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Translating the Heavens

Aratus, Germanicus, and
the Poetics of Latin Translation

by

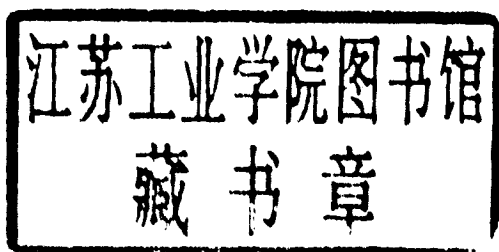
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In memory of
Scevola Mariotti
and
Sebastiano Timpanaro

Acknowledgments

This book owes its origin to Professor Edwin L. Brown of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who once suggested that I have a look at Germanicus Caesar's translation of Aratus's *Phaenomena*. That suggestion resulted in my dissertation, *Studies in the Aratea of Germanicus Caesar* (1987), which is largely concerned with the questions of authorship and date of composition. The results of that investigation have been condensed into what is now Appendix A. In that novice work there is also some discussion of Germanicus's methods of translation and his Ovidian approach to the *Phaenomena*, but overall the discussion is inadequate to the level of sophistication exemplified by the translation and fails to take full account of Germanicus's engagement with Vergilian and Ovidian texts. It is my hope that this new work will make good the deficiencies and errors of my first attempt at understanding Germanicus's poem and the poetics of Latin translation.

I want to thank the following individuals who read the entire manuscript and contributed to its improvement with their suggestions, criticisms, and corrections: Paul Coppock, Edward Courtney, Joseph Farrell, Daniel H. Garrison, editor of *Lang Classical Studies*, Mary Louise Gill, Dennis O. Looney, D. J. Mastronarde, Andrew M. Miller, and Richard F. Thomas. The manuscript has also benefited from the diligent and constructive labors of several anonymous readers; one in particular subjected the book to a thoroughgoing and unsparing critique. May they find some recompense in these pages for their time and effort. In recalling those who have helped me over the course of this work I feel conscious of a special debt of gratitude to Dennis O. Looney, Joseph Farrell, and Ralph M. Rosen.

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Jana L. Adamitis provided expert and indefatigable editorial assistance in proofreading the manuscript, in preparing the camera-ready copy for the publisher, in checking references, and in helping with the indexes.

D. A. Kidd's translation of the *Phaenomena* is reprinted with the permission of the Cambridge University Press. Material quoted from D. P. Kubiak's Harvard dissertation *Cicero, Catullus, and the Art of Neoteric Translation* (1979) is reprinted with the permission of the author.

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I alone am responsible for the judgments and conclusions here expressed. The faults that remain, as you might have guessed, lie not in the stars but in me.

Mark Possanza
Pittsburgh, PA
1 August 2003

Abbreviations

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Eds. H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin & New York 1972–
Baehrens	“Germanici Arateorum Quae Supersunt.” Ed. E. Baehrens. In <i>Poetae Latini Minores</i> . vol. 1. Leipzig 1879: 142–200.
Blänsdorf	<i>Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum</i> . Ed. J. Blänsdorf. Stuttgart & Leipzig 1995.
Bömer, <i>Fast.</i>	<i>P. Ovidius Naso. Die Fasten.</i> Ed. F. Bömer. 2 vols. Heidelberg 1957–1958.
Bömer, <i>Met.</i>	<i>P. Ovidius Naso. Metamorphosen.</i> Ed. F. Bömer. 7 vols. Heidelberg 1969–1986.
Breysig (1867)	<i>Germanici Caesaris Aratea cum Scholiis.</i> Ed. A. Breysig. Berlin 1867.
Breysig (1899)	<i>Germanici Caesaris Aratea. Accedunt Epigrammata.</i> Leipzig 1899.
Buescu	<i>Cicéron. Les Aratea.</i> Ed. V. Buescu. Bucharest 1941, repr. Hildesheim 1966.
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Eratosthenis Catasterismorum Reliquiae.</i> Ed. C. Robert. Berlin 1878, repr. 1963. (Cited by page number.)

- Courtney *The Fragmentary Latin Poets*. Ed. with commentary by E. Courtney. Oxford 1993.
- Gain *The Aratus Ascribed to Germanicus Caesar*. Ed. with translation and commentary by D. B. Gain. London 1976.
- Hyginus *Hygin. L'Astronomie*. Ed. A. Le Boeuffle. Paris 1983.
- Jocelyn *The Tragedies of Ennius*. Ed. with an introduction and commentary by H. D. Jocelyn. Cambridge 1969.
- Kidd, *Com.* *Aratus: Phaenomena*. Edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by D. A. Kidd. Cambridge 1997.
- Le Boeuffle *Germanicus. Le Phénomènes d'Aratos*. Ed. A. Le Boeuffle. Paris 1975.
- LSJ⁹ *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Eds. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. Stuart Jones. 9th ed. Oxford 1940. With a revised supplement, 1996.
- Martin, *Com.* *Aratos. Phénomènes*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Martin. 2 vols. Paris 1998.
- Maurach *Germanicus und sein Arat. Eine vergleichende Auslegung von V. 1–327 der Phaenomena*. Ed. G. Maurach. Heidelberg 1978.
- OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. Oxford 1996³.
- OLD *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Ed. P. G. W. Glare. Oxford 1968–1982.
- Orelli *Phaedri Fabulae. Accedunt Caesaris Germanici Aratea*. Ed. J. C. Orelli. Zurich 1832.

- RE* *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart 1893-1978.
- Ribbeck *Scaenicae Romanae Poesis Fragmenta*. Ed. O. Ribbeck. 2 vols. Leipzig 1871², repr. Hildesheim 1962.
- Roscher's *Lexikon* *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*. Ed. W. H. Roscher. Leipzig & Berlin 1924-1937.
- ΣAratus (Scholia to Aratus) *Scholia in Aratum Vetera*. Ed. J. Martin. Stuttgart 1974. (Cited by page and line number.)
- ΣGer. (Scholia to Germanicus) *Germanici Caesaris Aratea cum Scholiis*. Ed. A. Breysig. Berlin 1867. (Cited by page and line number.)
- Sk. *The Annals of Q. Ennius*. Ed. with introduction and commentary by O. Skutsch. Oxford 1985.
- Soubiran *Cicéron. Aratea, fragments poétiques*. Ed. J. Soubiran. Paris 1993².
- "Sternbilder" F. Boll and W. Gundel, "Sternbilder, Sternglaube und Sternsymbolik bei Griechen und Römern." In Roscher's *Lexikon* (above), 6.867-1071.
- TLL* *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig 1900-

The text and translation of Aratus's *Phaenomena* are quoted from Kidd; the text of Germanicus's *Aratea* is quoted from Gain, the text of Cicero's from Soubiran. Divergences from these texts are explained in the notes. The translations of Germanicus's and Cicero's *Aratea* are my own, though they have benefited from the translations in the editions just mentioned, as well as those in the editions of Buescu and Le Boeuffe. I am also responsible for any unattributed translations. Readers of the *Phaenomena*, who were formerly starved for guidance and information, can now fatten on the rich stores in the commentaries of Kidd and Martin. Students of Hellenistic and Latin poetry are greatly in their debt.

For astronomical and mythological information about the constellations I have relied on Boll-Gundel's indispensable article "Sternbilder" in Roscher's *Lexikon* and on the valuable articles in *RE*; A. Le Boeuffe's *Les noms latins d'astres et de constellations* (Paris 1977), though handier to consult, is less informative. Readers will find an excellent introductory account of the starry heavens in G. J. Toomer's *OCD* article "constellations and named stars."

Dates and abbreviations of authors' works are those given in the *OCD*. With regard to the spelling of the name *Avienus* / *Avienius*, Cameron (1967, 1995) has demonstrated, in my judgment, that *Avienius* is the correct form. I refrain from reviewing the question for fear of provoking another *Dunciad*.

The study of translation requires extensive quotation, even at the risk of irritating repetition, because quotation is the only means of reviving the dialogue that takes place between the source text and translation. In order to follow the course of that dialogue and see how the translator's own aesthetic intentions and values are realized, readers will want both texts before their eyes. Translation is an intensely textual activity and the Muse of translation is a bookish one. In this study the image of the poet as a maker of song inspired by a Pierian bolt from the blue must be replaced by the image of the translator-poet as a studious reader construing and interpreting the source text and calling upon a variety of other texts in order to create a "second original."

The manuscript was completed in June 2000. References to relevant works published since then, most notably Emma Gee's valuable monograph, *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus* (2000), are made in the notes and bibliography.

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Introduction

A New Phenomenon

The Latin translation of Greek poetic texts, in the period from the beginning of Latin literature in 240 BC to the death of Ovid in AD 17, is possibly unique as a form of literary composition. The reason is that Latin poetry itself evolved out of the artistic translation and adaptation of Greek poetic texts. The Latin translation of a Greek poem is like a grafted plant: it takes its sustenance from the very same stock as the source text, while at the same time retaining those linguistic and cultural characteristics that naturally belong to it. When the translator-poet Livius Andronicus began the arduous process of developing a hellenized literature at Rome in 240 BC with the translation and production of a Greek play, or possibly two plays, there existed no body of poetic texts in Latin, recognizable as literary compositions comparable in form and style to the Greek, which was strong enough to assert its own identity as a “native” poetry against the studied adaptation and imitation of Greek poetry; even the native saturnian meter, which Livius and Naevius used for their epic poems, was made obsolete for purposes of literary composition when Ennius introduced the Greek hexameter in his *Annales*. The artistic translation of Greek poetry into Latin not only revealed the tremendous potential of the Latin language for poetic composition, it also demonstrated how Latin poetry was to be written in accordance with the requirements of the established forms and styles of Greek poetry: Rome’s first poets, with their translations of Greek tragedy, comedy, and epic, grafted the Latin language onto the stock of Greek poetry and thus put Latin poetry on a course of development that would continue to draw life from Greek roots. As a result, the Latin translations of Greek poetry are by nature an outgrowth of that same tradition which gave birth to the Greek source texts themselves. Unlike the situation confronted by the modern translator who

is bringing the source text into the foreign literary environment of the established forms, styles, and diction found in the receiving language, the Latin translator is transplanting the Greek text into a literary environment which was created by the Greek poets themselves of the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods. This astonishing symbiosis of the Latin shoot implanted in the rich growth of Greek literature is brilliantly captured in Horace's pregnant phrase *Graiae Camenae* "Grecian Camenae" (*Carm.* 2.16.38); in this phrase native Latin goddesses of prophecy, the Camenae, whom Livius Andronicus had invoked at the beginning of his translation of the *Odyssey* as the equivalent of the Greek Muses, are explicitly recognized as having a dual identity of which the poet himself, as their protégé, naturally partakes.

Since Greek literary culture, both in its primary forms, i.e., the poetic texts themselves, and in its secondary forms, i.e., reception and exegesis, lay at the foundation of Latin literature, it follows from this cross-cultural phenomenon that the translator-poet was able to utilize fully the resources of the Greek literary tradition when he translated Greek texts into Latin. As I will illustrate below, when Germanicus translated Aratus's *Phaenomena*, he was able to use the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, just as Aratus himself had done, and actually rewrote passages of the *Phaenomena* through the texts of Aratus's two great epic models; he also made use of Hellenistic poets, Callimachus and Nicander, and of course his own predecessors in Latin poetry, most especially Vergil and Ovid. This amazing continuity, which stems from the shared literary values and ideals of a common tradition, provided a unique bridge over the divide of linguistic and cultural difference and made possible the development of a sophisticated translation practice which does not isolate, through a literalist approach, the source text as a specimen of a foreign literature, but rather integrates it through rewriting into the new currents of the tradition such as they are at the time when the translation is made. The modern image of the translator as a writer engaged in a one-on-one lexical battle with the wording of the source text in order to produce a true and literal copy of its meaning does not apply to Latin translator-poets who work not only with the source text but also with the texts which influenced it and were influenced by it. For these translators the source text is not an isolated linguistic artifact but part of a complex system of texts whose nature is not static but dynamic. And as the following examples will, I hope, show, the understanding that the source text is not forever fixed within the confines of a static, literal meaning, or within the confines of a

literary-historical context that determines meaning, opens up the possibility for something to be gained in translation.¹

Two examples from Germanicus's *Aratea* will illustrate how the source text is integrated through the poetics of Latin translation into the literary tradition as it has evolved since the source text itself was composed. (It is assumed here and in the following pages, on the basis of arguments presented in Appendix A on the date of the *Aratea*, that Germanicus was familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, and that in matters of poetic influence Germanicus is the debtor not only in diction and style but also in his conception of his role as an astronomical poet and in his treatment of the material.) In the first example Germanicus rewrites Aratus's description of the constellation Centaur (*Phaen.* 436–442) by adding the following lines:

hic erit ille pius Chiron, iustissimus omnis
inter nubigenas et magni doctor Achillis. (421–422)

(This will be Chiron the dutiful, most just of all the cloud-born ones [Centaurs] and the teacher of great Achilles.)

The motive for the addition of these lines is a purely literary one. At *Iliad* 11.832 we read:

[Ἀχιλλῆος] ὃν Χείρων ἐδίδαξε, δικαιοτάτος Κενταύρων
([Achilles] whom Chiron taught, most just of the Centaurs).

Germanicus's Chiron, the teacher of Achilles and most just of Centaurs, is derived from Homer:² whether directly or indirectly, we will see in a moment. In rewriting Aratus's description, Germanicus incorporates material from another text, but not just any text. Homer exercised a profound influence on the poet of the *Phaenomena*. In his description of Centaur Germanicus has taken that influence one step further by using Homer's text to give the constellation Centaur its epic identity as Chiron, the teacher of Achilles and the most just of Centaurs. In addition he has refined Homer's language by substituting the allusive description, *omnis inter nubigenas*, for the simple identification, Κενταύρων.

There is, however, another dimension to this rewriting, one which takes the reader from Greek epic into Latin astronomical poetry. In the *Fasti*, a poem in which Aratus makes his presence felt, Ovid tells the catasterism myth which explains the origin of the constellation Centaur: Chiron, while

handling one of Hercules' poison-tipped arrows, dropped one and wounded himself in the left foot; the wound was fatal (5.379–414).³ Near the end of the story, the narrator addresses Chiron in a way that unmistakably echoes Homer's phrase *δικαιότατος Κενταύρων*, but modifies it by putting it in the affective vocative, *iustissime Chiron* (5.413); and a few lines earlier in 410 Ovid refers to Chiron as *doctor*. Both of these details, "Chiron the most just" and "Chiron the teacher" of Achilles, explain why the Centaur is rewarded (*praemia* 410) with catasterism. Because Germanicus has a much greater interest in these catasterism myths than Aratus and uses them to expand the theme of aetiological explanation in the *Phaenomena*, it is very likely that he is here echoing, with the epithet *iustissimus* and the phrase *magni doctor Achillis*, the Ovidian account of Chiron's catasterism.

And finally, there is *nubigenas*, an elevated compound epithet belonging to Latin epic diction. The literary associations of the "cloud-born Centaurs" lead the reader back to Vergil's *Aeneid*, where the epithet is first attested, and to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. These two poets, as we will see, are major influences on our poet as he translates the *Phaenomena* in accordance with Augustan poetics. By adding the compound epithet *nubigenas*, Germanicus has modified Homer's phrase *δικαιότατος Κενταύρων* in a way that links Homer's description of Chiron with Vergil's and Ovid's allusive references to the Centaurs as "the cloud-born ones," i.e., the offspring of Ixion and Nephele. And thus all three epic predecessors are integrated into the rewriting of Aratus.⁴

The second example, the naming of the Pleiades (*Phaen.* 262–263), points to the Latin poet's use of Aratus's other great epic model, Hesiod.

Electra Alcyoneque Celaenoque Meropeque
 Asteropeque et Taygete et Maia parente
 caelifero genitae (si uere sustinet Atlas
 regna Iouis superosque atque ipso pondere gaudet). (262–265)

(Electra and Alcyone and Celaeno and Merope and Asterope and Taygete
 and Maia, born of a father who bears the sky (if in truth Atlas shoulders
 Jupiter's kingdom and the gods above, and rejoices in the weight itself.)

In 262–263 Germanicus follows Aratus's text and names the seven sisters of the constellation Pleiades. He then goes on, however, to make an important addition when he identifies them in 263–264 as the daughters of Atlas with an elevated patronymic phrase consisting of participle, compound epithet, and noun: *parente caelifero genitae* "born of a father who supports the sky." This phrase, following immediately after the naming

of the sisters, corresponds to a relative clause, which also follows the naming of the sisters, in a fragment usually attributed to Hesiod: τὰς γεί-
νατο φαίδιμος Ἀτλας “[the Pleiades] whom mighty Atlas fathered.”⁵
Moreover, in the *Works and Days* the Pleiades are named with a patro-
nymic, Πληιάδων Ἀτλαγενέων “Pleiades daughters of Atlas” (383); and
in the *Theogony* Hesiod gives the earliest depiction of Atlas as the pillar
of the sky: Ἀτλας δ’ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχει “Atlas holds broad heaven”
(517). Again Germanicus has rewritten Aratus’s description of a constel-
lation, the Pleiades, through the text of another of Aratus’s predecessors,
Hesiod, who in his *Works and Days* provided the structural and thematic
model for the *Phaenomena*.

At the same time, however, there are reflexes of the Hesiodic Atlas in
the poetry of Vergil and Ovid. The compound epithet *caelifer* is first at-
tested at *Aeneid* 6.796 and turns up again in *Fasti* 5.83.⁶ The occurrence
of *caelifer* in the *Fasti* is especially important for our analysis because this
passage is unique in combining Atlas’s role as father of the Pleiades with
his role as the god who holds up the heavens:

hinc sata Pleione cum caelifero Atlante
iungitur, ut fama est, Pleiadasque parit. (83–84)

Their daughter Pleione was joined, the story goes, with Atlas,
heaven’s upholder, and she bore the Pleiades.⁷

Germanicus has likewise combined *Atlas caelifer* with Atlas as father of
the Pleiades in the phrase *parente caelifero genitae*. And, as we will soon
see, this combination of roles has a special purpose.

Immediately after the patronymic phrase *parente caelifero genitae*
Germanicus adds a conditional clause in 264–265:

si uere sustinet Atlas
regna Iouis superosque atque ipso pondere gaudet.

(if in truth Atlas shoulders Jupiter’s kingdom and the gods above, and re-
joices in the weight itself.)

The conditional form is intended merely to indicate that the poet is relat-
ing a tradition. In the phrase *sustinet Atlas*, which also occurs at *Aeneid*
8.136–137 and *Metamorphoses* 2.296–297, the verb *sustinere* ‘to sup-
port’, ‘to endure’ can be read as an etymological gloss on the name
Ἀτλας derived from the verb τλήναι ‘to endure’: Atlas *lasts* as upholder
of the heavens.⁸ The adverb *uere* may then be read as a pointer to the

etymological connection, suggesting that Atlas is true to his name in enduring the weight of heaven. Here the poet has taken Aratus's practice of including etymologies, a practice also favored by Hellenistic and Augustan poetics,⁹ and applied it to his own addition to the *Phaenomena*.

The description of Atlas ends on a witty note. Germanicus writes that the god rejoices in the weight of his burden, though according to tradition, shouldering the sky was anything but an enjoyable task. What accounts for the obvious contradiction of the received tradition? The answer lies in the combination, mentioned above, of Atlas's two roles as father of the Pleiades and bearer of the heavens: he is the proud father of seven daughters whom he supports, quite literally, on his shoulders; and the daughters are the Pleiades, famous in the heavens as the sign of the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter, a special honor for a constellation, as Germanicus notes, (*praecipuo...honore* 267). When seen as the proud father of a well recognized constellation rather than as a laboring Titan, Atlas can be said to be glad of his burden.¹⁰ This playfulness, however, is not without consequence. To make room for Atlas as father of the Pleiades and supporter of heaven, Germanicus omitted Aratus's programmatic reference to Zeus as the cause (Ζεὺς δ' αἴτιος 265) of the Pleiades' dual significance as a sign of the seasons. The omission of this reference to Zeus's providential arrangement of the heavens for the benefit of humankind is, within the limits of this introductory analysis, a first hint at the Latin poet's reinterpretation of the *Phaenomena*.

Germanicus's descriptions of the constellations Centaur and Pleiades, which add new material drawn from Homer, Hesiod, Vergil, and Ovid to Aratus's text, reveal the workings of a very sophisticated translation strategy that works not only with the wording of the source text but also with the complex of relations that exist between it and other texts, both Greek and Latin; and out of that complex of relations it creates what may truly be called a "second original," a translation that has a claim to being a unique text in its own right and, as I hope I have shown, worthy of close analysis not only in relation to the source text but to others as well. In the discussion of even these brief passages we discover a synthetic form of composition that is similar to what we are familiar with in the composition of "original" works, but which we do not expect to find in a translation. The tame virtues of the "faithful translator" have little to recommend themselves in this highly innovative, subjective method of translation; innovative in the sense that the translator-poet does not feel bound to follow the wording of the source text and incorporates new material into it; subjective in the sense that the translator-poet is working out his own aesthetic