

MISZELLEN

TWO PROBLEMATIC TERMINATIONS
IN CICERO'S *ARATEA*

huic spatio ductum simili latus extat utrumque, 7
at non tertia pars lateris, namque est minor illis.

Cicero is describing the constellation Deltoton, which forms an isosceles, not an equilateral, triangle with a base shorter than the other two sides, but I do not see how *tertia pars lateris*, especially after the preceding *latus*, could mean ‘the third side’, for the genitive after *pars* here can hardly be anything other than partitive. What Cicero apparently meant to specify was the third item of the perimeter of the triangle, and in fact J. Soubiran, in the Budé text of the poems of Cicero, translates ‘deux des côtés sont de longueur analogue, mais non le troisième du périmètre’. This sense could not be given by the transmitted reading, but it could be by *tertia pars laterum*; the corruption would of course be caused by the unconsidered influence of the preceding singular. Germanicus 237–8 renders the point thus,

tres illi laterum ductus, aequata duorum
sunt spatia, unius breuius.

et quantos radios iacimus de lumine nostro 313
quis hunc connixum caeli contingimus orbem,
sex tantum poterunt sub eum succedere partes,
bina pari spatio caelestia signa tenentes

connixum (a medieval spelling) is the reading of the oldest manuscript, *conuexum* or *conuexum*, depending on which editor you choose to believe, that of the next oldest but with the *ue* resulting from a correction. The complex geometry underlying this section about the Ecliptic and the Zodiac is explained by editors of Cicero (Soubiran p. 220) and Aratus (D. A. Kidd pp. 371–2), and is not my concern here. It is sufficient for my purpose to understand that 313–4 refer to the distance of the ray reaching from our eyes to the Ecliptic; the English word ‘ray’ actually derives ultimately from *radius* (see OLD s.v. 1d for this sense). Soubiran, reading *connixum*, translates ‘ce circle arc-bouté du ciel’, but I cannot see any sense in ‘this buttressed celestial circle’, and it seems to run up against a problem also inherent in Buescu’s conjecture *caelo*, for which he compares 301 *oblicus in his nitens*, which refers to the two extremities of the Ecliptic which rest on the two Tropics. This problem is that *conitor* used in the sense possessed by *nitor*, ‘lean on’, is documented by TLL only from Arnobius 5.15; as far as I can see *connixum* could mean only ‘straining’, which gives no sense. *Conuexum* ‘convex’ seems to presume that *orbem* means the vault of heaven (see TLL 4.871.37 and OLD s.v. *conuexus* 1a), but as 315–6 show it certainly means not this but the Zodiac. Now see Avien(i)us 1041–2:

*id quod contenti uisus absciditur ultro
siqui in signiferi patulum circumferat orbem.*

‘Le segment du rayon visual ainsi dardé’ is Soubiran’s translation in the Budé edition of Avienus, and it looks as if Avienus read *conixis* (sc. *radiis*), ‘straining gaze’ in Cicero. This seems right to me; the corruption would be an easy error of attraction. When I asked Professor Possanza to cast an eye over my astronomy (and I am very grateful for his willingness to do this) he suggested *conixi* as an alternative; this is less close to the presumed imitation, but in compensation conveys an implicit comparison with the effort (cf. Verg. Aen. 9.410, 11.613, Val. Fl. 3.193) of hurling (*iacimus*) a spear and hitting the target (see OLD s.v. *contingo* 3a, TLL 4.714.19).

Charlottesville, Virginia

E. Courtney