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First Similes in Epic*

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EXTENDED SIMILES ARE PARTICULARLY AT HOME IN HEROIC EPIC, SO MUCH so that they are surprisingly rare in other genres, such as lyric or elegy; as we shall see below, they are also very rare in archaic didactic, although they later become more common in that genre.¹ If similes are a marked feature of heroic epic, then the first similes in epic are themselves particularly marked. The programmatic nature of the first simile in Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.148–53) has often been commented upon, as an emblem of restoration of order after chaos which generates a set of expectations for the rest of the poem. I shall argue that the iconic nature of the initial simile sequence is a feature of epic that goes back to Homer's *Iliad*, and continues well past Virgil. In general, the first similes in epic are programmatic for the cosmos of the whole poem, for they present an icon of the relationship between human beings and the natural world, which in turn gives us an icon of the poem's relationship between order and disorder, chaos and harmony. These icons are an ideal,

* I gave a first version of this paper an embarrassingly long time ago, at the Triennial meeting of the Roman and Hellenic Societies in July 1988, and also at the Literature Seminar of the Classics Faculty at Cambridge in that year. Since then the problem has been on my mind, and I was glad to have the opportunity to revisit and rethink it for the APA Convention in Chicago, and for the Corpus Christi College Classics Society later that month. For feedback and advice of various kinds I thank Philip Hardie, Stephen Harrison, Nicholas Horsfall, and Antony Smith, who gave a valuable presentation on the *Aeneid*'s first simile to a seminar in Oxford in Hilary Term, 2014. All translations are my own.

¹ Brunner 1996: 354–55; von Glinski 2012: 83; Feeney 2013: 73–74. On didactic, see Gale 1994: 102: “The use of extended ‘Homeric’ similes is ... rare in surviving didactic, with the exception of Lucretius’ model Empedocles and his imitators Virgil and Manilius.”

like all icons, and there are many ways in which these first programmatic moments turn out to have a degree of slippage and lack of fit, as is characteristic of similes in general.² A study of the first similes in an epic can shed light on a range of narrative techniques and thematic concerns that carry through the poem as a whole.

I. HOMER'S *ILIAD*

We begin with the first first similes in epic, in Homer's *Iliad*. The very first similes in the *Iliad* are not developed, although they generate considerable condensed power. As Apollo comes down Mt. Ida in response to the prayers of his priest, Chryses, in order to shoot his arrows at the Achaean host, "he went like night" (ὁ δ' ἤτε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς, *Il.* 1.47): since he has been called Φοῖβος, "bright/radiant," only four lines before, the oxymoronic power of the comparison to night is chilling.³ A second undeveloped simile soon follows, in the description of Agamemnon's anger at the speech of Calchas, when "his eyes were like shining fire" (ὄσσε δέ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντι ἔϊκτην, *Il.* 1.104); and a third is used to describe Thetis emerging "quickly from the grey sea like a mist" (καρπαλίμως δ' ἀνέδυ πολιῆς ἀλός ἤϋτ' ὁμίχλη, *Il.* 1.359).

It is only in the second book, with the poem's fourth simile, that we meet a developed simile of the classic type, the first one in the poem, as the movement of the Achaeans to Agamemnon's assembly is compared to the movement of bees going out to gather nectar (*Il.* 2.87–93):

ἤϋτε ἔθνεα εἴσι μελισσάων ἀδινάων,
 πέτρης ἐκ γλαφυρῆς αἰεὶ νέον ἐρχομενάων·
 βοτρυδὸν δὲ πέτονται ἐπ' ἀνθεσιν εἰαρινοῖσιν·
 αἰ μὲν τ' ἔνθα ἄλις πεποτήγεται, αἰ δὲ τε ἔνθα·
 ὡς τῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ νεῶν ἀπο καὶ κλισιάων
 ἠϊόνος προπάροιθε βαθείης ἐστιχόωντο
 ἰλαδὸν εἰς ἀγορῆν·

As the tribes of dense-flying bees go from a hollow rock, constantly coming on a-fresh; they fly in clusters on the spring flowers; some fly in throngs this way, some that; so the many tribes of the Achaeans from the ships and huts, in front of the deep beach, filed in companies to the assembly.

There are many lines of approach into this rich simile, but for the purposes of the present argument we shall concentrate on how the simile may be read

² Feeney 2013: 81–82.

³ My thanks to Simon Hornblower for not letting me overlook the impact of the half-line similes.

as an emblem of social cohesion.⁴ Homer creates a meticulous parallelism between the organization of the bees and of the Achaeans. The simile concentrates on the group organization of the bees, as the context concentrates on the organized subgroups which make up the larger mass of the Achaeans. The bees are grouped in ἔθνεα, “tribes” (87), as are the Achaeans themselves (91); they fly βοτρυδόν, “in clusters” (89), and ἄλις, “in throngs” (90), while the Achaeans move in στίχοι, “files” (ἔστιχόωντο, 92) and ἴλαι, “companies” (ἰλαδόν, 93).⁵ Now, the action of the simile may appear to be saying the opposite of the context, in that the bees are leaving a central point and going in diverse directions, while the Achaeans are coming from diverse directions to a central point. In fact, the two actions of simile and context supplement each other to achieve a harmonious reciprocity, which reinforces in narrative terms the thematic import of the comparison. The bees and the Achaeans are subgroups making up a larger unity as they jointly create a cyclical pattern of leaving the central point and then returning; the narrative shows the Achaeans gathering to a central point, and the simile shows them dispersing from it.

Bees to the ancients were the archetypal social animal, and comparisons between human and bee society were frequently made. Hesiod makes emblematic use of the social paradigm of the bee in the single simile in the *Works and Days*, which compares the lazy man to a drone, sitting at home and doing no work (303–6); in the *Theogony*, there are only three similes, one of which also has a comparison to drones, this time of the woman (594–601).⁶ The ancient world’s most striking development of the bee/human analogy is in Virgil’s Fourth *Georgic*, which draws on long-standing poetic, philosophical and scientific traditions.⁷ The honeybees have remained a multivalent and

⁴ Interesting and full discussion in Polleichtner 2005: 116–21, although I disagree that “swarming” in the technical sense is at issue, rather than a picture of dense groups leaving the hive and then thinning as they fan out.

⁵ Noted by Leinieks 1986: 10.

⁶ The *Theogony*’s only other developed simile says that the earth melted like smelted tin or iron as a result of the thunderbolt’s fire gushing out of the stricken Typhoeus (861–64); a hyperbolic analogy in the war between gods and Titans comes close to simile (700–5: the din of the conflict was “as if Earth and wide heaven above came into contact,” ὡς εἰ Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανὸς εὐρύς ὑπερθε/πίλνατο, 702–3). It is no coincidence that the great battles of the *Theogony* generate quasi-epic moments of simile or analogy: compare the density of similes in the section of the Hesiodic *Aspis* that contains the set-piece combat between Heracles and Cycnus (Hunter 2006: 87, referring to 374–79, 386–92, 402–12, 421–23, 426–32, 436–40). Otherwise, in the *Theogony* there is only one half-line simile (Phaethon is “a man like the gods,” θεοῖς ἐπιείκελον ἄνδρα, 987).

⁷ Thomas 1988: 1.175 and Mynors 1990: 278 provide orientation for Virgil’s use of the bee analogy, and its background: note esp. Dahlmann 1954 and Griffin 1979.

keenly contested emblem of human society ever since, and I recommend the engaging work of Wilson 2004 as a fine introduction to the long history of the bees as a microcosm of human society. To her survey of subsequent literary expressions of the image, including especially the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (I.ii.192–208), I would add only two personal favorites: the satirizing of the whole conceit of the comparison by the work-shy lawyer Eugene Wrayburn in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65: Book 1, Chapter 8), together with Tolstoy's three-page comparison of the abandoned city of Moscow to a queenless hive in *War and Peace* (1869: Volume 3, Chapter 20). The political force of the analogy is still alive, to judge by the fascinating study of the entomologist T. D. Seeley. Entitled *Honeybee Democracy*, his book explains for the first time the precise means by which swarming honeybees reach a "decision" about where to find a new site for a hive, and draws explicit lessons from their behavior for how human beings should reach decisions at all levels of society.

The comment of the ancient scholiasts on our first simile certainly shows a high degree of interest in the social force of the comparison (AbT 2.87):

ἔθνεα· πρὸς τοὺς εἰκαζομένους Ἑλληνας, ἐπεὶ σμήνεα ἔδει. πρώτη δὲ αὕτη παραβολὴ τῷ ποιητῇ. συγγενὲς δὲ ποιητικῇ τὸ ζῶον διὰ τὸν μόχθον καὶ τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὴν σύνθεσιν τοῦ κηρίου. ἡ μὲν οὖν φαλαγγιδὸν γινομένη πρόοδος εὖ ἔχει· ὠπλισμένα τε κέντροις εἰσίν, ὑπήκοοι τε καὶ αὐταὶ εἰσι καὶ ἐπ' ἔργον ἔξιασιν, οὐχ ὡς αἱ γέραννοι, φιλάλληλοι τέ εἰσι μεταβαίνουσαι τε πολλὰς ἀρχὰς πτήσεως ποιοῦνται.

Tribes: with regard to the Greeks who are the object of comparison, since it should have been "swarms." This is the poet's first simile. The creature is at home in poetry through hard work, sweetness and the construction of honeycomb. The way the procession happens in phalanxes is good: for they are armed with stings, they are subjects too [like the Achaeans] and they go out to work, not like the cranes (cf. 3.3–7), they are fond of one another and as they change course they make many starts to their flight.

The scholiast picks up on the way that Homer has accentuated the identification of the tenor and the vehicle by describing the bees with the word ἔθνεα, "tribes," since this is a human word, not a bee one.⁸ After noting that the simile is the first one in the poem and then throwing in some more or less

⁸"Tenor" and "vehicle," coined by Richards 1936, are not ideal words to describe the terms of a simile or metaphor, but we seem to be stuck with them. In the simile "Hector is like a lion," for example, "Hector" is the tenor and "lion" is the vehicle.

random possible connections between bees and poetry, he homes in on the social organization aspect of the comparison, finding numerous points of contact between the behavior of the bees and the Achaeans. He also makes a distinction between the industrious bees to whom the Achaeans are compared and the feckless cranes who illustrate the behaviour of the Trojans and their allies at the beginning of Book 3: the later comment on the bird similes concerning the Trojans and their allies disparagingly claims that “the similes fill out the gappy/uncoordinated nature of their march” (τὸ μέντοι διάκενον τῆς πορείας ἀναπληροῦσιν αἱ παραβολαί, b 3.2). In fact, in Book 2 the Achaeans are also compared to cranes (and geese and swans, 2.459–65), but our scholiast glosses over this as part of his usual philhellene bias, and he presses on, in that same comment at the beginning of Book 3, to mark what he considers the paradigmatic nature of the initial simile applied to each side: “Homer fixes the nature of both armies and does not depart from their characterization right to the end” (ἀμφοτέρως δὲ τὰς στρατιάς διατυποῖ καὶ μέχρι τέλους οὐκ ἐξίσταται τοῦ ἥθους, b 3.2).

The scholiast, however skewed his perspective, is clearly responding to something important in the bee-simile when he focuses on its programmatic social significance, and his modern counterparts likewise remark on the way that the first simile introduces the concept of the Achaean host as an organized and ordered group, setting up a progress that eventually leads in to the organization of the Catalogue of the Ships some four hundred lines later.⁹ The markedly iconic nature of the bee-simile is even more apparent on a rereading of the poem, because it transpires that there is no other bee-simile in the *Iliad*: the initial bee-simile is a programmatic singleton, presenting an ideal picture of the Achaeans’ cohesion and order.¹⁰ Given that the massive and disparate Achaean host gathered at Troy represents a scale of organization completely beyond the actual experience of the poet and his audience, it should not surprise us that the poet stamps this remarkable human gathering with an iconic simile from the archetypal social unit of the natural world.

Nonetheless, you have to have one eye shut to read this initial bee-simile as an entirely satisfying emblem of cohesion among the Achaeans, since the background for the opening assembly is precisely the absence of Achilles and

⁹ Leinieks 1986: 10–11; Hardie 2010: 18; Elmer 2013: 86–104.

¹⁰ The closest Homer later comes to a second bee simile is at *Il.* 12.167–72, when Asios complains that Polypoetes and Leonteus will not give ground, “like wasps flexible about the middle, or bees” (ὡς τε σφήκες μέσον αἰόλοι ἢ ἔ μέλισσαι, 12.167): note that the participle in the simile that describes the insects as “waiting” (μένοντες, 12.169), is masculine, like the wasps, not feminine, like the bees.

the Myrmidons. The latent failure of the idealized simile to correspond to the social reality is immediately brought out into the open by the host's chaotic response to Agamemnon's "test," in which he tries out their morale by suggesting that they should all immediately return home, leaving Troy untaken (2.139–41). The pattern of confused and potentially catastrophic action that follows is punctuated by a linked chain of similes taken from the natural world in chaos: eventually, order will be restored, but the ability of the organism to preserve its power to function will have been severely tested.¹¹ This chain of similes has an immense impact on the later epic tradition, particularly on Virgil's *Aeneid*, for the similes depict the turbulent movements of the Achaean host in terms of the effect of violent storm-winds on the sea.¹²

As soon as Agamemnon has finished the speech in which he deceitfully suggests that they all return home, there is a double simile comparing the chaos of the Achaeans' response to the turmoil caused by the impact of violent winds on sea and land (2.144–50):

κινήθη δ' ἀγορῆ φη κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης, πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο, τὰ μὲν τ' Εὐρός τε Νότος τε ῶρορ' ἐπαΐξας πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελῶν. ὡς δ' ὅτε κινήσῃ Ζέφυρος βαθὺ λήϊον ἐλθῶν, λάβρος ἐπαιγίζων, ἐπὶ τ' ἠμύει ἀσταχύεσσιν, ὡς τῶν πᾶσ' ἀγορῆ κινήθη· τοὶ δ' ἀλαλητῶ νῆας ἔπ' ἐσσεύοντο ...	145 150
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The assembly was stirred like the great sea-waves of the Icarian sea, which the East wind and the South wind have set in motion, dashing upon them from the clouds of father Zeus. And as when the West Wind coming stirs a deep field of corn as it rushes on it, blustering, and the field bends to it with its ears of corn, so was their whole assembly stirred. They rushed with a yell to the ships ...

These five lines of comparison remarkably condense three of the most conspicuous "crowd symbols" of Elias Canetti's list: "The Sea," "Corn," and "Wind."¹³ Hera sends Athena to stop the stampede (2.155–65), telling her to "check each man with your gentle words" (σοῖς δ' ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν ἐρήτυε φῶτα ἕκαστον, 164); but Athena chooses Odysseus as her surrogate, repeating to him the

¹¹ Elmer 2013: 86–104 is an excellent account of how Book 2 as a whole courts chaos in the process of reasserting an overall consensus.

¹² For accounts stressing the importance of seeing the chain of nature similes as a connected sequence, see Moulton 1977: 38–42; Leinieks 1986; Ready 2011: 127; Elmer 2013: 101.

¹³ Canetti 1962: 80–81 ("The Sea"), 85 ("Corn"), 86 ("Wind").

words Hera had used to her, “check each man with your gentle words” (180). Odysseus takes Agamemnon’s scepter (2.185–86), and he follows Athena’s advice for each king or outstanding man he meets (188–89), but each man from the people that he sees and finds yelling he hits with the scepter and upbraids (198–99), saying (203–5):

οὐ μὲν πως πάντες βασιλεύσομεν ἐνθάδ’ Ἀχαιοί·
οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη· εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω,
εἷς βασιλεύς ... 205

In no way will we all be kings here, we Achaeans: it’s not a good thing to have lots of leaders; let there be one leader, one king.

Odysseus’s actions and words have their effect, and the Achaeans immediately pour back to the assembly with another simile of a great movement of the sea, in the fourth developed simile of the poem (2.207–10), a simile which matches and responds to the simile of wind and sea that marked their initial chaotic departure from the assembly at 2.144–46¹⁴:

ὥς ὃ γε κοιρανέων δίεπε στρατόν· οἱ δ’ ἀγορήνδε
αὐτίς ἐπεσεύοντο νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων
ἤχη, ὥς ὅτε κύμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
αἰγιαλῷ μεγάλῳ βρέμεται, σμαραγεῖ δέ τε πόντος. 210

So he, acting as leader, brought the army into order; and they rushed back again to the assembly from the ships and huts with a noise, as when a wave of the much-resounding sea booms on the long beach, and the sea roars.

It is striking that Odysseus is acting as the κοίρανος here (κοιρανέων, 207), just after he has said that there ought to be only one κοίρανος—by implication, Agamemnon. The ideal of single rule that Odysseus espouses is being subtly undermined by his own action, yet the ideal is to some extent recuperated by the only other use of the verb to describe a human being in the *Iliad*, when it is used of Agamemnon as he inspects the Achaean contingents (ὥς ὃ γε κοιρανέων ἐπεπωλεῖτο στίχας ἀνδρῶν, 4.250): it is Odysseus’s rescuing of the expedition that will eventually make it possible for Agamemnon to act as the κοίρανος whom he failed to embody in Book 2.¹⁵

¹⁴ For the links between these two similes in particular, see Kirk 1985 on 2.144–46; Ready 2011: 127. Note also the echo in line 208 here, marked by αὐτίς, “again,” of the language that described the Achaeans’ first movement to the assembly, after the bee-simile (νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων, 2.91 and 208).

¹⁵ See Kirk 1985 on 2.207 for the link with 4.250 (he notes that the verb is elsewhere used only of the god Ares, 5.284).

This whole opening template of the *Iliad*, with its reception in scholarship and political philosophy, is going to be of great importance for the opening sequence and first simile of Virgil's *Aeneid*; likewise crucial for Virgil will be the opening sequence and first simile of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, which are themselves in dialog with Homer's patterns. Yet Homer's *Odyssey* is worth our consideration before we rejoin the mainstream of epic patterns of order and chaos, since its presentation of the iconic opening moments of comparison is intriguingly different from the *Iliad*'s portrayal of human organization against a backdrop of natural patterns.

II. HOMER'S ODYSSEY

Even allowing for the fact that the *Odyssey* is under four fifths the length of the *Iliad*, it is still striking that the *Odyssey* has but one third as many similes as the *Iliad*, and that only one third of the *Odyssey*'s similes are "developed," as compared to some three fifths of the similes in the *Iliad*.²⁰ There are certainly any number of memorable developed similes in the *Odyssey*, but the difference between the two poems is tangible, and one aspect of this difference is to be seen in the distinctive way in which the later poem sets out to deploy the theme of comparison.

There are a number of half-line similes to begin with in the *Odyssey*, just as there are in the *Iliad*. In response to the kind advice of Athena, disguised as Mentos, the fatherless Telemachus says s/he has spoken "like a father to his child" (ὥς τε πατήρ ᾧ παῖδ' *Od.* 1.308). This apparently almost throwaway remark will prove to have great programmatic resonance as the poem develops²¹: addressing the assembly in Ithaca, Telemachus once more uses a fatherly analogy, saying that Odysseus was to them "gentle like a father" (πατήρ δ' ὥς ἦπιος ἦεν, 2.47); Mentor shortly thereafter uses the same language to describe Odysseus (2.234), as does Athena in the "second" council of the gods (5.12).²² Next, Telemachus is "like a god to look upon" as he goes to the Ithacan assembly

which "has been seen by some modern scholars as related to the famous [contest] for the armour of Akhilleus at his own funeral games, which led to Aias' suicide."

²⁰ Moulton 1977: 117, drawing on D. J. N. Lee 1964: 3.

²¹ Podlecki 1971: 81–82; Moulton 1977: 141.

²² The only other occurrence of ἦπιος in the poem is when Menelaus uses it to describe to Telemachus his relationship with Nestor at Troy (15.152). As with the comparisons with gods, discussed immediately below, Menelaus—Telemachus's surrogate father-figure—is the only character who breaks into the connected similes which create the charmed circle of Laertes, Odysseus, and Telemachus.

(θεῶ ἑναλίγκιος ἄντην, 2.5). This theme, too, will develop as the poem goes on, with repeated formulae tracking each other to link together, above all, the family of Odysseus. Telemachus is once again compared to the immortals (ἔκ ρ' ἄσαμίνθου βῆ δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος, 3.468), as are he and Pisistratus, the son of Nestor (γενεῆ δὲ Διὸς μεγάλοιο εἶκτον, 4.27), then Menelaus (4.306–10 = 2.1–5), Odysseus (θεοῖς ἑναλίγκιον, 19.267; ἔκ ρ' ἄσαμίνθου βῆ δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος, 23.163 = 3.468, of Telemachus) and, climactically, Laertes, recognized as being θεοῖς ἑναλίγκιον ἄντην by his son in the poem's penultimate simile (24.371 = θεῶ ἑναλίγκιος ἄντην, 2.5 [Telemachus], 4.306 [Menelaus], θεοῖς ἑναλίγκιον, 19.267 [Odysseus]). Even these brief touches, then, are marking crucial themes—the paternity of Odysseus and the links between the generations of the royal family on Ithaca. But by the end of Book 3 we have not yet had a simile of more than half a line.

Book 4 is key to the theme of comparison, although we still have to wait a considerable time to meet the first developed simile. As Telemachus and Pisistratus walk through the palace of Menelaus, “there was a radiance as of the sun or the moon through the high-roofed house” (ὡς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης/δῶμα καθ' ὑπερεφές, 4.45–46); as Helen enters for the first time, she is “like Artemis of the golden distaff” (Ἀρτέμιδι χρυσηλακάτῳ εἶκυῖα, 4.122). It is Helen who introduces the crucial theme of likeness and comparison in an extended way with her remarks to Menelaus, when she hazards a guess as to the identity of the still as yet anonymous guest (4.141–45):

οὐ γάρ πώ τινά φημι εἰκότα ὦδε ἰδέσθαι
οὔτ' ἄνδρ' οὔτε γυναῖκα, σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορώσαν,
ὡς ὄδ' Ὀδυσσηὸς μεγαλήτορος νῆϊ ἔοικε,
Τηλεμάχῳ, τὸν λείπε νέον γεγαῶτ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
κεῖνος ἀνήρ ...

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for I say that I have not seen anyone with such a resemblance, neither man nor woman—wonder holds me as I look at him—as the resemblance that this man has to the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachus, whom that man left, a newborn, in his house ...

At this point we see in detail the huge investment that this poem will have in its own area of comparison—the likeness of inheritance, of father and son.

Interestingly, Helen does not straightforwardly say, “This young man resembles Odysseus.” She says, “He resembles the son of Odysseus”—in other words, “He looks the way I would imagine, on the basis of my knowledge of Odysseus, what his son would look like.” And Menelaus agrees. He had already guessed the truth just before Helen entered, when his expression of

loss for his dear friend Odysseus had made the young stranger weep, holding up his purple cloak in front of his eyes with both his hands (4.113–19). Now, responding to his wife’s prompt, he makes explicit what he had independently been thinking (4.148–54):

οὕτω νῦν καὶ ἐγὼ νοέω, γύναι, ὡς σὺ εἴσκεις·
 κείνου γὰρ τοιοῖδε πόδες τοιαῖδε τε χεῖρες
 ὀφθαλμῶν τε βολαὶ κεφαλῆ τ’ ἐφύπερθέ τε χαῖται. 150
 καὶ νῦν ἦ τοι ἐγὼ μεμνημένος ἄμφ’ Ὀδυσῆϊ
 μυθεόμην, ὅσα κείνος οἰζύσας ἐμόγησεν
 ἄμφ’ ἐμοί, αὐτὰρ ὁ πυκνὸν ὑπ’ ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβε,
 χλαῖναν πορφυρέην ἄντ’ ὀφθαλμοῖιν ἀνασχών.

I too now perceive in the same way as you make the comparison, wife. For the feet of that man were like this, and so were his hands, and the glances of his eyes and his hair above. And just now, as I was reminiscing about Odysseus, I was telling how much that man suffered and toiled on my account, and he shed thick tears under his eyebrows, holding up his purple cloak before his eyes.

The two of them are cooperating here in setting up the programmatic comparison between father and son that is going to be so important for the rest of the poem: Menelaus in fact calls attention to her act of comparison-making (ὡς σὺ εἴσκεις, “as you make the comparison,” 148).²³

Telemachus does not just look like his father; he even acts in the way that Homer will later show his father acting at the court of Alcinous, for Odysseus there likewise draws his cloak over his head to hide his tears, when he hears Demodocus sing the tale of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (8.83–85).²⁴ When we get to Book 8, it will feel as if Odysseus is imitating Telemachus. Actually, in retrospect we are able to see that both father and son are acting in the same way at the same moment, for they are each being entertained by their gracious hosts, Menelaus and Alcinous, on the very same

²³ Comparisons are a *forté* of Helen’s. Soon after this passage she describes how she saw through Odysseus’s attempt to make himself “like” a beggar (οἰκῆϊ ἐοικώς, 245; ἦῖσκε, 247; τῷ ἴκελος, 249): then Menelaus tells how she tried to trick the men inside the Trojan horse by “making her voice like the wives of all the Argives” (πάντων Ἀργείων φωνὴν ἴσκουσ’ ἀλόχοισιν, 4.279). Menelaus, in his turn, is good at spotting father-son resemblances: he remarks that Pisistratus’s speech shows he is Nestor’s son (4.206).

²⁴ Richardson 1983: 223–25, adducing the astute remarks of the scholia (MQ *Od.* 4.113) and Eustathius (1489.35–37) on the parallels between the two episodes.

day: they will each have four more nights to pass before they are reunited in Eumaeus's hut in Book 16.²⁵

In the *Odyssey*, then, comparison, likeness and similarity are going to be exceptionally important, yet in a way that is distinctively different from the strategies of comparison that open the *Iliad*. These two speeches of Helen and Menelaus are, in effect, the programmatic first statement about similarity in the poem.

Soon after this, Menelaus gives the poem's first proper developed simile, comparing Odysseus to a lion, describing the revenge he will inflict on the suitors (*Od.* 4.335–40):

ὡς δ' ὀπότεν ἐν ξυλόχῳ ἔλαφος κρατεροῖο λέοντος	335
νεβροῦς κοιμήσασα νεηγενέας γαλαθηνούς	
κνημοὺς ἐξερέησι και ἄγκεα ποιήεντα	
βοσκομένη, ὁ δ' ἔπειτα ἔην εἰσήλυθεν εὐνήν,	
ἀμφοτέροισι δὲ τοῖσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήκεν,	
ὡς Ὀδυσσεὺς κείνοισιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσει.	340

As when a doe beds down her fawns, newborn and still suckling, in the thicket of a mighty lion and then goes grazing over the foothills and grassy glens, and the lion then comes back to his own lair, and unleashes unseemly death on both of them, so Odysseus on them will unleash unseemly death.

On the face of it, this is a profoundly misleading glimpse of what the future holds, although Menelaus may be attempting to reassure his young guest.

At the end of this book there is an answering simile, establishing another crucial area of likeness for the poem, namely, the comparability of Odysseus and Penelope, because Penelope too is compared to a lion—not a lioness (*Od.* 4.791–94):

ὅσσα δὲ μερμήριξε λέων ἀνδρῶν ἐν ὀμίλῳ
 δείσας, ὀππότε μιν δόλιον περὶ κύκλον ἄγωσι,
 τόσσα μιν ὀρμαίνουσαν ἐπήλυθε νήδυμος ὕπνος·
 εὔδε δ' ἀνακλινθεῖσα, λύθεν δὲ οἱ ἄψα πάντα.

²⁵ The first night after they try to hide their weeping they sleep at the palaces of their hosts, Telemachus at Menelaus's (4.302–3), Odysseus at Alcinous's (13.17); on the second night Telemachus once more sleeps at Menelaus's (15.4–5), while his father sails overnight to Ithaca, asleep on the Phaeacians' ship (13.93–95); on the third night, Telemachus breaks the journey back to Pylos by sleeping at Pherae (15.185–88), while his father sleeps in Eumaeus's hut (14.523–24); on the fourth night, Odysseus once more sleeps at Eumaeus's hut (15.493–95), while his son sails overnight to Ithaca (15.296).

As a lion anxiously thinks in a group of men, in fear, when they are leading a circle as a trap around him, so was she deliberating as sweet sleep came over her. She lay back in sleep, and all her joints were loosened.

Scholars regularly comment on the incongruity of this likeness between Penelope and a lion, yet the link back to Odysseus, 450 lines earlier, provides the first example of the poem's paradoxical linking of the wife and husband.²⁶ This linking will eventually culminate in the extraordinary reverse simile that crowns Penelope's recognition of Odysseus in Book 23 (233–39). This simile describes the relief of a shipwrecked sailor finally reaching land, and we enter it under the inevitable impression that the simile refers to Odysseus, only to discover when the point of reference is spelled out at the end that the simile refers to *her* (ὥς ἄρα τῆ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εισοροῶση, “so welcome to *her* was the sight of her husband,” 239).²⁷

If the two lion-smiles of Book 4, the first developed similes in the poem, ultimately set up this climactic moment of identification in Book 23, then the first lion-simile, delivered by Menelaus to Telemachus (4.335–40), provides another technique of linking family members through simile. This first lion-simile is one of only two repeated similes in the *Odyssey*, and it is very significant that when it is repeated it is in the mouth of Telemachus, who quotes to his mother what he had heard from Menelaus (17.126–31).²⁸ Telemachus shuttles between his mother—the object of a lion-simile herself—and the person who had provided a lion-smile for his father. Cumulatively, these key similes, by pairing up the various focal members of the family and by providing an extended filigree of connection among them throughout the text, are a dynamic element of the larger themes of family likeness that structure the epic as a whole.²⁹

²⁶ Podlecki 1971: 84; Moulton 1977: 123–24; S. West in Heubeck, West and Hainsworth 1988: 242.

²⁷ On the power of this reverse simile, identifying the experiences of Penelope and Odysseus, see Podlecki 1971: 89–90; Moulton 1977: 129–30; Foley 1978: 24–26; Winkler 1990: 161.

²⁸ The other repeated simile in the *Odyssey* comes in the repeated passages describing how Athena restores Odysseus to his normal state on the beach in Phaeacia (6.232–35) and after the slaughter of the suitors (23.159–62); see Moulton 1977: 119.

²⁹ Ready 2011: 10 acutely observes how different the similes of the *Odyssey* are from those of the *Iliad*, where competitive dynamics are very important: “many extended similes in the *Odyssey*'s narrator-text rehearse the interconnectedness of the poem's actors.” He attributes this feature to the fact that “Odysseus has no human competitors in the *Odyssey*,” unlike the situation in the *Iliad*, with its many competing peers. Our approaches are complementary, rather than exclusive.

III. LUCRETIUS'S *DE RERUM NATURA*

After the *Odyssey's* distinctive commitment to its own brand of likeness and similarity, let us return to the mainstream of epic similitude, to follow up the *Iliad's* deep interest in the paradigms of order and disorder. Virgil's *Aeneid* is our goal, but before arriving there we must consider the first simile of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, which has a great impact on the subsequent epic tradition.³⁰

Lucretius's first simile is part of an extended passage proving the existence of the invisible atoms, with his basic point being that we should not conclude that atoms do not exist just because we cannot see them (1.265–70). There are forces in the world which demonstrably exist even if we cannot see them, and his example is the wind, which can have a visibly catastrophic impact despite being itself invisible. This image of the wind beating the sea and devastating the land parallels Homer's first paired similes of storm on sea and land in *Iliad* 2 (144–49), although in Lucretius the material of the Homeric simile has now become the content of the description of nature (1.271–79):

principio uenti uis uerberat incita pontum
 ingentisque ruit nauis et nubila differt,
 interdum rapido percurrens turbine campos
 arboribus magnis sternit montisque supremos
 siluifragis uexat flabris: ita perfurit acri
 cum fremitu saeuitque minaci murmure uentus.
 sunt igitur uenti nimirum corpora caeca
 quae mare, quae terras, quae denique nubila caeli
 uerrunt ac subito uexantia turbine raptant ...

³⁰ I skip over the only surviving first simile in epic between Homer and Lucretius, the fascinating moment in Apollonius's *Argonautica* where Jason's mother Alcimedea weeps at his departure like a little girl crying with her arms around the neck of her nurse, victimized by her stepmother (1.269–77). It is as if Apollonius is playing with our expectation that something of more cosmic weight should be presented, which he duly provides just over two hundred lines later, with Orpheus's cosmogony (1.496–511): in a poem where the serious and the unserious are so confused, it is piquant that the grand cosmogony is itself a false lead. There are those who think that the first simile that happens to survive from Ennius's *Annales*—comparing the crowd awaiting the twins' augury contest to the later Roman crowd awaiting the start of the chariot races in the Circus Maximus (79–83 Skutsch)—may have been the epic's first simile: see Hardie 2010: 27, reporting a lecture by A. Barchiesi. It is certainly possible; my own guess would be that Ennius marked the fall of Troy with the poem's first developed simile, one of storm, or fire, or torrent, or falling tree.

First of all the whipped-up power of the wind whacks the ocean and flattens huge ships and scatters the clouds, and racing over the plains with snatching whirlwind it strews them with great trees and harries the tops of the mountains with wood-smashing blasts: with such keen growling it rages and howls with threatening grumbling, the wind.³¹ There exist, therefore, without doubt, invisible bodies of wind, which scour the sea, the lands, even the clouds of the sky and snatch them along, harrying them with sudden whirlwind ...

At this point he shifts into an analogy, one of his favored argumentative techniques.³² The analogy illustrates his argument about the wind by referring to another natural force which has an analogous impact on the environment, and which can be seen—a river in flood (1.280–2):

... nec ratione fluunt alia stragemque propagant 280
 et cum mollis aquae fertur natura repente
 flumine abundantanti ...

... nor do they [the invisible bodies of wind] flow or wreak their havoc in any other way than when the soft nature of water is carried along in a suddenly overflowing stream ...

Lucretius develops the vision of the river in flood with great energy over the next eight lines, describing the devastation it inflicts on woods and bridges and rocks. Once we have this vivid picture in our minds, he returns to the wind, and at this point he finally turns his scientific analogy into the overt form of a simile, which has so far been avoided, and which strictly need never have been used, as he says that the blasts of the invisible wind are *like* a strong stream (1.290–97)³³:

sic igitur debent uenti quoque flamina ferri, 290
 quae ueluti ualidum cum flumen procubuere
 quamlibet in partem, tridunt res ante ruuntque
 impetibus crebris, interdum uertice torto
 corripunt rapideque rotanti turbine portant.
 quare etiam atque etiam sunt uenti corpora caeca, 295
 quandoquidem factis et moribus aemula magnis
 annibus inueniuntur, aperto corpore qui sunt.

³¹The word order is artificial in English, but attempts to capture the surprise effect of the postponement of the word *uentus* (276), whose presence is not grammatically necessary: all of this devastation is being done by something apparently insubstantial.

³²Schrijvers 1978; Schiesaro 1990: 21–25 on this passage.

³³D. West 1970: 274 and Schindler 2000: 89 both place the beginning of the simile too early, at *nec ratione ... alia* (280), at which point the argument is still proceeding by analogy.

Like this, therefore, must the blasts of wind also be carried, which when *like a powerful stream* they have plunged in whatever direction, they shove things in front and they flatten them with repeated assaults, sometimes they snatch them up in a twisted eddy and rapidly carry them in a whirling spin. Wherefore, there absolutely do exist bodies of wind, invisible, since in their impact and behavior we find them to rival mighty rivers which have a body openly visible to all.

This is a novel kind of simile, comparing one force of nature to another force of nature, instead of comparing a hero to a force of nature, as Homer had done in his similes of a river in flood in the *Iliad*, the models for Lucretius's river in flood, where Diomedes and Ajax had been compared to raging rivers smashing down bridges and fences (5.87–94; 11.492–96).³⁴ The wind and the water share fundamental natural characteristics, so that both the vehicle and the tenor are having their natures illuminated in the comparison.³⁵ In fact, in Lucretius we have a case with elements of identity as well as of similarity, since the wind and the river share many bodies. No entity is made up of one single kind of atom, as Lucretius explains in detail later in the first book: the same elements make up sky, sea, land, rivers, sun, fruits, trees and living things, with everything depending on the organization and arrangement of the *primordia* (1.820–22; cf. 2.581–88). These two forces, then, will even have some *corpora caeca* in common, as Lucretius suggests with characteristic plays on the similarities of the words used to describe the motion both of wind and water: *fluunt* (280), *flumine* (282), *fluctibus* (289), *flamina* (290), and *flumen* (291).³⁶

The traditional epic simile is here being harnessed to serve the purpose of a completely different kind of explanatory model. Yet Lucretius is nonetheless fully alive to the Homeric template of a programmatic opening simile sequence, and he emulates Homer by aiming for his own kind of programmatic effect, so that these lines are presented “as a showpiece, even as a programme, of Lucretian art.”³⁷ The *Iliad*'s programmatic sequence used similes from nature

³⁴ On the models, see Schindler 2000: 78–79; Hardie 2009: 209.

³⁵ Important discussions in Hardie 1986: 220–21; Schindler 2000: 81–83; cf. Gale 2007: 62. As Gale 1994: 63 points out in connection with the close identity of the wind and water in this passage, it was Empedocles, Lucretius's main poetic model, who pioneered didactic similes which “point out analogies between processes which are essentially similar”: see Sedley (1989) 277 on Lucretius's debt to Empedocles for this aspect of his technique, with reference to our passage.

³⁶ Friedländer 1941: 18; D. West 1970: 274; P. M. Brown 1984 on 280 and 290–91. For similar identification of wind and water, see 6.142–44, 367.

³⁷ Hardie 2009: 209n101, describing 1.265–328; cf. Hardie 1986: 182–83 on the programmatic function of 1.271–97.

to chart the fluctuations between order and chaos in the unprecedented social organization of the Achaean host: Lucretius, at first glance, appears to have pressed down on one side of the balance by using his programmatic sequence of analogy and simile to present a devastating image of chaos and destruction, taking over Homer's similes of chaotic storm in order to do so. Within the larger context of the opening sequence, however, this programmatic image of chaos is the second part of a diptych, for immediately before the wind/water analogy/simile Lucretius has given us an extended description of harmonious growth, with the birth of new vegetation and new animals (1.250–64).³⁸ The two aspects of nature, the creative and the destructive, complement each other, since to the Epicurean they are indissolubly part of the same natural processes: without death there can be no new birth (1.262–64; 2.569–80).³⁹

It is clearly important, then, that this programmatic image of chaos is counter-balanced by the immediately preceding image of harmony, with the two together giving an overall image of the cycles of nature. Yet there is a strong persistence to the programmatically catastrophic power of the storm of wind and water, as captured in the poem's first simile, and we may observe this persistence at two levels, the microcosmic and the macrocosmic.

At the microcosmic level, the opening evocation of the power of chaotic storm has an enduring effect throughout the poem because the reality of atomic physics means that the order of Lucretius's universe is ultimately grounded in chaos. The emphatic line which concludes the entire proof of the existence of invisible bodies sums up the previous sixty lines with a telling pun, where *caecis* means both "invisible" and also "blind, purposeless": *corporibus caecis igitur natura gerit res* ("Nature therefore carries on affairs by means of invisible/blind bodies," 1.328). According to the challenging vision of Epicurean physics, order and predictability at the level of the senses emerge from chaotic unpredictability at the atomic level, where we can imagine nothing but the purposeless and undirected buffeting of the atoms, which are generated ultimately by the randomness of the "swerve" (*clinamen*).⁴⁰ The

³⁸ On the creative/destructive diptych effect in these lines, see Hardie 1986: 182–83; Gale 1994: 114n61.

³⁹ On the "cycle of growth and decay," see Gale 1994: 70–71. From this point of view, the cycle of creation and destruction described in the whole sequence of 1.250–328 is a development of the symbolism evoked in the opening iconic image of Mars and Venus (1.29–40); see Gale 1994: 70–72, 220: "*Venus genetrix* and *Mavors/mors* together represent *natura creatrix et perfica* (cf. 2.1116 f.)."

⁴⁰ On the challenge represented by the apparent "reductionism" of atomic physics, see Wardy 1988; on the *clinamen*, see Fowler 2002: 301–10 (on 2.216–93).

swerve occurs “at an uncertain time and in uncertain places” (*incerto tempore .../incertisque locis*, 2.218–19), “neither in a certain area of place nor at a certain time” (*nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo*, 2.293). As a result, the atoms are in constantly restless motion (2.95–132), and Lucretius regularly suggests a paradoxical analogy between the atoms’ perpetual *error* (2.132) or lack of *quies* (2.95) and the fate awaiting human beings who fail to understand the truth about subsensory reality. As student-philosophers we will achieve *quies* only if we acknowledge that there is no *quies* at the atomic level: “It is the central atomist paradox, that certain knowledge of the endless motion of the atoms brings ἀταραξία.”⁴¹ Like the people who do not understand celestial phenomena at the beginning of Book 6, who “are carried along wandering in their blind way of reasoning” (*errantes caeca ratione feruntur*, 6.67), we will wander in blindness unless we grasp that the constituent elements of matter are always wandering in blindness.⁴²

Out of this microcosmic chaos, in a way that Lucretius aims to explain to us over the course of his first two books, fixed patterns of certitude and predictability in the life-cycle do emerge, and at this upper level all the language of un-certainty has its prefix removed. There are, for example, no Centaurs or tree-born men or Chimaeras, Lucretius tells us, and his explanation plays with the common elements of the words for “certain,” “create,” “mother,” and “grow” (2.707–10):

... omnia quando
 seminibus certis certa genetrice creata
 conseruare genus crescentia posse uidemus.
 scilicet id certa fieri ratione necessust.

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since all things, created from certain seeds from a certain mother, we see to be able to preserve their genus as they grow. Definitely it must be that this happens on the basis of a certain rationale.⁴³

⁴¹ Fowler 2002: 176.

⁴² So Wardy 1988: 123, on the beginning of Book 2: “Lucretius’ depiction of ordinary, vainly ambitious people from the philosopher’s point of view daringly compares them to atoms, as they wander (10 *errare, palantis*; cf. 132) and fight (11 *certare, contendere*; cf. 118–20). From that supreme vantage-point non-Epicureans appear to be caught up in utterly senseless, random turmoil, as purposeless as atomic collisions. *O pectora caeca!* (14)—*o corpora caeca!*”

⁴³ Cf. 1.167–73 (with another pun, this time on *secreta*, from *secerno*, etymologically linked with *certus*: see P. M. Brown 1984 ad loc.); 3.445–46 (with a pun on *crescere* and *senescere*); 3.547–52, 615–23, 746–47, 787, 794–95; 5.916–24, 1436–39. On these various puns and their import, see Snyder 1980: 38–39, 137–39.

Again, this certainty of Epicurean physics is based on a fundamental randomness, which is one reason why the first simile is an appropriate programmatic emblem, because here we see the massive uncontrollable power of natural forces, existing in their own realm with no relation to us, as wholly independent entities with their own kind of patterns. If the first simile is an emblem of nature out of control, we are encouraged to reflect that it is natural for nature to be out of control.

At the macrocosmic level, the sheerly destructive impact of the storm-wind also remains a potent image all the way through the poem, for it captures the “magnificence of the forces of the atomist universe” and also stands for the aspects of the natural world which are most likely to be “a potential stimulus to superstition”: as a result, the opening analogy and simile sequence of chaotic wind and water “has a programmatic function, foreshadowing later treatments of natural catastrophe on both the large and the small scale.”⁴⁴

In general terms at the macroscopic level, the universe exhibits a continual state of strife among its constituent members, in such a way that the ultimate destruction of the universe in its currently constituted form is certain (5.380–83):

denique tantopere inter se cum maxima mundi
pugnent membra, pio nequaquam concita bello,
nonne uides aliquam longi certaminis ollis
posse dari finem? 380

Finally, since the large-scale components of the world fight among themselves to such an extent, stirred up in a war that is by no means a holy war, don't you see that they can be given some end of their long strife?

The same metaphor of a war between the components of the universe is found elsewhere (2.573–76):

sic aequo geritur certamine principiorum
ex infinito contractum tempore bellum.
nunc hic nunc illic superant uitalia rerum
et superantur item. 575

So is war waged on the basis of an equal struggle of the elements, fought from time without beginning. Now here, now there, the life forces of the universe overcome and then in turn are overcome.

⁴⁴Hardie 1986: 182, 183.

In particular, the catastrophic power of wind is consistently Lucretius's favored possibility for the end of the *mundus* as we know it.⁴⁵ This might take the form of a colossal hurricane from outside the *mundus*: "Nor in fact are bodies lacking which could by chance arise from infinite space and cause the collapse of this sum of things with a violent whirlwind" (*neque autem corpora desunt/ex infinito quae possint forte coorta/corruere hanc rerum uiolento turbine summam*, 5.366–68). More commonly, it might be the winds beneath our feet, in subterranean caverns, which could tear the world apart. "If the subterranean winds did not blow back" in a different direction in their intermittent rampages, "then no power would rein things in and check them from destruction as they moved" (*quod nisi respirent uenti, uis nulla refrenet/res neque ab exitio possit reprehendere euntis*, 6.568–69; cf. 5.104–9). A vivid picture of the fear aroused by the rampaging of subterranean winds comes in Book 6 (577–607), a passage culminating in an evocation of the terror felt during an earthquake by people who casually assume the world will last for ever (6.601–7):

proinde licet quamuis caelum terramque reantur
 incorrupta fore aeternae mandata saluti:
 et tamen interdum praesens uis ipsa pericli
 subdit et hunc stimulum quadam de parte timoris,
 ne pedibus raptim tellus subtracta feratur
 in barathrum rerumque sequatur prodita summa
 funditus et fiat mundi confusa ruina. 605

So then, they may think as much as they like that the heaven and earth will be indestructible, consigned to safety for ever—still, now and then, the actual present force of danger applies even this goad of fear from one direction or another, lest the earth, suddenly taken away from under their feet, be carried into the abyss, and the sum of things, left in the air from the bottom up, should follow and the world become a jumbled ruin.

The winds, then, will probably overpower our cosmos in the end. For an Epicurean, who can manage a series of perspectival shifts from the infinitesimal to the infinite, the destruction of our universe by colossal storm-winds is no final moment of annihilation. The end of the cosmos may look like a terrifying and conclusive victory for the forces of chaos and destruction, but if you take the long-term Epicurean view, then the end of our universe is only a very large-scale dissolution of a compound body, one that, like all dissolutions of

⁴⁵ Hardie 1986: 92–93, 181, 187–89.

compound bodies, will return the constituent parts to the available sum of matter, ready for new compounds and new forms.⁴⁶

The threat to cosmic order posed by the annihilating power of the storm-wind was, of course, part of Hesiodic myth, embodied in particular in the opponent of Zeus who is most fully developed in Hesiod's narrative, Typhoeus.⁴⁷ In a manner first analyzed by the pioneering study of Hardie 1986, Lucretius has taken over the prevalent scholarly allegorizing readings of such mythic narratives in terms of natural philosophy, but he has "demythologized" the content completely, retaining the physics and jettisoning the fable.⁴⁸ In his turn, Virgil will use his programmatic opening simile sequence to "remythologize" the power of the catastrophic winds of Lucretius, as we shall now see.⁴⁹

IV. VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

Before we enter the *Aeneid*, we note that the first simile in Virgil's poem of nature already shows him engaging with Lucretius's first simile, as he rows hard upstream against the mighty river of Lucretius (*G.* 1.199–203).⁵⁰ The blind river of Lucretian nature will sweep Virgil away if he releases his grip, in an image of the constant effort required to create and maintain the human world of the *Georgics*, so distinctively different from that of the *De rerum natura*. Virgil's immediate context is the importance of keeping up the relentless work of selecting the right seeds—*semina*, a word regularly used by Lucretius to describe his atoms (e.g., 1.501, 2.773), and explicitly introduced early in his first book as one of a range of terms he will use for the atoms (1.58–61, together with *materiem, genitalia corpora, corpora prima*). In a pointed play on Lucretius's opening proof of the existence of invisible bodies as manifested in the wind, Virgil begins his programmatic simile sequence with an emphatic declaration that the seeds in his poem are ones you can see: *semina uidi equi-*

⁴⁶ Hardie 1986: 189; Fowler 2002: 155: "only the *summa summarum* as τὸ πᾶν, the whole infinite universe, is really immortal."

⁴⁷ Comprehensive discussion in Hardie 1986: 95–97.

⁴⁸ Hardie 1986: 91, 211–13, with 178 and 181 on Lucretius's "demythologization"; Gale 1994: 185–89.

⁴⁹ Hardie 1986: 178, 182 on "remythologization."

⁵⁰ Note that he has already, before this first simile, treated the *matter* of Homeric simile, but transferred the terms, turning the illustrative everyday vehicle of *Il.* 21.257–62 into the reality of his own poem's tenor (*G.* 1.104–10); Ross 1987: 51; Thomas 1988: 1.84; Farrell 1991: 211–13. As we have seen, this is exactly what Lucretius had done, turning Homer's opening similes of storm-wind into his own description of storm-wind.

dem ... (“I have seen seeds ...,” G. 1.193).⁵¹ No matter how much force you exert in this unremitting work of selection, he goes on to say, degeneration is always possible, as he resumes with yet more emphasis on his seeing of the seeds (G. 1.197–203)⁵²:

uidi lecta diu et multo spectata labore
 degenerare tamen, ni uis humana quotannis
 maxima quaeque manu legeret: sic omnia fatis
 in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri, 200
 non aliter quam qui aduerso uix flumine lembum
 remigiis subigit, si bracchia forte remisit,
 atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alueus amni.

I have seen seeds chosen over time and checked with much labor nonetheless degenerate, if human force weren’t picking out all the biggest ones by hand every year: in this way all things, by fate, plunge to the worse, slide down and are carried backwards, just like a person who rows his craft with difficulty upstream, if he happens to relax his effort, and the current snatches him headlong downstream.

Lucretius’s programmatic destructive river in spate appears at the end of the first book of the *Georgics*, as “Eridanus, king of rivers, roils woods in his insane whirl and sweeps them away, carrying along flocks, stables and all, all over the plains” (*proluit insano contorquens uertice siluas/fluuiorum rex Eridanus camposque per omnis/cum stabulis armenta tulit*, G. 1.481–83). There the river in spate is part of a series of natural catastrophes responding to the assassination of Caesar, a graphic portrayal of a world in chaos, culminating in a simile which looks back to the first simile as it conjures up a yet more frightening image of humans’ inability to maintain control over their world (G. 1.511–14)⁵³:

saeuit toto Mars impius orbe,
 ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,
 addunt in spatia, et frustra retinacula tendens
 fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.

⁵¹ As the sentence continues, it springs a surprise on the reader, demanding a readjustment: *semina uidi equidem multos medicare serentis* (“I have seen many sowers treating seeds”).

⁵² For discussions of the overall context of the simile, see Gale 2000: 81–82; Schindler 2000: 203–4.

⁵³ On the resposion between the two similes, see Thomas 1988: 1.102, 154; Farrell 1991: 167–68. On the many echoes in the *Aeneid* of this mighty storm at the end of *Georgics* 1, see Briggs 1980: 81–91.

Unholy Mars goes mad over the whole globe, as when the chariots have poured out of the starting-gates, they speed on the laps, and, hanging uselessly onto the reins, the charioteer is carried along by his horses and the chariot does not respond to his control.

The first simile of the *Georgics*, as part of an overarching pattern within the first book leading up to its final simile, serves to focus the poem's concerns about the limits of human ability to impose order on the world of nature and of politics. These concerns return in the first simile of the *Aeneid*. Here the initial patterns both of Homer and of Lucretius come together to form the *Aeneid's* opening sequences of similitude and comparison, as Aeneas and the Trojans face the potentially annihilating power of Juno's storm, aroused by the winds unleashed at Aeolus's command (*Aen.* 1.50–156).

Virgil inverts the order of Homer's opening similes. Homer's second, third, fourth and fifth similes, together with their wider context, are amalgamated into Virgil's first simile, while Homer's first simile, comparing men to bees, becomes Virgil's second simile.⁵⁴ Virgil's bees are imported from the descriptive reality of his own Fourth *Georgic*, where their applicability to human society had been more oblique; in the *Aeneid's* second simile they provide a comparison for the sight presented to Aeneas and Achates when they look down on the happy Carthaginians working away building their new city (*Aen.* 1.430–36 ≈ *G.* 4.162–69).⁵⁵ The order and harmony of the Carthaginians exemplify to perfection the ideal of social cohesion so admired by the ancients in the bees' community, and this order is apparently in strong contrast with the chaotic turmoil of wind and sea in the opening sequence⁵⁶; yet the contrast is ironic, for these Carthaginian bees are very soon to be faced with bee colony collapse disorder following the death of the queen, after sex has been introduced, in the person of Aeneas, into the idealized sexless life of the bees as represented in the Fourth *Georgic* (4.197–205).⁵⁷ As so often, Virgil is reading out of fea-

⁵⁴ Lausberg 1983: 219; Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 71–72.

⁵⁵ Briggs 1980: 72 on this switch in perspective, so characteristic—as he shows throughout—of the transposition of narrative and simile world between *Georgics* and *Aeneid*.

⁵⁶ Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 71–72.

⁵⁷ Briggs 1980: 72–75; Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 71; cf. Polleichtner 2005: 138–45, concentrating on the proleptic function of the bee simile within the whole Carthaginian narrative. On the various theories of bee reproduction, see Wilson 2004, Ch. 2, “Sex.” Virgil of course represents the ruler of the bees as a *rex* in the Fourth *Georgic*, even though some ancient opinion had it that the queen was indeed a queen: see Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 62.

tures already detectable in Homer, for Homer's bee-simile, as we have seen, is itself somewhat ironic in its idealizing image of the Achaeans' social cohesion.

The storm begun at Juno's initiative unleashes the titanic winds of Lucretius in order to destroy the *cosmos*, the *cosmos* of the Roman *imperium*, before it has even started. As Hardie 1986 has finely demonstrated, the winds confined in Aeolus's vast cavern evoke at every point the potentially world-destroying winds which, as we saw above, so frequently figure in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*: if the winds were not confined by Aeolus under the providential order of Jupiter, we are told, *maria ac terras caelumque profundum/quippe ferant rapidi secum uerrantque per auras* ("they would snatch up and carry off seas and lands and the deep heaven and sweep them through the air," *Aen.* 1.58–59).⁵⁸ This was the likely end that Lucretius foresaw awaiting our universe, as the result of entirely natural forces, but Virgil is now restoring the mythic dimension to the paradigm of order and chaos that had been stripped away by Lucretius.⁵⁹ Here we see the next turn in the sine-curve pattern of epic literary history charted by Hardie 1986: Homer and Hesiod mythologize, Lucretius demythologizes, Virgil remythologizes—and, as we shall see, Lucan re-demythologizes. It is immensely important to Virgil to capture and then to rewrite Lucretius's vision, in line with the *Aeneid's* need to assert that a providential world-order can be maintained, despite everything that Lucretius claimed.

When Aeolus lets loose the winds in response to Juno's approaches, we meet the poem's first simile, as the winds rush on *uelut agmine facto* ("as if having formed a column of march," *Aen.* 1.82).⁶⁰ Virgil has observed that Homer presents such mini-similes before the first developed one, and he follows suit, characteristically condensing into a single mini-simile the three mini-similes that Homer deploys before his first developed one.⁶¹ Further, even in this short phrase, Virgil is anticipating the reversal of terms that will follow on a much larger scale in the first developed simile, for with this military metaphor for the movement of the winds a natural force is compared to a human one, instead of the other way around, as is regular in epic.

After the storm and its impact on the Trojan fleet have been described (1.84–123), Neptune notices the chaos, and emerges to set things right

⁵⁸ Hardie 1986: 93, comparing these lines to *Lucretius* 1.277–79; cf. Hardie 1986: 180–83 and 237–40 ("Appendix: Lucretian Parallels for Virgil's Cave of the Winds (*Aeneid* 1.52–63, 81–83)").

⁵⁹ Hardie 1986: 93, 181.

⁶⁰ Hardie 2010: 19 notes the military metaphor here, which anticipates the way that the first simile and its context track the martial nature of Homer's assembly in *Iliad* 2.

⁶¹ Hornsby 1970: 20.

(124–30). He upbraids the winds and restores calm (131–47). The whole run of this action of Neptune’s is then captured in the poem’s first simile, in which the impact of the god upon the natural elements is compared to the impact of a statesman upon a rioting mob (*Aen.* 1.148–56):

ac ueluti magno in populo cum saepe coorta est
 seditio saeuitque animis ignobile uulgus
 iamque faces et saxa uolant, furor arma ministrat; 150
 tum, pietate grauem ac meritis si forte uirum quem
 conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus astant;
 ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet:
 sic cunctus pelagi cecidit fragor, aequora postquam
 prospiciens genitor caeloque inuectus aperto 155
 flectit equos curruque uolans dat lora secundo.

And as in a great people when regularly civil discord has broken out and the base mob is going mad with passion, and now torches and rocks are flying—frenzy supplies the weapons; then, if by chance they catch sight of some man, impressive in his pious virtue and his achievements, they are silent, and they stand still with ears pricked; he rules their passions with his words, and strokes their chests/minds: thus did the whole crashing uproar of the sea subside, after the father turned his horses, looking out over the seas and riding under the unclouded heaven, and flying along behind in his chariot gave his horses their head.

Servius already pointed out the connection with Homer’s initial similes, in his comment on 1.148:

iste tempestati populi motum comparat,⁶² Tullius populo tempestatem: *pro Milone* [§5] “equidem ceteras tempestates et procellas in illis dumtaxat fluctibus contionum.” [Servius auctus:] *ita et Homerus seditioni tempestatem κινήθη δ’ ἀγορῆ ὡς κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης* [*Il.* 2.144].

He compares the turmoil of the people to a storm, Cicero compares the storm to the people: *Pro Milone* [§5] “the other storms and hurricanes just in those waves of the meetings of the people.” [Servius auctus:] *Homer too compares a storm to discord, “and the meeting was stirred like the great waves of the sea”* [*Il.* 2.144].

Servius also points out the reversal of terms which has so caught the attention of modern critics, even though he initially quotes Cicero, before Homer, to make the point: in Homer (and in Cicero) human action is compared to natural forces, whereas in Virgil natural and divine forces are compared to

⁶²The direction of comparison is, interestingly, focalized by Servius in the reverse direction to ours: but the difference between Virgil’s and Cicero’s (or Homer’s) direction is clear.

human action.⁶³ This reversal of terms is crucial to the programmatic power of the first simile, which, as part of an overall narrative of the restoration of calm after chaos, sets up an ideal template for political action in the poem and its empire.⁶⁴ In Homer's case, the concord threatened by disruption is illustrated by reference to the natural world; in the *Aeneid*, the natural world is itself one of the arenas for the establishment of concord, in a hyperbolic vision of a Roman empire which is fused with the world of nature, overcoming the threats of chaos within a providential order.⁶⁵

The allusions and references in the simile are very dense.⁶⁶ Henry 1873: 427 first pointed to the significance of an iconic moment at the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony* (81–93), where the good king walks among the quarrelling people and settles their arguments, exemplifying the powers of social concord that are ideally embodied in the Muses, the poet, and the ideal orator.⁶⁷ The figure of Augustus is regularly seen as evoked here, not least in light of his self-identification as the favorite of Neptune in his victory over Sextus Pompeius in Sicily.⁶⁸ Scholars have suggested various specific historical points of reference, especially a famous moment in Cato's praetorship in 54 BCE, when he stopped the shouting in a riot with his mere appearance and went on to lull the crowd with his speech (Plut. *Cat. Min.* 44.3–4);⁶⁹ other candidates for the Republican statesman who soothes the mob with his rhetoric are Menenius Agrippa or M. Popillius Laenas.⁷⁰

It is in the end misguided to press too hard for an identification with one particular individual or episode, given the generalizing and paradigmatic nature of the simile⁷¹; yet the atmosphere of the Roman Republic is unmistakable, picked out with such key items of Republican political discourse as *populo* (148), *seditio* (149) and *uulgus* (149). In general, the first simile

⁶³ On this reversal see, e.g., Austin 1971: 68.

⁶⁴ Pöschl 1962: 13–24 on how the opening storm sequence (*Aen.* 1.8–296) “contain[s] in essence all forces which constitute the whole” (24); Otis 1963: 227–35; Hardie 1986: 176–83, 204–5; Harrison 1988: 55; Cairns 1989: 93–94; Beck forthcoming.

⁶⁵ Hardie 1986: 223.

⁶⁶ Well stressed in Beck (forthcoming), a valuable discussion of the main issues of the simile.

⁶⁷ Fully argued in Harrison 1988; see Thalmann 1984: 140–41, 179 on the Hesiodic themes.

⁶⁸ Galinsky 1996: 21–23.

⁶⁹ Conway 1935 on *Aen.* 1.148–53; Harrison 1988: 55–56.

⁷⁰ Moorwood 1998 (Menenius Agrippa); Galinsky 1996: 21 (Popillius Laenas).

⁷¹ Galinsky 1996: 21: “the simile’s applicability is broader than an identification with any specific Roman leader.”

“harks back to the power attributed to the orator in republican culture.”⁷² Cicero’s Isocratean descriptions of the ideal power of the orator refer to the historical significance of rhetoric’s ability to lift brutish human society above the level of the beasts.⁷³ Virgil certainly capitalizes on such conceptions in his characterization of the winds and their human counterparts in the simile as animals, specifically horses: Aeolus controls the winds with reins (*habenae*, 63) and they have their “ears pricked” in the simile (*arrectis auribus*, 152);⁷⁴ Aeolus has the power to “stroke” the sea with the wind (*mulcere*, 66), while the statesman in the simile “strokes the chests/soothes the minds” of the crowd (*pectora mulcet*, 152).⁷⁵ There is an interesting tension generated by the friction between the simile’s strong Hesiodic monarchical intertext, channeled through evocations of Augustus, and its strongly Republican atmosphere: is the statesman here walking in the footsteps of a Greek king or is he a Roman *nobilis*?⁷⁶ The simile hovers between Republic and Principate, capturing the interstitial nature of the Roman state at the time of composition.

In the context of the simile’s interest in the rhetoric of Republican Rome, Servius’s mention of Cicero in his initial comment on Virgil’s simile turns out not to be the red herring it might initially look like. Servius cites Cicero for his use of imagery of sea storm to describe civic discord, and Cicero’s fondness for imagery of civic storm is indeed marked.⁷⁷ In more general terms, however, Cicero’s wistful conjurings of the power of rhetoric over violence are part of the background noise in this simile. In the *Brutus*, for example, in the aftermath of the victory of Julius Caesar over Pompey the Great, Cicero looks back to the buildup to the war, lamenting the failure of peaceful persuasion by a good citizen to carry the day (*Brut.* 7)⁷⁸:

⁷² Spence 2002: 50.

⁷³ In particular, Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.2, adduced by Spence 1988: 15 and Spence 2002: 50; cf. the praise of the power of the good orator in *De or.* 1.30–35.

⁷⁴ Spence 2002: 49.

⁷⁵ Bartsch 1998: 330, with discussion of the idealized power of oratory to soothe the bestial; cf. Bartsch 1998: 323 on the first simile as raising the question: “Is it art that soothes the savage beast?”. My thanks to Stephen Harrison and Antony Smith for discussion of this imagery, and of the simile in general.

⁷⁶ Harrison 1988: 58 (“a neat and Vergilian irony”); Hardie 2010: 19 (“Irony, or the deliberate elision of the difference between Republic and Principate?”).

⁷⁷ Austin 1971: 68 refers to the citation of Cic. *Clu.* 138 in the discussion of Virgil’s first simile in Heinze 1915: 206n1 (Austin tacitly corrects Heinze’s miscitation of “*Clu.* 130”); cf., e.g., Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.4.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Off.* 1.77, where Cicero quotes his notorious verse *cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi*, and goes on to cite his suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy: *ita consiliis diligentiaque nostra celeriter de manibus audacissimorum civium delapsa arma ipsa*

quod si fuit in re publica tempus ullum, cum extorquere arma posset e manibus iratorum ciuium boni ciuis auctoritas et oratio, tum profecto fuit, cum patrocinium pacis exclusum est aut errore hominum aut timore.

But if there ever was a time in the state, when the authority and speech of a good citizen could have wrested the weapons from the hands of his enraged fellow-citizens, it was then when the advocacy of peaceful measures was ruled out by men's blundering or fear.

The idealized nature of the power of rhetoric in Virgil's simile is rather poignant in this light, given that Cicero is here acknowledging that the power of persuasion that he had celebrated from the beginning of his career did not in the end win out over the madness of armed violence.

Through all of these various echoes, however, Homer remains the crucial intertext, for an entire Homeric episode is being activated here, with the opening similes of the *Iliad* as its armature. We have sea-storm and wind, a gathering in an uproar, with order being provisionally restored by the oratory and authority of an outstanding individual. Virgil is responding to the way Homer has charted out his political coordinates in this single passage, using his similes strategically in order to do so. For him, Homer's epic will be the original political document, and his own epic has to respond by engaging with the patterns of order and the threats to order which this foundational text established. Further, his reworking of Homer has been blended with his reworking of Lucretius, whose patterns of natural chaos are so threatening to the order he wishes to establish in his poem: in the opening sequence of his epic Virgil is building upon his work with Lucretius in the *Georgics* so as to develop further his conceptions of the peculiar nature of human control over the world.

Virgil will have been reading this opening Homeric sequence in the light of centuries of political theory which regularly took Homer as a starting-point in the investigation of the nature of political power⁷⁹; the commentaries which accompanied Virgil's readings of Homer were themselves deeply influenced by such currents of thought.⁸⁰ Odysseus's aphorism as he berates the mob and drives them back to the assembly—οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη·

ceciderrunt (“in this way, through my planning and care, their very weapons slipped swiftly from the hands of totally reckless citizens and fell to the ground”).

⁷⁹ Murray 1965 restarted the debate; cf. Cairns 1989: 10–11; see Harrison 1988: 57–58 for similar philosophical interest in the “good king in Hesiod” passage (*Theog.* 81–93).

⁸⁰ Very valuable discussion in Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 66–74.

εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω,/εἷς βασιλεύς (“it’s not a good thing to have lots of leaders; let there be one leader, one king,” *Il.* 2.204–5)—became a famous tag: οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη is the only verse of Homer that Theophrastus’s character of the Oligarch knows by heart (*Char.* 26.2); Aristotle read the verse as a condemnation of democracy (*Pol.* 1292a 13–15); while a former teacher and confidant of young Caesar, Areius, quoted to him these words with his own twist when Caesar was deliberating what to do with the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra: οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκαισαρίη (“it’s not a good thing to have lots of Caesars,” Plut. *Ant.* 81.2).⁸¹ The scholiasts’ comment on Odysseus’s aphorism is utterly characteristic of their view of Homer as the original political philosopher: δογματίζει δὲ περὶ πολιτειῶν (“Homer is laying down the law on constitutional theory,” bT 2.204).

In general, Homer was claimed as the first writer on political theory ([Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 176), with a full knowledge of such matters as the “three-constitution” theory (*ibid.*, 182). Specifically, as Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 66–74 has demonstrated in convincing detail, ancient commentators and writers on Homer interpreted the sequence of action surrounding the assembly in *Iliad* 2, together with its similes, as illustrating the dangers of disorder, discord, and political upheaval: they insistently see Homer as espousing monarchy as the countermeasure to such threatened chaos. Virgil’s readings of such sources deeply inform his presentation of the authority of the statesman in his quelling of the riot, even as his whole context takes the themes of harmony and discord to a cosmic level.⁸² In the light of this pro-monarchical interpretative tradition, the tension with the idealizing Republican atmosphere of the simile becomes even more powerful.

If Virgil’s first simile, together with its larger context, holds up a programmatic template for the triumph of order over chaos, it remains to ask how far this template is realized in the action of the poem. Similes in general have slippage and lack of precise fit built into their operation, and Virgil’s similes “often juxtapose, undermine, or ironize the surrounding text.”⁸³ We are prompted to ask, “When is a statesman *not* like a sea-god?” Just as in the *Iliad*, where the concord emblemized by the bee-simile is called into question

⁸¹ My thanks to T. P. Wiseman for the Plutarch reference.

⁸² Well put by Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 69: “ἀταξία, die die antiken Erklärer durch das homerische Gleichnis verdeutlicht sahen, erscheint auch in der Aeneis als tiefere Ursache der Ereignisse in Natur- wie Menschenwelt.” See Cairns 1989: 85–87 on the contemporary Hor. *Epist.* 1.2, which has a strong interest in such readings of the politics of the *Iliad*.

⁸³ Spence 2002: 50.

by the fact that the Achaeans in Book 2 are manifestly not at that moment a harmonious social order, so too in the *Aeneid* the programmatic power of this opening simile is more fragile than it looks. Even within the immediate context, the idealized power of rhetoric can be read under an ironic guise, for it is not easy to pin down quite how the action of Neptune should be mapped on to the action of the simile.⁸⁴ If rhetoric is what achieves the result, then why does Neptune act “more quickly than speech” (*dicto citius*, 1.142)? Virgil twice calls attention to Neptune’s “savage trident” (*saevuum ... tridentem*, 138; *tridenti*, 145); by reminding us of how Odysseus beat the mob into obedience with Agamemnon’s sceptre, and by unveiling the violence that the god can always call upon to back up his words, Virgil may be suggesting that “words by themselves may not be enough to quell the stormy passions of political life: force will be a necessary part of the equation.”⁸⁵

As scholars have regularly observed, the poem is full of characters who try to live up to the ideal presented in the first simile, but who fail, finding that the quelling of discord through oratory is a lot harder to achieve than the first simile suggests.⁸⁶ As the first fighting breaks out in Latium in Book 7, the gradually mounting momentum of the conflict is caught with a simile of storm, in a passage that inevitably recalls the storm of Book 1, but this time with tenor and vehicle restored to their “right” relation, with human action compared to the natural world; and we see the failure of one Galaesus to quell the storm, despite his *iustitia* (*Aen.* 7.528–30, 535–37)⁸⁷:

fluctus uti primo coepit cum albescere uento,	
paulatim sese tollit mare et altius undas	
erigit, inde imo consurgit ad aethera fundo ...	530
... corpora multa uirum circa seniorque Galaesus,	535

⁸⁴ My thanks to Antony Smith for discussion of this point.

⁸⁵ Quint 2011: 291; cf. Spence 2002: 50.

⁸⁶ Lapidary formulation in Perret 1977: 11n1: “pourtant jamais Énée n’aura occasion de s’imposer de la sorte.” Cf. Lyne 1987: 7n9, 28n55. Hine 1987: 177, citing Lyne, is of course quite right to stress that the ideal espoused in the first simile “can be regarded as an ideal that must be striven for” even if it cannot be fully achieved. Bartsch 1998 importantly makes oratory, the most prominent Roman *ars*, part of the long-standing debate on the efficacy of art in the *Aeneid*.

⁸⁷ For the links back to Book 1, see Pöschl 1962: 31–33; Otis 1962: 327; Hornsby 1970: 27–29; the marked language of *primo ... uento* (7.528) may call attention to the reference back to the storm in Book 1. As stressed by Harrison 1985: 101–2, this simile is part of a chain of similes linking water and war-lust in this second beginning of the epic; note also 7.460–66 and 7.586–90; cf. Horsfall 2000: 381–82 on these links.

dum paci medium se offert, iustissimus unus
qui fuit Ausoniisque olim ditissimus aruis.

As when a wave begins to go white under the first effect of the wind, the sea lifts itself up bit by bit and raises the waves higher, and next surges from the very bottom up to the sky ... There are many bodies of men around, including the elderly Galaesus, as he came forward as an intermediary for peace, who was uniquely just and once the richest in Ausonian ploughlands.

It is important that the conflict here is not one “within a pre-existing community,” as was the case in the simile in Book 1 (*magno in populo*, 1.148), but rather between two different political groups: the template of the poem’s first simile is to that extent less applicable.⁸⁸ The same point applies in the final book of the poem, when Aeneas is given the chance to live up to the programmatically soothing power of the orator of the first simile, as he tries to calm the *discordia* that erupts over the broken truce (12.311–19); here too we have strife between two opposing sides, Trojans and Latins, rather than within one political entity. Soon after Galaesus is killed in Book 7, however, King Latinus attempts to withstand the storm of war and to be firm against the chaos of his citizenry. At first, his efforts look very promising (7.585–90)⁸⁹:

certatim regis circumstant tecta Latini: 585
ille uelut pelago rupes immota resistit,
ut pelago rupes magno ueniente fragore,
quae sese multis circum latrantibus undis
mole tenet; scopuli nequiquam et spumea circum
saxa fremunt laterique inlisa refunditur alga. 590

They vie with each other to surround the palace of King Latinus. He stands up to them, as a cliff stands up to the sea without being moved, as a cliff to the sea when a great breaker comes, which maintains itself by its mass with many waves howling around it; in vain the boulders and foamy rocks howl around, and the seaweed dashed on its flank pours back.

But straight after this simile, suddenly he cracks (7.591–94):

uerum ubi nulla datur caecum exsuperare potestas
consilium, et saeuae nutu Iunonis eunt res,
multa deos aurasque pater testatus inanis
‘frangimur heu fatis’ inquit ‘ferimurque procella! ...’

⁸⁸I thank Antony Smith for this important observation about whether or not there is a “pre-existing community” in place.

⁸⁹I follow the text of Horsfall 2000 for the repetition of *pelago* in 586–87; see Horsfall 2000: 382–83 for discussion.

But when no power is granted him to overcome their blind purpose and events go on according to the nod of savage Juno, with many calls to the gods and the empty breezes as witnesses, he says, “Alas, we are broken by the fates and we are carried along by the storm! ...”

Here the incompatibility between simile and context is far more marked than in the case of the ironies that have been detected in the statesman-simile of Book 1. Latinus cannot live up to the role of the cliff in his own simile, any more than he can live up to the role of statesman in the first simile: “Latinus is not a god of the sea; his people are not sea waves obedient to him.”⁹⁰ Nor can Latinus live up to the role of the jutting rock that Agamemnon fulfilled in *Iliad* 2 after the final restoration of order to the assembly of the Achaeans (2.394–97): there the isolated image of the headland surrounded by waves and winds evokes Agamemnon’s newfound steadfastness, a steadfastness which Latinus cannot emulate.

If the iconic opening simile in the poem turns out to be a very difficult paradigm to live up to, we observe an actually opposing momentum in play in the poem, as Aeneas is increasingly identified with the titanesque forces of storm and wind that threatened his life and his project at the outset.⁹¹ In his battle rampage after learning of the death of Pallas in Book 10, his frenzy is compared to that of “a river in flood or a black whirlwind” (*torrentis aquae uel turbinis atri/more furens*, 10.603–4). His climactic attack in Book 12 is like the onrush of a massive storm, bringing devastation from the sea to the trees and crops of the farmers (12.451–57).⁹² His final victory over Turnus is achieved by his control of the forces of the storm-winds to which he was helplessly subject at the very beginning of the poem.⁹³ The last simile in the poem follows on two “not-similes,” and it loops back to the first simile in the poem, with Aeneas now the agent and not the victim of the storm, as he throws his spear (12.921–24):

murali concita numquam
tormento sic saxa fremunt nec fulmine tanti
dissultant crepitus. uolat atri turbinis instar
exitium dirum hasta ferens ...

⁹⁰ Hornsby 1970: 30.

⁹¹ Important discussions in Hornsby 1970: 124–25; Briggs 1980: 90–91; Hardie 1986: 176–80.

⁹² Lyne 1987: 5–8.

⁹³ A major theme first fully discussed in Hornsby 1970: 39, 43, 124–25; cf. Briggs 1980: 91; Hardie 1986: 176; Tarrant 2012 on *Aen.* 12.951, *soluuntur frigore membra*.

Rocks hurled from a siege catapult do not roar so much, nor do such great cracks flash from a thunderbolt: the spear flies like a black whirlwind bearing dread death⁹⁴ ...

Despite the power and appeal of the programmatic first simile, it turns out to be impossible to keep the categories of order and disorder, chaos and cosmos, tidily separate from each other. Aeneas is at once the victim and the agent of titanic power. Rhetoric is not enough to maintain ultimate control over the forces that threaten the *imperium*, and the forces that have to be mobilized to dominate those threats are going to be very hard to distinguish in kind from the threats themselves.⁹⁵

V. SEQUELS

Later Latin epics continue to be enmeshed in this complex of ideas, and they continue to mobilize their first similes in order to set up their terms of debate over the roles and claims of certain kinds of order. Here I do no more than point to a couple of leading instances.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has the contest between order and disorder at its artistic and philosophical heart.⁹⁶ One of the first major developments in the poem is therefore Ovid's distinctive solution to the Lucretian and Virgilian titanic winds, showing that there will be control in this poem, but of a very different kind: instead of grouping all the winds together and confining them under a mountain like Virgil's Jupiter (*Aen.* 1.60–62), Ovid's creator-god disperses the winds to the four corners of the world and then “puts on top of them aether, clear and lacking in weight” (*haec super imposuit liquidum et grauitate carentem/aethera*, *Met.* 1.67–68).⁹⁷ The first simile in the poem builds on Virgil's first simile in order to set up an exaggerated version of the *Aeneid's* “statesman-simile.”⁹⁸ Virgil had used the realm of human politics to illustrate the providential natural order; now Ovid uses threatened chaos in the realm

⁹⁴ See Tarrant 2012 ad loc. for the echo here of the “black whirlwind” which Aeneas resembled in 10.603.

⁹⁵ Cf. Lyne 1983: 202–3 on the “indivisibility” of *uis*.

⁹⁶ A major theme in Ovidian scholarship (see Barchiesi 2005: CXXVIII–CXXIX): an important early statement in R. Brown 1987.

⁹⁷ Feeney 1991: 191.

⁹⁸ See Nicoll 1980: 178–79 for a full account of how closely Ovid's entire opening sequence (*Met.* 1.1–415) is modelled upon Virgil's (*Aen.* 1.1–304), with discussion of the two epics' respective opening similes; cf. Barchiesi 2005 on *Met.* 1.200–5 for Ovid's treatment of Virgil's first simile.

of human politics to illustrate the threat of chaos to Jupiter's providential dispensation. The first simile comes as Jupiter announces to the assembled gods that Lycaon has attempted to assassinate him, just as Augustus will have announced an unsuccessful assassination attempt on himself to a meeting of the Senate in the temple of Palatine Apollo (*Met.* 1.199–206)⁹⁹:

confremuere omnes studiisque ardentibus ausum talia deposcunt. sic, cum manus in pia saeuit	200
sanguine Caesareo Romanum exstinguere nomen, attonitum tanto subitae terrore ruinae humanum genus est totusque perhorruit orbis. nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum est, quam fuit illa Ioui. qui postquam uoce manuque	205
murmura compressit, tenuere silentia cuncti.	

They all made a hubbub and with blazing zeal asked for the person who had dared such a thing. Thus, when an impious band had the mad impulse to snuff out the Roman name with the blood of Caesar, the human race was appalled by such a great fear of sudden catastrophe and the whole globe shuddered: nor was the piety of your people, Augustus, less pleasing to you than that display was to Jupiter. And after he checked their murmurs with his voice and hand, all of them held their silence.

Here a new kind of political order is revealed, with the direct power of the autocrat on display in a very different atmosphere from that of the interstitial nature of Virgil's first statesman-simile.¹⁰⁰ Jupiter then goes on (*Met.* 1.253–61) to implement his plan of punishing human beings by returning the world to the state of primeval chaos (*Chaos*, *Met.* 1.7) out of which it has spent the last 200 lines trying to struggle. He begins by locking up all the winds in Aeolus's cave (1.262–63), just as his Virgilian predecessor had done—except for the South Wind (*emittitque Notum*, 1.264), which proceeds to run riot. In a surprisingly brief opening sequence Ovid has condensed variations on the universes of Lucretius and Virgil, with different conceptions of divinity, of order, and of control, which are to have their own strange kind of programmatic power for the rest of his epic.

⁹⁹ For this interpretation, as opposed to the still common view that the Ides of March are at issue, see A. G. Lee 1968 on *Met.* 1.200; Due 1974: 71–72; Barchiesi 2005 on *Met.* 1.200–5. Stephen Harrison points out to me the characteristic ambiguity of the reference in *sanguine Caesareo* (1.201, noted by Barchiesi 2005 ad loc.): Julius Caesar or Augustus are both initially in view, just as with *Caesar* and *Iulius* in Virg. *Aen.* 1.286, 288 (on which passage see Harrison 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Barchiesi 2005 on *Met.* 1.200–5.

A more abrupt challenge to Virgil's epic world-order is to be found in the first simile in Lucan's *De bello ciuili*, where the collapse of the Roman Republic is compared to the Stoic cosmos's return to primeval chaos (1.72–81), culminating in the throwing of all natural laws into confusion: *totaque discors/machina diuulsi turbabit foedera mundi* ("and the whole discordant structure of the convulsed universe will throw its laws into confusion," 1.79–80). Space forbids exploring the strategies of the Flavian epicists in any detail here. Statius has a georgic image of the strife (*discordia*, *Theb.* 1.137) between the brothers, describing two oxen that will not share the yoke (*Theb.* 1.131–36); a second simile brings in the expected storm, comparing the rain-lashed Polynices, journeying to Argos on foot, to a sailor caught in a winter storm (*Theb.* 1.370–75). Silius Italicus and Valerius Flaccus both use sly cunning in their first images, giving misleading initial images of deceit and of trickery: Hannibal is like a Dacian archer using poisoned arrows (*Pun.* 1.324–25); Jason's plot to get Acastus to join the expedition is compared to the wiles of a hunter who has stolen a lioness's cubs (*Arg.* 1.484–93). It is their second similes that shift to the expected register of chaos and allegorized storm: the besieged Saguntines use a catapult that acts like a thunderbolt to shoot at the Gigantesque Carthaginians (*Pun.* 1.356–59); the Argonauts are caught in a storm that is quelled by Neptune (*Arg.* 1.651–54), and their response to Jason's speech of reassurance is compared to that of a group of rustics, terrified by a storm, who have prayers said for them by a priest (*Arg.* 1.682–85). Claudian also plays cunningly with the expectations of the template in his *De raptu Proserpinae*. Pluto threatens to unleash an elemental war against the gods in order to gain a wife, so that the Titans would once more have been unchained, and Aeageon would once more have battled Jupiter's thunderbolts (1.42–47); but the Fates beseech him to ask Jupiter to provide a wife (1.48–67), and he relents. As the threat of elemental chaos recedes, the poem's first simile compares the abatement of Pluto's fierce temper to Aeolus confining the storm-wind Boreas within his bronze doors: "as when heavy Boreas arms himself with his hoarse whirlwind ... if by chance Aeolus shuts his bronze doors in his face, his empty onrush peters out and his storms are reduced to obedience and go back to their pens" (*ceu turbine rauco / cum grauis armatur Boreas ... si forte aduersus aenos / Aeolus obiecit postes, uanescit inanis / impetus et fractae redeunt in claustra procellae*, 1.69–75).

We close with the first similes in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where we may see how long-lastingly powerful is the appeal of these epic templates of chaos and cosmos. The poem's first simile illustrates the massive figure of the fallen Satan, lying at the bottom of Hell, and it compares his size to that of various

monsters, beginning with the titanic opponents of Jupiter first encountered in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The simile encapsulates the forces of chaos which have threatened divine order since the beginning of the epic tradition (*Paradise Lost* 1.196–202)¹⁰¹:

... in bulk as huge
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
 Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,
 Briarios or Typhon, whom the den
 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
 Leviathan, which God of all his works
 Created hugest that swim the ocean stream ...

In the next simile, the place that Satan lands on after he rouses himself is compared to the product of an eruption (1.230–38):

And such appeared in hue, as when the force
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill
 Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
 Of thundering Aetna, whose combustible
 And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
 And leave a singèd bottom all involved
 With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
 Of unblest feet.

Here we have an opposite effect from that of the first simile, although Milton is still working within the same epic tradition of interpretation. In the first simile the Titans, Briarios, and Typhon had been presented “straight,” as figures of pagan fable; in the second simile we see instead the violence of a rationalized and demythologized force of subterranean wind. Lucretius’s atheistic demolition of pagan religion is very useful to Milton at this point, for he is able to use Lucretian techniques in order to ridicule the truth-claims of the religion of the old epics. Lucretius had argued that there were no Titans fighting Jupiter, and that there was no monster under Etna; the volcanic activity of Etna was simply the action of subterranean wind, exactly as described here by Milton (231).¹⁰² Milton is clearly using those passages here, adapting

¹⁰¹ I cite Milton according to the text of Carey and Fowler 1968, with its modernizing spelling: see Carey and Fowler 1968: x–xiii for justification of this decision.

¹⁰² Fundamental discussion in Hardie 1986: 91, 181, 211 of such Lucretian passages as 1.722–25, 6.639–702; cf. Gale 1994: 187.

Lucretius in order to “demythologize” Virgil’s “remythologization” of pagan tradition in the aftermath of Lucretius.

Yet Milton is simultaneously “remythologizing” in his own distinctive and Christian way. Virgil’s redescription in religious terms of the forces of chaos has also left its impact on Milton, as we see if we compare his first two similes, which polarize out the ancient interpretative options for the mythological forces that embody chaos’s threat to cosmos. The Titans of pagan fable are not simply fictions for Milton, as they had been for Lucretius, but an imperfect memory of the real battle in heaven, between Lucifer and the true God.¹⁰³ And Satan is neither a figure of fable nor an allegorized piece of natural history, but a real force in the world, an actual instantiation of chaos and evil of a kind that Lucretius and Virgil could never have imagined.

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¹⁰³ A crucial passage is *PL* 1.738–50, which explicitly says that the pagan fable of Mulciber being flung from heaven by Jove is a false version of the earlier true event, the expulsion of the fallen angels from Heaven by God: on the Lucretian color of this passage, see Martindale 1986: 72–75. See Carey and Fowler 1968 on *PL* 1.50–83 for the importance to Milton of this parallel between the “false” Titans of fable and the actual devils, “since it justified treating the brief Biblical references to a war in heaven as more than allegory.”

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