

BOOK REVIEW

Forgotten Stars: Rediscovering Manilius' Astronomica. Edited by STEVEN J. GREEN and KATHARINA VOLK. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xix + 342. Hardcover, £79.00/\$150.00. ISBN 978-0-19-958646-2.

(Table of Contents available at <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199586462.001.0001/acprof-9780199586462>)

The late-Augustan didactic poet Manilius has largely been eclipsed in the passions of Anglophone classicists by his predecessors Lucretius and Vergil. This enlightening volume—a fusion of philosophical, epistemological, literary-critical, and reception-studies approaches—endeavors to correct course by gathering some of the luminaries of Latin poetry to put Manilius' *Astronomica* under the telescope. From my vantage point: mission accomplished.

Space here allows only a brief flyby of the 17 contributions to this rich constellation of Manilian scholarship, while homing in on a few of the work's brightest stars. Katharina Volk's introduction gives a structured, thematic overview of prior scholarship, keyed to the current essays, while Elaine Fantham provides a perfunctory précis of Roman thoughts about celestial phenomena. Thomas Habinek, in a dense but worthwhile chapter, sets *Astronomica* up as evidence for diachronic change in Stoic physical theories, against the scholarly conventional wisdom of a static Stoic physics. Daryn Lehoux starts strong, discussing Manilius' embrace of scientific and mythological explanations simultaneously (he's a Stoic "consciously *writing* allegory," 50) as an exemplar of ancient discourses of knowledge, but her conclusion is rather nebulous.

John Henderson, presenting Manilius in control of both material and poetics, undertakes a stellar m(i/a)croanalysis of a problematic early passage (1.215–46). No gravity here: all fun and eccentricity, showing systematic linkages between Manilian words and "worldview," Hender's jargon playing up the artistic value of Manilius'. Discontinuity isn't proof of failure in Manilius' imagery—it is his imagery. Hend., as only He. can, blasts off on a journey t(hr)o(ugh) the cosmos, where we voyagers can observe new horizons of Maniliness and Manilian curiosity.

Wolfgang-Rainer Mann, on the same wavelength but a different trajectory, offers two instances (both focused on the didact's implied student) where repositioning a supposed Manilian "contradiction" within the mindset of a sophisticated but non-expert Stoic resolves the issue. Mann and Henderson diverge from Volk, who sees Manilius' contradictions as "the unintentional ... by-product" of his using traditional discourses and metaphors (107)—like Lucretius, but on accident. Volk constructs a useful typology of Manilius' inconsistencies and suggests that Roman readers may not have experienced them as such. But her argument is essentially that Manilius isn't in control of his text—and while skirting the black hole of authorial intent, I'd say that such assessments seem inconsistent with this volume's overarching spin on Manilius as a poet equal to his (Augustan) age.

Stephen Green's sociopolitical reading of Manilius' didaxis strikes me as the book's zenith, its most provocative, innovative chapter. Green—reading, frankly, from his own subject-position—argues that Manilius deliberately constructs a lesson doomed to fail, a didactic addressee prone to despair and resistance. Why? "[T]o ensure that astrology remains an ... ultimately inaccessible craft" (135), thus unthreatening to the Emperor. This resolution of the failure of Manilian didaxis is better than merely attributing it to poetic/authorial inadequacy, but I'm not yet persuaded that didactic failure equals "a subtle form of imperial propaganda" (138). Missing from Green's argument: the "*Mega nepios*" anthology (*MD* 31) focused on the addressee in didactic, particularly Mitsis on the rocky relationship between the Lucretian didact and *his* addressee Memmius.

Wolfgang Hübner's imagery study shows that Manilius' *carmen* and *res* are very closely related—*figura* is both a stylistic device and an astronomical entity. Duncan Kennedy, like Lehoux, uses *Astronomica* as an instance of competing narratives in science historiography. He furthermore identifies Manilius' thematic interest in "the power of mathematical *ratio* to realize Rome's faltering imperial fantasy" (186). Patrick Glauthier's well-executed word study shows Manilius depicting his poetry as the stars' remuneration for their services (*viz.*, influence on earthly affairs).

Monica Gale argues persuasively that formal set-piece digressions (e.g.: the Myth of Ages) become a characteristic feature of didactic in which any predecessor, not only the most recent, is (by "accretion," 206) a valid intertext. Manilius' "anthropology" inverts Hesiod, Lucretius, and *Georgics* while contrasting with Aratus; his plague and war scenes in late Book 1 invert Lucretius and extend

Georgics; his version of the seasons links Roman *imperium* with stellar influence. All three digressions are, for Gale, markedly pro-Augustan. Josèphe-Henriette Abry (whose essay was posthumously revised by Green) sees Manilius' Milky Way, digression on the lengths of days, and description of the inhabited world as modeled on or in dialogue with (respectively) the Forum Augustum, the Horologium, and the "Map" of Agrippa, all in an exhibition of ancestral virtue, worldly power, and *imperium sine fine*. In other words: cosmos reflects Roman empire. James Uden presents Manilius' anomalously unerotic Andromeda epyllion as a "figurative space', where themes and motifs from the poem can be explored and recombined in new, metaphorical forms" (236).

Enrico Flores, the first of a small-but-super cluster on the reception of Manilius, uses allusions to *Astronomica* in Claudian's *In Rufinum* as evidence that Manilius was writing about Augustus while Augustus yet lived. Manilian verses praising Augustus serve as a fitting intertext for Claudian's praise of the Augustus Honorius. Caroline Stark explores how Lorenzo Bonincontri and Giovanni Pontano use Manilius' "anthropology" and epistemological views in reconciling deterministic astrology with Christian free-will doctrine. Stephan Heilen investigates Bonincontri's modification of Manilius to make comets, though ill-omened, nevertheless a possible agent of positive moral change (by scaring people into better behavior). Heilen also produces a partial edition of Bonincontri's commentary on his own *De Rebus Naturalibus et Divinis*.

All told, *Forgotten Stars* is an admirable collection that opens fruitful new pathways for inquiry into Manilius' *Astronomica*. This book—like Manilius himself!—is required reading for scholars of ancient philosophy, didactic poetry, and Augustan literature.

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