To have Lynceus' eyesight[1]

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Abstract

"Tener ojos/vista de lince [To have eyes / sight of lynx]" is a widespread expression in the European languages, which has its origin in ancient Greek. However, the modern version is the result of a probably medieval deformation of the original Greek expression, then adopted by the Latins, which is actually "to have eyes / sight of Lynceus". Lynceus is a personage of the Greek myth, who was attributed an acute sight, able to cross solid objects (walls, rocks, trees, and even the earth to discover the metals hidden under it). From the Middle Age, the increasingly unknown Lynceus was replaced by the most common lynx, by the similarity of the name. This latter variant has triumphed through modern languages, despite the fact that Erasmus himself splendidly comments on this expression in his *Adagia*, referring to the original Greek expression on Lynceus' prodigious eyes.

Keywords:
Paremiology.
Diachrony.
Ancient Greek.
Latin.
Lynceus.
Lynx.

Resumen

Título: «Tener vista de Linceo».

«Tener ojos/vista de lince» es una expresión muy difundida en las lenguas europeas, que tiene su origen en el griego antiguo. No obstante, la versión moderna es el resultado de una deformación, probablemente medieval, de la expresión original griega, luego adoptada por los latinos, que es en realidad «tener ojos/vista de Linceo». Linceo es un personaje del mito griego, al que se atribuía una vista agudísima, capaz de atravesar los objetos sólidos (paredes, rocas, árboles, e incluso la tierra para descubrir los metales escondidos bajo ella). A partir de la Edad Media, el cada vez más desconocido Linceo fue sustituido por el más común lince, por la semejanza del nombre; y pese a que Erasmo dedica a la expresión un espléndido comentario en sus *Adagia*, en el que recoge muchos textos antiguos que muestran que en la expresión original griega los ojos prodigiosos los tenía Linceo y no un lince, en las lenguas modernas ha triunfado la variante medieval con el nombre del animal.

Palabras clave:
Paremiología.
Diacronía.
Griego antiguo.
Latín.
Linceo.
Lince.

Résumé

Titre : « Avoir des yeux de Lyncée ».

«Avoir des yeux de lynx» est une expression très répandue dans les langues européennes, qui a ses origines en grec ancien. Toutefois, la version moderne est le résultat d'une déformation, probablement médiévale, de l'expression grecque originale, puis adoptée par les Latins, qui est en font «avoir des yeux de Lyncée». Lyncée est un personnage de la mythologie grecque, à qui était attribuée une vue très pénétrante, capable même de traverser des objets solides (murs, rochers, arbres et même la terre pour découvrir les métaux cachés en dessous). À partir du Moyen-Âge, Lyncée, de moins en moins connu, a été remplacé par lynx, plus commun, étant donné la similitude des noms; et bien qu'Erasme a consacré à cette expression un splendide commentaire

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dans ses *Adagia*, contenant de nombreux textes anciens qui montrent que dans l'expression grecque originale les prodigieuses yeux sont ceux de Lyncée et non pas ceux d'un lynx, dans les langues modernes a triomphé la variante médiévale avec le nom de l'animal.

INTRODUCTION

In the exemplary novel *Lady Cornelia*, written by Cervantes, the Bolognese Lorenzo Bentibolli laments that the Duke of Ferrara has managed to outwit his efforts to protect his sister Cornelia and says so: "Finally, to shorten the story and not to tire you, since this could be a long one, I say that the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso de Este, with eyes of a lynx, defeated those of Argos, knocked down and triumphed over my engagement, winning over my sister, and last night he took her to me and took her out of the house of a relative of ours, and they even say that she had just given birth". Cervantes uses two paremias of Greek origin to refer to the fact that Lorenzo's vigilance "with Argos' eyes" (the so-called *Panoptes*, "who sees everything", a giant of a hundred eyes that alternated open and closed in his perpetual vigilance) has been defeated by the "lynx eyes" (Bizzarri 2015: 403) that Alfonso de Este has shown to have in order to earn Cornelia's favours. Cervantes therefore turns to the mythical Greek character representing exhaustive and uninterrupted vigilance (Argos) and to an animal that is a proverbial paradigm of visual acuity. But the author of Don Quixote could actually have perfectly resorted to two characters from Greek mythology, because the lynx of our paremia is originally a mythical character, Lynceus. Five years after the publication of the *Exemplary Novels* in 1613, the squire Marcos de Obregón in the novel of the same name by Vicente Espinel (*The history of the life of the squire, Marcos de Obregon*, second relation, seventh break), when, speaking of the visual feats of a famous Spanish watchman of the Strait of Gibraltar, he states the following: "And I believe that no matter how much the things he did with Lynceus' eyesight (he was a man and not an animal, as some think) are hyped up, they did not overbid those of Martín López". And Marcos de Obregon is right: lynx (better said, Lynceus), with prodigious eyesight, was a man and not an animal[3].

1. IN GREECE AND ROME: "TO HAVE A SHARPER VIEW THAN LYNCEUS"

Indeed, the ancient and medieval collections of ancient Greek proverbs that we have preserved and that form the so-called *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, as well as other texts of erudite nature (lexicographic works and scholia or marginal comments to the ancient texts preserved in manuscripts) and also many literary texts document the expression "to have a sharper sight than Lynceus"[4], a mythical character of the Mesenian region (southwest of the Peloponnese), who, together with his brother Idas, intervenes in some mythical cycles, specifically those related to the Castor and Pollux twins, to the hunting of the Calydonian boar and to the journey of the Argonauts, cycle, this last one, in which the prodigious sight of Lynceus makes him play with all the guarantees the role of watchman of the Argo ship. With the sole exception of *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.71, which at the end of the explanatory gloss points to the possibility that the paremia refers to the animal and not to the mythical character, the rest of the sources document only the version "having a sharper eyesight than Lynceus" (or its variants), and frequently include in the explanation of the paremia some references to the visual feats attributed to Lynceus. More exam-

[3] Many centuries before Cervantes, Lynceus already appears proverbially associated with Argos, as can be seen in the passages of Apuleius and Themistius that will be cited later. See also Tosi (2014: no. 1394).

[4] A first collection of sources and texts can be found in Leutsch and Schneidewin (1839-1851: I 430-431), Jiménez Fernández (2005: 66-68; 2014: 81-84), Tosi (2014: no. 1394; 1993: no. 707).

ples are the many ancient and late-ancient literary texts in which the paremia is used (and which include as much as nine centuries), and which always refer to Lynceus (*Lynkeús,* Λυγκεύς) and not to the lynx (*lýnx*, λύγξ)[5]. The erudite sources (paremiographic collections, lexicons, and corpora of scholia) that collect our paremia are the following:

> a) Paremiographic collections (cited by the edition of Leutsch and Schneidewin: 1839-1851):
> - *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.71 (= *Collectio Coisliniana* 316): "*He has a sharper eyesight than Lynceus"*. About those who see sharply. Because that Lynceus found the gold, tin and other metal mines that were underground. Others, on the contrary, claim that Lynceus is a wild animal with the greatest acuity[6].
> - *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.70 (= *Collectio Bodleiana* 622): "*Just like Lynceus*. He came to see with great acuteness, to the point of reaching with his sight even that, which was underground[7]".
> - *Appendix Proverbiorum* 4.30 (= *Collectio Coisliniana* 377; the same explanation in the collection of Macarius 6.41): "*He has a sharper eyesight than Lynceus*. About those who see with precision the things that are far away"[8].
> - Gregory of Cyprus *Leidensis* 2.61: "*Just like Lynceus*. He, who sees with sharpness (ὁ ὀξυδερκής)."
> b) Lexicographic works
> - *Suda* λ 775: "*To see with a sharper eyesight than Lynceus*. He was Idas brother, but according to Aristophanes in *The Danaides* [fr.272 Kassel-Austin], son of Egypt. He had such a sharp sight that he could even see Castor killing his brother through a fir tree, according to Pindar [*Nemean* 10.61 ff.]. And Apollonius in *The Argonauts* [1.153-154]: 'If the fame of that man is true, he could clearly see through the earth'"[9].
> c) Corpora of Scholia:
> - Scholia to Platon, *Epistoles* VII 344th, Greene (1938: 394): "*Lynceus*: They say that Lynceus, the son of Apharaeus and Arene, saw with such a great sharpness, that he could even see what was underground. That is the source of the proverb"[10].

[5] It is not certain that the anthroponym Lynceus (Λυγκεύς) is etymologically related to the name of the lynx (λύγξ), as has traditionally been thought. The word λύγξ ("lynx") probably belongs to a well-documented root in Indo-European languages: *leuk- "to see", "to shine" (the same one found in the Latin *lux*, which in Romance languages gives its name to the light), and, as I believe Lockwood (1994) has shown with good arguments, would have designated the lynx not because of the brightness of the animal's eyes (which would be a relationship suggested to modern philologists precisely by the proverbial "lynx eyes", a tradition that is however hardly documented in ancient Greek and Latin texts, as we shall see), but because of the brightness of its skin. As for the anthroponym Lynceus (which in ancient Greek is also the name of other mythological and historical characters), it is possible that it belongs to the same root, but it is also possible that it does not, since Lockwood points out the existence in ancient Greece of toponyms such as *Lynkeía*, *Lýnkos* or *Lynkestaí*, which could also have a pre-Greek and not an Indo-European origin. Blanc, De Lamberterie and Perpillou (2009: 1325) opt for a pre-Greek origin: "Le zoonyme serait motivé par la teinte claire de la robe de l´animal, et non par l´éclat nocturne de ses yeux ou par sa vue perçante (qui serait une reconstruction... en lien avec le nom de l'Argonaute Λυγκεύς, compris com 'à l´ œil de lynx')... mais plutôt apparenté aux toponymes...". See also Beekes (2010: I 875).

[6] Λυγκέως ὀξύτερον βλέπει· ἐπὶ τῶν ὀξυδορκούντων. οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Λυγκεὺς εὗρε τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν μέταλλα χρυσίου καὶ κασσιτέρου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν. οἱ δέ φασιν ὅτι ὁ λιγκεὺς θηρίον ἐστι ὀξυδερκέστατον.

[7] Λυγκέως ὅμοιος· οὗτος ὀξυδερκέστατος γέγονεν, ὡς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν ὁρᾶν.

[8] ὀξύτερον Λυγκέως βλέπει· ἐπὶ τῶν τὰ πόρρωθεν ἀκριβῶς ὁρώντων.

[9] Λυγκέως ὀξυωπέστερον βλέπειν· οὗτος ἐγένετο ἀδελφὸς Ἴδα· ὡς δὲ Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν Δαναΐσιν, υἱὸς Αἰγύπτου· τοσοῦτον δὲ ὀξυωπέστατος ἦν, ὡς καὶ δι᾽ ἐλάτης ἰδεῖν Κάστωρα δολοφονήσοντα τὸν ἀδελφόν, ὥς φησι Πίνδαρος. καὶ Ἀπωλλόνιος ἐν Ἀργοναύταις "εἰ ἐτέον γε πέλει κλέος, ἀνέρα κεῖνον / ῥηδίως καὶ νέρθεν ὑπὸ χθονὸς αὐγάζεσθαι".

[10] Λυγκεύς· Λυγκέα φασὶ τὸν Ἀφαρέως καὶ Ἀρήνης οὕτω γενέσθαι ὀξυδερκῆ, ὡς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν βλέπειν. ἀφ᾽ οὗ καὶ ἡ παροιμία.

As can be seen, all our sources point to the Argonaut Lynceus as the protagonist of our paremia, and only at the end of the explanation of *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.71 it is added that "others, on the contrary, affirm that the Lynceus is a wild animal that sees with great acuity". It actually seems that the lynx does not have a more penetrating view than other felines[11], so that its supposed visual acuity is more of a myth than a reality, and a myth that was born precisely from the phonetic similarity of the animal's name with the Argonaut Lynceus. I believe that the myth of the "lynx's eyesight" has been definitively consolidated in the Middle Ages, but is already present in a couple of ancient texts, such as the one already cited from the *Appendix Proverbiorum* and a passage from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (XXVIII 32, 121): "exotic animals are also the lynx, which of all the cuadrupeds are those with the sharpest view (*clarissime quadrupedum omnium cernunt*)". These are, in any case, very exceptional texts[12] and this supposed visual acuity of the lynx does not appear in the descriptions of the animal that we find in other ancient authors. For example, when Aristotle (4th century B.C.) speaks of the lynx, he refers to the structure of its legs (*History of Animals* II 499b24) or to the fact that it expels urine from the back of its body (*ibidem* II 500b15 and V 539b23); when, five centuries later, Aelianus describes it (*History of Animals* 14.6), he says that the lynx is snub-nosed, that he has hair on the tip of his ears and that it makes prodigious leaps; nor does the poet Oppian of Apamea (III A.D.) make any reference to its visual capacity when he describes various species of lynx in his poem *Cynegetica* (3.86 ff.)[13]. When a Greek wanted to give a paradigmatic example of penetrating sight in the animal world, he did not resort to the lynx but to "eagle-eye", an expression also present in many modern languages, along with "hawk-eye". Thus, the paremias "to have the sight of an eagle" and "to have the sight of Lynceus" are associated in two texts of the physician Galen of Pergamon (II A.D.): *On hygiene* I.5 (VI 19-20 Kühn): "that we all have a bad sight, if we compare ourselves with eagles and Lynceus (ὡς ἅπαντές γε κακῶς ὁρῶμεν, εἰ τοῖς ἀετοῖς τε καὶ Λυγκεῖ παραβαλλοίμεθα), and we do not hear correctly, if we compare ourselves with Melampus, and of course we are weak in our feet if we are compared with Iphicles, and in our hands if we are compared with Milo"[14], and *On the elements according to Hippocrates* (I 414, 14 Kühn): "...for eagles and for Lynceus, even if some other man or animal

[11] See Barchiesi *et al.* (1982: note at XVIII 32, 121).

[12] Steier (1927: 2475) quotes two more passages in which the exceptional sight of the lynx could be alluded to, but in our opinion in both it is not certain that reference is made to that fact, but it is more likely that these are allusions to the beauty of the animal's eyes. First of all Oppian (*Cynegetica* 3.97) describes the lynx with the adjective εὔγληνος ("of good pupils"), which often refers to the "penetrating look" (perhaps due to the fame the looks of the lynx achieved in our cultural tradition), but which rather means "of beautiful eyes" (the adjective is documented on two other occasions, as a description of the swans in Lycophron, *Alexandra* 597, and of a fish in a fragment of the poem *Medical Remedies concerning fish* of Marcellus of Side, from the 2nd century AD). Second, the female lynx is described with the adjective *perspicua* by Eucheria, a Latin poetess of the 5th or 6th century A.D., who lived in Gaul and is only known for one satirical poem of 32 verses (v.20 of poem 60 in Baehrens 1883: V, 361-363). As Marcovich and Georgiadou (1988: 172) have very well shown, it is clear from the context that the adjective *perspicuus* in this text does not mean "penetrating" but "pretty, handsome, goodlooking", since the lynx is opposed to the monkey, the animal that represents ugliness (the poetess mocks a suitor by exposing a series of impossible pairings, such as that of a beautiful lynx with an ugly monkey).

[13] "About the lynx, some are small in sight and attack small hares. Others are larger and jump easily over the beautiful horned deer and the fast oryx. Both look alike; the delightful sparkles of their eyes under their eyelids are the same. Both have a radiant face, a small head and curved ears. They only differ in colour when they are seen". Kitchell (2014: 114-115) collects references to the lynx in ancient sources and cites only the Pliny's text as a testimony to his supposed visual acuity.

[14] Melampus is a mythical clairvoyant whose ears were licked by snakes, which gave him the gift of understanding the language of birds and divination; Iphiclus or Iphicles is a mythical character excellently

had greater visual acuity (ἄλλα μὲν τοῖς ἀετοῖς καὶ Λυγκεῖ καὶ εἴ τις ἕτερος ἄνθρωπος ἢ ζῷον ἄλλ᾽ ὀξυωπέστατόν ἐστιν)". Eagle's eyesight and Lynceus' eyesight also appear together in a passage from the 3rd century A.D. treatise *On the Abstinence from Animal Food* by the Neo-Platonic Philosopher Porphyry (3.8.3): "It seems that the animals are superior to us as far as the senses are concerned. For what man has such a great visual capacity–not even, no doubt, the Lynceus of which the myths speak–as the serpent or the eagle to which 'and not even being on high does a hare go unnoticed' [*Iliad* 17.676]?"[15].

As we have already advanced, the locution "having a sharper view than Lynceus" (and its variants) is often documented in ancient Greek literary texts that have come down to us. The oldest testimonies date back to the first half of the 4th century B.C. In 388 B.C. Aristophanes' comedy *Plutus* ("Money") was performed[16]. In verses 208-210, Chremylos, the protagonist of the play, says the following to the god Plutus, who is blind, which is why wealth is unfairly distributed among humankind: "Do not worry about anything. As soon as you are ready to put your hands to work, I will make you see more sharply than Lynceus (βλέποντ᾽ ἀποδείξω σ᾽ ὀξύτερον τοῦ Λυγκέως)". A few decades later, around 353 B.C., in Plato's *Letter* VII our paremia reappears (343e-344a). Here it is used in a somewhat peculiar sense, because now Lynceus is not the prototype of the one who enjoys the greatest visual acuity, but he is even capable of endowing others with that sense (not only physical, but above all mental and moral): "But if the dispositions are naturally bad, as it is in most people the natural state of soul, both in terms of the ability to learn and what is called moral character... not even Lynceus could make those people see clearly (οὐδ᾽ ἂν ὁ Λυγκεὺς ἰδεῖν ποιήσειε τοὺς τοιούτους)". Also in the 4th century B.C., Aristotle, in his treatise *On Generation and Corruption* (1.10, 328a 13-15), resorts to the proverbial figure of Lynceus when he speaks about visual perception: "and the same object that will look 'combined' to a man, if he does not have sharp eyesight, will not be combined to the eyes of Lynceus"[17].

Both, the scholia[18] to Plato, cited above, and the scholia to Aristophanes explain the origin of the proverb by referring to the hyperbolic visual feats attributed to Lynceus. Perhaps the most repeated of these is the fact that he was able to see even through solid objects, so that his razor-sharp vision could pierce walls, stones and tree trunks, and even scrutinize what lies beneath the earth. The ancient scholia to the *Plutus* of Aristophanes (which provide an identical explanation to the one of the lexicon *Suda*, cited above)[19], refer to an ancient mythical history, which is documented

endowed for the race, while the wrestler Milo of Croton, from the 6th century B.C., was perhaps the most famous athlete of Antiquity. About the passage, see Roubineau (2016: 165 and 167).

[15] Verses 674-676 of Song 17 of the *Iliad* say specifically: "like the eagle, which is said to have the sharpest view of all the birds in the sky and not even being on high does a hare with quick legs go unnoticed to him".

[16] Scholia to *Plutus* 210 also tell that in his lost comedy *Danaids,* Aristophanes made an allusion to the extraordinary visual capacity of Lynceus (fragment 272 Kassel-Austin), probably identifying the Lynceus, son of Egypt and husband of Hypermestra, who intervenes in the cycle of the Danaids, with his homonym 'brother of Idas' and who is famous for his visual acuity. See Pellegrino (2015: ad loc.).

[17] In his comment on the passage, John Philoponus of Alexandria, philosopher of the first half of the 6th century A.D., explains that Lynceus "because of the sharpness of his eyes, he is said to have seen even underground" (H. Vitelli edition, Berlin: Reimer, 1897, in the collection *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 14.2, p.194.13): ὃς διὰ τὴν τῶν ὄψεων ὀξύτητα καὶ κατὰ γῆς ὁρᾶν λέγεται. See also his treatise *Philoponus Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World against Proclus* (ed. by H. Rabe, Leipzig: Teubner 1899, reprinted 1963, p.151.14).

[18] Marginal comments preserved in the manuscripts, much of which ultimately go back to the studies of ancient Greek erudite and philologists.

[19] Chantry (1994: 48).

in the *Nemean* 10 of Pindar (verses 61 ff; the poem is dated around 444 B.C)[20] and earlier in a fragment belonging to an old lost epic poem, the *Cypria*, dating perhaps to the first half of the 7th century B.C. (fr. 15 Bernabé [1988])[21]. That story is as follows: two pairs of cousins, Castor and Pollux on the one hand, and Idas and Lynceus on the other, fight over a booty; the first hide inside a hollow oak, but Lynceus climbs Mount Taygetus, which dominates the lands of Sparta, and from there he scrutinizes the whole Peloponnese with his prodigious sight, until he discovers his two rivals hidden inside the tree, and in the following confrontation Castor, Idas and Lynceus die.

Lynceus' ability to see through solid objects reappears in many other ancient texts:

- Aristotle (IV B.C.), *Protrepticus*105: "for if anyone could see as sharply as they say about Lynceus (εἰ γάρ τις ἐδύνατο βλέπειν ὀξὺ καθάπερ τὸν Λυγκέα φασίν), who saw through walls and trees, could a person's vision then seem bearable, if he saw what vices he is composed of?". Aristotle's text is found almost literally in the *Protrepticus* (8.6) of Iamblichus, neoplatonic philosopher of III-IV A.D. And two centuries later, in the V-VI, the Latin Boethius (*On the Consolation of Philosophy* 3.8) quotes Aristotle again in connection with Lynceus' extraordinary sight: "If, as Aristotle says [fragment 826 Gigon], humankind could see with the eyes of Lynceus (*Lyncei oculis homines uterentur*), so that his gaze could pass through objects, when they had contemplated his entrails, would not that body of Alcibiades, which was extremely beautiful on the outside, look extremely ugly?". Perhaps in this passage, Boethius is also echoing a text by the Christian panegyrist Arnobius (III-IV A.D.), who, in his work *Against the pagans* 4.23, charges against men and women inclined to carnal passions and body pleasures, and wonders what beauty there is in bodies that can attract so many humans, and also mentions Lynceus in that context: "skin, viscera, mucus, and all that flow of filth hidden under the wrapper of the intestines, to which not only would Lynceus be horrified with his penetrating sharpness (*Lynceus ille penetrabili acie*), but also any other person would avoid even thinking about it".
- Plutarch (I-II A.D.), *Against the Stoics: On the common notions* 44, 1083d: "Legend has it however that the famous Lynceus saw through a stone or an oak (ὁ Λυγκεὺς ἐκεῖνος διὰ πέτρας καὶ διὰ δρυὸς ὁρᾶν), and there was in Sicily an individual who sat in a watchtower and from there saw the ships of the Carthaginians leaving the port, even if they were at a distance of a day and a night of race"[22].
- Plutarch, *How to Profit from Enemies* 3, 87b-c: "The enemy is always lurking and watching your affairs, and seeking everywhere the way to catch you, turn your life around, not looking only through an oak, like Lynceus, or through stones and bricks, but also through

[20] "Scrutinizing from the Taygetus, Lynceus saw them [Castor and Pollux] standing inside an oak hole. For his eyes were the sharpest of all those who inhabit the earth".

[21] The fragment of The *Cypria* is known to us by the scholia to Pindar, *Nemean* 10.114 (for more information, see Bernabé Pajares [1979: 109-111 and 132]): "The one who wrote The *Cypria* says that Castor, hidden as he was in the oak, was seen by Lynceus. Apollodorus also follows this variant. Regarding them, Didymus says that although both Castor and Pollux were hidden under the oak, Linceus only saw Castor... They present as testimony the one who wrote the *Cypria*, who says so: 'Immediately, Lynceus went up to the Taygetus, trusting his quick feet. When he reached the top, he watched over the whole island of Pelops and the glorious hero saw both of them immediately with his prodigious eyes [δεινοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖσιν], inside a hollow oak tree: to Castor, tamer of horses, and to the winner of competitions, Pollux, and approaching the great oak tree, he wounded...'".

[22] Other ancient sources transmit the last anecdote, which must have been a common example in rhetoric schools (see Cicero, *Lucullus* 81), and which recalls much of the story told by Marcos de Obregon about the Spanish watchman Martín López, commented on at the beginning of this paper.

your friend, your servant and all your relatives, probing, in what is possible, what you do, and scrutinizing and exploring your decisions".

- Pausanias (II A.D.), *Description of Greece* 4.2.7: "Of the sons of Apharaeus, the oldest and bravest was Idas and the youngest Lynceus, of whom Pindar said, if one can believe it, that his sight was so sharp that he even saw through the trunk of an oak tree (οὕτως ὀξὺ ὁρᾶν ὡς καὶ διὰ στελέχους θεᾶσθαι δρυός).
- Cleomedes (perhaps around 200 A.D.), *The Celestial Bodies* II 1, 55 Todd: "So that, if it were possible for us –affirms Posidonius [fragment 114 Edelstein and Kidd]– to see through solid walls and through other bodies, as the myths of Lynceus tell us, then the sun would appear to us much bigger, seeing through them, and much further away".
- *Panegyricus Nazarii* (Latin orator of the 4th century A.D., author of a panegyric pronounced in the Senate of Rome in 321 in honour of Emperor Constantine I) 11: "Who, then, is more perceptive to foresee? Who is more vigilant to see? Who examines the present with greater acuity, the future with greater detail, the uncertain with greater certainty, the deceitful more accurately? Hence, the famous Lynceus (*non hinc tecum Lynceus ille certaret*), who, as the poets say, easily crossed with his sight the barriers of the walls and the trunks of the trees, cannot compete with you".

Lynceus' ability to see through opaque objects reaches its climax when it is told that he had the faculty to pierce the ground with his penetrating eyes and contemplate what lies beneath him, even the metals that the earth conceals. We have already quoted the gloss of the proverb collection *Collectio Coisliniana* 316 (= *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.71): "*He has a sharper eyesight than Lynceus*. About those who see sharply. For that Lynceus found the mines which were under the earth, of gold, of tin, and of all the other metals" (remember also in this regard other texts quoted above as *Collectio Bodleiana* 622 = *Appendix Proverbiorum* 3.70, or the scholia to Plato, *Epistles* VII 344a). This prodigious skill attributed to Lynceus is often found in other erudite texts (scholia to Pindar, *Nemean* 10.112a and 114a Drachmann[23]; scholia to Lucian, *Icaromenippus* 12, and *Dialogues of the Dead* 28.1[24]), as well as in numerous literary texts. To the above passage from the epic poem by Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautics* (1.153-155: "and Lynceus also stood out for his keen eyes, if the fame, that this man easily saw clearly even underground, is true"), can be added other texts that mention Lynceus' ability to scrutinize the bowels of the ground with his prodigious sight in search of metals. Thus, in the *Library of Myths* attributed to Apollodorus (3.10.3; cf. also 3.11.2) we read that Lynceus "stood out for the sharpness of his sight, even to the point of seeing what is underground (ὀξυδερκίᾳ διήνεγκεν, ὡς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν θεωρεῖν)", and the physician Galen refers to the same popular tradition in his treatise *On the Diagnosis and Healing of the Errors of the Soul of Each One* (V 90, 12 Kühn): "Perhaps they will be the only ones to affirm that they are intelligent and that they see things by apprehending them directly, just as Lynceus saw what was underground". For his part, the Latin epic poet of the 1st century A.D. Valerius Flaccus, in his account of the Argonauts' journey (*Argonautics* 1.462-467), attributes to Lynceus the unique capacity to "cross the ground and discover infernal secrets with his deep sight" and to "announce the stars to the ship, which were hidden from the sky with clouds by Jupiter, and that Lynceus alone would cross with his gaze". And something very similar is affirmed in another epic poem,

[23] Drachmann (1927: 178-180): "Lynceus saw with great acuteness, to the point that he even looked through the stones and through what is underground... Because Lynceus eye outperformed by far all men in acuteness" (τοῦ γὰρ Λυγκέως ὑπὲρ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὀξύτατον ἦν τὸ ὄμμα).

[24] Rabe, 1971: 103 (οὗτος λέγεται ὀξυδερκέστατος εἶναι, ὥστε καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν βλέπειν) and 254-255 (Ἀθηναῖος δὲ ὁ Λυγκεὺς ὀξυδερκέστατος τοσοῦτον ὡς καὶ τὰ κατὰ γῆν ὁρᾶν δύνασθαι); see also page 208.

in this case Greek, dedicated to the journey of the Argonauts, the *Argonautica Orphica* 181-183: "And Lynceus, who was the only one of the men who perceived with his prodigious eyes, to its extremes, the depths of the ether and the sea and the abysses of the subterranean Pluto..."[25]. See also the text of Plotinus (*Enneads* 5.4.22-26) cited below. Finally, the Latin mythographer Hyginus (I B.C. or II A.D.), in *Fabulae* 14.12-13, not only gathers the tradition that Lynceus was capable of discovering the metals that were underground, but even attributes to him the faculty of being invisible during the night, so that the protagonist of our paremia has already gone from seeing better than anyone else to not being seen by anyone: "It is said that one of them, Lynceus, saw anything hidden underground (*sub terra quaeque latentia vidisse dicitur*), and that no darkness prevented him from doing so. Others say that no one could see Lynceus at night (*Lynceum noctu nullum vidisse*). It was also said that he was accustomed to distinguish clearly what was underground, to the point that he had recognized gold mines. As he descended and immediately showed the gold, so the rumour arose that he was accustomed to seeing underground".

In the last sentence of Hyginus' text one can appreciate an attempt, vaguely expressed, to rationally explain a myth that speaks of an individual who crossed the underground with his gaze and discovered the metalliferous deposits. We find this same attempt at rationalization more clearly exposed in other texts that we have preserved, especially in the *Incredible Stories* of Palaephatus, Greek author of the fourth century B.C. (§ 9): "Lynceus is said to have seen even what was underground. This is false and the truth is as follows. Lynceus was the first to obtain bronze, silver, and other metals through mining. In his search for metals he carried underground lamps, which he left in place, while he brought to the surface sacks with bronze and iron. Then people would say: 'Lynceus even sees what is underground, and also goes inside to bring silver to the surface'." Palaephatus is probably the source of the recent scholia to Aristophanes, which offer a very similar interpretation[26].

Thus, the mythical character Lynceus and his visual feats survive with remarkable roots throughout all the stages of ancient Greco-Latin culture (both in Greek and Latin), from the archaic period (VII B.C.) until the end of Antiquity and the transition to the Middle Ages (V-VI A.D.). What is more, the range of his achievements did expand. In the archaic epic poem *Cypria* and in Pindar we are told that he was able to cover with his prodigious view the whole Peloponnese from Mount Taygetus. Then other accomplishments are added: his ability to look through solid objects and see further than anyone else[27], so that he discovered the metal deposits that were underground,

[25] The 12th century Byzantine erudite John Tzetzes, in his note to verse 553 of the poem *Alexandra* by the Hellenistic poet Lycophron, explains a passage from the poem in which Castor's fight against Lynceus is compared to that of a lion against a bull: "He refers to Castor, whom he calls a lion; and bull to Lynceus, for having a sharp view, because they say he even saw what is beneath the earth".

[26] Dübner (1877: 336 and 552-553): "*With more acuity than Lynceus*:... It was said that he saw with extraordinary acuity, so that he even saw what was underground (ὀξύτερον τοῦ Λυγκέως· … ὃς ἐλέγετο εἶναι πάνυ ὀξυδερκέστερος, ὥστε καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς ὁρᾶν). The myth tells the following: regarding if the tale may be truth, it has been thought that he was the first to find mines of gold, iron and other metals, and that in his search for metals he carried lamps underground and left them there, while he brought up bronze, iron and other metals. Then the men said that Lynceus even saw what was underground and that he went underground and the wealth went up".

[27] Apollonius of Rhodes may be added to the cited texts 4.1477-1450 ("But only Lynceus believed to see Heracles on that occasion far away in the infinite earth, in the same way that one sees or believes to see the moon veiled by fog on the first day of the month"); Seneca, *Medea* 231-233 ("he who sees even what is beyond Pontus, Lynceus, setting his gaze there"); and the *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* of Olympiodorus, a sixth-century neoplatonic philosopher (edition of L.G. Westerink, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976): in 13.15 the normal vision is opposed, "what we all see", to the extraordinary vision "in the manner of Lynceus, who saw what was furthest away".

he tracked the world of the dead ("the abysses of the subterranean Pluto", in *Argonautica Orphica* 181-183) and the seabed[28], he scrutinized the sky "to the depths of the ether", and even Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* II 15, 78) seems to attribute to him the capacity of being able to see two of the lunar phases in the same day, in a passage in which he comments on astronomical phenomena difficult to appreciate with the naked eye: "the end of the last quarter and the beginning of the first are visible the same day and the same night in the same sign, Aries, and yet few mortals have managed to see it; hence the fame of the sight of Lynceus (*et inde fama cernendi Lynceo*)". Lynceus even becomes invisible at night (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 14.12-13), and even acquires in older texts nothing less than the gift of seeing the future, as in *Epistle* 33 of the Greek-Egyptian Theophilus Simocates, from the 6th-7th centuries A.D., in which Galatea tells Thetis: "I praise your wisdom and admire your great experience. Because, as an oracle of the tripod of Delphi, you have described to me what was going to happen and you have seen the most hidden and uncertain events with greater acuity than Lynceus (καὶ τοῦ Λυγκέως ὀξύτερον τὰ βαθύτερά τε καὶ ἀφανῆ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐσκόπησα): Callimachus has abandoned us".

The locution "to see with greater acuity than Lynceus" remains in force in the Greek language of the 6th-7th centuries A.D., as it was in the middle of the classical era, as show the texts of the 4th century B.C. (by Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle) quoted above. In the centuries between those two periods, initial and final, of the use of our proverbial expression in Greco-Latin Antiquity, many Greek (and also Latin) authors resort to our paremia when it comes to making reference to visual acuity. In Hellenistic times, the poet Posidippus of Pella (first half of the 3rd century B.C.) uses the expression "Lyncean view" (ὑπὸ Λυγκείου βλέμματος) in epigram no. 15 (Austin-Bastianini ed.), to refer to the very sharp sight of a goldsmith who has managed to carve a tiny chariot into a precious stone[29]. Around the same time Theocritus of Syracuse (*Idylls* 22.194) speaks of "Lynceus, the one with the sharp eyes" (ἀκριβὴς ὄμμασι).

In the centuries 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. the locution is documented by some of the most important Greek and Latin authors of the period. In Greek, in the treatise *On Providence* 2.7, of Philo of Alexandria, the expression "the sight sharper than Lynceus" (Λυγκέως ὀξυωπέστερος) appears in a

[28] Thus Philostrate (II A.D.) describes in the following way the amazement of the Argonauts before the appearance of the marine god Glaucus, as represented in a painting (*Descriptions of paintings* 2.15.3): "Lynceus, son of Apharaeus, occupies the bow, because he is very skilful in scrutinizing with the gaze; he fixes his eyes on the bottom, thus discovering the reefs of the sea; he is also the first to salute the mainland. But now it seems to me that even Lynceus' eye is stupefied by this apparition that is approaching".

[29] "This stone was not born on the banks of a singing river / which shines with white sparkles; of a serpent / the bearded head produced her. In his lincean sight / he carved a carriage the size of those / spots that nails have, visible in the imprint, / but that nobody appreciates on the smooth stone. / Great miracle, it is, by the way, that such a great and painful / effort, the eyes of the carver has not ruined". (No ha nacido a la orilla de un río cantor esta piedra / que reluce con blancos destellos; de una sierpe / la cabeza barbada prodújola. En ella una vista / lincea talló un carro del tamaño de esas / manchas que tienen las uñas, visible en la imprenta, / pero que nadie aprecia sobre la piedra lisa. / Gran milagro, es, por cierto, que esfuerzo tan grande / y penoso los ojos del tallista no haya estropeado). The spanish translation is by M. Fernández Galiano (1978: no. 263), who makes the following comment: "This is a precious stone that the Romans called *draconitis* or *dracontia* (cf. Pliny, NH. XXXVII 158) and that was believed to come out from the head of snakes, but with the particularity that it was necessary to decapitate them alive, because, in another case, when the animal died, the stone lost its brightness; reason why diverse systems were used to numb the snake and to be able to give her death with facility (in verse 1, probable reference to a torrent, considered as suitable place for the production of precious stones; the ancients attributed a kind of beard to some snake types). In this case, a carver of prodigious sight (the mythical hero Lynceus is alluded to, the sharpness of whose vision was proverbial) has taken advantage of one of the very small white spots to engrave on it a carriage, so tiny, that it is not seen with the naked eye, but only when, used the stone as a seal, it leaves an imprint on a soft matter".

list of paremias of similar structure, together with "richer than Croesus" (πλουσιώτερος Κροίσου), "more virile than Milo of Croton" (ἀνδρειότερος τοῦ Κροτωνιάτου Μίλωνος) and "prettier than Ganymede" (καλλίων Γανυμήδους)[30]. As for the Latin authors[31], Cicero, Horace and Seneca use the paremia. In one of his letters *Ad familiares* (9.2.2, addressed to Marcus Terentius Varrus and dated around April 20, 49 B.C.), Cicero comments on the difficult situation in Rome at that time, and adds: "Who is that Lynceus (*quis est tam Lynceus*), that in the midst of such darkness does not collide with anything, or does not stumble in some hindrance?"[32] Horace, for his part, alludes to the "sight of Lynceus" in passages from the *Satires* (1.2.90: "do not contemplate the best things of the body with the eyes of Lynceus (*Lyncei oculis*), nor look at the defects blinder than that Hipse") and from the *Epistles* (1.1.28: "you cannot reach as far with your eyes as Lynceus (*non possis oculo quantum contendere Lynceus*), but there is no reason for you to disdain to cure a sty with ointments"; the epistle is directed to Maecenas, and in it Horace defends the idea that it is necessary to try to reach up to where everyone can to the extent of their strengths and abilities. And in the treatise *On the benefits* of Seneca (4.27.3) Lynceus reappears as proverbial prototype of visual acuity: "Just as menkind have all the senses, but that does not mean they have such a penetrating sight as Lynceus (*nec ideo tamen omnes homines aciem habent Lynceo similem*), equally who is foolish does not have all the defects as high and intense as some men have".

In the literature of the 2nd and 3rd centuries we often find our locution again. It is the favourite one of the Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata[33], who uses it in several pieces of him. At the beginning of one of the *Dialogues of the Dead* (28.1), which takes place in the world of the dead between Menippus and the blind clairvoyant Tiresias, Lynceus appears as a proverbial representative of visual acuity, as Phineus is of blindness: "Tiresias, it is no longer easy to distinguish whether you remain blind, for all of us equally have empty eyes and only the place they occupied remains. For the rest, it is not possible anymore to say who was Phineus and who Lynceus". The blind Phineus and the very perspicacious Lynceus again oppose each other in the dialogue *In favour of the portraits* 20, when Lucian speaks about the lies told by the flatterers and refers to various mythical characters who embody certain qualities: a flatterer "lies and adds more of his own harvest, to the point of not hesitating to manifest that Tersites[34] was more handsome than Achilles, and to affirm that Nestor[35] was the youngest of those who took part in the expedition against Troy. And he would even say under oath that Croesus' son[36] had a sharper ear than Melampus and that Phineus had a sharper view than Lynceus (καὶ τὸν Φινέα ὀξύτερον δεδορκέναι τοῦ Λυγκέως), if he hoped to make some profit from his lie". In *Icaromenippus* 12, during a conversation between Menippus himself and a friend, they both make an imaginary journey to the Moon and from there, they contemplate the Earth, which they see with great clarity: "How now, suddenly converted into a kind of Lynceus, do you clearly distinguish everything that is on the Earth, men, animals and almost the nests of mosquitoes?" In *Timon* 25, in a debate on the fair distribution of wealth, the personification of the money thus answers the question of the god Hermes about whether Zeus is

[30] Philo himself, in *Questions on Genesis* 2.72, seems to confuse Lynceus and Argos when he says "endowed with eyes everywhere, in the manner of Lynceus" (Λυγκέως <δίκην> πάντοθεν ὀμματωθείς).

[31] About Latin authors, see Otto (1980: 203-204).

[32] "*Ojos tan de lince*" is J. Guillén's (1992) translation into Spanish: *M.Tulio Cicerón. Cartas políticas*. Madrid: Akal, 399. In his Spanish version, he may have used the Spanish equivalent for the paremia, rather than translating it literally from the Latin text.

[33] See Rein (1894: 14-15), who limits himself to quoting the passages, without any comment. Camerotto offers further details (2009: 120, and 1998: 243).

[34] "The ugliest man that came to Troy", is said about him in the *Iliad* 2.216.

[35] Ancient king of Pylos, who in Homeric poems represents the wisdom of old age.

[36] He was deaf and dumb, as Herodotus tells 1.34ff.

wrong or not when he believes that Money fulfils the decisions of the king of gods and enriches as many, Zeus deems worthy of being rich: "You are very right, my friend. He, in spite of knowing that I am blind, sent me to look for something so difficult to find and that for a long time has been absent from the world, something that not even Lynceus would find easily, because it is so dark and small". In *Hermotimus* 20, Licinius and Hermotimus discuss the latter's ability to see the inside of people: "He [Momus], as he was short-sighted, had those ideas about men, but you have fixed your eyes on us with better eyesight than Lynceus (σὺ δὲ ὑπὲρ τὸν Λυγκέα ἡμῖν δέδορκας), and you see what is inside, as it seems, through the chest, and everything is revealed to you, to the point of knowing not only what everyone wants and knows, but even who is better or worse". Finally, in *Charon* or *The Contemplative* 7, Hermes tries to cure Charon, the infernal boatman, of his vision problems using as a spell some verses of Homer; to the question of the god of whether he already sees well, Charon answers the following: "Extraordinarily! The famous Lynceus is blind, compared with me! (τυφλὸς ὁ Λυγκεὺς ἐκεῖνος ὡς πρὸς ἐμέ)".

At the same time, the doctor Marcellin (*On the pulses* 21; ed. of H. Schöne, Basel: Birkhäuser, 1907) refers to something that "not even the eyes of the Lynceus have been able to find (οὐδ' οἱ Λυγκέως ἠδυνήθησαν εὑρεῖν ὀφθαλμοί)"; and his much better known colleague Galen of Pergamon uses the proverbial figure of Lynceus in several of his medical treatises, as we had the opportunity to see above, and in particular he uses the locution "to see more sharply than the Lynceus himself" in *About semen* IV 601, 17 Kühn (ὀξύτερον μὲν ὁρῶσιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λυγκέως). It is also used, in the Latin version, by his contemporary Apuleius, when in *The Golden Ass* 2.23 Lucius, the protagonist, offers himself to a bandit to watch over a corpse: "you are seeing a man of iron and with insomnia, certainly with a better view than the very Lynceus or Argos, and all eyes" (*certe perspicaciorem ipso Lynceo vel Argo et oculeum totum*).

Already in the third century, "having a sharper view than Lynceus" reappears in the *Enneads* of the Greek neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (5.4.22-26): "Well, in the sky from around here, a star cannot contain another star, and so each star can only be a part. But, in the sky from around there each entity always contains the whole, and so it is at the same time each of them and everything. It has, indeed, vises of part, but it is seen as everything by the one who has penetrating sight, as one who has a sight as sharp as Lynceus, who was said to see even what is in the interior of the earth (ἐνορᾶται δὲ τῷ ὀξεῖ τὴν ὄψιν ὅλον, οἷον εἴ τις γένοιτο τὴν ὄψιν τοιοῦτος, οἷος ὁ Λυγκεὺς ἐλέγετο καὶ τὰ εἴσω τῆς γῆς ὁρᾶν). This Lynceus myth symbolizes the eyes from around there". And a similar expression is found in the treatise *On the Abstinence from Animal Food* by his disciple Porphyry and shortly thereafter in the *Protrepticus* of the also neoplatonic Iamblichus, as discussed above.

A century later, at the end of the ancient world, Lynceus is still the prototype of visual acuity in the Greek discourses of Libanius (*Discourses* 24.25, "On revenge for the death of Julian": "On one occasion, a certain traveller was killed and left on the ground after being beaten down, and the one who killed him, after leaving with the booty he had stolen, lived a high life. And there was no one to deliver him to the laws. But the instructor of the case did not go to sleep just because no one denounced the crime, leaving the criminal act uninvestigated, but, removing heaven and earth, without overlooking anything. He gave the impression that he used his intelligence as Lynceus his sight") and Themistius (*Discourses* 7.10, 92a, "Of the failure of the usurpers in Valente's time", regarding Procopius' conspiracy against Emperor Valente in the years 365-366: "Those who appeared everywhere, or better said, were the spies and informers who were never missing, endowed with more eyes than Argos and with a sharper sight than Lynceus").

And finally, in the 5th-7th centuries, fourteen centuries after his appearance in the *Cypria* and eleven centuries after Chremylos promised Plutus, in the comedy of the same name by Aristo-

phanes, to make him see "more sharply than Lynceus", the proverbial expression is still very much alive, as we can see in the texts already quoted from the Greek Theophylactus or from the Latin Boethius, to which other testimonies can be added. Thus, in the dialogue *Theophrastus or On the Immortality of Souls and the Resurrection of the Bodies* of Aeneas of Gaza, a Neo-Platonic and Christian philosopher of the 5th-6th centuries, we read that a blind man would be happier than Lynceus if he was more just (καὶ ὁ τυφλὸς ἐκεῖνος τοῦ Λυγκέως εὐδαιμονέστερος, εἰ δικαιότερος γένοιτο)[37]. Shortly after, another philosopher, John Philoponus of Alexandria, quotes our Lynceus in the two aforementioned texts of his commentary on *On Generation and Corruption of Aristotle* and in his treatise *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*, and in the same sixth century the philosopher Asclepius of Tralles follows in the wake of the thoughts of Aristotle, Iamblichus and Boethius to which we have referred earlier when, in his *Commentary on the Introduction to Nicomachean Arithmetic*, he states (I.11, 77): "Therefore, if it was possible for one to have the eyes of Lynceus (εἰ οὖν δυνατὸν τοὺς Λυγκέως ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντά τινα βλέψαι) and to reach with his gaze into the depths of the body and see uncleanness and all impurity, he would be convinced of how great the lack of beauty and ugliness is in us"[38]. Among the Latin authors, the pagan Rutilius Namacianus (4th-5th centuries) once again mentions Argos and Lynceus together in his poem *Return* 1.609-611: "When the Harpies, that tear the world apart with their nails, that drag with their sticky legs when touched, that turn Argos one-eyed and Lynceus blind (*quae luscum faciunt Argum, quae Lyncea caecum*)…".

2. IN THE MIDDLE AGES: FROM LYNCEUS TO LYNX

In the Latin Middle Ages[39], the old Lynceus probably fell into oblivion and was progressively replaced by the lynx, who is sometimes credited with the prodigies that ancient tradition assigned to Lynceus[40]. Thus, while in Antiquity only exceptionally (Pliny, *Natural History* XXVIII 32, 121; the gloss of the proverb collection *Collectio Coisliniana* 316) the texts attribute to the lynx an extraordinary view, when in the 13th century Albert the Great speaks of the lynx in his treatise *On animals* (23.113), his first commentary alludes to a view so penetrating that it is capable of crossing solid objects, assigning to it the visual feats that ancient tradition attributes to Lynceus (*linx est animal notum, perspicax oculis ita ut secundum poeticae fabulas corpora solida penetret*). In addition, another passage from the same work (21.4) confirms that the lynx has already become the prototype of visual ability: "we know that the lynx sees better than men (*et scimus lynces melius videre quam hominem*), and that vultures in turn have a better sense of smell, and similarly so do dogs, and certain animals have much better hearing". Very similar catalogues of animals that stand out for the sharpness of their senses are also found in gnomologies and other medieval texts, and in them the presence of the lynx as a representative of penetrating sight is usual. Thus, in his huge

[37] Edition from M.E. Colonna, Naples: Iodice 1985, page 29,12.

[38] Edition von L.Taran, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1969.

[39] In the Greek Middle Ages, however, the "sight of Lynceus" must have lasted through time. At least that's what the verses of the Byzantine poet Manuel Philes suggest, who often writes on subjects related to nature in the 13th-14th centuries, and uses the expression "to see better than Lynceus himself" (I 213, v.176-178 of the edition of his poems by E. Miller, Paris: Imperial Typography, 1855-1857, reprinted 1967: Ἰδεῖν δὲ μακρὰν ἀπὸ συμβόλου γρίφου / καταστοχαστὴν ἀκριβοῦν εἰθισμένον· καὶ Λυγκέως ἔμεινας αὐτοῦ βελτίων; see also II 1, v.483: κἂν ὡς ὁ Λυγκεὺς καὶ τὰ μακράν που βλέποι).

[40] See, for example, Francisco de Sosa, *Endecálogo contra ‚Antoniana Margarita'* (1556; edition by P. Cátedra, Barcelona: Ediciones Delestres's, 1994): "avía de tener tan subido ingenio como la águila el vuelo y tan agudo el entendimiento como el lince la vista, que dizen los naturales que vee gran cantidad debaxo de tierra".

collection of medieval Latin sentences, Walther collects the elegiac distiches *Lynx bene visa notat, lupus audit, vultur odorat, / in gustu et tactu predominatur homo* (no. 14178: "the lynx shows well what can be seen, the wolf hears, the vulture smells, / the man stands out in taste and touch") and *Nos aper auditu, lynx visu, simia gustu, / vulpes odoratur, percellit aranea tactu* (no. 18772a: "the wild boar is ahead of us in hearing, the lynx in sight, the monkey in taste, the fox in smell, the spider in touch")[41]. For this reason, when in the 12th century Godefroy de Breteuil[42] (*Epistle* 40, collected in the collection *Patrologia Latina* 205, 73a) uses the proverbial expression "lyncean eyes" (*lynceis oculis*)[43], we must suppose that he is thinking of the lynx and not of Lynceus.

3. FROM THE LYNCEUS OF ERASMUS TO THE LYNX OF MODERN LANGUAGES

In his never sufficiently praised *Adagia* (II 1, 54), Erasmus takes up our proverbial expression, under the Latin motto *Lynceo perspicacior*, "from a sharper sight than Lynceus", and dedicates it a large explanation[44] in which he refers to the ancient sources alluding to the visual feats of Lynceus, beginning with the *Cipria* and Pindar, and also cites the texts in which the expression "to have a sharper view than Lynceus" is proverbially used (Aristophanes, Plato, Lucian, Cicero, Horace). But at no time does Erasmus refer to the possibility that the proverbial model of ocular perspicacity is the lynx and not Lynceus. However, that is the version that ends up imposing itself definitively, by the weight of the medieval tradition and the greater familiarity of the speakers with the animal than with the anthroponym Lynceus. There is even the circumstance that in some cases the ancient texts, where the expression "to have a sharper eyesight than Lynceus" is used, were translated to "to have a better view than a lynx", as the Jesuit Bartolomé Bravo does when in his *Thesaurus Hispano-Latinus utriusque linguae verbis et phrasibus abundans* (corrected and updated edition) augmented by Pedro de Salas and Valeriano Requejo, Barcelona: Sierra y Martí, 1791, s.v. "Lynx") translates the passage from Cicero's letter to Varro "Who is there so lynx that he does not stumble in so much darkness?".

It is true that "sight of Lynceus" can still be found in some literary texts, such as that of Vicente Espinel cited at the beginning of this paper, and in scholarly works[45] and highbrow repertoires of proverbs, which very often drink directly from Erasmus, as the case in Spain of the collection *Refranes y modos de hablar castellanos con latinos que les corresponden*, by Caro y Cejudo (1675: 364): "Ve más que un zahorí, *Lynceo perspicacior*. Plato. Cuentan que Lynceo fue el primero que halló, y descubrió las minas de plata y de oro, de donde se dio lugar a la fábula que dice que veía las cosas que están debajo de tierra. Apolonio in Argonauticis says as follows: *At miro visu pollebat acumine Lynceus, / si modo vera est fama / virum quae predicat illum, / perfacile inspexisse sub altis condita terris*. Y Aristófanes aludiendo al adagio también dice: *faxo, ut videas, vel Lynceo*

[41] The second couplet is collected as "medieval aphorism" by Sánchez Doncel (1997: no. 6464).

[42] We take the reference from Tosi (2014: No. 1394; 1993: No. 707).

[43] *Scit ipse Deus qui charitas est qua vos affectione complector, et utinam cor meum lynceis, ut aiunt, oculis videretis.* The use of the formula *ut aiunt*, "as they say", indicates the proverbial character of the expression.

[44] Erasmus also uses the paremia in one of his *Colloquia familiaria*, specifically in the one entitled "Proci et puellae", when Mary says to Panphilius: *Nae tu plus quam Lynceus es, si istum perspicis per tot tectoria*. Erasmus himself includes *Lynceo perspicacior* in a catalogue of similar locutions, which he reproduces in *De copia verborum ac rerum*, I 954 (edition of B.I. Knorr, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1988).

[45] For example (and the influence of Erasmus is clear), Ioannis van Eysdem, *Oratio de civium commodis sub libera republica*. Dordrecht 1742, 13; and especially Edward Topsell, *The history of four-footed beasts and serpents describing at large their true and lively figure*, London, 1658: 383-384, quoting the paremia *Lynceo perspicacior* and offering a long, scholarly and well-documented discussion of Lynceus and his prodigious sight, with quotation from ancient sources.

ipso acutius. Y Cicerón a Marco Varrón: *Quis est tam Lynceus, qui in tantis tenebris nihil offendat, nusquam incurrat?* Y Horatio en el lib. I de las *Epístolas*, epist. I: *non possis ocullo quantum contendere Lynceus, / non tamen idcirco contemnas lippus in ungi*." For the rest, *Lynceo perspicacior* had already been the "translation" to Latin that, for the proverbial expression "ve más que un zahorí", Alonso Sánchez de la Ballesta had used in his *Diccionario de vocablos castellanos aplicados a la propiedad latina*, published in 1578, a Spanish-Latin dictionary very used in his time, in which there appear a great amount of comparisons of this type and other adages, taken fundamentally from Erasmus, as the author himself explicitly recognizes[46].

At the time when *Don Quixote* and *Marcos de Obregon* were published, Sebastián de Covarrubias defined the lynx in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611) as "a sharp-eyed animal, which some call a deer-like wolf". And, of course despite Marcos de Obregon, in his time the sight of the lynx had definitively cornered the prodigious sight of Lynceus as a proverbial model. Cervantes himself resorts to the sight of the lynx in *Lady Cornelia* and in the comedy *Pedro de Urdemalas* (vv.720 ff.; Bizzarri 2015: 65): "Luego fui mozo de mulas, / […]; / gran jugador de las cuatro, / y con la sola le vi / dar tan mortales heridas, / que no se pueden decir. / Berrugeta y ballestilla, / el raspadillo y hollín / jugaba por excelencia, / y el Mase Juan hi de ruin. / Gran saje del espejuelo, / y del retén tan sotil, / que no se le viera un lince / con los antojos del Cid" (Literal translation into English: After I took care of the mules, / […], / great player from the cardgame "*las cuatro*" / and with only one I saw him / give such mortal injuries, / that it is not possible to say. / Berrugeta and ballestilla, / raspadillo and hollín [different moves in the cardgame], / he played so excellent / and master Juan just as mean. / Great play of the espejuelo / and of the reten subtle, / that not even a lynx would see / with the whim of the Cid"). And the "lynx' sight" also reappears in chapter XVI of the second part of *Don Quixote* (Bizzarri 2015: 216): "Sometimes I eat with my neighbours and friends, and many times I invite them; my treats are clean and neat, and nothing scarce; neither do I like to murmur, nor do I consent that in front of me one murmurs; I do not scrutinize the lives of others, nor am I a lynx of the deeds of others".

In French, the "yeux de lynx" appear as early as the 13th century, in the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung, in a particularly significant context, since the allusion is based directly on the text of Boethius (explicitly quoted, together with Aristotle), but the lynx has already definitively replaced Lynceus[47]: "mes s'il eüssent euz de lins", v. 8901; "ainsinc le raconte Boeces / sages hom et plein de proeces, / et tret a tesmoign Aristote / qui la parole ainsinc li note, / car linx a la regardeüre / si fort, si percent et si pure / qu'il voit tout quan que l'en li moutre / et dehors et dedenz toutre", vv.8919 ff.[48]. Later, the eyes of the lynx are documented, of course, in the greats of French literature, such as Marivaux (*Les serments indiscrets* II, 1: "Notre vanité qui a des yeux de lynx") or Montesquieu (*Lettres perses* 148: "Je soupçonne Zélis d'être celle à qui la lettre que vous avez surprise s'adressait: examinez cela avec des yeux de lynx"); like the Italian "occhi(o) di lince" u "occhii lincei", already documented in Boccaccio's *Lettere volgari*: "Io per me credo certo che uomo tale (ed uomo lo chiamo a giudicio degli occhi nostri, che non veggiano con occhi lincei...)"[49]; and a century and a half later Ludovico Ariosto attributes to the "lynx eyes" the same prodigies that the ancient texts said of Lynceus eyes: "Ma se fin dove col pensier penètro / avessi, a penetrarvi, occhi lincei, / o' muri trasparesser com vetro, / forse occupati in cosa li vedrei

[46] See Satorre Grau (2015: 109-110).

[47] As Roger Bacon did (at the same time, but writing in Latin), who, also quoting Boethius and Aristotle, substitutes Lynceus for the lynx and attributes to him the faculty to cross the walls with his gaze: *de lynce, qui videt per mediam parietem* (*Opus maius ad Clementem Quartum* IX 2).

[48] We follow the edition of Félix Lecoy. Paris: Éditions Champion, 1979.

[49] "Epistola di Giovanni da Certaldo a Zanobi da Strada", ed. Florencia: Stamperia Magheri, 1834, 107.

/ che iustissima causa di celarsi / avrian dal sol, non che da gli ochi miei" (*Satires* II 88-93). Just a century later, in 1603, the Accademia dei Lincei is created, so called because the sharp vision attributed to the lynx symbolizes the vision needed by those who devote themselves to science to observe and study phenomena.

"Ter olhos de lince" say the Portuguese (and the Galicians), "to have lynx eyes" and "lynx-eyed" the English speakers, "Augen haben wie ein Luchs" the Germans[50]. The sight of the lynx has definitely displaced the very sharp eyes of Lynceus.

CONCLUSIONS

The locution "to have lynx' eyes/eyesight" is an example of the heritage that the European languages have received from classical antiquity, in which our cultural and linguistic tradition sinks its roots. These expressions can undergo changes over time, determined by a wide variety of factors, the common denominator of which is the need to adapt to each of the stages they go through in that long journey. In the case that has occupied us, the original Greek expression, later adopted by the Latins, is "to have eyes/vision of Lynceus", a character of the Greek myth to which a very sharp sight was attributed, capable of crossing solid objects (walls, rocks, trees, and even the earth to discover the metals hidden under it). Probably starting in the Middle Ages, the increasingly unknown Lynceus was replaced by the more common lynx, by the similarity of the name; and although Erasmus dedicates to the expression a splendid commentary in his *Adagia*, in which he gathers many ancient texts that show that in the original Greek expression the prodigious eyes belonged to Lynceus and not to a lynx, in modern languages the medieval variant has ended up triumphing with the name of the animal.

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[50] As in ancient Greek, in many modern languages the lynx shares proverbiality, as far as visual acuity is concerned, with other animals, especially the eagle and the hawk.

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