

TRANSLATION AND CANONIZATION OF TEXTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LATIN RENDITIONS OF ARATUS' *PHAENOMENA*¹

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The present article discusses how linguistic and stylistic considerations are significant and even critical to the acceptance, survival, and ultimately to the canonical status of literary works. The choice of subject, style and the translation process are factors which influenced the status and fate of many literary compositions. We use this criterion to examine the case of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, one of the most successful poems of antiquity. Our paper focuses on how the survival and popularity of Aratus' poem were affected by its being translated into Latin by Cicero, Germanicus and Avienus.

canonization / translation / commentary / Aratus / astronomy

TRADUCCIÓN Y CANONIZACIÓN DE TEXTOS CON ESPECIAL REFERENCIA A LAS TRADUCCIONES LATINAS DE LOS *PHAENOMENA* DE ARATO

El presente artículo discute de qué modo consideraciones lingüísticas y estilísticas son significativas o incluso críticas para la aceptación, la supervivencia y en última instancia para el status canónico de una obra literaria. La elección del tema, el estilo y los procesos de traducción son factores que influenciaron el status y la suerte de muchas composiciones literarias. Usamos este criterio para examinar el caso de los *Phaenomena* de Arato, uno de los poemas más exitosos de la antigüedad. Nuestro artículo analiza de qué modo las traducciones de Cicerón, Germánico y Avieno contribuyeron a su popularidad y supervivencia.

canonización / traducción / comentario / Arato / astronomía

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cum sole et luna semper Aratus erit

(Ov. *Am.* 1. 15. 16)

“As long as the sun and the moon Aratus live on”

(Transl. Showerman, 1921)

The most significant example of a Greek literary work that immediately after its publication became one of the most successful poems of antiquity is provided by the *Phaenomena* written by Aratus of Soli in 4th-3rd century B.C. The *Phaenomena*, “Things Seen in the Sky”, including an Appendix on weather-signs, the *Prognostica*, is the only surviving poem of Aratus’ literary oeuvre², but the continuously renewed interest aroused by it kept Aratus’ name alive until the 13th century³. Aratus’ *Phaenomena* was incessantly commented on, and translated into Latin by Cicero in the 1st century B.C., Germanicus in the 1st century A.D., and Avienus in the 4th century A.D. Virgil also follows closely a passage of Aratus’ *Prognostica* (*Phaen.* 909–941) in the *Georgica*, 1.356–382 (see Appendix examples 12 and 16).

The *Phaenomena* is a poetic reworking comprising 1200 hexameters of a prose astronomic treatise written in Greek in the 4th century B.C. by Eudoxus of Cnidus (ca. 390–340). Eudoxus’ *Phaenomena*, a description of the constellations with calendaric notices of rising and setting, survives only in fragments cited by Greek Hellenistic commentators like Hipparchus in his *Commentary on the Phaenomena of Aratus and Eudoxus* (2nd century B.C., see Appendix examples 6 and 7). In astronomy Eudoxus was the first Greek to construct a mathematical system to explain the motion of the heavenly bodies. His geometric model of rotating celestial spheres have come to our knowledge mainly through Aristotle’s account of it in his *Metaphysica* (1073b–1074a)⁴.

The basic theme of Aratus’ *Phaenomena* is how to recognize the different constellations and interpret weather signs for the benefit of seafarers and farmers. In detail, the first part is a description of the heavenly bodies, their names and celestial positions. Aratus gives a detailed description of the astronomical system of Eudoxus but, not being himself an astronomer,

² The rest of Aratus’ compositions, a *Hymn to Pan*, some poems mainly on medical subjects, and a collection of trifles, are lost.

³ See, among others, ERREN (1994: 189–284); KIDD (1997); and POSSANZA (2004: 79–103).

⁴ According to the biographical tradition found in Diogenes Laertius 8.86–91, Eudoxus studied geometry with the Pythagorean Archytas. When he was about 23 years old he came to Athens to hear the Socratics, later he spent time in Egypt studying astronomy with the priests. In a second visit to Athens he had the opportunity to discuss his astronomical model with both Plato and Aristotle.

commits a number of mistakes, which the ancient commentators conversant with astronomy singled out and corrected by comparison with Eudoxus' prose original. The second part, also known as the *Prognostica*, deals with how animals and nature foretell weather changes, and is in all probability based on a specialist source, *On weather signs*, transmitted under the name of Theophrastus (4th-3rd century B.C.).

The success of Aratus' Phaenomena: features in the text

Formally, the *Phaenomena* follows the general plan of Hesiodus' *Works and Days*. In the proem, a hymn to Zeus as the establisher of reliable signs in the sky for the benefit of mankind, we recognize the rational divine providence of the Stoics, and indeed one verse is actually quoted from the stoic Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (331–233 B.C., cf. n. 17). Instead of presenting Zeus as the relentless, unpredictable weather-god of Hesiod's *Works and days*, Aratus adjusts his cosmology to the philosophic and religious atmosphere of his time.

In general, Aratus' poem rests on solid epic tradition in borrowing his poetic language and verse meter from Homer, and laying thereby a claim to general validity. On the other hand, the language of the *Phaenomena* is updated by the use of forms from the Attic dialect and enriched by the author's own coinages.

Hellenistic sophistication

At the same time, Aratus' small-scale epic poem follows the poetics of graceful style and of 'trifles' of the Neoteric poets, peppering the technical description of constellations with miniature myths. By presenting facts and theories in a new light that bore the mark of the Alexandrian school, Aratus sets his poem within a contemporary frame of reference; and indeed we find some points of contact between Aratus' *Phaenomena* and Callimachus' astronomic poem, the *Lock of Berenice* (3rd century B.C.). Aratus' poem won the approval of Neoterics like Callimachus and Leonidas mainly for the 'fineness' or 'subtleness' of his style:

Ἡσιόδου τό τ' ἄεισμα καὶ ὀτρόπος· οὐ τὸν αἰοιδῶν
ἔσχατον, ἀλλ' ὀκνέω μὴ τὸ μελιχρότατον
τῶν ἐπέων ὃ Σολεὺς ἀπεμάξατο. χαίρετε, **λεπταὶ**
ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης,

(Call. *Anthologia Palatina*, 9.507)

The rhythm and the manner are Hesiod's. He of Soli (scil. Aratus) took as a model not the worst of the poets, but, I am afraid, the most honeyed of his verses. Hail! **delicate phrases**, the monument of Aratus' sleepless nights
(Transl. Paton, *The Greek Anthology*, 1916, III.507)

Γράμμα τόδ' Ἀρήτιοιο δαήμονος, ὅς ποτε **λεπτῆ**
φροντίδι δηναίους ἀστέρας ἐφράσατο,
ἀπλανέας τ' ἄμφω καὶ ἀλήμονας, οἷσιν ἐναργῆς
ἰλλόμενος κύκλοις οὐρανὸς ἐνδέδεται.
αἰνεῖσθω δὲ καμῶν ἔργον μέγα, καὶ Διὸς εἶνα
δεύτερος, ὅστις ἔθικ' ἄστρα φαεινότερα, Leon.
(*Anthologia Palatina*, 9.25).

"This is the book of learned Aratus, whose **subtle mind** explored the long-lived stars, both the fixed stars and the planets with which the bright revolving heaven is set. Let us praise him for the great task at which he toiled; let us count him second to Zeus in that he made the stars brighter."
(Transl. Paton, *The Greek Anthology*, III.25)

There is an analogy lurking behind Aratus' 'subtle' poetic language and the subject matter of his poem, i.e. the divine order of the cosmos:

πάντα γὰρ οὐπω
ἐκ Διὸς ἄνθρωποι γινώσκομεν, ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ
κέκρυπται, τῶν αἰ κε θέλη καὶ ἐσαντικά δώσει
Ζεὺς· ὁ γὰρ οὖν γενεῆν ἀνδρῶν ἀναφανδὸν ὀφέλλει
πάντοθεν εἰδόμενος, πάντη δ' ὅ γε σήματα φαίνων,
(*Phaen.*768–772)

For we men do not yet have knowledge of everything from Zeus, but much still is hidden, whereof Zeus, if he wishes, will give us signs anon; he certainly does benefit the human race openly, showing himself on every side, and everywhere displaying his signs.

In the same way as Zeus displays signs that may reveal to the observer the hidden patterns of the universe, the poet leaves traces that invite us to search for hidden patterns in the verbal arrangement of his poem. In the verse that follows, Aratus forebodes that "some things the moon will tell you" (Ἄλλα δέ τοι ἐρέει ἢ που διχόωσα σελήνη, *Phaen.*773). Thus, Aratus refers to the moon not only as a sign for undisclosed phenomena in nature but also as a clue for discovering the acrostic hidden in verses 783–787. The initials forming the Greek word *λεπτῆ*, 'fine', 'light', are an imitation of

the acrostic pattern found in Homer with the word λευκή, 'light', 'white' (*Il.* 24.1–5), and has the secondary purpose of highlighting the Alexandrian ideal of poetic style:

Λεπτὴ μὲν καθαρή τε περὶ τρίτον ἡμαρ εὐῶσα
 Εὐδιός κ' εἶη, λεπτὴ δὲ καὶ εὖ μάλ' ἐρευθῆς
 Πνευματὴν παχίων δὲ καὶ ἀμβλείησι κεραίαις
 Τέτρατον ἐκ τριτάτοιο φῶως ἀμενηνὸν ἔχουσα
 Ἥ νότου ἀμβλύνετ' ἢ ὕδατος ἐγγύς ἐόντος.

(the moon) If **fine** and clear about the third day, she will bode fair weather, if **fine** and very red, wind; if the crescent is thickish, with blunted horns, having a feeble fourth-day light after the third day, either it is blurred by a southerly or because rain is in the offing.

(Adapted from Kidd's translation, 1997⁵).

The success of Aratus: beyond the text

All these features contributed to the immediate success of Aratus' *Phaenomena* also beyond the circle of educated Hellenistic readers, and in fact the earliest papyrus that has come to our hands with fragments from Aratus' *Phaenomena* is an anthology, in all likelihood used as an elementary handbook on astronomy at school, from the 2nd century B.C. (*P.Hamb.* 121). An artistic description of the constellations, which is less difficult and more entertaining reading than its scientific source, presented in a didactic manner⁶ and in the Homeric verse form, suited the purpose of aiding the memory of the students to learn an otherwise arid topic.

⁵ The acrostic passage was discovered by JACQUES (1960: 48–61).

⁶ Aratus, unlike Eudoxus, presents the whole astronomical description from the point of view of the observer, turning his attention to the different constellations by means of second-person addresses, e.g.: δεινὴ γὰρ κείνη, δεινοὶ δὲ οἰέγγυθεν εἰσὶν / ἀστέρες· οὐκ ἂν τοὺς γε ἰδὼν ἔτι τεκμήραιο, *Phaen.* 141–142: "Impressive is the Bear and impressive are the stars near her: once you have sighted them, you do not need any other guide" (transl. Kidd, 1997) versus Eudoxus' Πρὸ δὲ τῶν ἐμπροσθίων ποδῶν τῆς Ἄρκτου ἀστὴρ ἔστι λαμπρός, *Eudox.* fr. 28 (Lasserre): "before the Bear's fore-feet there is a brighter star". Aratus' advice on sailing and farming given in the tone of a schoolmaster clearly follows the Hesiodic model of didactic epic: κλύθι ἰδῶν ἄλων τε, δίκη δ' ἴθυνε θέμιστας / τύνη· ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μῦθησαίμην, *Hes., Op.*, 9–10: "Attend you with eye and ear, and make judgements straight with righteousness. And I, Perses, would tell of true things" (transl. Evelyn-White, 1977).

Aratus was not the first Greek author to undertake the poetic reworking of a scientific prose treatise⁷, but the tremendous success of his *Phaenomena* and *Prognostica* doomed an immense body of didactic poetry on astronomy and meteorology to oblivion. Two Greek didactic epic poems written by his later contemporary Nicander of Colophon (2nd century B.C.) survived, the *Theriaca* (958 verses) and *Alexipharmaca* (630 verses) dealing with the treatment of bites of poisonous animals and with the treatment of food poisoning, respectively⁸. Analogously to the technical source of Aratus' work, these are based on medical prose texts on vegetable and animal poisons of one Apollodorus (3rd century B.C.). Aratus' influence upon Nicander may be detected in his use of an acrostic bearing his signature, ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟ, in a highly ornamental mythological passage (Nicander, *Ther.* 345–353), and in his adoption of some of the lexical innovations of the former⁹.

Only against the background of Nicander's tedious handling of the poetically intractable subject of poisonous animals and herbal remedies against their bites, overloaded with impenetrable technical vocabulary (printed in caps in the following passage), can one fully appreciate the magnificent achievement of Aratus' poem:

Οἷσιν ἐγὼ τὰ ἕκαστα διείσομαι ἄρκια νούσων.
 δὴ γὰρ ὅτ' ἀγχούσης θριδακηίδα λάζεο χαίτην,
 ἄλλοτε πενταπέτηλον, ὅτ' ἄνθεα φοινὰ βάτιοι,
 ἄρκτιον, ὄξαλίδας τε καὶ ὀρμενόνεντα λυκαψόν,
 κίκαμα τόρδειλόν τε περιβρῦές, ἐν δὲ χαμηλὴν
 ρεῖα πίτυν, φηγοῦ τε βαθὺν περὶ φλοιὸν ἀράξας,
 σὺν δ' ἄρα καυκαλίδας τε καὶ ἐκ σταφυλίνου ἀμῆσας
 σπέρματα καὶ τρεμίθιοι νέον πολυειδέα καρπὸν,
 (Nic.*Ther.* 837–844)

Now will I distinguish between each one of the remedies for these afflictions. You should take at one time the leaves, like wild-lettuce, of ALKANET, at another POTENTILLA, or the crimson flowers of the BRAMBLE; BEARWORT, SORREL, and the long-stemmed VIPER'S HERB, CICAMUM, the luxuriant

⁷ A precursor to this Alexandrian didactic epic on scientific subjects can be found in Menecrates of Ephesus (born 340 B.C.), Aratus' teacher and the author of two poems on agriculture and apiculture, most probably written in the manner of Hesiod, and of a poem on astronomy.

⁸ Cf. GOW-SCHOLFIELD (1953).

⁹ As for example the poetic superlative θερεΐτατος, 'hottest', for the prosaic form θερινός, attested only in Aratus and Nicander: ἦτοι ὅτ' ἠελίοιο θερεΐτάτη ἴσταται ἀκτίς, Nic. *Ther.* 469: "At the hour when the sun's rays are at their hottest" (transl. Gow-Scholfield); ἐνθα μὲν ἠελίοιο θερεΐταταί εἰσι κέλευθοι, Arat. *Phaen.* 149: "This is where the sun's track is hottest" (transl. Kidd).

HARTWORT, and you may well include GROUND-PINE and thick bark which you have broken off from the OAK TREE; with them too HEDGE-PARSLEY, and seed gathered from the carrot, and the fresh and variegated fruits from the TEREBINTH.

(Transl. Gow-Scholfield, 1953).

Furthermore, from the didactic point of view, whereas the reader of Aratus' *Phaenomena* may obtain some practical information on astronomy and weather-signs for sailing and farming, no victim of a snake-bite or poison would dare to consult Nicander' heroic menagerie of venomous animals for medical first-aid, cf. e.g.:

αὐτὰρ ὁ κάμνων
 ἄλλοτε μὲν δίψῃ φάρυγα ξηραίνεται αὖη,
 πολλάκι δ' ἐξ ὀνύχων ἴσχει κρύος, ἀμφὶ δὲ γυίοις
 χειμερὶν ζαλόωσα πέριξ βέβριθε χάλαζα.
 πολλάκι δ' αὖ χολόεντας ἀπήρυγε νηδύος ὄγκους
 ὠχραίνων δέμας ἀμφίς· ὁ δὲ νοτέων περὶ γυίοις
 ψυχρότερος νιφετοῖο βολῆς περιχεύεται ἰδρώς.

(Nic., *Ther.* 249–255)

Meantime the sufferer at one moment has his throat parched with dry thirst, often too he is seized with cold from the finger-tips, while an eruption with wintry rage lies heavy upon his whole skin. And again a man often vomits up the bile from upon his stomach and turns pallid all over his body and, while a moist sweat, colder than a falling snow, envelops his limbs.

(Transl. Gow-Scholfield, 1953)

The inclusion of Aratus' *Phaenomena* in the school syllabus is perhaps connected with the variety, already in the 2nd century B.C., of commentaries on the *Phaenomena*, which have been transmitted to us in fragments and scholia: Attalus, *Commentariorum in Aratum reliquiae*; Hipparchus, *Arati et Eudoxi Phaenomena*; and Boethus Sidon (*Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, III. 6, pp. 265–267). The grammarian Attalus and the astronomer Hipparchus compare Aratus with Eudoxus' work in trying to decide on astronomical and textual problems. The Stoic Boethus, who wrote a commentary in at least four books on Aratus' *Phaenomena*, from which only a few fragments have been handed down to us, was probably more interesting in philosophic and religious questions. An Alexandrian collection of the scholia on Aratus' *Phaenomena* ascribed to Theon was published most probably in the 1st century B.C. The impressive amount of scholia on Aratus' *Phaenomena* transmitted to us —comparable only with that written on

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—bears witness to the immediate appreciation of Aratus' work in Alexandria. Copies from Aratus' text were presumably made in the great Library itself in order to preserve the work for posterity. This would explain the early provenance of the papyrus aforementioned (*P.Hamb.* 121, 2nd century B.C.), as well as of two other papyri from the 1st century A.D., three more from the 3rd century and two from the 4th century. The Greek historians Posidonius (2nd-1st century B.C.) and Diodorus (1st century B.C.) were probably the authors of two lost commentaries on Aratus' *Phaenomena*. The Greek astronomer Geminus (1st century B.C.) writes an *Introduction to the Phaenomena* with particular regard to difficult technical passages in Aratus' work, possibly to be used as an elementary manual at school. In the 3rd century B.C. the Greek astronomer Achilles wrote an introduction to cosmology, collecting material from a great range of poets and philosophers, including Aratus. The section referring to Aratus appears quoted in a manuscript from the 13th-14th century A.C. (*Vaticanus* 1910) as an introduction to the *Phaenomena*, although it was not written as a preface to any specific author.

Latin translations of Greek literary works

Translations from Greek into Latin in Classical Antiquity represent an unique case in the history of translations, in that the Latin translations were not born from any need of the Roman readers for a Latin version of the Greek sources—since any educated Roman had fluent command of the Greek language—, but for the purpose of developing the Latin language as a scientific and artistic language through the studied adaptation and imitation of Greek models¹⁰. The history of the reception of Greek literature by the Romans began in the 3rd century B.C. with Livius Andronicus' *Odusia* (translated fragments from Homer's *Odyssey*). This translation marks the first attempt to convert the Latin language into a literary language that measures up to the *Kunstsprache* and generic conventions of Greek literature. On the one hand, the Roman authors took account of the Greek literature and literary language, which they recognized as superior. On the other hand, they were conscious of what they called *patrii sermonis egestas*, "the poverty of the mother tongue" (Lucr. 3.260) and tried to enrich it through the imitation of Greek models. Lucretius emphasizes the need of coining new words in Latin "due to the poverty of the language and the novelty of the subject matter" (*propter egestatem linguae et rerum nouitatem*, Lucr.1.139).

¹⁰ On ancient Latin translations from the Greek see BLATT (1938: 217–242, esp. 217–226), RICHTER (1938), KAIMIO (1979: 271–293), LEWIS (1986: 163–174), SEELE (1995), ROSEN (1999: 11–30), and POSSANZA (2004: 1–77).

The striving to conquer all the scientific and poetic domains, which were under Greek power, through translation and imitation, is especially notorious in the massive engagement of linguistic innovators such as Cicero, Lucretius and Ovidius in the creation of Latin calques from the Greek, i.e. semantic close copies of Greek terms built from Latin components. Illustrative of this conscious linguistic innovation through the practice of translation as a rhetorical exercise is Cicero's commentary in *De oratore*, 1.155:

Postea mihi placuit, eoque sum usus adulescens, ut summorum oratorum Graecas orationes explicarem, quibus lectis hoc adsequerbar, ut, cum ea, quae legeram Graece, Latine redderem, non solum optimis uerbis uterer et tamen usitatis, sed etiam exprimerem quaedam uerba imitando, quae noua nostris essent, dum modo essent idonea.

Afterwards I resolved — and this practice I followed when somewhat older — to translate freely Greek speeches of the most eminent orators. The result of reading these was that, in rendering into Latin what I had read in Greek, I not only found myself using the best words — and yet quite familiar ones — but also coining by analogy certain words such as would be new to our people, provided only they were appropriate.

(Transl. Sutton, 1948)

In his philosophical translations and treatises Cicero enriched the Latin language with numerous intellectual neologisms, some of which have become permanently established¹¹.

Sometimes we are able to follow the process of lexical innovation, which in the end led to the canonization of one of the Latin candidates and the discarding of other translational equivalents. Thus, for example, for the Greek Epicurean term πρόληψις, 'preconception' (the mental picture or scheme into which experience is fitted), Lucretius proposes *notities* (from *notus*, 'known'), whereas Cicero hesitates between *praenotio* (from *praegnoscere*, 'to know beforehand'), *praesentire* (from *praesentio*, 'to perceive beforehand' [with the senses]), and *anticipatio* (from *anticipare*, 'to apprehend beforehand'). The rejection of Latin neologisms proposed for Greek technical terms is founded either on morphological difficulty —the form of the word is unusual— or semantic ambiguity —the sense of

¹¹ See, among others, PETERS (1926), PONCELET (1957: 39–157), VON PUJELMA (1980: 131–178, esp. 140–165 and 170–174), TRAGLIA (1971: 307–340, esp. 315–340), ROSÉN (1983: 178–211, esp. 204–210), and COLEMAN (1989: 77–89).

the word is inexact¹². Cicero's commentary on a neologism proposed by his friend Atticus furnishes an illustrative case of a translational equivalent discarded due to its semantic imprecision:

'inhibere' illud tuum, quod ualde mihi adriserat, uehementer displicet. Est enim uerbum totum nauticum. Quamquam id quidem sciebam sed arbitrabar sustineri remos cum inhibere essent remiges iussi. Id non esse eius modi didici heri cum ad uillam nostram nauis appelleretur. Non enim sustinent sed alio modo remigant. Id ab ἐποχῆ remotissimum est. Quare facies ut ita sit in libro quem ad modum fuit. Dices hoc idem Varroni, si forte mutauit.

(Cic. Att. 13.21.3)

the word *inhibere* suggested by you, which at first took my fancy very much, I strongly disapprove of now. For it is exclusively a nautical word. That, however, I knew before; but I thought rowers rested on their oars, when told to *inhibere*. Yesterday, when a ship put in by my house, I learned that was not so. They do not rest on their oars, they back water. That is very different to the Greek *epochē* ('suspension of judgment'). So change the word back to what it was in the book (sc. Cic. Ac. 2.94), and tell Varro to do the same, if he has altered it.

(Transl. Winstedt, 1963)

Latin translations of Aratus' Phaenomena

In the 1st century B.C. Aratus became popular also in Rome as is evinced by the translations written by Cicero (see Appendix examples 7 and 8) and

¹² Quintilian's discussion of Latin coinages for Greek rhetoric and philosophic terms illustrates these two main reasons for the ephemerality of some of these neologisms: *Rhetoricen in Latinum transferentes tum oratoriam, tum oratricem nominauerunt... sed non omnia nos ducentes ex Graeco secuntur, sicut ne illos quidem quotiens utique suis uerbis signare nostra uoluerunt. Et haec interpretatio non minus dura est quam illa Plauti 'essentia' et 'queentia', sed ne propria quidem; nam oratoria sic effertur ut elocutoria, oratrix ut elocutrix, illa autem de qua loquimur rhetorice talis est qualis eloquentia. Nec dubie apud Graecos quoque duplicem intellectum habet* (Quint. Inst. 2.14.1-5): "Rhētoricé is a Greek term which has been translated into Latin by *oratoria* or *oratrix*... but translations from Greek into Latin do not always succeed, just as the attempt to represent Latin words in a Greek dress is sometimes equally unsuccessful. And the translations in question are **fully as harsh as the *essentia* and *queentia* of Plautus** (scil. the philosopher), **and have not even the merit of being exact**. For *oratoria* is formed like *elocutoria* and *oratrix* like *elocutrix*, whereas the rhetoric with which we are concerned is rather to be identified with *eloquentia*, and the word is undoubtedly used in two senses by the Greek" (transl. Butter, 1920).

Varro Atacinus (from Varro's version only 10 verses corresponding to Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 938–939, 942–945, and 954–957 have survived). Virgil imitates both Aratus' *Phaenomena* and Hesiod's *Works and days* in the *Georgics*, with a subject change from astronomy and weather to agriculture and animal husbandry (see Appendix examples 12, 13, 14 and 16). Literary charm, rather than accuracy of the astronomical content, seems to be what drew Cicero's attention to the *Phaenomena* (cf. Cicero's germane reason for translating Greek authors as a rhetorical exercise in *De oratore*, 1.155):

Etenim si constat inter doctos, hominem ignarum astrologiae ornatissimis atque optimis uersibus Aratum de caelo stellisque dixisse ... quid est cur non orator de rebus eis eloquentissime dicat, quas ad certam causam tempusque cognorit?

(Cic. *de Orat.* 1.69)

For if the learned world is agreed that Aratus, though quite ignorant of astronomy, has composed a most eloquent and artistic poem on the heavens and the stars ... why should not the orator be able to speak with the eloquence of a master on subjects which he has only studied for a particular case and occasion?

(Transl. Sutton, 1948)

Cicero's *Aratea* is not a free adaptation like those of his Roman predecessors in the art of literary translation —Ennius' *Annales* and tragedies recasting Greek sources from Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; or Plautus' and Terence's reworkings of Menander's comedies—, but rather the *Aratea* is a close version of the Greek original¹³. However, this faithfulness to the source should be understood in a wider context. Cicero does not pretend to give an exact image of Aratus' text through a word-by-word rendition, but to produce a new Latin composition enjoyable on its own merit. His purpose, and the purpose of Roman translators in general, is driven by an additional agenda: to defeat the Greeks on their own ground by conquering each genre through literary talent and innovation¹⁴.

¹³ On Cicero's *Aratea* see, among others, RICHTER (1938: 16–18), LEUTHOLD (1942: 11–42), EWBANK (1933 [1997²]: 129–226), JONES (1959: 22–34, esp. 28–29), TRAINA (1961: 141–159, esp. 156–159), SOUBIRAN: 1972), ROSEN (1996: 533–550, esp. 544–546), GEE (2001: 520–536), and CERRA (2009: 153–249).

¹⁴ Thus, for example, recalling a popular saying versified by Euripides in *Hel.* 665 (ἦδὺ τοι μόχθων κλύειν, “to hear of trouble past is a pleasure” [transl. Kovaks, 2002]), Cicero supports his intentions of outdoing his Greek source: *uulgo enim dicitur: ‘iucundi acti labores’, nec male Euripides — concludam, si potero, Latine: Graecum enim hunc uersum nostis omnes (Fin. 2. 105): “There is a popular saying to the effect that ‘Toil is pleasant*

Germanicus' Latin translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* (15 B.C.–A.D. 19) is concerned not only with its style, but also with the scientific accuracy of the content. Unlike his Roman predecessor Cicero, Germanicus corrects the astronomic information of the Greek original with the aid of the Greek commentaries and scholia¹⁵. He also supplements his model with information drawn from astronomical globes and illustrations, derived from illustrated manuscripts of Aratus.

Avienus' Latin translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* in the 4th century manifests a strictly literary rather than scientific interest in Aratus' work (see Appendix examples 7–10).

The *Aratus Latinus*, a version of the *Phaenomena* by an anonymous author in France was translated probably in the 8th century. It is a word for word translation but the Latin is often unintelligible due to the misinterpretation of Greek words; Greek was less widely and thoroughly known in this later period. The purpose of the Latin version was probably only to "explain" the Greek text and to propose conjectures to unfamiliar Greek words, which are sometimes simply transliterated or omitted.

The interest in Aratus' work continues in fact up to the end of the 13th century, when the Byzantine scholar Planudes revises the scholia and the text of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and rewrites in Greek and emends a difficult passage of 32 verses dealing with celestial circles. In addition we count 14 codices of Aratus' text from the 13th to the 16th century, two of which (*Vaticanus Gr.* 191 and 381) contain a register of 27 authors who wrote about Aratus' *Phaenomena*¹⁶.

Evidence from the New Testament

From a quotation by the apostle Paul of the fifth verse of Aratus' *Phaenomena* in his speech in the Areopagus of Athens in *Acts* 17:28 we may assume that the *Phaenomena* was widely read by educated Greek speakers of his day. Paul's literal citation in an oral message suggests a familiarity, even a rote knowledge, of the opening lines of Aratus, possibly from his schooldays. Furthermore, Paul's use of a verse from Aratus' in order to support his position before a Greek erudite audience attests to the popularity and to the religious and philosophical authority which this poem enjoyed in antiquity especially in the Greek and the Roman cultural spheres:

when it is over'; and Euripides writes not bad (I will attempt a verse translation in Latin; the Greek line is known to you all)" (adapted from Rackham's translation, 1951).

¹⁵ See, among others, RICHTER (1938: 18–26), LEUTHOLD (1942: 45–74), STEINMETZ (1966: 450–482), GAIN (1976), and POSSANZA (2004: 105–248).

¹⁶ As testified by LESKY (1971³: 752).

ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν, “**τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν**”. (= Arat. *Phaen.* 5: **τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν**)

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, **For we are also his offspring** (King James) (= Arat. *Phaen.* 5: “For we are also his children”)¹⁷.

Aratus probably never intended to make a serious contribution to astronomical and philosophic literature, or to write a manual for use at school. His artistic objective was rather to produce an aesthetically pleasing poem. In singing of the stars and of nature from the point of view of the new astronomical and Stoic theories of his time, and presenting it in the traditional costume of the Hesiodic didactic epic and in the refined, sophisticated, style of Alexandrian poetry, Aratus creates for his poem an “everlasting charm”. The beauty of his subject, the splendor of the starry sky, has clearly been a source of inspiration for Aratus’ verbal art. Amusingly, the astronomer Hipparchus (2nd century B.C) blames this ‘grace’ or ‘charm’ (χάρις) of Aratus’ verses for their success in convincing people of the truth of their content:

ἡ γὰρ τῶν ποιημάτων χάρις ἀξιοπιστίαν τινὰ τοῖς λεγομένοις περιτίθησι, καὶ πάντες σχεδὸν οἱ τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦτον ἐξηγούμενοι προστίθενται τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ λεγομένοις.
(Hipparch. 1. 1. 7)

Since the **charm of [Aratus’] verses** bestows certain trustworthiness upon the things said. And nearly all those interpreting this poet agree with the things said by him.

Hipparchus’ censure based on scientific grounds is in fact reminiscent, after the playful Hellenistic fashion, of Pindar’s personification of *Charis* in the *Olympian Odes* 1.30:

Χάρις δ’ ἄπερ ἅπαντα τεύχει τὰ μείλιχα θνατοῖς,
ἐπιφέροισα τιμὰν καὶ ἄπιστον ἐμήσατο πιστὸν
ἔμμεναι τὸ πολλάκις·

¹⁷ Aratus recalls both a verse from Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* (4th-3th century B.C.), v. 4: ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν, and less directly two verses from Homer, ἐκ γὰρ ἐμεῦ γένος ἐσσι, *Il.* 5.896, and ἐκ θεοῦ γένος ἦεν, *Il.* 23.347, but Paul’s literal citation comes from Aratus’ *Phaenomena*.

For Charis, who fashions all things pleasant for mortals, by bestowing honor makes even what is unbelievable often believed.

Appendix

Conspectus of astronomical parallel passages

Astronomical description became a theme for poetry long before it evolved into a subject of scientific investigation. According to the evidence found in the Homeric texts five constellations impressed the ancients by their brilliancy and magnificence: the Pleiades, the Hyades, Orion, the Bear, and Hesperus, the evening star:

(1) Homer, *Il.* 18. 483–489 (description of Achilles' shield):

Ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,
ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσιν,
ἐν δὲ τὰ τεύχεα πάντα, τὰ τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται,
Πληιάδας θ' Ἰάδας τε τό τε σθένης Ὠρίωνος
Ἄρκτον θ', ἣν καὶ Ἄμαξαν ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσιν,
ἣ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καὶ τ' Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει,
οἷη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο.

Therein he (scil. Hephaestus) wrought the earth, therein the heavens, therein the sea, and the unwearied sun, and the moon at the full, therein all the constellations wherewith heaven is crowned — the Pleiades, and the Hyades and the mighty Orion, and the Bear, that men call also the Wain, that circles ever in her place and watches Orion, and alone has no part in the baths of Ocean.

(Transl. Murray, 1999)

(2) Homer, *Il.* 22.318:

οἷος δ' ἀστήρ εἶσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ
ἔσπερος, ὃ κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῶ ἴσταται ἀστήρ

As a star goes forth amid stars in the darkness of night, the Hesperus (i.e. the star of evening), that is set in heaven as the fairest of all

(Transl. Murray, 1999)

(3) Homer, *Od.* 5.270–275:

αὐτὰρ ὁ πηδαλίῳ ἰθύνετο τεχνηέντως
 ἦμενος· οὐδέ οἱ ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν ἔπιπτε
 Πληϊάδας τ' ἔσορῶντι καὶ ὄψ' ἔδυντα Βοώτην
 ἄρκτον θ', ἣν καὶ ἄμαξαν ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσιν,
 ἣ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καὶ τ' Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει,
 οἷη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο·

and he (scil. Odysseus) sat and guided his raft skillfully with the steering oar, nor did sleep fall upon his eyelids, as he watched the Pleiades, and late-setting Boötes, and the Bear, which men also call the Wain, which ever circles where it is and watches Orion, and alone has no part in the baths of the Ocean.

To this stock of astronomic lore Hesiod adds the names of the Sirius and Arcturus:

(4) Hesiod, *Op.* 609–611:

Εὐτ' ἂν δ' Ὠρίων καὶ Σείριος ἐς μέσον ἔλθῃ
 οὐρανόν, Ἀρκτούρον δ' ἐσίδῃ ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως,
 ᾧ Πέρση, τότε πάντας ἀποδρέπεν οἴκαδε βότρους·

but when Orion and Sirius came into midheaven, and rosy-fingered Dawn sees Arcturus, then cut off all the grape-clusters, Perses, and bring them home.

(Transl. Evelyn-White, 1943)

(5) Hesiod, *Op.* 614–617:

αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν δὴ
 Πληϊάδες θ' Ὑάδες τε τό τε σθένοσ Ὠρίωνος
 δύνωσιν, τότε ἔπειτ' ἀρότου μεμνημένος εἶναι
 ὠραίου

But when the Pleiades and Hyades and strong Orion begin to set, then remember that this is the plowing season

(6) Eudoxus's scientific description of the Pleiades in his prose work, *Phaenomena* fr. 35–36 (Lasserre):

Παρά δὲ τοὺς πόδας τῆς Ἀνδρομέδας ὁ Περσεὺς ἔχει τοὺς ὤμους, τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα πρὸς τὴν Κασσιόπειαν ἀποτείνων, τὸ δὲ ἀριστερὸν γόνυ πρὸς τὰς Πλειάδας. Ὑπὸ δὲ τὸν Περσεῖα καὶ τὴν Κασσιόπειαν οὐ πολὺ διέχουσά ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τῆς Μεγάλης Ἄρκτου· οἱ δὲ μεταξὺ τούτων ἀστέρες εἰσὶν ἀμαυροί.

Near the feet of Andromeda Perseus has his shoulders; stretching out his right hand toward Cassiopeia and his left knee towards the Pleiades. Beneath Perseus and Cassiopeia standing not very far apart is the head of the Great Bear; the stars between them are faint.

(7) Aratus' poetic reworking of Eudoxus' *Phaenomena*, fr. 35–36 (= Aratus, *Phaen.* 248–256):

ἀμφότεροι δὲ πόδες γαμβροῦ ἐπισημαίνουσιν
 Περσεός, οἳ ῥά οἱ αἰὲν ἐπωμάδιοι φορέονται.
 αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἐν βορέῳ φέρεται περιμήκετος ἄλλων.
 καὶ οἱ δεξιτερῆ μὲν ἐπὶ κλισμὸν τετάνυσται
 πενθερίου δίφρου· τὰ δ' ἐν ποσὶν οἷα διώκων
 ἶχνια μηκύνει κεκοιμημένος ἐν Διὶ πατρὶ.
 ἄγχι δὲ οἱ σκαίης ἐπιγουνίδος ἤλιθα πᾶσαι.
 Πληιάδες φορέονται· ὁ δ' οὐ μάλα πολλὸς ἀπάσας
 χῶρος ἔχει, καὶ δ' αὐταὶ ἐπισκέψασθαι ἀφανυραί.

The two feet of Andromeda will be pointers to her suitor Perseus, as they move forever above his shoulders. He runs taller than other figures in the north. His right hand is stretched out towards his bride's mother's chair-seat, and as if on some pursuit he takes long strides as he runs in the realm of his father Zeus. Near his left knee all in a cluster the Pleiades move. The space that holds them all is not great, and they are individually faint to observe.

(Transl. Kidd, 1997)

(8) Cicero's translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* 248–256 (= Cic. *Aratea*, fr. 34.20–28 [Traglia]):

*e pedibus natum summo loue Persea uisses,
 quos umero retinet defixo corpore Perseus
 quem summa ab regione Aquilonis flamina pulsant.*

*hic dextram ad sedes intendit Cassiepieae
diuersosque pedes uinctos talaribus aptis
puluerulentus uti de terra elapsus repente
in caelum uictor magno sub culmine portat.
At propter laeuum genus omnis parte locatas
parua Vergilias tenui cum luce uidebis.*

You will see Perseus, born of highest Jupiter, at her feet [Andromeda's], which Perseus supports on his shoulder with fixed body. Gusts of the North Wind from the uppermost region strike him. He stretches his right hand to the throne of Cassiopeia and, covered with dust as if suddenly having glided from the ground, he, victorious, sets his feet, far apart, shod in fastened sandals, in the sky under the great summit. But near his left knee all located in a small space you will see the Pleiads [orig. *Vergilias*] with faint light.

(9) Germanicus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 248–256 (= Germ. *Phaen.*248–258):

*Subter utrumque pedem deuotae uirginis ales
Perseos effigies, seruatae grata puellae.
moles ipsa uiri satis est testata parentem:
tantus ubique micat, tantum occupat ab loue caeli.
dextera sublatae similis prope Cassiepiam
sublimis fulget: pedibus properare uidetur
et uelle aligeris purum aethera findere plantis.
Poplite sub laeuo, Tauri certissima signa,
Pleiades suberunt. breuis has locus occupat omnis,
nec faciles cerni, nisi quod coeuntia plura
sidera communem ostendunt ex omnibus ignem.*

Underneath both feet of the Maiden vowed to destruction lies the winged form of Perseus, pleasing to the girl he saved. The size of the hero is in itself sufficient evidence of his parentage: he shines so huge in all his parts, so much of the sky does the son of Jove occupy. His right hand resembles a hand lifted up; it shines on high near Cassiepiea; his legs seem to be hastening and he seems to be desirous of cleaving the sky with his wing-bearing feet. Under his left knee lie the Pleiads, a most reliable sign of the Bull. A small space contains them all, nor would they be easily visible, except for the fact that they lie together and present to the eye the combined radiance of them all.

(Transl. Gain, 1976)

(10) Avienus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 248–256 (= Avien. *Phaen.* 560–570):

*quin et uestigia propter
Persea sub uolucris par est tibi quaerere forma.
in caput inque umeros rotat aegram machina mundi
Andromedam, Thraeci nam sub flabris aquilonis
nititur alato uindex pede, maxima cuius
dextera maerentis solium prope Cassiepeiae
tenditur ingentique dehinc uestigia passu
puluerulenta quasi cano procul aere pandit.
Pleiades femoris pariter sub fine sinistri
Perseus protollit.*

and then near [Andromeda's] feet you should look for Perseus under a winged form. On his head and his shoulders the structure of the heaven rotates sorrowful Andromeda, then, under the gusts of the Thracian North Wind leans the avenger with winged foot, whose bravest right hand is stretched near the throne of Cassiopeia and then he spreads his feet, covered with dust as if with white air, in a huge stride. At the same time, Perseus holds up the Pleiades close to his left thigh.

(11) Nicander, *Ther.* 121–123 on the Pleiades:

ἀλλ' ἦτοι θέερος βλαβερόν δάκος ἐξαλέασθαι
Πληιάδων φάσιας δεδοκημένος, αἶθ' ὑπὸ Ταύρου
ἀλκαίην ψαίρουσαι ὀλίζωνες φορέονται

But chiefly in summer must you be on your guard against harmful snakes, observing the rising of the Pleiades, those smaller stars which graze the strength of the Bull in their course

(Transl. Gow-Scholfield, 1953)

(12) Aratus, *Phaen.* 954–955 (2nd Part: *Prognostica*):

καὶ βόες ἤδη τοὶ πάρος ὕδατος ἐνδίωιο
οὐρανὸν εἰσανιδόντες ἀπ' αἰθέρος ὀσφρήσαντο

Now also before rain from heaven cattle, gazing up at the sky, sniff the air

(13) Cicero's translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 954–955 (= Cic. *Aratea*, fr. 4.10–11 (Traglia) = 2nd Part: *Prognostica*):

*mollipedesque boues, spectantes lumina caeli,
naribus umiferum duxere ex aere sucum.*

and the slow-footed oxen, gazing at the clarity of the sky, with their noses inhaled the juice bringing rain from the air

(14) Varro Atacinus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 954–955 (= Varro Atacinus, fr. 22 Blänsdorf):

*et bos suspiciens caelum – mirabile uisu –
naribus aerium patulis decerpsit odorem*

and the ox gazing up at the sky –wondrous to behold– plucked the aerial smell with nostrils fully open

(15) Avienus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 954–955 (= Avien. *Phaen.* 1707–1708):

*imber erit, latis cum bucula naribus auras
concipit*

there will be rain, when the heifer inhales the breeze with open noses.

(16) Virgil, *G.* 1.375–376:

*aut bucula caelum
suspiciens patulis captavit naribus auras*

or the heifer gazing up at the sky inhaled the breeze with open noses.

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