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Aratus is an important model for Valerius, not only for astronomical references and allusions, but also for the Flavian poet’s use of acrostics. This essay discusses the influence of Aratus’ *Phaenomena* on the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus, by focusing on this last aspect.\(^1\) Against older views, several recent studies have demonstrated that, in the wake of Aratus, Augustan and post-Augustan Latin poets use acrostics widely.\(^2\) While there is a certain element of coincidence, objective criteria exist to help verify that these regular occurrences are intentional: a) the relation between the acrostics and the content of the passage in which they appear; b) various signposting techniques devised by the author; and c) intertextual references that embed the acrostics within the literary tradition. A number of examples found in Valerius Flaccus fulfill these criteria, and collectively they suggest that Valerius considers himself a continuator of a tradition set by his predecessors.

Before we proceed with the analysis of the passages in the *Argonautica*, let us review a few important acrostics elsewhere:

\[
σκέπτεο δὲ πρῶτον κεράων ἐκάτερθε σελήνη.
ἀλλοτε γάρ τ’ ἄλλη μιν ἐπιγράφει ἑσπερὸς αἰγέλη,
ἀλλοτε δ’ ἄλλοιαι μορφαὶ κερώσα σελήνην
εὐθὺς ἀεξομένην, αἱ μὲν τρίτῃ, αἱ δὲ τετάρτη,
τάων καὶ περὶ μηνὸς ἐφεσταότος κε πύθοιο.
λεπτὴ μὲν καθαρὴ τε περὶ τρίτον ἦμαρ ἐοῦσα
εὔδιος κ’ εἰη, λεπτὴ δὲ καὶ εὐ μάλ’ ἐρευθὴς
πνευματὴ, παχὶων δὲ καὶ ἀμβλείσαι κεραίας
\]

\(^1\) I would like to express my gratitude to Antony Augoustakis, Marco Fucecchi, and Kathryn Chew for always being available for helpful discussions.

\(^2\) The employment of the Aratean tradition of the catasterism of the Argo (V. Fl. 1.1–4 and 4.689–693) is discussed by Darcy Krasne in this volume, pp. 33–48. On the allusions to Aratus in the last book of the poem (V. Fl. 8. 56–63, 109–126), see most recently Castelletti (2012c).

\(^2\) A general account of acrostics can be found in Graf (1893); Vogt (1967); Courtney (1990); Damschen (2004) 88–94; Luz (2010) 1–77. See also Castelletti (2008) and (2012a); Katz (2012) 4–10.
Observe first the moon at her two horns. Different evenings paint her with different light, and different shapes at different times horn the moon as soon as she is waxing, some on the third day, some on the fourth; from these you can learn about the month that has just begun. If slender and clear about the third day, she will bode fair weather; if slender and very red, wind; if the crescent is thickish, with blunted horns, having a feeble fourth-day light after the third day, either it is blurred by a southerly or because rain is in the offing.

First observed by Jacques, the acrostic ΛΕΠΤΗ is the most famous case in Aratus’ *Phaenomena*. The word λεπτή (783) can be read horizontally, but also vertically, forming a so-called “gamma acrostic.” The same word can also be read diagonally, as it has been observed recently. Scholars have noted that Aratus embeds hints in his text to signal the presence of an acrostic: namely, at 778, σκέπτεο δὲ πρῶτον κεράων (ἑκάτερθε σελήνην) is an indication that one should “look first at the edges,” that is, the “edges” of the verses. Indeed, Virgil seems to have read it thus, since he uses the same technique in the *Georgics* to signal the presence of his syllabic acrostic MA VE PV, commonly considered as the poet's signature (MAro VErgilius PVblius). The hints to the acrostic should be read in sequentis / ordine respicies (Virg. G. 1.424–433).

3 Jacques (1960).
4 For this definition, see Morgan (1993) 143.
5 For a discussion and an updated bibliography on the multiple letter-plays in this passage, see Hanses (forthcoming).
6 E.g., Feeney and Nelis (2005).
7 si uero solem ad rapidum lunasque sequentis ordine respicies, numquam te crustina fallet hora, neque insidiis noctis capiere serenae. luna reuertentis cum primum colligit ignis, si nigrum obscuro comprenderit aëra cornu, MAXimus agricolis pelagoque parabitur imber; at si uirgineum suffuderit ore ruborem, VEntus erit: uento semper rubet aurea Phoebe. sin ortu quarto (namque is certissimus auctor) PViRa neque obtunis per caelum cornibus ibit .... (Virg. G. 1.424–433)

But if you pay heed to the swift sun and the moons, as they follow in order, never will tomorrow’s hour cheat you, nor will you be ensnared by a cloudless night. Soon as the moon gathers her returning fires, if she encloses a dark mist within dim horns, a heavy rain is awaiting farmers and seamen. But if at her fourth rising—for that is our surest guide—she pass through the sky and with undimmed horns ...

On this acrostic, first identified by Brown (1963) 102–105, see most recently Somerville (2010).