

A GREEN SKY AND A GREEN SUN? (PLINY, *HN* 17.74 AND MANILIUS 2.941)*

ABSTRACT

This article considers two passages in which either the sky (Plin. HN 17.74) or the sun (Manilius 2.941) is described as 'green'; it argues that in both cases such a colour epithet is out of place and proposes to correct uiridi caelo to nitido caelo in the former case, and uiridis ... Phoebus to rutilus ... Phoebus in the latter.

Keywords: Latin literature; textual criticism; weather; meteorology; astrology; *Dirae*

Three passages of Latin literature employ an unusual colour epithet, *uiridis*, in reference to the sky or the sun: *Dirae* (*Lydia*) 142 *sidera per uiridem redeunt cum pallida mundum*; Plin. *HN* 17.74 *differuntur* [*sc.* cypress seedlings] *post annum dodrantali filo, custodita temperie, ut uiridi caelo serantur ac sine aura*; and Manilius 2.941–2 *uiridis gelidis et Phoebus ab undis | enatat*. Only the first has apparently come under suspicion so far, with Giardina suggesting that *uiridem* is an error for *nitidum*, for which he lists numerous parallels: Manilius 1.126 *mundum ... nitentem*, 1.848 *nitidum* [*v.l. liquidum*] ... *mundum*, 4.866–7 *nitentem ... mundum*; Sen. *Med.* 402 *nitidus ... mundus*; Val. Fl. 3.467 *nitidus ... aether*; Mart. 10.28.1 *nitidi ... mundi* (add Val. Fl. 5.565 *nitidum ... aethera*; Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.262 *nitidum ... aethera*, 3.3.36 *nitido ... caelo*).¹ It may be worth pointing out that *nitid-* and *uirid-* can be virtually indistinguishable in minuscule script.² Since the *Dirae* (*Lydia*) passage is corrupt to such an extent that it is uncertain, among other things, to what time of day it refers, one cannot be quite sure of Giardina's emendation, but it definitely deserves to be remembered;³ even if *nitidum* is not the original reading, *uiridem* is none the less probably corrupt. The Pliny and the Manilius passages have been cited in its support (of which Giardina seems to have been unaware);⁴ as I propose to argue, however, in both of them *uiridis* is likewise an error of transmission.

Pliny is speaking about the cultivation of the cypress tree and advises that one-year-old seedlings should be transplanted in favourable weather conditions, namely *uiridi caelo ... ac sine aura* 'under a green sky and with no wind'. While in principle 'green sky' may not be inconceivable as a specific weather sign (even if it appears to be unparalleled elsewhere), what Pliny refers to is 'good weather' in general, not some rare

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¹ G. Giardina, 'Nuovi emendamenti al testo delle *Dirae* e della *Lydia* pseudovirgiliane', *QUCC* 92 (2009), 167–73, at 171.

² The corruption may also have been facilitated by the scribe's memory of *uiridem* in the same position at line 114, as well as by the ending of 141 *crudelē*, written right over *nitidum* (?) in our line (I owe this observation to the anonymous reviewer).

³ The manuscripts' *redeunt* implies the onset of night, but there are reasons to believe that the passage should rather refer to the morning (reading *cedunt* with M. Haupt, 'Coniectanea', *Hermes* 8 [1874], 1–17, at 13), in which case *nitidum* would be particularly apt: 'the pale stars disappear throughout the brightening sky'; but the adjective could also work with *redeunt*, in which case it could be taken proleptically to mean 'brilliant with stars lighting up in the sky'.

⁴ See K. Putsche, *Valerii Catonis poemata* (Jena, 1828), 95 and F. Jacob, 'Zu Catonis *Dirae*, Propertius, Cicero', *Philologus* 3 (1848), 547–53, at 549 respectively.

atmospheric phenomenon.⁵ The point of this phrase is explicated by the next sentence: *mirumque dictu, periculum eo tantum die est, si rorauit quantulumcumque imbris, aut si adflauit*,⁶ in which *si adflauit* is the opposite of *sine aura*, and *si rorauit ... imbris* – of *nitido caelo* ‘clear sky’; cf. *OLD* s.v. *nitidus* 1: ‘Bright [...] b (of sunny days, the sky)’.⁷ My argument is not that *uiridis* can under no circumstances refer to ‘clear sky’ but that it actually never does, whereas here we expect a fairly simple and neutral expression.⁸

Manilius is describing the first ‘temple’ (= ‘house’ in modern astrology) of the ecliptic, located in the eastern horizon (2.939–42):

nunc age surgentem primo de cardine mundum
respice, qua solitos nascentia signa recursus
incipiunt, uiridis gelidis et Phoebus ab undis
enatat et fuluo paulatim accenditur igni.

The point is quite straightforward: Manilius refers to the section of the celestial sphere where the stars and the sun begin to rise. Why is the sun *uiridis*? Housman explains: ‘solem autem uiridem uiderunt Cleomedes II 1 72 (ὁ ἥλιος) ἄλλοτε ἄλλοιός ἡμῖν φαντάζεται ... ἔστι δ’ ὅτε καὶ ποικίλος ἢ χλωρός et Lydus ostent. 9 6 μέλας δὲ ἢ ὑπόχλωρος ἀνατέλλων ... χειμῶνας δηλοῖ.’⁹ These parallels are irrelevant: they only show that the sun may seem ‘green’ in some specific cases, but not as a rule, whereas Manilius speaks of a typical situation that occurs every morning (note *solitos*). Goold takes *uiridis* in a non-chromatic sense and translates: ‘a pale Sun swims upward from the icy waves and begins by slow degrees to blaze with golden flame’.¹⁰ Yet, even if *uiridis* could have such a meaning as a calque of *χλωρός*,¹¹ it is inappropriate in the

⁵ Cf. the translations by H. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History, Books 17–19* (London, 1950), 51 (‘regard being paid to the weather so that they may be planted under a bright sky and when there is no wind’) and J. André, *Pline l’ancien: Histoire naturelle livre XVII* (Paris, 1964), 44 (‘en prenant soin, pour le temps, que le ciel soit serein et le vent nul’).

⁶ Note also Cato, who likewise advises against transplanting trees (including the cypress) *cum uentus siet aut imber* (*Agr.* 28.1).

⁷ *HN* Book 17 survives only in minuscule manuscripts, whose archetype (or rather already its ancestor) was evidently likewise written in minuscule; note e.g. on the same page: 17.72 *natura eius* (codd.) for *naturae uis* (Caesarius) and 73 *uuluualis* (D) for *uoluiculis* (Mayhoff). On Pliny’s tradition, see in general L.D. Reynolds, ‘The Elder Pliny’, in id. (ed.), *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford, 1983), 307–16.

⁸ More tentatively, I would further suggest that the reverse corruption may have taken place at *Ov. Met.* 14.720 *nitidaque incingere lauro*, where very possibly *uiridique* should be read (cf. *Verg. Aen.* 5.246 *uiridique aduelat tempora lauro*, 5.539 *cingit uiridanti tempora lauro*; *Val. Fl.* 4.334 *uiridi conectit tempora lauro*), although in view of *Met.* 1.552 *remanet nitor unus in illa* (of Daphne transformed into a laurel tree) the transmitted *nitidaque* may not be entirely indefensible (cf. e.g. K.S. Myers, *Ovid: Metamorphoses Book XIV* [Cambridge, 2009], 186: ‘*nitida* recalls Daphne’s metamorphosis into the laurel at 1.552’).

⁹ A.E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicum liber secundus* (Cambridge, 1937²), 111.

¹⁰ G.P. Goold, *Manilius: Astronomica* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 157. H.W. Garrod, *Manili Astronomicum liber II* (Oxford, 1911), 59 translates similarly: ‘Phoebus rises pale from the cold sea’, but then offers a baffling explanation in the commentary (at 151): ‘*uiridis* means quite simply “of the colour of the sea”’.

¹¹ Normally *uiridis* has an expressly chromatic force of ‘green’, but in poetry it sometimes appears to be used in a way similar to, and no doubt in imitation of, Greek *χλωρός* in its non-chromatic sense (which is usually rendered with *pallidus*), as, for instance, at *Ciris* 225 *uiridis ... pallor*, on which cf. R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Ciris: A Poem Ascribed to Vergil* (Cambridge, 1978), 193: ‘By *uiridis* the poet means of course *χλωρός*; indeed the usual active connotations of *uiridis* itself are all wrong for the context (“flourishing” and the like). The reader has to ignore these to find a phrase that makes

present context: under normal circumstances, the rising sun is anything but pale. Hübner claims that Manilius alludes to an astrological system, subsequently attested in the ninth-century Persian astrologer Abu Ma'shar, which associated different 'temples' with different colours.¹² Yet, even if one ignores the gap of eight centuries that divides the two authors, in Manilius both 'green' (*uiridis*) and 'yellow' (*fuluo*) belong in the first 'temple', whereas Abu Ma'shar links the first 'temple' with blue colour and only the adjacent 'temples' with green (the second and the twelfth) and yellow (the third and the eleventh).¹³ Besides, Manilius simply does not supply enough evidence to detect in his use of colour terms any sort of astrological system. If *uiridis* is corrupt, what has it replaced? I have considered *nitidus*, but in view of line 942 it is unlikely; we need a term for 'red', I suggest: when the sun only emerges from under the horizon (*enatat*), it is red, but then it gradually becomes yellower as it rises higher (942 *fuluo paulatim accenditur igni*). Out of a number of synonyms, *rutilus* is the likeliest: it could easily have produced *uiridis* (possibly by way of *uirilis*),¹⁴ and it can be paralleled (note, for instance, *Sil. Pun.* 1.577–8 *rutilus primis sonipes hinnitibus altos | afflarat montes*, of the Dawn's horse, and especially 12.648 *attollens rutilantem lampada Titan*).

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'BRIGANDS' AND 'TYRANTS' IN JOSEPHUS' *BELLVM IYDAICVM**

ABSTRACT

This article argues against the long-enduring practice of Josephan scholarship to treat the terms τυραννος ('tyrant') and ληστής ('brigand') as a collocation, or as undistinguished terms of invective employed by Josephus against various Jewish antagonists in his Bellum Judaicum (= BJ). Towards this aim, the article first examines the frequency in which these two terms appear together throughout the text of the BJ, before turning to a critical examination of particular passages that feature the terms, in order to prove that they are, in fact, not used as undistinguished terms of invective but as terms pertaining to two

sense; and has to feel through to the connotations of χλωρός (cf. LSJ s.v. II) to find a phrase that comes alive.' Cf. further J. André, *Etude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 186.

¹² See W. Hübner, 'Manilius als Astrologe und Dichter', *ANRW* 2.32.1 (1984), 126–320, at 145. S. Feraboli and R. Scarcia, *Manilio: Il poema degli astri (Astronomica)*, 2 vols. (Milan, 2001), 1.366 follow Hübner's interpretation.

¹³ See W. Hübner, *Die Eigenschaften der Tierkreiszeichen in der Antike: Ihre Darstellung und Verwendung unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung des Manilius* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 295–9 and 361.

¹⁴ Note that Manilius speaks about Saturn's *uires*, astrological 'influences', at line 938, immediately before our passage (I owe this point to the anonymous reviewer). But *rutilus* and *uiridis* can look sufficiently similar in minuscule for one to be corrupted into the other directly (*ru* → *ui*, *t* → *r*, *l* → *d*), especially as scribes (as indeed most practised readers) would normally read words as whole units, rather than deciphering them letter by letter. According to A.E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicon liber quintus* (Cambridge, 1937²), xviii, 'The archetype need not have been older than the 10th century' (i.e. it will have been written in minuscule).

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