

A Storm Chasing Conjecture? An Afterthought on Germ. fr. 4.30 Gain

Adalberto Magnavacca
Scuola Normale Superiore
adalberto.magnavacca@sns.it

Received July 2020 | Accepted September 2020

Abstract

In the following note, the contributor will lead a short discussion on a difficult passage occurring in Germ. fr. 4 Gain: the author revises previous emendations and then uses a palaeographical method in order to propose fresh conjecture, which **is indeed** a plausible reading of what an ancient scribe miswrote.

Keywords

AQ1

Over the last two years, what seemed to be an undisputed line of Germ. fr. 4 Gain has received increasing attention. In a 2019 article, I cast doubts on the exact meaning of the transmitted text of Germ. fr. 4.29–30 Gain (*spissatis caecus nebulis hebetabitur aer | nullaque praecipites agitabunt aequora uenti*) and proposed to alter the first word of the second line into *totaque*.¹ More recently, in a 2020 issue of this journal, B. Kayachev rightly drew my attention to the possibility that postulating a polar error is not the best way to emend the line and suggested a new conjecture (*nigraque*), justifying it with the aid of both palaeographical and stylistic considerations.² That *nigraque* may fit in well with the style of the lines is out of dispute (just as *totaque*, as Kayachev had to

¹ Magnavacca 2019, 662–666.

² Kayachev 2020.

admit, if only it had been transmitted by the manuscripts), but admittedly the resemblance between the transmitted *nullaque* and the restored *nigraque* is rather questionable: the hypothetical passage from *-gr-* to *-ll-* is not supported by palaeographical evidence from any known handwriting. Having reconsidered the passage under discussion, I am now inclined to think that a much better solution is to print *uastaque* instead of the transmitted *nullaque*. This emendation will restore the image of a storm stirring ‘the endless expanse of the water’, a well-known poetic formula: see e.g. Verg. *A.* 2.780 *uastum maris aequor* and 7.228 *uasta per aequora uecti* (with a similar alliterative effect of Germ. fr. 4.30 *Gain uastaque ... aequora uenti*). The adjective *uastus* is even more common with reference to other maritime terms, just as in the case of Verg. *A.* 3.197 *dispersi iactamur gurgite uasto* (in the context of a tempest, like in the passage under consideration) and Germ. *Arat.* 397–398 *uix caelum suspicit* [sc. *Turibulum*] *et iam | praecipiti tractu uastis demittitur undis* (the constellation of the Altar plunging into the sea). Most importantly, the newly-proposed conjecture is perfectly explainable from a palaeographical point of view: in a minuscule pre-Carolingian handwriting (but also in an early Carolingian one), the first two letters *ua-* and *nu-* are quite similar, being formed by four short strokes (a letter *-a-* may appear in a characteristic ‘open’ shape similar to that of a *-u-* letter),³ and the *-st-* ligature is very similar to the two tall strokes forming the *-ll-* group. We have heard what was said by a philologist of old times, that “a manuscript is a blind leader”; the present case, however, invites us to reflect on how a keen palaeographical eye can be a firm guide to restore a plausible reading from a false one.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to G. Ammannati, E. Berti, G.B. Conte, C. Panayotakis, G. Rosati and the anonymous referee for their most helpful suggestions.

3 A related error occurs in Germ. fr. 4.73 *Gain*, where *aurora* – the original but faulty reading of *O* – was miswritten in the lost sub-archetype of all our manuscripts as *curora*; for a discussion of this error, see Magnavacca 2018.

Bibliography

- Kayachev, B. (2020). Germanicus, Aratus fr. 4.30. An Emendation. *Mnemosyne* 73, pp. 1037–1038.
- Magnavacca, A. (2018). The Phases of Venus in Germanicus. A Note on German. fr. 4.73–76. *Philologus* 162, pp. 183–187.
- Magnavacca, A. (2019). What is the Weather Like According to Germanicus? Two Emendations to Germ. fr. 4 Gain. *Mnemosyne* 72, pp. 662–671.

AQ1: Please provide Keyword text