BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

Dieter Blume, Mechthild Haffner und Wolfgang Metzger, *Sternbilder des Mittelalters. Der gemalte Himmel zwischen Wissenschaft und Phantasie*. Band I: 800 – 1200 (2 vols.: Teilband I.1: *Text und Katalog der Handschriften*, Teilband I.2: *Abbildungen*)

Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012, 1055 pages, € 299.00, ISBN 978-3-05-005664-7.

Band II: 1200 – 1500 unter Mitarbeit von Katharina Glanz (3 vols.: Teilband II.1: *Text und Katalog der Handschriften*, Teilband II.2: *Katalog der Handschriften*, Teilband II.3: *Abbildungen*)

Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016, 1662 pages, € 298.00, ISBN 978-3-11-037601-2.

Reviewed by Kristen Lippincott

The five weighty tomes of this study represent a monumental achievement. Its catalogue of 213 manuscripts, drawn from over 85 libraries spanning eleven countries, reflects decades of careful and thoughtful research. The publication of more than 1000 pages of illustrations (a small selection of which are reproduced in colour) provides a valuable resource for scholars in a wide variety of disciplines – for which not only the authors, but their publishers and the funding body of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* should be thanked and applauded.

The structure of the two sets of volumes is slightly different. The first volume (covering manuscripts dating from 800 – 1200) opens with a series of essays, which provide a quick art historical overview of the texts found in these manuscripts, as well as a more detailed discussion of the cultural context in which several of the individual manuscripts were produced. The catalogue itself is arranged alphabetically according to the town of each parent library, with cross-indices listing the manuscripts according to the date of manufacture and in terms of their contents, provided at the end of Volume I.2.

The second volume (covering manuscripts from 1200 to 1500) is arranged according to what one might call 'family-groupings' of texts, with discursive essays on the authors Georgius Zothorus Zaparus Fendulus and Michael Scot; a discussion of the illustrated star catalogues influenced in varying degrees by the tenth-century Arabic exemplar of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb suwar al-kawākib al-ṯābita* (*The Book on the Constellations of the Fixed Stars*); and a description of the humanist interest in the classical texts of Aratus and Hyginus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The arrangement of the catalogue follows the content of the essays, with each sub-section providing descriptions of the manuscripts in largely chronological order. As with Volume I, however, a concordance providing both a rough chronological listing of the manuscripts and an alphabetical listing by library is provided at the end of Volume II.2. This difference of presentation between the two volumes is slightly unsettling as tracking a particular manuscript or author involves a good deal of flipping back and forth between the various books in each volume, but most readers will find a way to navigate this challenge.

The format for the catalogue entries themselves is exemplary. Each manuscript is described in terms of a summary overview of the contents, codicological information, a listing of the individual works found in each manuscript folio-by-folio (although, unfortunately, this is

presented as a list of titles and authors with references to the texts in printed editions, rather than with pertinent incipits and explicits of the actual text), a concise commentary setting the work into its art historical context, a short description of the location and appearance of each constellation illustration (though there is seldom any mention of whether or how the stars are placed within each figure), and a bibliography.

Whereas the authors cite the well-known series of catalogues of astrological and mythological manuscripts begun by Fritz Saxl in 1915 and 'concluded' by Patrick McGurk in 1966 as a source of inspiration,[1] it is important to heed their caveat that the current volumes should not be seen as an extension of Saxl's "epistemological superstructure" ("erkenntnistheoretische Urgeräte", I.1, 17). In particular, they highlight the extent to which Saxl's approach was formed by Aby Warburg's fascination with *Das Nachleben der Antike* and, as such, focussed on issues which both scholars saw as indicative of the survival of Greco-Roman learning and visual *formulae* across temporal and cultural obstacles. In the volumes under review, however, the authors claim to have approached the topic from a "completely different direction" ("in eine völlig andere Richtung", I.1, 17). Their aim is to focus on the changes that occur – specifically in the images of the individual constellations – as they are repeatedly subjected to the varying 'worldviews', ambitions, and influences of successive generations of scribes and artists.

In some ways, one could see this as two sides of the same coin, but there is a subtle difference between Saxl's larger questions concerning the changing relationships between text and image recorded in these manuscripts and his underlying conviction that there is an optimal model against which all these differing 'iconographies' can and should be tested, and the notion that each individual product has equal merit as a cultural representative of the particular time and place it was created. For those art historians and codicologists, who study the production of manuscripts as a self-contained *genre*, the latter method of enquiry is perfectly reasonable and – as the current volumes demonstrate – can provide very interesting insights into this body of primary material. Nevertheless, the only reason that this group of manuscripts has been brought together is because each shares two distinct qualities: first, they all have a classical provenance behind both their texts and images; and second, the ultimate value of this information is the extent to which it measures-up against observable phaenomena. Beyond all other criteria, each of these manuscripts depends (albeit admittedly often distantly and sometimes somewhat tangentially) on an antique scientific source. The current volumes, however, seriously lack any sense of engagement with the philological history of the texts or with the basic astronomical principles underpinning the illustrations of the constellations. For, as Dieter Blume explains in the opening line to his preface in Volume I: "This is a book about books" ("Dies ist ein Buch über Bücher […]", I.1, 9). This decision means that those scholars interested in some of the 'larger questions' posed by this body of manuscripts or in the interdisciplinary research that so desperately needs to be carried out amongst philologists, art historians, and historians of science will be disappointed. Nevertheless, art historians and scholars interested in the production of books *per se*, will find a wealth of material here to satisfy them.

The huge task of compiling the catalogues themselves is credited primarily to Mechthild Haffner and Wolfgang Metzger (with some ancillary work on some of the twelfth-century manuscripts carried out by Christoph Winterer in the early stages of the project and the contents of the second Volume finished with the co-operation of Katharina Glanz). The energy and determination to carry out what represents at least thirty years of cumulatively sustained effort must be championed. Of course, limits have to be set,

and against the background of what has been achieved, it seems slightly churlish to point out errors and oversights. Understandably, there are some manuscripts have been either omitted or missed. For example, even though the catalogues cite two twelfth-century manuscripts of the *Liber Floridus* of Lambertus (Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ms 92, and Wolfenbüttel, Herz. August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1. Gud. lat. 2°), there is no reference to the six other illustrated copies of the text, dating from the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.[2] Equally, none of the intriguing illustrated manuscripts of Domenico d'Arezzo's *Fons memorabilum universi* is included.[3] Further, one senses that either schedule constraints or the fact that many of the catalogue entries may have been 'put to bed' well before the volumes were published has meant that some of the more recent secondary literature has not been taken into account. For example, Haffner's entries on the illustrated Hyginus manuscripts appear not to take account of Caterina Leone's article from 2013, which provides compelling arguments concerning the date of the Florentine Hyginus in the Biblioteca Laurenziana (Ms Plut. 89 sup 43) to the early 1470s, and forces us to re-think much of the history of this family of manuscripts – as well as calling into question the precise source of the illustrations that appear in Erhardt Ratdolt's first illustrated version of the text, which he printed in Venice in 1482.[4] Equally, Metzger's assertion that the Oxford manuscript, Ms Marsh 144, is the oldest extant version of al-Sufi's text misses the research which indicates that the colophon in the Marsh manuscript mentioning a date of 400 AH (1009 – 1010 AD) is now generally thought to be a later addition and the manuscript itself probably dates from the twelfth century. Instead, the oldest-known and, in many ways, more iconographically significant manuscript is the one in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (Ms 2. 1998), which bears a date of 519 AH (April 1125 AD).[5]

As difficult as it must have been to catalogue this vast array of manuscripts, it must have been equally hard to write the set of introductory essays to each volume. Respecting Blume's explanation that "this is a book about books", one still would have appreciated a bit more attention being paid to the development of astronomical texts contained within these manuscripts. The second chapter of Volume 1, which purports to provide an overview of the subject, is much too cursory. The desire to summarize inevitably leads to generalisations and inaccuracies; chronologies are jumbled and inconvenient complications have been avoided. For example, though Hipparchus's *Commentary on Aratus and Eudoxus* is tremendously important for historians of science,[6] it is mistaken to claim that it had a "long-lasting influence" ("[…], die einen lang anhaltenden Einfluss ausübten", I.1, 27) on the structure or content of the Aratean corpus, beyond the fact that Germanicus appears to have read it and incorporated some of its corrections into his Latin translation of the *Phaenomena*. Furthermore, it seems an overstatement to claim that the *De astronomia* of Hyginus was written "as a response to the *Phaenomena*" and, therefore can "be counted among the writings of the *Aratea*" ("[…] und wird deshalb auch zu den Schriften der *Aratea* gerechnet", I.1, 31). As Blume himself points out, the tone and content of the two works very different: Aratus's work is a didactic poem celebrating the visual splendour of the heavens, with a verse description of the apparent movement of the sphere of the fixed stars by means of listing the simultaneous risings and setting of the constellations; while Hyginus's compilation is intended as introductory astronomical textbook, in which he discusses several different aspects of the knowledge needed to understand the workings of the cosmos. The fact that early medieval sources utilise information from *De astronomia* to supplement the poem does not necessarily mean that this was Hyginus's own original impetus or intent. Indeed, the history of how and when the contents of these two disparate traditions (the poetic and the didactic) become entangled is one

of the most important unresolved issues facing the various scholars who work on these texts. In this respect, Blume's essay does not really help to clarify matters. The history of these texts is a messy affair that all but refuses to fit into a neat narrative – suggesting, perhaps, that a helpful way to capture the twisted history of all these intertwined texts and *scholia* would have been to provide a diagrammatic chronological stemma, such as the one that appears in Hubert LeBourdellès study of the *Aratus latinus*.[7]

The subsequent essays in Volume I aim to provide an overview of the changing circumstances under which a series of different manuscripts was produced. One senses that this is the area where Blume feels most comfortable, and his descriptions of the changing interests in these texts and their illustrations by successive generations of patrons and scholars flows smoothly from the earliest consultations of these texts by the scholarly monks of Corbie, the religious and politically-motivated concerns over the creation of a reliable ecclesiastical calendar at the court of Charlemagne and the antiquarian yearnings of Louis the Pious in the eighth century to the rejuvenation of astronomical studies stemming from the Cluniac educational reforms of the tenth century, which lead to the enrichment of the great monastic libraries, such as in the Abbey of St Benoit-sur-Loire in Fleury (to which so many of the manuscripts of this period can be traced), and spread throughout Western Europe over the next 200 years. The tone of this survey benefits greatly from recent contributions to the scholarly literature on this period, which have striven to reshape the characterization of early medieval scriptoria as intellectual backwaters populated by mindless drones to a clearer understanding of the intelligent thought, care, and creativity that so many authors, compilers, scribes, and illuminators brought to their work.

Against this background, however, it seems odd that Blume continues to argue that the astronomical illustrations in the antique models behind manuscripts prompted "disgust" and "fear" in their medieval readers (I.1, 44). Such prejudices adversely affect a number of his observations. For example, the descriptions of the 'simple' drawings in the manuscript written by Hrabanus Maurus sometime between 820 and 830 in his monastery in Fulda (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms AN IV. 18) as reflecting a desire to turn away from the aesthetically pleasing and, therefore, potentially dangerous full-colour renderings of the constellations is misleading on two counts. First, is it unlikely that all the classical exempla available to early medieval scholars contained lavish, full-colour illustrations. Earlier Greek papyri – upon which many of the later Roman *rotuli* and manuscripts must have been based – prove that simple line drawings were often used to illustrate scientific texts. Second, focussing on the apparent 'simplicity' of the drawings obscures the fact that this corpus is extremely important in its own right and represents a set of constellation pictures that is very different from those seen in the two better-known illustrated versions of Germanicus's poem: namely, the so-called Leiden *Aratea* (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. lat. 4°. 79) and the twelfth-century manuscript in Madrid (Madrid, Biblioteca nacional, Ms 19).

Similarly, the desire to interpret seemingly unusual pictorial details as attempts by medieval scribes to Christianise certain constellation figures is often misplaced. The figure of Andromeda with a snakelike Cetus beneath her feet, which first appears in the mid-tenth century pseudo-Bedan *De signis caeli* manuscript from Fleury (Paris, BN, lat. 5543) is not a medieval invention and does not represent an amalgam either with the figure of a triumphant Christ, nor with Eve and the serpent from the Garden of Eden. There are ample Roman precedents for the image of Andromeda with Cetus at feet in surviving mosaics (such as in the Perseus and Andromeda mosaic in the Hatay Archaeological Museum in Antakya [Antioch] and the one from Tarraco, now

in the National Archaeological Museum in Tarragona [Spain], both of which date to the second or third centuries), sculptures (the marble relief in the Museo nazionale in Naples from the early first century) and in coins (such as on the reverse of the Thracian coin from Deultum [Bulgaria] struck for the Emperor Macrinius in 217 – 218).

The essays that accompany the second Volume are plagued by two major problems, neither of which is of the authors' making, but both of which raise serious concerns. The first is Michael Scot, about whom nearly everything is problematic – the authorship of the writings attributed to him, his sources, his expertise, his judgement and (quite frankly) why he was so popular and so influential in the development of astronomical iconography for over 400 years as both the texts and illustrations credited to him represent a complete mish-mash of mistakes, misunderstandings and purposefully adulterated interpretations. Admittedly, given Blume's desire to move away from the strictures of an "epistemological superstructure", one can understand how he might find Michael Scot's text having a "great catchiness and plausibility" ("[…] so ist die Schilderung des Sternenhimmels, welche Michael Scotus gibt, doch von großer Eingängigkeit und Plausibilität.", II.1, 38), and that within its premise, it is completely coherent ("Innerhalb ihrer Prämissen ist sie völlig schlüssig.", II.1, 38). If a flagrant disregard for accuracy and authority can be considered a plausible premise – a stance that carries uncanny echoes in today's political arena – then one might agree. Nevertheless, and regardless of one's own preferences, it still remains important to note the extent to which our understanding of 'Michael Scot' is still in its infancy and how much of the secondary literature – upon which Blume's essay depends – falls far short of providing a reliable way-finder through this rocky terrain.

The second problem concerns how one defines a 'star catalogue' manuscript: does it necessarily contain a listing of the stars with their astronomical co-ordinates or are sets of pictures that are in some way derived from the iconography found accompanying these tables a sufficient criterion for inclusion? And, whereas it is easy to differentiate the tightly knit family of so-called 'Sufi latinus' manuscripts from the rest, where does one draw lines between the 'Alphonsine' and 'Ptolemaic' branches of this tradition, particularly when several of the later manuscripts borrow their illustrations from multiple pictorial sources? The inclusion of the so-called 'secundum Hyginum' manuscripts as part of this set is also curious. Their illustrations, which appear to be derived from the very odd Hyginus manuscript in Berlin (Ms lat. 8° 44 [Rose 962]), bear no relationship to either the 'Ptolemaic' or 'Alphonsine' illustrated star catalogues, apart from the fact that some of them share a format of placing a set of labelled pictures together on a page without text. It is an interesting, but ultimately misleading case of codicological *faux amis*.

One final issue, which is pertinent for all scholars working on this body of material, is the need to address the degree to which the various sets of illustrations in these manuscripts can be considered either 'astronomical' or 'scientific'. Certainly many of the images that have reached us via the 'Ptolemaic' star catalogues of al-Ṣūfī and the Alfonsine court reflect a record of the night sky that originally had been based on active and critical observations – though it must be said that, even within a generation, the copies themselves are no longer wholly accurate or astronomically trustworthy. The series of star diagrams in the mid eighth-century manuscript of Gregory of Tours' *De cursu stellarum ratio* (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Ms Patr. 61) reflect a vision of the night sky, though their rendering is so rudimentary that modern scholars still disagree which specific stars are being depicted. And, as Elly Dekker has recently shown, the stars that adorn the constellation images in the Leiden *Aratea* show evidence of having been positioned in large part following a Ptolemaic model.[8] But

what of the others? We know that the impetus behind the compilation of the *Libri computi* of 809 – 810 was to improve time- and calendar-reckoning using astronomical phaenomena, but can the illustrations that accompany the text of the *De ordine ac positione stellarum* make any claim to astronomical precision? Equally, at the other end of the spectrum, it should be noted that the obvious diligence that went into the creation of some of the early fifteenth-century celestial charts, such as the Dyffenbach maps (Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat. 1368, c 1426) or those hailing from the ambit of Klosterneuberg (Vienna, ÖNB, 5425, c 1435), does not reflect newly-observed astronomical information. Instead, the data underpinning these maps has been drawn exclusively from contemporary, mathematically-rectified 'Ptolemaic' star catalogues.

Given these parameters, one seems justified in wondering just how many of the illustrations that appear in these 213 manuscripts had any practical use for those readers who wished to explore the night sky. Or, to put it another way, if this body of information was not being used to support or promote astronomical observations, why was it so popular? Such a question seems particularly pertinent once one realizes that, apart from measuring the positions of the luminaries for time- and calendar-reckoning and the possible tracking some of the 'lower' planets for astrological purposes, it remains difficult to find any tangible evidence of scholars in the Latin West being seriously engaged in scientific observations of the stars prior to the middle years of the fifteenth century.

In response to this conundrum, it seems prudent to paraphrase Blume's opening statement and note that – despite any internal claims to the contrary – these are books about books. Their contributions to 'knowledge' lies in how well they have passed along the information that has appeared in previous books to a new generation. To this extent, almost all the manuscripts discussed in these volumes reflect successive investments in the 'authority of the Book', and not in the science of the stars.

In the end, however, none of these issues affects the overall utility and ultimate value of these volumes, which represent a courageous and tremendously welcome addition to the literature on this unwieldy extended family of manuscripts. Future scholars will have much to digest, consider, argue over, and agree or disagree with, but the important thing is that we now all have a common benchmark and a much-needed shared resource. For, as a friend of mine once remarked: "by definition, good research always generates new research".

1 The *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters*. Saxl published his catalogue of the manuscripts in Rome and the Vatican in 1915, those in the National-Bibliothek in Vienna in 1926, and in English libraries (with Hans Meier) in 1953. Patrick McGurk's volume on the astrological manuscripts in Italian libraries appeared in 1966.

2 Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms 1569 (Ghent?, 1444 – 1477); Douai, Bibliothèque municipal, Ms 796 (Northern France, second half of the fifteenth century [after 1447]); Genoa, Biblioteca Durazzo-Giustiniani, Ms A. IX. 19 (Northern France, second half of the fifteenth century); The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms 72. A. 23 (Y 392) (Lille/Ninove, 1460); Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. lat. fol. 31 (Netherlands?, second half of the thirteenth century); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms lat. 8865 (Northern France [Cambrai?], second half of the thirteenth century); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms lat. 9675 (Northern France [Burgundy?], dated 1429). Beyond the chronological limit of the catalogues, there is also the very close copy of the Hague autograph manuscript dating to 1512 from Edingen in The Hague (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms 128. C. 4 [Y 407]), which deserves a passing mention.

3 Fermo, Biblioteca comunale, Ms 4 (Italy, before 1460); Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Aediliana 170 – 172 (Italy, before 1442 [possibly ca 1430]; London, Lambeth Palace, Ms 35 [Rome, 1450]; Madrid, Bibioteca nacional Ms 1983 [Northern Italy, c 1450]; Oxford, Bailliol College Ms 238 A-E [Cologne and Rome, c 1444 – 1448]; Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat 3121 [Italy, c 1400 (before 1418)]).

4 See Caterina Leone, Le immagini dei Fenomeni d'Arato nel Quattrocento italiano, in: Teresa d'Usa and Alessandra Perriccioli Sagesse (eds.), *Manoscritti scientific miniati fra tradizione classica e modelli arabi,* Battipaglia 2013, 111 – 128.

5 See Emilie Savage-Smith, The stars in the bright sky: The most authoritative copy of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī's tenth-century guide to the constellations, in: Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom (eds.), *God is beautiful; He loves beauty: The object in Islamic art and culture,* New Haven/London 2013, 122 – 155.

6 Hipparachus, *Hipparchi in Arati et Eudoxi Phaenomena commentarioru libri tres*, ed. and German transl. Karl Manitius, Leipzig 1894.

7 Henri Bourdellès, *L'Aratus latinus. Étude sur la culture et la langue latines dans le nord de la France au VIII*e *siècle*, Lille 1985, 15.

8 Elly Dekker, The provenance of the stars in the Leiden Aratea picture book, in: *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 73, 2010, 1 – 37.

David Ganz, *Buch-Gewänder. Prachteinbände im Mittelalter*

Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2015, 400 Seiten mit 180 Farbabbildungen und 30 s/w-Abbildungen, € 79,00, ISBN 978-3-496-01496-6

Rezensiert von Thomas Rainer

Wie gestaltet man den Einband eines Buches, das von Buch-Gewändern handelt? Vor diesem Problem stand der Buchgestalter Torsten Köchlin, als er die Aufgabe gestellt bekam, das Cover von David Ganz' Untersuchung zu Prachteinbänden im Mittelalter zu entwerfen. Köchlin hat die Herausforderung, ein repräsentatives Icon für den Text auf der ihn einschließenden Hülle zu schaffen, gelöst, indem er die Grenzziehung zwischen dem Wort-Inhalt des Buches und seinem bildlichen Gewand auflöst. Einem geöffnetem Fenster gleich schneidet die weiße Fläche mit dem Titelwort eine Öffnung in die bildbesetzte Außenhaut des Buches und lässt den Blick des Lesers ohne materielle Barriere zu den Buchstaben des dahinterliegenden Titelblatts vordringen (Abb. 1). Diese Verzahnung von Innen und Außen des Buches, von Wort und Bild am Bucheinband, bildet den medialen Rahmen der Untersuchung von David Ganz. Dabei folgt der mittelalterliche Prachteinband anderen Bedingungen als das moderne Buch. Wie Ganz gleich am Beginn seiner Untersuchung betont, sind die »plastischen Buch-Hüllen [...] mit dem Kodex vernähte Holzbretter, Gold- und Silberbleche, kunstvoll beschnitzte Elfenbeintafeln, in hohe Fassungen eingesetzte Edelsteine, Seidenstoffe mit Stickereien, bestempeltes und bemaltes Leder [...] die so deutlich sicht- und greifbaren sperrigen Aufbauten, die im Deutschen unter dem Begriff ›Prachteinband‹ zusammengefasst werden« (7), dem Buchgebrauch und Buchbegriff der Moderne fremd. Die Marginalisierung der Materialität des Buches, ein Prozess der durch den gegenwärtigen Medienwandel vom gedruckten zum digitalen Buch exponentiell beschleunigt wird, hat in den letzten Jahren die

1 Torsten Köchlin, Einband des rezensierten Buches, Berlin 2015