

Similes in the *Aeneid* — How to Count Them  
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Handout (2019)

- #1 *Aeneid* 5.527-28: caelo ceu saepe refixa  
transcurreunt crinemque volantia sidera ducunt.
- #2 **Parts of a simile:** Bk 11#1 68-71 Pallas ≈ a violet or hyacinth  
[*Tenor*] Prothesis Vehicle **Apothesis**
- hic [*iuvenem*] agresti sublimem stramine ponunt:
- qualem virgineo demessum pollice florem  
seu mollis violae seu languentis hyacinthi,
- 70 cui neque fulgor adhuc nec dum sua forma recessit:  
non iam mater alit tellus viresque ministrat.
- tum** geminas vestis auroe ostroque ridentis  
extulit Aeneas . . . .
- #3 **Not a simile, but a factual description of Apollo's physical transition from god to man:** Aen. 9.650 Apollo ≈ longaeus  
[*Butes*] (factual, not figurative)
- ibat [*Apollo*]
- 650 omnia longaevo similis vocemque coloremque  
et crinis **albos** et **saeva** sonoribus arma.
- #4 **A simile without a prothesis:** [Aeneas' boat]  
ocior et iaculo et ventos aequante sagitta. (10.248)
- #5 Let us define a simile as "a *figurative* comparison in which both *tenor* and *vehicle* are expressed (with or without a *prothesis*)" while a metaphor is "an implied comparison in which only the *vehicle* is stated." (Cf. 'crinem ducunt' in item #1 above.) A metaphor is a shift in meaning — often only one word (like

‘Turnus ardet: Bk12.3)— whereas a simile is a grammatical construction .

- #6 Plato’s Similes: A Compendium of 500 Similes in 35 Dialogues. Hosted by the Center for Hellenic Studies (2014): <http://wp.chs.harvard.edu/ziolkowski>.
- #7 The translation sometimes implies that there is a simile in the Latin: Bk 3.533: portus . . . **curvatus in arcum** (the harbour curved into a bow) translated as “**shaped like a bow**”; Bk 3.538: **candore nivali** (snowy whiteness) translated as “**white as snow**”; 11.718: **ignea** . . . cursu (fiery course): “**as swift as fire**”; 11.742 *se turbidus infert*: “charges **like a whirlwind**.”
- #8 Summary of Appendices to accompany my compendium of 140 similes in Vergil’s *Aeneid*: a chart summarizing the parts of every simile (prothesis, vehicle [*tenor*] **apothesis**); a chart showing the placement of the similes in each book of the *Aeneid* by 100-verse segments; a list of similes with two vehicles; the vehicles by category (animals, culture, myth or nature); a list of the various **protheses** (23) used by Vergil along with the **apotheses** (12).

### Bibliographical References:

- Beck, Deborah. (2014) “Simile Structure in Homeric Epic and Vergil’s *Aeneid*,” Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation in Antiquity, ed. Ruth Scodel, 244-288.
- Rieks, R. (1981) “Die Gleichnisse Vergils,” Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ANRW) 2.31, 2, 1011-1110.
- Wilkins, Eliza G. (Apr. 18, 1921) “A Classification of the Similes in Vergil’s *Aeneid* and *Georgics*,” The Classical Weekly 14, 170-174.