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THE DIDACTIC STRATEGY IN GERMANICUS' TRANSLATION OF ARATUS' *PHAENOMENA*

Summary: Germanicus Iulius Caesar translated Aratus' *Phaenomena* when the Roman interest in astronomy and astrology was on the rise. The Romans, including the imperator, were amazed by the fact that with the knowledge of the motion of celestial objects one can predict the future. And people wanted to learn more about the stars and the constellations. Did Germanicus' work perform the task of teaching its readers about the heavens? Did he manage to play his role as a teacher? Did he only translate the information contained in Aratus' text, or did he transfer even the didactic aspect of the poem? And how did he try to make the lecture more interesting? Did he make an attempt to interact with the reader? In this paper, Germanicus' text will be examined focusing on his didactic strategy. The core of the paper is the analysis of manners used by Germanicus to meet characteristic constituent features of the genre of didactic poetry, which will be briefly introduced in the beginning.

Key words: Aratus, Germanicus, didactic poetry, *Phaenomena*, *Aratea*

Consulting the *New Pauly encyclopaedia*,[1] we will learn that scholars have tried to define didactic poetry for centuries. The long-term discussion has led to a certain degree of scepticism about the feasibility of this task. There is no definite answer yet, but we are able to determine some characteristic features of this genre.

From a formal point of view, didactic poetry bears the linguistic, stylistic and metrical marks of epic poetry. Concerning the content, the author gives a coherent exposition addressed to a person absent from the text.[2] Unlike the epic written in the past tense, the didactic genre is written in the present tense, since the state described

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[1] Cf. HUSS, B. (Munich): "Didactic poem (CT)"; GLEI, R. F.: "Didactic poetry" in Brill's *The New Pauly* [online database]. Antiquity volumes edited by H. CANCIK and H. SCHNEIDER. Leiden 2007 [cit. 2015]. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.
[2] According to Brill's *The New Pauly* (n. 1), 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 (n. 1) Brill Online, 2015.

in the poem remains unchanged. Another difference between these two genres lies in the author's intent. Although we can definitely learn some important information from epic poems, such as Homer's *Iliad*, we cannot describe them as didactic, but as heroic epic poems. As Volk[3] 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." Therefore, there has to be a clear explicit didactic intent. Since the themes chosen to be explained are usually exact and not very poetic, the authors resign the smoothness of the form. There is thus a constant tension between δίδαξις and ποίησις.

It was Aristotle who first noticed the difference between particular works written in hexameter. He held the view that we should call Homer a poet, but Empedocles a natural scientist.[4] And the authors should decide whether they would teach the recipients or amuse them by a poetic adaptation. A few centuries later in Rome, Horace formulated the idea that the authors should try to combine both.[5]

As Aristotle, Plato would not have to put these two genres together either. In the *Republic*[6] he divided poetry into three categories according to the extent of using direct speech, i.e. imitation. Thus he rates didactic works among the group of poems consisting solely of the author's discourse, which is not interrupted by inserted direct speeches. In the 4th c. Diomedes also divided poetry into three categories. Didactic poems (*didascalice*), genealogies (*historice*) and aphorisms (*analgetice*) belong to the *genus enarrativum*, where "the poet speaks himself without interruption by any person".[7] In the same place he wrote that didactic poetry *est qua conprehenditur philosophia Empedoclis et Lucreti, item astrologia, ut phaenomena Aratu et Ciceronis, et georgica Vergilii et his similia.*[8]

Since the majority of ancient authors could not meet Horace's requirements and properly combine content and form of their works, Bernd Effe[9] divided didactic poems into three further categories. The first (Formaler Typ) includes poems, whose authors put an accent on their form and play down the subject. Works by Aratus of Soloi, Nicander of Colophon and Cicero's translation of Aratus' *Φαινόμενα* belong here. The second category (Sachbezogener Typ) contains poems which are focused on the transmission of the subject and which are flawless in respect of the content.[10] In the last category (Transparenter Typ), there are poems in which the authors managed to combine both *docere* and *delectare*.[11] Later, other scholars followed up Effe's

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[3] VOLK, K.: *The Poetics of Latin Didactic: Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius*. Oxford 2002, 36.
[4] Arist. *Poet.* 1447b17–20: οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὁμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητήν.
[5] Hor. *ars* 343–344: *omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci, / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo.*
[6] Plato, *Rep.* 392C–394C.
[7] Diom. gramm. 3. 482. 20: *poeta ipse loquitur sine ullius personae interlocutione.*
[8] *Ibid.* 3. 483. 1.
[9] EFFE, B.: *Dichtung und Lehre: Untersuchungen zur Typologie des antiken Lehrgedichts*. München 1977, 26–39.
[10] Works by Empedocles and Lucretius.
[11] Here Effe speaks about Hesiod's *Erga* and Vergil's *Georgica*.

attempts with more definitions. In 2002 Katharina Volk[12] determined four basic features which must be incorporated in a didactic poem. These are: explicit didactic intent, teacher-student constellation, poetic self-consciousness and poetic simultaneity. Three of these match the criteria mentioned in *New Pauly*.[13] Volk added the criterion of poetic self-consciousness, which inspects the author's awareness of the fact that the text he is writing is a poem and that he is a poet. According to this criterion, the poet should demonstrate his awareness by using words such as *canere, vates, versus, carmen,* etc. However, this aspect, in my opinion, applies to all poetry in general. Its function is not to distinguish didactic poems from eposes and other poetry, but more likely to put poetry above prose. Nevertheless, I will examine it, too.

Before we proceed to the outcome of my research, I will give some basic information on Germanicus and his model, Aratus. Aratus of Soloi lived at the turn of the 4th and 3rd c. BC. He wrote the epos *Φαινόμενα καὶ Διοσεμεῖα* consisting of 1154 verses. *Φαινόμενα*, a description of celestial phenomena, account for two thirds of the text and are a versification of the work of Eudoxus of Cnidus[14] written about one century earlier. Aratus did so in accord with the Hellenistic trends of focusing on an educated readership and the modernization of poetry.

Germanicus Iulius Caesar was born in 15 BC at the time of the reign of Octavianus Augustus. He was son of Nero Claudius Drusus, thus a step grandson of Emperor Augustus and a nephew of the second Emperor Tiberius. The exact dating of his translation is still a question.[15] Whenever it was carried out, Germanicus enjoyed life during a peaceful period of Roman history. His literary production was not burdened with any kind of a "mission" and it reflects the youthful joy of composing a poem and translating a work of such a writer as Aratus. Since his text is a literary translation of Aratus' poem, he more or less copies its length and structure. As the structures of both poems indicate, Germanicus did not translate *Φαινόμενα* word by word. His translation was driven by the increasing Roman interest in astrology, especially in circles close to Caesar.[16] He rather tried to retell its subject in Latin and intersperse it with more interesting mythological excursions.[17] His approach to the text will be examined on the next few pages.

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[12] See Volk (n. 3) 34–40.

[13] For other criteria of didactic poetry, see Toohey, P.: *Epic Lessons: An Introduction to Ancient Didactic Poetry*. London – New York 1996, 13–19.

[14] Eudoxus' works *Φαινόμενα* and *Ἔντροπον* are lost. Only fragments have been preserved in Hipparchus' commentary on Aratus.

[15] On the dating of the poem and for the addressee of the proem, see e.g. *Germanicus, Gaius Iulius Caesar. Les Phénomènes d'Aratos*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par A. Le Boeuffle. Paris 1975 [2003] vii–xi, who dates the translation between 16 and 17 AD; Conte, G. B.: *Latin Literature: A History*. Translated by J. B. Solodow. Baltimore 1994, 427–428, who more or less agrees with this dating and states the date between 14 and 19 AD; and Possanza, D. M.: *Translating the Heavens: Aratus, Germanicus, and the Poetics of Latin Translation*. New York 2004, 219–235, who prefers the period 4–7 AD (the broadest period Possanza is willing to accept is 4–14 AD).

[16] For the position of astrology in Rome, see Barton, T. S.: *Ancient Astrology*. London 1994 [2003] 32–63.

[17] Preceding translators were Cicero and Ovid (his translation has not survived). And in the 4th c., Germanicus was followed by Avienus.

First, we will look at the criterion of poetic self-consciousness. Aratus refers to the fact that he is writing a poem only twice. Both times it is at the end of the pro-oemium, where Aratus hails the Muses and asks them to assist him:

> Χαίροιτε δὲ Μοῦσαι
> μειλίχιαι μάλα πᾶσαι· ἐμοί γε μὲν ἀστέρας εἰπεῖν
> ᾗ θέμις εὐχομένῳ τεκμήρατε πᾶσαν ἀοιδήν.[18]
>
> (Arat. 16–18)

Contrary to Aratus, Germanicus calls himself a poet and his work a poem throughout the whole text. In the introduction, he entrusts the text to the Muses (v. 15) as Aratus does. And he turns to them also afterwards, when he writes that he is going to leave the description of the planets for later:

> **Hoc opus** arcanis si **credam** postmodo **Musis**,
> tempus et ipse labor, patiantur fata, docebit.[19]
>
> (Germ. *Arat.* 444–445)[20]

To these references to poetic self-conscious, he adds the noun *carmen* twice, in the introducing verses:

> Ab Iove principium magno deduxit Aratus,
> **carminis** at nobis, genitor, tu maximus auctor,
>
> (Germ. *Arat.* 1–2)

and in the passage concerning Virgo:

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

The verb *canere*, present in this extract, is used by Germanicus once more in verse 550, when he is speaking about Scorpio and saying that Artemis will sing about him later.[21] As one may see, all the words are used in connection with the poem. Last, Germanicus refers to his predecessors as *vates* and *poetae* and thus implies that he is a *vates*, too. First, when he speaks about dull stars covering the neck and the head of the Great Bear:

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[18] All the extracts of Aratus' *Phaenomena* in this paper are taken from *Aratus. Phaenomena.* Ed. with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by D. KIDD. Cambridge 1977.

[19] All the extracts of Germanicus' *Aratea* in this paper are taken from LE BOEUFFLE (n. 15).

[20] Germanicus mentions the Muses once more when describing Sagittarius, whom he identifies with the inventor of applause, Crotus (Germ. *Arat.* 551–553).

[21] Germ. Arat. 550: *quem mihi diva canet dicto prius Orione.*

Namque alii, quibus expletur cervixque caputque,
***vatibus** ignoti **priscis** sine honore feruntur*.

(Germ. *Arat*. 145–146)

And 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 definitely not the first one who writes about her humiliation:

*Sis **vati** placata, precor, Latonia virgo:*
*non ego, non primus, **veteres** cecinere **poetae***

(Germ. *Arat*. 646–647)

From the extracts, it is obvious that Germanicus tried to point out that his work was a poem far more than Aratus did. And although we may accept this criterion of didactic poems, it is in our context almost as relevant as the fact that the text is written in verses.

The criterion relating more to didactic poetry is poetic simultaneity. We could describe this feature as a topos, whose purpose is to convince the student 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, both Aratus and Germanicus use these means rather sporadically. Although Aratus opens the poem with 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 εἴην
ἀπλανέων τά τε κύκλα τά τ᾽ αἰθέρι σήματ᾽ ἐνισπεῖν.

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

τῆμος καὶ κελάδοντες ἐτησίαι εὐρέϊ πόντῳ
ἀθρόοι ἐμπίπτουσιν, ὁ δὲ πλόος οὐκέτι κώπαις
ὥριος. εὐρεῖαί μοι ἀρέσκοιεν τότε νῆες,
εἰς ἄνεμον δὲ τὰ πηδὰ κυβερνητῆρες ἔχοιεν.   (Arat. 152–155)

Or when he speaks about the Altar, a sign of storm at sea:

τῷ μή μοι πελάγει νεφέων εἰλυμένον ἄλλων
εὔχεο μεσσόθι κεῖνο φανήμεναι οὐρανῷ ἄστρον,

(Arat. 413–414)

The digressions from the lecture serve to make contact with the reader and revive the flow of the text. They do not relate directly to the process of writing, but they still convince the student that he is present and his teacher is still a living and moreover present person.

The attitude to poetic simultaneity is the same with Germanicus. In the introduction to his poem, he asks Augustus (alive or dead) to preserve peace while he is writing:

> *haec **ego** dum Latiis **conor** praedicere Musis,*
> *pax tua tuque adsis nato numenque secundes.*
>
> (Germ. *Arat.* 15–16)

Then, in verses 324–326 Germanicus sums up that he has described the stars in the northern hemisphere and can move on:

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

This remark concerning the poet himself contrasts with Aratus' impersonal statement:

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

We find the same passage as in Aratus' text excusing the omission of the descriptions of the planets.[22] Germanicus also rewrites Aratus' digression passages, because he wants to liven up his text. Thus, in verses 154–156, when the Sun first meets the Lion, he has a wish for himself:

> ***Ne mihi tum** remis pulset vada caerula puppis,*
> *dem potius ventis excusso vela rudente*
> *excipiantque sinus zephyris spirantibus auras.*

And again, there is a similar wish when the Altar rises:

> ***Tunc mihi** spissentur substricto cornua velo*
> *et rigidi emittant flatus per inane rudentes.*
>
> (Germ. *Arat.* 405–406)

Germanicus tries to invigorate the poem also by addressing the celestial figures, as in the whole passage introducing the Virgo (vv. 98–111) beginning with expression of current doubts: *Quam te, diva, vocem.* A similar digression is apparent in vv. 646–647:[23]

> ***Sis** vati **placata, precor,** Latonia virgo:*
> *non ego, non primus, veteres cecinere poetae.*

Germanicus addresses someone different from the student four times, which is more than in the case of his model, Aratus, who in the prologue salutes Zeus and one verse later the Muses:

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[22] See above Germ. *Arat.* 444–445.
[23] For other addressings of celestial figures, see vv. 32–33, 543–545 and 689. For addressing Caesar, see v. 9, 16 and 558.

χαῖρε, πάτερ, μέγα θαῦμα, μέγ᾽ ἀνθρώποισιν ὄνειαρ,
αὐτὸς καὶ προτέρη γενεή. Χαίροιτε δὲ Μοῦσαι

(Germ. *Arat*. 15–16)

A similar addressing of gods may also be observed in another Latin didactic poem – Ovid's *Fasti*, where in the beginning of the first book Ovid even interviews Ianus about the 1st January.[24] And the author's doubts concerning his approach to the god in verse 1. 89 *Quem tamen esse deum te dicam, Iane biformis?* strongly resemble verse 98 of Germanicus' *Aratea*.[25] The author directly addressing characters in his text, however, does not appear only in didactic poetry. We may see Vergil doing so in book 10 of the *Aeneid* when speaking to Pallas – the dead companion of Aeneas.[26] And similarly Ovid invigorates his *Metamorphoses*.[27] It is obvious that Germanicus tried to add more life to the long flow of the teaching text in the same way as epic poets did. The text could otherwise seem boring to the Roman audience.

In accord with this "enlivening" Germanicus breaks one of the criteria given already by Plato and affirmed later by Diomedes,[28] that the poet should speak alone without any interruption by another person. In verses 126–130, after an inserted, rather epic passage describing human ages,[29] he lets Virgo speak to the human race. However, here he completely follows Aratus' example.[30] The same deviation from this rule can be found e.g. in book 4 of Vergil's *Georgica*.[31] It is understandable that authors tried to interrupt the monotonous flow of their texts by adding mythological stories interwoven with direct speeches. So, again, this rule cannot be strictly applied to didactic poetry.

Now, it is time to proceed to the last two criteria, which rather focus on the author's expressions of being a teacher. The first one is called explicit didactic intent. This term covers all the words which express that the author is a teacher and that he is teaching and the words expressing the reader's process of cognition. Nowhere in the whole poem has Aratus called himself a teacher or his writing a teaching. However, in verses 460–461, he admits that he writes about things he knows and rather leaves out those he does not know:

οὐδ᾽ ἔτι θαρσαλέος κείνων ἐγώ: ἄρκιος εἴην
ἀπλανέων τά τε κύκλα τά τ᾽ αἰθέρι σήματ᾽ ἐνισπεῖν.

This confession should give the reader a feeling that Aratus does not just make things up and thus his poem is a reliable source of astronomical knowledge.

Germanicus does not call himself a teacher either. In verses 444–445 he repeats Aratus' excuse:

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[24] Ov. *Fast.* 1. 65–284.
[25] See above.
[26] Verg. *A.* 10. 507–509.
[27] *E.g.* Ov. *Met.* 5. 242–247; 13. 483–487.
[28] See above n. 6 and n. 7.
[29] For the whole passage see Germ. *Arat.* 96–139.
[30] Arat. 123–126. For the whole passage see vv. 96–136.
[31] Verg. *G.* 4. 317–558, this passage is an epic story of Aristaeus, the inventor of bee-keeping.

> *Hoc opus arcanis si credam postmodo Musis,*
> *tempus et ipse labor, patiantur fata, docebit.*

However, in this case, it is rather a mere translation of Aratus' passage, which Germanicus did not want to skip, than a show of real modesty. Right at the beginning of the poem he clearly states that he thinks highly of his text, when he speaks to Augustus:

> *te veneror, tibi sacra fero **doctique laboris***
> ***primitias**.*   (Germ. *Arat.* 3–4)

And a few lines later, he boldly adds more:

> *nunc vacat audacis in caelum tollere **vultus***
> *sideraque et mundi varios cognoscere motus,*   (Germ. *Arat.* 11–12)

As in verse 12, Germanicus denotes the process his student is undergoing with the verb *cognoscere*. He does so five more times, as *e.g.* in verse 573: *Saepe velis quantum superet cognoscere noctis*, which is followed by a piece of advice on what to do.[32]

When we examine the same feature in Aratus' text, we find that he omits all the words meaning *teacher, to teach, to instruct* etc. in *Φαινόμενα*. However, he often uses the verb σκέπτομαι, and prefixed verbs derived from it, in connection with the student. This verb means *to watch*, but in some cases the meaning may shift to *to know / to identify*, as in verses 562–563:

> τὰς δ᾽ ἄν κε περισκέψαιο μάλιστα
> εἰς αὐτὰς ὁρόων,

Although Aratus does not explicitly identify himself with the teacher's role, he definitely knows where his place is and how to show it to the reader.

This brings us to the last but definitely not least criterion – the teacher-student constellation. As Kromer[33] says: "The readers of didactic poetry are characterized as individuals who stand in need of help or guidance." It is therefore important to see how Aratus and later Germanicus dealt with their roles as guides. Aratus addresses the reader 36 times throughout *Φαινόμενα*. He uses the 2nd person singular pronoun σε and τοι, the imperative (or the infinitive functioning as an 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 one:

> νώτῳ μὲν Στέφανος πελάει, κεφαλῇ γε μὲν ἄκρῃ
> σκέπτεο πὰρ κεφαλὴν Ὀφιούχεον,...   (Arat. 74–75)
>
> καὶ δή οἱ Στεφάνῳ παρακέκλιται ἄκρα γένεια,
> νειόθι δὲ σπείρης μεγάλας ἐπιμαίεο χηλάς.   (Arat. 88–89)

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[32] For other use of (*cog*)*noscere,* see Germ. *Arat.* 234–236, 376–378, 636–637 and 708–709.

[33] KROMER, G.: The Didactic Tradition in Vergil's *Georgics.* In BOYLE, A. J. (ed.): *Virgil's Ascraean Song: Ramus Essays on the Georgics.* Melbourne 1979, 9.

> πὰρ ποσὶ δ᾽ Ἡνιόχου κεραὸν πεπτηότα Ταῦρον
> μαίεσθαι. (Arat. 167–168)

> ἥμισυ μέν κεν ἴδοιο μετήορον, ἥμισυ δ᾽ ἤδη
> ἐσχατιαὶ βάλλουσι κατερχομένου Στεφάνοιο. (Arat. 573–574)

If anyone observes some particular constellations in the sky in a specific position, Aratus also gives some advice on what to do:

> νότον δ᾽ ἐπὶ σήματι τούτῳ
> **δείδιθι**, μέχρι βορῆος ἀπαστράψαντος ἴδηαι (Arat. 429–430)

or

> μὴ κείνῳ ἐνὶ μηνὶ **περικλύζοιο** θαλάσσῃ
> πεπταμένῳ πελάγει κεχρημένος. οὔτε κεν ἠοῖ
> πολλὴν **πειρήνειας**, ἐπεὶ ταχινώταταί εἰσιν·
> οὔτ᾽ ἄν **τοι** νυκτὸς **πεφοβημένῳ** ἐγγύθεν ἠὼς
> ἔλθοι καὶ μάλα πολλὰ **βοωμένῳ.** (Arat. 287–291)

However, these instructions, though given to any recipient, apply predominantly to seamen and concern fear, landing and staying in the port. Yet, Aratus does not address his student only when he wants to instruct 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 otherwise usual verb ἔοικα, but paraphrases it with an optative form of φημί:

> ἡ δ᾽ αὕτως ὀλίγων ἀποτείνεται ὤμων
> ὀργυιήν. **φαίης** κεν ἀνιάξειν ἐπὶ παιδί. (Arat. 195–196)

When we compare this teacher-student criterion with the translation of Germanicus we can see that he addresses his student much less than Aratus. The addressing forms are present only 18 times, which means half of the amount in the original text. The usage of these words is the same, Germanicus also encourages the reader to seek the constellations:

> *Qua media est Helice, subiectum **respice** Cancrum;*
> *at capiti suberunt Gemini. qua posterior pes,*
> *horrentisque iubas et fulvum **cerne** leonem.*
> (Germ. *Arat.* 147–149)

Later in v. 507 Germanicus points to the constellation of Scorpio's claws:[34] *Ilic et Chelas transverso lumine **quaeres***. Besides pointing to celestial figures, Germanicus also advises the reader to fear:

> *Inter certa **licet numeres** sub nocte **cavenda***
> *Turibulum, nam si sordebunt cetera caeli*

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[34] The Scales.

> *nubibus obductis, illo splendente,* **timeto,**
> *ne pacem pelagi solvat violentior auster*.
>
> (Germ. *Arat*. 401–404)[35]

Both authors also use other forms of instructions like the 3rd person indicative and subjunctive (active or passive) and impersonal expressions such as the gerundive in Germ. 231: *querendus erit*.

To conclude, it is clear that the task to define didactic poetry is not as easy to perform as it might seem. And Gemanicus tried to do his best when treating such a difficult text as the *Φαινόμενα*. He proudly stressed this uneasy task in the opening passage. However, from the text itself it seems that Germanicus was rather carried away by the subject matter, especially by the catasterism myths, where he put most of his poetic skills. The text, although filled with knowledge, does not make the impression of a scholarly lecture. Unlike Aratus, who pays great attention to his addressee, Germanicus rather focuses on the poetic aspect of his text and on the fact that he is a poet. Therefore, it is more likely a well-done poetic play with a then fashionable topic – astronomy and astrology. The fact that Germanicus' poem was only a poetic re-working of the text translated to Latin already twice before, strengthens my belief that the aim of this translation was not to teach. As E. Gee[36] says: "It is logical that translating Aratus' *Phaenomena* might have been a good way of cutting one's poetic teeth, since part of Roman education, which incorporated astronomy, could have been the memorisation of this poem as a way of learning the constellations and their positions. It would also have been a good exercise in versification, containing many detailed descriptions and Greek names." Thus, however skilfully Germanicus translated the *Φαινόμενα*, he did not manage (and maybe did not even intend) to transfer to the reader the didactic aspect of the poem.

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[35] For another instruction, see v. 476.
[36] Gee, E.: *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus: Astronomy in Ovid's Fasti*. Cambridge 2000, 69.