes as heroes is affected by the unfamiliarity of familiar images. The heroes are shown in a different light, which leads the audience to perceive them in a way that may upset their expectations or contradict their opinion. This effect is further increased when the images used to describe a hero stand not only in contrast with the narrative context in which they appear, but also with each other. Homer's comparisons are a crucial aspect of what makes his poetry art, and their effect corresponds with what Shklovsky describes as the function of art:

And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Shklovsky 2017, 9.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study has examined all the syntactic types in which comparatives, superlatives, and similatives/equatives appear in the Homeric epics. It has distilled the semantic and pragmatic patterns underlying them, and defined the typical characteristics of each kind of comparison. On the basis of the semantic and pragmatic features of comparisons, their rhetorical and narrative effects have been tested, and a new angle has been developed from which to interpret the function of the Homeric similes.

Chapter 2 has outlined different general linguistic views on comparisons, and taken a syntactic, semantic, and cognitive approach to understanding what comparisons are and how they work. Given the lack of studies exploring all kinds of comparisons at once, a lot of emphasis was put on the distinction between comparatives, superlatives, and comparisons of similarity. Furthermore, it has been shown that the limited scholarship on comparisons of similarity in general, and on comparison compounds in particular, lacks a well-defined theoretical framework. This work aims to contribute to this field both on the level of general linguistics and for ancient Greek in particular. The categories and generalizations described here can be applied to written and spoken, formal and informal language, and will hopefully be useful to syntacticians, semanticists, and cognitive linguists alike.

On the basis of the theories outlined in Chapter 2, Chapters 3 to 5 have focused on providing the reader with a typological account of the comparisons found in Homeric Greek. I have described the wealth of syntactic and semantic characteristics found in each kind of comparison, and identified which syntactic constructions are typical and which are unusual. The synchronic evidence of the Homeric epics as presented here suggests that there are no strict grammatical rules governing expressions of comparison in early Greek. The syntactic constructions with which comparisons can be expressed are relatively varied and free, but there are patterns of usage, as for example in comparative constructions: a particle is used to mark the standard of a comparative construction almost only if the case or lexical strategy cannot, or at least not straightforwardly, be applied.

Most linguistic studies of comparisons are limited to complete comparisons. This work shows that a considerable number of comparative and superlative constructions lack an explicit standard of comparison or scope. Recognizing and investigating this fact contributes to a more complete picture of the difference between comparatives and superlatives. Superlatives, according to my conclusion, are not 'real' comparisons. Instead, they highlight the special status of one individual and juxtapose it with the other members of its kind. The scope of a superlative construction contributes much less to the characterization of the comparee than the standard of a comparative or similitive/equative construction. Comparatives and comparisons of similarity express a relationship between two specific entities or concepts. In most comparative constructions, these entities are of the same kind or category, while in most comparisons of similarity an entity of one kind is compared to something considerably different: most similitives and equatives in Homeric Greek are figurative.

In phonology and morphology, historical linguists are used to situations in which a synchronic irregular pattern or paradigm can be explained as a rule-governed development from a regular one. The assumption of such developments

underlies many historical approaches to comparisons, but in view of the results presented in this study, such an analysis is questionable. Strunk, for instance, claims with reference to certain old paradigms of positive, comparative, and superlative forms based on the same root: “Das sind also Ausdrucksparadigmen, die nicht nur für ihre eigene voreinzelsprachliche Herkunft, sondern auch für die einer grammatischen Dimension derartiger Steigerungstypen zeugen.”¹ The majority of suppletive paradigms over regular ones in what is regarded the oldest forms of comparatives and superlatives (in $-\iota\omega\nu$ and $-\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$), and the almost exclusively regular paradigms of the newer formation (in $-\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ and $-\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$), rather suggest a lack of an early grammatical status and PIE origin of comparison paradigms. While there are positive, comparative, and superlative forms of adjectives in Homeric Greek, it is difficult to establish to what extent they were perceived as forming a paradigm. In a similar vein, we need to revise Lujan’s statement that “in Homer most uses of superlatives in $-\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ are as relative superlatives, while in later Attic it is regularly used as both absolute and relative”.² According to my analysis, only 49% of all Homeric superlatives in $-\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ are undoubtedly relative, and at least 30% are clearly relative. If anything, the Homeric evidence suggests that superlative forms have always been used for both, the expression of complete superlative constructions and relatives.

One may be tempted to think that the most typical comparison expresses the aspect with regard to which two things are similar or different with an adjective. From a linguistic and a stylistic point of view, adjectives are the ideal word class for this job: they typically refer to properties, and can thereby describe and conceptualize, add colour, vividness, and character to an entity and to the story in which that entity is involved. In view of the linguistic form and literary impact of Homeric comparisons, this idea needs to be adjusted: nouns, and especially verbs,

¹ Strunk 1977, 11.

² Lujan 2019, 333.

play a very important role in comparisons. More often than expected, the richest comparisons are centred around actions. When comparisons are not directly connected to the action of the scene in which they appear, they characterize a hero in more general terms, with reference to his social standing or innate abilities. Often, such comparisons stand in contrast with the action of the comparee, and thereby attract attention and create emotional, ironic, or tragic moments. Chapter 6 has illustrated the various effects of comparatives, superlatives, and similatives/equatives on the development of the epic story and its characters. In hybrid comparisons these effects are heightened through the combination of two comparison types into a single expression that attracts even more attention than a ‘normal’ comparison.

Comparatives and superlatives denote a dissimilarity of similar things, and similatives/equatives pose a similarity of dissimilar things. The power of Homer’s comparisons lies in the cross-combination of elements that are familiar, similar, equal, and those that are unfamiliar, dissimilar, unequal. Homer uses comparatives and superlatives to express differences between characters, who, on the whole, are actually fairly similar to one another. Such comparisons have the greatest effect when they contrast with their context or the expectations of the audience. Similarly, the more familiar and directly comparable the image of a simile is, the more it tends to clash with its narrative context. The natural phenomena and animals that appear in Homeric similes are at the same time shockingly different and intriguingly similar to the characters to whom they are applied. Similes make a story and its characters more complex by drawing their effect “aus der Ungleichnis des Gleichen wie aus der Gleichnis des Ungleichen.”³ I hope that my work will inspire scholars to look at comparisons not just as an aid to communication and interpretation, but as devices that make literature art by complicating and defamiliarizing its audience’s experience.

³ Musil 1930, 227-8.

Chapter 8

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8.3 Literary studies

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