

*Myrtia*, nº 26 (2011)

Katharina Volk, *Manilius and his Intellectual Background*, Oxford 2009, 314 pages.

Katharina Volk explains in the preface that she decided to write a book about Manilius' *Astronomica* when she discovered that it had "not yet been the subject of an English-language monograph." She states that she has been helped by many friends and colleagues, but that her chief inspiration was G.P. Goold's excellent Loeb edition of the poet.

On page 1 V. mentions the fact that "not a single contemporary or later Roman writer mentions Manilius." I would like to point out, however, that Manilius is alluded to by Propertius. At 2,32,11 ff. Propertius states that Cynthia cares nothing for the pleasures of Rome. According to Burman, the following text for line 14 was supplied in the margin of an early edition: *flumina suspenso quaeque Anione cadunt*. Burman explained that there is an allusion here to the fact that the Anio was conveyed to Rome in an aqueduct. For a description of aqueducts cf. Manilius 4,259-265. The words *suspenso ...Anione = suspendere rivos* at Manilius 4,265: cf. my *Studies In The Text Of Propertius* (Athens 2002), page 71. For the aqueduct called *Aqua Virgo* cf. G.I.F. 2003, page 261. According to legend, the source of the *Aqua Virgo* was discovered by a little girl: cf. Sir Paul Harvey, *The Oxford Companion To Classical Literature* (Oxford 1969), s.v. Aqueducts. Rutilius Namatianus mentions streams suspended on airy arches: cf. line 97 *aerio pendentes fornice rivos*. Water from the Anio supplied the aqueducts called *Anio Vetus* and *Anio Novus*.

At Propertius 4,1, 147 ff. Horos warns the poet to beware of the constellation of the Crab. According to Manilius (2,453 ff. ) the Crab rules the human heart (*pectus*). Propertius is warned by the astrologer Horos to beware of the Crab, because Propertius was known to be a victim of the god Amor: cf. my *Studies*, pages 129 ff.

On pages 2-3 V. discusses the history of the text of Manilius. She notes that Manilius was edited by Scaliger and Bentley, as well as by A.E. Housman, who devoted several decades of his life to his famous editions of the *Astronomica*. More recently the manuscript tradition of Manilius' poem has been studied by Reeve and Flores.

On page 138 V. explains that Scaliger and Bentley considered that Manilius' poem was written when Augustus was the ruler of Rome. She states that "humanist manuscripts and early editions were often given titles such as *Marci Manilii poetae clarissimi astronomicon libri V ad Caesarem Augustum*. V. adds that "the only clear reference to a historical event useful for dating purposes is found in I. 898-903, where

Manilius mentions the disastrous Roman defeat in the Battle at Teutoburg Forest in AD 9.”

According to Karl Lachmann, however, Manilius wrote his poem for the emperor Tiberius at some time after 14 AD. V. explains that “Lachmann’s thesis led to a fierce controversy that continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” Scholars are still divided between those who favour an Augustan date for the poem, and those who argue that the poem was written during the reign of Tiberius. On page 139 V. discusses I. 7-10. I would like to suggest that Augustus is said to rule the scale of Libra (*orbem*), which obeys Augustus’ laws (*Augustis parentem legibus*). Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *orbis* l: “Of the scale of a balance: *instabilis natat alterno depressior orbe*. Tib. 4,1, 44”. Augustus is said by Ovid (*Met.* 15,832 ff.) to provide laws, and thus to direct the ways of men. Cf. also Virgil, *Aen.* 12,725 where Jupiter is said to weigh the fate of men in the scales of the balance.

On page 147 V. notes that “Augustus was born on 23 September 63 BC, shortly before sunrise.” She adds that “at this moment, the sun was in Libra.”

On page 148 V. discusses Vergil, *Georgics* 1.32-5. Vergil connects Augustus with Libra, i.e. the scales of Justice. On page 153 V. discusses 4.547-52. V. argues that this “positive description of the monarch born at the rising of Libra (*Chelae*) is a clear reference to Augustus, who, as we have seen, had the sign in the ascendant at his birth.” Augustus is said to hold the scales of life and death as a judge, and to put his yoke on the lands and to impose his laws.

On page 154 V. discusses 4. 763-6. Manilius refers here to the island of Rhodes. I would like to suggest that Manilius means that Tiberius is going to rule the scales of Libra (*orbem*): *Rhodos hospitium recturi principis orbem*. Thus Manilius states that Rhodes is the abode of the man who is going to rule the scales. V. notes that Manilius is alluding to “Tiberius’ sojourn on the island from 6 BC to AD 2.” Tiberius was given *tribunicia potestas* and appointed *legatus Augusti*: cf. *Habis* 33, 2002, page 125.

On page 156 V. discusses A.P. 9,287, where Tiberius is said to be the future Zeus, i.e. the emperor. Tiberius was adopted by Augustus and named as his successor.

On page 157 V. quotes 4. 773-7. In this passage, Manilius states that Libra was the sign of “the foundation of Rome”. She adds that Rome “holds the decision over all things and raises and lowers the peoples placed in her scales (*lancibus*).”

Manilius adds that Caesar has now founded the city in a better way, and directs the scale of the balance (*orbem*) that hangs on his commands.

On page 158 f. V. notes that “Rome’s birthday was traditionally believed to be 21 April, in keeping with the story that Romulus founded the city at the time of

the spring festival *Parilia*.” The festival of the *Parilia* was mentioned by both Propertius and Ovid: cf. my *Studies*, page 118.

On page 168 V. notes that Augustus was given the titles *pater patriae* and *princeps*. For these two titles cf. Nisbet-Hubbard’s note on Horace, Odes 1,2,50.

On page 172 V. states that she has argued that the *Astronomica* “was composed in the last years of Augustus’ reign, that is, between AD 9 and 14.”

On page 250 (note 59) V. discusses the constellation Lyra, which is mentioned by Manilius at 1.329-30: *nunc sidera ducit/ et rapit immensum mundi revolubilis orbem* (“now it is leading the stars and carries along the enormous sphere of the turning heavens.” V. suggests that “this may be a further allusion to the music of the spheres, which was often associated with the sound of the heptachord lyre.” It is also possible that *orbem* refers to the scales of Libra. Thus Manilius means that the constellation of the Lyre carries along with it the scales of Libra. Aratus mentions the Lyre together with the Phantom and the Claws (*Chelae = Libra*) at *Phaenomena* 612 ff.

Conclusion. This is a very learned and interesting book. Katharina Volk has studied all the literary and astronomical background to the poem in great detail, and provides the reader with a comprehensive introduction to Manilius’ poetry. Her discussion of the dating of the poem is very informative and well argued. The author should be congratulated on the production of a fascinating tool of research, from which we can all learn much about this important area of classical scholarship.

Heather White  
Universidad de Londres