

HORSES IN THE TEMPEST: THE SHAPE(S) OF THE WINDS IN *AENEID* BOOK 1*

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the horse imagery related to the winds in the storm episode at the beginning of Virgil's Aeneid. A close analysis of Aen. 1.50–86 brings to light the pervasiveness of this imagery, only partly noticed by scholars, who have regarded it as metaphorical (§1). It is here suggested that the winds released by Aeolus could instead be considered as real horses. A reassessment of the ancient literary—and, briefly, iconographic—evidence of the depiction of the winds as horses, horsemen or charioteers is proposed; Virgil fits into a long-standing tradition of Homeric ancestry, which represents the winds as horses (§2). This allows a better understanding of the narrative dynamic which in Aeneid Book 1 opposes Aeolus to Neptune, the god of the sea as well as of the horses; moreover, the equestrian (and circus) imagery evoked by Virgil contributes to the political and cosmic significance of the tempest episode (§3).

Keywords: Virgil; *Aeneid*; tempest; winds; horses; horsemen; charioteers; circus

Qu'est-ce que l'ouragan, nuit?—C'est quelqu'un qui passe.
Nous entendons souffler les chevaux de l'espace
Trainant le char qu'on ne voit pas.
Victor Hugo, *Les Contemplations*, *Horror*

Among the splendid miniatures found in the so-called ‘Vergilius Romanus’ (codex Vat. lat. 3867, from the early sixth century) is a remarkable representation of the tempest which ushers in the narrative of the *Aeneid*. On the upper register of fol. 77r, to the right and left of Juno, two winds are depicted in personified form, bust-length and in profile, blowing their trumpets.¹ Such an illustration freely builds on the text of the *Aeneid*, which does not explicitly state what the winds look like. As Philip Hardie writes, ‘Virgil is deliberately unspecific about the precise physical forms of his winds, but they are at least partly anthropomorphic; Neptune can use rational speech to them.’²

Scholars have focussed on two aspects in particular. First, at lines 52–6 (especially 55–6 *illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis | circum claustra fremunt*) Virgil alludes to a passage from the *De rerum natura* in which Lucretius compares the winds trapped within clouds to caged beasts: *magno indignantur murmure clausi | nubibus, in caueisque ferarum*

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¹ Digital reproduction of the manuscript: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3867. For the iconography of the winds, see E. Simon, ‘Venti’, *LIMC* 8.1.186–92 and 8.2.128–31. Specifically on Boreas and Zephyrus, see S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou, ‘Boreas’, *LIMC* 3.1.133–42 and 3.2.108–22, and J.H. Oakley, ‘Zephyros’, *LIMC* 8.1.308–9 and 8.2.217–18.

² P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), 93.

more minantur; | nunc hinc nunc illinc fremitum per nubila mittunt | quaerentesque uiam circum uersantur (Lucr. 6.197–200).³ Second, this scene evokes the Hesiodic description of the Titans imprisoned in *Theog.* 717–35. Through this mythological characterization, the winds prove to be gigantomachic forces that threaten the stability of the cosmos: were Aeolus not to keep them under control, they might upset the universe (*Aen.* 1.58–9 *maria ac terras caelumque profundum | quippe ferant rapidi secum uerrantque per auras*).⁴

This article aims to highlight a further, overlooked characterization: the winds as horses. Some scholars have rightly noted the presence of equine elements in this episode, interpreting them as metaphors.⁵ Instead, I will argue that we are probably dealing with more than just metaphors: within Aeolus' cave we could (and perhaps should) envision *real* horses—albeit very special ones. This characterization fits within a long-standing tradition in which the winds are represented as horses, which it is worthwhile to re-examine in its entirety (§2).⁶ Let us begin by examining the passage in greater detail.

1. HORSE TRACKS (*AEN.* 1.50–86)

In the section spanning from Juno's arrival in Aeolia to the unleashing of the storm (*Aen.* 1.50–86), various textual elements hint at an equine depiction of the winds—or, at the very least, allow us to envision them also as horses.⁷ Let us begin with the opening lines (*Aen.* 1.52–63):

hic uasto rex Aeolus antro
luctantis uentos tempestatesque sonoras

³ J. Shea, 'Lucretius, lightning, and Lipari', *CPh* 72 (1977), 136–8, at 136; Hardie (n. 2), 93. On the Lucretian passage, see D. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (Edinburgh, 1969), 54 and M.R. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 2000), 188. On Lucretius in the tempest episode, see M.M. Gorey, *Atomism in the Aeneid. Physics, Politics, and Cosmological Disorder* (Oxford and New York, 2021), 53–69.

⁴ V. Buchheit, *Vergil über die Sendung Roms. Untersuchungen zum Bellum Poenicum und zur Aeneis* (Heidelberg, 1963), 66 n. 252 and, above all, Hardie (n. 2), 90–7.

⁵ See J.L. de la Cerda (ed.), *P. Virgilii Maronis priores sex libri Aeneidos argumentis explicationibus notis illustrati* (Lyon, 1612), on *Aen.* 1.63 *habenas*; J. Henry, *Aeneidea, or Critical, Exegetical, and Aesthetical Remarks on the Aeneis*, vol. 1 (London and Edinburgh, 1873), 266, on Virgil's debt to chariot race imagery; M.C.J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Ithaca, NY, 1988²), 8–13, within a broader discussion on the presence of equine images in the *Aeneid*; M. Paschalis, *Virgil's Aeneid. Semantic Relations and Proper Names* (Oxford, 1997), 37 points out 'equine' semantic coincidences; see also J.B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill and London, 1988), 114–16.

⁶ Some good insights in this regard already in A. Sauvage, *Étude de thèmes animaliers dans la poésie latine. Le cheval – Les oiseaux* (Brussels, 1975), 85 with n. 32 and A. Ardizzoni, 'L'alato cavallo di Arsinoe e la chioma di Berenice (Callimaco e Catullo)', in *Scritti in onore di Salvatore Pugliatti*, vol. 5 (Milan, 1978), 81–90, at 87 n. 13. On Virgilian winds, see especially M. Labate, 'Venti', *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, vol. 5.1 (Rome, 1990), 490–8 and K.F.B. Fletcher, 'Virgil's deliberate use of named winds in the *Aeneid*', *MD* 90 (2023), 113–115. On winds in the ancient Greek imaginary, see D. Coppola, *Anemoi. Morfologia dei venti nell'immaginario della Grecia arcaica* (Naples, 2010) and E. Eidinow, '"They blow now one way, now another" (Hes. *Theog.* 875): winds in the ancient Greek imaginary', in T.S. Scheer (ed.), *Natur – Mythos – Religion im antiken Griechenland/Nature – Myth – Religion in Ancient Greece* (Stuttgart, 2019), 113–32. More generally, on the representation of winds in the ancient world, after the old dissertation by H. Steinmetz, *De ventorum descriptionibus apud Graecos Romanosque* (Göttingen, 1907), see K. Neuser, *Anemoi. Studien zur Darstellung der Winde und Windgottheiten in der Antike* (Rome, 1982), with a keen archaeological focus.

⁷ In the following paragraphs I develop some observations proposed—independently of one another, as it seems—by de la Cerda (n. 5) on *Aen.* 1.63; Henry (n. 5), 266 (hence, R.S. Conway [ed.], *P. Virgilii Maronis Aeneidos liber primus* [Cambridge, 1935], 31 on 1.54 *carcere*); Putnam (n. 5), 9–12; Sauvage (n. 6), 85 n. 32; Paschalis (n. 5), 37; Ardizzoni (n. 6), 87 n. 13.

imperio premit ac uinclis et carcere frenat.
 illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis 55
 circum claustra fremunt; celsa sedet Aeolus arce
 sceptrum tenens mollitque animos et temperat iras.
 ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum
 quippe ferant rapidi secum uerrantque per auras;
 sed pater omnipotens speluncis abdidit atris 60
 hoc metuens molemque et montis insuper altos
 imposuit, regemque dedit qui foedere certo
 et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas.⁸

At line 54 (*imperio premit ac uinclis et carcere frenat*) Aeolus undoubtedly acts as a jailer: he ‘holds them down with his authority, curbing them with chains and prison-bars’, as Austin translates.⁹ However, *frenat* suggests an animal image, since *frenum* primarily means ‘horse’s bridle or harness’ (*OLD* s.v. 1) and *frenare* ‘to equip or control (horses, etc.) with a bridle’ (*OLD* s.v. 1). To keep the winds under control, Aeolus puts reins—more or less metaphorically—on them. Thus, as Michael Putnam convincingly suggests,¹⁰ we can see Aeolus as a charioteer calming and reassuring his team of horses.

To a careful reader, *frenare* acts as a trigger: in the same sentence, both *uinclis* and *carcere* can be related to the same imagery. Besides indicating bonds or chains used to restrain prisoners, *uinc(u)la* can designate a halter (*OLD* s.v. 2a, ‘applied to ropes, etc., for tethering or securing animals’), particularly a horse’s halter. This draws attention to the epic image of the horse breaking free by snapping its halter, as seen in Homer (*Il.* 6.507 = 15.264 δέσμων ἀπορρήξας), Ennius (*Ann.* 535–6 Skutsch *sicut equos . . . | uincla suis magnis animis abruptit*) and Virgil (*Aen.* 11.493–4 *qualis ubi abruptis fugit praeseptia uinclis | tandem liber equus*). Similarly, *carcere*, which also occurs at line 141 (*‘illa se iacet in aula | Aeolus et clauso uentorum carcere regnet’* says Neptune), primarily meaning ‘prison’, can also signify the ‘cage’ or ‘starting gate’ from which horses began their race in the chariot races at the circus,¹¹ as in Ennius (*Ann.* 80–1 Skutsch *omnes audi spectant ad carceris oras | quam mox emittat pictos e faucibus currus*; 463–4 Skutsch *quom a carcere fusi | currus cum sonitu magno permittere certant*) and Virgil (*G.* 3.104 = *Aen.* 5.145 *ruuntque effusi carcere currus*). Varro writes that in Naevius’ time the *carceres* of the Circus Maximus were called *oppidum*¹² and were thus equated with a fortified citadel, either because the architectural complex was equipped with towers, as Varro states,¹³ or because it was fenced off by a

⁸ The Latin text of the *Aeneid* comes from the edition of G.B. Conte (ed.), *P. Vergilius Maro. Aeneis* (Berlin and Boston, 2019²); for the *Georgics* I refer to G.B. Conte (ed.), *P. Vergilius Maro. Georgica* (Berlin and Boston, 2013).

⁹ R.G. Austin (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber primus* (Oxford, 1971), ad loc.

¹⁰ Putnam (n. 5), 9. The actions described at line 58 (*mollitque animos et temperat iras*) are consistent with the taming of colts: cf. *G.* 3.206–9 *namque ante domandum | ingentis tollent animos prensique negabunt | uerbera lenta pati et duris parere lupatis*.

¹¹ *TLL* 3.434.29–63: ‘i.q. claustra, repagula, saepeta, quibus in circo equi continentur’; *OLD* s.v. *carcer* 3: ‘(usu. pl. or poet. sg.) the barriers at the beginning of a race course, the starting point of the course, “traps”’. According to Servius (on *Aen.* 1.54), the singular *carcer* would mean ‘prison’, while the plural *carceres* would indicate the place *unde . . . erumpunt quadrigae*, though Virgil often uses (*licet plerumque usurpet*) the singular with the latter meaning (same idea on *Aen.* 5.145 and *G.* 3.104). According to O. Skutsch (ed.), *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford, 1985), 229 and 624, *carceres* = ‘the barriers’, *carcer* = ‘the space fenced off by them’.

¹² Varro, *Ling.* 5.153 in *circo primum unde mittuntur equi, nunc dicuntur carceres, Naevius oppidum appellat. . . . quod a<d> muri speciem pinnis turribusque carceres olim fuerunt, scripsit poeta: ‘dictator ubi currum insidit, peruehitur usque ad oppidum’* (Naev. *fr. com.* 107); see *TLL* 9.2.759.54–9 s.v. *oppidum* (‘i.q. circi carceres’).

¹³ F. Marcattili, *Circo Massimo. Architetture, funzioni, culti, ideologia* (Rome, 2009), 160–1.

wooden palisade.¹⁴ In any case, an analogy can be established with the ‘fortress’ on which Aeolus sits and reigns (*Aen.* 1.56 *celsa sedet Aeolus arce*).

At line 55, *indignantes* may well apply to horses reluctant to accept bridles or any form of control, like Pegasus in Ovid (*Fast.* 3.455 *iamque indignanti noua frena receperat ore*) or a steed in Silius Italicus (16.352 *ibat campo indignatus habenas*).¹⁵ At line 56, *circum claustra fremunt* also points in the same direction. While *claustra* primarily means ‘cage’ or ‘prison’ (*OLD* s.v. 2), it can also designate the ‘enclosure’ of horses in the circus, as shown by Manilius (5.76 *cum laxato fugerunt [sc. equi] cardine claustra*) and Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 23.331 *illi [sc. equi] ad claustra fremunt repagulisque | incumbunt*); and *fremere* is commonly associated with horses (cf. Verg. *G.* 1.12–13 *fremementem ... equum*; *Aen.* 7.638–9 *fremementis [tremementis FM/Rabenru] ... equos* and 12.82 *equos ... fremementis*).¹⁶ Both *carcer* and *claustra*, in short, allow the coexistence of different planes of imagery. Incidentally, Sidonius’ phrase *ad claustra fremunt* seems to allude directly to the Virgilian line and at the same time interpret it, making explicit the imagery only hinted at in *Aeneid* Book 1.

From line 63, we know that Jupiter has instructed Aeolus to ‘pull or loosen the reins at his command’ (*et premere et laxas ... dare iussus habenas*). This wording confirms the association, since *habenae* are primarily the ‘reins’ used to control horses and chariots (*OLD* s.v. 1). A few lines later, Juno commands Aeolus: ‘*incute uim uentis submersasque obrue puppes*’ (1.69). In the phrase *incute uim uentis* we may recognize the image of ‘whipping’ the winds, as if urging on a horse.¹⁷

Finally, at lines 81–6 Aeolus releases the winds:

haec ubi dicta, cauum conuersa cuspide montem
impulit in latus; ac uenti uelut agmine facto,
qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine perflant.
incubere mari totumque a sedibus imis
una Eurusque Notusque ruunt creberque procellis
Africus et uastos uoluunt ad litora fluctus. 85

On the phrase *uelut agmine facto* (82) Austin remarks: ‘the winds come pouring from the “gate” like an army in column of the march, moving with precision.’¹⁸ The noun *agmen* is rooted in the military domain (*OLD* s.v. 5: ‘an army on the march, a column’), thus suggesting violence and hostility. Yet another image seems equally, if not more, fitting: a team of horses forming at the starting gate and, upon receiving the signal, dashing off in a race.¹⁹ *agmen* may indeed be ‘applied to groups or lines of animals, often w[ith] strong reminiscence of mil[itary] sense’, and can designate ‘a team (of horses)’ (*OLD* s.v. 9 and 9b), as happens in Gellius (*NA* 19.8.4 *equorum quattuor iunctorum agmen*).²⁰ The four cardinal winds could be seen as corresponding to the four horses of a *quadriga*: according to Servius, three of them are mentioned at lines 85–6 (*Eurus ... Notus ... |*

¹⁴ J.H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses. Arenas for Chariot Racing* (London, 1986), 133 and 171–2.

¹⁵ See Sauvage (n. 6), 79 on such images.

¹⁶ See *TLL* 3.1321.8–9 s.v.

¹⁷ Putnam (n. 5), 10.

¹⁸ Austin (n. 9), ad loc. Rather than ‘precision’ and order, we should think of a bustling movement, like that described in *Aen.* 12.121–3 (*procedit legio Ausonidum, pilataque plenis | agmina se fundunt portis. hinc Troius omnis | Tyrrhenusque ruat uariis exercitus armis*) or 12.441–4 (*portis sese extulit ingens | telum immane manu quatiens; simul agmine denso | Antheusque Mnesteusque ruunt, omnisque relictis | turba fluit castris*).

¹⁹ Sauvage (n. 6), 49–50 remarks that the horses’ impatience at the starting gate is a characteristic image of Latin poetry (Lucr. 2.263–5 may be added to the passages cited there).

²⁰ In Ov. *Am.* 3.2.78 *discolor agmen* refers to the charioteers.

Africus), while the northern wind appears at line 102 (*stridens Aquilone procella*).²¹ The use of *ruere* (83 *ruunt*) to describe the swift and impetuous departure of chariots in the circus is already found in Verg. *G.* 3.104 = *Aen.* 5.145 *ruuntque effusi carcere currus*.²² Even the polyvalent term *porta*, in the phrase *qua data porta* (83), may refer to the gates in the animal pens at the circus.²³

But why does Aeolus behave like a charioteer? First of all, there are genealogical and onomastic reasons.²⁴ In the *Odyssey*, Aeolus is referred to as Ἴπποτάδης (10.2 Αἴολος Ἴπποτάδης; 10.36 παρ' Αἰόλοο μεγάλῃτορος Ἴπποτάδαο), that is, 'son of Ἴππότης',²⁵ Ἴππότης meaning 'driver' or 'rider of horses' (LSJ s.v.). Additionally, his very name, Αἴολος, is nothing but a proparoxytone form of the adjective αἰόλος, meaning 'nimble', 'swift', as well as 'changeable', qualities that suit the king of the winds, which are both swift and proverbially changeable. This adjective is also associated with the speed of horses in epic tradition: Achilles' steed Xanthos, son of the wind Zephyrus (see below), is said to be πόδας αἰόλος ἵππος in Homer (*Il.* 19.404; αἰόλος ἵππος is then found in Quint. Smyrn. 1.338 and 4.563); the adjective also appears in the Homeric compound αἰολόπῳλος 'with swift horses' (*Il.* 3.185 and *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 137; then Theoc. *Id.* 22.34). So, Aeolus is the 'son of a horse-driver' and behaves as such in the *Aeneid*.²⁶

Equine imagery influenced later poets who dealt with the Virgilian tempest. Ovid's flood in *Metamorphoses* Book 1, for example, applies similar images to rivers (1.280 *fluminibus uestris totas immittite habenas*; 281 *fontibus ora relaxant*; 282 *defrenato uoluntur in aequora cursu*; 285 *exspatiata ruunt per apertos flumina campos*).²⁷ Closer to his model is Valerius Flaccus, when rewriting the Virgilian episode in the first book of his *Argonautica* (1.608–14):

dixerat, at cuncti fremere intus et aequora uenti
poscere. tum ualidam contorto turbine portam
impulit Hippotades. fundunt se carcere laeti
Thracēs equi Zephyrusque et nocti concolor alas
nimborum cum prole Notus crinemque procellis

610

²¹ Serv. on *Aen.* 1.85. Of course, we should assume that *Africus*, technically the southwest wind, here takes on Zephyrus' role.

²² The same verb, used of the winds but with different meaning and transitive value, occurs at *Aen.* 1.85: *incubuerē mari totumque a sedibus imis | una Eurusque Notusque ruunt creberque procellis | Africus* (1.84–6).

²³ See *TLL* 10.2.5.25–8 s.v. ('respiciuntur claustra circi, quibus bestiae tenentur'). A detail can be added: the seditionists in the simile in *Aen.* 1.148–53—corresponding to the rebellious winds—*silent arrectisque auribus adstant*. Serv. Dan. ad loc. remarks: *ARRECTIS AVRIBVS translatio a mutis animalibus, quibus aures mobiles sunt*. Perhaps it is another equine element: cf. Soph. *El.* 27 ὀρθὸν οὐς ἴσθησιν; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.1261 ὀρθοῖσιν ἐπ' οὐασιν; Quint. Smyrn. 4.511 οὐάτα δ' ὀρθώσαντο.

²⁴ See Paschalis (n. 5), 37.

²⁵ From Homer the patronymic is taken up by Apollonius Rhodius (*Argon.* 4.778 Αἴολον Ἴππότηω παῖδα κλυτόν) and Quintus Smyrnaeus (14.477 Αἰόλου Ἴπποτάδαο); *Hippotades* appears seven times in Ovid (*Her.* 18.46; *Met.* 4.663, 11.431, 14.86, 14.224, 15.707; *Pont.* 4.10.15) and once in Valerius Flaccus (1.610, discussed below).

²⁶ Interestingly, two other Aeoli, respectively the son of Hellen and the grandson of the former (linked in a single genealogy to the Homeric Aeolus by Diod. Sic. 4.67), are onomastically related to 'mares', Hippe and Melanippe: see J. von Negelein, *Das Pferd im arischen Altertum* (Leipzig, 1903), 69; L. Malten, 'Das Pferd im Totenglauben', *JDAI* 39 (1914), 179–255, at 199.

²⁷ See Solodow (n. 5), 114–16; B. Weiden Boyd, "'Non hortamine longo': an Ovidian 'correction' of Virgil", *AJPh* 111 (1990), 82–5, at 83. A central place will be given to the chariot race imagery in the Phaethon episode: see A. Barchiesi, 'Le Cirque du Soleil', in J. Nelis-Clément and A. Roddaz (edd.), *Le cirque romain et son image* (Bordeaux, 2008), 521–37; and G. Agosti (ed.), *Nonno di Panopoli. Le Dionisiache, volume terzo (canti XXV–XXXIX)* (Milan, 2013³), 673 on Phaethon's ride across a hippodrome-like cosmos in Nonnus, *Dion.* 38.

hispidus et multa flauus caput Euris harena.
induxere hiemem ...

Here too the winds wait eagerly to be set free (608 *fremere* ~ *Aen.* 1.56 *fremunt*). However, above all, as Andrew Zissos has well noted, at lines 610–11 '[t]he language makes available an attractive metaphoric equation between the escaping winds and racehorses pouring out of a starting cage': in addition to *equi* (611), the ambivalence of *carcere* (610) and the expression *se fundunt* (610), used for the chariot race in Verg. *G.* 1.512 (*cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae*; cf. Enn. *Ann.* 463–4 Skutsch *a carcere fusi* | *currus*), contribute to the same effect.²⁸ Indeed, it is not entirely clear whether we are dealing with winds as horses²⁹ or whether rather each wind is to be imagined as a charioteer/ἵππότης leading his horses, as the plural *equi* (611) would suggest.³⁰ In the preceding scene, Boreas, flying from Thrace to Aeolia, is unmistakably depicted as a winged deity (1.577 *omne dei rapidis nemus ingemit alis*). Here, *Thraces equi* would seem to designate not so much the god himself as his brute force, chained and now freed, that is, the horses hitched to his chariot.

In any case, it seems clear that Valerius Flaccus makes explicit the equestrian and circus imagery that was only hinted at in *Aeneid* Book 1; the choice of naming Aeolus *Hippotades* (610) points to the awareness of such an operation. Fifteen centuries later, Teofilo Folengo's macaronic genius will transfigure the Virgilian Aeolus into a very down-to-earth horse-groomer: *castigatque suos uentos de more pedanti, | moreque cozzoni magris dat fraina cauallis* 'he chastizes his winds like a schoolmaster and like a stable-boy gives fodder to his scrawny horses'; *cui data cura est | a Ioue striggiandi uentos stallasque sguardi* 'to whom Jupiter assigned the task of grooming the winds and cleaning their stables' (*Baldus* 13.36–7 and 59–60). Retracing the long tradition that, starting from Homer, associates the winds with horses will allow us to determine whether we are dealing solely with a metaphor or, instead, with something more 'concrete'. Literary accounts will be considered,³¹ concluding with a brief comparison with iconographic evidence.

2. WINDS AND HORSES, WINDS AS HORSES/HORSEMEN/CHARIOTEERS

In the *Iliad*, the world of winds and the world of horses communicate with each other through a permeable boundary. Xanthus and Balias, Achilles' two steeds, are the offspring of Ποδάργη ('swift-footed')³²—one of the three Harpies, creatures associated with the winds and identified with the θύελλαι ('hurricanes', 'squalls') in

²⁸ A. Zissos (ed.), *Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica Book 1* (Oxford, 2008), 340 on Val. Fl. 1.610–11. Note also 594 *domant*, 594–5 *fremuntum* | *ora*, 595 *claustra*, 602 *nondum uinclis et carcere clausus*.

²⁹ D. Galli (ed.), *Valerii Flacci Argonautica I* (Berlin and New York, 2007), 321 and Zissos (n. 28), 340 think of a metaphorical equation. Away from metaphor, M. Lenchantin de Gubernatis (ed.), *Il libro di Catullo* (Turin, 1933), lxxviii considered *equi* 'un plurale generalizzante per Borea cavallo'.

³⁰ F. Spaltenstein (ed.), *Commentaire des Argonautica de Valérius Flaccus (livres 1 et 2)* (Brussels, 2002), 239. More generically, P. Langen (ed.), *C. Valeri Flacci Setini Balbi Argonauticon libri octo* (Berlin, 1896–7), 100 ad loc.: '*equi* ventis tribuuntur propter celeritatem item atque alae'. See also R. Pfeiffer, 'ΒΕΡΕΝΙΚΗΣ ΠΛΟΚΑΜΟΣ', *Philologus* 87 (1932), 179–228, at 198: '*Thraces equi* sind die Rosse des Boreas'.

³¹ A first, valuable dossier is offered by G. Agosti, 'La cosmogonia di Strasburgo', *A&R* 39 (1994), 26–46, at 39–42.

³² In Stesichorus fr. 178 Page, Podarge becomes the mother of the two horses of the Dioscuri, Phlogeos and Harpagos. A homonymous mare is found in Nonnus, *Dion.* 37.157 and 37.337 (see n. 38 below). Πόδαργος is a horse of Hector in *Il.* 8.185 and a horse of Menelaus in *Il.* 23.295.

the *Odyssey*³³—and the wind Zephyrus (*Il.* 16.148–51, 19.400 and 19.415–16). From this extraordinary union³⁴ taking place at the edges of the world, in a meadow along the currents of the Ocean, two incredibly swift horses were born: they could fly in the company of the winds (*Il.* 16.148 τῷ ἅμα πνοιῇσι πετέσθην) and run like the breath of their father (νόϊ δὲ καὶ κεν ἅμα πνοιῇ Ζεφύροιο θέοιμεν, Xanthus says to Achilles in *Il.* 19.415). Similarly, Boreas, having fallen in love with Erichthonius' mares, assumed the form of a dark-maned stallion (ἵπῳ δ' εἰσάμενος . . . κυανοχαίτη) to mate with them; he thus fathered twelve fillies which galloped over the ears of corn and ran on the crest of the waves (*Il.* 20.221–9).³⁵

Similar miraculous unions proliferate in later epics, giving birth to several extraordinary horses: in Antimachus' *Thebaid*, Deimos and Phobos, Ares' horses, are sons of Thyelle, the 'Hurricane' (fr. 34 Matthews = 37 Wyss);³⁶ in Silius Italicus, Zephyrus is father of Pelorus, Durius' racehorse (16.363–5 and 13.426–7); in Quintus Smyrnaeus, the four horses of Ares—Aethon, Phlogius, Conabus and Phobus—are the offspring of Boreas and Erinys (8.241–5), while the mythical Arion, sired by Zephyrus and Harpyia, can compete with his father's swift hurricanes (4.569–70);³⁷ in Nonnus of Panopolis, Boreas and a Sithonian Harpy sired the horse Xanthos and the mare Podarge, gifted to Erechtheus by the northern wind when he abducted Oreithyia (*Dion.* 37.155–61),³⁸ while a young Balios, Scelmis' horse, is the son of Zephyrus and can run on the sea without getting wet (37.335–6).³⁹ The belief that mares could be impregnated by the winds is also widespread outside heroic epics: scientific treatises from Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 6.18, 572a) until the modern era set such a *thaumasion*, suitably rationalized, in various geographical contexts, while Virgil's *Georgics* (re)shape it poetically (see below).⁴⁰

A famous simile in the *Iliad* associates other outstanding steeds, those of Rhesus, with the winds, thus emphasizing their extraordinary speed: they were 'whiter than snow and in their running resembled the winds' (*Il.* 10.437 λευκότεροι χιόνος, θείειν δ' ἀνέμοισιν ὁμοιοί). This line can be considered the archetype of the widespread Greek and Latin tradition which associates winds and horses with rapidity.⁴¹ It may be

³³ Coppola (n. 6), 12–13.

³⁴ Although not explicit, it seems reasonable to assume that Zephyrus takes on an equine form (see K. Wernicke, 'Boreas 2', *RE* 3.1 [1897], 721–30, at 723.46–7; B. Schweitzer, *Herakles. Aufsätze zur griechischen Religions- und Sagen-geschichte* [Tübingen, 1922], 76). *Contra*: Coppola (n. 6), 43 argues that the wind would not change its atmospheric nature, unlike Boreas in *Il.* 20.224 (cited below).

³⁵ On this passage, see E. Delebecque, *Le cheval dans l'Iliade* (Paris, 1951), 27.

³⁶ See V.J. Matthews (ed.), *Antimachus of Colophon* (Leiden / New York / Cologne, 1996), 150 with n. 198.

³⁷ On this genealogy, see F. Vian (ed.), *Quintus de Smyrne. La suite d'Homère, Livres I–IV* (Paris, 1963), 158 n. 2. Cf. also Quint. Smyrn. 1.166–9 (during her stay in Thrace, Penthesilea was presented with a horse that could outrun the Harpies by Oreithyia, now Boreas' wife) and 3.750–1 (reproducing the Iliadic genealogy of Achilles' horses).

³⁸ On Falkenburg's correction Ποδάργην at line 157 (and 337) instead of ποδάρκην, as MS L reads, see H. Frangoulis (ed.), *Nonnos de Panopolis. Les Dionysiaques, Chant XXXVII* (Paris, 1999), 125. On the passage, see also Agosti (n. 27), 693.

³⁹ See K. Wernicke, 'Boreas 2', *RE* 3.1 (1897), 721–30, at 723 and O. Waser, 'Euros 3', *RE* 6.1 (1907), 1314.

⁴⁰ See the evidence collected by C. Zirkle, 'Animals impregnated by the wind', *Isis* 25 (1936), 95–130, at 97–104 (Plin. *HN* 4.115–16 and Serv. on *G.* 3.273 may be added). On Varro and Latin prose sources, see G. Ranucci, 'Un esempio di «doppione» in Varrone: il *thaumasion* delle cavalle lusitane', *Maia* 33 (1981), 209–12.

⁴¹ For epithets, similes and more articulate expressions, see the passages collected by Sauvage (n. 6), 84–5; Agosti (n. 31), 42; G. Massimilla (ed.), *Callimaco. Aitia. Libro terzo e quarto* (Pisa and Rome, 2010), 232 on Callim. fr. 143.9–10 (= 383 Pfeiffer). Not surprisingly, it is an idea widespread in other cultures and traditions as well (see von Negelein [n. 26], 64–70), which persists in modern times: one of

interesting to note that all Homeric passages referred to are related to Thrace: Boreas and Zephyrus blow from there and return there in *Il.* 9.4–5 and 23.229–30⁴²—Boreas blows ‘through horse-breeding Thrace’ in Hes. *Op.* 507 (διὰ Θρήκης ἵπποτρόφου)⁴³—while Rhesus is the lord of the Thracians. However, based on these Homeric images, scholars have deduced that in archaic Greece winds were imagined (also) in the form of horses.⁴⁴ Given the widespread presence of such imagery in other cultures, a more remote—or a broader polygenetic—origin can actually be suspected.⁴⁵

Winds used to ride in the sky of Attic tragedy, as shown by Hugh Lloyd-Jones.⁴⁶ In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the ἀελλάδες ἵπποι mentioned at lines 467–8 (ἀελλάδων | ἵππων) should be interpreted as ‘the horses of the storm’ of Boreas, while in the *Antigone* (985 Βορέας ἄμιππος ὀρθόποδος ὑπὲρ πάγου) Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas (Βορέας), is depicted as ‘riding the air with’ (ἄμιππος) the other Boreads. Likewise, the βόρειον [ἵπ]πον mentioned by Ion of Chios in his satyr play *Omphale* (fr. 17a Snell) would indicate a winged ‘wind-horse of Boreas’.⁴⁷ Lastly, Eur. *Phoen.* 211–13 is highly relevant: Ζεφύρου πνοαῖς | **ἵππεύσαντος** ἐν οὐρανῷ | κάλλιστον κελάδημα, translated by Donald Mastronarde as ‘while Zephyrus rode with his breezes, producing a lovely music in the sky’. The verb ἵππεύειν—like the Latin *equitare* (see below)—can refer either to a horseman, who ‘rides’, or to a horse, which ‘gallops’. Modern scholars lean towards the second possibility.⁴⁸ Zephyrus would be represented as a horse.

the best British racehorses of the nineteenth century was named Favonius (1868–77), offspring of the mare Zephyr.

⁴² On the localization of the winds in the *Iliad*, see Coppola (n. 6), 52–3.

⁴³ On the association Boreas–Thrace, see A. Rapp, ‘Boreas’, in W.H. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 1.1 (Leipzig, 1884–90), 803–14, at 804.18–28.

⁴⁴ L. Preller and C. Robert, *Griechische Mythologie*, vol. 1, *Theogonie und Goetter* (Berlin, 1894⁴), 473; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1906), 838; H. Steinmetz, ‘Windgötter’, *JDAI* 25 (1910), 33–55, at 33; Malten (n. 26), 199–200; C.V. Daremberg and E. Saglio (ed.), *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d’après les textes et les monuments* (Paris, 1877–1919), 5.716a, s.v. ‘Venti’ (R. Lantier); Schweitzer (n. 34), 76; H. Steuding, ‘Windgötter’, in W.H. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 6 (Leipzig, 1937), 511–17, at 512; Delebecque (n. 35), 242; especially on Boreas, see Rapp (n. 43), 804.53–805.10. On Mt Taygetus, horse sacrifice was practised in honour of the winds (Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* page 190, line 22; see Preller and Robert [this note], 474 and Steuding [this note], 513); Eidinow (n. 6), 123 rightly notes that this may relate to the close association between winds and horses in ancient Greece.

⁴⁵ Indo-European origins are assumed by von Negelein (n. 26), 64–70 and Delebecque (n. 35), 242. See the materials collected in M.L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007), 263–5; Germanic and Russian folklore in W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte*, vol. 2, *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte aus nordeuropäischer Überlieferung* (Berlin, 1877), 95, 99 and 203. A Northern European saying associates the galloping of a horse with the wind blowing over wheat fields (Gruppe [n. 44], 838; H. Patzig [ed.], *Mythologische Forschungen aus dem Nachlasse von Wilhelm Mannhardt* [Strasbourg, 1884], 167; J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, part 5, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, vol. 1 [London, 1914³], 292) or raising dust in a whirlwind (Mannhardt [n. 45], 95). Yet similar associations can be found in other cultures, so that polygenesis is not ruled out: in a vision of the prophet Zechariah, the four ‘winds of heaven’ are represented as four chariots, each drawn by horses of different colours (Zech. 6:1–8); according to a Bedouin legend, Allah created the purebred Arabian horse from the south wind; Tibetan tradition knows the wind-horse Lungta.

⁴⁶ H. Lloyd-Jones, ‘Notes on Sophocles’ *Antigone*’, *CQ* 7 (1957), 12–27 (= H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy* [Oxford, 1990], 368–77), at 24–6.

⁴⁷ On Ion, see also L. Leurini, ‘Il βόρειος ἵππος di Ione di Chio (19 F 17a Sn.)’, *QUCC* 9 (1981), 155–61 and L. Lehnus, ‘Ancora Ione di Chio *TrGF* 19 F 17a’, *QUCC* 17 (1984), 137–9.

⁴⁸ D.J. Mastronarde (ed.), *Euripides. Phoenissae* (Cambridge, 1994), ad loc. (‘ἵππεύσαντος ... probably means “riding like a horse” rather than “riding on a horse”’) and A.C. Pearson (ed.), *Euripides. The Phoenissae* (Cambridge, 1909), ad loc. (‘expresses the movement of the horse under the rider’); so already U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (ed.), *Euripides. Herakles* (Berlin, 1895²), 2.217 on 1001 ἵππεύει. *Contra*: Pfeiffer (n. 30), 197–8.

This brings us to the fundamental, yet long-disputed, testimony of Callim. fr. 110.52–4 Pfeiffer: καὶ πρόκατε γνῶτος Μέμνονος Αἰθίοπος | ἔτο κυκλώσας βαλιὰ πτερὰ θῆλυς ἀήτης, | ἵππο[ς] ἰοζώνου Λοκρικὸς Ἀρσινόης ‘and straightaway the brother of the Ethiopian Memnon | came rushing on, circling his swift wings, a gentle breeze, | the Locrian horse of Arsinoe with her purple gridle’.⁴⁹ These lines describe the movement of Zephyrus, ‘the brother of the Ethiopian Memnon’, depicted as a winged (βαλιὰ πτερὰ) horse (ἵππος). Such reading is confirmed by Catullus’ translation: *cum se Memnonis Aethiopis | unigena impellens nutantibus aera pennis | obtulit Arsinoeos Locricos ales equos* (66.52–4). Both passages have been much debated.⁵⁰ Despite the suspicions of scholars such as Housman and Pfeiffer, firmly convinced that winds could be represented only as horsemen,⁵¹ modern interpreters agree that Zephyrus appears here as a horse.⁵²

It should be noted that the passages mentioned so far associate equine traits with Zephyrus and Boreas (or with their offspring, as in Sophocles and Ion), that is, the two winds that take on horse form in the *Iliad*.⁵³ In Roman literature, this depiction extends to Eurus as well, as we can appreciate from Virgil (*Aen.* 2.417–18, discussed below) and Horace (*Carm.* 4.43–4 *ceu . . . Eurus | per Siculas equitavit undas*). These lines appear to reference the aforementioned passage from Euripides’ *Phoenissae*, which is also set in Sicily (210–11 ὑπὲρ ἀκαρπίστων πεδίων | Σικελίας). Just like the Greek ἵππεύειν, the Horatian *equitare* might refer both to a rider and to a horse.⁵⁴ Modern commentators tend to lean towards the second possibility.⁵⁵

Further evidence comes from imperial and late antique poetry. The common association between winds and horses takes on an interesting guise in Ov. *Fast.* 4.391–2 (*Circus erit pompa celebr numeroque deorum, | primaque uentosis palma petetur equis*), where the adjective *uentosis*, besides indicating speed, may no doubt recall the Homeric tradition of horses sired by winds.⁵⁶ Also worth mentioning are Quintus’ *Posthomerica*: at 4.509–21, the chariots, drawn by horses as swift as Harpies, raise dust at their departure as when Notus and Zephyrus raise smoke or mist on the mountains; at

⁴⁹ Text and translation from A. Harder (ed.), *Callimachus. Aetia*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2012).

⁵⁰ For an overview, see N. Marinone (ed.), *Berenice da Callimaco a Catullo* (Bologna, 1997²), 151–7; see also O. Zwierlein, ‘Weihe und Entrückung der Locke der Berenike’, *RhM* 130 (1987), 274–90, at 284–5, and M.G. Bajoni, ‘*Ales equos*: Catull. 66, 54 e Callimaco 110 Pf., 52–54’, *Aevum(ant)* 3 (1990), 163–7, at 163–5.

⁵¹ R. Pfeiffer (ed.), *Callimachus. Volumen I. Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1949), 117 in the apparatus criticus on fr. 110.54; A.E. Housman, ‘Catullus 66 51–4’, *CR* 43 (1929), 168 = J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear (edd.), *The Classical Papers of A.E. Housman*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1972), 3.1157 approved Achilles Statius’ emendation *alisequus*. See also Pfeiffer (n. 30), 197–201. Zwierlein (n. 50), 288 argued that ἵππος and *ales equos* should be understood metaphorically.

⁵² See Lenchantin de Gubernatis (n. 29), lxxvii–lxxviii; Ardizzoni (n. 6); Leurini (n. 47), 156–7; Agosti (n. 31), 42; Marinone (n. 50), 156–7; Massimilla (n. 41), 484; Harder (n. 49), 2.826–7.

⁵³ Where in fact they prove to be the most characterized winds: Coppola (n. 6), 35–46.

⁵⁴ See *TLL* s.v. *equito*: 5.2.729.23–56 ‘de homine’, 5.2.729.57–64 ‘de equo . . . , i.q. currere’.

⁵⁵ A. Kiessling and R. Heinze (edd.), *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Oden und Epoden* (Dublin and Zurich, 1968¹³), ad loc.; *TLL* 5.2.729.62–3 s.v. *equito*; R.F. Thomas (ed.), *Horace. Odes Book IV and Carmen saeculare* (Cambridge, 2011), ad loc. *Contra*: P. Fedeli and I. Ciccarelli (edd.), *Q. Horatii Flacci Carmina liber IV* (Florence, 2008), 241 think of a horseman. C.G. Heyne and G.P.E. Wagner (edd.), *Publius Virgilius Maro uarietate lectionis et perpetua adnotatione illustratus*, vol. 2, *Aeneidis libri I–VI* (Leipzig and London, 1832⁴), 326 on *Aen.* 2.417–19 thought of charioteers, both here and in Eur. *Phoen.* 212.

⁵⁶ E. Fantham (ed.), *Ovid. Fasti Book IV* (Cambridge, 1988), ad loc. An equine image referring to Boreas is found in Ov. *Met.* 6.709 (the abduction of Oreithyia), where the wind *aerii cursus suppressit habenas*: L. Galasso (ed.), *Publio Ovidio Nasone. Le metamorfosi*, 2 vols. (Turin, 2022²), 1.549 rightly identifies a reference to *Aen.* 1.63. Interestingly, in two ceramics from the fourth century B.C. Boreas abducts Oreithyia on a horse: see Kaempf-Dimitriadou (n. 1), 137 nn. 60 and 61.

4.548–55, racing horses are compared to the swift gusts of the Boreas and the tempestuous Notus.

More substantial evidence can be found in Greek literature from Egypt. In the so-called ‘Strasbourg Cosmogony’, a fragmentary *πάτριον* poem preserved in *P.Strash.* 481, probably composed in the fourth century in Hermopolis Magna,⁵⁷ the blowing of winds is said to be ‘unbridled’ (*recto*, line 36 ἀχάλινον), thus implying an equine image.⁵⁸ In Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*, a compound of the Euripidean *ἵππεύειν* (*Phoen.* 212, discussed above) is used many times in relation to the winds: at 2.646 the whirlwinds (2.644 στροφάλιγγες ἀέλλης) born from Typhon’s limbs unsettle the calm sea with their riding (ἀκλύστοιο **καθιππεύουσι** γαλήνης); at 39.377–83, the four winds, engaged in naval battle against Dionysus’ enemies, are depicted as ‘riding their storms’ (καὶ πίσυρες κατὰ πόντον **ἐφιππεύοντες ἀέλλαις** | κύματα πυργώσαντες ἐθωρήθησαν ἄηται ...); at 41.44–6 Zephyrus is depicted as ‘riding’ (λιγυηεὶ ταρσῶ | Ἑσπερίων Ζεφύροιο **καθιππεύοντος** ἐναύλων).⁵⁹ Other equine images referring to (storm) winds can be found in *Dion.* 28.253 πλωτῆρα **συνιππεύοντα** θυέλλαις and 47.358 ... μιν ἄσταθέεσσι **συνιππεύοντα** θυέλλαις,⁶⁰ both passages clearly recalling Oppian, *Halieutica* 5.344 αἰεὶ δυσκελάδοισι **συνιππεύοντες ἀέλλαις**, where fishermen are involved in the impetuous movement of the storm.⁶¹ In turn, Nonnus’ poetry, especially *Dion.* 39.377–83, inspired John of Gaza, who in his *Tabula Mundi* portrays the four winds personified (Ἀῆται), with winged feet and heads, and their respective four impetuous horses representing the storms (ἄελλαι); John also compares the group of the four winds to a charioteer trying to restrain the momentum of his racing quadriga (lines 250–96 Lauritzen/Gigli [= 225–71 Friedländer], especially 257–71 for the comparison).⁶² It is worth noting that Nonnus and John are the only remaining literary accounts in which the winds are unequivocally depicted as horsemen, not as horses or charioteers; in both cases, however, the winds–horsemen are one with their mounts, the storm–horses.

We thus come back to Virgil. In my opinion, the equine traces identified in *Aeneid* Book 1 are to be contextualized within this long-standing tradition, which goes back to Homer. In this regard, other passages from Virgil’s *œuvre* should be recalled. Take the following passage from the *Georgics*, where the impregnation of mares by Zephyrus is described (3.271–9):

⁵⁷ For contextualization, see now M. Perale (ed.), *Adespota Papyracea Hexametra Graeca (APHex I). Hexameters of Unknown or Uncertain Authorship from Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Berlin and Boston, 2020), 33–8.

⁵⁸ D. Gigli Piccardi, *La ‘Cosmogonia di Strasburgo’* (Florence, 1990), 133–4 (with further clarifications by Agosti [n. 31], 39–42 and Perale [n. 57], 61).

⁵⁹ According to Chuvin in P. Chuvin and M.-C. Fayant (edd.), *Nonnos de Panopolis. Les Dionysiaques, Chants XLI–XLIII* (Paris, 2006), 158, ταρσῶ would designate the back wings (‘rémites’) of the wind; *contra*, Rouse and Accorinti translate it as ‘heel’. A passage from John of Gaza’s *Tabula mundi* is perhaps decisive: **ταρσὰ ποδῶν πτερόεντα** μετοχμάζοντες ὀπίσω (line 227 Friedländer = 252 Lauritzen/Gigli); this passage refers to the winged heels of the (personified) winds. Note that in *Dion.* 6.38–43 the four winds, including Zephyrus, clearly show anthropomorphic traits.

⁶⁰ See Agosti (n. 27), 275 on 28.253; on the image, D. Gigli Piccardi, *Metafora e poetica in Nonno di Panopoli* (Florence, 1985), 183–4.

⁶¹ Similar is the image (clearly metaphorical) of Isis ‘riding the waves’ on a ship in *Hymn. Is.* 154 Peek οἶδμα καθιππεύουσα, which finds a precise parallel in Oppian, *Halieutica* 2.515 κύμα καθιππεύουσιν.

⁶² See P. Friedländer (ed.), *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius. Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1912), 183–5; D. Lauritzen (ed.), *Jean de Gaza. Description du tableau cosmique* (Paris, 2015), 127–32; D. Gigli (ed.), *Giovanni di Gaza. Tabula mundi* (Alessandria, 2021), 261–9.

continuoque, auidis ubi subdita flamma medullis
 (uere magis, quia uere calor redit ossibus), illae
 ore omnes uersae in Zephyrum stant rupibus altis
 exceptantque leuis auras et saepe sine ullis
 coniugiis uento grauidae (mirabile dictu) 275
 saxa per et scopulos et depressas conuallis
 diffugiunt, non, Eure, tuos neque solis ad ortus,
 in Borean Caurumque, aut unde nigerrimus Auster
 nascitur et pluuiο contristat frigore caelum.

Virgil gives poetic form to the Aristotelian *thaumasion* of the mares impregnated by the winds (see above), while at the same time recalling the Iliadic episodes of Boreas and Zephyrus.⁶³ Such Homeric reminiscence is prepared, a few dozen lines earlier, by an elaborate simile associating a galloping young stallion with the breath of Aquilo, that is, Boreas (*G.* 3.193–201):

tum cursibus auras,
 tum uocet ac per aperta uolans ceu liber habenis
 aequora uix summa uestigia ponat harena. 195
 qualis Hyperboreis Aquilo cum densus ab oris
 incubuit Scythiaeque hiemes atque arida differ
 nubila (tum segetes altae campique natantes
 lenibus horrescunt flabris, summaeque sonorem
 dant siluae, longique urgent ad litora fluctus), 200
 ille uolat simul arua fuga, simul aequora uerrens.⁶⁴

As much as the comparison between horses and winds is commonplace in Virgil's time,⁶⁵ it should be appreciated how lines 195, 201 and, within the simile, 198–200 give new life to the Homeric image of Zephyrus' twelve fillies: αἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν σκιρτῶεν ἐπὶ ζεῖδωρον ἄρουραν, | ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀνθερίκων καρπὸν θέον οὐδὲ κατέκλων· | ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ σκιρτῶεν ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης, | ἄκρον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνος ἁλὸς πολιοῖο θέεσκον (*Il.* 21.226–9). The steed 'flies' (194 *uolans*, 201 *uolat*), one wonders whether more by mere metaphor or rather by an effect of permeability between *comparatum* and *comparandum*, as is characteristic of Virgilian similes.⁶⁶ The same image is reworked, with greater breadth and adherence to the model, for Camilla's debut in the *Aeneid* (7.803–11):

hos super aduenit Volsca de gente Camilla
 agmen agens equitum et florentis aere cateruas,
 bellatrix, non illa colo calathisue Mineruae 805
 femineas adsueta manus, sed proelia uirgo
 dura pati cursuque pedum praeuertere uentos.
 illa uel intactae segetis per summa uolaret
 gramina nec teneras cursu laesisset aristas,
 uel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumentis 810
 ferret iter, celeris nec tingeret aequore plantas.

Lines 808–11 precisely refashion the image of *Il.* 21.226–9 (four hexameters in both cases), although now applied to Camilla's running on foot⁶⁷—but here she appears in all

⁶³ R.A.B. Mynors (ed.), *Virgil. Georgics* (Oxford, 1990) on *G.* 3.271–9.

⁶⁴ Simile reworked in Nemes. *Cyn.* 269–78.

⁶⁵ Mynors (n. 63) on *G.* 3.196 and n. 41 above.

⁶⁶ D. West, 'Multiple-correspondence similes in the *Aeneid*', *JRS* 59 (1969), 40–9 and A. Perutelli, 'Similitudini e stile "sogettivo" in Virgilio', *Maia* 24 (1972), 42–60.

⁶⁷ Through the mediation of Hes. *Cat.* fr. 62 M.–W. (= 62–3 Most) (Iphiclus) and Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.182–4 (Euphemos), where the image had already been transferred to foot racing: see N. Horsfall (ed.),

likelihood on horseback, since she is leading her cavalry squadron (7.804).⁶⁸ A final passage from the *Aeneid* must be cited: a simile likening the Greeks' onslaught during the final night of Troy to the unleashing of a storm (*Aen.* 2.416–19):

aduersi rupto ceu quondam turbine uenti
confligunt, Zephyrusque Notusque et laetus Eois
Eurus equis; stridunt siluae saeuitque tridenti
spumeus atque imo Nereus ciet aequora fundo.

After Zephyrus and Notus, the eastern wind is mentioned as *laetus Eois* | *Eurus equis* (2.417–18). His horses are said to be 'of Eos/Aurora' because Eurus blows from the east.⁶⁹ In addition, according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 378), Eos was believed to be the mother of the winds,⁷⁰ so the adjective may also have a genealogical meaning. Clearly, here we are not dealing with a wind-horse but rather with a wind driving several horses (*equis*), that is—we should deduce—a charioteer.⁷¹ Not surprisingly, the Homeric phrase ἵπποισιν ... ἀγαλλόμενος, of which *laetus* ... *equis* has been seen as a calque,⁷² is used of a warrior, Asius, son of Irtacus, 'proud of the horses and the chariot' (*Il.* 12.114 ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν ἀγαλλόμενος).⁷³ Furthermore, this expression is taken up, albeit with a significant variation, by Valerius Flaccus in the above-mentioned phrase *laeti* | *Thraces equi* (1.610–11), where the winds are seemingly represented as four charioteers.

Aen. 2.417–18 would be the first literary evidence depicting a wind as a charioteer. This representation is also attested by archaeological sources. In the *LIMC* entry 'Venti', Erika Simon cites, as the oldest testimony for the 'Winde als kosmische Pferdeführer', a fresco from Nero's Domus Aurea; the other considered examples also date from the Imperial period (second to fourth centuries).⁷⁴ Interestingly, in these depictions the winds drive the horses of the Sun (sometimes also those of the Moon); in particular, in two of them it seems to be Eurus performing such function.⁷⁵ This could further motivate the image *laetus Eois* |

Virgil, Aeneid 7. A Commentary (Leiden and Boston, 2000) on *Aen.* 7.808 and D. Nelis, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Leeds, 2001), 309.

⁶⁸ On Camilla's association with horses, wind and flight, see F. Giannotti, '«Praevertere ventos»: velocità, volo e leggerezza della Camilla virgiliana', *Latinitas* 9 (2021), 25–56. Similar images in *Aen.* 12.84 *qui candore niues anteirent, cursibus auras*; 12.333–4 *illi aequore aperto | ante Notos Zephyrumque uolant*; 12.345 *uel equo praeuertere uentos*. Cf. also 1.316–17 *uel qualis equos Theissa fatigat | Harpalyce uolucrumque fuga praeuertitur Hebrum* (where Rutgers conjectured *Eurum* instead of the river *Hebrum*).

⁶⁹ S. Casali (ed.), *Virgilio, Eneide 2* (Pisa, 2019²), ad loc.

⁷⁰ More precisely, of Boreas, Zephyrus and Notus, sired by the Titan Astraeus; Eurus is not mentioned. But the text is problematic: at *Theog.* 379 modern editions print ἀργεστήν Ζέφυρον, ἀργεστήν ('cleanser') being Jacoby's emendation for the MSS reading ἀργέστην, accented as the proper name Ἀργέστης. The somewhat confused scholium on *Theog.* 379 identifies this Argestes with the east wind Eurus (Ἀργέστης, ὁ καὶ Εὐρος καλούμενος; see M.L. West [ed.], *Hesiod. Theogony* [Oxford, 1966], 271). The Hesiodic triad was thus read as a tetrad (schol. *Theog.* 378 τέσσαρες ἄνεμοι). Cf. Nonnus, *Dion.* 6.28–30, 6.37 and 37.77, where Eurus is the son of Astraeus and Eos; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.4 ... Ἡοῦς δὲ καὶ Ἀστραίου ἄνεμοι καὶ ἄστρα ('the winds', generically); Hyg. *Fab. praef.* 15, lines 50–1 Marsh ex *Astraeo et Aurora, Zephyrus Boreas Notus Fauonius* (a tetrad with Favonius as the fourth wind).

⁷¹ Heyne and Wagner (n. 55), 326 on 2.417–19: '*equi*, ut ἵπποι, Homericō usu, pro curru'.

⁷² N. Horsfall (ed.), *Virgil, Aeneid 2. A Commentary* (Leiden, 2008) and Casali (n. 69), ad loc.

⁷³ Cf. also *Il.* 20.222 πόλοισιν ἀγαλλόμεναι ἀταλῆσι ('rejoicing in their fillies'), said of Erichthonius' mares.

⁷⁴ Simon (n. 1), 190–1 (nos. 20–3).

⁷⁵ Simon (n. 1), 191a (nos. 22b–3).

Eurus equis in *Aen.* 2.417–18: Virgil might be alluding to the role of Eurus as the Sun's charioteer, whose horses 'rise' in the east (*Eois*) and traverse the sky until sunset.⁷⁶

The earliest instance of the motif of 'winds as horses' cited by Erika Simon is the eastern frieze of the Altar of Zeus in Pergamon: the winged horses yoked to Zeus's chariot have been recognized since the nineteenth century as the four cardinal winds; the remains of the inscriptions support this interpretation.⁷⁷ Late ancient Greek epics portray the four winds similarly yoked: in Quintus, Εὔρος καὶ Βορέης, Ζέφυρος δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσι Νότος τε pull Zeus's chariot in an Olympian theomachy stopped by his intervention (12.192),⁷⁸ according to Nonnus, in the fight between Zeus and Typhoeus ἵπποι δὲ Κρονίωνος ὁμόζυγες ἦσαν ἀῖται (*Dion.* 2.423).⁷⁹

To sum up: not all the evidence examined has the same weight; however, if the proposed reconstruction is correct, we may draw the following tentative conclusions. The representation of winds as horses seems to be the oldest 'equine' representation: Zephyrus and Boreas appear as horses in Homer, Callimachus and Catullus,⁸⁰ while the four winds are harnessed together in the Pergamon gigantomachy. These should be considered as firm points. Charioteers and horsemen are likely to be a later development, combining both an anthropomorphic and a theriomorphic aspect. The first charioteer wind to appear is seemingly Eurus in *Aeneid* Book 2—not surprisingly in Roman literature, where circus imagery is pervasive⁸¹—while all four winds drive chariots in Valerius Flaccus; contemporary iconographic evidence complements these literary accounts. Concerning the winds as horsemen: Attic tragedy mentions Boreas' horses, while two fourth-century ceramics depict him as a horseman abducting Oreithyia.⁸² No unequivocal literary evidence for the four winds as horsemen can be found before Nonnus and John of Gaza, nor does similar iconographic evidence appear to be known, which nevertheless must have been widespread, as the lost artwork (painting or mosaic) described in John's poem suggests. In any case, Horace and Euripides cannot support Housman's and Pfeiffer's categorical assumption that winds could *only* be represented as horsemen.⁸³

At this point, it should be clear that Virgil had both a literary and an iconographic tradition behind him that represented the winds as horses. Some scholars, as we have seen, have taken the equine elements in the tempest episode as metaphorical. Of course, the boundary between real and metaphorical is problematic and often insidious. Yet in this case such pre-existing tradition may suggest that Virgil—without explicitness, as is typical of his art—is not comparing the winds released by Aeolus to horses, but is *describing* them as actual horses. It is time now to draw some interpretative conclusions.

⁷⁶ Horsfall (n. 72), ad loc.: the association between horses and winds is 'possibly here easier because associated with the East, and thus with the more equestrian dawn and sun'. Preller and Robert (n. 44), 441 notice that Eos often appears with winged horses and in relation to Helios.

⁷⁷ Simon (n. 1), 191; see also E. Simon, *Pergamon und Hesiod* (Mainz, 1975), 20, 30 and 40; Neuser (n. 6), 156. The four winds were also envisaged as Zeus's horses in the eastern metope of the Parthenon: see Neuser (n. 6), 156 and Zwierlein (n. 50), 285–7, with bibliography at 285 n. 29.

⁷⁸ A few lines earlier the winds appear as mounts of the gods (12.163 Ἀνέμων δ' ἐπιβάντες ἀέλλαις).

⁷⁹ In Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.43, Zeus, in his battle against Typhon, is ἐπὶ πτηνῶν ὁχούμενος ἵππων ἄρματι. See Waser (n. 39).

⁸⁰ With a revival in French Romantic poetry: see Sauvage (n. 6), 85.

⁸¹ Zeus's chariot in the Pergamon Altar may, of course, have been influential.

⁸² See n. 56 above.

⁸³ See n. 51 above.

3. HORSES IN THE TEMPEST: IMPLICATIONS

First of all, evoking the image of galloping horses and the beginning of a chariot race brings Virgil's readers back to a fundamental passage in the *Georgics*, which occurs at the end of the first book (1.511–14):

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

Damien Nelis has highlighted the political and metapoetic significance of this scene: the chariot symbolizes the *res publica*, while the charioteer who can no longer control it (Mars or Caesar-Octavian, as Servius already thought?) represents the Civil War; at the same time, Virgil suggests the image of the 'chariot of song', of Pindaric origin, as a metaphor for the epic 'flight' in the didactic poem.⁸⁴ The parallels with *Aeneid* Book 1, where the storm arouses themes of civil war,⁸⁵ are clear. Furthermore, since a tradition dating back at least to the Pergamon Altar depicts the four winds harnessed to Jupiter's chariot in the gigantomachy, we can read the tempest episode in a contrastive way: here the winds, unleashed by Aeolus on Juno's orders, (re-)endanger the ordered cosmos ruled by Jupiter.

Envisioning the winds as horses also allows us, I believe, to understand better the overall dynamic opposing Aeolus to Neptune at the beginning of the poem. Since Homer, the sea-god is in fact also the lord and tamer of horses, as well as their creator, as Virgil reminds us in the prologue to the *Georgics*: *tuque o, cui prima frementem | fudit equum magno tellus percussa tridenti, | Neptune* (1.12–14). Now, this gesture performed by Neptune—striking the ground with his trident to make the frenzied horse emerge from it—seems precisely imitated by Aeolus when he strikes the mountain rock to release the winds: *cauum conuersa cuspidem montem | impulit in latus* (1.81–2). It is not clear what exactly the term *cuspidis* designates, which most interpreters consider to be a generic *hasta*.⁸⁶ However, I believe that Vinzenz Buchheit and Michael Putnam hit the mark by acknowledging a reference to Neptune's trident: Virgil seems to be playing on the polyvalence of this term, making the words of the sea-god even more poignant: '*non illi imperium pelagi saeuumque tridentem, | sed mihi sorte datum*' (1.138–9).⁸⁷ In short, the text suggests the

⁸⁴ D. Nelis, 'Caesar, the Circus and the charioteer in Vergil's *Georgics*', in J. Nelis-Clément and J.-M. Roddaz (edd.), *Le cirque romain et son image* (Bordeaux, 2008), 497–520, also discussing Ennian influence on Virgil.

⁸⁵ One can simply mention the famous simile between Neptune and the charismatic political leader who quells the riot in *Aen.* 1.148–53. On the political dimension of this episode, see D. Beck, 'The first simile of the *Aeneid*', *Vergilius* 60 (2014), 67–83; Gorey (n. 3), 66–9 with further bibliographical references.

⁸⁶ E.g. de la Cerda (n. 5) and Austin (n. 9), ad loc.; *TLL* 4.1553.29–30; according to Heyne and Wagner (n. 55), ad loc., equivalent to a sceptre.

⁸⁷ Buchheit (n. 4), 195–7, especially 196 n. 17; Putnam (n. 5), 13. According to Buchheit, Quint. Smyrn. 14.479 gives Aeolus a trident (τρίαινη) because he would have interpreted the Virgilian *cuspidis* as a τριάννα, following the post-Virgilian tradition that referred to Neptune's trident with this term (starting with Ov. *Met.* 12.580 *deus aequoreas qui cuspidem temperat undas* and 12.594 '*faxo triplici quid cuspidem possim | sentiat*': see *TLL* 4.1554.35–43 s.v. *cuspidis*). Like Quintus, Lucan puts a trident in Aeolus' hand: *si rursus tellus pulsu laxata tridentis | Aeolii tumidis inmittat fluctibus Eurum* (2.456–7). Cf. also Luc. 6.394–6 *primus ab aequorea percussis cuspidem saxi | Thessalicus sonipes, bellis feralibus omen, | exiit*.

image of Aeolus wielding Neptune's trident, with it repeating—better, usurping—one of his most famous gestures: bringing the horse(s) out of the rock.

Neptune calms the Virgilian storm standing on his horse-drawn chariot, as befits the equestrian god of the sea (cf. 1.156 *flectit equos curruque uolans dat lora secundo*). A similar scene will occur later in the poem, where the bridling of Neptune's wild steeds and the quelling of the storm are closely linked (*Aen.* 5.817–21):

iungit equos auro genitor spumantiaque addit
frena feris manibusque omnis effundit habenas.
caeruleo per summa leuis uolat aequora curru;
subsident undae tumidumque sub axe tonanti
sternitur aequor aquis, fugiunt uasto aethere nimbi.

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One final point. Late imperial sources—the most recent of which is Tertullian's *De spectaculis*—establish an explicit analogy between the Roman circus and the cosmos, both as a whole and in its individual constituents (the arena would correspond to the earth, the *euripus* to the sea, the four colours identifying the factions with the four elements or the four seasons, etc.); several scholars convincingly date this association much earlier, at least to the beginning of the Imperial era.⁸⁸ Was Virgil familiar with this symbolism? If so, the chariot race imagery in the cosmic storm of *Aeneid* Book 1 would acquire even more significance. When staging a cosmic upheaval, Virgil would be conjuring up the atmosphere of the Circus Maximus, a miniature world in which the social order as well as—symbolically—the cosmic order were temporarily subverted, where chaos and confusion used to reign, where the Roman *ciuitas* was reduced to angry mobs excited by partisan *furor*, fighting for the triumph of one faction or colour over the others⁸⁹—four colours just like the four cardinal winds, one of which, the White, as we learn from Tertullian (*De spect.* 9.5) and Isidore (*Etym.* 18.41.2), was consecrated to the Zephyrs.⁹⁰

sunt uenti corpora caeca, wrote Lucretius (1.295). Yet Virgil's mythological epic required them to be visible and have bodies. What animal better to represent them than horses, chthonian creatures and emblems of speed and instinctual violence since Plato,⁹¹ which long-standing literary tradition had represented as winds? Like Balius and Xanthus in the *Iliad*, Virgilian winds are responsive to Neptune's rational speech: a further clue, perhaps, of their Homeric pedigree.

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⁸⁸ R. Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire. Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun* (Oxford, 2006), 123; Barchiesi (n. 27), 532; Nelis (n. 84), 508. See also Averil Cameron (ed.), *Flavius Cresconius Corippus. In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris libri IV* (London, 1976), 143; Marcattili (n. 13), 141–7.

⁸⁹ On chaos and subversion in the Circus Maximus, see A. Saggioro, 'Circus imago poli: la dimensione spazio-temporale dei ludi circenses', in D. Segarra Crespo (ed.), *Transcurrir y recorrer: la categoría espacio-temporal en las religiones del mundo clásico. Actas del I Seminario Hispano-Italiano de Historia de las Religiones (Roma, EEHAR, 16–17 de febrero del 2001)* (Rome and Madrid, 2003), 65–80, at 72 and 78–9; on *clamores*, *discordia* and *furor*, see J. Nelis-Clément, 'Le cirque romain et son paysage sonore', in J. Nelis-Clément and J.-M. Roddaz (edd.), *Le cirque romain et son image* (Bordeaux, 2008), 431–57, at 433. On the circus as a representation of political and cosmic order, see A. Feldherr, 'Ships of state: *Aeneid* 5 and Augustan Circus spectacle', *ClAnt* 14 (1995), 245–65.

⁹⁰ According to Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 56–61, all four colours date well back into the Republican period.

⁹¹ From the famous chariot allegory (Pl. *Phdr.* 246a–b) onwards, horses symbolize passions and instincts: see, in brief, Gigli (n. 62), 261–2.