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Didactic Features in Two Latin Translations of Aratus' *Φαινόμενα*

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Abstract

The didactic epos *Φαινόμενα καὶ Διοσημεΐα* by Aratus of Soloi was very popular among the Romans. Thus, it was translated into Latin by several Roman authors including Marcus Tullius Cicero and Germanicus Iulius Caesar. The aim of this paper is to find out whether these two authors only translated the information contained in Aratus' text or whether they also managed to imitate the didactic tone of the poem. Did both translators manage to play their roles as teachers? Did they try to make the lectures more interesting and perhaps to interact with the reader? Or did they minimize the didactic aspects of the epos and concentrated on other features of the text? The main goal of my paper is to analyse the ways in which Cicero and Germanicus applied the features of the didactic poetry genre in their translations. This includes a comparison of these with Aratus' text and with each other.

Keywords

didactic poetry; Aratus; Cicero; Germanicus; Phaenomena; Latin translation; ancient astronomy

It is not an easy task to define the didactic poetry and scholars have tried to find a suitable definition for centuries.¹ The long-term discussion led to a certain degree of scepticism about the feasibility of this task. There is no definite answer yet, but we can determine some characteristic features of this genre. From a formal point of view, the didactic poetry bears the linguistic, stylistic, and metrical marks of the epic poetry. Concerning the content, the author gives a coherent exposition addressed to a person absent from the text.²

There are some features which appear in the majority of modern definitions of the didactic poetry. The first one is author's intent to teach which must be explicitly expressed. As Volk (2002: p. 36) says: "Whether one can in fact learn something – anything – from a text is a useless criterion since by that token, there would be very few, if any, poems that could not pass as didactic". The following attribute is closely connected to the first one. Although the person to whom the knowledge is passed, i.e. student, may either be the reader (as in Aratus' *Φαινόμενα*) or any character named within the poem (as in Hesiod's *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι*), a strong character of a teacher represented by the poet himself is essential. Therefore, the authors also often try to create and maintain the impression of a lecture being given directly to the student (reader or character from the text) and they intersperse the poem with some instant remarks. Volk (2002: pp. 39–40) calls this feature poetic simultaneity. Since the themes chosen to be explained are usually rather scientific and not very poetic, some authors resign on the smoothness of form. Others, on the other hand, try to highlight the poetic form of their texts. They make digressions to mythological themes, use various figures of speech and directly point to the fact that their work, even though it has educational aims, is still a poem. Thus, the last typical feature of didactic texts is a constant tension between teaching and amusing the reader, since authors' attempts to find a balance are perceptible in all the didactic poems.

The aim of this paper is to have a closer look at didactic features in Aratus' text *Φαινόμενα* and in its Latin translations written in the first century BCE by Marcus Tullius Cicero and in the first century CE by Germanicus Iulius Caesar.³ Both authors treat the original text with greater freedom than we expect of translators today. Their texts are not literal translations, but the poets rather keep to the content, form and structure of *Φαινόμενα* and set them into Roman linguistic and cultural environment. Possanza (2004: p. 39) says that "it is this combination of core equivalence and rewriting that makes the

1 For definitions, division and some criteria of the didactic poetry see e.g. Effe (1977: pp. 26–39), Toohey (1996: pp. 13–19) and Volk (2002: pp. 34–40). Possanza (2004) prefers term "catalogue poetry" to "didactic poetry". For his reasons see his note 9 on p. 100.

2 According to Brill's New Pauly's entry, the didactic poems are "versified texts, mainly cast in the present tense, with the primary intention of imparting an item of knowledge, however formulated. This requires a presupposed or explicit teacher-student relationship between the author and the addressee". Cf. Huss (2006).

3 These two Romans were not the only translators of *Φαινόμενα* into Latin. Aratus' poem was translated into Latin also by Varro Atacinus and Ovid (unfortunately, their texts have not preserved till today) and later by Avienus and the author of *Aratus latinus*. The poem was also subject of numerous commentaries. Possanza (2004: p. 90) and Volk (2010: p. 209) emphasize that although Hipparchus was very famous second-century BCE astronomer, his only work coming down to us were commentaries on *Φαινόμενα*.

translation a unique creation, a 'second original'." Dehon (2003: p. 95) considers the technique of Roman translators to be rather a "literary rivalry". According to him, the translators generally take the subject matter and try to reproduce it with personal elements, hoping that their imitation would equal or even surpass the original. Doing so, both Cicero and Germanicus read not only Aratus, but also commentaries, and sometimes even altered the factual data.⁴

Finally, both treated translations reflect the contemporary role of astrology and astronomy in Roman life. When Cicero⁵ dealt with the Greek poem, astrology was popular among the common people⁶ and the nobility occupied themselves with it only in private lives and publicly despised it as a deceit.⁷ Thus, by translating *Φαινόμενα* into Latin Cicero helped to raise prestige of astrology. His translation brought to Rome not only the celestial phenomena, but also the form of the didactic poem. Until then, the didactic poetry was something quite uncommon in Roman literature (Lucretius' *De rerum natura* was about to be written back then) and the few written texts were composed in various metres (e.g. Ennius wrote *Epicharmus* in trochaic septenarius and although his *Hedyphagetica* were written in hexameter, his metrical technique is so peculiar, that he probably made a distinction between this genre and heroic epic). Cicero, following Aratus, used dactylic hexameter which was later chosen by all the authors writing the didactic poetry.

The almost one-century distance between Cicero's and Germanicus' translations produced a completely different approach to the source text. When Germanicus composed his translation,⁸ the Cicero's one was widely known among erudite Romans and the genre of the didactic poetry was already well established in the Roman literature. In that period, major works of the Latin didactic poetry were written⁹ and Ovid had already

4 On passages where Germanicus prefers Hipparchus to Aratus see Gain (1976: pp. 14–16). On Cicero's access to Hipparchus' commentary and his choice of (not) using it see Gee (2013: pp. 64 and 119–121).

5 Cicero translated *Φαινόμενα* in the time of his literary beginnings in the eighties BCE, even before his first given speech – *Pro Quinctio* (81 BCE). During his lifetime, he returned to this topic several times. In his philosophical texts *De Divinatione* and *De natura deorum*, Cicero quotes passages from his translation of Aratus. From his other works we may see that he did not appreciate Aratus' poem for the knowledge of astronomy but was rather attracted by its poetic qualities. In *De Oratore* (1, 69) Cicero wrote *hominem ignarum astrologiae ornatissimis atque optimis versibus Aratum de caelo stellisque dixisse*, and few years later in *De Republica* (1, 22) he stated that Aratus versified Eudoxus' work *non astrologiae scientia, sed poetica quadam facultate*. Although Cicero knew there had been some errors in Aratus' poem and that Aratus was not a scholar, but only a talented poet, he was captivated by its didactics.

6 See e.g. Plaut. *Rud.* 1–82.

7 See e.g. Green (2014: pp. 65–74 and 138).

8 Up to now, the authorship of this translation is still dubious. However, scholars mostly accept the attribution to Germanicus – son of Nero Claudius Drusus, later adopted by the emperor Tiberius, his uncle. For the debate see Gain (1976: pp. 16–20); Baldwin (1981); Possanza (2004: pp. 219–243) or Gee (2005: pp. 132–135). Another question arises concerning the date of the text composition. Baldwin (1981: p. 172) guesses that the text was composed in the last years of Germanicus' life; Le Boeuffe (1975/2003: p. x) dates the translation between 16 and 17 CE, Conte (2008: p. 385) more or less agrees with this dating and broadens the time span between 14 and 19 CE, while Possanza (2004: p. 235) suggests that Germanicus' translation was written in the period 4–7 CE and later revision and reworking was carried out before 14 CE.

9 Lucretius' *De rerum natura* and Vergil's *Georgica*.

composed his *Ars amatoria*, which, in a way mocked the genre of didactics. Moreover, Roman aristocracy did not only tolerate astrology but also became genuinely interested in it. The popularity of astrology stroke the highest classes openly. The emperor Augustus believed so much in the power of stars that he had his moon sign Capricorn minted on coins¹⁰ and Tiberius was believed to be the first emperor who had his personal astrologer.¹¹ According to Gain (2014: p. 148), Germanicus wanted to “celebrate the powerful place of astrology in the life of his poem’s imperial addressee.” And he was not the only one who made use of the change of the social and political role of astrology.¹² Manilius’ treatise in five books called *Astronomica* was being created at the same time as Germanicus’ translation.¹³ And Ovid’s translation of *Φαινόμενα* is believed to be already existent and thus influence Germanicus’ work.¹⁴ Since Germanicus was not moved to treat *Φαινόμενα* by public need for another astrological discourse but by a wish to extol the modern trend, he could work with the text more freely and elaborate passages he considered too concise.¹⁵

The whole Aratus’ poem is titled *Φαινόμενα καὶ Διοσημεΐα* and it consists of 1154 verses. Since only fragments of *Διοσημεΐα* (Weather signs) by Cicero survived and Germanicus’ translation is not based on Aratus’ text,¹⁶ my attention is primarily focused on its first part – *Φαινόμενα*. It is a description of celestial phenomena and it accounts for two thirds of Aratus’ text.

The table below shows that, unlike Germanicus’ translation, the one of Cicero has unfortunately not remained as a whole. We have 28 fragments consisting of less than 3 verses, 4 fragments comprising 5 to 8 verses, and then the body of the poem comprising 480 verses. In total, there are 571 surviving verses, which is ca 78% of the original Aratus’ poem. The largest extant part starts with a description of the fixed stars of northern hemisphere and continues till the last segment of the poem – to risings and settings of the twelve signs of zodiac. To be more precise, it starts with the last verse concerning the Ram and ends after the description of rising and setting of the eighth sign – the Aquarius. Nevertheless, there is still enough material to compare Cicero’s and Germanicus’ approaches to the text.

10 Cassius Dio even claims that Augustus published his horoscope in an edict – see D.C. 56, 25.

11 Tac. *Hist.* 1, 22.

12 For more detailed study on the increasing popularity of astrology in Roman empire see Barton (1994/2002: pp. 37–70; 1994/2003: pp. 32–63) or Green (2014).

13 Nowadays, the opinion that Manilius wrote first two books of *Astronomica* during the reign of emperor Augustus and the last two books after Augustus’ death prevails. See e.g. Goold (2006: p. xii).

14 For treatise on influence of Ovid’s writings (not only his translation of *Φαινόμενα*) on Germanicus poem see Possanza (2004: pp. 201–202 and 234–235).

15 Germanicus paid special attention to catasterism myths. He even added sixteen catasterisms to original fourteen. For detailed survey on Germanicus’ fondness for catasterisms see Possanza (2004: pp. 172–176).

16 Gain (1976: p. 13) says, that “whether they [fragments ii–vi, i.e. the rest of the poem] are based on another writer, or are a compilation of several sources, and whether there are original elements in them or not is unknown”.

	Aratus	Cicero	Germanicus
Introduction	1-18	missing; fragm. I, II	1-16
Fixed stars of northern hemisphere	19-318	missing; fragm. III-XXXII; v. 1-94	17-323
Southern hemisphere	319-453	95-225	324-436
A refusal to deal with planets	454-461	226-236	437-445
Celestial circles	462-558	237-312	446-572
Risings and settings of the twelve zodiacal signs	559-732	312-480	573-725

Let us now proceed to the comparison of the texts with regards to the first touchstone of the didactic poetry – an explicit didactic intent. This term covers all the words expressing that the author is a teacher and that he is teaching and all the words expressing reader's process of cognition. Nowhere in the whole poem Aratus calls himself a teacher or his writing a teaching. However, when he gets to the description of planets, he admits that he writes about things he knows and rather refrains from those, he does not know: οὐδ' ἔτι θαρσαλέος κείνων ἐγώ· ἄρκιος εἶην¹⁷ / ἀπλανέων τὰ τε κύκλα τὰ τ' αἰθέρι σήματ' ἐνισπεῖν¹⁸ (Arat. 460–461). This confession should give the reader a feeling that Aratus does not just make things up and, consequently, ensure the reader of author's didactic intents. Neither Cicero nor Germanicus, in the manner of their Greek model, call themselves teachers. When treating this passage, Cicero translates Aratus' text almost literally:

*quarum ego nunc nequeo tortos euoluere cursus:
uerum haec, quae semper certo [e]uoluuntur in orbe,
fixa, simul magnos edemus gentibus orbes.*¹⁹ (Cic. Arat. 234–236)

On the contrary, Germanicus only paraphrases the meaning of this passage. He rather accentuates the poetic aspect of his writing by bringing the Muses on stage again:²⁰ *Hoc opus arcanis si credam postmodo Musis, / tempus et ipse labor, patientur fata, docebit.*²¹ (Germ. 444–445). Germanicus points to the didactic aims of his poem using various forms of verb *docere* two more times²² and six times terming the process his student is undergoing with the verb *noscere* or *cognoscere*,²³ e.g. in verse 573: *Saepe velis quantum superet cognoscere noctis*, which is followed by a piece of advice telling what to do. When highlighting the

17 The relevant words and phrases of the treated texts are highlighted to make author's argument perspicuous.

18 The Greek texts and all English translations of Aratus are borrowed from the edition by Kidd (1997). However, for the sake of completeness, I indicate in a note when there is a difference in reading between Kidd's edition and the one by Martin (1998): "I am not at all confident in dealing with them: I hope I may be adequate in expounding the circles of the fixed stars and their guide-constellations in the sky."

19 Extracts of Cicero's *Aratea* are from the edition by Soubiran (1972).

20 The Muses were first mentioned in the opening passage, verse 15, see below.

21 All the extracts of Germanicus' translation are from the edition by Le Boeuffle (1975/2003).

22 Germ. 3, 176.

23 Germ. 11–12, 234–236, 376–378, 573–574, 636–637 and 708–709.

demanding character and didactic aspirations of the text he is translating, he occasionally adds a remark on its poetic form, as in the already mentioned verses discussing planets. In the same manner, he speaks to the emperor, probably Augustus,²⁴ in the prooemion:

*Ab Ioue principium magno deduxit Aratus
carminis; at nobis, genitor, tu maximus auctor;
te ueneror, tibi sacra fero doctique laboris
primitias* (Germ. 1–4)

A few lines later, Germanicus again emphasizes the close relation between his didactic and poetic ambitions:

*Nunc uacat audacis in caelum tollere uultus
sideraque et mundi uarios cognoscere motus,
nauita quid caueat, quid scitus uitet arator,
quando ratem uentis aut credat semina terris.
haec ego dum conor Latiis praedicere Musis,
pax tua tuque adsis nato numenque secundes* (Germ. 11–16)

Germanicus closely binds one third of all his didactic remarks with the poetic objectives of his writing.

Just like Germanicus, Cicero, rather than stressing his position as a teacher, describes the process his student is undergoing with the verbs *noscere*, *cognoscere*, or *pernoscere*. He does so relatively frequently as, for instance, in the following verses:²⁵ *e quibus ... possis cognoscere* (Cic. *Arat.* 1).

*Andromedae laeuo ex uero, si quaesere perges,
adpositum poteris supra cognoscere Piscem.* (Cic. *Arat.* 18–19)
and
*Haec sunt quae uisens nocturno tempore signa
aeternumque uolens mundi pernoscere motum
legitimo cernes caelum lustrantia cursu.* (Cic. *Arat.* 223–225)

From the whole text, it is obvious that Cicero realized that he was the one to teach the Roman audience about the sky, and he reminded the reader of it once every ca 50 verses.

When we examine the same feature in Aratus' text, we find out that he omits all the words meaning *teacher*, *to teach*, *to instruct* etc. in *Φαινόμενα*. However, he often uses the verb *σκέπτομαι* (and derived prefixed verbs) when he instructs the student. This verb's meaning is *to watch*, but in some cases it may take on the meaning of *to know* / *to identify*,

24 Although the Emperor Augustus is widely accepted as the addressee of the proem, this agreement is sometimes questioned with regards to the discussion on the authorship of the poem. Cf. note 8.

25 And in verses 106, 190, 240, 268, 341, 347 and 349.

as in verses 562–563: τὰς δ' ἄν κε **περισκέψαιο** μάλιστα / εἰς αὐτὰς ὀρώων.²⁶ Although Aratus does not explicitly identify himself with the teacher's role, he knows where his place is and how to show it to the reader.

This brings us to the second criterion of the didactic poetry – strong character of the teacher. As stated by Kromer (1979: p. 9), “the readers of didactic poetry are characterized as individuals who stand in need of help or guidance”. It is therefore important to look how Aratus and later Cicero and Germanicus dealt with their roles as guides. Aratus addresses the reader 36 times²⁷ throughout *Φαινόμενα*. In relation to the reader, Aratus uses 2nd singular personal pronoun *σε* and *τοι*, imperative (or infinitive functioning as imperative) and other verbal moods in the 2nd person singular (mostly optative forms). Using these, he instructs his student to look at the sky and find the constellations one by one²⁸ (e.g. Arat. 74–75: Νώτω μὲν Στέφανος πελάει, κεφαλῆ γε μὲν ἄκρη / **σκέπτεο** πὰρ κεφαλὴν Ὀφιούχων,²⁹ and 167–168: Πὰρ ποσὶ δ' Ἠνιόχου κεραὸν πεπτηῶτα Ταῦρον / **μαίεσθαι**).³⁰ If anyone sees some constellations on the sky in specific position, Aratus gives also some advice on what to do: νότον δ' ἐπὶ σήματι τούτῳ / **δείδιθι**, μέχρι βορῆος ἀπαστράψαντος **ἴδηαι**³¹ (Arat. 429–430) and:

μὴ κείνῳ ἐνὶ μηνὶ **περικλύζοιο** θαλάσση
 πεπταμένῳ πελάγει κεχρημένος. Οὔτε κεν ἦοι
 πολλὴν περιήνεια, **ἐπεὶ** ταχινώταται εἰσιν,
 οὔτ' ἄν **τοι** νυκτὸς πεφοβημένῳ ἐγγύθεν ἦώς
 ἔλθοι καὶ μάλα πολλὰ βοωμένῳ.³² (Arat. 287–291)³³

Yet, Aratus does not address his student only when he wants to instruct him (or to inspire awe in him), but also when he tries to liken some images to those familiar to anyone. Thus, when he is speaking about Cassiopeia's posture, he does not use the usual

26 “It will be best, if you can identify them by looking at the actual constellations.”

27 Arat. 76–5, 76, 89, 96–97, 136, 142, 156–157, 157, 160–161, 167–168, 186–187, 196, 198–199, 199, 222–223, 229–230, 246–247, 287–291, 302, 303–304, 405, 413–414, 430, 434, 436, 451, 456–457, 463, 473–474, 475, 495–496, 562–563, 565, 566–567, 573 and 710. For the list of all uses of direct address, imperatives and 1st person speech in the whole Aratus' poem see Bing (1993: p. 109).

28 And in verses 88–89, 573–574.

29 “The Crown is close to his back, but beside the tom of his head observe the head of Ophiuchus, ...”

30 “Near the feet of the Charioteer look for the horned Bull crouching.”

31 “With this sign fear a southerly, until you see Boreas flashing lightning.”

32 “In that month, I hope you will not be surged about by the sea through taking to open waters. Neither by day can you make much headway, for the days pass most swiftly then, nor in your terror by night will the down come soon, however much you cry out.”

33 For detailed study on Cicero's, Germanicus' and Avienus' innovative translations of this passage see Dehon (2003).

verb ἔοικα, but paraphrases it with an optative form of the word φημί: ἢ δ' αὖτως ὀλίγων ἀποτείνεται ὤμων / ὀργυῖν.³⁴ **φαιῆς** κεν ἀνιάξειν ἐπὶ παιδί.³⁵ (Arat. 195–196)

After the explanation of Aratus' various methods to strengthen his position as a teacher, I would like to shift the attention to Cicero's translation. At first glance, we may observe that he tries to address the student as much as Aratus does. And when we look at the verses closely, we may count 28 attempts³⁶ to address the reader directly. When we compare these 28 entries to the 36 of Aratus, we will see that this is almost the same ratio as the proportion of the extant Cicero's translation to Aratus' Greek text. In most cases, it is obviously a translation of Aratus' text. Thus, the largest extant part of his poem starts with the verse *e quibus hunc subter possis cognoscere fulgur* (Cic. Arat. 1), which is Cicero's interpretation of Aratus' verses localising the Ram: ζώνη δ' ἄν ὄμως **ἐπιτεκμήραιο** / Ἀνδρομέδης· ὀλίγον γὰρ ὑπ' αὐτὴν ἐστήρικται³⁷ (Arat. 229–230). In the following extracts, both authors conclude the long passage dealing with the fixed stars of northern and southern hemisphere in a similar way:

*Haec sunt quae uisens nocturno tempore signa
aeternumque uolens mundi pernoscere motum
legitimo cernes caelum lustrantia cursu.* (Cic. Arat. 223–225)

Ταῦτά κε **θηήσαιο** παρερχομένων ἐνιαυτῶν
ἐξείης παλίνωρα· τὰ γὰρ καὶ πάντα μάλ' αὖτως
οὐρανῶ εἰς ἐνάρησιν ἀγάλματα νυκτὸς ἰούσης.³⁸ (Arat. 451–453)

Sometimes Cicero addresses the reader also in the cases, where Aratus uses impersonal phrases. Adjusting Aratus' text, Cicero does not only describe the heavenly bodies, but encourages the reader to actively seek out the constellations.

*Et prope conspicias, expertis nominis omnis,
inter Pisticem et Piscem quem diximus Austri
stellas, sub pedibus stratas radiantis Aquari.* (Cic. Arat. 170–172)

ἄλλοι δέ, σποράδην ὑποκείμενοι Ὑδροχοῆϊ,
Κήτεος αἰθερίοιο καὶ Ἰχθύος ἠερέθονται

34 Martin (1998): ὀργυῖαν.

35 "She extends outstretched arms just from her small shoulders: you would say she was grieving over her daughter."

36 Cic. Arat. 1, 4, 18, 19, 20, 27–28, 62, 63–64, 65–66, 79, 145, 149–150, 170, 183, 192, 195, 196, 197, 223–225, 240–241, 244, 245–248, 268, 269–272, 341–347, 248 and 249.

37 "But you can still identify it from the girdle of Andromeda: for it is set a little way below her."

38 "These you can see as the years pass returning in succession; for these figures of the passing night are all well fixed in the sky just as they are."

μέσσοι νωχελέες καὶ ἀνώνυμοι.³⁹ (Arat. 389–391)

However, there are very few cases, where Aratus addresses the reader and Cicero misses the opportunity to do so – as, for instance, in the following verses:

*Ille autem Centaurus, in alta sede locatus,
qua sese clare conlucescens Scorpios infert,
hac subter partem praeportans ipse uirilem,
cedit, equi partis proferat subiungere Chelis.* (Cic. 207–210)

δήεις δ' ἄστρον ἐκεῖνο δὴ ὑποκείμενον ἄλλοις.
τοῦ γάρ τοι τὰ μὲν ἀνδρὶ εἰοκίτα νειόθι κείται
Σκορπίου, ἰππούραια δ' ὑπὸ σφίσι Χηλαὶ ἔχουσιν.⁴⁰ (Arat. 436–438)

The surviving segments of Cicero's translation suggest that Cicero uses practically all possible opportunities to address the reader that Aratus' text offers (and sometimes finds his own way).

When we contrast Germanicus' translation with Aratus' and Cicero's methods of presenting themselves as strong teachers, we can see that he addresses his student much less than Aratus and even less than Cicero, whose text is not complete. The addressing forms are present only 18 times,⁴¹ which means a half of the amount of the original Aratus' text. However, in the cases when he addresses the reader, Germanicus also encourages him to seek out the constellations:

*Qua media est Helice, subiectum respice Cancrum;
at capiti suberunt Gemini. Qua posterior pes,
horrentisque iugas et fuluum cerne leonem.* (Germ. 147–149)

Later in v. 507 Germanicus points to the constellation of Scorpio's claws.⁴² And besides pointing to celestial figures, he also advises the reader to fear:

*Inter certa licet numeres sub nocte cauenda
Turibulum, nam si sordebunt cetera caeli
nubibus obductis, illo splendente, timeto,
ne pacem pelagi soluat violentior auster.* (Germ. 401–404)⁴³

39 "Other stars, lying scattered below the Water-pourer hang in the sky between the celestial Monster and the Fish, but they are faint and nameless."

40 "You will find this constellation lying below two others: part of it, resembling a man, lies beneath the Scorpion, and the Claws have horse's hindpart under them."

41 Germ. 75–76, 147, 149, 279–280, 292, 343, 394, 401–402, 403, 476–477, 494, 507, 573, 575, 577, 587, 612 and 711.

42 Nowadays called the Scales.

43 For another instruction see v. 476.

Similarly to Aratus and Cicero, Germanicus uses other forms of instructions as the 3rd person indicative and subjunctive (active or passive) and impersonal expressions such as gerundive in Germ. 231: *querendus erit*.

The third criterion of the didactic poetry is poetic simultaneity. Besides the fact that the didactic poems should be written in the present tense, we may find some features, whose purpose is to convince the reader that the author composes the text in front of him. The writer can achieve this effect by using pronouns and verbs in the 1st person singular. These words are generally used in the openings of the poems or in the transition passages when the author changes the subject. Yet, Aratus uses these means rather sporadically. Although he opens the poem by ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα (v. 1), the only other reference to the course of the poem is given in verses 460–461, where Aratus explains why he does not intend to describe the planets: οὐδ' ἔτι θαρσαλέος κείνων ἐγώ: ἄρκιος εἶην / ἀπλανέων τά τε κύκλα τά τ' αἰθέρι σήματ' ἐνισπεῖν.⁴⁴

These examples are the only ones concerning the text construction. Nevertheless, Aratus mentions himself in other contexts. The most significant passages concern sailing.⁴⁵ For example, when the Sun comes together with the Lion for the first time, he explains his motives for changing the ship used:

τῆμος καὶ κελάδοντες ἐτησία εὐρέϊ⁴⁶ πόντῳ
 ἀθρόοι ἐμπίπτουσιν, ὁ δὲ πλόος οὐκέτι κώπαις
 ὄριος. εὐρεΐαί μοι ἀρέσκοιεν τότε νῆες,
 εἰς ἄνεμον δὲ τὰ πηδὰ κυβερνητῆρες ἔχοιεν.⁴⁷ (Arat. 152–155)

Later, he speaks about the Altar, a constellation which may, under certain circumstances, signal a storm at sea: Τῷ μὴ μοι πελάγει νεφέων εἰλυμένον ἄλλων / εὐχέο μεσόθι κείνο φανήμεναι οὐρανῷ ἄστρον⁴⁸ (Arat. 413–414). These digressions from the lecture serve to maintain contact with the reader and make the flow of the text more vivid. They do not relate directly to the writing process, but they still convince the student that his teacher is still a present person trying to maintain contact with the reader.

Although Cicero's poem has not survived in full, it is apparent, that he was fonder of this feature than Germanicus. One of these is the already mentioned translation of Aratus' verses 460–461 on avoiding the discussion of the planets.

44 For the translation see note 18.

45 Rosen (1990) brings an interesting view on the metapoetic meaning of sailing in Hesiod's *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι*. He argues, that *Nautilia* serves as a metaphor for poetry and it brings an advice not to dare to write epic poetry but rather to compose something easier and only in the time of appropriate poetic inspiration and technical training.

46 Martin (1998): εὐρέι.

47 "This is the time when the whistling etesian winds sweep strongly across the broad sea, and it is no longer seasonable for ships to be under oars. Then let broad-beamed ships be my pleasure, and let helmsmen hold their steering-oars into the wind."

48 "So pray, I beg you, that at sea this constellation be not visible in mid-sky overarched by clouds everywhere."

*quarum ego nunc nequeo tortos evoluere cursus:
uerum haec, quae semper certo [e]uoluuntur in orbe,
fixa, simul magnos edemus gentibus orbes.* (Cic. Arat. 234–236)

In other cases, Cicero adds remarks concerning the previous instruction, as e.g.: *Hunc propter subterque pedes quos diximus ante / Orioni' iacet leuipes Lepus* (Cic. Arat. 120–121) and in verse 171, where he points to the aforementioned constellation of Piscis Australis: *inter Pisticem et Piscem quem diximus Austri*. Both remarks are Cicero's addition and are not present in the Greek model, which disregards making comments on the preceding or following text.

Cicero also differs from Aratus when he explains the length of the Zodiac. In his description, the focus is brought not only to the Zodiac itself, but also to our process of its detection:

*et quantos radios iacimus de lumine nostro,
quis hunc conixum caeli contingimus orbem,
sex tantae poterunt sub eum succedere partes,
bina pari spatia caelestia signa tenentes.* (Cic. Arat. 313–316)

This remark contrasts with Aratus' detached portrayal of the same area of the sky:

ὄσσον δ' ὀφθαλμοῖο βολῆς ἀποτέίνεται αὐγή.
ἑξάκις ἂν τόσση μιν ὑποδράμοι· αὐτὰρ ἑκάστη
ἴση μετρηθεῖσα δύο περιτέμενεται ἄστρα.⁴⁹ (Arat. 541–543)

Therefore, even when only three quarters of Cicero's translation are extant and we do not have the opening part of the poem, it seems indisputable that he tried to get more instances of his and reader's presence into the text and thus to liven it up.

Germanicus' attitude to use the means of poetic simultaneity is comparable with Cicero's. In the introduction to his poem, he asks the emperor Augustus to preserve peace while he is writing: *haec ego dum Latiis conor praedicere Musis, / pax tua tuque adsis nato numenque secundes* (Germ. 15–16). Later, in verses 324–326 he sums up, that the stars in the northern hemisphere have been treated and he can proceed to the southern ones:

*sidera, quae mundi pars celsior aethere voluit
quaeque vident borean ventis adsueta serenis,
diximus.*

This remark concerning the poet himself is an addition the impersonal statement made by Aratus, who did not intersperse his text with comments on its construction:

49 "Six times the length of the beam from an observer's eye-glance would subtend this circle, and each sixth measured equal intercepts two constellations."

καὶ τὰ μὲν οὖν βορέω καὶ ἀλήσιος ἡελίοιο
 μεσσηγὺς κέχυται· τὰ δὲ νειόθι τέλλεται ἄλλα
 πολλὰ μεταξὺ νότοιο καὶ ἡελίοιο κελεύθου.⁵⁰ (Arat. 319–321)

There is also the same passage as in Aratus' text excusing the omission of the descriptions of the planets, to which Germanicus adds the allusion to the Muses helping him.⁵¹ Germanicus also livens up the text in the same way as Aratus; thus, in the following verses (here Sun meets Lion) he also wishes to change the means of transport:⁵²

*Ne mihi tum remis pulset uada caerulea puppis;
 dent potius uentis excusso uela rudente
 excipiantque sinus zephyris spirantibus auras.* (Germ. 154–156)

Germanicus tries to invigorate the poem by addressing the celestial figures, too, as in the whole passage introducing the Virgo (v. 98–111) beginning with the expression of current doubts: *Quam te, diua, vocem*. Similar digression is apparent in v. 646–647, where he tries to appease goddess Artemis: *Sis vati placata, precor, Latonia virgo: / non ego, non primus, veteres cecinere poetae*.⁵³ Unlike Germanicus, who addresses someone different from the student four times throughout the text, Aratus uses this way of enlivening only twice. Both times in the prologue, where he salutes Zeus and one verse later the Muses: Χαῖρε, πάτερ, μέγα θαῦμα, μέγ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὄνειρα, / αὐτὸς καὶ προτέρη γενεή. χαίροιτε δὲ Μοῦσαι⁵⁴ (Arat. 15–16).

We may observe similar address to the gods in Ovid's *Fasti*. At the beginning of the first book Ovid even interviews Janus about the 1st of January. His doubts on how to call the god correctly (*Quem tamen esse deum te dicam, Iane biformis?*)⁵⁵ bear resemblance to Germanicus' question in verse 98: *Quam te diua vocem*.⁵⁶ However, not only authors of didactic poems turn directly to the characters in their texts. We may see Vergil doing so in the tenth book of *Aeneid* when he speaks to Pallas – the dead companion of Aeneas.⁵⁷ Similarly, Ovid invigorates his *Metamorphoses* and speaks to Polydectes, king of Serifos, and others.⁵⁸ It is obvious that Germanicus tried to add more life to the long flow of didactic text in the same way as the epic poets did. The text could otherwise seem boring to the Roman audience.

50 “Now these are the stars that are broadcast between the north and the sun's wandering path. But many others rise below this, between the south and the track of the sun.”

51 See above Germ. 444–445.

52 For Aratus' reading of this passage see verses 152–155 above.

53 For other addressing to celestial figures see v. 32–33, 543–545 and 689. For addressing Caesar see v. 9, 16 and 558.

54 “Hail, Father, great wonder, great boon to men, yourself and the earlier race! And hail, Muses...”

55 Ov. *Fast.* 1.89.

56 Both authors' doubts are examples of hymnal topos and they strongly resemble opening of Callimachus' hymn to Zeus (Call. *Jov.* 1–5).

57 Verg. *A.* 10, 507–509.

58 E.g.: Ov. *Met.* 5, 242–247; 13, 483–487.

In accord with this “enlivening”, Germanicus also breaks one of the criteria given already by Plato⁵⁹ and affirmed later by Diomedes,⁶⁰ i.e. that the poet, especially an author of a didactic text, should speak alone without any interruption by another person. In verses 126–130, after a passage describing human ages, Germanicus lets Iustitia⁶¹ speak to the human race. However, here he completely follows Aratus’ example.⁶² The same deviation from this rule can be found, for example, in the fourth book of Vergil’s *Georgica*.⁶³ It is understandable that the authors tried to change the monotonous flow of their texts by adding mythological stories interwoven with direct speeches. Thus, this ancient regulation cannot be applied to the didactic poetry strictly and without any exceptions.

Concerning Cicero’s translation, we have no evidence that he addressed any god or the Muses. However, ca 200 first verses of his translation are missing, so we may only guess how he would deal with the opening and the Virgo passage.

Finally, we should have a look on authors’ struggles between writing a poem and a didactic text. Aratus refers to the fact that he is writing a poem twice. Both times it is at the end of the opening part, where Aratus hails the Muses and asks them to assist him:

Χαίροιτε δὲ Μοῦσαι

μειλίχια μάλα πᾶσαι· ἐμοί γε μὲν ἀστέρας εἰπεῖν
ἢ ἢ ἑμὶς εὐχομένῳ τεκμήρατε πᾶσαν **αἰοιδίην**.⁶⁴ (Arat. 16–18)

From the extant fragments of Cicero’s translation, it seems that he followed his Greek model and did not bother to stress that he is a poet. Thus, words like *carmen*, *vates*, *poeta* or *canere* do not appear in the extant verses, at all.

Contrary to Aratus and Cicero, Germanicus calls himself a poet and refers to poetic character of his work throughout the whole text. In the introduction, he entrusts the text to the Muses (v. 15), in line with Aratus. He turns to them also afterwards, when he writes that he is going to leave the description of the planets for later.⁶⁵ He adds the

59 Pl. *R.* 392C–394C. Plato divides poetry into three categories per the extent of using the direct speech, i.e. imitation. Thus, the didactic works belong to the group of poems consisting solely of author’s discourse, which is not interrupted by any direct speech (this group is in the text represented by dithyrambs).

60 Diom. *Gramm.* 3, 482, 20: *in quo poeta ipse loquitur sine ullius personae interlocutione, ut se habent tres georgici et prima pars quarti, item Lucreti carmina et cetera his similia.*

61 Iustitia than ascends to the sky and becomes a constellation Virgo. The first one who connected Dike from the myth of ages with constellation of Virgo (then Parthenos) was Aratus. For survey on the tradition of Virgo constellation in Aratus, Vergil and Germanicus see Gee (2013: pp. 34–50).

62 Arat. 123–126. For the whole Dike myth see Arat. 96–136.

63 Verg. *G.* 4, 317–558, here Vergil inserts a narrative of Aristaeus, inventor of bee-keeping. Due to several direct speeches inserted, was this passage recognised as an epic story and thus the second half of book four was not regarded as didactic; see Diomedes’ quote in note 60.

64 “Hail, Muses, all most gracious! In answer to my prayer to tell of the stars in so far as I may, guide my singing.”

65 Germ. 444–445. Germanicus mentions Muses once more when he describes Sagittarius, whom he identifies with the inventor of applause, Crotus (Germ. 551–553).

noun *carmen* twice to these poetic references, in the introducing verses: *Ab Ioue principium magno deduxit Aratus, / carminis at nobis, genitor, tu maximus auctor* (Germ. 1–2) and in the passage concerning Virgo:

*Quam te, diva, uocem? tangunt mortalia si te
carmina nec surdam praebes venerantibus aurem,
exosa, heu! mortale genus, medio mihi cursu
stabunt quadrupedes et flexis laetus habenis
teque tuumque numen canam terris venerabile numen.* (Germ. 98–102)

The verb *canere*, present in this extract, is used by Germanicus once more in the verse 550, when he speaks about Scorpio and says that Artemis will sing about him later.⁶⁶ Finally, Germanicus refers to his predecessors as *vates* and *poetae* and thus implies he is a *vates* too. First, when he speaks about the dull stars covering the neck and the head of the Great Bear: *Namque alii, quibus expletur cervixque caputque, / uatibus ignoti priscis sine honore feruntur* (Germ. 145–146). Later, he explicitly calls himself *vates*, when he wants to recount the catasterism myth of Orion (the passage referred to in verse 550). Here he tries to placate Artemis pleading not guilty and, just in case, saying that he is not the first one who writes about her humiliation: *Sis uati placata, precor, Latonia virgo: / non ego, non primus, ueteres cecinere poetae* (Germ. 646–647). From all the extracts, it is obvious that Germanicus tried to point out that his work was a poem far more than Aratus did.

Taub (2010: p. 135) says that “the ancient Latin translations of Aratus’ *Φαινόμενα* should be understood as poetic and as scientific; their creators did not choose between science and poetry but offered a rich tradition of science poems”. However, when we compare the figures in the following table,⁶⁷ we may see that Cicero and Germanicus treated the text in different ways and that they preferred either the teacher’s or poet’s role.

	Aratus	Cicero	Germanicus
Amount of verses	732	571	725
Author = teacher	0	0	0
Reader’s process of cognition	7 ⁶⁸	10 ⁶⁹	9 ⁷⁰
Addressing the reader = student ⁷¹	36	28	18
Poetic references	2 ⁷²	0	8 ⁷³

66 ... *quem mihi diua canet dicto prius Orione.*

67 As stated at the beginning, the data in this chart embrace only the first part of Aratus’ poem.

68 Arat. 76, 156–157, 229–230, 404–405, 456–457, 473–474 and 562–563.

69 Cic. *Arat.* 1, 18–19, 106, 190, 223–225, 240, 268, 341, 347 and 349.

70 Germ. 3, 11–12, 176, 234–236, 376–378, 445, 573–574, 636–637 and 708–709.

71 For verses concerned see notes 27, 36 and 41.

72 Arat. 16, 18.

73 Germ. 2, 15, 99, 102, 146, 444–445, 550, 646–647.

None of the authors openly declares that his role is the role of the teacher. Cicero inspired by Aratus and by the opportunity to teach the Romans rather tries to guide and guard his reader through the process of cognition. Just like Aratus, he does not bother with assuring the reader that the text he is reading is a poem. Cicero addresses the reader by the second person singular to maintain a teacher-like authority without any strong stress on his role. This way he subtly underlines his didactic intentions. Thus, he transfers to the Roman audience not only the text itself, but also the instructive impression. Later in *De natura deorum*, Cicero highlights the didactic intention of his translation showing that it served as an aid to memorize constellations and astronomical phenomena when he lets Stoic Balbus speak: “*Utar*” inquit “*carminibus Arateis, quae a te admodum adulescentulo conversa ita me delectant quia Latina sunt, ut multa ex is memoria teneam...*”⁷⁴

On the contrary, Germanicus did not need to teach the Romans discipline with which they were already familiar. Nevertheless, he seems to personally enjoy the subject matter, especially the catastrophe myths, where he shows off most of his poetic skills. Unlike Aratus and Cicero, who pay great attention to their readers and try to engage them in the presentation of stars, Germanicus focuses on the poetic aspect of the text. Instead of frequent addresses to the reader, he rather emphasises the fact that he is a poet. Thus, he intersperses the text with remarks to its poetic character. Although filled with knowledge,⁷⁵ the poem written in this way does not give a primary impression of a scholarly lecture and it is rather a well-done poetic play with then fashionable topics – astronomy and astrology.⁷⁶ Thus, however skilfully Germanicus translated *Φαινόμενα*, he did not manage (and most likely this was not his intention anyway) to transfer the didactic aspect of the poem to the reader.

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74 Cic. *Nat. deor.* 2, 104.

75 In many places, Germanicus corrects errors made by Aratus. See note 4.

76 For the role of astrology and astronomy in Roman life see Barton (1994/2002: pp. 37–70; 1994/2003: pp. 32–63).

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