

RESUMEN

La cita de Cicerón (en *Rep.* 1.30) de Ennio, *scen.* 82 *TrRF* (= XCV, líneas 185-187 Joc.) necesita algo de cirugía conjetural para volverse más inteligible y, con suerte, una cita más memorable: propongo *sint* en lugar de *sit*; *obseruationes* en lugar de *obseruationis*; *ante pedes quod est non spectant* en lugar de *quod est ante pedes nemo spectat*.

SUMMARY

Cicero's quotation (at *Rep.* 1. 30) of Ennius *scen.* 82 *TrRF* (= XCV, lines 185-187 Joc.) needs some conjectural surgery to become more intelligible and hopefully a more memorable quote: I propose *sint* instead of *sit*; *obseruationes* instead of *obseruationis*; *ante pedes quod est non spectant* instead of *quod est ante pedes nemo spectat*.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ennio; fragmentos trágicos; crítica textual.

KEYWORDS

Ennius; Dramatic fragments; Textual criticism.

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*Scen.* 82 *TrRF*<sup>1</sup> is one of the greatest challenges among the tragic fragments of Ennius. The following quotation stemming from Cicero's *De re publica* 1.30 is the text we encounter in the latest edition of Ennius in the *Loeb Classical Library*<sup>2</sup>:

Cuique [i.e. Aelio Sexto] contra Galli studia disputanti in ore semper erat ille [ille *fort. cod. corr.*: illa *cod.*] de Iphigenia Achilles:  
*tr*<sup>8</sup> astrologorum signa in caelo quid sit observationis, 1  
cum Capra aut Nepa aut exoritur nomen aliquod beluarum: 2  
*tr*<sup>7</sup> quod est ante pedes nemo spectat, caeli scrutantur plagas. 3

And when he [Sextus Aelius] was arguing against Gallus' [C. Sulpicius Gallus'] pursuits, there constantly was on his lips the famous Achilles from *Iphigenia*:

<sup>1</sup> G. Manuwald, *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta. Vol. II Ennius*, Göttingen 2012, 167 ff.

<sup>2</sup> S.M. Goldberg, G. Manuwald, *Fragmentary Republican Latin. Ennius. Dramatic Fragments. Minor Works*, Cambridge (Mass.)-London 2018, 84-5 (I have only added a line counter to the text).

as regards the star-readers' signs in the sky, what observation there is, when Capella or Scorpio or some other constellation named after beasts appears:  
 what is before one's feet nobody watches, they scrutinize the expanses of the sky

The text emerged from Angelo Mai's palimpsest of Cicero's *De re publica* two hundred years ago and is now, more or less whole-heartedly, accepted by most modern editors. In 1957, Konrat Ziegler dealt with the *status quaestionis*<sup>3</sup>, apparently a little more confident than he was in 1915<sup>4</sup> when he put an *obelos* before *quid sit* and cleared away many rash conjectures of the past. Ziegler's text and interpretation throughout two thirds of the twentieth century seem to be more and less the same as that of Goldberg and Manuwald. I have not been able to convince myself, however, that we should abide by the prevailing view.

As to the metre, there is no fault to be observed in the first two lines. These are regular trochaic octonarii. The third line, however, does not scan well. Both the first and the third foot seem to reveal that the line has been tampered with. One may even suspect that Cicero quoting the line twice in this form (*rep.* 1.30 and *diu.* 2.30) has adjusted his quotation of the last line without regard for the original metre, a trochaic septenarius.

As to the syntax of it all, it is legitimate to ask whenever we seem to have an interrogative pronoun (*quid*) whether the sentence is a direct and independent question or an indirect one and part of a larger structure. The first line as quoted above was apparently understood as an indirect question closely connected with the following line, in which case, however, there is no plausible main sentence to bring the whole fragment to a natural conclusion. We may ask, then, whether we should concur with Jocelyn's text<sup>5</sup> by putting a question mark at the end of the first line. What the implications will be when we make *cum Capra etc.* the beginning of a new sentence encompassing also the third line, remains unclear to me, however.

#### LINE 1

Let us start with *astrologorum signa in caelo quid sit observationis* taken as a complete sentence by Jocelyn with a question mark at the end. He renders it: "What right have *astrologi* to look for signs in the sky (and give men like us advice on how to conduct the affairs entrusted to us)?" Immediately Jocelyn adjusts this to be an impatient subjunctive implying: What right *would* the astrologers *have*

<sup>3</sup> K. Ziegler, "Zur Iphigenia des Ennius", *Hermes* 85, 1957, 495-501.

<sup>4</sup> *M. Tulli Ciceronis scripta quae manserunt omnia. Fasc. 39. De re publica, recognovit K. Ziegler.* The latest edition of *De re publica* under Ziegler's supervision, the 7<sup>th</sup> in 1969, reflected of course his *Hermes* article.

<sup>5</sup> H.D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* [Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 10], Cambridge 1967, 324-7.

to look for signs in the sky? J.E.G. Zetzel<sup>6</sup>, who has the same text as Jocelyn, translates the whole in this way: “Why do astrologers have to look for signs in the sky? When the Goat or the Scorpion etc.” I have doubts for the following reason: *signa* [acc.] ...*quid sit observationis* is being compared syntactically with Pl. *Amph.* 519 *Quid tibi hanc curatio est rem?* (“What do you mean by interfering in this matter?”), *aul.* 423 *sed quid tibi nos tactio est?* (“What do you mean by touching us?”), *asin.* 920 *quid tibi hunc receptio ad te est meum virum?* (“What do you mean by receiving this husband of mine at your place?”). Common to these Plautine examples is the sequence *quid* + *tibi* + another pronoun (demonstrative or personal) in the accusative. The accordance with Ennius is slight: *quid* + verbal noun *observationis* (but in the genitive?) + an alleged accusative of the noun *signa*. The colloquial stamp in Plautus, with fixed word order (pronominal forms going together), is simply not there in Ennius. Nor is the syntactical analysis evident at first sight: what does in fact go together with the genitive *astrologorum*? We can hardly combine it as easily with *signa*, ‘signs’, as assumed by many. The heavenly phenomena do not in any obvious way belong to astrologers. We should instead consider what is already evident from Jocelyn’s interpretation, namely that the verbal noun *observatio* points to the activity that in fact ‘belongs to’ / is characteristic of astrologers.

So far, a solution suggests itself spontaneously: due to *quid*, so often combined with a partitive genitive of the type *quid novi*, *quid rei*, arose the genitive *observationis* that ousted an original nominative plural *observationes* which a scribe would find difficult to construe with the rest of the line. With *observationes* we will have a hyperbaton spanning the whole line and giving the genitive *astrologorum* a marked initial emphasis. The five remaining words, *signa in caelo quid sit*, will be the core of the line giving us a sentence in its own right. Instead of the singular *sit* I propose the plural resulting in a paleographically easy construction: *signa in caelo quid sint*. In this way, we will have an indirect interrogative sentence, idiomatically correct, meaning: “what the signs in heaven would mean (convey, entail).” That this sentence is dependent on a verbal noun, and not a proper verb, should surprise no one. In my *Vergiliana*<sup>7</sup> I have discussed a similar syntax at *georg.* 3.159 where I pointed to parallel examples in Cicero dependent on nouns like *quaestio*, *cogitatio*, *scientia*.

An illustrative parallel for the emphatic hyperbaton is found in Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.2: *Quis enim est, qui putet, cum floreret in Italia Graecia potentissimis et maximis urbibus ... in iisque primum ipsius Pythagorae, deinde postea Pythagoreorum tantum nomen esset, nostrorum hominum ad eorum doctissimas voces aures clausas fuisse?* (“[...] who can imagine that the ears of our countrymen were

<sup>6</sup> J.E.G. Zetzel, *Cicero. De re publica. Selections* [Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics], Cambridge 1995, 121.

<sup>7</sup> E. Kraggerud, *Vergiliana. Critical Studies on the Texts of Publius Vergilius Maro*, London-New York 2017, 114.

closed to the echo of their wisdom” J.E. King, *LCL* [141]). Any attempt at an adequate rendering of this hyperbaton (to illustrate my underlined semibold in the Latin text) will easily fail to do justice to the strong emphasis created by the wide span between *nostrorum hominum* and *aures*: It is as if the interposed words (*ad eorum doctissimas voces*) illustrate the long-lasting and strong impact the Greek philosophers had on the ears of the Romans.

Our text (observe the commas!) is this, then:

Ástrologórum, sígna in caélo quíd sint, óbservatiónes,<sup>8</sup>

Astrologers’ observations of what the signs in heaven mean,

#### LINE 2

The next line begins with a *cum* clause, in our interpretation closely attached as apodosis to the indirect interrogative clause in line 1:

cúm Capra aút Nepa aút exóritur nómen áliquod béluárum:

when the Goat or the Scorpion or some name among the beasts rises:

that is to say that the signs in the sky (*signa in caelo*) are not in themselves revealing any meaning, but when they are rising, i.e. in the period of their movements, the activity of astrologers is at its peak. In such situations, the signs should be heeded and are decisive for men’s choices. The best commentary on the line stems from Cicero himself at *De natura deorum* 3.40 *singulas ... stellas numeras deos eosque aut beluarum nomine appellas, ut Capram, ut Nepam, ut Taurum, ut Leonem, aut rerum inanimarum, ut Argo, ut Aram, ut Coronam* (“you reckon each of the stars a god, and either call them by the names of animals such as She-goat, Scorpion, Bull, Lion, or of inanimate things such as the Argo, the Altar, the Crown.” (H. Rackham, *LCL* [268])). The *beluae*, alluding to ζῴδια, comprise all the animals of the zodiac; *aliquod* in our Ennius text, then, is ‘some other name’ (see *OLD s.u. aliqui* 7).

#### LINE 3

The closing line re-emerges in *De divinatione* 2. 30, presumably composed seven or eight years after *De re publica*. Here, however, the famous comparison between the practical and the philosophical way of life (emanating from Euripides’ *Antiope* cp. Plato’s *Gorgias* 485e–6d) has been attributed, somewhat astonishingly, to Democritus, the natural scientist (*physicus*):

<sup>8</sup> As to word order, poetry is even freer. For a similar daring example of hyperbaton in Ennius concerning *ann.* 517 (*Tonsillas apiunt, configunt litus, aduncas*) see O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Q. Ennius*, Oxford 1985, 669.

*Democritus tamen non inscite nugatur, ut physicus, quo genere nihil adrogantius: "quod est ante pedes nemo spectat, caeli scrutantur plagas." Verum is tamen habitu extorum et colore declarari censet haec dumtaxat: pabuli genus et earum rerum, quas terra procreet, vel ubertatem vel tenuitatem; salubritatem etiam aut pestilentiam extis significari putat* ("Nevertheless, Democritus jests rather prettily for a natural philosopher — and there is no more arrogant class — when he says: 'No one regards the things before his feet, but views with care the regions of the sky.' And yet, Democritus gives his approval to divination by means of entrails only to the extent of believing that their condition and colour indicate whether hay and other crops will be abundant or the reverse, and he even thinks that the entrails give signs of future health or sickness" (W.A. Falconer, *LCL* [154]).

The quotation, or rather saying, is evidently to be read as prose: *nemo spectat* is a double spondee, thereafter follows two more spondees before the closing cretic. This series of spondees ending with a short penultima is not different from e.g. the opening of Cic. *Man.* 1.1 *Quamquam mihi semper frequens conspēctus vēster mūlto iūcundīs-sīmūs*. No one, I guess, would have thought of scanning Democritus' Latin line as a septenarius. One strongly suspects that Cicero has formulated *quod est ante pedes nemo spectat* independently without any regard for a metrical pattern, least of all a trochaic septenarius.

As the third line stems explicitly from Ennius' *Iphigenia Aulidensis at rep.* 1.30 the same sequence of words does not scan well in that context either. It is more than probable that the line was not so phrased by Ennius. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether it has been tampered with in some way or other.

My hypothesis is that Cicero's enthusiasts — one may think of the time of Symmachus and Macrobius at the latest — had noticed the agreement of the line in *diu.* 2.30 with the third line in the Ennius quotation at *rep.* 1.30 and had jotted down the parallel in the margin of the latter and more important treatise. The late parallel then ousted the original Ennian line. It has struck me that two easy changes can restore the original form. To postpone the relative pronoun will give *ante pedes* a nice emphasis as the two first words of the line. Compare the more natural word order [*quod + ante pedes + predicate*] at Ter. *Ad.* 386 *o Demea, / istuc est sapere, non quod ante pedes modost / videre sed etiam illa quae futura sunt / prospicere* which elicited the following comment from Donatus "*hoc sumpsit poeta de illo in physicos<sup>9</sup> pervulgato Achillae dicto 'quod ante pedes est non vident<sup>10</sup>: caeli scrutantur plagas'.*" The words in the quotation underlined by me I consider identical with the third foot (*est, non*) in Ennius. As to *vident* in

<sup>9</sup> I propose *physicos* instead of *physicum* preferred by the editor of Aelius Donatus' *Commentum Terenti*, Paul Wessner, in his text (Leipzig 1902-1908).

<sup>10</sup> The plural of the verb is warranted by the ms. C in the transmission of Donatus (see Manuwald, *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta*, 167).

the scholiast's comment above, however, it is too much influenced by Terence's *videre* to reflect Ennius' verb *spectare* directly, but the plural is correct in both Donatus and Ennius. Our third line should therefore in my opinion be written

ante pedes quod est non spectant, caeli scrutantur plagas.

what is before their feet, they do not examine; they do scrutinize the heavenly regions.

#### THE SYNTAX OF IT ALL:

So far, we have established the subject of a main sentence (*astrologorum ... observationes*) in line 1. After the clarifying interruption in line 2 there is no orderly continuation of the initial subject (*astrologorum observationes*) in line 3. This lack of a proper syntactical structure in the whole fragment was even more marked in the transmitted form of the fragment. Goldberg – Manuwald seem (otherwise correctly) to understand line 1 and 2 as a unity by putting a colon after *beluarum*. Line 3 becomes in this way a fresh start; traditional *nemo spectat* in their reading will probably be taken by many as *nemo astrologorum*, whereas it would be more logic to take it in a general sense (no man). As a consequence it is not obvious that *astrologi* is subject for *scrutantur*. As mentioned above, Jocelyn had a question mark after *observationis* taking *quid* as a pronoun introducing a direct question. But this expedient makes the whole syntactically even more disjointed. Jocelyn provided no comment on the syntactical issue. As an experienced editor of both Greek and Latin texts Ziegler's wholehearted defence of an unaltered text rightly led to a comment on the syntactical issue. He admits that coming to the third line, we would have expected *spectant*, but assumes that the speaker in his eagerness shifted to the negative statement *quod est ante pedes nemo spectat* before proceeding to the expected positive assertion with a plural verb.<sup>11</sup> With all due respect, it is difficult to see anything but unduly complicated syntax in Ziegler's explanation.

Here is my own analysis: due to the inserted indirect question (i.e. the *quid* sentence in line 1) *astrologorum ... observationes* highlights the subject as equivalent to *astrologi observantes*. Line 2 is parenthetical in the sense that it expatiates on the indirect question in line 1. Finally, line 3 relates to line 1 and its virtual subject *astrologi observantes*. This has created an easy and rather typical example of an anacoluthon: The *de facto* subject is eventually brought to the fore,

<sup>11</sup> Ziegler, "Zur Iphigenia", 499 tries to explain the whole construction in the following way: "In einem gelockerten, aber noch nicht eigentlich anakolutisch zu nennenden Satzbau hebt Achilles an: auf die Sternbilder, was da zu beobachten ist, wenn das Gestirn aufgeht, blicken sie – so sollte es nach der Parenthese nach dem Nominalobjekt *signa*, wie man es nennen will, weitergehen, aber im Eifer wird dieses Verbum zunächst zugunsten des "auf die Erde blickt keiner" unterdrückt, um dann in Form des synonymen *scrutantur* mit Wiederholung des Objektes, ebenfalls in etwas abgewandelter Form, nachgebracht zu werden."

first interrupting the expected continuation by pointing, in a negative form (*non spectant*), to a serious deficiency in the astrologers' all-consuming activity until the fragment ends, emphatically and almost sarcastically, on the main note by means of an *asyndeton adversativum*. This handling of the sentences serves to highlight the astrologers' business as reprehensibly one-sided. In this reading it has become obvious that *astrologi* is the subject all along. The construction of the third line – the most important one of the three – shows a variation on more common modes of expression: *\*(astrologi) [a] caeli regiones scrutantur [b] neque* (or *et non*) *spectant quod est ante pedes* or *non spectantes q. e. a. p.* (or *ut / cum non / quin spectent etc.*). The combined parataxis and change of order from [a] + [b] to [b] + [a] contribute to putting the strongest emphasis on the astrologers' deficiency.

#### THE FRAGMENT IN ITS PRIMARY (A.) AND SECONDARY (B.) CONTEXT

##### A. EURIPIDES/ ENNIUS:

As to the primary context, our fragment has a bearing on Achilles' railing at Calchas in Euripides' *IA* 955-8 Diggle (perhaps a post-Euripidean interpolation according to Kovacs): *πικροὺς δὲ προχύτας χέρνιβας τ' ἐνάρξεται / Κάλχας ὁ μάντις. τίς δὲ μάντις ἔστ' ἀνὴρ, / ὃς ὀλίγ' ἀληθῆ, πολλὰ δὲ ψευδῆ λέγει / τυχῶν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ τύχη, διοίχεται;* ("Cruel the barley-spending and the lustral water with which he will start his sacrifice, Calchas, the seer! But who is a seer when he says but a few truths, but many falsehoods when successful, but when he is not successful vanishes?"). The aim of Achilles, then, is to prevent Calchas from administering a ceremony by pointing to his incompetence as a seer: the seer's interpretation of things and the future supposed to be favourable from his religious provisions, is utterly questionable in his view.

Based on the keyword *μάντις* uttered by the 'enlightened' Achilles above, one may likewise call the astrologers questionable prophets when they are making forecasts based on observations of stellar phenomena. Their blindness concerning what is close to their own feet is an obvious truth to Ennius and serves as well to prove their dubious competence in their special field from which they are making their forecasts. In that connection, one could point to the famous anecdote told of Thales in its popular form as an illustrating parallel<sup>12</sup>. Compare namely how the philosopher's mishap is represented by Diogenes Laertius (1.34): *λέγεται δ' ἀγόμενος ὑπὸ γραδὸς ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας, ἵνα τὰ ἄστρα κατανοήσῃ, εἰς βόθρον ἐμπεσεῖν καὶ αὐτῷ ἀνοιμῶξαντι φάνατι τὴν γραῦν: "σὺ γάρ, ὦ Θαλῆ, τὰ ἐν ποσὶν οὐ δυνάμενος ἰδεῖν τὰ ἐπὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ οἶμι γνῶσεσθαι,"* ("And it is told that being led out of his house by an old woman so that he might gaze at the stars, he fell

<sup>12</sup> The Thracian maid in Plato's *Theaetetus* (174a) is at least a little more respectful towards astronomic science: *ὥσπερ καὶ Θαλῆν ἀστρονομούντα [...] καὶ ἄνω βλέποντα, πεσόντα εἰς φρέαρ, Θραττά τις ἐμμελής καὶ χαρίεσσα θεραπαινὶς ἀποσκῶψαι λέγεται ὡς τὰ μὲν ἐν οὐρανῷ προθυμοῖτο εἰδέναι, τὰ δ' ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ πόδας λανθάνοι αὐτόν.*

into a hole in the ground and that the old woman said to him when he wailed: ‘How can you, Thales, believe that you can understand the things in the heavens when you are unable to see the things at your feet?’”). The old woman assumes from the accident that the ‘gnosis’ of Thales about heavenly phenomena may be as deficient as he evidently is about earthly realities.

*B. CICERO:*

With this, I put ‘my’ medium-faced fragment into its broader Ciceronian context (*rep.* 1.30):

... in ipsius paterno genere fuit noster ille amicus, dignus huic ad imitandum,

Egregie cordatus homo, catus Aelius Sextus,

qui ‘egregie cordatus’ et ‘catus’ fuit et ab Ennio dictus est, non quod ea quaerebat, quae numquam inveniret, sed quod ea respondebat, quae eos, qui quaesissent, et cura et negotio solverent, cuique contra Galli studia disputanti in ore semper erat ille de Iphigenia Achilles:

**Astrologorum, signa in caelo quid sint, observationes,  
cum Capra aut Nepa aut exoritur nomen aliquod beluarum:  
ante pedes quod est non spectant, caeli scrutantur plagas.**

Atque idem (multum enim illum audiebam et libenter) Zethum illum Pacuvii nimis inimicum doctrinae [‘too hostile to learning (i.e. ‘science’)] esse dicebat; magis eum delectabat Neoptolemus Ennii, qui se ait philosophari velle, sed paucis [‘only a little’]; nam omnino [‘in general’] haud placere.

This may legitimately be taken in the way the wise Aelius Sextus did – the down to earth politician and lawyer working for the benefit of his clients – when he used to quote the lines of Ennius in conversation with his friend Gallus. He had no intention to insult Gallus or other acolytes of Greek science by saying that their study of astronomy / astrology was a total waste of time. He only pleaded that they should temper their enthusiasm for it and take up more earthly branches of learning both for their own personal benefit and for that of society. It was the excesses of *studia* he took exception to. This is a little later reflected in Laelius’ moderate words as well: *Dicam mehercule et contemnna a te fortasse, cum tu ista caelestia de Scipione quaesieris, ego autem haec, quae videntur ante oculos esse, magis putem quaerenda* (*rep.* 1.31.1).

Finally, one may understandably ask: Is it probable that a fragment of only 25 words would contain so many errors and need a transposition in addition? Working on the fragment for some time, I have myself been taken aback by the extent of corruption. How can that be? An important contributing factor to such deterioration in the transmission is no doubt that quotations, like so many fragments in general, are severed from their original context and therefore exposed in the course of transmission to a number of influences which the full context



would have protected them from. Confronted with a quotation from an archaic tragedy a scribe would all of a sudden have been left on his own to create meaning in an alien and difficult utterance like the one we have been dealing with here.

To end this study, then, this is my text and translation in combination:

Astrologorum, signa in caelo quid sint, observationes,  
cum Capra aut Nepa aut exoritur nomen aliquod beluarum:  
ante pedes quod est non spectant, caeli scrutantur plagas.

Astrologers' observations<sup>13</sup> of what the signs in heaven mean,  
when the Goat or the Scorpion or some other name of animal appears:  
what is before their feet, they do not see; the heavenly regions they  
do scrutinize.

<sup>13</sup> One is free to adopt the translation “*as to the observations of astrologers ...*” in view of the anacoluthon that follows.

