Jane Lightfoot

Chapter 2
Stars of a lesser magnitude: some glimmerings from the corpus of astrological poetry ascribed to Manetho

Greek and Latin astrological literature is neglected (to put it no more strongly), which is precisely why it exerts such an appeal to someone looking for an *entrée* to the ancient world other than through the well-charted routes marked out by canonical texts. What one finds is a topic whose interest is limited only by the intellectual range of the exegete. If ever there was a counterbalance to the literature of elites, this is it. What it has to say about the blessings and woes brought about by the stars is full of enlightment about social attitudes and values, the economy and workforce, and a popular morality which is very different from, say, the language of public inscriptions.[1] It tells us about the mentality of the world that gave rise to astrology in the first place. My particular interest is in a corpus of six poetic books amounting to about three thousand hexameters in total.[2] The earliest part of the collection can be dated because the poet gives his own horoscope for a date in AD 80 (ps.-Man. 6.738–50). But other parts of the corpus reach into later antiquity, perhaps as far as the fifth century. They go under the name of Manetho, but all we can say about their real authors is that the corpus is certainly Egyptian.

Because the Manethoniana are so unfamiliar a lot of spade-work was called for, and this paper involves some first-level exposition. It falls into two parts.

I

The first aims to frame the subject within a discussion of anonymity. We are dealing here with a case of pseudepigraphy.

The Manethoniana are demonstrably by different authors and were bundled together by an unknown editor. The speaker in two of the books, the first and the fifth, purports to address ‘Ptolemy’.[3] It is a plausible guess that the speaker is meant to be the Egyptian priest and religious expert Manetho who compiled a famous Egyptian history under the Ptolemies.[4] But he does not identify himself explicitly, and the ascription to Manetho rests on headings in

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[1] I refer to public inscriptions, especially honorific, in which the rhetoric of selfless devotion to the common good is quite outfaced by the get-ahead careerism of astrology. Private inscriptions are another matter. The sepulchral inscriptions discussed by Hunter in this volume (Chapter 12) raise a different set of questions, for which see n. 33 below.

[2] For many years the standard editions were the two by Hermann Koechly (1851 and 1858). Koechly was a brilliant textual critic, and the first edition benefits from his critical notes, but both are vitiated by the absence of a proper critical apparatus. That is to be had in the edition of Lopilato 1998 (available online), although, not being at the foot of the page, it is difficult to consult, and based on questionable anti-Koechly-ism. A satisfactory critical edition has only recently been supplied by De Stefani 2017. My edition is in two parts: the first (Lightfoot 2020) deals with books two, three, and six, and a second volume will contain the remainder.

[3] References to numeration are to the traditional order of books as they appear in the manuscript. This does not necessarily represent the order in which the books were written, and Koechly and De Stefani in practice reorder 2, 3, 6, 4, 1, 5. The only possible source of confusion stemming from this is that Koechly placed, in brackets after the traditional numeration, the book-numbers resulting from his rearrangement (II (I), III (II), VI (III), etc.).

[4] The testimonia and fragments of Manetho are cited from *BNJ* 609, edited by Lang 2014 (superseding the old entry in *FGrH* 609). See Lightfoot 2020: 42.

the manuscript, which is ninth century.

Astrological literature, and specifically astrological poetry, circulated in Egypt under different names. At least some of it carried false ascriptions. Certainly the earliest Greek-language astrological corpus into which we have any insight, that of Nechepso(s) and Petosiris, used ancient authority-figures to bolster its prestige. Nechepso(s) properly means 'Nechepso the Wise' (though the epithet became obsolete and ceased to be comprehended) and refers to the Pharaoh Necho II (610–595 BC);[5] Petosiris is the classical version of Petese, a legendary priest of Heliopolis who is depicted in the Nechepso–Petosiris literature as a conduit of ancient wisdom and the king's adviser.[6] On these two worthies was fathered a corpus of fifteen books whose exact nature is unclear (organised collection or tralatician assemblage?),[7] at least some of which was apparently in verse. The verse passages include an intriguing fragment in which the speaker, Nechepso, apparently told how he received a night-time revelation from a voice concealed within a dark cloak (fr. 1 Riess / Heilen; see Heilen 2011: 37–56): more of this later. On the other hand, there is no reason to regard either Dorotheus or Anubion as pseudepigraphs. Dorotheus was the author of a very influential astrological poem in five books of hexameters. He too was Egyptian and apparently lived in the first century AD.[8] Anubion, author of an astrological poem in elegiacs, is a figure we are learning more about, especially through and after Dirk Obbink's 2006 edition based on the new Oxyrhynchus fragments.[9] It does not look as if Anubion was pseudepigraphical either, because the name is so common.[10] But it does seem that he was known well enough for his name to be usable as that of a generic astrologer, because an 'Annubion' appears in this role in the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.[11] That would give us the terminus *ante quem* of the second century AD if we think that work was trading on the fame of the poet.

Manetho is one of the pseudepigraphs. The name Manetho is extremely rare.[12] Whoever used it for the astrological verse must have been trying to evoke the Ptolemaic priest as an authority-figure and good source for recondite teaching. Josephus is our main testimony for him and says that he composed his history using sacred documents translated from the Egyptian (*Ap.* 1.73 = Man. *BNJ* 609 T7a). If that was a point made by Manetho himself in (say) the preface to his work, it made him a good figure with whom to associate the cultural transmission of 'alien wisdom' into Greek.

The Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus (*d.* after 810) quotes a letter written

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[5] The correct Demotic form of the name is Nechepsos, but classical authors, including Valens and Firmicus, often call him Nechepso. On nomenclature, see Ryholt 2011: 63–6; Heilen 2011: 25–9 and 2015: 544–51; Lightfoot 2020: 26 n. 49.

[6] On Petosiris, and his possible connection with the literary figure of another Heliopolitan priest, Petese, who was wise in astrological lore and, Hellenised as Peteesis, was Plato's teacher during his time in Egypt (P. Ryl. 63), see Heilen 2011: 29–30 and 2015: 540–4; Lightfoot 2020: 54.

[7] Pingree 2008; Moyer 2011, esp. 228–48. The collection of fragments is still that of Riess 1892.

[8] See Pingree 2008a; edition by Pingree 1976.

[9] Obbink 2006 (containing editions of P. Oxy. 4503, 4504, 4505); Schubert 2015 (containing an edition of P. Gen. IV 157, published subsequently to Obbink).

[10] Obbink 1999: 58 suggested the name might be 'a suitably theophoric pseudonym'. This was not, however, the view of Bremmer 2005: 314 (and Obbink 1999: 61 had indeed noted that the name was common). Weinstock 1952: 216–17 considered the possibility of pseudonymity, but rejected it on the grounds that Anubion was a common Greek name and there seems little reason to choose the name for a pseudepigraph if it had no particular resonance, that of an authority [if it lacked the resonance of an authority (?)] with cachet.

[11] Bremmer 2005: 313–17; Schubert 2012: 195 and 2015: ix–xiv.

[12] All the more so if the two sole remaining attestations (Manetho *BNJ* 609 T4 and 5) themselves refer to the historian, though that is uncertain.

by ‘Manetho’ to Ptolemy II (*BNJ* 609 F 25). This letter is not genuine. Nor was the work at whose head it stood, apparently a late-antique Egyptian king-list.[13] But the point is that it shows that in late antiquity – say the fourth or fifth century AD – the name of Manetho was associated with the transmission of ancient Egyptian wisdom into Greek. This stock motif occurs again in the fifth book of the Manethoniana, setting forth how the wisdom of ‘Hermes’ and ‘Asclepius’ concerning the heavenly stars has come to be transcribed, preserved and eventually served up to king ‘Ptolemy’ (ps.-Man. 5.1–11). In sum: Manetho would be a good person with whom to associate the transmission of ancient, native wisdom.

But when did he begin to be associated with astrological subject-matter? The earliest clear attestation of star-poetry under the name of Manetho is not until the astrological compiler Hephaestion (born AD 380).[14] He certainly quotes from the first book (at 2.4.27, quoting ps.-Man. 1.167–9) and possibly alludes to others,[15] though what he says about them are not good parallels for what we have in the corpus as transmitted to us. In short, Hephaestion is not enormously helpful, because he adds nothing to an attribution (namely that of book 1) which was secure already. Concerning the other books, given the uncertainty about what Hephaestion is actually alluding to, it remains unclear when and how they were swept up into the Manethonian net. For them, all we have are the ascriptions in the manuscript itself, which, as we have seen, is ninth century.

As I have also said, it is books 1 and 5 which address a king Ptolemy, even though Manetho’s own name is absent. This is certainly Philadelphus in book 5, because he is married incestuously to queen Arsinoe (5.207–8). It looks as if this book is reflecting a similar tradition to the one in the spurious letter of Manetho addressed to Ptolemy II in Syncellus. But alongside that, the prologues of these books suggest that the author was still drawing on the topoi of the Nechepso–Petosiris literature. That literature began in the second century BC, and it remains a shaping influence for astrological literature into late antiquity. The connection is quite explicit: Petosiris is named expressly in both books, in the fifth as ‘much the dearest person to me’ (11), in the first as the source which the poet is now recasting in epic hexameters (11–12). But the extent to which (Nechepso and) Petosiris make themselves felt has not been properly realised – was not even realisable until the recent discovery of Demotic papyri from the temple library in Tebtunis. The crucial texts are still not fully published,[16] but it is clear that they reveal a lot more about the native tradition concerning Nechepsos and Petese (to give them their Egyptian names). We can now see that book 5 of the Manethoniana follows its footsteps in a number of ways.

In the first place, they appeal to the same two deities. The Greek ‘Hermes’ and ‘Asclepius’ (5.2, 4) are not, as one might have assumed, the gods familiar from the Hermetic corpus, but the deified Egyptian wise men Amenhotep and Imhotep, a familiar pairing in

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[13] The Book of Sothis: see Manetho *BNJ* 609 T11a, with commentary; F 25–8.

[14] See Pingree 1978: 429; Lightfoot 2020: 42–3.

[15] He alludes (2.11.125) to a treatment by Manetho of the calculation of the length of life – a subject which is indeed treated in 3.399–428, but not in terms which allow us to be clear that this passage is what Hephaestion had in mind. Likewise, although Pingree 1973: 330 adduces 6.237–9 and 244–5 for the configuration described in Appendix 1.7, it is not so close that one can be sure of the reference (it follows standard astrological ‘logic’).

[16] P. CtYBR 422 verso + P. Lund 2058, from Tebtunis temple library, second century AD. For references to this text, see Moyer 2011: 245–6; Ryholt 2006: 13–14; 2011: 62 (with earlier bibliography in n. 4); 2012: 13, 135 n. 10; Heilen 2015: 549–50.

Egyptian sources.[17] What gives this away is that the one is not the junior partner to the other, but that Hermes takes Asclepius as σύμβουλον πινυτῆς σοφίης, a fellow-counsellor in wisdom. In the Tebtunis text, a stone block falls from a temple wall revealing a book which the wise Petese, summoned to Pharaoh, identifies as having been written by 'Imhotep the Great, son of Ptah'. In another text, this time Greek,[18] an astrologer boasts of having consulted books handed down from Chaldaeans and Petosiris and Necheus, who were themselves dependent on 'Hermes' and 'Asclepius'; the latter is expressly identified as Imouthes son of Hephaestus, creating the presumption that the former is his companion Amenhotep. In other words, two Egyptian documents, one Demotic, the other Greek, make Petese / Petosiris and king Nechepsos (who is identifiable as the unnamed Pharaoh in the Tebtunis text) / Necho conduits of wisdom derived from the sages Amenhotep and Imhotep, authorities so venerable that they were the only human beings in Egyptian tradition to be divinised for their wisdom. Despite its consistent use of Greek names, ps.-Manetho book 5 can be seen to derive from the same stock.

In the second place, the Manethonian poet even alludes to the same modes of revelation. Despite some rather garbled phrasing, the proem of the fifth book refers to the engraving of astrological wisdom in a temple and, a few lines later (5.7–8), to the narrator's having discovered a 'speaking lesson' (λάλον τὸ μάθημα) 'in the black night' (διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν) 'under the choir of heavenly stars' (ὑπ' οὐρανίων χοροῦ ἄστρων). The first of these is the very familiar motif of the engraving of ancient wisdom on a pillar, which is often preserved and subsequently rediscovered in a temple (Festugière 1950: 74–6, 319–24). As we have seen, the Tebtunis text has this motif, attached to Petese and a Pharaoh identifiable as Nechepsos (so that it is now definitely attested in the Nechepso–Petosiris literature), and so does the pseudepigraphic letter quoted by Syncellus at the beginning of the ps.-Manethonian Book of Sothis[19] (so that, by approximately the fifth century, when it was included in Syncellus' source,[20] it was also present in the corpus of works ascribed to Manetho). In our classical testimony to Nechepso–Petosiris, however, this is combined, as we have seen, with the idea of direct revelation to the visionary, king Nechepso, under the night sky, and it lies very near at hand to connect ps.-Manetho's black night to Nechepso's night-time revelation (Vett. Val. 6.1.9 πάννυχον) in a dark environment (πέπλος κυάνεος | κνέφας προτείνων), and his 'speaking lesson' to the voice that addressed the king (καὶ μοί τις ἐξήχησεν οὐρανοῦ βοή). In other words, the precise motifs of textual transmission and direct revelation are combined within eight lines of each other in the prologue to ps.-Manetho's fifth book. So that we cannot miss the point, the narrator explicitly refers Petosiris as 'the man most dear to me'.

The argument so far is that ps.-Manetho books 1 and 5 are explicit cases of

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[17] Ryholt 2011: 71; Wildung 1977. For Imhotep, see Grenfell and Hunt 1915: 221; Ryholt 2009, esp. 313 and n. 30 (on Imhotep's astrological associations); Lightfoot 2020: 55–6.

[18] P. Salt (P. Louvre 2342 / P. Paris 19bis), a horoscope for 4 December AD 137. See Neugebauer and Van Hoesen 1959: 42–4, no. 137c; Moyer 2011: 243–4; Heilen 2015: 548–9; Lightfoot 2020: 55.

[19] In this case, the engraved-pillar motif is in a form recognisably indebted to one of the most famous versions of the motif, Josephus' account of how antediluvian wisdom concerning the heavens (σοφίαν τε τὴν περὶ τὰ οὐράνια καὶ τὴν τούτων διακόσμησιν) survived the Flood, for it both mentions the Flood and locates the pillars 'in the Seriadic land'. See Jos. *AJ* 1.70–1 στήλας δύο ποιησάμενοι τὴν μὲν ἐκ πλίνθου τὴν ἑτέραν δὲ ἐκ λίθων ἀμφοτέραις ἐνέγραψαν τὰ εὑρημένα, ἵνα καὶ τῆς πλινθίνης ἀφανισθείσης ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπομβρίας ἡ λιθίνη μείνασα παράσχῃ μαθεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ ἐγγεγραμμένα δηλοῦσα καὶ πλινθίνην ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀνατεθῆναι. μένει δ' ἄχρι δεῦρο κατὰ γῆν τὴν Σειρίδα.

[20] Syncellus' source was the fifth-century Alexandrian monk and chronographer Panodorus, on whom see the commentary by Lang 2014 on Manetho *BNJ* T 11a.

pseudepigraphy, and indeed of pseudepigraphy folding back upon itself, since one pseudepigraph, 'Manetho', depends on conventions already established by an earlier one (Nechepso and Petosiris). A late-antique text takes its authenticating fiction from an earlier one, which not only drew on a fictionalised image of a Pharaoh of the early sixth century but also reached further back for its authority to two divinised human sages (Imhotep and Amenhotep) now made figureheads for astrological lore. The point, ultimately, is to construct chains of transmission. Ancient wisdom in the form of rediscovered texts is brought to the attention of an interested monarch.

I would draw attention, nevertheless, to the fact that ps.-Manetho lacks the motif which is usually found in fictions of this type, the idea that one *language* is being translated into another. In the ps.-Manethonian Book of Sothis (*BNJ* 609 T 11a), there is a particularly complicated chain, as pillars are originally inscribed by Thoth in the 'sacred *dialektos*' and in 'hiero*graphic* writing' (ἱερᾶι φησὶ διαλέκτωι καὶ ἱερογραφικοῖς γράμμασιν κεχαρακτηρισμένων), then translated into Greek and written in books in hiero*glyphic* characters by Agathos Daimon (εἰς τὴν ῾Ελληνίδα φωνὴν γράμμασιν ἱερογλυφικοῖς καὶ ἀποτεθέντων ἐν βίβλοις), and Manetho himself has some further role in their transmission as he now mediates them to Ptolemy Philadelphus. There is none of this in the proem of ps.-Manetho 5. There is a mysterious reference to wax in 5.5 (ἀντιτύπῳ κηρῷ ἀπομαξάμενος): has the speaker transcribed the writings onto wax tablets instead of book-rolls, or did the original author, Hermes / Amenhotep, put a wax seal on the inscription? (But if so, how does one seal an inscription?) But there is no reference to any attempt at decipherment or translation. Nor do we find the motif of the king's hunger for knowledge, which has led him to commission the sage in the first place. The poet instead refers to his work as an anthology and uses the image of a bee which is used by writers who want to present their work as the result of judicious selection (5.5–6 κεκόμισται | ἀνθολόγου μούσης βλύζον δώρημα μελισσῶν); perhaps at this point he prefers to evoke the astrologer Dorotheus who (at least according to the Arabic translation) introduced his work in precisely this way.[21] The point seems to be poetic virtuosity rather than cross-cultural transference; the narrator in the proem of the first book similarly lays emphasis, not on the alien culture from which the present work is translated, but its recasting into heroic hexameters.[22] This is nicely in line with Emily Kneebone's comment on the Greek poetic didactic tradition in general: 'ancient didactic poets frequently orientate their authoritative claims less towards their own technical expertise in the subjects they treat, and more towards their status, and expertise, as poets' (Kneebone 2017: 203). In this case, what has been downplayed is less personal technical expertise and more the chain of transmission from native antiquity.

II

[21] Dorotheus, proem to book 1: 'I collected the best of their sayings from the first [authorities] who were before me like the bees which gather [honey] from the trees and all kinds of plants; for from it there is the honey of medicine' (tr. by Pingree 1976: 161).

[22] He says specifically that he is recasting 'very accurately' (1.12 μάλ' ἀτρεκέως) everything that Petosiris had said ἐπιτροχάδην (1.11), now in hexameters (1.13 ῥυθμοῖς ἡρωικοῖσι καὶ ἑξαμέτροις ἐπέεσσιν). It would be neat indeed if ἐπιτροχάδην could refer to Nechepso–Petosiris' putative iambic original, so that the point would be the translation of the less pretending metre into the more pretentious one. But if ἐπιτροχάδην had a metrical reference at all, it would sooner be to trochees, and in fact the meaning is likelier not to be metrical at all. The poet means to indicate either the brief / cursory nature of the original (*Il.* 3.213) or, contrariwise, its diffuse and rambling character (*Od.* 18.26).

The second part of the paper concerns the circulation of this material in Roman or late-antique Egypt. It will hardly come as surprise that, with similar material circulating in parallel transmission under different names, this proves highly complex. And yet the argument of this section is that we can say many useful things about the identity – poetic if not biographical – of the poet of the earliest section of the corpus.

These texts circulated in multiple forms presumably because they were in constant use. They were what is known as *Fachliteratur*, used by professionals, and perhaps by amateurs as well who were keen for a bit of self-help. A papyrus from Oxyrhynchus which runs parallel to a section from book 4 of the Manethoniana reveals a mass of small variants which suggests how this material was chopped and changed in the course of everyday use (Radici Colace 1990, cf. 1993: 284–6).[23] They are minor divergences – plus and minus lines, transpositions, small expansions, elaborations, and adjustments to syntax. However, the present focus is on the second, third and sixth books which, despite being non-contiguous in the Manethonian corpus in the manuscript, do very clearly belong together as a well-organised sequence proceeding from less to more complex, homogeneous in style and cumulative in content. These books indicate a much more complicated situation than that implied by the papyrus evidence for the fourth book, intricate and elusive as that is. They are also a better follow-on from the first part of the present paper.

The books in question (which I continue to refer to in manuscript-order as books 2, 3 and 6, even though in another sense they might be called books 1, 2 and 3) are affiliated to a number of other astrological texts in ways which have not properly been worked through. My edition attempts to remedy that. It is clear that these texts are not dependent on one another, but that all go back to a common source – perhaps our old friend Nechepso–Petosiris (Heilen 2010: 136–7; Lightfoot 2020: 65). All these treatises arrange their material in approximately increasing order of complexity. The fullest witnesses to the tradition are ps.-Manetho and the fourth-century Roman astrologer Firmicus Maternus,[24] who both arrange their material starting with simple, one- or two-factor configurations, to much more complex ones sometimes involving half a dozen or more. They begin with catalogues, rationally ordered and easy to follow, but progress to more sophisticated systems of organisation inviting the editor's ingenuity.[25] In the case of ps.-Manetho book 6 that is very ingenious indeed.

My first point is simply that all this material circulates in multiple versions, recensions and translations, both poetry and prose. If the common source was Nechepso–Petosiris, we have seen that several fragments from that corpus show very obvious traces of iambic metre.

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[23] P. Oxy. 2546, dated by the editor, John Rea 1966: 57, with a query to the third century.

[24] Editions by Kroll and Skutsch 1897–1913 and Monat 1992–7; translation by Rhys Bram 1975.

[25] Firmicus' fifth and sixth books contain a Latin prose rendering of material which at least partly overlaps with all books of ps.-Man. 2, 3 and 6. There is no parallel for the opening section on the heavenly circles (2.1–140, which comes from Aratus and Aratus commentaries), but Firmicus 5.5–6 is the truncated remains of a longer treatment of one planet in the houses of another (~ ps.-Man. 2.141–398). Firmicus 6.3–28 furnishes parallels for the section on the aspects of the planets (3.227–362) and for conjunctions of planets with the Sun (2.426–35), and 6.29–30 provides much the best and richest comparisons for the collection of complex charts in book 6. Within these chapters is a sequence on planetary oppositions across the Ascendant and Descendant (6.29.6–13), which also finds parallels in ps.-Manetho's dedicated section on that subject (3.132–226). Otherwise, the planets in the circuit of twelve places (the *dodecatopos*) (3.2–7) have links with the *kentrothesiai* (3.8–131), and the *synaphai* and *aporrhoiai* of the Moon (4.2–8+9–15) with ps.-Manetho's much abbreviated catalogue (2.441–502). Firmicus acknowledges a debt to Nechepso and Petosiris in his introduction to book 4, though we cannot be sure in any given case where his material came from.

At least some of it, therefore, bears seeming comparison with other iambic didactic verse,[26] some of which – the *Chronica* of Apollodorus of Athens, pseudo-Scymnus' geographical poem – can be dated to the second century BC,[27] the putative date of the beginnings of the Nechepso–Petosiris corpus itself. Apollodorus' and pseudo-Scymnus' poems are both dedicated to Hellenistic monarchs: Attalus II of Pergamum and Nicomedes III of Bithynia, respectively (Baronowski 2011: 40–2). Did the Egyptian version mobilise the same framework but adapt it to a Pharaoh with the aura of antiquity and under the mantle of pseudepigraphy? What strikes us here is the number of times this material was subsequently reworked in poetry, apparently with no sense of redundancy. Two later versions were in hexameters. One was ps.-Manetho himself. The other, which may have preceded him, was the very influential poem of Dorotheus. We know Dorotheus' poem through a small corpus of verse quotations, but our main evidence for it is a complete Arabic 'translation' (*via* Pahlavi: Pingree 1989: 229–30). There is – conveniently – a Greek prose paraphrase of that very part of the poem which coheres with ps.-Manetho books 2 and 3.[28] A third poem was by Anubion, which, as mentioned above, was in elegiacs. Anubion is the interesting name here because the Oxyrhynchus papyri published by Obbink turn out to run parallel to some material in ps.-Manetho book 6, as well as with Firmicus. In other words, they extend our opportunities to watch poetic astrologers at work.

How come there arose so many adaptations of an iambic poem into dactylic verse? Unfortunately I do not have space here to lay out all the evidence, which is complicated, but I do not think that those scholars who *have* worked on this material so far have got the interrelationships between all these treatises quite right. Nor do I think that they are always correct about the nature of the texts they are dealing with. Could it be the case, for example, that *one* basic poem was circulating in multiple recensions and attributed variously to Manetho, to Anubion and to Dorotheus? It can hardly be as simple as that, because Anubion was certainly writing in elegiacs. We also know of a poem attributed to Dorotheus which was a catalogue, like ps.-Manetho's, but seems to have differed from it because instead of just baldly stating astrological outcomes it made little attempts to provide rationales for them.[29] So why did so many poets set about the re-versification of similar material? Was it that multiple practitioners were trying to bolster their authority with different clienteles, or simply had different purposes? Did one try to sound more 'scientific', while another had no grander ambitions than to be an aide-mémoire?

Trying to sort out the relationships between all these parallel versions may be complex and frustrating, but at least it enables us to formulate and to make progress towards answering some important questions, which are posed here apropos of the Manethoniana. Where, to judge from multiple parallel versions, it is a question of material that seems to go back to a

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[26] Two fragments of which are astronomical, one on the fixed stars (i.e. constellations) and the other on the planets (Maass 1898: 154–71). Ascribed to Empedocles, these are undatable.

[27] For Apollodorus, see Marcotte 2000; Korenjak 2003; Hunter 2006; for pseudo-Scymnus, see *FGrH* 244; Jacoby 1902: 60–74.

[28] Pingree 1976: 345–67. The treatise is entitled, in the manuscripts that carry it (Marciani 334 and 335), Περὶ τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους σχηματισμῶν τῶν ἀστέρων ἐκ τῶν Ἀνουβίωνος, but, as Heilen 2010: 133–6 says, it coheres so closely with the Arabic translation of Dorotheus that the paraphrast must, in practice, be regarded as working from a version of that. See Lightfoot 2020: 73–6.

[29] Pingree 1976: 368.24–369.6 (explicitly cited from the third book of Dorotheus). The pseudo-physical explanation is absent from the corresponding passage in Περὶ τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους σχηματισμῶν 95 (Pingree 1976: 354.6–13).

common original, how much liberty does the individual poet have, or take?

One source brings us as close as we are likely to get to being able to analyse the translation technique of the poet of the second book. The work in question, the *Liber Hermetis*, preserved in a single fifteenth-century manuscript, is a compilation.[30] It was (so David Pingree) translated, probably in the thirteenth century. from a lost ninth- or tenth-century Greek original.[31] Our interest here is in a long chapter, the thirty-second, which proves to run extremely close to the section in ps.-Manetho 2 which describes the effects of the planets when located in one another's houses (Saturn in the houses of Jupiter, and so on). So close is the correspondence that it looks as if the Greek from which it was translated was, if not Manetho's actual source, then something very like it. This text is an unambitious rendering, often at the level of calque, and its frequent parallels with Manetho give a good idea of their common Greek original. Comparing this, as well as the Greek prose paraphrase of Dorotheus,[32] we can gain some insight into how ps.-Manetho adapts his prose source and with what degree of artistry he has operated. He may borrow words directly, lightly Ionicising them to fit the (pseudo-)Homeric register. He may substitute epic / poetic synonyms.[33] At his most ambitious he pads his material with contextually relevant passages from the Homeric poems. His favourite recourse is to the *Odyssey*, which has just the right sort of banal materialism and worldliness to suit the ethos of astrological texts, which represent the average man's desire for riches, strong family connections and advancement. His main references are thus the Homeric poems, but he shows some knowledge of Hellenistic poetry too (Callimachus, Apollonius and above all Aratus in a section where he describes the course of the heavenly circles). More than that, he even – occasionally – practises a technique which is more frequent in the show-off neo-Callimachean poet who was perhaps his contemporary and fellow-Egyptian, namely Dionysius the Periegete. This is the technique of combining allusions in a kind of midrashic procedure where two passages are threaded together or tessellated, sometimes just in virtue of related subject matter, sometimes by means of a linking word.[34]

All this is documented *in extenso* in my commentary, but let the following stand as an example of the poet's best technique. One particular configuration results in natives of evil intentions. *Liber Hermetis* (whose rambling and repetitive nature, be it said, gives every impression of rendering a prose original, not a poetic one, which would short-circuit the argument) describes them as *male consulentes*; a suitable Greek underlay might be κακοβούλους, κακοτέχνους or κακογνώμονας, all attested in astrological prose. But what ps.-Manetho has at this point is οὐλοὰ μητιόωντας (2.194), which updates a familiar Homeric formula (*Il.* 15.27 κακὰ μητιόωσα, 18.312 κακὰ μητιόωντι, *Od.* 1.234 κακὰ μητιόωντες) with

[30] MS Harleianus 3731 (dated 1431); first published by Gundel 1936, and now by Feraboli 1994.

[31] Pingree 1977: 219 and 1963: 227 n. 31. Pingree's dates are very considerably lower than those of the first editor. The lateness of the Latin translation is demonstrated by the presence of Arabic words. See also Lightfoot 2020: 66–7 and n. 9.

[32] Ascribed to Anubion, but in practice Dorothean (n. 28 above).

[33] One question raised by Hunter's essay in this volume (Chapter 12) is how the astrological poets' techniques of Homeric (and other poetic) appropriation compare with those of popular verse as evidenced in inscriptions, and whether the grab-and-snatch approach to verse-ends in particular goes beyond opportunism. Another is with regard to versification: the practice of interspersing the occasional pentameter among hexameters will be particularly relevant to the first book of the Manethoniana. There is plenty of grab-and-snatch in the Manethonian poems (Lightfoot 2020: 147–51), but I have yet to see the Manethonian (or Dionysian) practice of interweaving two literary models paralleled in inscriptions. This deserves, however, much closer attention.

[34] Cf. Lightfoot 2014: 38–40; 2020: 151–2, and index s.v. 'Homeric poems – combinatory allusions to'.

a rarity from Hellenistic poetry, οὐλοός, a puzzle-word which clearly delighted Apollonius and Callimachus,[35] and to which ps.-Manetho himself gives none too clear a meaning except that its suitably baleful connotations ('deadly'? 'destructive'?) well suit the menacing imprecision which he seeks to evoke.

Another example – this one worthy of Dionysius himself – comes from the first section of the book, a description of the heavenly circles whose chief source is Aratus and the Aratean commentary industry. The lines in question describe the constellation Navis as it cleaves through the sky (2.97–8):

> ἠδὲ καὶ Ἀργοῦς
> ποντοπόρου τέμνοντα δι' αἰθέρος ἄκρα κόρυμβα.
>
> and the high stern of seafaring Argo cutting through the aether.

The description as a whole is erected on the framework of Aratus' own description of the Argo (686 οὐδέ τι ἄκρα κόρυμβα μένει πολυτειρέος Ἀργοῦς), from which ps.-Manetho recycles ἄκρα κόρυμβα (the constellation was only supposed to represent the ship's stern, not the whole ship). But Aratus' πολυτειρέος Ἀργοῦς (starry Argo) is replaced with Ἀργοῦς | ποντοπόρου, looping back to the *Odyssey*'s famous original reference to the Argo in 12.70 ποντοπόρος νηῦς. Moreover, vis-à-vis Aratus, ἄκρα κόρυμβα is returned to its original Homeric (*Il*. 9.241), as well as Apollonian (*Arg*. 2.601), position at hexameter-end, while nevertheless retaining its Aratean sense of (entire) stern, rather than just the ornamentation or emblems at the extreme end. This looks like a sophisticated way of threading together the poet's main poetic authorities.[36] It would even be a window-allusion if one believed that Aratus already had the *Odyssey* in mind. And while the poet uses τέμνειν for the way that celestial circles 'cut through' constellations which lie on them a number of times in this section, I thank Boris Kayachev for the intriguing suggestion that in this particular case it glances particularly at the tradition that the to-be-catasterised Argo had its stern ornaments 'grazed' (*Arg*. 2.601 παρέθρισαν ἄκρα κόρυμβα) as it passed through the Clashing Rocks – although it must be said that Apollonius has followed the Homeric sense of κόρυμβα,[37] which, as we have seen, ps.-Manetho does not. In short, the critic should not underestimate the sophistication of this particular Manethonian poet.

The poet has limited scope for expansiveness, but allows himself occasional indulgence. He wants to make vivid and to particularise what was bare and formulaic in the source. For example, references to musicians may elicit little flourishes on types of instrumentalist or performer (2.328–41, 6.506–10). One rare moment of indulgence is when he treats, in parallel with Firmicus, the birth chart of Oedipus (6.160–71). Anubion's text is defective at this point: at least one hexameter has fallen out (fr. 3.10–16 Obbink). But in what is extant there is no reference to Oedipus at all. Firmicus mentions him, with a bit of tabloid

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[35] Harder 2012: 668–9 on Call. *Aet*. fr. 78.1; Hollis 2009: 251 on Call. *Hec*. fr. 74.16; Cuypers 1997: 122.

[36] A happily assimilative approach; contrast the direct challenge apparently posed to his model by Valerius Flaccus 4.691–3, who translates ἄκρα κόρυμβα into Latin (where *corymbus*, normally a cluster of flowers or fruit, does not otherwise have this meaning) only to gainsay Aratus' version (by having the ship's stern ornamentation destroyed by the clashing rocks and *not* translated to the heavens); for the emulation-cum-rejection involved here, see Krasne 2014: 36–9.

[37] On Apollonius' own recycling of Homeric ἄκρα κόρυμβα, see Rengakos 1994: 104–5 and Kyriakou 1995: 28.

prurience (‘incestuous fury’).[38] But ps.-Manetho excels himself, with Furies brandishing pine torches and what-not as they sing the wedding-song (6.165–9):

> δὴ τότ’ ἀπ’ ὠδίνων ὁπόσοι φάος ἔδρακον ἠοῦς,
> μοῖραν ἀνέπλησαν πολυπενθέος Οἰδιπόδαο·
> τοῖσι δ’ ἄρα στυγεροὺς Ποιναὶ μέλπουσ’ ὑμεναίους
> νερτέριαι, χείρεσσιν ἀναψάμεναι πυρὶ πεύκας·
> μητράσι γὰρ σφετέραις φιλοτήσιον ἐς λέχος ἦλθον.
>
> Then indeed those who, fresh from labour-pains, behold the light of dawn fulfil the fate of Oedipus, man of many sorrows: for them, loathsome is the bridal hymn raised by the Avenging Ones, infernal, kindling brands of fiery pitch in their hands; for they share the bed of love with their own mothers.

In other words, indulgence for this poet often takes the form of colourful topoi. He also gives us a nice little taste of his Homeric *variatio*, by adapting the clausula in *Iliad* 23.679 δεδουπότος Οἰδιπόδαο and Hesiod fr. 193.4 πολυκηδέος Οἰδιπό[δαο and substituting πολυπενθέος, which is hapax in the genitive in *Iliad* 9.563 (from an unrelated myth). The art consists in maximum evocation within the limits of a constraining form.

There are at least two directions that a possible conclusion might take.

On the one hand, there is a lot to get out of this poetry. There is almost nothing written about it. It represents a type of poetry which is worth characterising. Its metre suggests that in some respects it belongs among popular verse like the *Sibylline Oracles* (Lightfoot 2020: 274–5). Most obviously, it resists the tendency of later hexameter poetry to greater ‘dactylicity’ – although it does not indulge in the more hair-raising licences with prosody taken by some of the Sibylline books. That sorts well with the averageness of its content, the common man’s aspirations to money in his purse and a fertile wife. On the other hand, it presupposes an audience culturally adept enough to cope with nicely judged Homeric allusions and the odd bit of Hellenistic poetry (see Lightfoot 2020: 147–65), and an author with some poetic ambition, one on whom the same sort of literary criticism can in principle be practised as on Dionysius the Periegete.

And yet astrological poetry is labile in the extreme. What we have to do with in the material studied here is very basic, astrology’s bread and butter: catalogues of basic configurations followed by sample charts, arranged by theme, concerning birth, marriage, parents and siblings, slaves, loss and gain of wealth, disease and death, the hopes and fears of ordinary people from the late Hellenistic period through to at least the late Roman Empire. One text evidently attained particular popularity and forms of it came to be circulated, in catalogues and epitomes, in prose and verse, in multiple recensions (if that word, which sounds rather solemn and formal, is appropriate under circumstances of such textual instability). The extant versions of this underlying text (let us call it Nechepso–Petosiris) differ in many ways. They vary in the order in which entire sections are presented; in the order of individual configurations; and in the level of detail with which those configurations are described. At the same time, they run close enough together to permit insight into the

[38] Firm. 6.30.1 … *incesto furoris ardore et potestatis alicuius praesidio subleuati matrum suarum conubia sortiuntur, aut nouercas suas praepostero mentis ardore; cupiditate possessi ad consortium tori genialis inuitant … talem Oedipodem habuisse genituram antiquae ferunt memoriae lectionum.*

choices a given member of the series has made in the presentation of his material. They allow the kind of appreciation of individual technique which I have been able to conduct for the Manethoniana (Lightfoot 2020: xxiv; 212–30). Then again, in the case of the fourth book, papyri have shown that one and the 'same' text could nevertheless circulate with a massive number of minor textual discrepancies. From the evidence of the manuscript that carries the Manethoniana, it also seems possible that editors were aware of these discrepancies, had variant versions of texts in front of them and sometimes tried to produce synthetic editions which took variants into account.[39]

One discernible feature is how readily material crosses between prose and poetry and back again – from the iambics (possibly) of Nechepso–Petosiris into hexameter and elegiac poetry, and from there into prose paraphrases, which in theory could themselves serve as the basis for re-versification. One poet also sets out to rework another, which is the case with the fourth book vis-à-vis books 2, 3 and 6. Although there was no opportunity to discuss that here, it is a particularly interesting example because it raises questions about the fundamental nature of astrology. The later poet reworks the earlier one. He adds a great deal of verbiage but also combines the earlier poet with (yet another) prose source.[40] In the process he produces yet another data set for the arrangements of the stars in the heavens. He modifies configurations by both simplifying and complicating them. He omits detail but also adds it. Innumerable small changes can also be observed between the versions of ps.-Manetho, Anubion, Dorotheus and Firmicus. Does this practice of reworking reduce astrology to a game of literary *aemulatio* where the 'science' can be treated with gay abandon? No, that overstates the case. The differences are usually quite minor. A more appropriate comparison is with a language or linguistic game, which depends on basically accepted rules to support endless fresh sequences and variations.[41] In the case of ps.-Manetho – who shows particularly marked variations with regard to Dorotheus, Anubion and Firmicus – my suspicion is that he is simplifying the better to bring out the essential characteristics of his planets; one might infer that he intended his manual to be an elementary primer, pitched at the astrological beginner (Lightfoot 2020: 84). One might even discern an analogy between a discipline, a 'science', which nevertheless left so much room for individual inflection, and a poetic art whose practitioners, although carriers of traditional material, can still cultivate distinctive personae with whose individual voices we can still, with a little effort and much profit, become acquainted.

Abbreviations

BNJ Worthington, I., ed. *Brill's New Jacoby*, 2009– (online publication: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby).
FGrH Jacoby, F. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin-Leiden, 1923–58.
P. CtYBR *Yale Papyri in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*.
P. Gen. *Les Papyrus de Genève*, Geneva, 1986–.

[39] Take the doublets at 2.236–7, 2.394–5 (two lines of identical meaning), 6.453–4. Contrariwise, I defend 2.164–5.

[40] Some of his configurations (4.121–4, 201–5, 249–62, 294–316, 317–26, 438–42, 545–51+552–9) more closely reflect those in a treatise which presents itself as an epitome of a work by the (probably) second-century AD astrologer Antiochus (ἐκ τῶν Ἀντιόχου θησαυρῶν ἐπίλυσις καὶ διήγησις πάσης ἀστρονομικῆς τέχνης, published by Franz Cumont 1921: 115–225). Indeed, a few (4.193–200, 290–3) have no parallels in book 6 and are *only* paralleled in this epitome.

[41] For the implications of the comparison, see Lightfoot 2020: 39–41.

P. Oxy. *The Oxyrhynchus papyri*, London, 1898–.
P. Paris Letronne, J. A., ed. *Notices et textes des papyrus grecs du Musée du Louvre et de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, Paris, 1865.
P. Ryl. *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, Manchester, 1911–1952.

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