

A NEW LOOK AT VERGIL'S NEW SUN (AEN. 7.720–721)

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Abstract: A new interpretation of *sole novo* at *Aen.* 7.720 (frequently flagged as confusing by commentators). I propose it refers to the action of Sirius, based on various parallels referring to Sirius as “doubling” the sun and scorching crops, as well as on contextual parallels between this and nearby similes in Vergil’s catalogue of Italian allies and their model similes in Homer’s Catalogue of Ships. Following this reading, the referent of the simile becomes not (exclusively) the immense number of Sabines, but their destructive potential. Accordingly, I also propose punctuating with a comma, not a period, at the end of 7.721.



uel cum sole nouo densae torrentur aristae
aut Hermi campo aut Lyciae flauentibus aruis.
(Verg. *Aen.* 7.720–21)

1. INTRODUCTION

THE PHRASE *SOLE NOVO* IN THE SIMILE QUOTED ABOVE HAS GIVEN SCHOLARS no end of trouble. “How the ripening July sun can be called *nouus*, I do not see!” says Horsfall, throwing up his hands in a rare sign of defeat for that formidable critic (Horsfall 2000, 472). Other scholars have either been equally candid in their frustration or have cheerfully ignored the problem.¹

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1. As far back as Servius, who is clearly guessing along with the best: *prima aestatis parte: nam proprie sol nouus est VIII. Kal. Ian.; sed tunc non sunt aristae* (“in

I wish in this article to propose a different interpretation of the phrase—and the simile—than has heretofore been suggested.

To begin by putting the problematic passage into context, it occurs within the catalogue of Italian allies in Book 7 of the *Aeneid*, capping the description of the Sabine troops (Verg. *Aen.* 7.718–722, trans. Ahl 2007, 181):²

the first part of summer: for strictly speaking, the new sun is eight days before the Kalends of January; but there are no ears of grain then,” in *Aen.* 7.720). Like Horsfall, Binder and Binder (2001, 171) acknowledge that “die Anbindung des zweiten Bildes und die Erklärung von 720 *sole novo* bereiten Schwierigkeiten”; see below for “the second image.” Of other modern commentators, Fordyce (1985, 191) professes uncertainty: “Elsewhere *sol nouus* means either ‘the early morning’ (*Geo.* i. 288) or ‘the beginning of the warm weather’, in spring (*Geo.* ii. 332). The second meaning provides an artificial contrast to the preceding line but is as inappropriate here as the first.” So too Conington and Nettleship (1883, 76), continuing: “It is difficult to see why either of these should be represented as baking the ears of corn.... Perhaps it may mean ‘an Eastern sun,’ like ‘sole recenti’ *Pers.* 5. 54.” Williams (1973, 221) follows Servius: “*Sole novo* seems to mean ‘at the beginning of summer.’” Warde Fowler (1918), Perret (1978), and Paratore (1981) ignore the line. It should be observed that Manilius uses *sol novus* quite differently (*Astr.* 2.776), of a sun perceived for the first time after the felling of an ancient forest, but that is unlikely to apply here despite the otherwise Vergilian resonances of the surrounding passage (see Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996, 351–53, on the Vergilianisms).

2. All other translations are my own. For a comparison of how translators have dealt with the phrase *sole novo*, I offer a sampling of Anglophone translations across the centuries, which largely parallel the range of interpretations cited in the previous note and below: “Or how feil eichyrris of corn thik growyng, / With the new sonnys heit byrsillit, doys hyng / On Hermy feildis in the symmyr tyde, / Or in the zallow corn flattis of Lyde” (Douglas 1513; Coldwell 1957–1964, whose text I have printed, glosses “byrsillit” as “scorched, burned, charred”); “Or like to standing corne, that parchid is with heat of sonne” (Phaer 1558); “Nor thicker harvests on rich Hermus rise, / Or Lycian fields, when Phoebus burns the skies” (Dryden 1697); “Or thick as stand the wheaten ears the young sun burneth there / On Hermus’ plain or Lycia’s lea a-yellowing for the hook” (Morris 1876); “as thick as the ears that ripen in the morning sunlight on the plain of the Hermus or the yellowing Lycian tilth” (Mackail 1885); “Thick as the ears of corn that bake in the orient sunshine / Over the plain of Hermus or the yellow prairies of Lycia” (Day Lewis 1954); “or just as thick as ears of corn / scorched by the eastern sun on Hermus’ plains / or Lycia’s yellow fields” (Mandelbaum 1971); “dense as the ears of corn baked by an early sun / on Hermus’ plain or Lycia’s burnished fields” (Fagles 2006); “or as / thick as the ears of grain that are warmed in spring by the new sun / either on Hermus’ plains or on Lycia’s golden fields” (Johnston 2012). (N.B. I have omitted these translations from the bibliography, as they are readily located; for a reasonably comprehensive list of English translations of the *Aeneid*, through 2012, see Keith 2018, 78–79.)

quam multi Libyco uoluuntur marmore fluctus
 saeuus ubi Orion hibernis conditur undis,
 uel cum sole nouo densae torrentur aristae 720
 aut Hermi campo aut Lyciae flauentibus aruis.
 scuta sonant pulsuque pedum conterrita tellus.

Countless as rolling waves on the marbled Libyan sea-swell
 When fierce Orion is setting in wintry and turbulent waters,
 Dense as ears of grain as they roast in the new season's sunshine
 Over the plains by the Hermus or Lycia's goldening farmlands,
 Shields clatter, terrified earth's ground down by the trample of footsteps.

Here we have winter waves in one simile matched by grain under the sun in another; the winter's devastating effect is evident in the adjective *saeuus* (7.719), but scholars have failed to reach consensus as to the intention of the second simile. Is it a gentle, ripening sun?³ Is it a sun that dries the grain?⁴ Or is it a scorching sun that destroys the crops?⁵ I would argue that none of these is precisely the answer, although the last is closest to accurate. Specifically, to air my conclusions in advance, we do not here have the “new” sun of spring or of early morning, but rather the “newly added”⁶ sun provided by a second, additional, augmenting sun—namely, Sirius, the Dog Star, bringer of devastating late summer heat and drought when it amplifies the sun at its morning rising in late July.⁷

3. Johnston (1981, 28) takes this as a “beneficent” image of “the hot sun ripening fields of grain to a golden hue”; Fordyce (1985, 191), despairing of any obvious meaning, simply notes that “in Asia, as in Italy, it is the *maturi soles* (*Geo.* i. 66) that bake the corn, not the *sol nouus*.”

4. E.g., Ross 1979, 243 n. 11. Servius, after failing to address satisfactorily (or at all) the reasoning behind *novus* (see n. 1), continues to skirt the question by providing an etymology of *arista* from *ariditas*; cf. O’Hara (1996, 196), who still takes *torrentur* as “scorched.”

5. E.g., Hornsby 1970, 30–31, although despite his description of the grain as “scorched by the sun” (30), he seems to consider the destruction as more implicit in the grain’s eventual harvesting by reapers than actually caused by the sun.

6. *OLD*² s.v. “novus” 5: “Additional to that already existing or present, fresh, further.”

7. Precise dates are impossible, as they change somewhat over time and a significant amount by location (and are notoriously tricky to calculate, see Robinson 2009). However, Robinson (2009, 362) gives July 30 as an (unusually) consistent date for the visible morning rising of Sirius at Rome, from 300 BCE to 401 CE (for the use of the visible rising, rather than the “true” rising at the horizon, see Robinson 2009, 358, and cf. Kidd [1997, 308], who takes Aratus’s ἄμ’ ἠελίω ἀνιόντα [*Phaen.* 332], of Sirius, as “mean[ing] the visible rising ahead of the sun, which is the traditional

2. BACKGROUND

Double similes are not overly common in the *Aeneid*;⁸ the one under consideration here has precedent in various “counting” similes from earlier epic.⁹ Those that accrue to catalogues and express the innumerability of the catalogue’s contents in a variety of ways, however, usually occur at the beginning and end of the catalogue, rather than in the middle;¹⁰ the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2 is the obvious *locus classicus* for such quantifying similes, particularly those in groups or “chains.” While this particular double counting simile does look back to *Iliad* 2, it in fact looks back further than the Catalogue of Ships, adhering most closely to an earlier double simile used when Agamemnon’s sham throwing in of the towel accidentally inspires the Greeks to launch their ships, rather than rousing them to fight (Hom. *Il.* 2.144–150):¹¹

phenomenon”); although cf. Varro, *Rust.* 1.28.2. For comparison, Pliny says that in Assyria (approximately 6.5 degrees further south than Rome) Sirius rises three days after the star Procyon’s rising on July 17, “on the 23rd day after the solstice” (*xvi kal. Aug. Assyriae procyon exoritur, dein post triduum fere ubique confessum inter omnes sidus ingens quod canis ortum vocamus, sole partem primam leonis ingresso: hoc fit post solstitium xxiii die*, HN 18.68.269); see also Robinson 2009, 364 and 374 n. 63, for the star’s latitudinal variation.

8. I generously count thirteen similes, at best, that could be considered double (that is, with two different and unrelated “vehicles”), not all equally fully formed, in the list of similes in Rieks 1981, 1093–96.

9. Horsfall (2000, 470–72) cites precedents and parallels for various aspects of each of these similes independently (e.g., waves: *Anth. Pal.* 7.273 [Leonidas], Verg. *G.* 2.108; grain: Hom. *Il.* 11.67–72, Catull. 48.5–6, Catull. 64.353–355), although noting (471) that ears of grain are a less common metric for uncountable numbers than waves on the sea.

10. Cf. Fraenkel 1945, 10–11. Subsequent to Vergil, similes find their place within catalogues, but those that are specifically modeled on the similes from *Iliad* 2 (such as those mentioned in n. 14) tend to remain outside the catalogue.

11. Obviously, not all elements of the similes are matched, as I discuss further below; however, the stormy sea followed by a field of wheat is uncommon. Knauer (1964) includes this parallel in his comparison tables; Conington and Nettleship (1883, 75 *ad* 7.718) also note the possibility of comparison between these two double similes; Briggs (1980, 15) likewise waves his hand in this direction. Vergil has also adapted this double simile at *G.* 3.196–201, on which see Thomas 1988, *ad loc.*, and he may be inspired by it for the opening simile of the *Aeneid* (Hunter 2006, 84–85; Hardie 2010, 18–19). On the internal connections within the chained similes of *Iliad* 2, see, e.g., Moulton 1977, 27–33, 38–42; Feeney 2014, 190–96.

κινήθη δ' ἀγορή φῆ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης
 πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο, τὰ μὲν τ' Εὐρός τε Νότος τε 145
 ὄρορ' ἐπαΐξας πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελῶν.
 ὡς δ' ὅτε κινήσῃ Ζέφυρος βαθὺ λήϊον ἐλθὼν
 λάβρος ἐπαιγίζων, ἐπὶ τ' ἡμίει ἀσταχέσσειν,
 ὡς τῶν πᾶσ' ἀγορή κινήθη· τοὶ δ' ἀλαλητῶ
 νῆας ἔπ' ἐσσεύοντο, ποδῶν δ' ὑπένερθε κόνιη 150
 ἴστατ' ἀειρομένη·

And the assembly was stirred like the long waves of the sea, the Icarian sea, which Euros and Notos roused in their downward onslaught from father Zeus's clouds—and as when Zephyros stirs the deep crop, coming furious, rushing, and flattens the ears of grain, thus was their whole assembly stirred; and they rushed to the ships with a hullabaloo, and under their feet, the dust was set flying high.

The broader implications of the imitation of this particular simile as pertains to Clausus and the Sabines will not concern us here;¹² we should note, however, that Apollonius Rhodius serves as an intermediary between the two, as he imitates the first half of Homer's double simile to describe the Colchians mustering and launching their ships in pursuit of the Argonauts.¹³ Apollonius, however, replaces the second half with a simile of countless leaves drawn (partially) from the simile chain immediately prior to the Catalogue of Ships (*Argon.* 4.214–219):¹⁴

12. As a purely speculative example, one might imagine that parallels between the disastrous misfiring of Agamemnon's ploy, resulting in the Greeks' tumultuous flight, and the disastrous encounter at the Allia (the subject of *Aen.* 7.717, the line just prior to the simile), resulting in the Romans' tumultuous flight (cf. Livy 5.38), could have something to do with it. Obviously, this is not the main thrust of the simile, but see the discussion of "multiple-correspondence" similes and "irrational correspondence" in West 1969 and 1970 (the latter article specifically on Vergil's adaptation of earlier similes), even if my suggestion is one associative step beyond West's approach; cf. Lyne 1989, 88–92. Note, too, the observation of Heiden (2008, 150) that "the specter of death" looms over both the Catalogue of Ships itself and the similes that precede it.

13. Hunter 2015, 111 *ad* 4.215. It appears to be Apollonius who adds the waves' wintry aspect to the simile.

14. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.468. Apollonius is drawing on multiple sources here (see Hunter 2015, 111–12), but it is also clear that later poets saw this as a gesture toward the Catalogue of Ships; post-Vergilian poets such as Manilius (*Astr.* 5.726–733), Seneca (*Oed.* 600–607), and Valerius Flaccus (*Arg.* 6.163–170) engage with the Homeric, Apollonian, and Vergilian pre-, mid-, and post-catalogue similes (both those dealt with here and those at *Aen.* 6.309–312) in such a way as to demonstrate that they

parallels for *torreo* evoking the sun's more blistering heat, of the sort that might indeed frighten the earth.²⁰ As I foreshadowed at the beginning of this article, I would argue that such an intense blast of heat as to merit these resonances can only reasonably be provided by the Dog Star, Sirius.

3. REINTERPRETATION

Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, was well known in antiquity for his devastation of the earth and all her life at his late-summer rising, a destruction caused in particular by the intensity of the heat that he was thought to add to the sun; images of the star parching earth and plants are familiar.²¹ Vergil himself refers to Sirius scorching the people of India in precisely the same manner as the *sol novus* here (*iam rapidus torrens sitientis Sirius Indos / ardebat caelo*, “now ravening Sirius, scorching the thirsty Indians, was burning in the sky,” G. 4.425–426).²² There may, further, be an implication of Sirius's scorching rays hidden in Vergil's use of *torrida semper ab igni* at G. 1.234, as the lines of Eratosthenes's *Hermes* which this passage

neutral “be dried by the sun” rather than “be parched by the sun,” but even in these cases, *torreo* seems to mean “dry to an absolute crisp.” (The anonymous reviewer on an earlier version of this article helpfully pointed out to me that Pliny's prosaic language ought not in any case to be a parallel for Vergil's poetic diction; however, it must be observed that Pliny does also demonstrably borrow phrasing from Vergil, e.g., the unmarked quotation of *quae tenuem exhalat nebulam* [G. 2.217] in *quae tenues exhalat nebulas* [HN 17.3.25].) For comparison, Varro uses *exarescere* to refer to the last stage of grain maturing, in early June (*Rust.* 1.32.1), while Columella uses *torreatur* (*Rust.* 2.20.1) of grain that is left too long in the field and burned by Sirius (see further below). The positive didacticism—and meaning—of G. 1.298 (*et medio tostas aestu terit area fruges*) is, of course, a counterexample to this drying action as a negative principle; however, Vergil had already reshaped part of the equally positive G. 1.296 (*et foliis undam trepidi despumat aëni*) into a negative context earlier in book 7 (*Aen.* 7.463–465). There is, after all, more than one way to dry grain.

20. Cf. the words of Tellus to Jupiter as she pleads for him to stop Phaethon's destruction of the earth: *tostos en aspice crines* (“Just look at my scorched hair!” Ov. *Met.* 2.283). In specific relation to crops, and both in fact describing the effect of Sirius, likewise cf. Ov. *Fast.* 4.940 (*tosta ... tellus*) and Columella, *Rust.* 2.20.1 (*seges ... torreatur*), both discussed below (see p. 52 and n. 29).

21. See especially Green 2014, 130–32, 139–43, with particular focus on late Republican and Augustan poets; see also Stover 2003, 137–41. Arat. *Phaen.* 332–335 and Cic. *Arat.* fr. 33.113–119 note in particular the star's adverse effect on vegetation.

22. Servius notes on this phrase his impression that Vergil here is using “Sirius” to mean the sun: *Sirius enim a poetis et pro sole ponitur; ab aliquo eorum canicula intellegitur* (“Since ‘Sirius’ is used by poets for the sun, too; some of them mean the Dog-Star,” in G. 4.424).

best be accomplished *between* the summer solstice and the morning rising of Sirius (*Rust.* 1.32)—between mid-June and late July—and these dates are (almost) universally confirmed by other data.²⁷ Columella, moreover, is very specific about the reason for harvesting before Sirius rises (*Rust.* 2.20.1–2):

sed cum matura fuerit seges, **antequam torreatur uaporibus aestiui sideris, qui sunt uastissimi per exortum Caniculae, celeriter demetatur**; nam dispendiosa est cunctatio, primum quod auibis praedam ceterisque animalibus praebet, deinde quod grana et ipsae spicae culmis arentibus et aristis celeriter decidunt. si uero procellae uentorum aut turbines inceserunt, maior pars ad terram defluit; propter quae recrastinari non debet, sed aequaliter flauentibus iam satis, antequam ex toto grana indurescant, cum rubicundum colorem traxerunt, messis facienda est, ut potius in area et in acruo quam in agro grandescant frumenta; constat enim, si tempestiue decisa sint, postea capere incrementum.

But when the crop is mature, **let it be harvested quickly, before it can be scorched by the emanations of the summer star, the Dog Star, which are extremely destructive at its rising**; for delay means loss, first of all because it allows depredation by birds and other animals, and secondly because kernels and even whole ears quickly fall as the stalks and beards grow dry. Furthermore, if hurricanes of wind or twisters fall on the crop, a rather large portion of it drops to the ground. On account of these things, there ought to be no delaying, but once the kernels turn uniformly yellow—even a reasonable portion of them—the harvest must happen before they grow entirely hard, when they have taken on a ruddy hue. That way the grains can keep swelling on the threshing floor, and in a heap, rather than in the field; for it is a fact that if they are cut at the right time, they keep filling out afterwards.

While one possible response is that the harvest may have occurred later in the Asian locations that Vergil has specified for the simile,²⁸ there are

27. Cf. Plin. *HN* 18.10.56, Shaw 2013. However, Varro's *plerique* is a clear indication that this was not the universal practice; see also Plin. *HN* 18.10.60, Broughton 1936, and Shaw 2013, 24, 324 nn. 88–89, for discussion of some variation, whether caused by locational variation or by calendrical drift.

28. For example, at least under the Hittites and presumably later as well, the harvest took place in Anatolia between June and September; see Demirel 2017, 399–400, and also the previous note. However, the Hermus River and the agricultural regions of

other more plausible and more meaningful possibilities. Most crucially, Sirius's explicit destruction of the grain harvest also occurs elsewhere in epic; notably, Valerius Flaccus leaves no doubt in another simile, located in southern Italy, that the harvest can be affected by Sirius: *sic cum stabulis et messibus ingens / ira deum et Calabri populator Sirius arvi / incubuit* ("thus when Sirius, great wrath of the gods and ravager of the Calabrian field, has fallen on stables and harvests," Val. Fl. Arg. 1.682–684).²⁹ The hungover lay-abed Persius frames the wastefulness of his condition in similar terms, his friend telling him: *siccas insana canicula messes / iam dudum coquit* ("the raving Dog Star has long been baking the harvest dry," Pers. 3.5–6). Granting a normative Italian production cycle to the grain of Vergil's simile, therefore, there may be a further implication in the simile that the crop could not be harvested in time³⁰—a reading that only adds to the sense of waste and devastation that we have already identified in *torrentur*, as well as contributing to the simile's significance in the broader context of Book 7's pervasive themes and even those of the *Aeneid* as a whole.

Lycia have a more Mediterranean climate than that of inland Anatolia (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 6 [fig. 1.4]).

29. As Broughton (1936) and Shaw (2013, 24) observe that the dates of the harvest are pushed later as one moves further north, the explicit southern locale of Valerius's simile is notable. Ovid forges a more complicated link between Sirius and scorched wheat-fields in connection with the sacrifice of a dog to Rigobito to prevent wheat-rust blighting crops: *est Canis, Icarium dicunt, quo sidere moto / tosta sitit tellus praecipiturque seges* ("There is a Dog, they call it the Icarian; when this star is moved, the scorched earth thirsts, and the crop is culled too soon," Ov. Fast. 4.939–940). Ovid has here collapsed into one the late April/early May evening setting and late July morning rising of Sirius, and their respective effects of crop-blight and scorching heat (see, variously, Zadoks 1982; Gee 2002; Fox 2004, 115–16; Robinson 2007, 140–41, 150–51; Palmer 2018). However, Pliny later makes it clear that there is indeed a common (false) belief that rust is partially caused by intense sun (*rorem inustum sole acri frugibus robiginis causam esse*, HN 18.68.275), a belief to which Ovid may also be alluding.

30. A striking example is provided by Pliny, HN 18.78.340–341 (see further Shaw 2013, 27): a farmer harvesting *ardentissimo aestu* ("at the high heat of summer") left part of his crop in the field while he brought the rest under cover; shortly thereafter, the remainder was destroyed *saevo imbre* ("by a vicious rainstorm"). Cf. the Etruscan or pseudo-Etruscan prophecy of Vegoia (see Adams 2003, 179–82), which includes *fructus saepe ledentur decutienturque imbribus atque grandine, caniculis interient, robigine occidentur* ("your produce will often be damaged and knocked off by rainstorms and hail, will perish under Dog Stars, will be killed by rust," text from Valvo 1988, 3).

of the harvest's onset (*messorem induceret arvis*) implies an earlier temporal setting;³⁴ and the ferocity of the wind in this season is emphasized, as it was in Homer's original simile. In the light of these Vergilian parallels and precedents, as well as their subsequent interpretation by later authors, the devastation implied in the stormy waters and fiery heat of the double simile of *Aeneid* 7 therefore becomes more apparent; and it is likewise apparent that we can read both halves, rather than just the first simile, as belonging to the pattern of escalating elemental destruction that Johnston has identified in this book.³⁵

Furthermore, in addition to intertextual evidence for the destructive implications of the second simile, the interpretation of the *sol novus* as Sirius can be reinforced by mention of Orion *setting* in the preceding simile, producing the opposite meteorological effect.³⁶ Sirius was imagined to be the faithful dog at Orion's heels, always accompanying him (cf. Hes. *Op.* 609–610, Aratus, *Phaen.* 326–327); Homer had even referred to Sirius as “Orion's dog” (ὄν τε κύν' Ὀρίωνος ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσι, *Il.* 22.29; cf. Aratus, *Phaen.* 755) in his simile picturing Achilles as Sirius.³⁷ It may be that the explicit astral reference in the first simile was meant to evoke thoughts of a parallel (indeed, a polar opposite) phenomenon in the second, as has sometimes been recognized of the explicit seasonal reference in the first and its tacit inclusion in the second.³⁸ Furthermore, as scholars have observed

with *torreatur* a likely echo of Vergil, while his description of the storms is at least suggestive of poetic language (especially *ventorum procella* and *turbo*).

34. Vergil's express mention of barley also emphasizes the *beginning* of the harvest; cf. Plin. *HN* 18.18.80 (*rapitur omne a prima statim maturitate festinantius quam cetera*, “all barley is snatched right away, as soon as it is first ripe, more hastily than the other grains”).

35. Johnston 1981; she addresses this simile-pair on p. 28. See also Harrison 1985, 99–102, discussing the book's “gradually intensifying moving-water images” as the narrative “move[s] towards the full declaration of hostilities” (99), although he does not include this specific simile.

36. Winter storms around the setting of Orion: e.g., Hes. *Op.* 619–621; Aratus, *Phaen.* 300–310; Cic. *Arat.* fr. 33.72–82.

37. For another sort of (post-Vergilian) association between Orion and Sirius, see Gee 2002; for investigation of possible Indo-European etymological connections between Sirius, Orion, the sun, and other astral temporal and seasonal markers, see Bader 2003.

38. Or rejected, as Horsfall 2000, 472: “Though Lat. authors do at times employ a simple polar division of the year into winter and summer ..., that is a quite distinct idiom not to be invoked here.” But note Binder and Binder 2001, 171, with an important list of the oppositions between the two similes: “*winterliche* Meeresflut und *reifendes* Kornfeld: Winter/Sommer, Menge/Dichte, Meer/Land, hohe Wogen / flache Ebene,

that Vergil's grain simile here is indebted to Catullus's image of Achilles reaping Trojans like grain *sole sub ardenti* ("under a blazing sun," 64.354),³⁹ the implicit evocation of Achilles through the intertext bolsters a secondary allusion to Homer's image of Achilles as the destructive Sirius.⁴⁰

It becomes clear, then, that despite the ancestry of Vergil's pair of similes in quantifying similes, Vergil takes a sharp interpretative turn that is even reflected in seeming anacoluthon:⁴¹ the Sabine troops, it turns out, are being compared not so much to the countless waves and ears of grain that we find in ancestors and descendants of the simile (although naturally the innumerability is still intended, and expected until we near the end),⁴² but to the destructive potential of the natural forces that create those waves and destroy that grain,⁴³ much as in the original Homeric pair of similes. We might even do well to re-punctuate with a comma at the end of 721 and translate thus: "How the many breakers are rolled on the Libyan surf when cruel Orion sets in the winter waves, or when dense ears of grain are scorched by extra sun, either on the plain of the Hermus or in the fields of

Wasser/Feldfrucht, Nordafrika/Kleinasien" (italics original). (Kühlmann [1973, 216] likewise points out, albeit more generally, the chiasmic arrangement of place and time found in *Libyco marmore ... hibernis undis ... sole novo ... Hermi campo*.) We can add some additional pairs to Binder and Binder's list: Orion's setting/Sirius's rising, water/fire.

39. Ross 1987, 35–36, also pointing out Ovid's multitiered allusion to Vergil and Catullus at *Her.* 5.111–112; Ovid's plural *solibus* there predictably answers no questions.

40. Perhaps the fusion of Achilles's fiery destruction of men and grain also owes something to Lycophron, who pairs an image of spears bristling like grain with an image of the land aflame to describe the devastation of war: καὶ δὴ καταίθει γαῖαν ὀρχηστής Ἄρης, / στρόμβω τὸν αἵματηρὸν ἐξάρχων νόμον. / ἅπανα δὲ χθὼν προῦμμάτων δηουμένη / κείται, πέφρικαν δ' ὥστε ληίου γύαι / λόγχαις ἀποστίλβοντες ("and dancer Ares sets the land ablaze, leading his bloody strain in a whirligig. And all the land lies ravaged before my eyes, and the acres bristle, shining with spears like those of the cropland," *Alex.* 249–253). Cf. Hornsby's reading of the grain of Vergil's simile (Hornsby 1970, 31).

41. Horsfall 2000, 471: "uel cum Not rigorously parallel after **quam multi**, but given the close similarity in sense, the faint irregularity of form is welcome."

42. Taking *quam* in the sense of *OLD*² "quam" 6a: "(without antecedent adv.) To which extent, in which degree, as." By contrast, Conington and Nettleship 1883, 75–76: "Strictly speaking the construction is 'aut quam multae aristae cum sole novo densae torrentur,' but as 'densae' really does duty for 'multae,' we may say that Virg. expresses himself as if the comparison in v. 718 had been introduced by 'ac veluti,' 'quales,' or some similar form"; so too Williams 1973, 221.

43. Kühlmann (1973, 217), assuming instead that the flowing movement of sea and plain is the primary point of the simile-pair, finds "kaum eine Entsprechung" in the couplet that follows.

Lycia as they shade to gold, the shields sound, and the earth is terrified by the tromping of feet.”

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