

“Epic similes, also called Homeric similes, are formal, sustained similes in which the secondary subject, or vehicle, is elaborated far beyond its points of close parallel to the primary subject, or tenor. This figure was imitated from Homer by Virgil, Milton, and other writers of literary epics, who employed it to enhance the ceremonial quality and wide-ranging reference of the narrative style. In the epic simile in *Paradise Lost* (I. 768ff.), Milton describes his primary subject, the fallen angels thronging toward their new-built palace of Pandemonium, by an elaborate comparison to the swarming of bees:

As Bees

In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,  
Pour forth their populous youth about the Hive  
In clusters; they among fresh dewes and flowers  
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothèd Plank,  
The suburb of their Straw-built Citadel,  
New rubb'd with Balm, expatiate and confer  
Their State affairs. So thick the aery crowd  
Swarm'd and were strait'n'd; . . .”

- M.H. Abrams

“An extended simile, in some cases running to fifteen or twenty lines, in which the comparisons made are elaborated in considerable detail. It is a common feature of epic (q.v.) poetry, but is found in other kinds as well.”

- J.A. Cuddon

Book I, *lines*197-210

As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,  
**Titanian**, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,  
**Briareos** or **Typhon**, whom the Den  
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast [ 200 ]  
**Leviathan**, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:  
Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam  
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,  
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell, [ 205 ]  
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind  
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night  
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:  
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay  
Chain'd on the burning Lake...

**Titanian:** In Greek mythology, the Titans were a primeval race of powerful deities, descendants of Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky). They were immortal giants of incredible strength and were also the first pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses.

**Jove:** In ancient Roman religion and myth, Jupiter or Jove is the king of the gods and the god of sky and thunder. The Romans regarded Jupiter as the equivalent of the Greek Zeus.

**Typhon:** or Typhoes was a monster/giant who supposedly was born of Gaia (Earth) and Tartarus (early Titan entity ruling lowest realm of Hades) and attempted unsuccessfully to overthrow Zeus when Zeus seeks to overthrow the Titans and become ruler of the gods. Zeus defeats Typhon, and becomes the head of the gods.

**Leviathan:** Leviathan is a creature with the form of a sea monster from Jewish belief, referenced in the Hebrew Bible in the Book of Job, Psalms, the Book of Isaiah, and the Book of Amos.