

Contemporary scholarship has paid considerable attention to etymology and word-play as stylistic tools in Hellenistic authors and their Roman imitators, especially Virgil (cf. J. O'Hara, *Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Word Play* [Ann Arbor, 1996]). In 1981 D. A. Kidd drew attention to the possibility of a pun on the name of Aratus present in the opening of the *Phaenomena*, where the author may be drawing subliminal attention to himself in the enjambed beginning word of the second line, ἄρρητον (CQ 31.2 [1981] 355-62).

The first verse of Germanicus' Aratean translation is noted for the anomalous appearance of the Greek author himself (*Ab Jove principium magno deduxit Aratus*), but this oddity has allowed to go unnoticed a meaningful pun on Aratus' name twelve lines later, the number twelve important in astronomical didactic poetry as the number of zodiacal signs. The emperor Tiberius has replaced Jupiter/Jupiter in Germanicus' proemium as the origin of all good things for humankind (following G. Maurach [ed.], *Germanicus und sein Arat* [Heidelberg, 1978] on the poem's dedicatee). Because the emperor maintains control of land and sea men now enjoy Lucretius' hoped for *placidam pacem*. There is time to look upwards and contemplate the stars, to consider what bodes ill and well for the sailor and farmer: *nunc vacat audacis in caelum tollere vultus / sideraque et mundi varios cognoscere motus, / navita quid caveat, quid scitus vitet arator, / quando ratem ventis aut credat semina terris* (11-14).

The subjunctive verb *vitet* in line 13 represents an original potential with overtones of necessity: "what the canny farmer ought to avoid". But the grammar could, in the accustomed manner of didactic verse, be equally understood to require the subjunctive because of the indirect question, and an original indicative be presumed (cf. *Geor.* 1.1: *Quid laetas faciat segetes*, etc.). C. Springer has pointed out how in Virgil's third *Eclogue* the noun *arator* should be seen to conceal the name Aratus as solution to the proposed riddle (CJ 79 [1983-84] 131-34); given that Aratus often addresses farmers the pun is partly etymological. The adjective *scitus* is also capable of meaning "accomplished" or "skilled", as at Ovid *Fast.* 5.54 of the Muse, *curvae scita Thalia lyrae*. Combining these elements we then have as a subtext of the clause that one of the subjects the poet will take up is "what learned Aratus avoids." The *sous-entendu* is by no means inert, since Aratus announces directly what he will not discuss in the *Phaenomena*, namely the planets (460). Germanicus counters with the explicit promise to include this subject in his poem (444-45); fragments 2-4 are evidence that he did so.

Germanicus' clever conflation of human endeavor in nature and his own artistic *aemulatio* with Aratus stands in an identifiable literary tradition marked by consistent subtlety and complexity of reference, and recognizing it contributes to the process of critical re-appraisal through which a largely neglected figure in Roman literature appears as an increasingly engaging and individual poetic voice (cf. D. M. Possanza, *Translating the Heavens: Aratus, Germanicus, and the Poetics of Latin Translation* [New York, 2004]).