

Man. 5.604: Pseudoetymological Figures in *Astronomica*[†]

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1 Introduction

In the fifth book of *Astronomica*, Manilius describes the so-called paranatellonta (i.e., constellations rising with each of the zodiacal signs) and their effects. At the end of the Andromeda episode in which the poet depicts the battle of Perseus against Cetus¹, the text is somewhat obscure:

efflat et in caelum pelagus mergitque volentem
sanguineis undis pontumque exstillat in astra (Man. 5.603-604)

exstillat **M**: extollit **GL**

The Loeb translation is as follows²:

it spouts forth sea towards heaven, drenches its winged assailant with a blood-stained deluge,
and sends in spray the ocean to the stars.

Most editors adopt M's reading, but they do not give a sufficient explanation of *exstillat*. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to argue that *exstillat* is defensible and fits with Manilius' style.

2 *Exstillat* or *extollit*: Discussions in Manilian Scholarship

³Earlier editors did not find any difficulty in the passage; neither Scaliger nor Bentley have been troubled by the verse and accepted the reading of GL³.

It was Jacob who first preferred *exstillat* to *extollit*, though he did not give any explanation, and

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¹ In this famous episode, Manilius obviously imitates Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: on the relationship between Ovid and Manilius, see Flores 1960: 54-56; Flores 1966: 29-32.

² Goold 1977: 349.

³ ³Scaliger 1579: 132; Bentley 1739: 295.

Breiter rejected *extollit* because of its exaggerated meaning⁴.

Housman, the most eminent critic in Manilian scholarship, accepted Jacob's text and remarked that the poet had imitated Vergil's *Aeneid* here:

604 exstillat M, extollit GL. illud multo significantius est recteque ab Iacobo receptum, etsi usus transitiui, de quo in simplici uerbo constat, exemplum in hoc quidem composito non uidetur extare; nam de Colum. XII 50 2 parum liquet. imitatur Verg. Aen. III 567 *spumam elisam et rorantia uidimus astra* (Housman 1930: 76-77)

Even if we admit the resemblance and accept Housman's interpretation, the exact meaning of *exstillat* still remains obscure.

In 1984 Jones dissented from Housman's view and proposed to take GL's reading *extollit*: he argued that *exstillo* means the downward movement of liquids and in other cases it is always intransitive⁵. He found approval only with Liuzzi who also rejected Housman's view and denied Manilius' imitation of Vergil because of the difference in context⁶. But if we take *extollit* with Jones, the quasitautological repetition (*efflat et in caelum pelagus and pontumque extollit in astra*) seems awkward, if not intolerable.

On the other hand, recent scholars, especially Flores⁷ and Hübner⁸, retain the reading of M, though both of them recognize the unusual meaning of *exstillo*.

3 Survey of the Manuscript Tradition

^{p.66}Before examining the meaning of *exstillo*, we shall give a brief survey of the manuscript tradition of *Astronomica*. Among all the manuscripts of Manilius, the most important ones are the following:

- M = codex Matritensis 3678
- G = codex Gemblacensis (Bruxellensis 10012)
- L = codex Lipsiensis 1465

Since G and L descend from the same parent α^9 , one can not adopt the reading of GL simply by majority,

⁴ 'extollit pontum wäre übertrieben; exstillat m (*sic*) ist angemessen' (Breiter 1908: 172).

⁵ 'Given Housman's note one might pass over the transitive use here, especially as *exstillo* is not common word, but the resemblance it bears to its usual sense is so slight, apart from this, that doubts obtrude' (Jones 1984: 139).

⁶ Liuzzi 1997: 150-151.

⁷ Italian translation: 'buffa anche zampilli verso il cielo e sommerge il volante | avversario con getti sanguigni e spruzza fino agli astri l'oceano.' According to the commentary, there is a semantic innovation: 'Il verbo *exstillo* viene opposto al più ovvio e naturale *destillo*, che esprime il cadere delle gocce dall'alto, e risulterebbe una innovazione semantica assoluta di Manilio' (Feraboli et al. 2001: ad loc.).

⁸ German translation: 'Sie sprüht Meerwasser zum Himmel empor und taucht den Fliegenden (Perseus) | in blutrote Wellen und spritzt das Meerwasser hoch zu den Sternen' (Hübner 2010: ad loc.).

⁹ ^{p.66}On the *stemma codicum*, see Goold 1985: XI.

and the fact that *exstillat* is a *lectio difficilior* requires careful consideration.

4 Grammatical Problems

Jones asserts that *exstillo* can be used only intransitively and means the downward movement of liquids. In this passage, there are two difficulties: (1) the transitive use of *exstillo* and (2) a contradictory movement of drops (downward (*exstillat*) or upward (*in astra*)).

First, if we take into account the feature of *e(x)*- compounds in *Astronomica*, it is not unlikely that the poet uses it as a transitive verb. At the end of the first proem, the poet prays for the success of his enterprise:

ut possim rerum tantas emergere moles (Man. 1.116)

Here *emergere* is troublesome; Bentley emended it and read *evincere*, but modern editors retain the transmitted text. If *emergere* is sound and used transitively, the phrase can have two meanings: (1) by analogy to *eluctari*, *emergere* means ‘to surmount, overcome’ (Housman, Goold), or (2) on the basis of its reflexive use, we can take *emergere* to mean ‘to bring forth, bring to light, disclose’ (Liuzzi, Fels).

So far as I know, this verb is almost always used intransitively in classical Latin, but the cases of Catullus (64.14) and *Appendix Vergiliana* (*Dirae* 57) which are substantially reflexive can make its transitive use less awkward. Apart from classical writers we can find its transitive use in the *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours (*Hist.* 6.15)¹⁰. Therefore *exstillat* should not be discarded solely ^{p.67}because of its transitive use.

Second, it is somewhat puzzling that the movement of *exstillat* is downward, while *in astra* seems to suggest an upward direction. If we take *in astra* as ‘on to stars’ and assume that *mergit* implies a downward movement, Perseus must be flying higher than stars, and it is quite incomprehensible. This problem, I think, will be solved by assuming that the preposition *in* indicates manner or form rather than direction¹¹. However, this interpretation needs a more detailed examination of the verse and it will be discussed in the next section.

5 Manilius’ Pseudoetymological Figures

Let us examine the meaning of *exstillat* in the present context more closely.

Since the poet not infrequently makes use of pseudoetymological (or paretymological) figures, it will be found that here the poet suggests the connection between *stillat* and *stella*.

¹⁰ See also *TLL* s.v. *emerge* 473.39-43.

¹¹ ^{p.67}I.e. ‘as though to become stars’ or ‘fashioned like stars’ etc. See *OLD* s.v. *in* 18a, c; Kühner-Stegmann §107e. This usage of *in* is usually accompanied by *modum* etc., but not necessarily: ‘(equum) pellis aenis | in plumam (= in modum plumae) squamis auro conserta tegebat’ (Verg. *Aen.* 11.770-771). Manilius himself uses this kind of *in*: ‘Euxinus Scythicos pontus sinuatus in arcus’ (Man. 4.755).

In fact, we find a passage of Quintilian where he mentions a *clarus in litteris* and criticizes his pseudoetymological explanation of *stella*¹²:

sic pervenimus eo usque ut '*stella*' luminis *stilla* credatur, cuius etymologiae auctorem clarum sane in litteris nominari in ea parte qua a me reprehenditur inhumanum est. (Quint. *Inst.* 1.6.35)

This pareymology may have its origin in Stoic thought; since *Astronomica*'s world view agrees with that of the Stoics¹³ and the poet probably was well acquainted with their doctrine, it will not be surprising that he made use of the etymological theory of this school¹⁴.

The following passages will prove Manilius' tendency to use pseudoetymological figures:

In the first proem, Manilius invokes the help of Augustus:

^{p.68}qui regis augustis parentem legibus orbem, (Man. 1.7)

Although it is a sort of allusion rather than an etymological figure, the poet implies the Emperor himself through the phrase *augustis legibus*.

insignemque facit caelato lumine mundum. (Man. 1.680)

caelato lumine **O** *prob. van Wageningen, Liuzzi: lato caelamine Garrod, Goold: caelato culmine Housman, Flores*

Whether it needs correction or not, one can see a connection between *caelare* and *caelum*. Pliny the Elder attributes this pareymological explanation of *caelum* to Varro¹⁵. A little later text states:

namque in caeruleo candens nitet orbita mundo
ceum missura diem subito caelumque recludens, (Man. 1.703-704)

Describing the Milky Way, Manilius suggests another etymological figure which can find modern linguistic support¹⁶.

In the second book, he emphasizes the absolute authority of Fortune and asks:

¹² Of course, phonetically there is a difference: *stella* has a long \bar{e} , while *stilla* etymologically has a short \check{i} ; it is, however, uncertain whether or not ancient grammarians were aware of the quantitative difference. For other explanations, see Maltby 1991: s.v. *stella*.

¹³ On the intellectual background of *Astronomica*, see Volk 2009: 226-258. She points out that Stoicism exerted the largest influence upon this work.

¹⁴ On the relationship between Manilius' symbolical language and Stoic allegory, see Schrijvers 1983: 149; on the affiliation of *Astronomica* with Stoic poetry, see Takeshita 2016: 32-38.

¹⁵ ^{p.68}'equidem et consensu gentium moveor; namque et Graeci nomine ornamenti appellavere eum et nos a perfecta absolutaque elegantia mundum. caelum quidem haut dubie caelati argumento diximus, ut interpretatur M. Varro. adiuvat rerum ordo discripto circulo qui signifer vocatur in duodecim animalium effigies et per illas solis cursus congruens tot saeculis ratio' (Plin. *NH* 2.3.8). See also Isid. *Etym.* 13.4.1.

¹⁶ *Caerulus* and *caeruleus* come from **caelulus* by dissimilation. Cf. de Vaan 2008: s.v. *caelum*.

quod Fortuna ratum faciat, quis dicere falsum
 audeat et tantae suffragia vincere sortis? (Man. 2.134-135)

Here one can find the connection between ‘reckoned, certain’ (*ratum*) and ‘reason’ (*ratio*) which means the rule of fate not infrequently found in *Astronomica*¹⁷.

In 2.443, describing the correspondence between zodiacal signs and Olympian gods, Manilius uses *Mavors*¹⁸, the archaic form of Mars and suggests its connection with *mors* (‘death’)¹⁹.

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6 Conclusion

^{p.69}To return to the verses in question, they can be translated as follows:

it spouts forth sea towards heaven, drenches its winged assailant with a blood-stained deluge,
 and lets fall the ocean in drops just like stars²⁰.

The difficulty pointed out by Jones is not crucial and will be resolved, or at least reduced. In addition, the pseudoetymological figure between *stilla* and *astra* (= *stellae*) fits with Manilius’ style, as shown above. It is therefore concluded that the poet wrote *exstillat* with the intention of alluding to the connection between a ‘drop’ (*stilla*) and a ‘star’ (*stella*)²¹.

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¹⁷ Lühr 1969: 182 thinks it is one of the instances equal to *fatum*. In addition, Feraboli et al. 1996: 304 quote Varro’s testimony: ‘quod enim fit rite, id ratum ac rectum est’ (Varro, *Lat.* 7.88).

¹⁸ ‘pugnax Mavorti Scorpios haeret’ (Man. 2.443). It may be an imitation of Lucretius (1.32). ‘He (= Mars) is also a symbol of disintegration, and indeed of death: it may well be that Lucretius uses the archaic form *Mavors* here, and only here, in order to underline the connection between Mars and *Mors*’ (Wormell 1960: 61).

¹⁹ Furthermore, the following passages show that Manilius also had an interest in Greek etymology: 1.292-293 (*axis* (ἄξων) and ἄγεσθαι, see Malchin 1893: 19; or ἄμαξα, see Feraboli et al. 1996: 223-224), 2.81 (*frons* and φροντίς, see ^{p.69}Feraboli et al. 1996: 304), 4.729-730 (μαῦρος and ἄμαυρός, on the color of Mauretians), and 5.350 (Κένταυρος and κεντεῖν).

²⁰ If we consider *astra* (= *stellas*) as ‘shooting-stars’, their downward movement corresponds to Manilius’ own description of shooting-stars: ‘praecipites stellae passimque volare videntur’ (Man. 1.847).

²¹ So Manilius not only imitates Ovid (*belua puniceo mixtos cum sanguine fluctus | ore vomit; maduere graves aspergine penna*, *Ov. Met.* 4.728-729), but also adds a new image.

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