

*Like a god vs. god-like*  
 Making sense of the syntactic variety  
 of similitive expressions in Homer

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## 1 Similitive expressions in Homer

### 1.1 Terminology

(1)	<i>Achilles</i>	<i> fights</i>	<i> like</i>	<i> Ares</i>
	Comparee	Aspect	Marker	Standard of comparison

### 1.2 Syntactic types of similitive expressions

#### Marker is particle

(2)	<i> theòs</i>	<i> d'</i>	<i> hòs tíeto</i>	<i> démōi</i>
	god.NOM.SG	PTCL	like honour.3SG.IPF.PASS	people.DAT.SG
	‘He was honoured <b>like</b> a god by the people.’ ( <i>Il.</i> 13.218)			

#### Marker is verb (participle)

(3)	<i> nūn dè</i>	<i> theoĩsin</i>	<i> éoikas,</i>	<i> hoĩ</i>	<i> ouranòn</i>
	now	PTCL	gods.DAT.PL	<b>resemble.2SG.PF</b>	who.NOM.PL
	<i> eurùn</i>	<i> ékhousi.</i>		heaven.ACC.SG	
	broad.ACC.SG	hold.3SG.PRS			
	‘But now <b>you resemble</b> the gods, who hold broad heaven.’ ( <i>Od.</i> 16.200)				

#### Marker is adjective (adverb)

(4)	<i> autàr épeit'</i>	<i> autōĩ</i>	<i> moi</i>	<i> epéssuto</i>	<i> daĩmoni</i>	<i> ĩsos.</i>
	PTCL	then	self.DAT.SG	1.DAT.SG	rush.3SG.IPF	god.DAT.SG
	<b>equal.NOM.SG</b>					
	‘But then upon me myself he rushed <b>equal</b> to a god.’ ( <i>Il.</i> 5.459)					

#### Marker is case

(5)	<i> Hermiόνēn,</i>	<i> hē</i>	<i> eĩdos</i>	<i> ékhe</i>
	Hermione.ACC.SG	who.NOM.SG	appearance.ACC.SG	have.3SG.IPF
	<i> khrusēs Aphrodītēs</i>			
	<b>golden.GEN.SG Aphrodite.GEN.SG</b>			
	‘Hermione, who had the appearance <b>of golden Aphrodite.</b> ’ ( <i>Od.</i> 4.14)			

**Marker is unexpressed**

- (6) *pántes d' en khroì pēkhthen arēithóōn*  
 all.NOM.PL PTCL in flesh.DAT.SG fix.3.PL.AOR.PASS Ares-swift.GEN.PL  
*aizēōn.*  
 youth.GEN.PL  
 ‘All [my arrows] are fixed in the flesh of youths swift as Ares.’ (*Il.* 8.298)

**Explicit aspect of comparison**

- (7) (*ē toi mèn tóde kalòn akouémen estìn aoidoũ | toioũd'*)  
*hoĩos hód' estí, theoĩs'*  
 such.REL.3.NOM.SG DEM.3.NOM.SG be.3SG.PRS god.DAT.PL  
*enalígkios audén.*  
 resembling.NOM.SG **voice.ACC.SG**  
 ‘(Indeed this is a good thing to listen to such a singer,) the kind that this man is, resembling the gods **with regard to his voice.**’ (*Od.* 9.3-4)

**Implicit aspect of comparison**

- (8) *hò d' épeita metēúda isótheos phós.*  
 3.NOM.SG PTCL then speak.among.3SG.IPF god-like.NOM.SG man.NOM.SG  
 ‘But then he spoke among them, the god-like man.’ (*Il.* 23.569)

**Extended similes**

Comparee	Standard	Narrative Context	Reference
Aias	Ares	Aias entering into battle	<i>Il.</i> 7.206-13
Agamemnon	Zeus	Agamemnon unable to sleep	<i>Il.</i> 10.3-10
Meriones & Idomeneus	Ares & Phobos	M. & I. entering into battle	<i>Il.</i> 13.298-305
Nausicaa	Artemis	Nausicaa being noble and brave	<i>Od.</i> 6.101-9

**2 The concept of time stability**

more time stable		less time stable
nouns	adjectives	verbs
concepts	properties	events/actions
denote		describe

Actions tend to be more temporary than concepts, and thus within a narrative discourse, a higher degree of verbality means a lower degree of time stability and greater power to drive the narrative forward.

- (9) *A wild horse ran across a field until it came to a river. There it stopped to have a rest and a drink.*

### 3 Comparisons in narrative context

What role does the comparison play within its context, how does it interact with the unfolding of the narrative? Is it part of what drives the narrative forward?

#### 3.1 The role of word class and time stability

–	driving force in narrative	+
comparison involving nominal structures		comparison involving verbal structures

#### 3.2 The narrative environment

There are a number of environments in which comparisons refer to general characteristics or appear as metrically convenient ornaments:

- Lists and genealogies
- Non-restrictive relative clauses
- Epithets
- Formulaic passages: speech introductions, offerings, meals, arrivals/departures, address

- (10) *tōn mèn Odusseùs ērkhe Diì*  
 3.GEN.PL PTCL Odysseus.NOM.SG be.leader.3SG.IPF Zeus.DAT.SG  
*mētìn atálan̄tos.*  
 counsel.DAT.PL equal.NOM.SG  
 ‘Of them Odysseus was the leader, equal to Zeus in counsel.’ (*Il.* 2.636)

Comparisons count as driving the narrative forward when the effect of the comparison plays an active role in the story.

- (11) (*aĩpsa d’ hetaĩron heòn Patroklēa proséceipe*  
*phthegksámenos parà nēós; hò dè klisíēthen akóúsas*)

*ékmolen*                      *ĩsos*                      *Árēi,*                      *kakoũ*                      *d'*                      *ára*  
 come.forth.3SG.AOR like.NOM.SG Ares.DAT.SG evil.GEN.SG PTCL PTCL  
*hoi*                      *pélen*                      *arkhē.*  
 3.DAT.SG become.3SG.IPF beginning.NOM.SG

‘(Immediately he [Achilles] spoke to his comrade Patroclus, calling him from beside the ship; and he, hearing from the hut) came forth like Ares, and for him that was the beginning of evil.’ (*Il.* 11.602-4)

## 4 Distribution of comparison types

### 4.1 Compounds

Compound type	Interaction with narrative context					
	No			Possibly		
<i>god-like</i>	(26   20)	46	94%	(3   0)	3	6%
<i>like-god</i>	(37   33)	70	90%	(5   3)	8	10%
<i>Ares-swift</i>	(3   0)	3	100%	–	–	0%
<i>theĩos</i>	(16   41)	57	97%	(1   1)	2	3%
<i>arēios</i>	(16   3)	19	70%	(8   0)	8	30%

### 4.2 Other syntactic types

Syntactic type	Interaction with narrative context								
	No			Possibly			Yes		
Particle	(3   3)	6	20%	–	–	0%	(11   13)	24	80%
Adj/Adv	(32   8)	40	52%	(7   5)	12	16%	(14   11)	25	32%
Verb	(3   3)	6	46%	–	–	0%	(3   4)	7	54%
Case	(0   1)	1	100%	–	–	0%	–	–	0%
Simile	–	–	0%	–	–	0%	(3   1)	4	100%

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