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# How the Winds Blow: Inherited Anemologies in Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*

**Abstract:** This chapter argues that the short description at Valerius Flacchus 1.577–578 of Boreas making a woodland groan, crops flatten, and the sea turn black is largely derived from similes in earlier literature, and that recognition of its specific sources is vital to understanding the local function and broader implications of these lines. Looking especially at the lines' inheritance from passages in Vergil, Lucretius, Hesiod, and Homer, it argues that by reframing simile as reality, the lines engage both with the scientific tradition of weather prognostication and with an established tradition of representing cosmic order and disorder in the first and second similes of epic.

## Introduction

Shortly after the Argonauts set sail, in Valerius Flaccus's Flavian *Argonautica*, they are spotted by the North Wind, Boreas, who has stationed himself atop Mt. Pangaeon in Thrace. The outrageous sight of mankind trespassing upon the as-yet-unviolated sea causes Boreas to go racing off to the Aeolian Islands, where he will complain about this unconscionable transgression and will rouse a cosmic storm with the full cooperation of Aeolus and the other winds:[1]

> interea medio saevus permissa profundo
> carbasa Pangaea Boreas speculatus ab arce
> continuo Aeoliam Tyrrhenaque tendit ad antra
> concitus. omne dei rapidis nemus ingemit alis,
> strata Ceres motuque niger sub praepete pontus.
>
> (Val. Fl. 1.574–578)

1 All translations are my own.

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> Meanwhile, savage Boreas, having espied from his Pangaean citadel the sails let out mid-deep,[2] heads immediately for Aeolia and the Tyrrhenian caverns, roused to action. All the woodland[3] groans under the god's ravening wings; the crop is flattened and the sea black under his swift motion.

The last two lines of this passage are at the center of the present study, but they will not, for the most part, be its focus. The three images presented here — the woodland groaning under the wind's force, wind-flattened grain, and a wind-darkened sea — are, to varying degrees and in various combinations, indebted to several highly-pedigreed intertextual chains of similes; and in order to understand the relevance of Valerius's choices and manipulations, including his significant transference of the images out of simile-form and into the narrative, we must first understand the complex, inherited, literary texture of these lines.[4]

In referring to intertextual chains, I am simultaneously looking to two overlapping but distinct modes of allusive composition, most commonly referred to as "window reference"[5] and "combinatorial imitation".[6] As a concept, however, the idea of an intertextual chain especially emphasizes the repetition and development of an image as a set-piece *topos*, which thus acts as an especially overt sort of window reference in proactively demanding its reader's attention to its sequential inheritance.[7] When it comes to intertextual chains of similes specifically, such a

**2** Commentators disagree over the implications of *permissa*: for Zissos 2008, 329, it is a technical term (*OLD* 'permitto' 2a) that "speaks to the setting of the sails" (cf. Mozley 1936, 47, "sails set to the wind"); for Kleywegt 2005, 343–344, it is to do with the Argonauts' entrusting of their ship to the sea. There is no reason that we should not also understand a reference, focalized through Boreas, to divine dispensation granting the Argo's voyage (*OLD* 'permitto' 6), with ellipsis of a verb like *ire*, given this exact use of the participle in Neptune's speech just before the conclusion of the subsequent storm (*veniant Phariae Tyriaeque carinae*/ ***permissum****que putent*, Val. Fl. 1.644–645).

**3** Mozley 1936, 47 takes this as "every forest", but despite the subsequent cosmic implications of Boreas's flight, it is unlikely that he is here having an effect on the entire world.

**4** Similes — including similes specifically involving the winds — have long been a particular concern of Stephen Harrison's; thus I offer this paper very much in his honor.

**5** Thomas 1986, 188; see now Thomas 2020 for a retrospective on the idea's genesis. Also called "double" (McKeown 1987, 37), "two-tier" (Hinds 1987, 151 n. 16), or "multi-tier" (Nelis 1992, 15) allusion or imitation.

**6** Hardie 1989, 3; Thomas 1986, 193 calls it "conflation" or "multiple reference", and Burrow et al. 2020, 303 term it "cluster imitation".

**7** The two are only overlapping concepts: an example of an intertextual chain that is not also a straightforward example of window reference is the lineage descending from Homer's famous "many mouths" *topos* at *Il.* 2.488–490, well-discussed by Hinds 1998, 34–47 and substantially extended through Clément-Tarantino's 2006, 260–279 study of the *topos*'s connections with the Vergilian Fama, whose predecessors and afterlife are enormous (Clément-Tarantino 2006, Hardie 2012). For the thorny intersection of intention and intertext, see especially Farrell 2005.

"serial reading of sequences of comparisons"[8] allows us to interpret the similes not just in connection to their local context, but as hypertextual portals through which earlier comparisons and analogies may — even must — be evoked.[9] It is possible, of course, that this has always been a function of extended epic similes, as Homeric scholars have been arguing: that their very openness originated as a vertical openness backwards into the tradition as well as horizontally outward from their present context.[10] In what follows, I shall almost exclusively concentrate on this vertical mode of reading, examining how simultaneously combinatorial and chaining compositional techniques in the selection, construction, and deployment of similes build up an ineluctable, layered meaning through repetition of language and image.[11]

To return to Valerius, the earliest source for his combined image of a crop flattened by the wind and a sea roughened by the same — not, in fact, a common pairing, in our surviving material[12] — is the stampede of the Greek soldiers towards their ships in *Iliad* 2, when Agamemnon's scheme for rousing his army to fight goes awry:

> κινήθη δ' ἀγορὴ φὴ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης
> πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο, τὰ μέν τ' Εὖρός τε Νότος τε
> ὤρορ' ἐπαΐξας πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελάων.
> ὡς δ' ὅτε κινήσῃ Ζέφυρος βαθὺ λήϊον ἐλθὼν
> λάβρος ἐπαιγίζων, ἐπί τ' ἠμύει ἀσταχύεσσιν,
> ὣς τῶν πᾶσ' ἀγορὴ κινήθη·
>
> (Hom. *Il.* 2.144–149)

> And the assembly was stirred like the long waves of the sea, the Icarian sea, which Euros and Notos rouse in their downward onslaught from father Zeus's clouds — and as when Zephyros stirs the deep crop, coming furiously, rushing, and the crop bends thereto with its ears, so was their whole assembly stirred.

**8** Harrison 2020, 27–28.

**9** See especially Harrison 2003; Feeney 2014; Harrison 2020.

**10** Indeed, *any* established repetition of phrase or type-scene in orally composed poetry may have always had the potential to function like this; intertextuality would merely be a textually-codified version of traditional referentiality. On similes in particular, see e.g. Scott 1974; Muellner 1990; Dué 2005; 2010.

**11** On the construction of a coherent program of intertextual allusion, see also Gail Trimble's chapter in this volume.

**12** Apart from Verg. *Aen*. 7.718–721 (for which, see Krasne 2019), the passages discussed in this paper, and the numerous passages indebted to Hom. *Il.* 20.223–229 (see p. 241), only Val. Fl. 3.91–94 and Stat. *Theb*. 5.11–16 offer a somewhat similar pairing of sea and grain. While these two last passages are, on one level, simply using field and sea as a commonplace synecdoche for the world as a whole, both also seem to be engaged with the texts under consideration in the present study.

In this pair of similes, Agamemnon's words act as the forceful wind, and the numerous soldiers react like the sea and grain, although their subsequent headlong rush might also be seen as belatedly reflecting the winds' action.[13] Apart from Valerius's aforementioned collapsing of simile into reality, two primary differences stand out between Homer's passage and Valerius's: Homer makes no mention of the woodlands that feature in the first line of Valerius's description, and the North Wind is notably absent from Homer's list of acting winds.[14] The specific image of the sea turning black under the wind's motion can again be traced back to the *Iliad*, where two similes describe a black sea under a newly-risen wind — in one, where the image itself is closer, the wind is Zephyrus, not Boreas, but in the other, Zephyrus is working in concert with Boreas, and the winds are even blowing from Thrace:

> οἵη δὲ **Ζεφύροιο** ἐχεύατο πόντον ἔπι **ῥιὶξ**
> ὀρνυμένοιο νέον, **μελάνει δέ τε πόντος ὑπ' αὐτῆς**
> (Hom. *Il.* 7.63–64)

> And like the ruffling of a newly-risen Zephyros spreads over the sea, and the sea blackens under it.

> ὡς δ᾽ ἄνεμοι δύο πόντον ὀρίνετον ἰχθυόεντα,
> **Βορέης καὶ Ζέφυρος, τώ τε Θρῄκηθεν ἄητον,**
> ἐλθόντ᾽ ἐξαπίνης· ἅμυδις δέ τε **κῦμα κελαινὸν**
> **κορθύεται**, πολλὸν δὲ παρὲξ ἅλα φῦκος ἔχευεν·
> (Hom. *Il.* 9.4–7)

> And like two winds stir up the fishy sea, Boreas and Zephyros, which blow from Thrace, coming suddenly; and the black wave crests up all together, and the sea casts out much seaweed.

It is these passages that allow us to make the connection between a black sea and a choppy sea, although the two are not always identical.

The incorporation of the North Wind and noisy woods into the Homeric simile's roughened sea and flattened grain, however, is not Valerius's own innovation.

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**13** So too Seymour 1891, 79 *ad Il.* 2.149, who observes that "both comparisons are meant to depict the whole scene".

**14** That Valerius noticed and responded to this singular absence — either on his own or inspired by earlier imitations — is plain from his more direct adaptation of the Homeric simile in a later book: *nec tot ab extremo fluctus agit aequore nec sic*/ *fratribus adversa Boreas respondet ab unda* ("nor does Boreas drive so many swells from the edge of the water, nor thus does he reply to his brothers from an opposed wave", Val. Fl. 6.163–164). Here, he explicitly names only Boreas, while anonymizing the other winds. On Valerius's precise imitation of Homer's extensive simile chain from *Iliad* 2 in this passage (Val. Fl. 6.163–170) that makes clear the allusion, see Baier 2001, 87–91, 158–160; Fucecchi 2006, 193–201; Krasne 2019, 50–51.

Instead, the combination comes from the intervening tradition, where it is already found in what is arguably Valerius's most direct and immediate model, a simile from Vergil's *Georgics*:[15]

> tum cursibus auras
> tum vocet, ac per aperta volans ceu liber habenis
> aequora vix summa vestigia ponat harena:
> qualis Hyperboreis **Aquilo** cum densus ab oris
> incubuit, Scythiaeque hiemes atque arida differt
> nubila; **tum segetes altae campique natantes**
> **lenibus horrescunt flabris, summaeque sonorem**
> **dant silvae, longique urgent ad litora fluctus**;
> ille volat simul arva fuga simul aequora verrens.
> (Verg. *G.* 3.193–201)

> Then, then let [the well-trained race horse] challenge the winds in his courses, and flying across the open flats as though free of reins, let him scarcely place his hoof-prints on the top of the sand: such as when a compressed[16] **Aquilo** [*North Wind*] from Hyperborean shores bears down and scatters[17] the winters of Scythia and the dry fogs; **then, the deep crops and watery plains prickle with its smooth blasts, and the tops of the forests make a din, and long waves press toward the shores**; he flies on, scouring fields and seas alike in his flight.

Here, we have the North Wind sweeping over land and sea, which respond to his flight: the woods make noise, and the sea and crops are stirred by the wind's passage. These are essentially the same images that we subsequently find in Valerius. In terms of Vergil's own sources here, we can again look to the simile from *Iliad* 2, since much of the *Georgics*' simile is distinctly Homeric.[18] Even though a single, Romanized North Wind, Aquilo, replaces Homer's three Greek winds from the East, South, and West, nevertheless the "long waves" and "deep crops" are direct translations of the original

**15** For previous claims concerning his model(s), see n. 19.

**16** Scholars disagree — or express *aporia* — over the implications of *densus* (e.g. Miles 1975, 182 ["concentrated"]; Thomas 1988, ii.77 *ad loc.* ["'in its power', not 'thick [with rain]'"]; Mynors 1990, 212 *ad loc.* ["unexplained. … It might mean 'continuous' or 'concentrated'"]), but Theophr. *Vent*. 2 specifically notes that the compression of air to the north (and south) results in the strength of the northern (and southern) wind, which seems pertinent here; see Mayhew 2018, 105ff. for discussion of the Theophrastus passage.

**17** Cf. Bailey 1947, 645 *ad* Lucr. 1.272: "'scatters', 'drives them this way and that'"; Mynors 1990 notes that "Aquilo is associated with clear skies". The Aristotelean *Problemata* likewise see Boreas as a clearing force (Arist. [*Pr.*] 25.18 = 939b4–5; 26.27 = 943a2; etc.); however, Theophrastus in the *De Ventis* notes that some people claim that Boreas brings clouds (Theophr. *Vent*. 61).

**18** Cf. Thomas 1988, ii.76–77, who nevertheless sees "the similarities [as] fairly slight". Mynors 1990, 212 *ad loc*. does not appear to notice the resemblance, and he denies any potential destructiveness of the wind.

simile. But the motivating sources for a number of other elements — including the North Wind and the noisy forest — are still to be found in other models; they are not Vergil's invention any more than they are Valerius's.

At this point we may ask why Vergil, and subsequently Valerius, chooses the north wind as his focus. If it were only Valerius who did so, we might point to the narrative as motivation — the Argonauts are sailing near Boreas's Thracian territory, and he has sons among the Argo's crew. But Vergil's choice of — and emphasis on — Aquilo is not obviously motivated by the immediate narrative context of the *Georgics*, and Valerius will likewise prove to have additional considerations in mind. Second, what motivates Vergil's and Valerius's combination of these several disparate, inherited elements into a single image? The choice of Boreas or Aquilo, the wind flattening the crops, the sea prickling or turning black under the wind, and the noisy woods all appear to have different origins. But combinatorial allusion does not tend to combine unrelated sources without purpose; indeed, it often serves as a commentary on perceived connections between its intermingled sources, which is certainly true here. Finally, why does Valerius choose the *Georgics* simile as his primary model? It is not a universally-recognized fact that he does so: Andrew Zissos, for instance, proposes only Boreas' trip to abduct Orithyia from Athens, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as a parallel for "the baleful effects of Boreas' flight",[19] while some commentators suggest no overarching parallel at all.[20] But since there is, in fact, a high level of clear correspondence between the two passages, as shown above, we should treat the allusion and the careful echoes as meaningful.

**19** As Zissos 2008, 331 notes (cf. Galli 2007, 305), the description of Boreas's flight from Thrace at Ov. *Met*. 6.703–706 is definitely an important antecedent here, and in fact it derives from the same tradition. However, although it has the sea prickling (*perhorruit aequor*, 704), the wind in the treetops (*pulvereamque trahens per summa cacumina pallam*, 705), and a sweeping flight (*verrit humum*, 706), for which see below, it does not contain the elements of noise or flattened grain. While Galli 2007, 305–306 likewise gestures to Ovid's Boreas and also notes both the *Georgics* simile and Lucr. 1.273–276, discussed below, as examples of "un motivo ricorrente" that features the arrival of a wind and a description of its effects, for her, the passage's primary model is Allecto at *Aen*. 7.511–515 (which only contains blowing woodlands) and *Aen*. 7.526 (where the quaking crop is metaphorical).
**20** Nothing in Kleywegt 2005 or Spaltenstein 2002.

## Homer and Hesiod

To begin with Vergil's choice of the North Wind for his simile, although it plays no part in the Homeric original, at least one explanation is straightforward. His comparison of the racehorse to Aquilo is noticeably indebted not just to the simile from *Iliad* 2, but to a second passage of the *Iliad*, where Aeneas is describing the wind-sired horses possessed by Erichthonius:[21]

> τάων καὶ Βορέης ἠράσσατο βοσκομενάων,
> ἵππῳ δ' εἰσάμενος παρελέξατο κυανοχαίτῃ·
> αἳ δ' ὑποκυσάμεναι ἔτεκον δυοκαίδεκα πώλους.
> αἳ δ' ὅτε μὲν σκιρτῷεν ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν,
> ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀνθερίκων καρπὸν θέον οὐδὲ κατέκλων·
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ σκιρτῷεν ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης,
> ἄκρον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνα ἁλὸς πολιοῖο θέεσκον.
>
> (Hom. *Il.* 20.223–229)

> And Boreas desired the [mares] as they grazed, and likening himself to a dark-maned horse, he lay with them; and they, conceiving, bore twelve foals. And these, whenever they leapt over the grain-giving plowland, ran over the surface of the crop of grain and did not break it; but whenever they leapt over the broad back of the sea, they ran over the surface of the grey sea's breaker.

Homer's horses skim over the crop and waves without leaving a trace: this image, too, engenders a long line of imitations in later poetry,[22] usually describing the miraculous running ability of certain humans, including Camilla in the *Aeneid*, rather than horses. Vergil's divergence from the tradition here is evident in the forceful effect that the wind of his simile *does* have on the crops and sea,[23] as they ripple and roll under its passage — this is the telltale inheritance from the simile in *Iliad* 2. The wind is a wind, and the well-bred horse of the *Georgics* is only a horse, although the two seem to converge in the ambiguous final line of the simile.[24] But even so, Vergil's Aquilo is clearly chosen as an overt nod to the specific wind who sired Erichthonius's horses: Erichthonius was mentioned as the *primus inventor* of *quadriga*-racing at *G.* 3.103–122, to which this segment on breeding and training horses looks back, and

**21** Noted by Jahn 1905; Gale 2000, 262 n.105; Schindler 2000, 169–170; Giannotti 2021, 32.

**22** Collected in Ziogas 2013, 169–174.

**23** Horsfall 2000, 524–525 *ad Aen.* 7.808 notes the variations between just-above and just-touching the grain and waves in several related passages.

**24** So too Thomas 1988, ii.77 *ad G.* 3.201.

the impregnation of mares by the wind will be the explicit subject of *G*. 3.269–279.[25] Thus the presence of the north wind creates a unifying bridge between these two passages.

While some of the thematic elements introduced by this additional lineage of Vergil's simile will in fact be pertinent for Valerius, too, this is an issue to which I shall return. For the moment, sticking with the earliest Homeric layer, I want instead to turn to another part of the tradition that stands behind Valerius's overall description of Boreas's flight, namely the sources for the still-unaddressed addition of a noisy forest in Vergil's simile and in Valerius's subsequent adaptation of it. A chain of three similes in Homer offers one plausible origin for these noisy woods, and here too we find mention of Boreas:

> οὔτε θαλάσσης κῦμα τόσον **βοάᾳ** ποτὶ χέρσον
> ποντόθεν ὀρνύμενον πνοιῇ **Βορέω** ἀλεγεινῇ·
> οὔτε πυρὸς τόσσός γε †ποτὶ† **βρόμος** αἰθομένοιο
> οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃς, ὅτε τ' ὤρετο καιέμεν ὕλην·
> οὔτ' ἄνεμος τόσσόν γε περὶ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισι
> ἠπύει, ὅς τε μάλιστα μέγα **βρέμεται** χαλεπαίνων
>
> (Hom. *Il.* 14.394–399)

> Neither does the wave of the sea shout [*boáai*] so greatly when stirred from the sea toward land by the grievous breath of Boreas; nor [is] the roar [*brómos*] of shining fire so great in the mountain's glens, when it rises to burn the woods; nor does the wind sound so greatly around the oaks with their towering foliage, the wind that roars [*brémetai*] especially loudly in its rage.

The emphasis here is on noise,[26] and in addition to being the focus of the tripartite comparison, the alliterative βοάᾳ, βρόμος, and βρέμεται all occur in the same metrical position, as does the name of Boreas. This shared metrical placement might therefore put us in mind of an etymology for the name of Boreas, "from βοή (shout)," that is preserved only by Aulus Gellius and Apuleius, and attributed by

**25** The impregnating wind here is Zephyrus, bringing to mind Achilles' horses that were mentioned at Verg. *G*. 3.91 (cf. Thomas 1988, ii.93 *ad G*. 3.273).

**26** The same is true of Vergil's direct adaptation of this simile at *G*. 4.261–263, where the low and prolonged buzzing of the sick bees is compared to the South Wind (Auster) in the woods, the surging sea, and fire roaring in a furnace. Thomas 1988 (*ad loc*.) also points out a framing antithesis of cold and hot, which he links with the temperature imbalance associated with plague. This contextual relevance of plague may also account for Vergil's substitution of Auster for Boreas — the South Wind was traditionally seen as disease-bringing (cf. Verg. *G*. 1.444), for which see Eidinow 2019, 116–117.

both to Favorinus.[27] While the attestation is late, both this Homeric passage and the similar Hes. *Op.* 504–511 (for which, see below) are strongly suggestive of the possibility that Boreas's name was indeed envisioned as being somehow associated with noise, whether βοή or βρόμος.[28]

Yet it is not Boreas himself who is noisy, in either Valerius's passage or Vergil's, but rather the woods that bend under his force. While one much-imitated simile in Homer features a forest thrown into noisy chaos by the strife of two winds,[29] neither of them is Boreas, and the parallel would be distant at best. However, Boreas does show up in our first surviving description of trees groaning under the onslaught of a single wind, which comes instead from the aforementioned passage of Hesiod:

> μῆνα δὲ Ληναιῶνα, κάκ' ἤματα, βουδόρα πάντα,
> τοῦτον ἀλεύασθαι καὶ πηγάδας, αἵ τ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν
> **πνεύσαντος Βορέαο** δυσηλεγέες τελέθουσιν,
> **ὅς τε διὰ Θρῄκης** ἱπποτρόφου εὐρέι πόντῳ
> ἐμπνεύσας ὥρινε, **μέμυκε δὲ γαῖα καὶ ὕλη·**
> **πολλὰς δὲ δρῦς ὑψικόμους ἐλάτας τε παχείας**
> **οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃς πιλνᾷ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ**
> **ἐμπίπτων, καὶ πᾶσα βοᾷ τότε νήριτος ὕλη·**
> (Hes. *Op.* 504–511)
>
> And as for the month of Lenaion, evil days, ox-flaying all, shun this and its hoar-frosts, which form cruelly upon the earth when Boreas blows, who arises throughout horse-feeding Thrace, blowing over the broad sea, and the earth and forest groan:[30] and falling upon many oaks with their towering foliage and close-packed silver firs in the mountain's glens, he brings them to the much-nourishing earth, and then all the immense forest cries out.

Here we find the lone wind Boreas blowing towards Boeotia over the sea from Thrace,[31] and a forest resounding under his onslaught. While it is entirely plausible

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**27** *boream autem putant dictum* ἀπὸ τῆς βοῆς, *quoniam sit violenti flatus et sonori* (Gell. *NA* 2.22.9); βορέαν *vero* ἀπὸ τῆς βοῆς *quod non sine clamore soleat intonare* (Apul. *Mund.* 13).

**28** This may also support an implication in the third simile that the wind is Boreas, thus providing justification for the phrase ὅς τε μάλιστα (Hom. *Il.* 14.399) that has troubled so many scholars in its unclear specificity (e.g. West 2001, 228; Krieter-Spiro 2018, 185–186 *ad loc.*).

**29** Hom. *Il.* 16.765–771; Gale 2000, 68 n. 35 and 237 sees this passage of Homer as the model for Lucr. 1.273–275 and 6.97–98, which in turn stand behind Verg. *G.* 1.319–321. For Vergil's adaptation of this simile in the *Aeneid*, too, see Harrison 2020, 28–30.

**30** On the likelihood that μέμυκε comes from μυκάομαι ('bellow'), rather than μύω ("be closed up"), see West 1978, 286 *ad loc.*

**31** West 1978, 286 thinks the idea of Boreas blowing over the sea "may be borrowed from Ionian poetry".

that this passage provided the remaining elements for Vergil's simile,[32] given the wind's northern origin and the combination of land and sea, it seems even more plausible that Valerius drew directly on this text in creating his adaptation: he restores the wind's Greek name, its Thracian rather than Hyperborean origin, and the forest's specific groan.

Furthermore, my suggestion above that we may be able to hear an etymological connection between Boreas and βοή in these passages from Homer and Hesiod seems to me directly — if speculatively — pertinent to Valerius's description. We see Valerius highlighting three effects of Boreas: the wind makes a forest noisy, crops flat, and the sea black. There is a potential for etymological resonance in all three. The possible connection between Boreas and noise is elaborated above; but the name of Boreas' Roman equivalent, Aquilo, is derived from the adjective *aquilus*, 'dark',[33] and ancient etymologies also often connected it with *aqua*.[34] Certainly there are other reasons for Valerius to have added the novel element of the water's blackness here — a particularly important motivation, for instance, may be an observation in the Aristotelean *Problemata* that the north wind tends to make the sea turn black[35] — but Valerius also seems to enjoy subtle etymologizing, including between Latin and Greek.[36] So it is notable that the third effect of Boreas, his flattening of the crops, may also serve as a *figura etymologica*, although our evidence here is even later than Favorinus's etymology: preserved in the *Etymologicum Gudianum* is a connection between Boreas and βαρύς, 'heavy',[37] which the wind-imposed flatness would readily reflect. If we are willing to accept that this trio of etymologies could have been available in Valerius's day, we can recognize a significant, if subtle, element of Valerius's approach here: language reflects reality.

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**32** Certainly Rieks 1981, 1058 takes Hesiod as one of Vergil's sources. Thomas 1988, i.121 sees Hes. *Op.* 507–516 as one of the models behind Vergil's storm at *G.* 1.316–334, which is a connected passage, although he does not identify any explicit parallels.

**33** For Vergil's plays on this etymology, see O'Hara 1996, 159, 265.

**34** Maltby 1991, 45 s.v. 'Aquilo'.

**35** διὰ τί ποτε τοῦ μὲν νότου πνέοντος ἡ θάλαττα κυανέα γίνεται, τοῦ δὲ βορέου ζοφώδης; ἢ ὅτι ὁ βορέας ἧττον τὴν θάλατταν ταράττει, τὸ δὲ ἀταρακτότερον ἅπαν μέλαν φαίνεται ("Why at times does the sea become dark-blue when Notos blows, but dark and opaque when Boreas blows? Is it because Boreas disturbs the sea less, and the more undisturbed appears entirely black?" Arist. [*Pr.*] 26.37 = 944b21–24); cf. Gell. *NA* 2.30.11.

**36** E.g. Krasne 2014, 559–561; Adkin 2017; Cowan 2020.

**37** Βορρᾶς· ὅτι βαρὺς καὶ βίαιος καὶ κρυμώδης (*Etym. Gud.* 279); Βορέας· ὁ ἄνεμος· παρὰ τὸ βάρος βαρέας (*Add. in Etym. Gud.* 279).

## Lucretius and Vergil

Returning to the question of ancestry, rather than etymology, we now have plausible origins for each independent piece of Vergil's and Valerius's images. But even if I have accurately identified the earliest, disparate sources for this tripartite combination of flattened crops, roughened sea, and resounding forest under the driving force of the North Wind, there are numerous aspects of and antecedents for Vergil's simile — not to mention their subsequent influence on Valerius — that still need to be unpacked, as does the significance of the later poet's choices.

As has been observed, much of Vergil's language in his simile is borrowed directly from Lucretius,[38] including from Lucretius's simile-like analogy between invisible atoms and the invisible force of wind:

> principio venti vis verberat incita pontum
> ingentisque ruit navis et **nubila differt**,
> inter dum rapido percurrens turbine campos
> arboribus magnis sternit montisque supremos
> silvifragis vexat **flabris**: ita perfurit acri
> cum fremitu saevitque minaci murmure pontus.
> sunt igitur venti ni mirum corpora caeca,
> quae mare, quae terras, quae denique nubila caeli
> **verrunt** ac subito vexantia turbine raptant,
>
> (Lucr. 1.271–279)

> At first, the roused force of wind strikes the sea and rushes against huge ships and scatters fog; meanwhile, racing across the plains with a ravaging whirlwind, it strews them with great trees and hassles the highest mountains with forest-breaking blasts: so does it vent its fury with a sharp roar, and the sea rages with a menacing murmur. There are, therefore, clearly, invisible particles of wind, which sweep the sea, the lands, and even the clouds of the sky, and suddenly snatch them away, jostling them in a whirlwind.

Vergil's language in the *Georgics* simile, describing the wind's scattering of clouds and fog (*differt*/ *nubila*, 3.197–198), its sweep over land and sea (*simul arva … simul aequora verrens*, 3.201), and the particular word choice of *flabris* (3.199), a distinctly Lucretian term,[39] are all drawn from this passage. Accordingly, Vergil's image of tree-tops stirred to noise by the wind, in this context, could just as plausibly derive from Lucretius's specific mention of trees devastated by the wind as from Hesiod's

**38** Schindler 2000, 167–168; Gale 2000, 262 n. 106; Thomas 1988, ii.77; Rieks 1981, 1058; Jahn 1905, 375.
**39** Gale 2000, 262 n. 106; Thomas 1988, *ad loc.*

description of the winter winds.[40] This is not, moreover, the only place that Lucretius depicts the wind felling trees and noisily whistling through them, and a related reprise of this image in his sixth book may give us some additional insight into Vergil's choice of the North Wind for his simile — Homer's mare-impregnating Boreas is not his only meaningful source.

In discussing possible explanations for the sound of thunder at 6.96–144, Lucretius offers an extended series of alternative explanations that, while notionally independent of each other, when taken together effectively manage to reproduce the storm of his first book (along with the flooding river to which he analogizes those invisible winds):[41]

**Tab. 2:** Parallels between the winds of *DRN* 1 and the thunder of *DRN* 6.

| ***DRN* 1: Wind [and River] Analogy** | ***DRN* 6: Thunder Explanations** | **Sequential Parallels** |
|---|---|---|
| driving winds, 1.271–276, 290–294 (*passim*) | 6.96–107: battle of the winds driving clouds together | driving winds |
| wind shoving ships, 1.272 | 6.108–120: winds *super aequora*; cracking and creaking noise of *carbasus*, *mali*, and *trabes* (here, a theater awning, but language also evocative of ships) | ships (*vel sim.*) |
| rotating *turbo* and *vertex*, 1.273, 279, 293–294 | 6.121–131: production of coiled *procella* and *turbo* | whirlwinds |
| *venti vis … incita*, 1.271; wind tearing up trees and making noise 1.274–276; [trees smashed by river, 1.284] | 6.132–136: noise like Caurus ([W]NW wind) blowing through woods<br>6.137–141: *vis incita venti* splitting clouds is like wind tearing up trees | *vis incita venti** / noise of wind in trees |
| sea raging, 1.276; [flooding river, 1.280–289] | 6.142–144: crashing of waves and roar of flooding river | raging water |

* For Lucretius's important thematization of the phrase *vis incita venti*, see Krasne *forthcoming*.

Here, Lucretius specifically identifies the wind in the trees as Caurus; and Bailey has proposed that this same wind's name may also hide behind a textual problem

**40** Certainly Gale would have it so: see n. 29.

**41** For an author's intratextual linkage of disparate parts of his work through the replication of vocabulary, theme, and structure, cf. Thorsen's chapter in this volume.

in the first book's storm sequence.[42] But even without the name occurring in both places, it is straightforward to detect an association between the first book's windstorm and the thunderous winds of the sixth book, as highlighted by the parallels in Table 2. Thus we may have another motivation for Vergil's North Wind, since although, strictly speaking, Caurus blows from the northwest[43] and many authors classify it as a predominantly westerly wind,[44] for Vergil, Caurus appears to be distinctly associated with the north.[45] At *G*. 3.278, he pairs Caurus with Boreas, naming them together by contrast with the other cardinal directions, and he likewise seems to use Caurus as a metonym for the North at *G*. 3.356. Thus we can plausibly see the noisy Lucretian Caurus, too, lurking behind the predominantly Homeric North Wind of Vergil's simile.[46]

Vergil's other prominent Lucretian allusion in the simile is to the plague episode of Book 6, where *incubuit* and *camposque natantes* occur together in the opening discussion of the Athenian plague:[47]

> haec ratio quondam morborum et mortifer aestus
> finibus in Cecropis funestos reddidit agros

**42** Bailey 1921, 18 and 1947, 646 *ad* 1.276. Centuries later, Rutilius Namatianus explicitly describes Caurus as a wind that smashes trees (*qualis silvarum frangere lustra solet*, Rut. Namat. 1.464), suggesting either that he has found such a description of Caurus here or elsewhere in Latin poetry, or that he has made the same association between the two Lucretian passages. (Thanks to Frances Foster for bringing the Rutilius line to my attention).

**43** Plin. *HN* 2.48.126; Vitr. *De arch*. 1.6.5. Some authors specifically associate it with the point where the sun sets on the summer solstice (Sen. *QNat*. 5.16.5; Plin. *HN* 2.46.119, 18.77.338).

**44** Seneca (*Phaed*. 1131) and Silius Italicus (*Pun*. 9.493) implicitly identify Corus as a west wind, by naming it in place of Zephyr alongside the other three Greek cardinal winds; Favorinus (at Gell. *NA* 2.22.12 and Apul. *Mund*. 13) likewise classifies Caurus as one of three westerly winds; and Gellius and Apuleius (presumably still following Favorinus) both subsequently propose that Caurus is more or less the same as Iapyx, again western (Gell. *NA* 2.22.22; Apul. *Mund*. 14).

**45** Pliny, too, associates Caurus more closely with the north winds (*ventorum frigidissimi sunt quos a septentrione diximus spirare et vicinus <i>is corus*, *HN* 2.48.126; *corus … sicut omnes qui a septentrionis parte spirant*, *HN* 18.77.338). As Caurus seems also on etymological grounds to be a rainy, northern wind (De Vaan 2008, s.v. Caurus), its frequent association with the west may have to do with its typical correlation with Greek Argestes — although Seneca disputes this identification, pointing out that Caurus is violent and driving, while Argestes is gentle (*QNat*. 5.16.5).

**46** Fratantuono/Smith 2015, 233 *ad Aen*. 5.126 suggest a connection between the name of Caurus and the verb *caurire*, which Suetonius (*Rel*. Reiff. 161) tells us is the characteristic noise of panthers. If they are correct that this was a viable association, it gives further significance to the shared noisiness of Caurus and Boreas.

**47** For the importance of *incumbo*/*incubo*'s debt to the Lucretian plague in Vergil's *Georgics*, see Thomas 1988, i.213 *ad G*. 2.311, ii.77 *ad G*. 3.197. The phrase *camposque natantes* occurs also at Lucr. 5.488 and 6.405.

vastavitque vias, exhausit civibus urbem.
nam penitus veniens Aegypti finibus ortus,
aëra permensus multum **camposque natantis,**
**incubuit** tandem populo Pandionis omni.
(Lucr. 6.1138–1143)

Once this explanation for diseases, and a death-dealing surge of heat, made the fields in the territory of Cecrops deadly and laid waste to the roads; it drained the city of its citizens. For coming from deep within, having arisen in Egypt's territory, having spanned far across the air **and the watery plains, it settled** at last on Pandion's entire populace.

The plague's encroachment upon the city here is explicitly presented as a ravaging, invading force.[48] Both of Vergil's Lucretian source passages therefore strongly intimate destruction, indeed airborne destruction: Lucretius's plague is an inherently devastating force carried by flows of air, and the winds of his first book form a hurricane that shreds the cosmos to pieces. Additionally, as is well recognized, those hurricane winds stand firmly behind later poets' images of cosmos-destroying storms.[49] However, despite this overwhelming implication of destruction in both Lucretian source passages, the wind to which Vergil's horse is compared is not obviously destructive on the surface of the text. Indeed, one critic has even claimed that it is a gentle and favorable wind, pointing especially to its characterization as "smooth" (*lenis*).[50]

Nevertheless, I would argue that there *is* something implicitly and incipiently destructive about the wind's flight even in Vergil's simile,[51] and that the same is (more obviously) true of Valerius's two-line description of Boreas's flight over forest, field, and sea.[52] First, these hints of destruction and chaos are due not simply to

**48** On the plague as an invading army, see Fowler 1984, 348–349.

**49** See e.g. Hardie 1986, 90–93, 182–183, 237–238; cf. Morford 1967, 26. For the Lucretian storm's simultaneously cosmogonic and eschatological facets, which influence later poets, see now Schiesaro 2022, 298–299.

**50** Miles 1975, 182: "the north wind to which the horse is compared originates in the favored land of the Hyperboreans; it drives away storms and scatters clouds; it is swift, concentrated (*densus*), and yet gentle (*lenibus … flabris*)". Ovid seems to agree that this is the implication of *lenis*, although he clearly finds it a problematic image, as he applies it instead to the West Wind in a similar but corrective couplet: *ut* ***leni*** *Zephyro graciles vibrantur aristae,/ frigida populeas ut quatit aura comas* ("as the slender ears are set trembling by mild Zephyrus, as a cold breeze shakes the poplar's foliage", *Her*. 14.39–40). See also e.g. Mynors 1990, 212 *ad G*. 3.196, who explicitly denies any destructiveness of the wind, despite it being 'gale force'.

**51** So too Gale 2000, 99: "the simile … continues to hint at the presence of destructive instincts barely suppressed".

**52** Additionally, Eidinow 2019 demonstrates that the most fundamental aspect of Boreas in the Greek imaginary is his destructive power.

the Lucretian intertexts, but to the various Homeric and Hesiodic precedents that stand behind even Lucretius's opening analogy of the destructive storm-winds,[53] as well as behind Vergil and Valerius. In every source text for these passages, the wind's action is characterized as destructive.[54] This is equally true within the *Georgics*, where the racehorse-as-wind simile is embedded in a wider complex of images in the third book that parallels the crop-destroying storm and rampaging civil war of the first *Georgic*, the olive-grove-destroying firestorm of the second *Georgic*, and the swarming bees' civil war in the fourth *Georgic*.[55] It is also anticipatory of the destructive plague that brings the third *Georgic* to a close, thanks not only to these various parallels, but also to the aforementioned verbal echoes of Lucretius's plague.

Furthermore, Valerius himself eventually confirms that he is reading Vergil's wind-simile as anticipating destruction, despite the apparent gentleness of its gusts. In Book 6 of the *Argonautica*, when Juno forcibly infects Medea with love for Jason, the onset of Medea's love is described with a simile that is, once again, modeled directly on the same wind-simile from the *Georgics*:[56]

> ac velut ante comas ac summa cacumina silvae
> **lenibus** adludit **flabris** levis Auster, at illum
> protinus immanem miserae <sensere> carinae,
> talis ad extremos agitur Medea furores.
>
> (Val. Fl. 6.664–667)

> And like a light Auster [South *Wind*] at first toys with the foliage and topmost peaks of a forest with smooth blasts, but immediately after, the unhappy ships <have felt> it, now immense, just so is Medea driven to utmost madness.

Here, *lenibus … flabris* is borrowed directly and uniquely from Vergil, but the context is extended. We now find out that such seemingly gentle gusts can be the prelude to a powerful storm over the sea — exactly the sort of storm that the other

**53** Especially Feeney 2014, 202–209.

**54** Porphyry, in his *Homeric Questions* (*ad* B.447), later will explicitly identify this image as a hurricane, etymologically connecting ἐπαιγίζων with both *aegis* (as causing storms) and *aigis*/*kataigis* ("hurricane"). Seymour 1891, 79 *ad Il.* 2.147 notes a parallel passage at *Il.* 4.275–278, where the hurricane (λαίλαπα, 4.278) is made explicit, again brought by Zephyrus.

**55** See Thomas 1988, i.120–122, i.212, ii.76–77, 160; Farrell 1991, 248–251; Gale 2000, 262, 267; Krasne 2022, 230–233. More generally, on the parallels between storm, civil war, and plague in the *Georgics*, see also Lyne 1974; Ross 1987, 135–136; Thomas 1988, i.18–19; Gale 2000, 69–70 (cf. Gale 1995, 46). For further relevant discussion, see pp. 254–255 and n. 78.

**56** Other parallels: Fucecchi 1997, 222 *ad loc.*, who highlights the contrast of Auster's seeming innocuousness in this simile with Boreas's ferocity in the first book.

passages standing behind Boreas's entrance describe, and exactly the sort that soon does blow up in Valerius's text.[57] Vergil likewise described such a foreshadowing onset in another simile in the *Aeneid*, when he compared the gods' rumbling dissension in the divine council at the beginning of Book 10 to the soft noises of winds in the trees prior to a full-blown storm at sea:

> talibus orabat Iuno, cunctique fremebant
> caelicolae adsensu vario, ceu flamina prima
> cum deprensa fremunt silvis et caeca volutant
> murmura venturos nautis prodentia ventos.
>
> (Verg. *Aen*. 10.96–99)

> With such words was Juno pleading, and all the sky-dwellers were roaring their yeas and nays, like when the first gusts roar, trapped in the woods, and churn out indistinct murmurs that betray to sailors the winds to come.

As Stephen Harrison notes,[58] one important source-text for this passage is Vergil's own description, in the *Georgics*, of the weather-signs that foretell rising winds and a storm, among them a heaving sea and the intensifying sounds of wind in the forest:[59]

> continuo ventis surgentibus aut freta ponti
> incipiunt agitata tumescere et aridus altis
> montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longe
> litora misceri et nemorum increbrescere murmur.
>
> (Verg. *G*. 1.356–359)

> Immediately, as the winds rise, either the sea's agitated straits begin to swell and a dry boom to be heard in the lofty mountains, or the far-resounding shores begin to be thrown into confusion and the murmuring of the woodlands to intensify.

Here, the effects of the winds, as they stir up the waters and sough in the trees, are presented as the prelude to a storm (somewhere between a predictive weather-sign and the storm's onset), and as Harrison has pointed out, the simile of *Aeneid* 10 clearly has these harbingers in mind. Since the seemingly-calm wind of Vergil's simile in *Georgics* 3 causes more or less the same effects as the rising winds do here, as

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**57** Valerius's substitution in this simile of Auster for Vergil's Aquilo may be corrective: there is a repeated claim in anemological texts that Boreas starts strongly and then tapers off, whereas Notos starts gently and increases in force (e.g. Arist. [*Pr*.] 26.39, 45; Theophr. *Vent*. 5). However, it is most likely also connected to the understanding that Auster causes disease (see n. 26).

**58** Harrison 1991 *ad loc*.

**59** Theophrastus and Aratus do not include a forest in the parallel passages at *Sens*. 29 and *Phaen*. 909–912 respectively, nor does Cicero in his translation of Aratus (*Progn*. fr. 3).

well as echoing the repeated pairing of sea and land, it seems reasonable to suggest that Vergil does in fact intend the wind of *Georgics* 3 to be seen as implicitly heralding a storm.[60]

## Myth and nature, simile and reality

These several passages that tie the activity of winds to their real-world effects, from Hesiod through Vergil, are important for our reading of Valerius's description of Boreas's flight, in particular for the larger function of this passage within the epic. What we learn from these antecedents is that Boreas's effects on the natural world can serve as harbingers for an upcoming windstorm — which will indeed soon develop. Moreover, this is not an unseasonable storm, at least at the outset, although it is as cosmic as the one prompted by Juno in the *Aeneid*. Instead, as in Hesiod's description of the chill brought by Boreas in the mid- or late-winter month of Lenaion, what we have here is perfectly in keeping with the fixed narrative temporality. Based on the constellations that Tiphys points out during the Argonauts' first night at sea (Val. Fl. 2.62–63), the Argo must launch between the start of the sailing season, in early- to mid-March,[61] and mid-April, when Orion and Perseus start setting before, rather than after, nightfall.[62] In northeastern Greece, a particular seasonal weather pattern is common from mid-February to mid-March, right around the beginning of the sailing season: cold northerly winds blow violently down from Thrace, developing suddenly in the midst of fine weather and prevailing western

**60** Silius Italicus eventually brings together several of these descriptions of winds as a storm's harbingers — including Lucretius's mention of Caurus — when he combines them into a simile: *ut, qui stelligero speculatur sidera caelo,/ venturam pelagi rabiem Caurique futura/ praedicit miseris haud vanus flamina nautis* ("… like the one who keeps watch on the constellations in the star-studded sky predicts to unhappy sailors — not wrongly — the upcoming madness of the sea and the incipient gusts of Caurus", Sil. *Pun*. 2.289–291). Here the winds themselves do not serve as weather-signs, since Silius, in keeping with other antecedents of his simile (especially Luc. 8.172–174), focuses on the astronomical knowledge of the skilled helmsman. However, the upcoming seasonal storm that the constellations advertise is a perfect match for the destructive winds and seasonal weather of the earlier passages.

**61** E.g. Clodius Tuscus' *parapegma* (Lehoux 2007, 7), which overall corresponds closely with Columella's and likely derives from a shared source (Greswell 1854, 465–479), gives March 17 as the date sailing begins. As Morton 2001, 306–308 notes, various meteorological and seasonal events linked with the beginning of the sailing season, such as the return of the swallow, let the season start earlier than if it were only marked by the rise of the Pleiades near the end of spring, which was Hesiod's touchstone.

**62** See also Soubiran 1997, 125–126.

winds.[63] This is precisely what we see happening here: prior to the Argo's launch in early spring, a favorable West Wind is blowing (Val. Fl. 1.350) and the sun is shining (Val. Fl. 1.495), but shortly thereafter, the North Wind arises. Valerius was familiar with this particular weather pattern, as he draws on it for a simile later in the epic, comparing the death of the richly-adorned ambassador Myraces to a sudden cold north wind (*subito … praeceps Aquilonia … hiems*, Val. Fl. 6.715–716)[64] uprooting a newly-budding olive tree that has previously only felt gentle and productive breezes (*ventis … felicibus*, Val. Fl. 6.712) — implicitly, the gentle zephyrs of spring-time.

We can therefore see in the simile-inspired description of Boreas's flight an early example of what I propose we should understand as Valerius's spin on the established tradition of polemical demythologizing and remythologizing the cosmos (a literary polemic that goes back at least to Lucretius and Vergil and has been well-documented by Philip Hardie, Monica Gale, and others).[65] What Valerius does instead, here and elsewhere, is what I propose to call co-mythologizing. In describing a divinely-orchestrated scenario that is consistent with the world's operation, he ensures that his divine cast of characters and the natural phenomena they produce, or else stand as allegories for,[66] can be read from either perspective, the mythological or the scientific, without privileging one over the other.[67] In this instance, a fully-mythologized, divine Boreas brings about the storm through a verbal plea to Aeolus and his brother winds; but at the same time, the real-world effects of his

**63** Morton 2001, 303 n.49: "At this time of year [i.e. spring, when the 'bird winds' blow] northerly winds blowing off the rear of a depression passing north of Greece, over continental Europe […] draw cold continental polar air down from the north, and appear in Greece as katabatic winds such as the Thraskias and the Bora. Thus we may have a situation where birds migrated back to Greece on light westerly winds and sunny clear skies, and then appeared *en masse* when the westerly winds were interrupted by sharp, icy northerly blasts […]. These northerlies are particularly associated with the coastlands of Thrace, Macedon, and Thessaly, onto which they descend violently from the mountains of the interior".

**64** Interestingly, Seymour 1891, 79 *ad* Hom. *Il.* 2.147 interprets Homer's Zephyros in the original simile of *Iliad* 2 essentially thus: "this was a cold and stormy wind to the people of Aeolis and Ionia, for it came over the mountains of Thrace, *cf.* Δ 276 ff., H 63 f., Ψ 200, 208; it is called δυσαής *fierce-blowing* (Ψ 200, and κελαδεινός *loudroaring* (Ψ 208); it is never a gentle 'zephyr' in Homer".

**65** On Vergil and Lucretius, see especially Hardie 1986, 91–95, 178–187; Gale 1994, 185–189; 1995; 2000, 113–123. Numerous scholars, following Hardie and Gale, have looked at individual instances of demythologizing in Lucretius and remythologizing in Vergil; extensively, now, Gorey 2021. For Ovid's exploitation of de- and remythologizing, see especially Myers 1994, 27–60 and 133–166; Schiesaro 2014; and various papers in Volk/Williams 2022.

**66** On divine allegoresis in Roman epic, see especially Feeney 1991.

**67** See also Krasne forthcoming.

travel from Thrace to Sicily are the natural weather-signs that farmers and sailors can use to predict heavy winds.[68] In essence, the storm was on its way even before Boreas arrived at the Aeolian Islands. We can perhaps see this as a modified form of Homeric (and Vergilian)[69] double causation, where instead of divine interference and human self-motivated action paralleling each other, we have divine action and natural phenomena paralleling each other.[70] This is also the significance of Valerius's restructuring of similes into reality, here: in doing so, he implicitly advertises his debt to the didactic poetry of Hesiod, Lucretius, and Vergil, where the traditional imagery and language of similes is frequently repurposed as reality or analogy.[71]

While this advertisement of an overlap between the mythological and the meteorological within Valerius's epic is one important facet of this passage's significance, I want to highlight another aspect of its poetics as well. Here we return to its earliest ancestry in Homer and its cousin-similes from that lineage, as well as to the specific importance of Vergil's *Georgics*. Denis Feeney, in his exploration of first similes in epic, has demonstrated a direct chain of inheritance that extends from the opening sequence of similes in *Iliad* 2, including our original double simile of the winds' effect on waves and grain, and reaches through the epics of the early Empire, all the way to Claudian and even Milton. As Feeney argues, these first similes, often in combination with an epic's second simile, are all broadly concerned with "paradigms of order and disorder".[72] Included in this family are Lucretius's

**68** Another event that can be interpreted as a weather-sign occurs in the preceding lines, immediately before Boreas spots the Argo and rushes southward, when Jupiter sends a forked bolt blazing through the heavens toward the ship (Val. Fl. 1.568–573), resulting in the phenomenon now known as St Elmo's Fire; it resembles a meteor as much as a lightning bolt. (The term *fax* [1.569] is ambiguous in context, perhaps intentionally: according to Seneca [*QNat*. 1.1.5–6], the two types of celestial fire are produced identically.) Either would serve as a suitable weather-sign: the Aristotelean *Problemata* ask "Why, whenever stars shoot through [the sky], is it a sign of wind?" (διὰ τί, ὅταν ἀστέρες διάττωσιν, ἀνέμου σημεῖον; Arist. [*Pr*.] 26.23), while a weather-sign preserved from Varro tells us that lightning from the north predicts a storm (*item Varro dicit signum esse tempestatis dum de parte Aquilonis fulgit et cum de parte Euri intonat*, Isid. *De nat*. 38.2). On the contextual engagement of Valerius's St Elmo's Fire with natural philosophy, see Buckley 2018.

**69** Williams 1983, 20–35.

**70** So too at e.g. Val. Fl. 2.616–618 (here explicitly); for a more direct adaptation of Homeric double-causation in the *Argonautica*, see Krasne 2018, 245.

**71** For Hesiod, cf. e.g. West's 1978, 287 note on *Op*. 512: "The last five lines might have stood in some epic simile". For Lucretius, see e.g. Gale 1994, 63–65, 114–117; Schindler 2000, 78–83; Gale 2001, 28–30; 2005, 444–445; Feeney 2014, 202–204. For Vergil, see e.g. Thomas 1988, i.84 *ad* 1.104–110 and i.121 *ad* 1.316–334. In the *Aeneid*, however, Vergil takes the opposite approach, transforming didactic "reality" into epic simile (see e.g. Briggs 1980).

**72** Feeney 2014, 202.

opening analogy of the storm-winds and its parallel analogy of the raging river, which together are balanced against a productive image of verdant growth and harmony (Lucr. 1.250–264).[73] In the *Aeneid*, likewise, Vergil's first simile of the turmoil-quelling statesman (*Aen.* 1.148–153) is balanced by the second simile, which compares the Carthaginians to productively-swarming bees (*Aen.* 1.430–436). As Feeney notes, however, this pairing of order and disorder that reaches back to the *Iliad* breaks down once we reach Flavian epic, and other concerns usurp the first similes — now "the expected register of chaos and allegorized storm" appears only in the epic's second simile, which is unmoored from the first.[74] But Valerius's second simile, which depicts a priest in heat-stricken Calabria praying for cooling winds to arrive,[75] and which Feeney sees as the epic's sole remnant of the earlier tradition's focus on chaos and order in its opening similes, can in fact be read as balancing the description of Boreas's flight towards Sicily. Together, this non-simile that foreshadows the destructive storm and the actual simile of anticipated order that comes in the storm's wake — and that is followed by the arrival, within the narrative, of favorable Zephyrs — form a pair that precisely replicates the meteorological and cosmic antithesis that Feeney has identified in the first and second similes of so many epics.[76] Here, too, therefore, we see further confirmation that Valerius has indeed erased the line between simile and reality in describing Boreas's effects on the world.

I propose that this intertextually-structured intimation of chaos also interacts with Valerius's still-unexplained reason for choosing Vergil's racehorse-as-wind simile from *Georgics* 3 as his most immediate intertext in the description of Boreas's flight. In the *Georgics*, as I mentioned previously, the multipart description of the well-bred horse — beginning with a description of chariots bursting from the starting gates (3.103–109), continuing with a portrait of the Lapiths' trained warhorses (3.115–117), and picked up again by the simile of the horse as Aquilo[77] — is linked

**73** Feeney 2014, 205.

**74** Feeney 2014, 223.

**75** Val. Fl. 1.682–685. While Valerius does not call the hoped-for breezes Etesian winds, nor even explicitly specify that the priest is praying for wind rather than rain, the priest of Valerius's simile, praying to avert Sirius's wrath, is strikingly close to Apollonius's Aristaeus, whose prayers result in the annual winds that counteract the oppressive and febrile heat brought by Sirius (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.516–527).

**76** Another simile follows immediately on the heels of the Calabrian priest simile, and here the meteorological aspect and the implication of cosmic order are both made explicit: the helmsman Tiphys and his attendant deck crew are compared to the elements of nature waiting in serried ranks for Jupiter's command (Val. Fl. 1.691–692).

**77** For the link between the Lapiths' warhorses and the horse of the Aquilo simile, Ortoleva 2001, 134–137.

through repetition of verbal elements and imagery to two interconnected passages in the first book, the set piece of the great storm and the closing image of civil war as an out-of-control charioteer.[78] The storm that blows up in Valerius's *Argonautica*, which Boreas demands from Aeolus and his fellow winds, begins with an image of Boreas's Thracian horses — which are substituted for the name of the wind[79] — charging from the winds' prison with a line that forcibly recalls two discrete lines of the *Georgics*' chariot imagery:

> **fundunt se carcere** laeti/ ***Thraces equi*** (Val. Fl. 1.609–610)
>
> The Thracian horses exuberantly pour from their stall
>
> carceribus sese effudere ***quadrigae*** (*G.* 1.512)
>
> The teams pour forth from the starting gates
>
> ruuntque **effusi carcere *currus*** (*G.* 3.104)
>
> The chariots rush on, having poured from the starting gate

Thus we are left with the strong impression that Valerius is signaling his recognition that these two passages of the *Georgics*, describing civil war and a chariot race respectively, are linked with the first book's crop-destroying storm, not to mention his recognition of their shared influence on the opening storm of the *Aeneid*. By choosing to focalize his description of Boreas's flight through the horse-as-wind simile of the *Georgics*, Valerius taps into this complex network of images that occupies the *Georgics* as a whole.

Finally, beyond the important implications of these images for Valerius's construction of his natural world, the intertextual emphasis on chariots and horses

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**78** The storm and the description of the Lapiths' horses are two of the four related passages (one per book) that use the verb *glomero* (see n. 55 for bibliography); the chariots of both passages rush from the starting-gate with openly parallel language (*G.* 1.512 and *G.* 3.104; see below); and the storm of the first book destroys crops (*G.* 1.324–326), as is intimated in the simile of Aquilo. The storm of *Georgics* 1 is heavily indebted to a simile comparing a Trojan chariot to a storm at *Il.* 16.384–392, and further parallels are developed through triangulation with the firestorm of Book 2 and the bee-swarm of Book 4. Additionally, Vergil's phrase *quorum Grai meminere poetae* (*G.* 3.90), slightly earlier in the passage on horses, sharply recalls Lucretius's repeated phrase *Graium … cecinere poetae* (Lucr. 2.600, 5.405, 6.754), one use of which refers to Phaethon, who is also recalled by the *Georgics*' out-of-control charioteer (Nelis 2008, 507 n. 55 for bibliography, although Ross 1987, 167 sees him as Glaucus; on Phaethon, see now also Closs 2020, 47–50).

**79** The other three winds are named explicitly (Val. Fl. 1.611–613).

could, of course, be read as meaningful on a metapoetic level, as chariot and ship are readily analogized both to each other and to the vehicles of poetry.[80] Accordingly, it is possible — although not necessary — to read Boreas's heavily intertextual flight as metaphorically and poetologically significant, too, for Valerius's Argo and *Argonautica*, alike.[81] Either way, however, Valerius's precise engagement with his heavily-layered source material in the two lines describing Boreas's flight makes it possible for the careful reader to see below the surface of the text to the interwoven inner workings of the *Argonautica*, shedding light on the poetry itself, the cosmos that it portrays, and the connections that exist between the two.

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**80** The conceit is well known, and the bibliography is vast. For the present discussion, see especially Harrison 2007 and Nelis 2008.

**81** This possibility is heightened both by what may be a Valerian window allusion, via the simile at Verg. *G*. 3.196–201, to the sailing of Catullus's Argo at 64.7–9 (for the more definite reference of Vergil to Catullus, see Thomas 1988, ii.78) and by the emphasis on *speed* in Valerius's short description of Boreas (*rapidis*, Val. Fl. 1.577; *praepete*, Val. Fl. 1.578), an observation that I owe to Gregory Hutchinson — one traditional etymology for the Argo's name (and the etymology favored, again, by Catullus at the opening of *carmen* 64, as Thomas 1982, 148–154 argues) being ἀργός, 'shining, swift'. On Valerius Flaccus's attention to Catullus's Argo, see especially Polt 2012.

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